

The Public in Public Service Media

Gregory Ferrell Lowe (ed.)

RIPE@2009

NORDICOM

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Preface

This fourth RIPE Reader marks the culmination of thirteen months of continuous collaborative work to produce a volume that represents a maturing of topics addressed in the RIPE@2008 conference, which was about *Public Service Media in the 21st Century: Participation, Partnership and Media Development*. This Reader focuses, distils, and extends pertinent scholarship. The title, *The Public in Public Service Media*, crystallises the core concern that permeated conference proceedings. As with the three earlier publications in this series to date, the fourth Reader is published by NORDICOM, the Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. I am especially grateful to Ulla Carlsson and her able team for supporting scholarly productivity in the RIPE initiative, especially in contributing so much in shared efforts to build collaborative relations between scholarly and practitioner communities concerned about the public interest in media today, with emphasis on its continuing development.

I also wish to express appreciation to the sponsors and hosts for the RIPE@2008 conference. The fourth conference was organised by ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen), Germany's public service television broadcasting company, together with two universities: The Medienintelligenz programme and IAK Medienwissenschaften at the Johannes Gutenberg-University of Mainz, and the Institute of Media Design at the Mainz University of Applied Sciences. We are also grateful for the donation from Sparda-Bank Südwest. Everyone agreed the fourth conference was a marvellous experience both in terms of intellectual enrichment and gracious hospitality. On behalf of the speakers, planners and participants I am pleased to offer our sincere thanks.

Special appreciation is richly deserved by the members of the Conference Planning Group [CPG] and RIPE Advisory Board [RAB] for all the good work that went into planning the conference, and especially their home institutions for providing the funding and other supports necessary to their involvement. The CPG members for the 2008 conference were: Gregor Daschmann and Susanne Marschall for the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, and Harald Pulch for the Mainz University of Applied Sciences; Simone Emelius and Markus Karalus

for ZDF; Jo Bardoel for the Amsterdam School of Communications Research [ASCoR] at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands; Jeanette Steemers for the Communication Media and Research Institute [CAMRI] at the University of Westminster in Britain; Brian McNair for the University of Strathclyde in Scotland; and Philip Savage for McMaster University in Canada.

The members of the CPG, myself included, want to thank the RAB members for their feedback, suggestions and critical support in producing an excellent conference: Taisto Hujanen for the University of Tampere in Finland; John Jackson (professor emeritus) for Concordia University in Canada; Per Jauert for the University of Aarhus in Denmark; Slavko Splichal for the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia; and Al Stavitsky for the University of Oregon in the USA.

I am sure that everyone involved with conference planning and organising will join me in especially thanking Vera Cuntz from the Johannes Gutenberg University and Estrela Pereira from ZDF. The success of the conference can be directly attributed to the professionalism, persistence and patience that characterised all your good work. We also thank Prof. Pulch's students for their work in producing conference materials and for audiovisual production during the conference.

This RIPE Reader is funded by The Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, and the Programme in Media Management at the University of Tampere.

The RIPE@2010 conference will take place in London on 8-11 September. It is sponsored by the BBC and Ofcom, and hosted by CAMRI at the University of Westminster.

Tampere in December 2009

Gregory Ferrell Lowe

Beyond Altruism

Why Public Participation in Public Service Media Matters

Gregory Ferrell Lowe

Reconceptualising what the public service enterprise in media should be about in the 21st century has been thematic in its first decade, as evident in the series of RIPE conferences and books produced since 2000.¹ In recent years discussion about renewal has focussed increasingly on public participation in public service broadcasting [PSB], although what that means for practice remains uncertain and why it matters is largely framed in ethical terms. As ‘altruistic imperative’, public participation is important among media theorists concerned about growing marketisation that may threaten the vitality of the public sphere for contemporary democracy (drawing on Habermas 1969/1989). Many are concerned that PSB policy and journalistic practice show weakening commitment to its historic emphasis on serving civil society as a citizenry above all. As a principle, public participation resonates with the ethos that legitimates PSB, what Denis McQuail (2005) described as the “social responsibility” model.

Practitioners are also interested in public participation for altruistic reasons (c.f. EBU 2002), but equally PSB firms hope that championing greater openness to public involvement will shore up support among audiences and policy makers. This growing interest is co-related with 1) deepening understanding that the viability of the public service enterprise depends on the degree to which the people paying for it and using its services think PSB worth the expense, and 2) debate over reframing the enterprise as public service media [PSM] – i.e. beyond radio and television alone (see Lowe and Bardoel 2007).

All these discursive threads are evident in the theme selected by ZDF, the German public service broadcasting company, for the RIPE@2008 conference – *Public Service Media in the 21st Century: Participation, Partnership and Media Development*.² ZDF is not alone in this interest. The management board of the Finnish public service operator, YLE, indicated similar interest when a key provision of their 2010 strategy emphasised being “customer-oriented. The BBC expressed early interest harnessing new media in their efforts to renew relations with audiences, in part to better secure the company’s future (Chapman 1999).

This is not to imply that senior managers in PSB firms have ulterior motives when they talk about public participation or no longer care about the social responsibility ethos, nor is it to say academicians are impractical. It is to say the attractions of public participation have so far enjoyed more rhetorical support than operational readiness. But that is changing, as the contents of this volume demonstrate.

There has been early progress in developing a more collaborative emphasis in participatory designs. The BBC in Britain and NPR in America have been investing in the technical capacity and process requirements for involving people more in production practices, despite internal resistance (see the chapter by Stavitsky and Huntsberger, and the chapter by Jackson). Germany has long featured a system of broadcasting councils that in theory should ensure the public has some voice in decisions relevant to PSB companies (see the chapter by Kleinsteinuber for critical discussion about how this has gone in practice). And in general one can say that the public has a say in most contexts through their elected representatives with oversight responsibilities. Although much of this is not collaborative in design or intention, that is also changing.

Most PSM companies have developed more sophisticated forms of participation for two-way conversation with audience members (e.g. via discussion in chat rooms and interactive web sites), and some are developing participatory designs for content development. For example, DR in Denmark has for some years worked with regional panels where people discuss with local DR staff their ideas about content development, and once each year DR's executive management team meets with these regional panels to take the results on board in more comprehensive development practice. In Finland YLE has been developing a system called YLE *Kulmilla* (translated: YLE at the Corners) that encourages discussion between managers and audiences about the company and its services.

These are early days, however, and to date what people have been able to affect in PSB in most places and cases is largely confined to their role as audiences in traditional terms. They can choose how they will receive content (e.g. over the air or online) and when they will consume it (time and place shifting options). There are fewer opportunities to contribute to concept design, format creation, production processes, strategy formulation, or critical discussion and brainstorming. Although it is unlikely that many in proportionate terms want to be involved at every level given that television is a 'lean back' medium and radio a 'background' medium, and granting as well that not so many are likely to be keen on involving themselves even in a single aspect, nonetheless structural constraints make it difficult or impossible for those with the desire to collaborate.

Although notable among scholars and practitioners, discussion about public participation in PSB is not very evident among publics. This can't be taken to mean people are not interested in being involved with media because where possible (politically and/or economically) many are already engaged, as evident in the rapid growth of 'social media'. Facebook (2009) reports 300 million

active users, of which 50% logon everyday, and says the fastest growth rate is among users age 35+. Similarly the photo sharing website, Flickr (2009), reports dramatic growth in the volume of pictures posted in recent years, up from about 5 million in 2006 to about 2.2 billion in 2008.³ In increasing proportion ‘the public’ is active in media. Of course this begs the question as to what kinds of media and to what ends? So far, at least, people generally seem more interested to participate in the “digital mass self-communication network”, in Castells’ formulation (2009), than in traditional media organisations, and more interested to express themselves as individuals through media than to participate in mediated discourse for collective purposes.⁴

Because the picture is so mixed and the situation so varied, the complexity surrounding public participation encouraged this as the thematic focus for the RIPE@2008 conference about the rationale for, and complications in, public involvement with PSB. Pertinent research, analyses and discussion is the basis for this fourth RIPE Reader about conceptualising and operationalising the public in public service media. This volume queries what any serious effort to achieve that requires of a PSB company in its many interdependent facets: strategy revision, organisational restructuring, retooling production processes, and redefining professional identities.

In this introductory chapter I want to contextualise the authors’ contributions to the volume and also attempt a supplementary contribution in demonstrating why the substance of this book is important to the managers of PSM firms – to explicitly address why this discussion matters beyond altruistic reasons and rhetorical motives more typical to internal support for public participation. Drawing on three aspects of contemporary business theory, knowledge management, customer relationship management, and creative organisation, I argue that incorporating the public in public service media is not only a good idea in principle; it is instrumental for revitalising the social legitimacy of the enterprise and developing the value people experience in its products and services. In a word, the public in public service media is *worthwhile*.

Caveats

It is important to recognise that discourse about PSB and PSM is not universal, although often presented as such. A frequent problem is that each discussant thinks about the issues based on personal experiences in a particular domestic context and assumes a degree of applicability wider than merited. This does not detract from the usefulness of discussion, but it does signal the need for taking care in presuming generalisability. As noted by one reviewer of the 2003 RIPE Reader (Chapman 2008), much that has been done is Euro-centric and fails to accommodate developments elsewhere.

Moreover, one should be careful not to be unwittingly captured by normative assumptions that imply people are lacking in commitment to citizenship if preferring to interface with media primarily as audiences. As observed more

than a decade ago (Bennett 1998), civic engagement may not be declining at all but rather shifting to new forms. Representative democracy has never privileged direct participation; citizens exercise control by electing political representatives (Held 2006). Mass media, as the Fourth Estate in Western-style democracy, serves functions on their behalf, especially gate-keeping, agenda-setting, and acting as a watchdog (Christians et al 2009).

Caution is further warranted in two additional aspects. Firstly, many PSB companies have been active in developing participatory frameworks, as illustrated in this volume.⁵ Although exact numbers are often difficult to know, the European Broadcasting Union found that PSM websites are among the top 10 in many countries (EBU 2007). Certainly commercial media companies and their lobbies acknowledge the growing success of PSM in their persistent efforts to roll them back. A word about this is appropriate before continuing to the second caution.

PSB companies are often powerful incumbents. The BBC has about 23,000 employees across 43 countries (BBC Annual Report 2008/09). The two German public service broadcasting companies, ZDF and ARD, had a combined budget of about €7 billion in 2008 (Biggam 2008). Of course size is relative. PSB operators in smaller nations have less revenue and employees. For example in its annual report (YLE 2008) the Finnish public service broadcasting company reported a turnover of €380 million and had 3,243 employees. Although small in comparison with Germany and Britain, this is nonetheless a big operation *in context*. In their annual report for the same period the biggest commercial operator in Finland, Sanoma Group, reported net sales of more than €3 billion and had 18,163 employees (Sanoma 2008a). But that company only had €295.7 in operating profits and when one separates out Sanoma Entertainment (the division responsible for broadcasting operations) from its core business in newspaper and magazine publishing, the picture is different. Sanoma Entertainment had net sales of €157 million in 2008 with an operating profit of €17 million and 488 employees (Sanoma 2008b). YLE is a big operator in its national market.

Thus the point in general: PSB companies in much of Europe are big and old⁶, and still influential. They enjoy the power of incumbency and have strong interests in maintaining a privileged status, which now requires development not only in broadcasting but also beyond that.

At the same time one needs to accommodate the fact that the commercial sector's efforts to push back are beginning to payoff. This is evident 1) in a deteriorating financial situation in the public sector in most countries that precedes the current economic recession (EAO 2002), 2) in domestic initiatives for new regulatory bodies and more rigorous oversight (such as the BBC Trust and YLE's Board of Governors, *Hallitus* in Finnish), 3) in growing procedural requirements to launch new products and services (e.g. the "public values test" in Britain and now the "three step model" in Germany), and 4) in the drive for contestable public funding that commercial companies can also access (as already in New Zealand and of growing interest in much of Europe).

To continue now with the second caution, it is important to note that much of the discussion about public participation centres mainly on affordances offered by internet-based communication. It is easy to fall into a mode of thought that implies all participation is situated in online environments to the neglect of long-term efforts in radio and TV, with the former of keen relevance (see the chapter by Mäntymäki), and also in face-to-face discussions as noted already in Denmark and Finland as examples. In fact, there are many types of participation, and degrees of that, which deserve deeper consideration and receive that in the chapters in this collection.

Re-orienting for future success

Especially in Europe, public service broadcasting has long been criticised for a character of insularity that is partly rooted in its monopoly heritage and, more generally, as an engendered condition of the historic Enlightenment Mission. PSB firms are routinely accused of institutionalised arrogance, exaggerated notions of their product quality, structural inequities that ‘distort media markets’, and management cultures obsessed with internal and external politics. Although a caricature and partly unfair, and also arguably untrue in many cases given that most PSB companies have made tremendous gains in efficiency and effectiveness this decade, there is undeniably a ‘hangover’ of institutionalised self-importance. For PSB companies wanting to develop beyond traditional broadcasting there is compelling need to reorient and reorganise not only with regard to technological platforms and organisational structures, as they have been doing and rather well on the whole, but more fundamentally in terms of how they work (processes) and with whom (relationships) in routine patterns.

The heritage of public service broadcasting is simultaneously the source of great strengths and complicated problems. Its strengths are not to be treated lightly because that heritage is premised on legacy values which include high standards of professionalism, the importance of editorial independence in journalism, commitment to universal access, and being civil society organisations with relative autonomy from both government and industry that facilitates keeping a critical eye on both (see Jauert and Lowe 2005). These strengths are foundational to the social legitimacy of the enterprise. But this heritage also poses barriers, one of which is keenly relevant here: the difficulty in accommodating people as more than audiences.

That understanding raises pointed questions and thorny challenges variously treated here, including collaborative designs (see the chapter by Aslama), handling functions that are essential for social relations in processual terms (see Hartmann), editorial responsibility and citizen journalism (see Mäntymäki), broadcasting councils and executive privilege (see Kleinstaubert), commissioning content from the independent sector for public service channels (see Norbäck), what to do with and about services for children (see D’Arma, Enli

and Steemers), and how the value chain which characterised systemic arrangements in the PSB era might be redesigned for greater suitability to PSM (see Brown and Goodwin).

The growth of media as markets, fuelled by policies favouring deregulation combined with technological development and socio-cultural trends, has required PSB companies to grapple with mounting complexity these past twenty years. This is evident in the need 1) to continually increase operational efficiency while expanding the offer and services (Fenn, Paton and Williams 2009; Dias and Antoniadis 2007), 2) to legitimate their draw on public funding and the licence fee system (Picard 2005), 3) to defend the role of PSB in principle and its position in practice (Nissen 2007), and 4) to invest in new media and new content for increasingly segmented markets. These pressures explain the imperative of building relations with their ‘publics’ to garner support and succeed competitively. Thus, for example, the BBC (2004) is focussed on “building public value”, YLE in Finland wants to be “customer-centric” (YLE 2006), and DR in Denmark seeks to “build bridges” (CoE 2009).

Two meanings of institution

The sustained size and strength of PSB is an artefact of social history. The functions of PSB were grounded in peculiarities of broadcasting as a distinctive *form* of mediation. In this there is nothing that really distinguishes different approaches to broadcasting (e.g. public service or private commercial). This form provides for a degree of immediacy and scale of communality unparalleled before broadcasting. As John Durham Peters (1999) suggested, the value of broadcasting lies in its capacity to “sow the seed” widely and without discrimination. Paddy Scannell (1989) argued that broadcasting created a scale of public space that enormously enhanced the scope of shared immediate experiences and, in the process, facilitated a redrawing of historic boundaries that had separated public from private life.

In Europe, in particular, during the period when broadcasting was being defined and organised, policy makers believed in its potential for achieving social ends beyond market-based benefits: it should be a common resource for distributing information and growing knowledge, a system for inclusive public discussions, a force for good in developing appreciation of arts and culture and for distant education, and ultimately a platform (in today’s parlance) for social tolerance and equality (c.f. Briggs and Burke 2005; similarly in the USA, see for example Lewis 1991 and Barnouw 1966). Three points are important here: 1) the form facilitates the functions, 2) the form is no longer as unique or distinctive because digitalisation has put an end to channel scarcity (Ellis 2000), and 3) too often, perhaps, advocates of commercial media neglect addressing its functions to focus on the broadcasting form (i.e. neglect discussion of principles in favour of practicalities).

All of the above can be understood as a dilemma that may be usefully interrogated in the light of two meanings of ‘institution’ that are lately in some

contradiction. PSB is an institution in the sense of being 1) an *organisation* and 2) an *orientation*. It is the former in the same sense as public schools and public hospitals. It is the later in the sense of being grounded in a system of cultural values legitimating a particular arrangement of social practice, e.g. in the same sense as marriage. Remaining an institution in this principled sense depends on the breadth and depth of social adherence to values that legitimate its social responsibility ethos. This orientation has become uncertain both from within and without.

From without it is uncertain because PSB is increasingly viewed as an exception to “normal” systemic arrangements for media today (Bardoel and d’Haenens 2008). Many policy makers equate normalcy with a media system that is privately owned, commercially operated, and market driven. Nearly everywhere one finds less evident agreement about how much social responsibility media firms (as industries) ought to have, and of which kinds (see the chapter by Trappel for an assessment of trends and their implications).

PSB advocates have been engaged in ongoing, often complicated negotiations characterised by trade-offs. That was evident in the Amsterdam Protocol on Public Service Broadcasting that was amended to the 1997 Treat of Amsterdam (Lowe and Hujanen 2007). The Protocol acknowledges that it is a competency of national governments to define, confer and organise the remit for PSB, which is understood to have a vital role in directly serving the cultural, social and democratic needs of host societies. But the same instrument qualifies this with limitations to protect market competition and liberal economic interests. The various EU rulings, decisions and updates since 1997 have largely been about clarifying the parameters inherent in this trade-off (Kleist and Sheurer 2006), most recently in the 2009 Broadcast Communication from the European Commission (EC 2009).

The trade-offs from within have been less clearly articulated. As these companies develop competence in business practices in the bare-knuckle fray for market share and operational efficiencies, there is a danger they may lose sight of, or even deliberately jettison, historic commitments to public service. Achieving business competence is important because PSM must be fluent with and credible in its operational context, and because remits conferred by governments very often require PSB companies to be business-like. But courts losing distinguishing features and the unique identity that legitimate these companies as something beyond media business-as-usual.

Because the institution as orientation is in trouble, the institution as an organisation is as well. It could not be otherwise wherever the principles grounding the ethos that legitimates the organisation are no longer as widely or deeply shared. Not surprisingly, the institution as organisation tends to trump the institution as orientation, internally at least, for a variety of ‘selfish’ reasons that are entirely legitimate to the people employed by these companies. It would be naïve to expect that devotion to abstract principles and an ambiguous ‘public’ should prevail over individual concerns where one’s lifework, career and retirement are at stake. However understandable, self-interest can obviate prioritising public

service in principle when that requires doing or being something that threatens the organisation's future (see the chapter by Collins especially).

As the sense of PSB's social legitimacy has weakened, the importance of improved audience relations has strengthened. A growing register of voices council the importance of building 'partnerships' with diverse and demanding publics as the top priority for content makers and media managers alike. This is not entirely new. In a seminal article (1989) Paddy Scannell observed that although PSB is supposed to be democratic as a fundamental attribute, in practice it features highly asymmetric relations with the public. Collins et al (2001: 11) highlighted the importance of PSB connecting to a degree that people truly feel "public service broadcasting is theirs". More recently Lowe (2008a) proposed a model for legitimating the transition to public service media on the grounds of democratic development.

Great expectations for citizens and broadcasters

But it is useful to observe that people can acknowledge various social services are necessary for societal well being, and with some bearing on the personal quality of their own lives, without feeling very strongly about this at a given moment. It is worth asking if the "feeling" implied above requires too much of people as citizens? It certainly matters that people as citizens accept that there are values they generally share and support, and that others have needs that deserve to be taken care of in light of these values. In many instances, if not most, that surely ought to be enough.

It may also be useful to observe that PSB should not be treated as an isolated case. Public sector institutions generally have been dealing with the same pressures, struggling with the same challenges, and undergoing similar transformation. This is especially evident in school systems seeking similar solutions via efforts to grow interdependence with parents, to incorporate visiting experts as guest teachers, to require more collaboration with colleagues, and to actively encourage student creativity, teamwork and problem-solving skills. All of that is current in American discussions about 'charter schools' and in British interests in school reform (c.f. *Reviving America's Schools* 2009; *Tory Plans for Schools* 2009; Finn et al 2000; Clark and Wasley 1999).

Although the organisational problem does pose barriers that need work and revision, there is also need to reform orientations within PSB. Ytreberg's analysis (2002) of public broadcasters' perceptions of themselves and their roles in society pointedly illustrated how far public service broadcasters have to go in changing how they think in order to make organisational openness viable in practice. He identified four ideal types – Paternalists, Bureaucrats, Charismatics and Avant-gardists. As Karol Jakubowicz (2006: 18) noted: "Not one of these ideal types assumes anything else than an institution apart, aloof from the audience to which it speaks and seeking legitimation in terms of the content it delivers to the audience. Not one of these ideal types assumes the renunciation of PSB power". This asymmetry in the balance of power is

embedded in the classical mass media formulation of source and receiver, as evident in Ang's work (1998) which showed broadcaster interest (private as well as public) in audience research was often less due to a robust desire to know more than a fundamental desire to control better. As noted earlier much has changed and in very many places since that publication. But the insight still has relevance in many instances, and certainly in principle.

Thus, in his keynote address for the RIPE@2006 conference Jakubowicz (2006: 17) suggested that for strategic reasons PSB companies must prioritise "renewing" relations and recommended building a "new partnership" with the public. While acknowledging that the requirements for achieving this are extremely challenging, he concluded that "PSM [needs] to acknowledge the role of the public as an active partner and no longer just a passive receiver; to reconnect with the public in ways suited to the 21st century and to make public media truly public". In a follow-up keynote in the RIPE@2008 conference he placed even stronger emphasis on the revolutionary aspect, as evident in the title – *Participation and Partnership: A Copernican Revolution to Re-engineer PSM for the 21st Century*.

It is clear to many observers that the preservation of PSB (at least) and its development into PSM (at best) mainly depend on the character of relations these companies have with their publics. Of course the quality of products matter, but one can't fairly say the quality of products from the private sector are lacking given their popularity among audiences, their acquisition for broadcast by PSB companies, and the remarkable growth of trade for international formats in which PSB firms engage (Moran 2006). Organisational restructuring is a critical success factor because these companies must achieve mandated gains in efficiency (economic) and effectiveness (operations) – the first keyed to declining resources and the later to increasing competition. But quality in content, professionalism in management, and efficiency in operations will only take them some of the way to where they need to be. In the absence of public support, all the rest must ultimately be in vain.

Thus, the character of institutional relations with the public is the *fulcrum* on which everything must ultimately balance. This is particularly evident in mature political systems where the public as a citizenry elects representatives who in turn appoint PSB governors; where the public can, by varying if not usually straight-forward means, exert influence on evolving media policy; and where the public is the main source of funding via licence fees or general tax receipts. Even where all of these factors do not hold as true, in every market economy the public in its various media-related formations (as users, readers, subscribers, viewers, listeners, audiences) choose in various media-oriented formulations (as individuals, communities, segments, target markets, etc.) between competitors, and this ultimately determine which media firms thrive, which merely survive, and which suffer demise.

The size and colours of the welcome mat

Although it has become increasingly clear that the future of PSB hinges above all on relations with their publics, there has been much ambiguity and ambivalence about how the public ought to be involved – or perhaps better to say should be *allowed* to be involved. This is a stingy formulation; one could instead frame things in more flattering terms as to how people should be invited, encouraged and appreciated in their involvement. But the stingier option drives at a crucial point: the management and governors of PSB companies must decide what is appropriate and under what conditions before it is practicable for organisations to retool and for employees to reorient in order to invite, encourage and appreciate public participation in public service media. Those with responsibility for managing the threshold must first decide the size and colours of the welcome mat before it can be rolled out.

As mentioned earlier, rhetorical reformulation is well advanced in some places. An influential 2004 BBC report titled *Building Public Value* illustrates:

We look forward to a future where the public have access to a treasure-house of digital content, a store of value which spans media and platforms, develops and grows over time, which the public own and can freely use in perpetuity. A future where the historic one-way traffic of content from broadcaster to consumer evolves into a true creative dialogue in which the public are not passive audiences but active, inspired participants.

That is a fine formulation, the substance of which was thematic in discussions among the Directors General convened for the July 2009 General Assembly of the EBU in which the author was privileged to participate as a panel discussant (EBU 2009). But the formulation hinges on two rather different degrees of involvement. The first is a matter of rights to access and use contents already paid for by some means of public funding, in this case a licence fee. The second meaning is much broader in implying a condition of interaction, interdependence and partnership wherein the company has robust collaborative relations with the public.

This begs the question of what would be required to achieve the more robust participation? The formulation is fine, but what is the formula? And there may well be unintended consequences – in fact, they are all but certain. For example, the Finnish public service company, YLE, launched what its executive management team calls an ‘Enablement Strategy’ after 2005 (see the chapter by Hartmann). The objective was to become customer-oriented, explicitly stated in those terms. As an outgrowth of that perspective the company opened its news services for use in public spaces outside its own channels. As a result, YLE news text is being screened in shopping malls, selected primarily because this is ‘free content’ for the property operators, much to the consternation – and harsh objection – of the Finnish newspaper industry which claims market distortion (*Aamulehti* 2009; *Taloussanommat* 2009).

If it is clear why PSB companies seek partnership relations with their publics, it is so far unclear how the public stands to benefit from agreeing to be a partner. It isn't possible to usefully clarify that in the absence of public involvement in formulating answers. Few will agree to partner up unless and until they see that whatever is at stake makes doing so in their self-interests. For the public as well, only a minority could be expected to embrace this for purely altruistic satisfactions. Discussion with the public about how and why it is in *their* self-interest is largely missing. This again reflects a key point of criticism: PSB's interest in partnership with the public often appears mainly to be for organisational self-interests rather than the public interest; it seems mainly developing the interests *of the media* rather than interest *in the media*.

There are two concepts that need treatment in brief at this point: the 'public' and 'altruism'.

Public and audience

As Sonia Livingstone (2005) observed, in media studies it is difficult to clearly distinguish between public, audience and nation.⁷ And for the first two she thinks such efforts are not even especially useful. Critical scholars often characterise the roles of public and audience as contradictory; audiences are associated with the private realm and mostly denigrated while publics are conceived as an absolute good. This dichotomy supposes a public that is active and engaged as citizens, whereas an audience is passive and only involved as consumers, thus treated in normatively negative terms. In Livingstone's view this is not only too simplistic, it is laden with normative dualisms: "rational versus emotional, disinterested versus biased, participatory versus withdrawn, shared versus individualised, visible versus hidden" (ibid: 18).

Drawing on scholars in the cultural studies tradition, including especially John Corner, John Fiske, and Roger Silverstone, she considers the approach less than useful because we live in an increasingly mediated world where activities as audiences and publics can't be clearly separated, except of course for theoretical interests. As Raymond Williams observed (1961: 289), there are no masses but "only ways of seeing people as masses". The 'public' is an abstracted term that, as John Hartley (2002: 189) wrote, functions largely as a "virtualised" and "imagined community".

Livingstone's solution in part is to constitute people as situated in a "civic culture" or "civil society" which incorporates their multiple roles, with the complexion of engagement depending on the activity and their interests from time to time. In other words, identity is conditional and relational. Her views are especially influenced by Corner's (1995) notion of "citizen-viewers". Of course this does not entirely escape the dilemmas posed by contending understandings of publics and audiences, and certainly there are potentially negative consequences to over reliance on the audience concept. As Hartley (2002) observed, the audience concept supposes some relatively homogenised and certainly a marketised aggregation of individual spectators.

The lack of differentiation or the overlap (depending on one's perspective), is keyed to the development of mass media, mass audiences and mass society. Audiences are engaged with mediated texts, whereas publics might be but that is not necessary to this identity. Audiences convene as a public under certain circumstances, especially for example in their role as citizens choosing between candidates in a democratic election. But audiences may not wish to be engaged as a public at all, as for example when watching TV purely for pleasure or relaxation.

At any rate, I agree with Livingstone that "one cannot now imagine how the public can be constituted, can express itself, can be seen to participate, can have an effect, without the mediation of various forms of mass communication" (2005: 26). Neither is it necessary to confine our interests in public engagement to the political, nor even there as classically conceived. People as audiences may be engaged as publics in other than purely political things – for example in their interests as participants in cultural events and sociable affairs, or in the life experience of some group to which they belong as an important aspect of self-identities, i.e. they don't have to be acting solely as citizens to affect change that has political implications. In short, "audiences are, generally, neither so passive and accepting as traditionally supposed by those who denigrate them nor generally so organised and effective as to meet the high standards of those defining public participation" (Livingstone 2005: 31). Here one should also reference theorisation that reframes traditional and mainly political notions of citizenship with notions that are more tightly integrated with culture, and more broadly inclusive for that⁸.

Altruism and egoism

As Monroe (1996) observed, modern social theory and political science owes much to John Hobbes' notions about self-interest as the fundamental driver of social behaviour. Although the importance of self-interest should not be minimised, it is not the only motivator for human action or inaction. Human beings are emotional as well as rational and do many things on the bases of how something (an event, condition, experience) touches us or moves us. Certainly marketing theory is aware of this; emotional appeal is essential to branding and also evident in campaign appeals for charitable donations (c.f. Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling 2006).

Batson (1991) distinguished between altruism and egoism as opposites (from a social psychology perspective). The relationship between these aspects should be understood as dialectical because each aspect is one anchor of a continuum about human nature concerning where one stands on the role of other people in our lives. All people are sometimes more selfless and other times more self-ish, depending on conditions, context and the stakes involved.

'Altruism' was coined by Auguste Comte (1798-1857), the founder of positivism, who was interested in the motivations of social behaviour. He believed some motives were self-serving while others were self-denying and devoted

to living in service to others. This orientation and condition (it has elements of both) has a much deeper history, of course. It has been spoken of variously as friendship, benevolence, compassion and charity – all of which continue to be associated with an altruistic inclination. There is also religious heritage backgrounding the issue (Grant 2001). Altruism and egoism are to an important degree about principles of right and wrong in a morality schema. The altruistic impulse seeks to serve others above self, while egoism seeks one's own interests above or even against others. And there has long been debate about whether altruistic motivations are really selfless or just another form of egoism.

Altruism is fundamental to the ethos of public service broadcasters as an institutional condition; that is to the orientation grounding the organisation. Its functions are essentially about *giving* services to people as a collective to benefit their social welfare as a 'commonwealth'. This imperative is evident in the ideals that ground John Reith's (1924) theory of broadcasting as a public service endeavour, ideals based on a morality schema that became foundational to the BBC (see the chapter by Mäntymäki) and since to its formulation in most other contexts (Sterling 2004: 1915). As Balmer (1994) found in his research of documents expressing Reith's ideas, his initial proposal for the BBC motto was *Quaecunq̃ue*, Latin for *Whatsoever*. Reith took this from St. Paul's epistle to the early Church in Philippi: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are modest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise – think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

To an interesting degree, then, the challenge in public service media has from the beginning been characterised by dialectical relations seemingly inherent in linking organisational egoism and orientational altruism. Although this dilemma is not unique to media, it is certainly striking in the PSB context.

The practice of public participation in the PSM enterprise

In the parlance of competitive advantage theory (Porter 1985), the question posed here is at what points in the value chain, and to what degrees, can the public add value to the goods provided by PSM? Of course the public is involved as choosers and users, but this has little potential for adding any value in the chain of processes required to produce products and services. The strategic issue is in which components of the value chain should public involvement be facilitated? Certainly in choosing the platform and schedule for content consumption. That is evident everywhere today. What about opportunity for involvement in the production of content? That is less evident, but certainly growing as the contents of this book illustrate. How about concept design and format development? Less evident yet, but again this might be changing as we see in Denmark for example. How about corporate strategy development? Almost certainly not. As Mintzberg et al (2008) suggested, this is regarded as the inner sanctum of corporate management.

In this part of the chapter I hope to make a contribution for contextualising the contents of this volume especially for management interests by arguing why the contents matter in practical terms. Little evident thought has yet been given to practical reasons for inclusive interdependency. The practical potential is suggested in light of three influential strands in contemporary business theory: knowledge management, customer relationship management, and creative organisation.

Knowledge Management

It is essential that every firm today have a knowledge management [KM] strategy because the intensity of information is growing geometrically and competitive success increasingly depends on the firm's capability to 1) capture and process information efficiently and 2) to apply it effectively as knowledge (Blackler 2002). Moreover, the brand valuation (both material and perceptual) of companies is today increasingly a reflection of their intellectual capital. As Grant (2002) demonstrated, intellectual capital is the result of the integration of human resources, structural resources and relational resources. Especially for media firms that depend so intimately on the production and processing of information of many kinds and for diverse purposes, knowledge is a fundamental strategic resource.

A company's knowledge strategy is determined by its business strategy because that dictates what knowledge needs to be developed. Otherwise a company will waste scarce resources developing knowledge that is duplicative or irrelevant to its strategic aims. The firm must constantly mine information and develop it into knowledge that is valuable, unique and difficult to imitate. In practice, knowledge strategy thereby contributes to the continual maturing of business strategy because these twin aspects of corporate development strategy are both reflexive and iterative (Zack 2002). As McKenzie and van Winkelen (2004: 1) put this in the form of a question, "The issue at stake is how do we improve the situation we find ourselves in so that we can make better choices, more timely and informed decisions, and come up with more new ideas?"

In PSB companies knowledge has been segmented in organisational silos that are historically self-contained and characterised by internal competition over resources (Wessberg 2009). This condition is a product of organisational complexity (they're big) and sedimentation (they're old). Such firms are typified by 'collective bounded rationality' where managers and employees find it difficult to think outside the box of inherited structures, routines and perspectives (Bontis 2002). Breaking out requires permeability in boundaries to facilitate communication, internally of course but also especially with actors in the environment. The key to knowledge production depends on interaction not only to build relations but also to facilitate sharing information through collaboration. That is essential to develop new insights.

The importance of communication with actors in the wider environment is rather the opposite of what has historically been the case for PSB companies,

and contrary to what is required for success as PSM companies. What is important for strategic development (as distinct here from operational development) depends on securing, processing, producing and applying information about what's going on 'out there' in order to canalise what needs to be happening 'around here'. The information that matters most for strategic development will only rarely be internal to the organisation.

For quite practical reasons, then, PSM firms should prioritise engagement with their publics because that is the essential catalyst for generating the new knowledge necessary for innovation that succeeds in a highly competitive environment characterised by higher uncertainty and instability. This is especially true in culture industries (Choi and Karamanos 2002).

There are three take-aways for managers with regard to facilitating public participation in and for public service media:

1. Intellectual capital is crucial to success and that depends on relational resources. Internal collaboration is of already accepted importance. But collaboration with actors in the environment is even more important because the boundaries that limit development are not mainly internal.
2. Knowledge management and business strategy are reflexive – each feeds the other as an iterative process. The essence of this work hinges on the firm's competence to capture, process and develop information in ways that transform its knowledge base for application. Most of the information that can make a significant difference is outside the firm nested in the context that values its content.
3. Companies situated in cultural industries are among the most dependent on relations with actors who embody the cultures they seek to satisfy. Failure in knowledge production will be especially fatal here.

Customer Relationship Management

Customer Relationship Management [CRM] prioritises development of insightful understandings about customers not only as buyers (even if mainly as that in the end) but as people with complex lives in their several identities, and always in relations to what the company is doing and can do better in delivering higher degrees of satisfaction (Buttle 2005). This is essential to lowering the risks required to be proactive in competitive and strategic terms (Peelen 2005). The strategic objective is to widen, lengthen and deepen customer relationships with the company (Chablo 2001).

Developing a customer-centric organisation requires hard work in unfamiliar territory, especially in media companies because these tend to be product-centric. Programme makers and journalists usually rank 'my programme' and 'my story' as the top priority and base their professional self-esteem on how colleagues regard their work. Moreover, most media companies have historically been structured on a media-centric basis (e.g. Radio Division and

Television Division) combined with genre emphasis (e.g. Radio News and Television Documentary). This product-centric view has grounded strategising and organising for decades. Despite admonitions to ‘know your audience’, the product-centric view doesn’t actually demand deep thinking about them (see the chapter by Leurdijk and Leendertse). In recent years PSB firms have been creating new structures that are not medium-centric. But they nonetheless remain largely content-centric.

Putting audiences in the centre rather than at the end of the classical source-receiver chain may be painful. Their perspectives will certainly reveal aspects of the mission that are outdated and areas of the organisation that are no longer needed (Nykamp 2001). Looking in the mirror can be at least as difficult as looking out the window. Moreover, the task requires assessment of what customers choose instead, and especially why (Gentle 2004). This is essential because success requires differentiating products and services based on what various kinds of people in their differing uses of media value most highly (Lowe 2008b).

This is why Gupta and Lehmann (2005) found that the fundamental problem every company faces in the earliest stages of developing a customer-centric approach is figuring out what business they are actually in. That is essential for knowing the *experienced* value of the firm’s products and services, indeed of the firm in its self. The issue must be periodically revisited, too, as conditions are constantly evolving. This is why Newell (2003) questioned the implicit direction in the CRM formulation – the notion that a company can manage customer relations in the first place. He instead advocates a more radical approach yet: Customer Managed Relationships.

There are three additional take-aways for managers with regard to facilitating public participation in and for public service media:

4. Incorporating the public in public service media is the surest path for ensuring that products and services the company develops, and decisions about what should be ended or declined, are wisely taken. It is a steely-eyed matter of serving a PSM company’s strategic self-interests in a stressed environment where risks of failure must be minimised.
5. The value of programmes and services are only partly determined by makers. Some characteristics are of course intrinsic to professional skills and personal talents. But the historic product-centric view is flawed in thinking that value is largely determined by the thing in itself rather than by its relational worth. One can’t know the proper value of anything when viewing it only from the inside-out; it must also be understood from the outside-in.
6. There must be a basis for designing differentiation strategies. That has so far been done on the basis of assumptions about the PSB ethos and product superiority derived from that. But under competitive conditions differentiation actually lies in comparative perceptions of variance in the

minds of people who do the choosing and using. Both for development of organisational logic and product differentiation that will succeed, the public are the most valuable resource for a public service media firm.

None of this is to under-emphasise the importance of PSM as an essential service for social, cultural and democratic needs, or to slight the significance of audience as citizen. But the importance of citizenship does not inherently accord no importance to people's interests as customers.

Creative Organisation

In 2002 barely a month into his term of office, former BBC Director General Greg Dyke launched an initiative he called Making It Happen. The idea was to empower BBC staff to implement changes that "encourage creativity and connect with all audiences" in order to "make the BBC the most creative organisation in the world" (BBC News 2002). Current DG Mark Thompson launched a follow-on initiative in 2005 he called Creative Future, again shortly after taking over, because he felt that "although the BBC had lots of policy ideas about the future, it hadn't really grappled with the creative challenge of what feels like an entirely new chapter in broadcasting" (BBC Creative Future 2006). Certainly Richard Seel (2005: 1) was impressed; he characterised the BBC as "a creative organisation *par excellence*".

For PSM firms generally, the creative organisation [CO] concept was growing until mid-decade. YLE in Finland launched a programme development workshop called Särämä (translation: Edge) in 2002, for which the author was the head for three years before it was dissolved in 2005. SVT in Sweden had a similar workshop called Växthus (translation: Greenhouse), also launched and ended nearly in parallel. Neither has interest been confined to Europe, as evident in treatments of National Public Radio in the USA in this volume and the corporate plan for 2007-2012 for the Special Broadcasting Service in Australia (SBS n.d.).

PSM firms came to realise that the great management challenge is "enabling knowledge creation" (von Krogh, Ichijo and Nonaka 2000: 31). This is easier said than done. Knowledge creation depends firstly on developing new understandings and then crafting new ways of doing things. It requires making allowances for experimentation and bearing the cost of mistakes when experiments fail. It requires investment in opportunities for employees to experience new things and time for reflection about lessons learned.

Creativity in an organisation requires a high degree of interaction. Success depends on building processes in which continuous exchange of views is obligatory rather than optional, not only with colleagues but also with customers and partners. This is worth doing because interaction is crucial for both types of innovation: continuous (incremental) and discontinuous (breakthrough). The people doing the work can do that best to the extent that they know and understand the people they are working for. Nothing ensures this better than working *with* them.

The key to success for innovation management is to encourage imagination and discovery. That is a function of 1) the interaction of diversity and 2) crafting a systemic order for that. Both have structural and process requirements for managing “the paradox of creativity and control” (Davis and Scase 2000: 71). Achieving this balance is often difficult for managers because what is required flies in the face of sacrosanct management theory: “As managers we are captives of a paradigm that places the pursuit of efficiency ahead of every other goal. This is hardly surprising, since modern management was invented to solve the problem of *inefficiency* (Hamel 2007: 12). But as Gary Hamel further suggested, innovation in management is a pearl of great worth because it is the most difficult thing to imitate: “Most executives find it easier to acknowledge the merits of a disruptive business model than to abandon the core tenets of their bedrock management beliefs” (ibid: 35).

Big, old companies are especially prone to lose their capacity for innovation in part because they dominated their market in some golden period. With success their core values shifted from development to protection. Such companies are well established, usually hierarchical, bureaucratic, and their management practice is control-oriented. One must be careful about implied normative judgements because certain organisational forms are necessary for stability, efficiency and accountability. But the tendency to become increasingly risk averse works against becoming what companies in the creative industries most need to be – *creative*.

This is a major problem because the seedbed for creativity is only rarely at the centre; it is almost always at the periphery (Lampikoski and Emden 1996) which depend, as Gareth Morgan noted (1989: 149), on “intense, informal communications”.

There are three final take-aways for managers with regard to facilitating public participation in and for public service media:

7. The varied problems PSM companies have today are most likely to find lasting solutions through collaboration with people *outside* the firm, particularly those who are most intimate with their services and products.
8. Creativity is fuelled by diversity and PSM companies need to reorient from their PSB heritage to invite, encourage and actively facilitate the participation of the public in order to guarantee the richest, most embedded context of diversity.
9. The most difficult thing to change is not organisational structure or the fundamentals of production, but rather the thinking that grounds these things. And the very hardest thing to develop is management’s theory of management.

Taken as a whole, these nine insights gleaned from three influential strands of contemporary business theory can be summarised by a tenth: The public in public service media matters not only as an altruistic principle; it is a practical success factor.

Overview of the book

This fourth RIPE Reader has two sections. The first provides a selection of treatments that situate the importance of public participation in mainly conceptual terms drawing on relevant contemporary theorisation about why such matters, and to whom. These treatments are underpinned by examination of defining trends that characterise the intersection of society and the media, suggesting what needs to happen next and explaining why.

The second section continues emphasis on theoretical development but with more emphasis on critical assessments of comparative cases that are relevant for deeper understanding about audience behaviours and issues keyed to accountability. This section opens with four chapters presenting audience research about media use and participatory involvement. The final four chapters, in a sense part two of the second section, treat participatory dimensions that either directly involve or strongly imply wider relations with, and accountability to, societal domains.

Section one: Trends and theorisation

Section one opens with Josef Trappel who assesses contemporary industrial, political and social trends to argue that although public service media are under threat there are real opportunities for renewing the legitimacy of the enterprise. The chapter by Richard Collins discusses how and why public service broadcasters may be losing legitimacy. Highlighting the situation in Britain, he argues that internet content providers are increasing efforts to pluralise and deepen provision of public service content, which in effect augment their trustworthiness and deepen public trust for them, while at the same time one sees waning support for traditional PSB arrangements. These chapters comprise a dialogue about how contemporary trends can either strengthen or erode the legitimacy of PSM and, pointedly, agree that it depends in large part on the degree to which PSM companies remain true to their unique PSB heritage as civil society organisations.

In her chapter, Eeva Mäntymäki amplifies the importance of the historic PSB ethos for contemporary PSM practice as she reviews foundational principles in the philosophy of public service broadcasting first formulated by Sir John Reith for the early BBC. She demonstrates how and why public participation is really nothing new, and has been understood as a vital component of public service conceptualisation from the beginning. Contradictions and complications are evident in her treatment of public radio journalism as a profession of expert practice.

Chapters five and six treat theorisation about participation in contemporary terms with emphasis on strategic implications for PSM companies. Minna Aslama tackles the 'collaboration' concept to propose that in the non-linear environment an unrecognised but highly relevant dimension of diversity is participation. She treats this as a strategic route for developing the public value of public

service media. The chapter by Benjamin Hartmann compliments and extends this discussion by expounding a ‘sociating function’ for public service media, a view that seeks to advance a principled understanding of PSM as social enabler, facilitator, and active mediator. He argues that PSM is obligated to explicitly focus on, and interact with, the public because value is experienced and can only be jointly created.

This first section ends with a chapter from Charles Brown and Peter Goodwin who use value chain analysis (drawing on Michael Porter) to demonstrate what is already changing in the production of value when comparing the historic PSB value chain with the emerging contemporary value chain in PSM. The public service ethos remains foundational and at the same time opens opportunities for revamping how components that comprise the value chain are being operationalised to accommodate increasing public participation.

Section two: Audiences and accountability

Section two begins with four chapters at the heart of the matter with regard to roles, identities, and practices characterising audiences today. The insights are highly relevant to our discussion of the public in public service media.

Uwe Hasebrink leads off with a conceptual framework under development at the Hans Bredow Institute this decade. He applies the “repertoire-oriented approach” to the analysis of PSM audiences, relying on secondary analyses of audience data from Germany between 1980 and 2005. The analyses are focussed on how audiences combine media to indicate patterns of use and perception. This approach captures nuances that are essential for improved understanding of media’s roles and functions in social life, with obvious implications for strategic planning.

Andra Leurdijk and Matthijs Leendertse continue the assessment of audience behaviours in exploring how PSM companies have responded to – and often led – media innovation in European television. They assess the development of thematic TV channels, interactive TV, on-demand and time-shifted TV, and web 2.0 online video sites in three counties: Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. By confronting assumptions about audiences with empirical data on audience behaviours they demonstrate that TV use is both more complex and more traditional than often thought.

These chapters lay the groundwork, in a sense, for the two that follow. In chapter ten Lizzie Jackson investigates how the BBC in Britain and NPR in the USA are dealing with the challenges of accommodating participating publics online and in on-air programming. Drawing on sociable media theory, she illustrates how and why mediation by professional personae is just as important in the new media paradigm as in the broadcasting paradigm.

In her chapter, Irene Costera-Meijer reports on research comparing quality in public television from the perspectives of both audiences and practitioners in the Netherlands. Theoretical discussion addresses discrepancies in understandings about ‘quality television’ to highlight changes in perceptions keyed

to experiences in media consumption. This grounds her argument that good taste is increasingly about 'tasting good'. The empirical findings provide a useful assessment of the gap between what people say they value in quality television and why they watch less of it – i.e. the gap between media values and media behaviours.

Hans J. Kleinsteuber shifts the focus from audience behaviours and patterns in media use to offer a critical assessment of institutions that are supposed to act on their behalf in guaranteeing the accountability of PSM companies. His critical assessment of Germany's history with broadcasting councils shows how and why these have not typically been very effective or responsive, despite the fact that it is a very good idea in principle. The chapter assesses a number of proposals for strengthening their position by making their activities more transparent and their agency more accountable. His analysis has wider implications for efforts in many places today to create independent supervisory mechanisms for PSM.

Alessandro D'Arma, Gunn Sara Enli and Jeanette Steemers discuss how public service media companies are redefining their engagement with children in multichannel television and online interactive media. Taking three public service media cases, NRK (Norway), RAI (Italy) and the BBC (Britain), this chapter shows that all three organisations have expanded activities for children on digital platforms, most notably by launching dedicated digital TV channels and expanding online provision of audiovisual and interactive content. Beyond these common strategic features, however, it is clear that each organisation differs in its ability to serve children in ways that mark their content and services out as both distinctive and popular. The chapter usefully addresses issues raised by participatory and interactive services online regarding their strategic importance for the future.

In chapter thirteen Maria Norbäck reports on her research about how the Swedish public service broadcaster, SVT, produces programmes in collaboration with independent producers and external financiers. This is a topic of increasing relevance given that most PSM companies today are either legally mandated or operationally dependent (due to declining resources), or both, to commission public service programming from commercial companies. The chapter deals with issues regarding the locus of control over work processes and content profile, as well as the struggle over property rights.

In the closing chapter Alan G. Stavitsky and Michael W. Huntsberger provide a useful assessment of public broadcasting in the United States that makes a viable case for lessons that should be learned for European PSB. Public broadcasting in the USA operates with very limited public funding and a highly localised organization and orientation. Since the 1980s, American public radio (in particular for their treatment) has necessarily focussed on the interdependence of services with audiences because public broadcasters have been forced to rely increasingly on listener contributions and programme underwriters for financial sustenance. The public has long had a very different role in American PSB for that reason. As the authors demonstrate, there have been essential positives in

this development. It becomes clear in the reading that trends and dynamics in Europe today make the American experience increasingly relevant.

All these authors agree that the degree to which PSB remains viable, and the extent to which the development of PSM will be encouraged or inhibited, depends on genuine interaction with the public who is paying the bills and using their services, and further on what these companies do with the information, knowledge, and relations developed as outcomes of interaction. To an important degree the challenge of public participation tests the permanence of this social institution in the 21st century. Although there are risks, failing to take them arguably creates an even greater risk because without testing its genuineness the institution cannot be proven, and without proof it will be increasingly difficult to both defend and develop organisations entrusted with fulfilling the orientation.

The research reported here certainly demonstrates that taking decisions to establish relationships with an involved public requires an active process and proactive practices. To build relationships with their publics PSM firms must accept the vulnerability created by such interdependence. The data and argumentation suggest that is worthwhile because to change peoples' minds about PSB requires first changing PSB minds about audiences. In this it is vital to understand that partnership with the public is not only a rhetorical courtship – it is a practical relationship that requires hard work, persistent effort, keeping promises, making sacrifices, and rather a lot of old-fashioned humility. This fourth RIPE Reader makes a case for seizing on the *public in public service media* as foundational for the strategic development of the enterprise.

Notes

1. The programmes and substance of RIPE conferences can be accessed at a University of Tampere website: <http://www.uta.fi/jour/ripe/2008/>. Look under the menu heading, About RIPE for archives. To investigate RIPE Readers published by the Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research (NORDICOM) visit their website: http://www.nordicom.gu.se/eng.php?portal=publ&main=publ_search.php&search=Alla%20Publikationer&me=13. The three Readers published earlier were edited respectively by Lowe and Hujanen (2003), Lowe and Jauert (2005), and Lowe and Bardoel (2007). See references for citations.
2. A planning group consisting mostly of academicians formulated the title, but that work was done in alignment with interests articulated by ZDF as the practitioner sponsor.
3. It is however unclear how much of Flickr's growth is the result of new postings versus "bumped images" (changing the upload date of already posted photos).
4. Things may not be as straightforward as this implies in light of recent protests over election fraud in Iran and given social interest groups using Facebook as a platform in efforts to organise support for causes.
5. See Lowe's (2008a) report and related documents at the Council of Europe website, especially CoE (2009) cited in the references.
6. Certainly there are exceptions even in Western Europe, particularly Spain and Portugal due to decades of dictatorship – a commonality with central and eastern European countries where whatever counts as PSB, and this varies in 'authenticity', is rooted in the state broadcasting of the Soviet occupation (see Jakubowicz 2005).

7. As Colin Sparks (2009) has noted, national identification is evident in the titled formulations for most flagship broadcasting companies, public and private alike: e.g. the American Broadcasting Company, The Australian Broadcasting Company, the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Canadian Broadcasting Company, Corporación de Radio y Televisión Española, Radio Audizioni Italiane, Svergies Radio, Zweites Deutsches Fernsehse, etc. Finland is the exception as Yleisradio says nothing about national origin, other than the language of course.
8. For references and discussion about cultural citizenship see the book edited by Sonia Livingstone cited here and also the introductory chapter by Jauert and Lowe in the 2005 RIPE Reader, also cited in references.

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Trends and Theorisation

The Public's Choice

How Deregulation, Commercialisation and Media Concentration Could Strengthen Public Service Media

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The *concept* of public service broadcasting has lately been framed in both public and scientific debates as eroding, collapsing and all but vanishing. In practice public service media [PSM] are still performing quite strongly in most audience markets, although public support has weakened nearly everywhere. License fee payments require continual legitimisation and the massive influx of 'free media' (private commercial television, corporate online media, free newspapers) in Europe has given fresh impetus for questioning the license fee system. Despite challenges, international meta-trends in public communication development indicate a growing need to maintain the concept of public service media, even when and where the practice requires change.

In this chapter I argue that significant media trends may eventually strengthen the position of public service media. Commercialisation, deregulation, internationalisation, media concentration, convergence, and Web 2.0 (social networks and user generated content) are meta-trends likely to widen the gap between political logic and media logic. These trends strengthen the power of big corporate media and enable them to distance themselves from democratic power structures and the public at large. Private commercial and internationalised mass media thereby erode their relevance to national policy institutions and processes. Consequently, the relevance of public service media for the democratic process and policy discourse arguably increases.

Three meta-trends and social change

Cumulative changes in public communication do not suggest a brilliant future for public service media. Three meta-trends are especially powerful here: governance trends, technology trends, and media consumption trends. Each will be treated in turn.

Governance trends

Since the 1980s most European countries have liberalised broadcasting markets to the extent that private operators have increasing freedom to run media as businesses while public service broadcasters have faced increasing restrictions including limits on advertising time, budgetary contraction and barriers on expansion into new fields of public communication, especially the internet. As a result, media organisations are today far more governed by commercial logic and imperatives than twenty years ago, and less accountable to society than to shareholders and owners. Strict application of media concentration rules has been the exception rather than the rule and many media companies have expanded across borders, particularly into Central and Eastern Europe. Media companies from Western Europe are today market leaders in Bulgaria, Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary (Trappel 2008: 143). The public interest as the guiding principle for media policy and system development is no longer predominant. The frame of reference has become transnational for corporations, even if media products remain rooted in national, regional and local cultures (Tunstall 2008).

PSM sits uncomfortably in this setting of liberalisation, de- and re-regulation as well as de-nationalisation. National by nature and non-profit in principle, PSM cannot easily follow trend paths in the development of media industries. While commercial competitors advance, PSM suffers restricted options for re-invention in response.

Technology trends

The transition from analogue media to digital media has dominated the debate this decade. Although media companies have largely mastered this transition, the social effects are not yet entirely clear. But as expected digitisation has ushered in a fundamental re-organisation of internal production processes along the value chain of each mass medium. Print and broadcast media have digitised production processes and are confronted with growing demands for hardware and software upgrades and a broad range of new logistic challenges.

Less expected was the emergence of new mass media based entirely on internet distribution. As frequently observed, the internet infrastructure blurs traditional boundaries between mass communication and interpersonal communication (e.g. van Dijk 2004). Most intriguing is the emergence of new public, semi-public and private spaces for communication with little reference to boundaries of time and space. Social networks such as Facebook, the whole blogosphere, internet fora, Second Life, and other forms of computer-aided communication, enable citizens to bypass traditional mass media. One of the main functions of mass media is at stake: Groups of citizens can communicate without the interpretation that journalism has long provided. Digital technology and smart applications pioneered new communication spaces.

This runs counter to much in PSM tradition which is rooted in PSB, where the concept rests in part on facilitating the transformation of collected information into collective knowledge. Gregory F. Lowe has suggested that dialogue, debate and deliberation are three core ingredients of the European mediated public sphere and pointed to the outstanding role of PSM here, both in its capacity to mediate in the interests of representative and participatory democracy (2008: 8). Public service broadcasting has been a major source of social interpretation for news and events in much of Europe, especially west Europe. Together with the press, PSM created an authoritative public space for deliberation. Internet-based online media produced largely by corporate media organisations replicate this communication model in a new public arena. PSM became part of this expansion despite political and competition-related efforts to keep them out (Trappel 2008b). The greater challenge is the creation of links between corporate media and internet-based participatory social networks. While private media industries set up or bought up brands, such as MySpace by News Corp. in 2005 and Germany's StudiVZ by the publisher Holtzbrinck in 2007. PSM lacks such entrepreneurial flexibility in many places.

Media consumption trends

The shift in media consumption from PSM programmes to other forms of mass communication, including growing media abstinence in some segments of society, is today the most pointed challenge. Although the press as well as private commercial television is faced with similar trends, their business models allow the full range of managerial instruments. In contrast, PSM must maintain a high quality level and, typically, 'universal service' to justify its public finance. To take an example from Switzerland: The country's second largest publishing company, Tamedia in Zurich, suffers – like other paid newspapers – from a continuous erosion in the number of copies printed for their flagship daily *Tages-Anzeiger*. In parallel, the daily free-sheet, *20 Minuten*, increasing its circulation and advertising generated turn-over spectacularly. Tamedia reacted by acquiring this successful rival in 2003. Since then, Tamedia profits from growing cash flows generated by *20 Minuten* compensating ongoing circulation losses in the paid newspaper. If necessary, Tamedia is free to lower the quality level of its paid newspaper, to cut costs in newsrooms, and to search for other potentially profitable markets, including online media.

In fact, all of this has already happened. In August 2008 Tamedia launched its online news portal by creating Switzerland's largest online newsroom (*Newsnetz*). In May 2009, Tamedia dismissed 80 journalists from its paid-for daily newspapers, representing one-third of the journalistic staff. The Swiss public service broadcaster, in contrast, has no such opportunities to compensate audience losses, which are especially evident among younger viewers. As elsewhere in Europe, expansion towards online media is being limited by regulation and meets strong resistance from the publishers' lobby. Purchase of competing television channels is equally impossible; dismissing journalists

is politically sensitive and considered inopportune. Clearly PSM's room to manoeuvre is far more constrained.

Arising from these reflexions is the fundamental question as to whether PSM as a model for organising public communication – or, as Trine Syvertsen put it, as “communication structures that are accountable to neither the market nor the state but to the public at large” (2003: 158) – is very future-proof? Do the meta-trends in society and mass media work against the concept of public service media? Is there room for PSM within the multiplicity of new communication cultures arising from the emergence of the internet?

I agree there is little reason for a “chorus intoning the last rites for public broadcasting” as Graham Murdock put it (2005: 213). I share Murdock's argument that “pessimism is misplaced and that Public Service Broadcasting is a project whose time has finally come both philosophically and practically” because, as he observed, “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” (ibid).

The argument in this chapter is based on a comparative view of the performance of three dominant types of public communication and their possibility to deliver what the public in contemporary democracies requires. We will see that among these media types only PSM fulfils *all* the requirements. Given that a stable and uncompromised importance of a shared modality to organise public life is fundamental to democracy, PSM is best placed as a backbone of public communication in electronic media.

The public in contemporary democracy

Contemporary democracy and mass media are interdependent. Mass media furnish the link between those who govern and those who are governed, and in turn need democracy because it respects freedom of speech and separation between media and state. Democracy needs the media to disseminate ideas and – most essentially – to inform voters about choices. In contemporary democracies the media have three functions: They should 1) safe-guard the flow of information; 2) provide a forum for public discussion about political ideas; and 3) act as a public watchdog against the abuse of power (Strömbäck 2005: 332). “At a time when most people rely on media for information, and when political actors have to adapt to media logic it is reasonable to expect that they [democratic concepts] also pose different normative obligations upon media” (ibid: 333).

The minimalist perspective is basic to representative democracy, which supposes that every political system be ruled by political elites capable of making public decisions and protecting individual liberty. In this view the broad public has neither adequate ability nor keen interest to govern itself. Citizens choose by election their representatives to govern for predefined periods. In *elitist de-*

mocracy the essential requirement of media is to provide reliable information because people need information and knowledge about issues and actors to make properly informed choices between competing political elites.

In *participatory democracies*, in contrast, a strong ethos of political equality and tolerance plays a crucial role. Democracy is sustained by involved citizens: "The more people are politically interested, the more they engage in associations and civic organisations, the more they vote, the more they develop attitudes and norms of generalized reciprocity, the better" (ibid: 336). In this view democracy can't be built or sustained by elected elites alone. It requires the on-going engagement of many people acting as citizens. Citizens act directly as a collective that aims for the common good. This concept of democracy can be traced back to the classical Athenian model (Held 2006: 11-28) which implies ideals of direct democracy (ibid: 96-122; Schmidt 2000: 165-174). In participatory democracies media should frame politics as an arena open for every citizen to mobilise people's interest, engagement and participation in public life.

Deliberative democracy can be understood as an extension of participatory democracy. The core idea is that the notion "includes collective decision-making with the participation of all who will be affected by the decision or their representatives: this is the democratic part. Also, all agree that it includes decision making by means of arguments offered by and to participants who are committed to the values of rationality and impartiality: this is the deliberative part" (Elster 1998: 8). Citizens need opportunities to deal more profoundly with political issues in deliberative ways. Ideally, deliberative discussions should be part of daily life and decision-making at all levels of society. Deliberative democracy asks the media to mobilise people in the political process and to provide factual information as well as frames for interpretation. The three models need be assessed in relation to three fundamental principles applicable to democracy in general and universal terms.

Three fundamental principles

In an attempt to measure the performance of the media for democracy, three fundamental principles (or dimensions) have been identified (Trappel and Maniglio 2009). They correspond to three prototypical aspects for democracy: *freedom*, *equality* and *control*. These originated in the Age of Enlightenment and the great democratic revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. They are three principles that democrats across time and place have struggled for, and which characterise the development of modern states (Schulz 2000: 1).

Freedom consists of three types of rights: political, civil, and social (or socio-economic) rights. These rights are based on the idea of a people's freedom to act (freedom of opinion, freedom of association, freedom of information, etc) independently and with self-determination in political, economic, social and cultural terms. These principles have been referred to as negative press freedom rights due to absence of political prohibitions against them (Picard 1985: 48). "Over time, the list of negative freedom rights has grown and the protection

and guarantee of these rights have become one of the minimal conditions for democratic regimes.” (Bühlmann, Merkel and Wessels 2007: 8). Beyond this protection, conditions must be created to ensure that people are able to develop freely and live a self-determined life. From this perspective, political liberties are seen as preconditions for citizens to actively influence political decisions. This implies that the state must protect freedom rights (Lauth 2004: 77).

Freedom as a principle in civil society has often been defined in terms of communication rights to hold opinions and to receive and impart information. Sarcinelli (1995: 241) provides a useful example: “Political communication in democracy is connected with the idea of freedom. Freedom of expression and opinion building as individual basic rights, and as institutional guarantees for an independent media system, are part of very core of democracy, and they are constituent for a democratic order *per se*” (translation J.T.). In this view, freedom of expression is a crucial individual right as well as an indispensable social good. It is from freedom as a principle in civil society that we derive the *information function* of media. Media fulfil this function by collecting and processing volumes of information and distributing this to all participants in a political process (Voltmer 1999: 13).

Equality in political terms posits the equal status of all citizens before the law and in political process. Thus, equality means equal treatment of all citizens by the state, and equal rights to participate in politics – i.e. all citizens’ preferences have the same weight in political decisions (Dahl 2006: 4).

When applied to mass media equality must be translated into more specific terms, equality “is connected with public communication in less direct, but no less crucial ways” (McQuail 1992: 67). In relation to communication and political power, it is equality, which demands that no favour be given to power-holders and that media access should be provided on a fair basis to oppositional or deviant opinions. Equality calls for an absence of discrimination in the amount *or* bias in the kind of access available on channels for all alternative voices, so far as practicable. “If we suppose there to be a ‘right to communicate’, then we also suppose an equal claim for all to hear and be heard” (ibid: 67). The media’s communication function following from the principle of equality is variously termed public opinion-making, the forum function, and public mediation. Mass media as public fora are expected to represent the whole range of political perspectives and to give fair access to all political actors who aim at addressing the public (Voltmer 2000: 3). This public mediation between different opinions, social groups and vested interests becomes more important in the deliberative democracy prototype. When collectively-binding decisions are negotiated rather than imposed, the mass media contribute substantially to this process.

Control is essential for any form of democracy and its political institutions. This principle demands that citizens exercise control over their representatives in government in order to secure their own freedom and equality: “[I]n a good democracy the citizens themselves have the sovereign power to evaluate whether the government provides liberty and equality according to the rule

of law” (Diamond and Morlino 2004: 4). This also implies that citizens, their civil organizations and political parties participate and compete to hold elected officials accountable for their policies and actions. Moreover, they monitor the efficiency and fairness of the application of laws, as well as the efficacy of government decisions.

Mass media should act on behalf of the public as watchdogs holding government officials accountable (Norris 2000: 28). Here mass media act as an independent, fair and impartial critic of powerful interests to inform citizens about abuses of both political and economic power. This implies that mass media should go beyond the provision of information. Liberal authors consider the watchdog function as even more important than the information function. As Kelley and Donway (1990: 70) argued:

We have distinguished two political roles of free press in classical liberalism: the watchdog and the democratic [i.e. information] functions. And we noted that for advocates of limited government, the first is by far the more important [...]. The implication of this priority is that even if, contrary to all the evidence we have cited, the government could use its power effectively to strengthen the democratic [i.e. information] function, it would not be justified in doing so at the cost of the watchdog function (quoted by Voltmer 1999: 30).

To sum up: The functions of media and communication processes must coincide to promote fundamental democratic principles as 1) a guardian of the flow of information, 2) a public forum for public discussion of diverse, often conflicting political ideas, and 3) a public watchdog against the abuse of all sorts of power. These functions have been identified separately, but they are interconnected and overlapping in practice.

Who, then, is best placed to deliver the functions?

In his normative model Splichal suggested several criteria to distinguish authoritarian from commercial and public service media as ideal types (2007: 252). He classified commercial media as being subordinate to property rights, while public service media are related to civil (natural) rights. The dominant form of social relationship in commercial media is competition, while in public service media it is co-operation. Access to public communication is property-restricted in the case of commercial media but open in the case of public service media. While Splichal includes several other models in his analysis, he did not refer to the latest addition to the media field – the participatory and interactive online media such as weblogs and other forms of internet-based communication.

These media are not necessarily public by nature, but they may become public occasionally and may impact both commercial media and PSM. Boundaries between public and interpersonal communication are blurred. From the perspective of radical democrats these new forms of communication hold

important promise. Non-corporate online media enable citizens to exchange views, opinions and news without interference by the agents of capital. Counter-publics can establish themselves. “Clearly the universe of counter-publics has changed considerably as a consequence of the Internet as it provides a relatively low-cost means of disseminating counter-publicity and of making contacts and alliances between geographically dispersed groups” (Downey 2007: 117). Applying Splichal’s classification to these participatory online media, they can be characterised as subordinate to civil (natural) rights, their dominant form of social relationship is egalitarian, and access is limited only by computer literacy and internet connection.

Table 1. Media types and democratic performance

<i>Prototype</i>		<i>Media Type</i>		
		Commercial media	Public service media	Participatory media
Democratic Requirements	Information/Freedom	full access to information; high level of professionalism	full access to information; high level of professionalism	restricted access to information; low level of professionalism
	Interest mediation/Equality	self-interest as profit-oriented companies; ownership, advertising	no profit self-interest; less dependent on advertising income;	no profit self-interest, little sustainability, self-exploitation
	Watchdog/Control	high alert towards public power; lower alert towards private corporate power	high alert towards public power; high alert towards private corporate power	high alert towards public power; high alert towards private corporate power

The three democratic requirements (treated above as prototypical aspects) and the three types of communication are integrated in Table 1. Commercial media as well as PSM can be expected to fully exploit their possibilities to provide *information* to the public. Both media types have full access to information. Professional journalism can be expected to research, select and present relevant information. Participatory media, in contrast, may be excluded for news sources as most makers are amateurs and only a very few can devote full-time work and attention to information gathering and presentation. The public value of participatory media rather lies in complementing mainstream news provision with news pieces from the “wisdom of the crowds”. In this respect, participatory media doesn’t really compete with corporate media, but can provide valuable input in the news flow. Anecdotal evidence shows that corporate journalists often inform themselves in the blogosphere and include such information in their coverage.

The dimension of *interest mediation* (equality) shows again some differences: Interest mediation requires a high degree of independence for the mediating agent. Mass media are well placed to provide fora for different interest groups but should not themselves be part of them. Participatory media have little to

no profit related self-interest, while commercial media are always part of the economic setting with varying degrees of dependency on advertising income. Public commercial television and free newspapers (the commuter press) are fully financed by advertising and thus less credible as neutral-interest mediators. PSM, in contrast, can exploit this most significant strength. Typically institutionalised by law but independent from the state, their level of advertising dependency is much lower than for commercial media – in many cases, especially in northern Europe, entirely free of advertising revenue. They are publicly controlled and non-profit-oriented. Their credibility as neutral-interest mediators can be expected to be higher than both other media types. Participatory media, although normally free from commercial and profit interest, consists of a variety of radical subjective perspectives. Individuals and groups express themselves without editorial intervention. They contribute in their entirety to public deliberations but their actors cannot claim neutral-interest mediator status.

The *watchdog (control)* dimension shows that commercial media can be expected to maintain high alertness towards public institutions and public holders of power, but not to exert the same alertness towards private corporate power. Both other media types are expected to keep the same critical distance from centres of public and private corporate power.

Taken together, PSM score highest across the three democratic requirements. Combined, they are least dependent on commercial income, their distance from public and private centres of power is greatest and their status regarding professional journalism is highest. Commercial media have deficits in the dimension of equality / interest mediation while participatory online media have weaknesses in the dimension of information / freedom. Of course the classification assumes 1) that PSM is institutionalised with adequate distance from the state and its Government, 2) has sufficiently independent sources of income and 3) is established in permanence. If these conditions are not met, PSM might not be public service in complexion at all. Similarly, commercial media might enjoy high independence, provided by liberal owners and a high degree of income from product sales and a corresponding low degree of advertising income. Even participatory media might improve their performance by building journalism capacity and professional skills. Therefore and once again, boundaries blur and the model has to be seen as prototypical.

Is the public interested?

These reflexions are based on the further assumption that citizens are interested in public life and want to participate in politics. Unfortunately there are reasons for citizens not to be interested. In Dahlgren's view there are numerous reasons for civic disengagement, ranging from

...a sense of personal powerlessness and despair over one's life circumstances,
to a sense of bitterness of having been abandoned or betrayed by political

elites. (...) Many people simply do not have enough time and energy as a result of stressful life circumstances; people can find it difficult to manage work life (or unemployment), leisure, and the role of citizen. Moreover, these factors interplay with a dominant culture that emphasizes consumption and promote in various ways a retreat from the public sphere into depoliticized enclaves (2007: 56).

But there are equally good reasons to argue that at least a considerable portion of society is interested in public life and requires services from media to participate as informed citizens. Personal and occupational objectives might only be reached when people defend their causes; political issues might be physically close or affect one's personal life (e.g. public vs. private transportation). Civil society groups are built around issues that affect many people (such as the natural environment, health care and education). Whenever people get involved in civic engagement, a higher level of information is needed to participate in deliberations.

However, large parts of Europe have experienced quite the opposite over the last decade – an erosion of quality news and the rise of the news-byte provided by corporate online media and free sheets in metropolitan areas in many major cities. Corporate online media and free newspapers cultivate journalism that is short, immediate, less researched, under-resourced, and with little emphasis on comments and opinion-making. Brants listed the most obvious threats and problems: “the indolence of ‘copying and pasting’, the difficulties with checking reliability of sources and posts, copyright issues in hyperlinks, the lack of an online culture of correcting mistakes, the lack of a professional sense of social responsibility and accompanying values and codes, and regular updating running the risk of hyping and diminished accuracy” (Brants 2007: 117).

Informed citizens who want to participate in democratic deliberations require different news. This represents a fair chance for PSM which, as argued here, are best positioned to deliver all that contemporary democracy requires from its media system. Many PSM organisations have strong links with civil society. Some entertain viewers' and listeners' councils (e.g. German and British PSM), others are organised as trusts with members of the civil society as trustees (e.g. Austrian PSM). Swiss (and Dutch) public service broadcasting is owned by associations, built up by members from civil society. Each association recruits members from varied layers of society who then elect among themselves their regional board members who finally represent the Swiss people in the national Board. Thus, PSM are well placed both at the professional journalistic level to fulfil democratic requirements and also at the organisational level, which is closer to the people than corporate media.

Apart from such formalised ways of citizen involvement in PSM institutions, there is however generally little experience with citizens' input. Traditionally public service broadcasting is produced centrally by large organisations with little direct connection to civil society at large. The public has not been represented except in abstract data about daily reach and market share. PSB did not

acknowledge the need to go much further, except when useful to also assess satisfaction levels. It was the exception rather than the rule for PSB companies to open their doors for representatives of civil society, other than as interviewees or talk show guests. This attitude may be gradually changing – but there is certainly a long way to go before one could fairly speak of any robust public involvement in public service media.

But the internet enables all media to engage the public with immediate responses – in communication, in short. This is of particular relevance for PSM given the ethos that grounds its legitimacy. This remains, however, more a matter of potential than practice and development here is important. A new quality of citizen involvement should be systematically explored by PSM, which is also in these companies' self interest given that such participation will contribute to deepening the social legitimacy of PSM as an institution. Further, it should be recognised that involvement and participation is not only an individual task but one for social collectives. PSM can play a vital role in helping activate citizens and groups of citizens to participate in democratic discourses and thereby construct meaning and cultivate "democratic preferment in both attitude and practice" (Lowe 2008: 38).

Conclusions

Changes in society and in the media landscape do not favour PSM at first sight. Commercialisation, media concentration and deregulation have weakened their positions in most European countries, and probably worldwide. They seem out of step in a world where the speed of information trumps accuracy and where corporate interests prevail over the public interest. News and information changes originate in the personalised internet realm rather than in large and sometimes inflexible public institutions.

Nonetheless, democratic societies depend on an active citizenry participating in public life. Public issues concern people who are interested in reaching personal objectives or common goals. These active groups in democratic societies require media services that go beyond what commercial and participatory online media are able to deliver. PSM is best placed to respond to these needs and demands. Information, interest mediation and watchdog control are public service virtues that are more and more neglected by other types of mass media. Internet related forms of public communication can only partially fulfil democratic requirements.

Clearly this perspective does not embrace society as a whole. Not all citizens are motivated to participate in public life. But well researched and presented news and other forms of information that correspond with democratic requirements might attract attention beyond the politically savvy parts of society. In stark contrast to new forms of journalism, PSM might experience a revival – even perhaps a renaissance – as providers of information relevant for contemporary democracies. The meta-trends discussed in this chapter suggest that PSM would

gain importance as a still vital and relevant alternative to conglomerated commercial media as well as semi-professional participatory online media.

Note

1. The author thanks Tanja Maniglio for her valuable contributions.

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From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Communication

Richard Collins

We live in an age of communication technologies. It should be easier than it used to be to check out strangers and institutions, to test credentials, to authenticate sources, and to place trust with discrimination. But unfortunately many of the new ways of communicating don't offer adequate, let alone easy, ways of doing so. The new information technologies are ideal for spreading reliable information, but they dislocate our ordinary ways of judging one another's claims and deciding where to place our trust (O'Neill 2002: not paginated).¹

Technological and regulatory change has effectively removed the entry barriers to provision of broadcasting, and broadcasting like services. This puts in question the competitive position of public service broadcasters and the very institutional form of public service broadcasting [PSB] through which social goals, (whether social control, fostering of national communities or securing public goods such as universal provision, diversity and quality in programming etc), were historically to be realised. New entrants both worsen the established position of the psb incumbents and provide alternative institutional means of realising social goals. The first wave of change came with cable and broadcasting satellites in the 1980s and 1990s and latterly a second, and probably more powerful, wave of change has been fuelled by the internet.²

Scepticism about the institution of public service broadcasting has been amplified by public service broadcasters' own actions. To varying degrees, they have sought to maintain their claim on public finance by maximising audience 'reach'. This has meant mimicking the strategies of commercial competitors, to the effect that the "inform and educate" elements of the classical Reithian triad have been marginalised by the imperative to "entertain". Public service broadcasters' strategy has been premised on the belief that should significant numbers of viewers and listeners cease to use PSB services, then licence fee funding (essentially, a regressive tax to which all who watch television are liable) will lose legitimacy. The BBC has followed commercial broadcasters. As their public service performance has waned so have the BBC's schedules

more and more resembled its commercial competitors' – in some cases to the point of absurdity, as in the simulcasting of World Cup soccer by the BBC and its main rival! But this 'dumbing down' of PSB compromises the legitimacy of public service broadcasters' claim on public resources as legitimacy diminishes in proportion as they mimic commercial rivals' programmes and strategies. The internet intensifies competitive pressures by reducing both consumption of broadcasting, as more time is spent on internet use (see Dutton and Helsper 2007), and broadcasters' revenues (as advertising migrates to the internet). Though the BBC is not directly affected by changes in the advertising market as commercial PSB firms' advertising income has fallen so their claims for a "top-sliced" share of the BBC licence fee have grown.

I argue both that public service broadcasters' legitimacy has declined as they have retreated from their public service vocation and also that internet based content providers potentially offer opportunities, (with "proof of concept" being provided by some, albeit fragile, actual providers), to extend, pluralise and deepen provision of public service content beyond what public service broadcasters provide. Moreover, some Web 2.0 internet applications provide a "dialogic"³ basis for provision of public service content different from and superior to that of established one-to-many public service broadcasting. Technical change thus threatens established providers of public service content, the PSBs, and provides opportunities for new providers who, potentially, are not only able to mitigate the decline in media pluralism which has pre-occupied policy makers and analysts but also build on new ways of engaging with the public and augmenting trust and trustworthiness in public media and content.

Dumbing down and declining trustworthiness

The belief that the BBC has dumbled down was given public credence by the current Director General, Mark Thompson, when Head of BBC Television in a celebrated speech at the Banff Television Festival (Thompson 2000). Yet the tendency for the BBC's programming to mimic its commercial rivals has persisted. The convergence of PSB programming and scheduling convergence with commercial rivals in the UK has been echoed in behavioural patterns, evident in product placement scandals, competition rigging, and offensive behaviour by some performers. Such behaviour has eroded distinctions between public and commercial broadcasters – and public trust in *PSB as an institution*. Trust and trustworthiness are not of course the same, but there is evidence of a decline in both.

In respect of trustworthiness, the action (in July 2008) of Ofcom, the UK regulator of electronic communications, in fining the BBC £400,000 for eight separate breaches of the Ofcom programme codes is an outstanding case in point. Ofcom commented, "In each of these cases the BBC deceived its audience by faking winners of competitions and deliberately conducting competitions unfairly" (see Ofcom 2008b). A year earlier, Ofcom had fined the BBC £50,000

for falsifying the results of a competition on the iconic children's programme *Blue Peter*⁴. Ofcom had also fined the UK's commercial PSB channels: in December 2007 Channel 4 was fined £1.5m and Ofcom had previously fined Five £300,000; it had also fined GMTV, the advertising financed and formally public service broadcaster £2m. And the largest advertising funded for-profit public service broadcaster, ITV, was fined £5.68m for misconduct in conducting 'phone in' competitions (see Ofcom 2008c). These adverse judgements on the trustworthiness of each and everyone (the tiny S4C excepted) of the UK's public service broadcasters, accounting for between 50% and 60% of both radio and television consumption, of course followed the Hutton Report⁵ of 2004 which found the BBC's editorial procedures "defective"⁶.

This *prima facie* evidence of the falling trustworthiness of psbs has been accompanied by a commensurate loss of public trust, though it is hard to be fully confident about this judgement since evidence (often provided by interested parties) is incomplete and longitudinal studies not fully commensurable. Poll findings point in different directions: in 2009 77% of those polled thought the BBC an institution to be proud of (see Freedland 2009) while Ofcom found that "Asked whether they think the BBC is more likely to tell the truth than its rivals, only 37% agree. A clear majority of viewers and listeners – 58% – said they thought that there was no difference between the BBC and other channels" (Glover 2007).

The internet – threat and opportunity

Although varying in intensity and extent from country to country, the crisis in public service broadcasting is based on two general factors: 1) PSB firms are experiencing (in varying degrees) intensified competition, chiefly deriving from increased internet penetration and use, and 2) a loss of legitimacy on their claims to special treatment caused both by the effects of competition and by their (mis)behaviour.

The internet as the pre-eminent new medium of communication has begun to replace established 'legacy' (mainstream) media because, as Kevin Werbach presciently observed, "The Internet is substitutable for all existing media" (Werbach 1997: 1). In an earlier RIPE reader Lowe and Hujanen contended that "broadcasting must not be marginalized in the convergence debate" (Lowe and Hujanen 2003: 10). Here I propose that broadcasting *should* be marginalised and for two reasons. First, because the excessive salience given to broadcasting in contemporary media policy debate blocks recognition that non-broadcast media and non-broadcast public service content providers – in shorthand the Internet – can mitigate problems that have been found intractable when considered only within an institutional framework centred on broadcasting. Second, a broadcasting centred myopia also blocks recognition of the public service achievements and potential of non-broadcast media. What's needed is a radical shift in mentality – one that ceases to fetishise the traditional PSB

and acknowledges the achievement and potential of the internet for delivery of public services and contents. This change in mentality would mark the beginning of what Chris Freeman, a leader in innovation studies and theory (Freeman 1994 and 2008), has called a new “techno-economic paradigm”.

Freeman argued that technological innovation proceeds in analytically distinguishable stages: incremental, radical, establishment of new technological systems and, finally, a change in the dominant techno-economic paradigm. He further posits that socio-institutional mentality characteristically lags behind technological potentiality. One of Freeman’s most celebrated followers, Carlota Perez,⁷ stated the matter thus:

The existing framework, created to handle growth based on the previous set of technologies, is unsuited to the new one. Thus, in the first decades of installation of the new industries and infrastructures, there is an increasing mismatch between the techno-economic and the socio-institutional spheres (Perez 2002: xviii).

Perez herself proposes a history of five successive technological revolutions (Perez 2002: 11) over the last 250 years with an “Age of Information and Telecommunications” beginning in the 1970s as the most recent. Such change is realised in four stages – irruption, frenzy, synergy and maturity (Perez 2002: 57). For her, change depends on the relative strength of different institutional actors – incumbents generally have an interest in delaying innovation and new entrants the reverse⁸. A distinctive feature of the Freeman-Perez argument is the proposition that technological change, effecting a transition whereby the new paradigm becomes “common sense”, depends on “social shaping”, i.e. on institutional factors (see also Castells 1996). As Perez put it: “the institutional setting will influence both the speed and the manner in which innovations are adopted” (Perez 2002: 141). Indeed, Perez’s (2002: 11) exemplification of her fourth “technological revolution” – the “Age of Oil, the Automobile and Mass Production” – by the event the “First Model-T comes out of the Ford plant in Detroit, Michigan”, attests to the importance of institutional and organisational factors, the dawn of the “Age of Oil” was an organisational⁹ as well as a technological event.

The relationship between the internet and legacy media, especially broadcasting, exemplifies Freeman and Perez’s propositions. The internet is a paradigm-changing technology presenting multi-faceted challenges (and opportunities) to established media, and to broadcasting in particular. It has undermined the advertising subsidised business model that has sustained public media in industrialised countries for the past 100 years. As advertising migrates from newspapers and broadcasting to the Web, *eBay* replaces classified advertising, web based recruitment sites supplant newspaper advertisements, and search advertising (e.g. Google) has substituted for much display advertising.

Incumbents experience this structural change negatively because they lose revenues and market share. In broadcasting, historically characterised by scale

and scope economies, the impact is substantial. In the UK this has led to a crisis in the business model, and the public service performance, of advertising funded public service broadcasters – notably ITV, Channel 4 and Five. But they have also put in question the funding of non-advertising financed PSB companies, as the intense current UK debate about “top slicing” the BBC’s licence fee testifies. More fundamentally, the entry of new internet-based providers of public service content, coupled with a decline in time devoted to radio and television by internet users (see Dutton and Helsper 2009: 33), has undermined PSB’s historic claim to exclusivity, or priority, in public funding.

By undermining the advertising subsidised model that has dominated newspaper and broadcasting provision, the internet has, paradoxically, both increased diversity and plurality in the supply of public service content and put in question sustainable supply of authoritative news. Ofcom pointed to these opportunities and threats, actual and potential, in its recent reviews of public service television and of the future of news, *New News Future News* (Ofcom 2007). This report identifies a threat of diminished news coverage:

Without a continuing regulatory requirement for ‘high quality’ (as currently defined in the Communications Act) there may be unavoidable commercial pressures for cheaper, less original journalism – although, to date, commercial news organisations remain highly regarded and continue to win prestigious industry awards (Ofcom 2007: 6).

But Ofcom also identified the promise of the internet in opening news supply to new voices and providers:

There is potential for genuine breadth and depth in news to be delivered in new ways via broadband and other new media sources, although this might not be recognised as ‘television’. The concept of a public service publisher (PSP)¹⁰ may have a role in this (Ofcom 2007: 6).

Just as did an earlier wave of new broadcasting technologies (notably satellite and cable), the internet provides a platform that enables, if not always with unqualified success, new entrants to enter hitherto protected broadcasting markets (see, *inter alia*, *Hulu* at www.hulu.com and *Joost* at www.joost.com). No less important, non-broadcasting services (ranging from *Facebook* to *Cricinfo*) may substitute for broadcasting in users’ time budgets (although available data suggests some unevenness in this process). Ofcom reported that in all of the six countries on which it reported extensively (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, UK, USA) there was a significant increase in time spent on the internet in the period between 2004–2008 (Ofcom 2008: 126). Increases ranged from an annual, year-on-year cumulative increase of 6% in the USA to 21% in the UK.

The internet and legacy media

Ofcom's research suggests that the internet has reduced consumption of legacy media, although its effect varies significantly from country to country and from medium to medium. Dutton and Helsper succinctly capture this finding:

The impact of the Internet on legacy UK media has been twofold, Internet users consume less television and radio and read fewer newspapers than do non-users (Dutton and Helsper 2007: 24 see also Dutton and Helsper 2009 for current UK data¹¹).

These trends have had a striking impact on the UK's three advertising financed PSB companies, ITV¹², Channel 4 and Five. Data in the public domain is better for ITV than for the other two – ITV's share price fell from 105p per share in January 2007 to 27p in mid May 2009 (recovering to 39p at the end of May 2009). As the *Financial Times* observed:

These are extraordinary times for ITV. "The economic outlook has worsened significantly since the summer and businesses right across the UK, including most of our customers, are facing considerable uncertainty", John Cresswell, chief operating officer, wrote to his staff. "Analysts' current consensus is that total television advertising is expected to be down by around 5 per cent in 2008, and by 6 to 7 per cent in 2009. The need for action is therefore urgent. We need to accelerate our plans to improve the efficiency of all our operations now" (Fenton 2008).

The changes to the broadcast advertising market that stem from the internet have not yet had so marked a direct effect on the UK's largest PSB firm, the BBC, nor on the few – but growing¹³ – number of psbs elsewhere that are free of advertising funding. Indeed, the BBC currently enjoys a *guaranteed growth* in its licence fee revenues of approximately 12% from 2007-2012. However the BBC's financial security may be thought too much of a good thing. The combination of crisis in advertising financed PSB and the BBC's growth in funding has given rise to increasingly strong claims for re-distribution of licence fee¹⁴ ("top-slicing") funding to broadcasters (or, in less technology bound versions, public service content providers) other than the BBC.

The current situation of a cash rich BBC with other public service content providers under financial pressure, neatly bears out Ofcom's predictions in its 2004 review of public service broadcasting. Ofcom referred to "monopoly provision from what would, in those circumstances, be an increasingly isolated BBC" (Ofcom 2004a: 4) and proposed seizing the opportunities to enhance and encourage provision of public service content via the internet by establishing a "Public Service Publisher" (see Ofcom 2004: 81-84 and Ofcom 2004b). Ofcom's acknowledgement that public service content is not, and need not

be, exclusively provided by psbs was echoed in the UK government's recent *Digital Britain* report (DCMS/BIS 2009: 135), which stated:

Public service content in Digital Britain now comes from a much wider range of sources than in the analogue age. Public cultural institutions like Tate, the Royal Opera House, the RSC, the Film Council and many other museums, libraries, archives and galleries around the country now reach a wider public online.

Testimony to the potential of the internet to deliver such “disintermediated” public service content was provided by *Fathom*¹⁵, a sadly premature venture which successfully melded content provided and synthesised by leading universities, museums and libraries, but which did not generate revenues sufficient to cover its costs. *Fathom*'s fate, and the precarious condition of surviving web-based providers of public service content, vindicates Ofcom's analysis – the public service potential of the internet is manifest but so too is the need for public support if public service provision is to be sustained.

Web 2.0, dialogue and trustworthiness

Whilst there are undoubtedly more and more potential substitutes for conventional public service broadcasting, the contemporary importance of these substitutes is easy to overestimate. Their share of consumption is small. Their importance lies in their potential – first to enhance pluralism in the supply of public service content via ‘disintermediation’ (enabling content suppliers to reach users directly without broadcaster mediation), thereby extending the range and choice of content available to users, and second by offering a trust enhancing dialogic, interactive form of content production closed to conventional ‘one to many’ broadcasters.

The dialogic and deliberative potential of 2.0 internet applications has been realised in a host of instances. *Wikipedia* is probably the best-known example of a site that uses the network effect “to get better the more people use them”¹⁶. At its best this site accelerates and makes more extensive and inclusive the collaborative processes of peer review, critique, factual correction and consensus building that underpin offline scholarship. It has, at least potentially, an intrinsic self-correcting capacity. But at its worst (though this worst seems scarcely different to similarly abusive behaviour offline) *Wikipedia* is prey to systematic falsification and bias¹⁷ but the combination of the Web 2.0 network effect and editorial intervention by *Wikipedia* “illuminati” has established the site as an authoritative and increasingly used resource.

Slashdot, another 2.0 site, provides an outstanding example of how such “participating user relationships” can build trust and authority. *Slashdot.org* was one of the first sites to build trustworthiness through contributors' input. It legitimises content on the site, and builds trust, through the appointment

of contributors as moderators empowered to award “karma” points to other contributors. The level of karma determines the salience of contributors’ postings. Karma scores may (if users of the site so wish) trigger filters enabling readers to exclude postings with low karma from their attention (see <http://slashdot.org/faq/com-mod.shtml#cm600>). *Slashdot* has thus a self regulating and ranking system based on peer review. As Tony Curzon-Price, Chief Editor of *openDemocracy*, a leading UK non-profit interactive news, comment and deliberation site, stated (interview 27.6.2008) “something like this carries over to all successful online communities”.

Another ‘web minnow’ offering an innovative and constructive application of Web 2.0’s interactive potential is *Spot.us*, which provides “community funded reporting”. *Spot.us* is a very new site and may yet prove to have the mayfly longevity of many internet content initiatives. But whether or not it enjoys a decent longevity this site provides journalism that is responsive to its readers’ and users’ demands, and opportunities for journalists to market their proposals for investigation and reporting. It is an exemplary instance of “networked”¹⁸ or “distributed”¹⁹ journalism which is (slowly) changing news consumption, news gathering and editorial practices.

The internet therefore provides a platform for new entrants to the provision of public service content and, more importantly, a platform for the provision of *new kinds* of public service content. In this context the Web 2.0 applications illustrated above, though insignificant in comparison to the weight of established legacy media behemoths such as the BBC, point towards public service media which embody and are strengthened by a distinctive dialogic form of authority and trustworthiness, from which legacy ‘one to many’ mass media are disbarred.

There is no shortage of sceptical voices aroused by Web 2.0 content provision, although there are more sceptical voices than voices representing well-founded scepticism. For example, the UK House of Lords’ Communications Committee Inquiry on the Ownership of the News of 2007/8 elicited the comment from Pierre Le Sourd, the London Bureau Editor for Agence France Presse, that:

We have a written rule inside our company which forbids any journalist from using Wikipedia. We have the same thing, which has been updated last week, for Facebook because there was an incident last week with Bilawal Bhutto in Oxford where some newspaper picked up some pictures on the Facebook site about Mr Bhutto which turned out to be fake (House of Lords 2008: 30)²⁰.

Le Sourd’s statement represents a familiar negative professional journalistic reflex – a reflex grounded in a singular notion of journalistic authority and trustworthiness.

But there is more than one kind of authoritativeness and trustworthiness in information – there are at least two kinds, both of which in different ways rely on peer consensus. The first is biased to a demand-side (Wiki) type of authority that employs user review and dialogue to establish authority (with

a corresponding expectation that authors will revise and amend in the light of convincing peer commentary). The second is biased to a supply-side (Le Sourd) type of authority that derives from authors' status as experts, a status which is in turn based on adherence to proven procedures and practices found to ensure a high level of correspondence between the real world and its representation. Although I distinguish analytically between these two types of authority they are not mutually exclusive and there are many instances of media and information services that authenticate content by combining, in varying degrees, both methods.

Dialogue and the roots of trust and trustworthiness

Recently technological change and the growth of Web 2.0 internet applications have greatly increased the salience of the establishment of demand side authority and authentication systems. These not only claim attention for their empirical salience, but such peer review-based authority and authentication systems conform to the conception of trust (and trustworthiness) identified by the UK philosopher, Onora O'Neill. She has argued (in her Reith Lectures – O'Neill 2002) that trust is grounded in dialogue and face to face contact, that such direct personal contact was the basis of trust in pre-modern societies, and that modernity (the "information age" as she names it) has established social practices and systems where such "dialogic" trust building rhythms and routines have diminished in importance. She states:

When Kings of old tested their daughters' suitors, most communication was face-to-face and two-way: in the information age it is often between strangers and one-way. Socrates worried about the written word, because it travelled beyond the possibility of question and revision, and so beyond trust. We may reasonably worry not only about the written word, but also about broadcast speech, film and television. These technologies are designed for one-way communication with minimal interaction. Those who control and use them may or may not be trustworthy. How are we to check what they tell us? (O'Neill 2002).

She thus images modern communication, that of the "information age", as one-way and attributes two-wayness and interactivity (foundations of trust) as the exclusive prerogative of pre-modern, non-information age, media. This is, as I shall argue below, misleading. But O'Neill's contention has two important kernels of truth. First, that the media of pre-Internet modernity were (and are) largely free of the dialogic, trust building, potentiality that she identifies in pre-modern societies. Second, that dialogue genuinely provides, through mutual checking and verification, possibilities of trust enhancement. The latter proposition potentially provides both a very productive heuristic and a potentially useful norm for policy and practice. For the dialogic capacity is largely absent

(excepting a few mitigating factors such as the readers' letters pages in newspapers, telephone in radio programmes and the occasional viewer response television programmes). What is lacking in traditional one-to-many mass media is potentially strongly present in Web 2.0 online media which offer a dialogic capacity, and thus a potential for engendering trust, that is superior to the one-to-many mass media that form the main object of her attention. This dialogic capacity satisfies the normative criteria implicit in O'Neill's claim that:

Well-placed trust grows out of active inquiry rather than blind acceptance. In traditional relations of trust, active inquiry was usually extended over time by talking and asking questions, by listening and seeing how well claims to know and undertakings to act held up. That was the world in which Socrates placed his trust-and his reservations about publishing. Where we can check the information we receive, and when we can go back to those who put it into circulation, we may gain confidence about placing or refusing trust (O'Neill 2002).

There is no necessary incompatibility between Web 2.0 ("wiki") information generation and authentication systems and use of the procedures that have underpinned successful operations such as the BBC's. Information may be user-generated *and* compiled and produced using procedures deemed likely to engender trustworthiness. Indeed, many sites including *Wikipedia* and *openDemocracy* combine user-generated content with expert editorial origination and amendment of content.

Wikipedia is transparent: readers of all stories can 'go behind' the stories to see the history of their editing, their source and the sources on which contributors have drawn²¹. Moreover, the strength of the Web 2.0 model underpins the growth of "citizen" or "networked" journalism (see *inter alia* Beckett 2008) where both the contributions of non-professional journalists to news gathering and formulation and, crucially, the "wiki" like fact checking and dialogic verification of the output of professional journalists can, Beckett claims, "help the news media address the crisis of trust in journalism as a way of re-building its relevance and authority" (Beckett 2008: 62). True, the trustworthiness of few of these Web 2.0 media is supported by the stringent (albeit fallible) procedural practices of the best legacy media professional journalism (such as those which O'Neill identifies in Reuters' codes – see O'Neill 2002a). But there is no reason why the dialogic legitimization of Web 2.0 content may not be further enhanced through appropriate procedural means – the "moderation" of sites such as *Wikipedia* and *openDemocracy*, imperfect and halting though it may be, suggest how this might be done.

Policy options: the good old psb or the bad new internet?

Freeman and Perez characterised innovation as proceeding by stages. The contemporary internet's impact on broadcasting exhibits aspects of their incremental

and radical stages, with some signs of establishment of a new technological system beginning to firm up. Certainly, mentalities have not kept pace with these transitions – despite the policy salience given to pervasive high-speed affordable connectivity in advanced societies.

The central policy issue is whether to embrace the internet as one of what Brecht called the “bad new things”²² (bad because it disrupts the achievements of established institutions and practices) or instead reject it in favour of, Brecht again, the “good old things”. Embracing the internet offers the *good new things* of potentially enhancing media pluralism, (innovative) new entrants and the possibility of developing the trust building potential of Web 2.0. But its potential remains to be realised and effectively combined with established institutions and established practices of trust building and trustworthiness. Moreover, it threatens disruption of the good old things both because it is a potential competitor for resources (notably the licence fee), historically the exclusive prerogative of established PSB companies and because the Web 2.0 model of authority and trustbuilding challenges the established PSB “habitus”²³ of control and authority which, at best, has underpinned public trust in PSB.

The distinctive European psb tradition (habitus) of balanced and authoritative editorial policy and practice was, however, derived from supply constraints. Returning to our representative case, the BBC was constituted as an independent (within limits!), and thus structurally un-accountable, body to preserve its capacity for balance and editorial authority from interference by self-interested parties (whether government *or* business). Of course, PSB’s empirical record of balance and impartiality is compromised and partial as a host of studies and professional testimonies have demonstrated (for the BBC see, *inter alia*, Cathcart 1984; Reith 1949). But the ideals of independence, disinterestedness and trustworthiness certainly lived in the minds of generations of PSB staff – particularly those working in broadcasting organisations either modelled on or having affinity with the BBC²⁴. And these values contributed to a significant measure of lived and asserted institutional independence (the “*Real Lives*”²⁵ controversy providing but one exemplary case in point), making it possible to consider broadcasting as an element of civil society rather than of business or the state. This PSB habitus is congruent with the ‘one to many’ character of ‘legacy’ broadcasting but is not readily compatible with either the interactive character of the networked internet or the growing networked character of other media such as the newspaper press²⁶.

Established media enterprises are, to varying degrees, in a crisis arising from the erosion of the two supports on which their established business models depend: advertising and circulation/subscription revenues. In consequence, their provision (albeit imperfect) of a range and depth of authoritative news and information at affordable prices to all who wished to use is under threat. New entrants may fill this gap. For legacy media incumbents, however, with significant assets in their established brands and market positions, they may not be attractive. And in any case, new entrants are, almost without exception, very fragile.

The conjuncture of, on the one hand, the break down of trust in and trustworthiness of psbs and, on the other, the possibilities of enhanced pluralism and diversity of supply coupled with the novel²⁷ forms of authoritativeness and trustworthiness potentially offered by Web 2.0-based internet content, has put in question the future extent and character of public service broadcasting finance. Heretofore, public service broadcasting in the UK has been provided by four²⁸ free to air broadcasters: ITV and Five (advertising financed for profit commercial limited television companies), Channel 4 (a public sector non-profit advertising financed radio and television broadcaster) and the BBC (a public sector not for profit corporation funded by an annual licence fee). The rapid decline in television advertising revenue (not least that occasioned by the migration of advertising online) has, it is generally but not universally agreed, fatally compromised the ability of the advertising funded public service broadcasters to discharge their public service mandates. Ofcom estimates that an additional approximate £200m will be required to maintain a satisfactory quantum of public service broadcasting from providers other than the BBC.

In its most recent consultation on the future of public service broadcasting (Ofcom 2008a) Ofcom invited comment on three possible future funding models: 1) “*extended evolution*” (which reduces the public service duties of ITV and Five and requires additional funding to sustain the public service mandates of the advertising funded broadcasters); 2) a “*refined BBC/Channel 4 model*” (whereby only these two broadcasters would be charged with public service obligations in respect of which Channel 4 would require additional funding to discharge); and 3) a “*refined competitive funding*” regime in which “additional funding would be opened up to a wider pool of providers”. This third option has its origins in an earlier Ofcom proposal to establish a Public Service Publisher (PSP) that envisioned support for “content for all distribution channels – broadband and mobile, together with a broadcast element” (see Ofcom 2005a).

There are no current UK plans to develop Ofcom’s public service publisher model (even discreetly re-badged as “refined competitive funding”), although it provides both an interesting and potentially fruitful basis for development. However, the Netherlands has established public support for online providers of public service content analogous to Ofcom’s PSP. Twenty-six Dutch public service internet content providers received public support of about €2.5m between 2003-2007 (see the 2008 study by TNO for the Stimuleringsfonds voor de Pers – TNO forthcoming). The PSP/third option has been fiercely resisted by UK broadcasting incumbents, and hardly supported by the fragile new entrants which stand to gain by it because they, for the most part, lack the capacity to intervene effectively in the lobbying and politicking which has attended such policy initiatives.

Change brings opportunities as well as threats. The potential offered by online connectivity and interactive web based content services mean striking opportunities to diversify and pluralise provision of, and access to, high quality content, with positive externalities which hitherto was the prerogative of public

service broadcasters. But the same changes which have seen the move online by established media (newspapers etc), the proliferation of new entrants, and the widening of access to non-domestic 'broadcast' signals, put in question the role and status of European psb incumbents. These changes to the empirical situation have given rise to growing discussion as to whether a change to policy norms, and thus to the status of incumbent institutions, is mandated.

It's a truism to state that public service broadcasting is in crisis. But its crisis is not necessarily a threat to public service media and public service content. Rather the possibilities offered by the internet, both as a platform offering entry to new providers and a medium enabling development of a dialogic, and therefore potentially more trust enhancing and trustworthy, relationship between content providers and the public (who may, as "prosumers" be the same people), offers enormous opportunities to improve the quality, plurality, diversity and accessibility of public media and public content.

To realise these potentialities PSB's "habitus" of authority has to be reconfigured. At worst it is an obstacle that needs to be swept away. At best it offers an element (seriousness, fact checking, multiple sourcing, expert commentary and judgement – all the positive elements of responsible journalism) that could complement and enhance the different kind of authority and trustworthiness that dialogue endows. Whether public service broadcasters can unlearn the habits of a lifetime and contribute to the realisation of this potentiality remains to be seen. Unfortunately there is much to bear out Perez's gloomy contention that, "The existing framework, created to handle growth based on the previous set of technologies, is unsuited to the new one" (Perez 2002: xviii).

To make some normative proposals: the PSP initiative should be developed. Technological change has brought genuine new opportunities to broaden the range of institutions providing public service content and services (i.e. to discharge the traditional mandate of PSB) as well as, necessarily, putting in question the size, mandate, conduct and status of PSB incumbents. Many of the new online entrants are fragile and have a claim, on classic market failure grounds (diversity and pluralism, merit goods, infant industries), to public support. Canvassing such a possibility of course puts in question the incumbent PSB's claims to exclusivity in licence fee revenue or taxation, as well as posing awkward questions about the conditions on which public support should be granted.

Here a combination of the dialogic, potentially trust enhancing, characteristics of Web 2.0 based media with adoption and implementation of supply side codes of professional behaviour, seems promising. As to accountability, a combination of competition between providers (offering users the opportunity to exercise an 'exit' sanction²⁹) with the dialogic Web 2.0 practices of new entrants such as *openDemocracy* and *Slashdot* (offering 'voice' sanctions) provides a promising line of advance.

In the citation which opens this chapter, O'Neill underestimates how far new media have developed ways³⁰ of fostering and deserving trust. But her insight into the connections between dialogue, verification and trust opens the door to

recognition of the potential offered by new, Web 2.0-based media. Realisation of the new media's potential could be, should be, further embedded through selective public support awarded on condition of adhering to high standards of editorial and journalistic conduct. O'Neill sets out a basis for the improvement of these standards of conduct. This would combine the trust enhancing capabilities of dialogic Web 2.0 media (what we may call "demand side" trust enhancement) with the "supply side" trust enhancing practices of (some) established high quality legacy media including PSB. However, realisation of this potentiality, and breaking out into a realisation of the fruits of a new Freeman/Perez like paradigm, will come only if, in contradiction to Lowe and Hujanen (2003), broadcasting *is* marginalised in the convergence debate. Better to build on the bad new things than the increasingly failing good old ones.

Notes

1. Citations from O'Neill 2002 are from the unpaginated online source.
2. This analysis is shaped by the author's greater ignorance of events and trends outside the UK than of events in the UK.
3. My discussion of O'Neill below makes clear the importance of "dialogue".
4. The BBC Trust stated that these "were particularly serious as they resulted in children being misled to participate in a competition they had no chance of winning and in a child in the studio being involved in deceiving the audience". See http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/news/press_releases/2007/ofcom_blue_peter.html
5. In 2003, a senior judge, Lord Hutton, was appointed to inquire into the death of a British civil servant, Dr David Kelly. His report found, inter alia that the BBC management were "at fault" (Hutton 2004). Hutton's findings prompted the resignation of both the BBC's Director General and the Chairman of the BBC Governors.
6. The BBC's own reflections on its journalistic and editorial practices, the Neil Report, (BBC 2004) constructively acknowledged that the BBC had a case to answer and that its procedures and training should be improved and was has adopted.
7. See <http://www.carlotaperez.org/index.htm> accessed on 29.5.2009.
8. Again, there are affinities between Castells' and Perez-Freeman's analyses: Castells (1996), for example, attributes to socio-political inertia China's non-realisation of its potential to industrialise earlier than Europe.
9. Henry Ford did not use technologies radically different to his competitors, rather "Fordism", symbolised by the first Model-T coming out of the Ford plant in Detroit, was born out of Ford's distinctive organisation of labour and production.
10. I will return below to the category "public service publisher" mobilised by Ofcom.
11. See, for example, the annual German ARD/ZDF Online Study (see www.ard-zdf-onlinestudie.de accessed on 28.5.2009) which suggests that substitution is less marked in Germany than in the UK.
12. Strictly, ITV is now a company (a plc) holding 11 of the 15 licences for the regionalised terrestrial advertising funded public service television channel properly known as Channel 3. The remaining 4 licences are held, two each, by stv and UTV. However, ITV (for historical reasons) remains the customary usage for Channel 3.
13. In 2009 France Television began to reduce advertising timeage – from January its schedules were advertising free from 2000 to 0600 and will be free of advertising by 2011.
14. Channel 4 is, at the time of writing, playing a variation on this theme by bidding for all (or much) of the BBC's commercial arm, BBC Worldwide, to enter "partnership" with Channel 4 so that Channel 4's anticipated public service deficit may be met.

15. See <http://www.fathom.com/index.html>
16. Tim O'Reilly, sometimes credited with first using the term "Web 2.0", defined it as "applications that harness network effects to get better the more people use them" Web 2.0 Compact Definition: Trying Again. At http://radar.oreilly.com/archives/2006/12/web_20_compact.html on 6.3.2007.
17. But see Nature's comparative evaluation of the accuracy of Wikipedia and the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" at <http://www.nature.com/news/2005/051212/full/438900a.html> accessed on 14.5.2007. "Nature" found "the difference in accuracy was not particularly great".
18. Charlie Beckett's term – see Beckett 2008 and 2008a.
19. Paul Bradshaw's term – see <http://onlinejournalismblog.com/2007/10/02/a-model-for-the-21st-century-newsroom-pt2-distributed-journalism/>
20. Some might find a condemnation of Wikipedia for the characteristics of Facebook a weak argument.
21. An intriguing, but uncommon, equivalent is the webcast of the editorial conference of the Liverpool Daily Post editorial news conference. At <http://www.journalism.co.uk/2/articles/531562.php>
22. Nicht an das gute Alte anknüpfen, sondern an das schlechte Neue. Attributed to Brecht by Walter Benjamin – see Walter Benjamin, *Fragmente. Autobiographische Schriften. Gesamelte Schriften VI*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp tabu wiss., 1991, S.537 ff. Cited by Gerd Peter at http://www.forum-neue-politik-der-arbeit.de/content/workshop/2006/Nicht%20an%20das%20gute%20Alte_Peter.pdf accessed on 4.7.2009.
23. "Habitus" is a term now associated with the work of Pierre Bourdieu and is usefully defined in the ubiquitous Wikipedia as "a set of acquired patterns of thought, behaviour, and taste" (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habitus_\(sociology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habitus_(sociology))).
24. Of course, there was, and is, more than one psb tradition: the Netherlands complemented the "BBCish" AVRO with confessional (KRO, VPRO) and politically aligned (VARA) broadcasters; in the USA PBS and NPR stations were linked to universities and other educational institutions etc.
25. This was described by the BBC as "There is a serious rift with the government over editorial independence, this time around the Northern Irish issue – probably the most serious since the General Strike of 1926" <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/innovation/index.shtml> See also http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/resources/pressure/real_lives.shtml ; <http://www.spinwatch.org/latest-news-mainmenu-10/151-northern-ireland/2219-the-truth-behind-real-lives> : <http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/archive/chronicle/1980s/document8.shtml> all accessed on 23.6.2009.
26. It is easy to exaggerate such trends, however the growth of "distributed" or "citizen" journalism; the efforts of newspapers to build wide-ranging relationships with their users (eg through dating services, readers' letters and SMS pages, free gifts, commercial offers and the like) increasingly differentiates the relationships that newspapers have with their users vis a vis those of broadcasters.
27. Novel only in the context of modern public media – as O'Neill has argued, the dialogic base of trust antedates modernity.
28. There are also the publicly owned not for profit S4C which provides Welsh language television programmes and is financed by government grant and advertising and the Gaelic Media Service.
29. See Exit, Voice and Loyalty (Hirschman 1970).
30. It goes without saying that not everything on the Internet and/or which fits Web 2.0 paradigms is trustworthy!

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Journalistic Authority Meets Public Participation

Re-Reading Reith in the Age of Networks

Eeva Mäntymäki

John Reith is perhaps the most iconic figure of public service broadcasting [PSB]. A man renowned for an authoritarian disposition, the first Director General of the BBC (1927-1938) was to a significant degree the innovator of the PSB ethos and theoretician for its practice. Reith was a fierce advocate of broadcast monopoly. This son of a Presbyterian minister was firmly anchored in the system of British middle-class values and famous for his disgust with “light entertainment”. In his discussion of networked journalism as a potential saviour of the public service ideal, Charlie Beckett (2008: 82) conceives the Reithian heritage as the main obstacle to democratisation of public service institutions, especially the BBC. It’s not clear, however, which features in the Reithian paradigm Beckett is referring to. Despite legitimate criticism for a character of arrogance more or less enshrined in the traditional Enlightenment Mission he envisioned for PSB, his singular manifesto, *Broadcast over Britain* (1924), presents a still impressive vision of broadcasting (in that case radio) as a powerful tool for opening the public arena to inclusion by all classes and both sexes as citizen participants in public debates: “A new and mighty weight of opinion is being formed, and an intelligent concern on many subjects will be manifested in quarters now overlooked” (Reith 1924: 19). To a striking degree, the very foundations of Reithian thought evidences keen interest about the public in public service broadcasting.

Beckett was writing with deep concern in *SuperMedia* about public service in media being under threat and in retreat. In particular he worries about “the danger of a major loss in public service journalism and a drastic fall in the quality of mass journalism” (Beckett 2008: 40). In his view, what is needed to rescue democracy under current socio-economic conditions is “networked journalism”, a term that references new collaborative practices in news content production that especially highlight the possibilities for citizen journalism and user-generated material. His rationale is premised on renewing a historically important ethos: “The new public service journalism has to be a part of a new democratic compact between state and citizens” (ibid: 84). In this light, perhaps surprisingly, Reith as architect and Beckett as critic seem to share both an

enthusiasm for public participation and a vision that new media technologies and developmental practices are invaluable for empowering the public(s). The undertone in both books actually emphasise the relationship between easily accessible media and a healthy democracy.

By noting the similarities (and admittedly here ignoring rather big differences) I don't suggest any straightforward continuum through the decades that other practitioners and scholars have failed to see. What I intend to argue is that despite all the considerable economic, cultural, social and technological changes in the interval since the dawn of radio broadcasting and today's increasingly complex multimedia environment, there are core values grounding the ethos of PSB that have remained relevant and are still convincing for its legitimacy in the mission of public participation in democracy, even though the means differ through the years. This implies no major contradiction in principles and objectives between public service ideals and the emerging networked practices in journalism. The problem that must be tackled, and a focus of work in this chapter, hinges on friction that changing practices of journalism as a profession create as a challenge to all journalistic institutions, including especially public service media [PSM]. Although core values and typical principles of PSB celebrate the role of the public in public life, institutional practices have more often resisted incorporating the public. The public has largely been construed as a pupil, a resource and an audience – not as any equal and certainly not as a 'partner'.

In this chapter we open discussion about the dynamics of public service in the context of changes in journalism practice by distinguishing between public service and journalism as distinct value discourses. Although both are highly influential and engrained institutionalised practices, featuring considerable overlap in ideological frames, they can be treated as distinctive traits of a generalisable public service tradition. Seen from this angle, there might be differences in emphasis that have implications for and observed reactions to the changing media environment. At this very moment when both journalism and public service are – once again – in mounting crisis and, it seems to the author, desperately in need of re-formulation, even minor differences could be of major importance.

Public service broadcasting as a tradition of participation

In his by now classic defence of public service broadcasting, Paddy Scannell (1989: 135-166) saw the one-to-many foundation of public service broadcasting as a genuinely social service offering something for everyone as a phenomenon of genuine social sharing. He argued that the emergence of broadcast radio in the 1920's created a fundamentally new public sphere by opening events to the widest public awareness and participation. Broadcasting greatly lowered barriers limiting public access. Extending access to concerts, sporting events, church services, royal ceremonies and political speeches was not uniformly

welcomed, however. Public inclusion via the microphone faced considerable opposition. For example, BBC radio wasn't allowed to transmit the proceedings of the House of Commons until 1978 and television cameras entered British Parliament only ten years later in 1989 (Peele 2004: 239).

Despite restrictions that only slowly dissolved, through broadcasting citizens certainly had greatly improved possibilities to participate in processes and practices of national cultural and political life by listening to live broadcasts, something seen by many as an important means for reinvigorating democracy (Briggs and Burke 2002: 232-233). Broadcasting broadened the public sphere – to an important degree making it truly public – by delivering the voices of establishment figures to the citizenry at large more effectively and efficiently than before. But this was only part of the story, and perhaps not the most important part. According to Scannell (1989: 141-147), broadcasting began incorporating new voices – the voices of ordinary people – expanding the discursive universe of the “talkable”, i.e. what could be discussed in and by the public. In the 1930's the first radio documentaries created a sensation by giving eyewitness accounts of slum conditions and letting the unemployed speak for themselves. Such importantly demonstrates a continuum of sorts that mixes not only notions of public and private via an expansion in ‘ordinariness’, but also and significantly makes the public private and the private public (Splichal 2007).

The notably slow progression in public service media from exclusivity (the so-called ‘high rail’ bias) towards inclusion of all those social groups comprising society is characterised by constant struggle, and it continues today. The results of this democratisation-through-media project have never been fully satisfying even in respective European national contexts, let alone more global perspectives. In this regard, the style or ‘mode’ of address in media is essential. Of course content creates barriers to inclusion, for example when the substance is too difficult for non-specialists to grasp or in programmes intended for young children, which more or less excludes great interest among most adults. But barriers are also erected by the mode of address in a programme when the mode emphasises social distance or cultural gaps between persons or groups. Here the question is not so much about the principle of inclusion which is largely taken as a given in PSB; the question is who feels ‘at home’ in a particular mode of address, who is included or and excluded from the symbolic unity that media convey (Morley 2004: 418). Accordingly, one of the basic problems regarding public service institutions has always been the difficulty of tackling and balancing two parallel aspirations – the will to reach out to everyone and the wish to maintain high-brow quality standards (Curran 1998: 192-194).

Keeping Scannell in mind while re-reading Reith in this light, I suggest that however strong the cultural elitism of the pre-war BBC, from its very beginning there was a clearly stated and highly motivated interest to create a new kind of public sphere through broadcasting practice, one not only allowing universal participation (in a national context) but *actively facilitating* that. From the beginning PSB was intended to have a *catalytic* role. In the 1920s broad-

casting was, in this respect, every bit as inspiring an innovation and exciting a phenomenon as social media are today. The hopes of democratisation via media services were at least as high, if not actually higher. As Reith (1924: 218) wrote, “There need be no first and third class. There is nothing in it [broadcasting] which is exclusive to those who pay more, or who are considered in one way or another more worthy of attention”.

Universal and equal service remains a core principle of public service media, although universalism provided via one or two generalist channels was abandoned long ago. In their discussion of cornerstones in public service, Bardoel and Lowe (2007: 11) follow the seminal work of Dennis McQuail, listing five core values which together comprise the public service ethos: 1) universal service, 2) diversity in political, social and cultural terms, 3) democratic accountability, 4) significant public financing and 5) a commitment to non-profit goals. It is significant to note that all five values – this value construct, if you will – represent a striving for inclusiveness and commonality. In this view, the value set of PSM must encourage deep and wide public participation in media production wherever practicable and viable to keep faith with its own heritage, and thereby maintain the social legitimacy of its continuing public service mission (*ibid*).

It should be clear at this point that the main problems and key obstacles opposing the emerging trend in networked journalism practices and the more robust inclusion of user-generated contents are not primarily in anything properly having to do with the PSB ethos or ideology. Resistance is rooted in the institutional interests of a variant of professionalism that is fundamental to the content profiles and service offerings characteristic of PSB in operational terms. We can turn attention to consideration of journalism.

Journalism: The heart of public service broadcasting

Perhaps surprising to some, for political and contextual reasons journalistic news and current affairs programming was not as essential a component of public service broadcasting in its formative years as nowadays. Newscasts were brief and mainly of the headline variety because political governors sought to protect the newspaper industry from competition with radio, thinking this important for maintaining a coveted status quo for national coherence. Thus, news service was severely restricted and kept under careful inspection (Reith 1924: 112-113 and 137-143). In the early years the BBC could only broadcast two news bulletins per day, and nothing before 7:00 p.m. Moreover, news content was restricted to material from press-owned news agencies. The company could broadcast direct transmissions of ceremonies and important speeches, but commentary and descriptive reporting was forbidden – let alone debate about current affairs.

This state of affairs was not only characteristic of broadcasting in Britain. In Finland as well, for example, executives of the Finnish Broadcasting Company (today YLE) consciously avoided controversial issues, and the news that

was broadcast was taken from the Finnish News Agency, STT. The Finnish Broadcasting Company didn't have its own radio news until 1965. Peculiarly enough, YLE's television news services began to develop earlier with the first news show airing about 50 years ago on 1 September 1959.

In the 1920's the greatest emphasis was on the weighty responsibility of broadcasters as stewards of a powerful new social engine. The notion of responsibility didn't necessarily imply impartiality and editorial independence, however. This became crystal clear in Britain during the general strike of 1926 when the BBC, then the only medium able to report the strike (after restrictions of its news services were lifted), was constantly under threat of government take-over. Wanting to preserve the company's editorial independence, Reith succeeded in walking the tightrope and, in practice, secured the independence of the BBC as a publicly funded but relatively autonomous corporation (Briggs 1961: 235-238 and 360-384, Briggs and Burke 2002: 233). His victory laid the basis for the widely recognised ideal that PSB institutions should be independent from *both* market forces and direct state control.

However, it was the Second World War which marked the turning point regarding the importance of broadcast news, and its independence (Briggs and Burke 2002: 217-218). In Britain all the restrictions laid upon BBC's news services were lifted and for the first time radio had a market advantage over newspapers because its news was immediate. The role of radio changed during the war "from a provider of private or familial enjoyment and self-improvement to a vital instrument of public information and entertainment" (Hayes and Hill 1999: 63). Significantly, the BBC earned a sterling reputation as a truth teller in times of immense propagandist efforts all over Europe, even though the Beeb surely wasn't free from propaganda. In Finland, development paralleled Britain in the sense that the amount of radio licences grew quickly during wartime especially because of the hunger for news of any sort (Vihavainen 1996: 250-251).

The 1960's witnessed growth in the independence of PSB news and a change in tendencies represented in a very similar fashion by Sir Hugh Greene at the BBC (Director General 1960-1969) and Eino S. Repo at YLE (Director General 1965-1969). Each CEO of these respective national broadcasting companies encouraged programming that featured social and political debate and sought to reform the style and manner of address in broadcasting to achieve a tone more in keeping with 'the modern spirit' of the times. In their views, the role of the public broadcaster was to be always at the forefront of change. During the respective regimes of Greene and Repo, the BBC and YLE both took a significant step away from emphasis on constructing an ideal national consensus towards a far more critical orientation in journalism. In both countries, however, this was a bit too much at the time and both DGs were more or less compelled to step down, leaving company leadership in the hands of 'moderates' (see Tracey 1983; Salokangas 1996: 151-155).

In scholarly discussion about journalism as a profession, the 1960s and 1970s are sometimes seen as a high water mark for professional journalism in gen-

eral. According to Hallin (2006), the period of “high modernity” in journalism between the end of World War II and the early 1980s were a result of quite specific historical conditions. The economy of media houses and broadcasters were incredibly secure (from our perspective today) and there was a relatively long period of political consensus centred on progressive preferences for a social welfare state in Europe and, in parallel, the New Deal in America. These conditions encouraged journalists “to see themselves simultaneously as a part of the establishment and as independent” (ibid).

In their comparative study of broadcasting systems, Hallin and Mancini (2004: 34-36) described a generalisable pattern characterised by the following features: a) ‘public service’ orientation, b) control over one’s own work and c) the presence of distinct professional norms as basic features of professional commitment among journalists. This pattern is evident regardless of the otherwise remarkable cultural differences across media systems in the West. In his discussion about journalism as a profession (from an Anglo-American angle), Deuze (2005: 162-164) proposed a schema comprised of five ideal-typical occupational values employed by journalists in general debates. According to Deuze (ibid: 132), these values are: 1) Public service (explicitly referring to the public interest), 2) Objectivity (values of impartiality, neutrality and fairness), 3) Autonomy (being independent and free from interference in their work), 4) Immediacy (actuality and speed; making news) and 5) Ethics (a profession bounded by a certain system of moral values and appreciating the importance of validity and legitimacy). Despite the obvious complexity involved here, these are in fact relatively taken-for-granted values among professional journalists, although of course filtered through the specific cultures of various media organisations and, correspondingly, interpreted in several different ways even inside the framework of one national culture.

The ideology of journalists’ professional identity must be taken seriously when the attitudes of journalists are being treated in relation to emerging networked practices. As Deuze (2006: 4) pointed out, journalism still largely depends on its *established* mode of production. Especially in public service media companies, many journalists today feel vulnerable precisely because recent developments seem to threaten the *standards* of professionalism. This is arguably keyed to a two-fold commitment: it is first due to the principle of editorial independence that is foundational to journalism as a general system of professional ideals and, then, also as a foundational aspect of public service media institutions in particular which, already beginning with Reith, have stressed the necessity to remain independent from both government and market forces.

Journalism in the age of networks

Beginning in the 1980s as an outcome of deregulation in media markets, and accelerating through the 1990s in the transformation process energised by developments in digital media technologies, mutually reinforcing economic,

political, technological and cultural powers were creating a new media environment (not just new media, but a new environment of media). In this emerging context, the two factors discussed in the closing sentences of the previous section were increasingly problematic: 1) the position of journalism, and 2) the position of public service broadcasting (in this new environment, public service media). Recent developments enable new kinds of media activities and also strengthen some older ideas. One example of 'ideas reborn' is live interaction with media users – something actually and quite generally practiced in radio for some decades.

Bardoel and Deuze (2001: 91-103) identified four characteristics of the "new journalism on the Net": interactivity, convergence (of many kinds), customisation of content and hypertextuality. In a later book on changing media, Deuze (2005) followed Zygmunt Bauman in talking about the evolving contingencies typical to contemporary work life in general under conditions of "liquid modernity". The new media culture was characterised as a context of growing individualisation, globalisation and networked practices, all of which "challenge all the assumptions traditional newsmaking is based upon" (Deuze 2005: 170). This view has been confirmed since Deuze (Witschge and Nygren 2009; Nygren 2008a, 2008b; Beckett 2008).

Heinrich (2008) tapped this vein of growing interest in developing her notion of network journalism as a concept describing basic structural transformations, which in her view include large-scale technical, economic and cultural processes effecting media as a field of action and journalism as a profession. In this context, network journalism doesn't only refer to adding the internet, citizen journalism, and social media (blogs, Facebook, Twitter etc.) to the journalistic toolbox. Instead, network journalism is a structural concept that is shaping a new global communication infrastructure operating in a highly decentralised and fundamentally non-linear system. The subsequent transformation of journalism as a profession isn't restricted to so-called online or network journalism. On the contrary, Heinrich stresses that the occupational ideology of journalism as a whole is certain to undergo re-interpretation in the age of networks when professionals are operating in '24/7' societies and their role as gatekeepers has been eroded by amateurs equipped with video cameras, cell phones and broadband internet connections. In digital networked environments, distances – including the metaphysical distance between a journalist and her audience – collapse, which ruins metaphysical presumptions of journalistic ideology (Singer 2009: 73-75).

Hallin (2006) summarised developments since the 1980s in journalism with the observation that "journalists have lost autonomy within news organisations increasingly dominated by the logic of market, and have lost prestige within society" (see also Davies 2008). Accordingly, on the basis of empirical data collected in Sweden and in Britain, Witschge and Nygren (2009) identify a definite turn towards de-professionalisation of journalism that comprises a loss of professional autonomy, growing emphasis on technological skills, weakening trade unions and blurring of ethical codes. In short, the emphasis in journalistic

practice has moved “from research and content towards production and form” (ibid: 49), which also implies deep-going transformations in terms of aesthetics and quality (Mäntymäki 2006)¹.

Returning to Reith, recent developments are at first sight the very realisation of his worst nightmares, although his perspective was limited to broadcasting and he hardly mentioned ‘journalism’ as such. Even so, he meditated upon the possibility that broadcasting would fall into ‘irresponsive’ hands (referring to both party politicians and private proprietors) and wondered “if many have paused to consider the incalculable harm which might have been done, had different principles guided the conduct of the service in the early days?” (ibid: 31). He also saw independent public service broadcasting as a potential means of imposing more balanced news coverage on the party press system of his day (ibid: 111). Interestingly, however, he refused to categorise radio ‘a mass medium’ and opposed any audience measurements. For him, a listener surely was an individual – an opinion astonishingly up-to-date in the age of networks.

Sustaining editorial autonomy still remains a key question in critical thinking about the emerging network culture of journalism, as well in PSM in other respects. The new media environment of non-linear and non-hierarchical patterns weakens the position of the newsroom as a constitutive part of the journalism sphere. Incorporating former audiences as participants in the process of journalistic production, not only through media but significantly also in media, must weaken the ‘knowledge monopoly’ of journalists – a cornerstone of their professional status. This, in turn, leads to deterioration of that professional authority historically based on a perception of the journalist as a representative of the audience (Witschge and Nygren 2009: 55; Nygren 2008b: 16-19).

With all of this in view, it’s clear that the distinctive occupational ideology developed during the 20th century in step with the professionalisation of journalism in Western liberal democracies faces a totally new situation. Until recently, a fundamental presumption in discourse about professional values has been that journalism is a filtering element between power elites and the people as a public of citizens. Journalists serve the public interest both as watchdogs on the activities of elites in government and industry, and as gatekeepers selecting what counts as relevant information. In this paradigm the autonomy of journalists must be protected from pressures coming from above. In the case of network journalism, however, the influences come from every direction and it simply isn’t clear to what extent professional autonomy remains a necessary precondition for serving the public interest.² This is one core challenge the collaborative paradigm poses to the historic traditions of professionalism in journalism.

A second main challenge collaborative practices pose for professional values lies in how to satisfy traditional ethical claims in the context of network journalism. Witschge and Nygren suggested that “a more relative and post-modern view on accuracy is developing in journalism” (2008: 46), although journalists typically say that it is the fact-checking and accuracy-ensuring tasks that mark the key distinction between professional journalists and other sources. The

question of trust has become more central than ever in liquid modern societies where reputation and image, crystallised in trademarks and brands, have enormous power. Public service media, in particular, have been very dependent on a trustworthy reputation since the time of Reith. In this sense the internet environment with its emphasis on anonymity, the unbounded flow of opinions, and a strong anti-authority flavour, is a very demanding, even threatening, field of action. It requires methods of evaluation and criticism of sources that are quite different from all that was needed under previous conditions, which were still of course quite high. It calls for new journalistic skills that certainly include higher media literacy and the capacity to distinguish between, for instance, reliability of the many and varied bloggers.

The impacts of networked practices are many-faceted. Advocates of network journalism like Charlie Beckett (2008: 58-65) assure readers that the collaborative culture of new digital networks will help mainstream media regain their lost authority. In his view, citizen journalists are often able to claim trust because they are mostly enthusiasts, don't work for money and are policed by the wider community. Such conditions raise new ethical issues related to so-called "hacker ethics", for instance demands for transparency and reciprocity. These new ethical values may be in sharp contrast with the traditional professional ethics of journalism, however – a condition calling for a revised code of ethics in journalism that should include new kinds of collaborative practices without losing the professional public service ethos. This immanently contradictory character of journalism's re-evaluation project in the age of networks was recognised by Carpentier and Cammaerts (2006: 968) in their account of this as a process where "autocratic gate-keeping is combined with democratic gate-opening, and where a more modest positioning towards its truth-speaking is combined with more courageous claims of the truth when necessary." The need to reconcile these very different ways of thinking is obvious also in attempts to reformulate the role of a journalist as an instructor or an educator (e.g. Beckett 2009: 8) – again similar to conditions in the Reith era when sound broadcasting was seen as a powerful tool for democratic aspirations and the role of a broadcaster was in a deep sense that of an 'enabler', in today's parlance.

The strength of tradition must be taken into account to understand the critical nature of this encounter between the historic value system of professional journalism and the emerging culture of network journalism. That is to say that despite all these changes, there remain strong continuities in the field of journalism. The daily routines and institutional cultures inside professional newsrooms are remarkably stable (Deuze 2005: 170), quite generalisable in liberal democracies, and practitioners interpret and filter the many pressures of changing demands. Witschge and Nygren (2009: 50) believe that what is most changing is everyday work as such, including technologies and the organisation of journalistic operations. What is continuing more or less as before is at the level of unconscious norms, rules and routines. Professional journalism ideology is changing, of course, but far more slowly and less straightforwardly than more utilitarian dimensions. It will be useful to address this in the light

of empirical evidence. I do so drawing on a case study that illustrates the continuity between traditional on-air sound broadcasting and the networked on-line media.

Trading phone-ins for net debates

Bertol Brech (2000: 41-46) in his famous lecture *On the Function of Radio* in 1932 declared that radio is in principle a medium for two-way interactive communication, even if technical facilities limited the implementation of the principle in practice. In recent times his dream seems to have come true in the form of phone-in shows. As a programme genre, the phone-in or radio talk show has existed for decades. It has flourished after the deregulation of broadcasting in Europe. At the moment, the genre is alive and well in the US, Ireland and Britain, especially.

Underestimated in media studies until recently, the role of phone-in programmes was highlighted by Nyre (2007: 4003) who wrote that, "Phone-in programmes on radio are the most obvious example of traditional participatory programming, albeit quasi-democratic and sometimes caricatured". Similarly Hutchby (2006: 100-101) thought radio talk shows – however trivial or emotionally loaded – "one of the few media environments in which ordinary members of the public are given the opportunity to speak on issues and events in their own voices". In this respect, radio is a forerunner of interactivity in electronic media, even if typically treated as the novel invention of recent digital networks.

In Finland, commercial radio was introduced in 1985 which ushered in a burst of commercial local stations eager to fill airtime with cheap and easily made phone-in programmes with their hint of 'local democracy'. By 1990 the loss of the PSB monopoly in radio forced YLE into a major radio reform, bringing with it profiled channels targeted to different audience groups (e.g. Ala-Fossi 2005: 178-180). At that time, regional public service stations (the Radio Suomi system) as well as an entirely new national youth channel, Radiomafia, were launched. These featured several audience participation programmes. Until recently nearly every of the 20 regional YLE radio stations in the Radio Suomi system had daily phone-in programmes. Lately, however, such shows have been trimmed back or dropped entirely, replaced by online discussions. Some stations have spared these shows, however, due to high ratings, simply adding an e-mail element.

In spring 2008 when YLE was officially investing the internet as the third main platform (along with radio and television), there was fierce debate in the editorial offices of YLE regional public service stations in Northern Finland, especially, about the transformation of phone-in programming into net discussions (Mäntymäki 2008)³. In this debate many journalists saw moderated internet discussion as a welcome substitute for traditional phone-ins because moderation keeps control in the hands of editors. A male host with long experience on radio talk shows explained:

It's different because you can moderate the discussions. It can't be any chaotic hustle allowing anybody to write anything on our web site. They can use their own sites and blogs and chat rooms and whatsoever for that – then it's a different thing. But no responsible radio station looking after its image or anything lets people do just anything (JRM20).

As to the phone-in shows per se, many journalists see the open channel as important for giving 'ordinary people' a chance to speak for themselves and in their own way. But nearly in the same breath, these same journalists stress that such shows should be short enough not to irritate too much. There is evident anxiety and ambivalence around these popular shows, an anxiety that hasn't totally withered even after twenty years' experience:

I've said a million times it's ready for the scrap heap – but yes, yes it is necessary. And I've sometimes felt it's an overwhelming task for me – but not any more. But there are people who said when we had to choose between news and current affairs they'd like to do current affairs otherwise but they can't stand the phone-in. They were afraid of it (JRM25).

Here one finds evidence of the two contradictory value discourses earlier discussed, indicating two important principles simultaneously at stake – the public service discourse about empowering publics and a professional discourse about striving for skilful and disciplined expression and dealing with issues of general relevance. Both these value discourses are in principle important parts of YLE journalistic culture. In practice, however, journalists often feel awkward in situations where public participation is involved. Again to repeat an earlier point, evident in the case study, the principle of participation, which is fundamental to the public service ethos, is supported in theory but clashes with principles of journalistic practice that are, in many respects, far more personal for journalists.

Consequently, as the internet multiplies opportunities for public participation the result might well appear chaotic from the perspective of journalists. This is not only because journalists fear losing editorial independence and risks to their knowledge monopoly, but also because in the direct contact with 'ordinary people' journalists are on the edge of the non-sayable in contemporary culture (referring to Scannell 1989: 141-147). This has already been true in the case of regional phone-in shows in Radio Suomi channels. The uncomfortable feelings among journalists have obviously arisen, at least partly, from the opinions and mode of address of callers who tend to be elderly representatives of the Finnish working class. The callers openly express views that aren't compatible with the liberal middle-class public opinion advocated by journalists in general, giving voice to contradictory feelings among older and more traditional Finns about foreign cultures and the changing position of women, for example.

By transforming such phone-in programmes into internet debates the editors hope to eliminate, or at least greatly limit, the volume of embarrassing talk on

the air. As a medium, the internet might even be a barrier to the involvement of some elderly callers and more likely to engage younger debaters, a possibility that public service media houses with aging audiences find attractive. As to the typically black-and-white tone of net debate, it can be only partially controlled by moderating the discussions. Without going more deeply into the differences between live broadcast radio and on line internet as cultural forms or means of communication, there are two key lessons to be learned here. The first is that each platform has its own inherent limitations as a means of social inclusion. The second is that notwithstanding the differences, the role of the journalist as a mediator is in both cases crucial.

Re-interpreting Reith: The best for the public

During the last decade public service media houses, representing established linear and hierarchical broadcasting structures, have been challenged by emerging journalistic practices. Public service institutions might be, in some senses, even more vulnerable than commercial corporations because of their distinctive position as benchmarks for high quality journalism and their special claim to universality. However, there might be a special position reserved for public service media also in the visions of new modes of journalism.

In his discussion of the digital commons, Graham Murdock (2005: 227) proposed that public service as an idea could be revitalised by generating non-commercial open spaces based on the principle of reciprocity with public service institutions as cornerstones. Roope Mokka and Aleksi Neuvonen (2006: 96-97) have in some sense taken this to an extreme in their suggestion that YLE should be the first institution to open its creative processes so that journalists would offer only minimal technical and editorial assistance for citizen contributors working to create their own public service media. Heinrich (2008: 14) would seemingly agree, to a large extent. She argued that public service newsrooms should be reorganised with the purpose of repositioning public service media outlets as central nodes within a dynamic sphere of network journalism: "Interactive features and collaborative media practice are not an additional extra, but a necessity to be included in the newsgathering, production and dissemination practices today".

In practice, for instance, the BBC is already advanced in this regard. The company has developed network-building strategies that allow for increased inflow of information, as well as for conversational formats on their websites. Finland's YLE has created a successful web strategy with viable on line archives, on demand services and net discussions. The company's struggles to find ways to reach young generations by means of social media has resulted in the launch of several collaborative initiatives. But YLE's decision to distribute its news for free on the screens of shopping centres and other public locations has aroused acrimonious claims by commercial operators and stirred political debate in Finland. Commercial media houses accuse YLE of unfair competition using taxpayers' money.

As to the role of journalists, the authoritarian shadow of Reith has often been considered one of the main hindrances in developing new practices in public service institutions (e.g. Beckett 2008: 82). I'd like to suggest, however, that in this respect Reith himself is worth re-interpretation. In his declaration of broadcasters' responsibilities Reith stated with a clearly enthusiastic undertone that: "Our responsibility is to carry into the greatest possible numbers of homes everything that is best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement, and to avoid the things which are, or may be, hurtful" (Reith 1924: 34). Taken at face value as an expression of the desirable, the statement is as valid a definition of responsible public service journalism in the age of networks as in the period before their development.

Contrary to general perceptions, then, it seems to me that the internet age doesn't differ so drastically from the early days of broadcasting in this respect. With regard to journalistic companies, even digital technology hasn't been able to eliminate seemingly inevitable restrictions on limited time and space which make the editorial selection process a structural necessity. As Witschge and Nygren (2009: 47) point out in relation to net conversations, "it is still the journalist who ultimately decides which debates get pushed to the fore or even if debate is possible at all". Accordingly, when journalists of the digital age are linking their stories to the most interesting and relevant internet sources, they are essentially doing the same as the contemporaries of John Reith did by the standards of their time. It should not really come as any great surprise that the 'old-fashioned' definition of a journalist-as-educator is undergoing renewal in the emerging context (e.g. Beckett 2009: 8). The glut of information and inability to ascertain the veracity of so much of it would suggest that at least one role of the educator may be more needed than ever – professional journalists as guides in this highly dynamic media environment. The professional authority in that role may even be essential for helping publics orientate themselves in the more chaotic networked media sphere, and in the work of validation regarding the authority value of the information they consume. In this definition of journalist-as-guide, then, the two basic and otherwise conflicting value discourses of public service and professional journalism actually converge – here we have professional expertise in pursuing public service precisely by empowering publics.

Consequently, I will suggest that in the inevitable process of transformation, public service media houses should see the strong professional culture of editorial chambers not as an enemy impregnated with change resistance but rather as a sturdy and committed ally in seeking fresh solutions to old problems via shared professional self-reflection. This must not be taken to mean, however, that the transformation will be painless. To implement emerging new practices of public service journalism in a proper manner, journalism as a profession must reconsider its framework of professional ethics. There one faces the formidable challenge of new and frequently contradictory perspectives, including claims for objectivity, representativeness, transparency and reciprocity.

The still unresolved question is whether and in which way it is possible to assimilate new collaborative practices and actual public participation in jour-

nalistic work without losing essential professional values including editorial independence and claims of relevance and truthfulness which give it social value and societal worth. The challenge is actually to journalism in general and not confined to PSB. But journalists in PSB companies are perhaps uniquely positioned to feel more threatened because they hold a double commitment to public interest and editorial independence that are not only the basis of their personal professional identities but also the very basis of PSM institutional legitimacy in the future.

Seen from a different angle, however, the public service heritage with its emphasis on empowering citizens might in this situation become a greater strength. The inevitable re-adjustment of professional practices could be tolerated better in public service media houses than elsewhere if these changes are considered not as transformations forced from above and outside, but from within given the possibilities offered for critical self-reflection that has always been instrumental to the formation and continual reformation of journalism as a public service.

Notes

1. It is noteworthy, however, that the developments which have been considered destructive regarding the professional values of journalism might have been welcomed in public service media houses as marks of new effectiveness, flexibility and openness.
2. In practice, however, linking and sharing as the basic principles of network journalism challenge also the competitive culture of media houses. Having studied USA national news websites and the patterns of web news editors Mark Tremayne (2005) remarks that there are now fewer links to off-site content than there used to be because each organisation builds up its own archive of web content and favours its own contents.
3. The interviews were a part of a post-doctoral research project focusing on the transformation of traditional public service radios into regional public service media units producing outlets for television and Internet as well as for radio. The project, for its turn, is a part of the INTERMEDIA research project exploring intermedial relations of in the Finnish media in a time-scale reaching from the introduction of television to the current era of digitalisation.

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Re-thinking PSM Audiences

Diversity of Participation for Strategic Considerations

Minna Aslama

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, years characterised by commercialisation and expansion in broadcasting output, the basic dilemma in the public service broadcasting [PSB] sector was how to offer alternatives to consumer-oriented content supply and continue to address audiences primarily as citizens. It remains unclear how well most have done in meeting this challenge, as other chapters in this volume discuss. What is certain is that PSB as such is now as deeply challenged by non-linear media due to developments in the internet, mobile media, and forms of social media. While traditional public media institutions have been renewing identities and missions for nearly two decades, increasingly their relationship with audiences defines today's greatest challenges. How the public thinks of itself today and what it considers service in and from media firms are certainly far more complex than historically understood or accommodated.

The scope of transformation in the media landscape was aptly summarised by Brian McNair (2006) as fundamentally representing the shift from a 'control paradigm' to a 'chaos paradigm'. He listed several of the 'main constituents', including the transition from information scarcity to surplus, from exclusivity to accessibility, from passivity to (inter)activity, from hierarchy to network and from dominance to competition (ibid: 199). One of the most important elements in McNair's view is a change from homogeneity to diversity. Although certainly true, the meanings and dimensions of diversity deserve closer examination. This chapter works at providing such with deepest concern about rethinking the public service remit in terms of its conventional mission of serving as a guardian of media diversity.

With regard to media, diversity is often primarily conceptualised as a range of aspects describing variety in contents. Generally speaking, these aspects are frequently taken to be some combination of 1) the quantitative, measurable breadth of programme-type supply at a structural level (i.e. the diversity of output as a whole); 2) the diversity of issues and voices presented in content output; and 3) the mode of addressing audiences in genres of contents (see Aslama 2008). Two other distinct if related dimensions of diversity are 4) media sources,

i.e. producers of output in a media system, and 5) reception, that is breadth of media consumption by factors including medium, genre, and audience segments (see Napoli 1999). In recent decades most analyses of Western media systems, and especially of public service broadcasting as a sector, have focussed on the diversity of media organisations operating in a social system and the plurality represented in contents they offer (see, for example, Hellman 2001).

In this chapter the author will suggest that a crucial and generally neglected aspect of increasing importance is *diversity of participation*. This is new and crucial in the context of exponential growth characterising media industries and platforms, globalisation of media markets and contents, rapid technological development, and the mainstreaming of user-generated content, indicating significant changes in media behaviour for important segments of media markets. This should be understood as a strategic issue with great relevance in rethinking the meaning of ‘audience’ of and for the public service media enterprise. The idea of diversity of reception is arguably implied in contemporary debates, policy papers and mission statements, although seldom explicitly foregrounded or empirically addressed in research (Aslama 2008: 141-146). But although related to participation, ‘reception’ is a more limited concept in light of growth in user-generated media content and experience. As noted in the recommendations of a recent report by the Council of Europe on measuring media diversity (CoE 2008: 13), “It would...be useful to explore the use and creation of media by the audience, which is changing with the new technologies, and examine if it is nowadays enough to offer what has traditionally been considered important information for a democracy”.

In going beyond the idea of audiences as mere recipients of content, even in the more expansive concept of ‘media practices’, the term participation is becoming a popular way to reference the complex dynamics of audiences in diverse identities and their relations with diverse forms of media (Hargittai and Walejko 2008; Karaganis 2007). In this chapter participation is discussed in terms of people’s engagement with contents, in production of content, and within media structures. Understood in such a multidimensional way, ensuring the diversity of participation can be seen as the primary driver for organisational development and the foundation for support in media policy-making arenas public service media [PSM].

PSM, diversity, and new strategic requirements

From the perspective of traditional public service broadcasters, the new media environment requires a more complicated and multi-layered mission. Novel demands (in historic terms) are producing complex remits. But most nonetheless continue to emphasise PSB’s essential role as guardian of diversity in a broadcasting system. Even with digitalisation and channel expansion, this historic duty remains more or less everywhere (Aslama et al 2004). The question under debate in Germany, the UK and elsewhere is mainly about the role

of the public service sector in a comprehensive media system, and then in respective media (i.e. TV, radio, the internet). It is clear that many European public television broadcasters do not want to compete with commercial competitors by offering 'more of the same', but prefer an aim of producing a range and quality of services that competitors find difficult for varied reasons (e.g. resources, scale, the profit motive).

Public service content must be distinctive in order to correct 'market failure'. But public service media must at the same time ensure their offer is a universal service to secure the legitimacy of their enterprise as a public service system. Pay services in many digital platforms require diversification by public service providers so that diverse content is offered free to air or with minimal charges, mainly in new media – i.e. for its content to be universally available it must be universally affordable. Following this logic, there are still many proponents of the idea of full-service television channels as a continuing feature of the public service remit. A fragmented multi-channel strategy, the argument goes, may transform television from its historic role as a medium of social cohesion into a medium of social fragmentation (Aslama et al 2004: see also Ellis 2000).

But of course PSB has not been only about TV for quite some time. PSM has expanded and extended its mission into new services and platforms. The PSM concept is now recognised by numerous European-wide bodies, including especially the European Broadcasting Union (EBU 2002), the Council of Europe (2007)¹, and the European Commission². It seems that many agree with Karol Jakubowicz (2008): In order to survive public service media need to build strategies that include public service broadcasting plus all relevant platforms, including Web 2.0. One could argue this is necessary to guarantee diversity of sources and contents. As the report by the Council of Europe on good PSM practices (CoE 2008b: 32) noted, public service organisations in Europe already engage in a variety of activities indicating a broad array of tasks and services, ranging from new digital radio and television channels to web-streaming of radio and TV programming, to special online services (including teletext, unique online content, interactive services, and on-demand archives), and now mobile services.

Marginalised public service?

Even given the variety of platform options and existing innovative examples of many European public service organisations, strategising for successful PSM activities is not easy and success is far from guaranteed. Moreover, as recent history in Germany and the UK indicate, success can create its own backlash from the commercial sector. In fact, policy responses vary greatly from country to country in terms of whether public service organisations are generally supported, merely allowed, or increasingly restricted in new media activity (Aslama and Syvertsen 2006; Moe 2008). This is partly due to uncertainty about how the media landscape is shaping up at various levels: locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.

In the beginning of this decade it was feared that new technologies might pose a threat of marginalisation for public broadcasters in the market-driven context. Some ten years later, it generally seems that such a fate is not immediately to be expected, at least in the wider European context. Although some claim the threat to media diversity lies in the global concentration of new technologies and their applications, which inherently narrow consumers' options (Zittrain 2008), in fact national and regional 'old media' organisations have done rather well in terms of developing content production. Of course the current economic situation makes it difficult to say whether such will continue, or better to say where it will continue and where it will not, several studies on European media in recent years indicate that in terms of traditional contents in television programming, domestic production is still valued and valuable. While young people are clearly more accustomed to the internet as a primary medium and care less for television in comparative terms than earlier generations, this has been a trend for some time and TV ratings in many places have not shown dramatic audience fragmentation (see Aslama 2008: 80-87).

Moreover, it is important to observe that although the new media environment is more global, the most 'viral' new media fads, whether in online services or multiplatform social media innovations, have not come from commercial developers. Web 2.0 phenomena such as Facebook with its 250 million users (as of July 2009) or YouTube were not created by commercial media firms, although big commercial outfits are increasingly keen to own those that have become successful. To date, however, none of the new social media innovations have demonstrated significant potential to be a comprehensive, or even a truly complementary, alternative to traditional media – or media organisations. While news and political campaigns encourage intense blogging and may reach millions on occasion via platforms such as Twitter, people still rely to a great extent on traditional media outlets as primary sources for reliable information, at least, or as counterparts at 'worst'.

In general, as well, it is fair to say that in Europe public service organisations have been the flagship companies in digitalisation of media systems. This is especially obvious in the digitalisation of television, but has also been evident in the intentions of media policy makers in terms of support for development of new contents and services (Aslama and Syvertsen 2006). Of course older commercial media organisations in broadcasting face many of the same dilemmas in scarce resources, and especially today the same holds for print media firms which are feverishly trying to develop profitable new media solutions to shore up lagging profits and shrinking margins. Obviously, if the diversity ideal (in its assorted dimensions) remains a relevant and foundational principle for media policy-making, there is need for mainstream public service organisations, contents and services. At least there is no clear alternative for the immediate years ahead. In other words, there is a distinct strategic position for PSM in the map of future media systems in Europe – and arguably elsewhere, as well – and that position is positively developmental.

Re-positioning strategic focus: Diversity of participation

The complexity of media systems today creates co-related complexity in challenges for how, in practice, PSM can fulfil its diversity mandates. Needs and gaps at systemic levels are not filled until and unless they translate into organisational strategic plans and practices. As Jakubowicz (2008) observed, policy measures alone cannot guarantee the sustainability and success of PSM. That is why he calls for internal re-organisation to pursue best production practices for *all* media in what Lowe (2008) called “the PSM platform portfolio”. Pursuing this would represent commitment to the creation and provision of alternative, diverse contents distributed across media, from traditional broadcasting to online and mobile devices. However, Jakubowicz emphasised the even keener need for re-thinking conceptions of audience as an equally serious commitment to building a culture of *engagement and participation*. Given the tendency for PSB companies to focus on their internal concerns and interests, this is especially important.

While interaction and, more recently, participation have been catchwords in public, academic and industry discourse about media, surprisingly little thought or systematic analysis has been given to either (1) its theoretical and conceptual aspects or (2) the concrete opportunities and solutions for that in the current media landscape. Both these aspects matter for PSM strategising. Following Christian Nissen’s (2006) schematisation, European PSM can be envisioned as having three distinct socio-cultural contextual challenges which, in turn, translate into three distinct mandates and, again in turn, require three different approaches to contents and services.

First, mainstream markets today bear little resemblance to the mass media markets of earlier decades. Thus the obligation of public service organisations is increasingly *to serve an individual citizen* because each citizen may have unique needs. Consequently, a PSM organisation must provide contents and services to meet the needs of specific, smaller groups rather than only large national audiences. Second, trends in globalisation underscore a need for sustaining and fostering cultural diversity, and supporting democratic processes. In contrast with the first task, this calls for contents and services distinct to PSM that *bring together larger audiences*. Lastly, socio-cultural developments including individualisation and fragmentation require the unifying power of public service media with a high reach to facilitate a ‘*civic market place*’ alongside the purely commercial one.

Nissen’s schema (and other similar analyses, e.g. Dahlgren 2000) indicate the necessity for different modalities and co-related opportunities for participation in and via PSM: as audience, as individual, as citizen, as member of cultural communities (typically many of from personal interest to local, national, and global), as information-seeker, as content-provider, etc. Consequently, for PSM there are two axes of participation: 1) theoretically we are talking about participation as *position*; 2) practically we are talking about participation as *production*. These are equally important to the work of strategic development

given the fundamentally non-profit remit of public service media and its ethos for fostering democratic societies.

Two axes of participation

Concepts vary for understanding how audiences are addressed by media, and also how audiences position themselves in relation to media. Some scholars want to bypass the notion of audience position altogether to talk only about 'audienceship' as an interface between audiences and texts.² Others believe notions of mass communication and 'the work' of related audiences remain valid concepts if appropriately reconfigured (Napoli 2008). In this view audiences can be considered to still be 'working' in the user-generated environment, if not always in the same terms posited in the 1980s when it was thought that audiences 'work' for programmers and advertisers by watching television programmes (e.g. Jhally and Livant 1986).

Reality TV offers a case in point as the flagship of multimedia audience participation genres. Academic theorisation and public debate rather often reference 'audience participation' as articulated in the 1980s, insinuating that viewers work for commercial media enterprises when 'seduced' by a 'manufactured authenticity' characterising reality programming. This view is difficult to maintain, however, given that empirical analyses of audiences engaged with reality programming seem to indicate that part of the 'authenticity labour' undertaken by them is very much the partly participatory work with and for one's self in acts of self-development, self-discovery, self-identification, and the like (Aslama and Pantti, forthcoming). The example illustrates that although some traditional perceptions about participation as position persist, especially in PSB the classical and polarised 'citizens versus consumers', contemporary research suggests a more nuanced and complex situation; one characterised by multiple and diverse roles and modes of address. Such theoretical thinking about audience identity in the new media context is at least as important in scholarship about broadcasting, if perhaps less common as yet.

But there are new and interesting ideas beginning to emerge here, as well. John Ellis (2000) theorised that the TV viewer occupies a 'witnessing' position, an experience at least as frustrating as it is empowering because the witness has little power to affect any change in whatever is witnessed. In his depiction of modes of current television journalism, Mats Ekström (2000) noted that the imagined recipients of journalistic contents are addressed as knowledge-seeking citizens, listeners (of stories), or spectators (of spectacles). Trine Syvertsen (2004) observed that broadcasters have begun to address audiences not only as citizens and consumers but also as customers and players. Irene Costera Meier (2004) has advocated for the 'enjoyer' as a legitimate position for audiences, including especially for the 'quality programming' of public service broadcasting. Another way to diversify the thinking about audiences for public service media is evident in a divide between media generations aptly presented by

Gregory Ferrell Lowe (2008) in his work at YLE in Finland when employed as a senior adviser for strategic development. He characterised a divide between an older PSB generation characterised as 'traditionalists, universalists and collectivists' and a younger generation of PSM users characterised as 'acquirers, hedonists, and independents'. All such work imagines new and strategically useful ways to understand participation as position, a generalisable approach to (re)conceptualising audience in the multimedia environment.

As important an approach as this clearly is, offering an increasingly diverse array of starting points for assessing how PSM firms could foster participation and engagement, the kinds of participation associated with a client identity are very different in that it supposes a much greater degree of empowerment for the media consumer. As Lowe (2008b) suggested, however, there is much sloganeering within PSB firms about audiences as 'participants' or even in 'partnership' – most of which is so far mainly rhetorical and marketing strategy. Internal public service discourse about 'clientship' and the 'prosumer' already a while ago bypassed the conventional core idea of audience as citizen (Jääsaari et al forthcoming). This may be no bad thing if adopted as a supplemental term to offset limitations posed by a more restricted sense, but of course every conceptual choice informs mission statements, corporate strategy, and policy stance, either closing off or opening up varied options to steer development of contents and services. Greatly weakening, much less abandoning, the citizenship mode must have practical consequences, some of which would clearly seem to erode the foundation of PSM institutional legitimacy in post-modern democracy.

The concept of participation can refer to specific platforms or contents. In industry parlance, 'Participation Media' frequently references crossmedia or multimedia content production and products, as well as interactive possibilities for consumers to take part in production. The presumption, of course, is that the platform for participation is provided by conventional media institutions and that a great part of the content is produced by professionals. As mentioned earlier, 'reality programming' is often quoted as an example par excellence of 'participation media' and of truly 'active audiences', since audiences follow television shows, vote by mobile, and chat online (Tincknell and Raghuram 2002).

But it is already clear that non-traditional media firms together with flexible and increasingly universal social media tools have overtaken many traditional tasks of mass media. As noted in a recent PEW Foundation study on news media³, social networking and citizen video sharing have broadened into a medium of news distribution and are not only for social interaction and entertainment contents today. This non-professional and informal communication is nonetheless facilitating serious political activism (boyd 2008). Facebook and Twitter offer current examples during the crisis in Pakistan, and (albeit in different ways) in elections in Iran and in the U.S.⁴ There are instances, as well, where production by amateurs has outdone mainstream media output in terms of content relevance and in the speed of communication: For instance, Kivikuru (2006) analysed the news coverage in 2005 in Finland of the Tsunami

crisis and noted the importance of Finnish diving sites in providing the most up-to-date information about Finns in Thailand.

It could be argued that the intersection between source-driven (push) participation and the more spontaneous, informal user-driven (pull) participation of social media suggests a variation on the theme of user-generated content production; something that is *systematic and independent* of mainstream media. This is a variety of participation in production that is purely non-commercial and non-institutional that is evident in crowd sourcing, for example, where the foundation is joint production. There is a hub where interested publics contribute, collect, edit and develop information. This production is neither facilitated by nor channelled through any professional means of media production and distribution. The Wikipedia online encyclopaedia is the most successful representative case. But there have been other (often short lived) projects in crowd sourced journalism, and recent experiments would include a Facebook-directed animation⁵ and a collaborative translation service for TV shows⁶.

Thus, there are essential modes for participation as production already quite evident. The variations and combinations are potentially very important to PSM, if indeed this truthfully implies media services of, by and for the public. Certainly there is enough case history to accept the claim that 'participation as production' is no fad; it is a plethora of interrelated phenomena with very real and quite practical socio-cultural consequences. As noted by others, the period of 'individualistic experimentation' with participatory media is probably over as all kinds of digital platforms and services are currently being embraced by communities, businesses, civil society organisations, political parties and universities (Clark and Aufderheide 2009). The trend may be expected to grow as broadband penetration grows in West and elsewhere⁷ and as the importance of mobile communication also takes off. Social networks are far from only for the younger generations today⁸. A variety of organisations for the most varied assortment of publics have established a viable presence in popular social networking sites.

The challenge for PSM

The question for PSM, then, is what kind of participatory mix to engage in and to facilitate? Should PSM participate in popular Web 2.0 phenomena, and beyond that seek to create new options and even alternatives? Or should PSM act mainly as hubs – as a kind of knowledge broker – for PSM-relevant user-generated contents? Obviously the answer has strategic implications because it goes to the firm's intentions in positioning itself in the market and each variation requires different formulations in resource allocation to achieve the position. And this really can't be put off because one thing is certain: public participation in media will not disappear. It is in fact likely to grow. Benkler (2006) thinks we are entering an era of the "non-proprietary networked information economy", which Prior (2007) characterises as a "post-broadcast democracy".

From the perspective of PSM, participation as production poses a fundamental uncertainty regarding who wants to participate, when, and how? If PSM would take their traditional diversity principle seriously, then the way forward must encourage providing their varied publics (conceived as strategic segments) with differing, relevant ways to participate. Phenomena such as Facebook is certainly becoming mainstream, while far fewer have so far demonstrated desire to engage in microblogging or to participate in deciding the ending for things such as interactive drama. There is relatively little research to which to base strategic decisions as yet, however, beyond some aggregate statistical data on the everyday uses and meanings of Web 2.0. Still, studies on fans of multimedia products such as reality television, and online fandom in general, suggest some scale of participation intensity – or intensity of desire to participate. Some multimedia products may evoke ‘hyperactive participation’ (Hautakangas 2006). But one must be cautious. In various places and to varying degrees, a significant portion of people still prefer to be mostly engaged as ‘audiences’ in a rather traditional sense and seemingly do not care for intense involvement.

A study on viewers who participated in an online activity involving a television series (Costello and Moore 2007) revealed, for example, a variety of approaches that audience members took regarding participation. In “the lower end of the activity continuum” were audience members who merely wanted to share their experiences with other fans/viewers. Participation for them meant having a more informed and pleasurable position as a consumer of the media product. They were not interested to influence the programme, much less to affect the entertainment industry. On the other end of the scale were those who wanted to inform the production process and to create their own versions of a favourite programme.

Moreover, to date it seems that participation is more readily supported in entertainment genres and that innovation in participatory journalism by traditional media institutions remains quite limited.⁹ While journalists may share their blogs and offer options for commenting or sharing their stories, a survey on citizen-based media in the U.S.¹⁰ verified that citizens are mostly used as sources rather than given opportunities to produce journalistic content. Also, the possibilities for participation may not directly translate into a sense of engagement. A recent Finnish survey on people’s experiences of empowerment in the media (Karppinen and Jääsaari 2007) clearly showed that Finns, at least, do not feel significantly empowered by new media. While the internet is an increasingly important news source for many, respondents felt audiences are the least likely parties to have any influence on media contents. If this is true for new media which is interactive by nature and design, one can imagine how very limited any sense of empowerment in and influence on the contents of old media – much less in any other aspect.

Finally, it is quite uncertain that the position of audiences as information-seeking citizens is practically ‘outdated’. To continue with the Finnish example, numerous surveys and other research on audiences imply that the citizen-viewer is highly evident in Finland, that s/he wants to be addressed as such (among

other identities and needs), and s/he remains concerned about the diversity of traditional television programming (Aslama 2008; Jääsaari 2004). While political participatory culture has surely changed in all (Western) countries in recent decades, there are no strong indications that the so-called “crisis of public communication” (Blumer and Gurevitch 1995) has resulted in dramatic decline in participation or distrust in politics. The dilemma seems to be about a more complex disconnection between the media, decision-making elites of official politics and citizens (see Nieminen et al 2005: 6-12).

Conclusion: diversity, participation, and strategic alliances

Predictions about the role of PSM produced by thinkers, researchers, managers, committees, working groups and other bodies are often vague, and vaguely similar. A few years ago in concluding its ‘Phase One’ review on public service broadcasting, Britain’s Office of Communication [Ofcom] concluded that continued evolution in the way audiences consume media will present a range of new opportunities for achieving public service purposes. Consequently, the report stated, there is a broad range of plausible outcomes for audiences’ future use of different kinds of media, and the level of take-up of innovative interactive and mobile services.¹¹ The latest recommendations in ‘Phase Two’ affirm that message while also pointing to an implication of decisive importance: “The central question is how a historically strong and successful public service broadcasting system can navigate from its analogue form to a new digital model. We need to sustain its quality and creative spirit while also capturing the opportunities of broadband distribution, mobility and interactivity”.¹²

Although surely meaningful, PSM managers cannot rely for strategies on “a broad range of plausible outcomes”. These public service companies must urgently choose some participatory mix, which is likely to vary in across contexts and in media, to create a viable future for PSM audiences as participants and not merely as competitive ‘targets’ resources of self-interested importance to these firms. There are many options, which is of course a big part of the problem in practical terms (as opposed to theoretical musings). The sheer diversity of participation envisioned by Jessica Clark and Pat Auferheide (2009) in their recent report on *Public Media 2.0* indicates that “the people formerly known as the audience now are at the centre of media”, and accordingly presents a model of a new “public media” as “people-centric”. In this idea the authors insinuate that people deal with their own needs, identities, affinities, services, emergencies, work, creativity, communities, issues, and education, as well as organisations they belong and products they consume, not only more often through media but also more directly in media than before. They expect this to increase.

The paramount strategic challenge for PSM organisations is twofold: (1) to recognise the importance of participatory diversity, and (2) to decide the basis and parameters they will endorse to position participation as a core value in

PSM philosophy and a central component of their operational remits. There are several allies, areas of foci, and sources for inspiration that PSM could potentially utilise when taking diversity seriously. One forerunner regarding diversity of participation is community media, which has traditionally addressed specific audience needs in geographic or thematic terms, and has been specifically dependent on supporters' active engagement. Of course the viability of any partnership arrangements, however constructed, will depend on the health of each partner and the degree to which authentic shared benefits are anticipated. However, alone some issues and practices of community media might inspire PSM R&D.

A sign of the times is, perhaps, that the European Union has recognised community media as an opportunity and accordingly commissioned a study on the state of the art of community media in Europe. The EU Parliament recently voted on a Motion for a resolution on the matter.¹³ The core idea is that community media will serve as one medium for securing social cohesion and, they hope, the EU's connection with its citizens. But this begs important questions, in turn. While content production and distribution and the related roles of those (formerly?) known as audiences are important in this discussion, there is another and vital sphere in terms of people's awareness of, and participation in, media policy making. That ought to be as crucial an aspect in these times of transition from PSB to PSM when the question is largely about transnational new media and when policy approaches in Europe differ greatly in varied national contexts. The so-called 'media reform' or 'media justice' movements are not very typical in Europe, but certainly alive in North America and the U.K., and are becoming increasingly global. Various civic organisations are increasingly concerned with diversity in reference to media ownership concentration and alternative media outlets, the representation of voices in media content, access to media technologies and contents, net neutrality, and so on (Hackett and Carroll 2006; McChesney 2007).

In addition, the importance of public participation in media policy deliberation, and more pointedly, perhaps, also in media governance, is becoming a topic of European-wide discussion. This is evident in a recent report from the Council of Europe (Scifo 2009). In terms of internal organisational governance, recommendations urge media organisations on every platform to redefine their relations with their audiences and open their content to real conversation in order to build and maintain a constant dialogue with clear and accountable procedures (*ibid*: 21). It is certainly high time: In the European environment where support for PSM by policy-making and regulation is ambiguous and contradictory at best, public debate seems to circulate endlessly around funding PSM and the 'distortion' of market trading conditions to the exclusion of all else. Relevant challenges to media diversity in all three terms discussed here – sources, contents and participations – are of direct and crucial importance to the future of PSM in its capacity to safeguard diversity.

Finally, PSM should work with scholars in systematic analyses of diversity of participation. Theoretical conceptualisations can be inspiring in terms of

participation as a position, and empirical research can shed light on ways and possibilities of participation as production. Still, yet another point of considerable importance is how diversity of participation can be *assessed*? As Barbara Griffen-Foley (2005) observed, 'audience participation' has at least a century of history as part of mass communication and that history indicates that the mere presence of PSM in new media is not enough to guarantee that robust participation actually happens in practice. So a core issue in practical terms for diversity of participation is how to measure mission performance, whatever the positions taken or production practices offered. Scholars with an interest in the diversity principle, empirical assessments, media strategies and media policy, should be engaged in developing ways to analyse how diversity of participation is realised in media systems, and how PSM contribute to it. In sum, understanding, advocating, and collaborating for the advancement of diversity of participation is at least one key to a winning strategy for PSM of the future.

Notes

1. The European Union Audiovisual Media Directive of 2007 noted that PSB should be able to benefit from technological advancement: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:332:0027:0045:EN:PDF> (accessed 28 July 2009).
2. Conceptualisation by Li (2009): <http://canarytrap.net/2009/05/audiences-and-audienceship/> (accessed 28 July 2009).
3. See, www.stateofthedia.org/2009 (accessed 28 July 2009).
4. See the report by the Center for Social Media, American University, on Twitter and the U.S. elections: http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/resources/publications/public_media_20_field_report_building_social_media_infrastructure_to_engage/ (accessed 28 July 2009).
5. See, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/16/movies/16mass.html?_r=5 (accessed 28 July 2009).
6. See, <http://canarytrap.net/2009/06/collaborative-transnational-audienceships-viikinet/> (accessed 28 July 2009).
7. See, e.g., <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm> (accessed 28 July 2009).
8. See, e.g., http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/272/report_display.asp (accessed 28 July 2009).
9. There are, and have been, several experiments, such as the BBC World's citizen journalism project: http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/haveyoursay/2009/04/090406_yourstoryexplain.shtml (accessed 28 July 2009).
10. See, http://www.stateofthedia.org/2009/narrative_special_citizenbasedmedia.php?media=12&cat=0 (accessed 28 July 2009).
11. See, <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/psb/psb/> (accessed 28 July 2009).
12. See, http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/psb2_phase2/statement/ (accessed 28 July 2009).
13. See, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A6-2008-0263&language=EN&mode=XML> (accessed 28 July 2009).

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The Media Experience Environment for PSM

Recognising Opportunities of a Societing Function

Benjamin Julien Hartmann

This chapter addresses opportunities for public service media [PSM] deriving from complex social changes with emphasis on value and experience. Important opportunities invite examination: 1) What if PSM brands were understood primarily as social enablers – as the vehicles and platforms on which people bond together? 2) What if public service media took ‘connectivity’ and ‘mediation’ as an additional defining function for orientation and operation?

Several authors identified the postmodern condition as a framework for understanding societal change dynamics today (e.g. Bardoel and Lowe 2007; Cova 1996; Nissen 2006). This chapter argues that the postmodern social condition expands rather than limits opportunities for the development of public service media firms. Given the paradigmatic shift in public service policy towards more consumerist values in recent years (van Cuilenburg and McQuail 2003: 200), and an emerging consumer-centrism (Ots 2009: forthcoming), here argumentation draws on sources from marketing and consumer research for useful theoretical concepts to deepen understanding about the transition to PSM and the role of the public in this development. In this later sense these ideas are especially pertinent to consideration of ‘the public’ in public service media.

I begin with discussion of postmodern societal dynamics and implications on the nature of value and its creation. This furnishes the basis for theorising a ‘societing function’ for PSM to complement the traditional ‘casting function’ of PSB. Here the idea of a general ‘media experience environment’ is introduced, an analytical framework for research about implications of the postmodern condition for media firms. It is argued that a key for developing PSM is the societing function whereby PSM is understood as social enablers and facilitators – as active mediators serving a polypublic’s interests to interact. This idea is illustrated with two cases. A case in German public service radio shows how a societing function can supplement the traditional casting function. The case of a Finnish PSM demonstrates how the entire experience environment has become an issue of co-creation between the PSM firm and various publics, including commercial organisations and consumers. The chapter ends with discussion of implications, a brief note on limitations and main conclusions.

Postmodern societal dynamics

Today, we are not born into a strong pre-existing identity of traditional forms of communities such as rural village, family, or religion (Cova 1997). While these traditional forms of community still exist, their significance for identities is challenged as individuals continuously desired liberation since the advent of modernity. Individuals and their actions are now characterised by higher degrees of mobility in spatial and social dimensions (ibid). This shift towards individual freedom and autonomy goes hand in hand with a more individualistic, autonomous, and fragmented society (see Firat and Venkatesh 1993). Although freed from traditional community restrictions, it has been suggested that the postmodern condition can be paradoxically understood as a movement where individuals seek a counterforce to individualism entailing a redefined community condition as a platform for renewed social cohesion (Maffesoli 1996; Cova 1997).

Guided by this de-differentiation, people gravitate towards and seek a condition of belonging in alternative social arrangements described as 'neo-tribes' (Cova 1997; Maffesoli 1996). The word tribe is a metaphor that speaks to fragmented social arrangements. These can be conceived as groups held together by shared emotions, lifestyles, varied systems of moral beliefs, shared experiences, and consumption practices (Cova and Cova 2001, 2002; Cova, Kozinets and Shankar 2007). For example, people bond based on shared interest in motorcycles, parenting, cooking, music, or by the love of a home region. Tribal membership often involves a local sense of identification based on a subjective feeling of belonging. But neo-tribes are unstable groupings because individuals decide which tribe to belong to, will often belong to multiple tribes, and may grow out of some for varied reasons.

Underlying this is Giddens' (1991) idea that building self-identity is a necessity, not an option one could choose to leave aside. Identity has become a central problem (see Bauman 2001) as it entails tension between construction and expression of individual identity ('me') and collective identity ('we'). Resolving the tension explains why individuals merge into micro-groups to find 'we' and express 'me'.

While there are certainly limitations with the concept of tribes, the perspective is helpful for understanding dynamics of social changes underway in contemporary societies. Two aspects should be underlined. First, among the things characterising the postmodern condition, the tension between individuality and communality, is highly pertinent. Second, the tribal view theorises society as constituted of networks of many fragmented groups (Cova 1997; Cova and Cova 2001, 2002). From this follows two practical implications: 1) because of the tension between individuality and communality consumers demand *both* individual ('me') and tribal ('we') experiences (Cova and Pace 2006); 2) the tribal view stimulates an alternative view to conceptualise 'the public in public service media'. In this perspective, 'the public', especially the ghostly mass of consumers, appears comprised of fragmented groups. Unlike market seg-

ments, these groups are less stable and more complex, with individuals being members of many tribes and migrating from tribe to tribe based on their own evolving self-interests.

The nature and creation of value

Leaving aside discussions on 'public value' and 'public interest' for the moment, it is here argued that one needs to understand what value means to consumers of public service media content and services. In this context, notions of postmodern societal dynamics have implications regarding what constitutes meaningful value for consumers. Of course PSB has a long history of self-justification in both rhetorical and operational terms, especially in Western Europe. This was a topic of considerable importance in the first RIPE conference in 2002 (see Lowe and Hujanen 2003). In recent years a worrisome lack has been observed, however, regarding good faith efforts to renew legitimacy for the enterprise when looking from the outside-in, as argued in this volume and as a primary outcome of the 2008 conference.

The influential idea advanced by Cova (1997) is that products and services have value beyond their functional use because they hold linking or relational value. Linking value is what allows and supports social interaction, creating and reinforcing social bonds – the sense of *we-ness*. This was a core issue in the 2004 RIPE conference and a defining dimension of the 2005 book (Lowe and Jauert 2005). With reference to that body of work, and simply put, products and services – mediated above all – are capable of linking people via processes of bridging and bonding. What is proposed here, is that consumers demonstrate this when they use media to assist in social bonding. As Cova and Cova (2002: 600) observed, "...today consumers are looking not only for products and services which enable them to be freer, but also for products, services, employees and physical surroundings which can link them to others, to a tribe".

From a marketing perspective the idea that people can use products and services to find togetherness has been formative in development supporting consumer bonding processes. Today firms might want to build brand communities, conceived as specialised and rather stable tribes that revolve around a certain brand (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). The approach to marketing in this vein has been described as 'tribal marketing' or a 'societing approach' (Cova and Cova 2001, 2002). 'Societing' refers to the active role of firms in fostering social aggregation, thereby helping create an extra dimension of meaningful value in products and services. 'Societing' alludes to promoting consumer-consumer interactions rather than consumer-firm interactions. Based on a feeling of belonging, tribes are ultimately comprised of the interactions taking place between members. Helping to facilitate those interactions is essential to the very formation and structuring of a social aggregate.

Supporting the development of 'we-ness' through a distinct offering has at least two implications for managers: 1) its relational value needs to be un-

derstood and managed at least as well as the functional value of a product or service; and 2) it is increasingly important to build products and services capable of facilitating bonding and bridging between people rather than merely 'targeting' products and services to abstracted average consumers. Because the linking value of any offering will be, and only can be, socially co-created with and by media consumers, they must be understood as vital co-creators of value (Vargo and Lusch 2004).

What does this mean for public service media? In the light of received wisdom and accepted practice in traditional PSB, important opportunities emerge for PSM to expand its value creation in explicitly social terms. Simply put, linking value should be a core consideration of PSM managers. Re-thinking the public service mission and its functions to meet changed conditions in new contexts with more socially relevant complexities opens new opportunities for strategic corporate development. Because the public creates much of the value in what constitutes service in media today – public or private – they are not only the payers and owners of public media but increasingly also the experts on service value and co-operative production. This is a central reason why the public matters *in* public service media and not only for and to it. This was suggested as a constituent determinant of product or service value where the future of PSM is not mainly about transmission but rather communication (Lowe and Bardoel 2007).

This chapter argues that creating value is not only an internal organisational matter, but is very much and increasingly about helping the public mobilise to create their own value for their own interests (Normann and Ramirez 1993). This can be done by offering products and services that are valuable and meaningful not only in terms of their use value, but especially in terms of their linking value. The creation of value therefore has a critical social dimension in that it acknowledges the public as co-creators of what counts as value, and ultimately the arbiters of how much and of which kinds.

Obviously this is a balancing act. Facilitating a societing function is not about shifting responsibility for value creation to consumers, thereby exploiting them as 'non-paid employees'. It is about reframing the primary responsibility of managers in PSM firms because paying consumers of PSM demand a sense of community and social bonding. PSM managers must start thinking about how to serve that for publics demanding such services as fundamental to media experience.

New complexities and opportunities: From 'casting' to 'societing'

Public service broadcasting has a long, respected history of transmitting content, mainly to audiences conceived as national and a mass. The objective has been to create value on foundational principles summarised as citizenship, universality and quality (e.g. Born and Prosser 2001). But the mass audience approach in traditional broadcasting was understood to be problematic already decades ago (Coase 1966: 443):

If viewers are thought of as 'the mass audience' they will be offered only the average of common experience and awareness; the 'ordinary'; the commonplace. [...] 'To give the public what it wants' is a misleading phrase: misleading because as commonly used it has the appearance of an appeal to democratic principle but the appearance is deceptive. It is in fact patronising and arrogant, in that it claims to know what the public is, but defines it as no more than the mass audience; and in that it claims to know what it wants, but limits its choice to the average of experience.

Against the background of complexities of postmodern societal dynamics and value creation, this insight finds fresh relevance in recognising opportunities and limitations the social condition poses for the viability of a unified orientation and organisation, a characteristic notion inside public service broadcasting companies. One must begin by asking questions about the functions of PSM and addressing the nature of experience and value creation, at least in developed democracies and mature media markets.

The thesis of a tribalised society connects with discussions on audience fragmentation (McQuail 2005) and problematises conceptions of 'the public'. Rather than a unified and cohesive entity, one is actually talking about, and trying to serve, a polymorphous range of complex publics – a polypublic, if you will. Under such circumstances a 'mass broadcasting' approach designed to please a ghostly average receiver can't hope to create sufficiently meaningful value simply through transmitting content as the sum of all intents. Thus, many PSM practitioners have begun to understand their audience as fragmented groups of active media consumers and started to find ways to co-create meaningful value. What follows supports this and aims to fuel argumentation for a more refined approach to PSM.

In the experience of tribes, media gain importance by playing a particular and essential role addressing the tension between individuality and community. Tribes rely on media *to mediate*. They must do this effectively between separate individuals to facilitate sharing the feelings of communality. New media can better facilitate social cohesion (e.g. Kozinets 1999; Nissen 2006; Lowe 2008). Today people are connecting in social networks and virtual communities in which they consume, produce, modify, re-mix, and publish media content, belonging to many and diverse tribes. The social world has become more complex, and so PSM is and must be more complex than PSB. People use media for their own purposes. The social reality "requires media companies to rethink old assumptions about what it means to consume media (because)...if old consumers were assumed to be passive, the new consumers are active" (Jenkins 2006: 18). Under postmodern conditions, all of this poses a fascinating divergence from the traditional orientation and conduct of public service broadcasting with regard to media consumption and value creation by a polypublic.

As noted earlier, the traditional conduct of PSB adheres to a primary logic of transmission (Bardoel and Lowe 2007), here labelled a 'casting' function. Even

in the PSM context making content available is mostly described as variations in casting – broadcasting, narrowcasting, podcasting, etc. The critical connotation is that value overwhelmingly resides *in* the content; that is where *all* the information or entertainment exists. Casting logic supposes a linear, source-centred mode of value creation that is conditioned to produce primarily individual experiences that are nonetheless rather uniform in complexion.

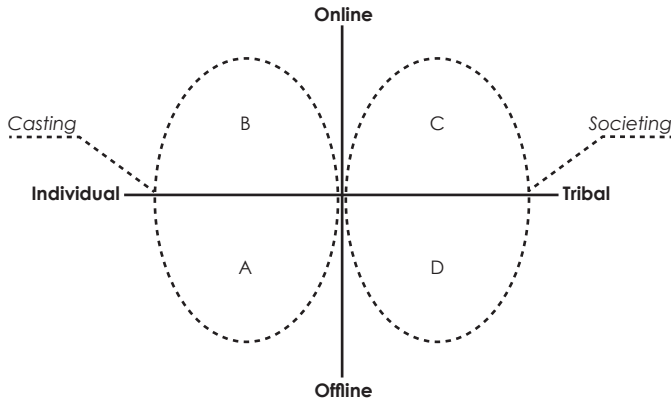
Taking the discussion above into account, there are good reasons for developing PSM logic beyond its PSB precedents. Media users are consumers looking for both individual and communal experiences. They appreciate the linking value of media because it satisfies that complex need and helps them gravitate towards personally relevant social aggregates. If one accepts the idea that today people value the capacity media offer for embedding in varied cultural spheres and seek a robust sense of community and connectivity while creating their own personalised experiences, then a horizon function of service in public media must be to serve as a ‘societing’ agent. An agent that helps in facilitating ‘witness’ not only by broadcasting with reference to a national culture, but in literally bringing people together. In this view societing is mediating between people in their many roles as a vital enlargement of the PSM value proposition.

The media experience environment

A key implication is that while broadcasting to a mass audience is the historic model, the contemporary condition has opened additional opportunities to create ‘experience environments’ that facilitate both individual and communal brand experiences using several means of mediation. That is to say, the dimensions of mediation value have become more complex. The proposed ‘media experience environment’ aims to emphasise complementary modes of media operation. Informed by case-based research on two PSM firms (reported later), the following analytical framework is suggested (Figure 1). It represents two important dimensions public service media act on: Experience and Means of mediation. With these dimensions it is possible to map the two functions of media argued in this chapter: Casting and Societing.

Online/Offline

The vertical axis situates different means of mediation. This axis is anchored in the question of *where shall value for media consumers be created?* While there are certainly many technological platforms for mediation, over the last years one issue has been in the centre of attention in discussions on the development of the media landscape: the Internet. Therefore, a simplistic distinction shall be made here between whether media strives to create value for consumers online or not. *Online* refers to mediation using the Internet. Examples include websites and audio/video streams. *Offline* refers to mediation using transmitters, i.e. radio, television, satellite, etc.

Figure 1. Dialectics of the media experience environment

Individual/Tribal

On the horizontal axis, different types of experiences are mapped. This axis relates to the question of *'what kind of value shall be created by media consumers, i.e. experienced?'*. Of all the experiences media can offer, the two elements of 'individual' and 'tribal' are of special relevance in this discussion. *Individual* refers to experiences that are primarily achieved through linear media offering consumers one-way communication from transmitter to receiver. This type of experience involves a low degree of reciprocity designated *in* the medium. Examples include traditional TV, or traditional radio listening. However, while a family watching TV can certainly interact with each other, and therefore can construct experiences of communality and 'we-ness', this type of interaction and experience of we-ness is still not the primary goal and not *mediated* through the medium.

Tribal refers to those experiences that resonate more with the notion of communal experiences offered by media allowing high degrees of interactivity. Although based on feelings of virtual belonging to a tribe, concrete tribal experiences are supported and mediated through non-linear interaction with other like-minded people. With focus on consumer-consumer interaction, examples include online communities, chat rooms, physical gatherings, and events. While linear media can also provide the basis for social bonding, e.g. talking about last night's programme at lunch, here non-linear experience refers to tribal interactivity *through* mediation.

Two different value propositions

What this framework suggests is that in addition to the more traditional PSB logic of *casting* (areas A and B), the new logic emerging for PSM is a function of *societing* (areas C and D). These two functions hold different value proposi-

tions. While casting refers to the *value of content in itself*, societing refers to the *value of mediating* between people per se, in an important sense to the value of content in context. One needs to recognise that mediation holds relational value. The societing function refers to the active role of PSM in fostering social aggregation and thereby helping create a social dimension of meaningful value by promoting consumer-consumer interactions and not only consumer-firm interactions. The idea of PSB as a socialising agent, as argued by Jauert and Lowe (2005), is here elaborated as a societing function in the PSM context.

One issue gains special importance here. Because ‘online’ does not automatically create ‘tribal experiences’, nor ‘offline’ automatically ‘individual experiences’, thinking of PSM functions as ‘casting’ and ‘societing’ detaches the role of public service media from the medium used to fulfill the roles. We instead start with the function and only then decide how to best fulfill the mission. Rather than focusing on a few areas (e.g. A+B), PSM firms should think about how to exploit the full range of opportunities in fulfilling its value propositions (A+B+C+D). This follows ideas earlier proposed by Alm and Lowe (2001) about managing the “PSB polymedia enterprise”. The idea proposed here is that public service media may additionally act as an enablement platform for citizens to create *their own* tribal experiences. Therefore, the societing logic re-vision public service philosophy to support an enriched sense and sensibility in the mediating role. The logic of societing acknowledges that value has crucial social dimensions beyond content in and of itself. Quality is not only about what is sent but what is embraced, incorporated, encouraged and *enabled*.

Cases: radioeins and YLE

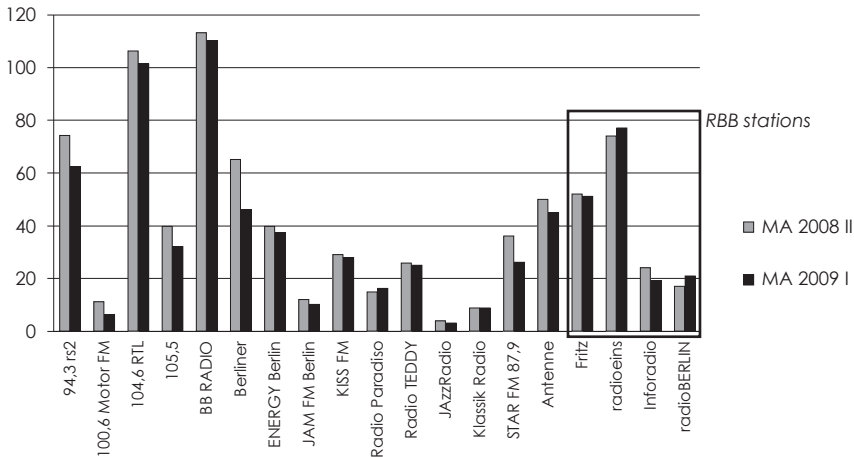
The following offers concrete examples and as a preliminary empirical basis to demonstrate how the concepts addressed in this chapter resonate for the development of PSM value propositions. The purpose of research was to investigate how and in what ways PSM providers attempt to create societing experiences. The case insights and theorisations are informed by interviews with respondents in Potsdam-Babelsberg, Germany with study of archival material gathered on site and via the internet in the case of radioeins. The interview material was transcribed, checked by the respondents, and subsequently analysed, interpreted and translated by the author. Research about YLE’s enablement strategy was conducted via the internet and online correspondence.

radioeins

In the past ten years (plus) the German radio landscape has developed into a complex dual system where private and public service radio stations compete. One of five public service radio stations in the Berlin/Brandenburg region, radioeins is operated by Rundfunk Berlin Brandenburg [RBB], which originates from a 2003 merger of two ARD firms, Sender Freies Berlin [SFB] and Ostdeutscher

Rundfunk Brandenburg [ORB] (RBB 2007). An urban programme that targets listeners aged 29-49 (ibid), radioeins enjoys relatively high autonomy within RBB. Figure 2 is an overview of the radio landscape in Berlin and Brandenburg.

Figure 2. Listening in: the radio landscape in Berlin/Brandenburg¹



Source: www.reichweiten.de

Casting (areas A+B)

The traditional radio experience can be mapped into area A of the model presented earlier. Like many other stations, radioeins has enlarged its casting value proposition by building online spheres. The station has a web presence, an online stream, and a tweet, all of which make it easy to access information about songs, playlists, hosted activities and to hear the current programme online. The station's management considers such activities vital extensions of traditional radio-centric functions:

Well, I believe that today one cannot do public-service radio without also being online. That's just part of the game and those people, this generation that is growing up now, they again will handle this completely differently; for them, it is entirely natural (taken for granted) to be permanently on the Internet; and now, if one as public-service radio kept out of this, one would be absolutely cut-off, one would simply be left outside.

This line of argumentation is about 'being where your audience is', a familiar argument in contemporary discussion legitimating the transition to PSM (e.g. see Nissen 2006 and Lowe 2008). Indeed, utilising the internet as an auxiliary or ancillary distribution channel may enhance the value proposition of traditional

radio broadcasting. Many Germans living abroad appreciate listening to their 'home' radio station via the internet because it provides a sense of being connected. Moreover, archival utilities expand the benefits by reducing dependency on time and in providing additional content (e.g. podcasting). These gadgets may add to the value proposition of PSB as PSM by increasing availability of content, as well as the scope and scale of information, thereby strengthening a traditional casting function that continues to be used and relevant. Because their design is of a more linear nature, these services can anyway be mapped into area B as they are mainly about the value of content in itself.

Societing (areas C+D)

As argued, mediation is about more than casting. As a manager at radioeins put it, "It is beautiful...if two listeners, who did not know each other in advance link with each other". The specific approaches to radioeins' societing function are rather interesting in terms of tribal experiences and interaction. The case shows how the station has enlarged their value proposition by expanding openness to allow for co-creation of value and communal experiences.

This happens online as radioeins continuously engages in social campaigns. These include various local gatherings revolving around the radioeins brand. One current example (RBB 2009) is radioeins schwimmt oben (roughly: radioeins floats on top). In co-operation with experts in water sports, radioeins invites listeners to participate in sailing trips, match races, raft building, and thematic sailing days, such as 'moonlight sailing', 'sailing for gay people', or 'family matches'. On 3 May 2009 approximately 350 radioeins listeners participated in one such sailing day – a three-day crash course under professional supervision with a radio moderator (radioeins.de 2009a). As a manager explained, "That means radioeins is a programme that cultivates a community-thought, but we don't shout it from the housetops like some other radio stations that are talking of club community or something like that".

During these tribal activities listeners get to know each other, connect and interact in a situation of local co-presence that is mediated by this public service radio brand. Because such social action campaigns are explicitly designed to provide a platform for listeners to interact with each other, they represent an approach to value creation that is more tribal and participative. Here, radioeins clearly aims to design experiences of a more interactive and tribal nature. These activities can be mapped into area D. It is at least as much about context as content.

The Digital Band Room (radioeins.de 2009b) is a second and prime example of online collaboration in a kind of wiki-media mode. Enabled by the radioeins brand, amateur musicians among listeners were invited to team up and, by using special software, compose a song together in iterative steps over the Internet. For example, one listener has a great bass line, another contributes a drum part, and a third person adds vocals. Together they create and record their song. A radioeins manager said about 300 signed up and that, in the end,

25 tracks were submitted to a judging jury, “which is a lot, if you take into consideration that those people really had to do creative work and only had about one week of time for that”, says a manager.

The Digital Band Room was part of a radioeins theme day labeled “modern times – how digital media change our everyday life”. The project demonstrates fostering reciprocity and co-production in value creation. Value is socially created via collaboration and interaction. In the radioeins manager’s view, “What is essential with this idea is that musicians can link with one another across spatial distances. Well, that was the goal of this activity”. Here, the idea was to equip the radioeins brand with linking value. Although a one-time activity within a set time frame, the essential idea of providing tribal experiences is also reflected in radioeins parties and their online community. As another manager explained, “radioeins also has a strong community with its listener’s area, where it has tried to link the people, the listeners, with each other and to link them to the radio station”. Thus, there are two critical dimensions of connectivity – the first for listeners between themselves and the second with and for the radio station.

The case demonstrates that notions of the passive audience belong to the past and that tribal experiences are actively sought for and integrated in the value proposition. On a more strategic level, tribal gatherings are used as a sincere and authentic interaction tool. Primarily to provide the brand with linking value, they are designed to be a basis for listeners bonding together, but also have clear loyalty goals for radioeins.

Enabling interaction and explicitly providing platforms for media users to link with each other is a strategic approach demonstrating the practical utility of the societing function. When listeners are invited to sail, to build rafts, to compose and record songs, to upload their own music, and to interact in tribes on a radio brand platform, the radio experience environment exceeds traditional associations of the transmission medium per se. Of course one may wonder if this is still radio or something else. But in the view of a radioeins manager it is a vital component of radio’s development as a medium and service:

I think this developed so well because, right from the outset, we have said that we are not only a radio station that only pays attention to what comes out of the radio, but rather events and radio are just connected very closely with one another, and one is helping the other. We are not doing an event just for the sake of doing it; our core duty for that matter is radio. But if it goes well together and we really have to offer something to the listener – just like with this sailing issue now – then the listeners benefit from being radioeins listeners. We accompany the listeners in their life, their everyday life, and that includes leisure time, cultural offers, and of course information on what is going on.

Here, then, are two important features of the media experience environment: Symbiosis and Synthesis. Different elements in the environment are symbiotic

in that each feeds the other and they are interdependent. They are synthetic in that the experience environment is the combination of all the elements which are, essentially, produced for affect.

The strategic dimension: YLE's enabling strategy

While the radioeins case demonstrates how one local station attempts to create experiences for its audiences by using a synthetic and symbiotic media experience environment, the YLE case points to a similar direction but more squarely focused on the strategic dimension of value co-creation for a national social context.

Yleisradio Oy [YLE] is Finland's national public service broadcasting company. YLE has four national television channels, six radio channels, 25 regional radio programmes, and online services at www.yle.fi. YLE (2009a) aspires to "provide Finns with equal opportunities to obtain information, have *experiences*, be entertained and to educate and develop *themselves*" on equal terms (emphasis added by author).

In the past couple of years YLE introduced as a core ingredient of corporate development the 'enabling strategy'. This is now a fundamental element of YLE's overall strategy for its future and is based on principles of openness, partnership, and co-operation (YLE 2009b). "The enabling strategy is designed to strengthen the nation's competence and national culture as well as to create business opportunities. At the level of organisations, the aim is to create new operating and business opportunities. At the level of individuals, the aim is to find environments and tools for self-expression and development" (YLE 2008).

The enabling idea is that the public owns what YLE makes, and indeed the firm in itself. The public therefore has rights to use YLE properties without additional payment beyond annual licence fees. YLE content and services ought to be freely available for use, re-use and re-shaping, even by commercial operators. This later is a sticking point, as we will come back to. Some important aspects of the enabling strategy include the notion that YLE is bringing contents to new distribution channels more broadly than before, that the company is keen to harness user-oriented development resources outside the company and that YLE engages in co-operation with companies, educational bodies, public administration, civic society parties and, importantly, with citizens (YLE 2009b).

Instead of relying on a traditional casting function and social conditioning as the essential mission of expertise by professional transmitters – the historic logic of PSB – YLE is embedding a logic that PSM ought to be mainly about creating and constructing value as a shared expertise of professional mediators, varied organisations, and media consumers. That is evident in the "että/sekä aspect of corporate strategy – "this and also that", as framed here meaning casting and also societing. The approach recognises that the public creates much of the

value in what constitutes service in media today – public and private. People are not only the payers and owners of public media, ultimately they are the experts in co-operative production and the arbiters of service value. This is why the public matters *in* public service media in Finland.

The radioeins case shows how PSM attempts to create a beneficial structure conducive to a media experience environment. At YLE the entire media experience environment itself is open to be mutually co-designed and re-designed by the various publics construed as paying consumers with ownership rights. While the enabling strategy certainly involves engaging “ (...) in co-operation with distribution, telecoms and media companies, independent production companies, other content producers, educational bodies, public administration and civic society parties (...)”, it explicitly aims to engage citizens as consumers in reshaping not only YLE contents, but also its societing function and PSM experience environment. No longer is this structure being dictated by an institution alone – the PSM media experience is co-constituted by respecting the public as partners helping to shape and re-shape how public service media is, can, and shall be experienced.

At the individual level this aim is explicitly stated: “to find environments and tools for self-expression”. The enabling strategy pursues a grassroots bottom-up approach to a societing function. How individuals want to construct ‘me’ and ‘we’ using the structures and resources of PSM is partly in their hands. This strategy is attuned with the idea of enabling tribes. Giving freedom to those who use and consume PSM content and services for their own purposes means decentralising decision-making and loosening restrictions of a fixed structure for the media experience environment. Rather than imposing a national culture, this approach recognises the different parties involved in culture as interaction among all citizens. The way forward is significantly influenced by how consumers want to use and experience PSM content and services. This approach detaches PSM from a purely casting operation and situates it right in-between *casting* and *societing*.

Implications

Traditional PSB has long been associated with providing entertainment and information through broadcasting. Against the background of the postmodern social condition and its implications for value-creation, the cases presented here highlight a development that exceeds the historic notion. While these media companies still provide casting services, they are attempting to create a more comprehensive experience environment that integrates the functions of ‘casting’ and ‘societing’. With their enabling strategy, YLE seeks to involve various publics in the co-creation of PSM functions and operations by loosening the restrictions of a pre-given structure for their PSM experience environment.

As for radioeins, the idea of hosting tribal events is not new, of course, and follows a clear market-oriented logic that is increasingly part of PSB conduct.

However, the core of such campaigns is to link people together in tribes and that is highly relevant when one makes a useful distinction between functional value and relational value. The underlying rationale for both cases presented here deserves consideration in what such strategies reveal about the development from PSB to PSM. Even though the self-serving purpose is to increase loyalty to these companies, and certainly the campaigns at radioeins in particular have the purpose of filling content time for casting radio, their tribal activities nonetheless beg the question: What should be done when casting is no longer enough?

The two cases indicate that the boundaries between marketing and content-creation, between casting and societing, and between a market-oriented and public service oriented logic are blurring to a degree where distinctions become less meaningful in the postmodern context. One might argue that for radioeins, although high-quality content is crucial it is less and less a practical basis for PSM distinctiveness. At a more strategic level these companies, particularly YLE, are coming to realise that the active elements in value co-creation and in shaping the media experience provide the best means and basis for distinguishing public service media; the key is in the societing function whereby PSM is understood as enablers and facilitators – as active mediators serving a polypublic's interests to interact on the two levels of organisation and individuals. However, YLE's enabling strategy raises considerable concerns in the Finnish commercial media sector, especially in the recessionary context when the private sector needs to find or create new revenue streams. Because PSM content is free and freely usable by other parties, claims of market distortion are vocal.

The central question, then, is whether what is already happening is a good thing or not? Should PSM be about casting and societing, or only the first and not the later – or neither? Is there a better alternative? In favour of the case made in this chapter, pluralism – one of the most cited operative goals of PSB – is about allowing for a polypublic, serving pluralistic formations of contemporary tribes, enabling cultural developments, and increasingly doing everything from a bottom-up approach (Harrison and Wessels 2005) rather than trying to impose some ideal of a national identity. All of this points to complexities and also opportunities inherent to the postmodern condition.

It has been found that advertising in the forums of online communities and 'making money' from community members can be perceived as negative (Abrahamsen and Hartmann 2006). This is precisely where PSM with its not-for-profit and, ideally also non-commercial background has unique opportunities compared to private commercial media firms. The history and ethos of the ideal that legitimates PSM offers a firm foundation for developing an authentic and trustworthy societing function.

Of course the scale and nature of this research to date only allow modest generalisation. The work is exploratory and a beginning in efforts to clarify societal dynamics framing PSM under postmodern conditions. But it should be clear that to understand the context of Public Service Media for management and operations requires far more research on and about the consumer side of

contemporary media – research seeking to understand cultural processes, the nature of experiences, as well as modes, meanings and social aspects of media consumption in public service provision. This includes exploring postmodern tribal phenomena in the habitus of PSM, the tension between marketplace logic and public service logic in production and consumption economies, and exploration and specifications of value, its creation, and the experience of that.

But above all it is crucial to understand that public service media has the obligation to explicitly focus on, and interact with, the public. Collaboration with the public through a societing approach adds the vital dimension of value co-creation. In the context of postmodern societal dynamics, public service media enterprises must think deeply about how to support communal embeddedness, how to promote interaction between members of neo-tribes, and thereby also among citizens. The provocative idea is that PSM enterprises are beginning to really mediate *between* people – to embrace a societing function – while still providing content and orientation in the traditional casting function, that is mediating to them. To the degree that this is so, PSM is co-creating a symbiotic and synthetic experience environment. In the development of value propositions that acknowledge the co-creation and co-production of value (see Ofcom 2007), PSB has opportunity to refine their role and functions primarily in societal terms in their transition to PSM.

Note

1. Total coverage in thousand, age 14-49, Basis: Berlin / Brandenburg, Ø-hour 06:00-18:00, Mo.-Sa. Source: <http://www.reichweiten.de>. Please observe: MA 2008 II = media analysis second half 2008, MA 2009 I = media analysis first half 2009. Due to a change in methodology, no data earlier than 2008 II can be compared with 2009 I.

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Constructing Public Service Media at the BBC

Charles Brown & Peter Goodwin

The history of the British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC] is characterised by the pioneering use of new technologies to develop content services that attract a mass audience. In the 1920s the company was instrumental, as well, in defining the public service model for broadcasting. Now 87 years on the BBC is again a test-bed for the creating new content services by harnessing emerging technology and has a key role in the development of Public Service Media both in theory and practice.

All broadcasters, public and private alike, have relied on the same one-to-many communication model and value chain structure. This model is based on exploiting the economics of scarcity and attracting mass audiences for a relatively small number of highly popular (or at least highly attended) television and radio programmes. But the underlying principles informing the operation of the value chain has been markedly different, with the essential distinction based on whether or not such operation is for-profit in material terms. This difference is attuned with the source of funding – public, commercial or a combination of the two – which influences company strategies, priorities, content preferences and their intentions in relations with viewers and listeners. Despite significant differences, however, the essential value chain has been closely aligned and, until recently, quite stable. This is primarily due to environmental characteristics (keyed to policy preferences and technical capacity) and partly due to attributes inherent to broadcasting (e.g. use of electromagnetic spectrum and limited options with regard to programme supply). The broadcast model is characterised by what Raymond Williams termed ‘flow’ in the sequencing of programming and interstitial material as “the defining characteristic...[both] as a technology and as cultural form” (Williams 2003: 86).

While the private commercial sector crafts flow to maximise what Philip Napoli (2003) terms, “the audience product”, the public service sector has pursued this more as a matter of principle, especially given the historic interest in making content not only universally available but also universally serviceable via a schedule of programmes which, taken as a whole, achieve universal appeal. Michael Tracey has argued that the aim of public broadcasters has therefore not

been to maximise audience or aim to please all of the people all of the time, but rather to guarantee diversity in the schedule and driven by a desire to make well produced programmes that “can please a lot of the people a lot of the time, and everybody some of the time” (Tracey 1998: 27). Increasing competition from many sources, especially satellite and cable channels as well as new terrestrial operators on the heels of digitisation, has strengthened pressures for increasing audience share and revenues, but it is only with the arrival of the broadband internet and expansion of network capacity in telecommunications that the established broadcast model in itself became unstable.

Given the aim of universality and the need to justify continued public funding, whether through a licence fee or by direct government support, public service broadcasters are challenged to innovate again, this time in the face of threats posed by audience erosion. Outside Great Britain and northern Europe, the situation is much the same, although the picture is further complicated by the fact that a large proportion of the world’s public broadcasters are, like their private counterparts, at least partially reliant upon commercial income.

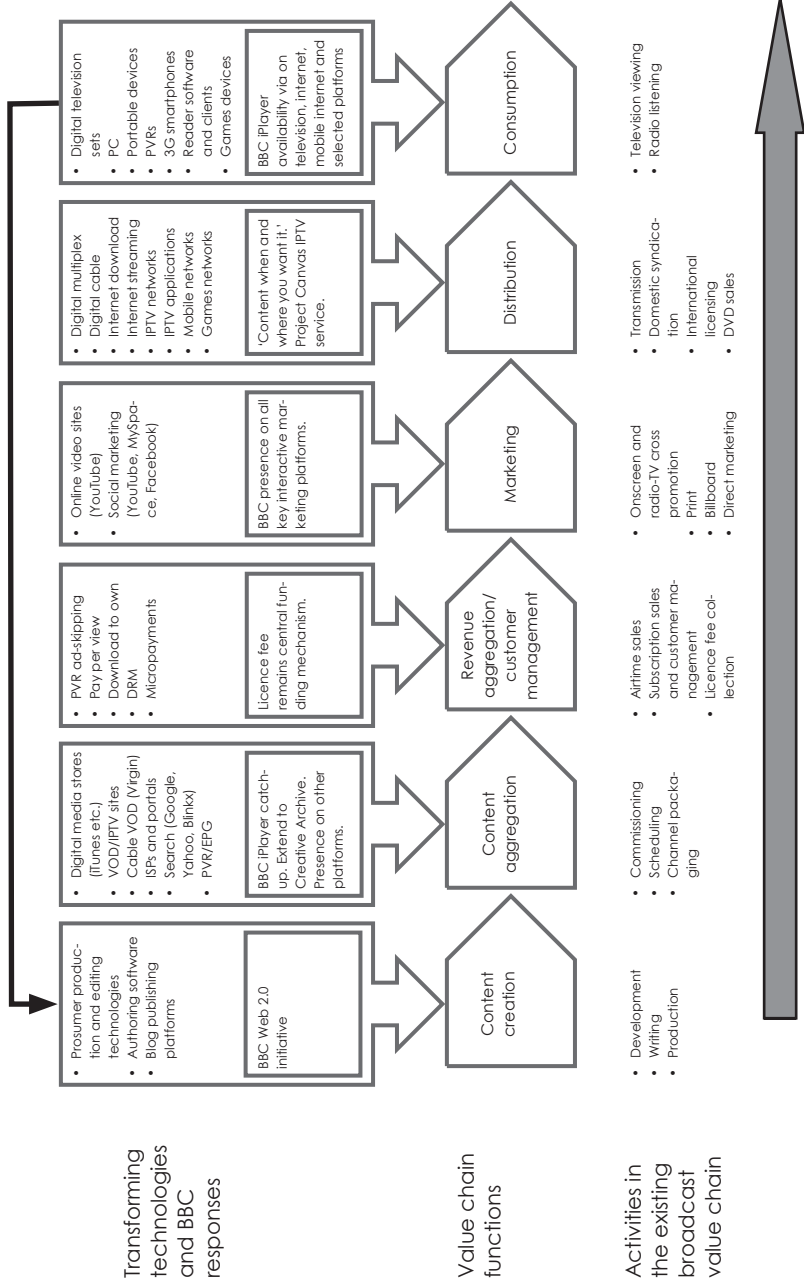
This article examines the impact of digital technologies on the established value chain in broadcasting (particularly television) and explores how one of the world’s leading public service broadcasting companies is responding to related threats and opportunities. We seek to describe the BBC’s emergent strategy and examine how, through a series of initiatives both proactive and reactive, the BBC is transforming the historic value chain to accommodate a new public service media (PSM) enterprise. In the emerging value chain the BBC seeks to be the central node of an open network and to fulfil the role of aggregator and market-maker. These changes have significant implications for the BBC’s relationships with both its audiences and competitors. Indeed, while the new market-making role we identify is a source of potential long-term strength and resilience, it is also one that commercial rivals find highly unpalatable.

Changes in the broadcasting value chain

The BBC’s digital evolution has taken place in piecemeal fashion. This is not to suggest the corporation’s progress has lacked purpose. On the contrary, its development has included a number of substantial, strategic initiatives. Nor are we suggesting the emerging new value chain is now complete. What we see is an *emergent* strategy expressed as much through ad-hoc initiatives (see Mintzberg and Waters 1985) as via formal planning evident in policy documents. In seeking to embrace new technologies and platforms, the BBC has experimented and woven the lessons learned into a broadening vision of and for the company’s future.

The traditional value chain, pictured in Figure 1 below, links a series of activities beginning with the *creation* of content and proceeding through delivering that content via terrestrial networks (*distribution*) to a mass audience (*consumption*). This is the classic broadcast model with its historic limitations in one-way

Figure 1.



capacity and its requirements for television and radio organisations to *aggregate* content into linear schedules. The *aggregation* of content (and in commercially funded or mixed funding models this includes aggregating advertising ‘spots’ which are also a type of content) is crucial for networks to attract audiences and transform that into a product that can be sold to advertising clients (and where relevant to also receive money from public sources). This is what we mean by referencing *revenue aggregation and customer management*.

The public or private character of the value chain is expressed in the execution of its functions and the nature of the linkages between functions. For the BBC content aggregation has been guided by its public service mission as outlined in Article 5 of its Royal Charter, with a renewed Reithian edict to inform, educate and entertain (DCMS 2006a). These longstanding principles have been supplemented in response to wider policy debates concerning the BBC’s role and purposes, which include:

- Sustaining citizenship and civil society
- Promoting education and learning
- Stimulating creativity and cultural excellence
- Representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities
- Bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK
- Delivering to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services (DCMS 2006b).

This is the downstream side.

Upstream, so to say, the public service remit is communicated in the form of corporate strategy which informs scheduling, commissioning and, by extension, in-house and independent production of content. Direct government funding or, as in the case of the BBC, licence fee income, enables public broadcasters, in principle at least, to focus on programme quality (and these purposes) rather than maximising audience and revenue. The gate keeping function provided by the downstream control of scarce distribution capacity (historically via analogue terrestrial frequencies alone) enabled broadcasters, public and private alike, to control the delivery of programming and advertising messages to the mass audience.

Distribution and gatekeeping

Conventional argumentation suggests distribution is the *key* strategic function in electronic media and, in consequence, the arrival of high capacity *open* networks acts as a catalyst for change throughout the value chain. It would be mistaken, however, for one to assume this impact will be felt equally by publicly and commercially funded networks, or that public broadcasters and private broadcasters have the same room for manoeuvre in responding to threats and

opportunities. The advertising based revenue mechanisms of private broadcasters (and the commercial income earned by those public service broadcasters with mixed funding model) are directly impacted by the fragmentation of audiences and by on-demand distribution. Audience erosion may have political consequences for public broadcasters and declining public support poses a long-term threat to funding commitments. The threat, however, is not so immediate. Public funding can provide a limited cushion against sudden disruptive change. Moreover, publicly funded television and radio is less dependent on the manner in which it is delivered.

At any rate, the erosion and fragmentation of mass audiences brought about by the arrival of satellite and cable had, by the 1990s, already weakened the traditional broadcast model. The internet brought yet more competition and new alternatives for the audience. The BBC was quick to take account of these threats and extended its services to the new non-linear platform. Its flagship popular music radio channel, Radio One, began streaming as early as 1996 and BBC News Online launched in 1997. BBC research supported those inside the Corporation who felt that to remain engaged the BBC would have to move *with* its audience. A 2004 study commissioned by Mark Thompson on his arrival as Director General suggested that a quarter of 15-24 year olds did not watch the BBC at all (Patrick 2008). The same study suggested that without changes to the BBC's output and at its rate of decline, the proportion of viewers watching a BBC news programme week on week, would drop from 81% of the population to 60% by 2015.

In distribution terms, then, the BBC has acknowledged that it must become a public service *media* organisation and can no longer exclusively remain a public service broadcaster. The BBC's multiplatform and on-demand ambitions are central to the *Creative Future* (2006) vision, unveiled by Thompson in April. Of the five themes he highlighted, the first was a commitment to the 'Martini Media' (content available as the drink's company slogan once went, 'Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere'). Content would be made available, "when and where you want it with content moving freely between different devices and platforms" (ibid). In this approach, Thompson continued, on-demand would be key, not just as a new way of delivering content, but as a principle prompting a "rethink of what we commission, make, and how we package and deliver it."

It would be foolish to deny the impact of the end of the era of spectrum scarcity on the BBC and its *raison d'être*. Not only is this argument a key weapon in the armoury of its critics, but as already touched upon these changes in distribution cannot be divorced from changes elsewhere in the value chain. But to see an end to scarcity as the key factor is surely too simplistic. Other broadcasters are arguably more vulnerable than PSB firms. Multiple systems operators and pay-tv players such as BSkyB have built their entire business models on controlling distribution and the interface with the end-user, and by doing so the entire upstream value chain. This underpins the provision of premium television channels, the position of power occupied when negotiating over film and sports rights, and the striking of favourable terms when negotiating with channels keen to join

the bouquet. All such weapons in the BSkyB armoury have been depended on its gatekeeping function and controlling access to the end user.

The evidence can be seen in BSkyB's vociferous criticism of the BBC's innovation in this area and of the Canvas IPTV project, a joint venture with British Telecom, ITV and Channel 5. Dubbed 'Freeview 2' after the low-cost, open digital terrestrial decoder, the project is designed to define a set of standards to facilitate device manufacturers being able to lower the risks in making devices that enable televisions to be connected to the open internet via broadband connections. For the BBC the device would work in association with an enhanced version of the BBC's iPlayer catch-up application (already available on the internet and via the Virgin cable network). The partners have said there will be no restriction on the number of shareholders in the venture (Bradshaw 2009).

Such reassurances have done little to stem criticism from BSkyB, however. In its response to the BBC Trust's consultation on the Canvas project, Sky stresses that the BBC, "is not required to develop, promote or operate its own means of delivery", and further that the project takes the BBC beyond its 'proper' role in "content syndication and participation in *industry-led* (our emphasis) technical standards development" (BBC Trust 2009a, 262). Such activities, argue BSkyB, have the "potential to distort significantly existing and emerging competition (BBC Trust 2009a, 269).

Consumption

Actually consumption played little role in the traditional broadcast value chain. This is not to suggest the audience, collectively and individually, were passive recipients of messages. It is to say that without a return path and with such limited means of communicating with the source upstream (or engaging in transactions with the source) viewing and listening was never *fully integrated* into the broadcast value chain. The profile of the end consumer has of course played a significant role in shaping upstream activities and the co-ordination of value chain elements. In fact the nature of the public service audience member has been debated extensively in the past decade as media theorists grapple with the issue of whether old distinctions between citizen (the notional public service audience member) and consumer (in private and commercially-funded broadcasting) remain relevant (Livingstone et al 2007). But the changes in distribution technology have brought a fundamental change to this stage or component of the value chain.

In the emerging model and non-linear value chain consumption is fully integrated and the nature of usage and is, in fact, a *paramount* consideration. New user behaviours are not solely a response to broadband adoption. New devices enable new user behaviours, both online and offline. In committing to provide content when and where users want it the BBC is making content available via mobile networks (and devices) and games platforms, including for example the Nintendo Wii (BBC 2009). The BBC's *Creative Future* vision emphasises this new focus on the active nature of the audience in observing

that the audience “doesn’t want to just sit there but to take part, debate, create, communicate, share” (BBC 2006).

The BBC’s vision of the active audience (and the development of applications for it) recognises two fundamental trends:

1. A shift towards on-demand modes of consumption and a desire to personalise applications and content;
2. An increasing desire on the part of users to adapt and reuse content, and combine it with their own user-generated content.

On-demand consumption patterns can also be seen in the use of digital video recorders (available as consumer devices but more often integrated into satellite and cable set top boxes). Such technologies ease the process of time-shifting and the prising of content out of structured schedules. The combination of open networks with user devices and software applications that enable consuming content on-demand and at a time of the user’s choosing moves the entire system closer to the point when the user chooses rather than when the broadcaster schedules. This in turn has major implications for ways in which broadcasters conduct both marketing and aggregation.

The opening up of platforms complicates this picture further. Users can, in principle, build their own schedules from a range of public interest programming, not only that provided by domestic public broadcasters. Accessible via personal computers, mobile devices, and open broadband-compliant set top boxes, public interest content can be sourced from an expansive *range* of sources that include not only traditional PSB companies but also museums, galleries, non-profit organisations, universities, independent producers and distributors. The issue of what makes public service programming *distinctive*, then, has become a topic of increasingly heated debate. Further, unless countered one should expect that audience atomisation and declining viewing for public service programmes is likely to strongly contribute to weakening of support for licence fee or direct state funding.

One should note that the new technologies and associated changes in behaviours do not *directly* undermine the funding of publicly funded media. The *direct* impact is instead on channels that rely partly or entirely on advertising revenue. For such channels, private and public alike, the impact is potentially far more serious. The ad-skipping capability of digital video recorders has the potential to disrupt the advertising model and while pay video-on-demand [VOD] models operated by cable networks have proven to be popular, UK broadcasters have failed to develop a compelling advertising proposition around on-demand content, whether it be catch up or archival in derivation.

Aggregation

The BBC’s initial response to the challenge of on-demand viewing was the creation of its successful iPlayer. After a lengthy gestation period, and speculation

that the Corporation had run into a dead-end in development of the application, the iPlayer was launched on Christmas Day 2007. Since its introduction the iPlayer has generated almost 400m requests in the UK (BBC Worldwide 2009). Although YouTube is a significantly more popular video aggregator, this has been built around short-form content. In contrast, the iPlayer was developed primarily for programme length content and has been the BBC's greatest success since the launch of the Freeview Digital Terrestrial initiative in 2002. Indeed, there are indications that the iPlayer venture is succeeding in one of the Corporation's key objectives: to attract and retain younger viewers and reach the users of other platforms. A recent survey by wireless industry analysts, CCS Insight, suggests the iPlayer is the most desired mobile service among young UK consumers (Lomas 2009).

The iPlayer provides an alternative to the aggregation functions offered by the traditional schedule in offering a seven-day catch up option, and the ability to delay playing downloaded programmes for up to 30 days. In addition to providing a category-based menu, the client software (and the online application) enables users to 'series stack' key BBC programmes, encouraging users to engage with BBC series and to stay with the entire run. Series stacking functions have been enabled for flagship drama and factual series (such as the BBC's renowned natural history programmes). By storing and providing a means of accessing content collections, branded services like iPlayer provide a means of delivering the organisation's content to the viewer whilst simultaneously presenting that content in a manner appropriate to the online environment.

The BBC hoped to follow the success of iPlayer with Project Kangaroo, a joint initiative together with Channel 4 and ITV. The aim of this joint venture was "to create a customer proposition that could compete in the VOD market against powerful competitors who were able to leverage significant existing assets that the broadcasters did not possess" (Competition Commission 2009: 3.18). The planned service would provide a 'one-stop-shop' with a common interface and encourages usage and economies of scale by directing users to a single destination. Archive content distribution rather than catch-up functionality was to be the main focus of Kangaroo, recognising that archive services require critical mass and the economics for a joint service were more encouraging. The parties maintained that none of them had the scale and scope alone to guarantee long-term success. Consumers are "likely to migrate towards the broadest content offering, the best user experience, and the most powerful brand, and that the [joint venture] would be such an offering" (ibid: 3.21).

In the end this venture was blocked by the Competition Commission as being a threat to competition in VOD market. The BBC is now focusing its efforts on building its own Creative Archive project in association with the British Film Institute, Channel 4, Open University, and Arts Council. This project is designed to enable the BBC and other public institutions to open their video, audio and corporate archives to the public. According to Director of Archive Content, Roly Keating, the long-term aim is to digitise and make available all

of the BBC's material, including rushes and corporate documentation. In the short to medium term the selection of archive material for offer to the public will depend on certain criteria: educational value (developing a knowledge resource for the nation) cultural value (the creative record of broadcasting) pleasure, and entertainment and personal value (Keating 2009).

Aggregation is still a key skill, however and not only in these new approaches to aggregating content but also in the continued life of the traditional broadcast schedule. It is easy to over-estimate the rate of decline in conventional television viewing. Traditional schedule-driven viewing remains by far the most common form of TV consumption. Indeed, it may be that this remains the case, in the absence of new, more effective means of content discovery (through, perhaps, recommendation engines – more sophisticated versions of the recommendation services available on e-Commerce and digital content sites like Amazon and iTunes).

Production

In-house and independent production will continue to dwarf user-generated content in the BBC's output. That is only to be expected given that traditionally a key aspect in its legitimacy is the commissioning and provision of professionally produced content. But as indicated in our value chain configuration, the growth of the active audience and peoples' desire to use and rework content to varying degrees, links consumption and production functions in a new kind of interdependency. The growth of social media and the increasing importance of user generated content has been recognised by the BBC and plays a prominent role in Creative Future: "We need a new relationship with our audiences – they won't simply be audiences anymore, but also participants and partners – we need to know them as individuals and communities, let them configure our services in ways that work for them" (BBC 2006).

Thus the BBC's Web 2.0 initiative aims to update the company's online services to allow increased participation by users. In unveiling *Creative Futures* Thompson stressed how the Corporation would have to acknowledge that the new audience would want to "take part, create, communicate, share", even if this presents the BBC with difficult editorial questions. Commercial content companies (newspapers and magazines, mainly) are already embracing techniques such as 'crowdsourcing'. There is little evidence, so far at least, of the BBC pursuing this approach on a large scale. But in some areas it is certainly recognising that its relationship with users will and *must* change.

The BBC envisages the involvement of users in the development of the Creative Archive project. Keating suggests the BBC needs to think carefully about the kind of value it is creating for the public. "I'm hoping that this 'public value' means 'released to the public' rather than used as a method of gaining more money by selling old content, thus reducing the need to increase the license fee" he said (Technovia 2008). Although some high value content will be curated by the BBC or in association with commercial partners, some

content – local content, for example – could be curated and disseminated in association with users.

The Corporation has also highlighted the possibility of using a form of Creative Commons license for its archive content, enabling users to incorporate their content into their websites, blogs and other projects, providing they are used on a not-for-profit basis.

Distinctiveness, marketing and funding

New technologies are contributing to the process of change at each link in the value chain. As noted earlier, both public and private channels are affected, albeit in markedly different ways. Although changes in some components of the value chain have played a catalytic role – and we have tried to indicate that some are more important than others – the shift from public service broadcasting to public service media is a result of changes in the system taken *as a whole*. This is significant and needs to be clearly understood: Structural changes are relational, featuring systemic arrangements characterised by high interdependence. Although the broadcast value chain has not yet suggested changes as dramatic as those characterising changes in the music industry, it is nevertheless only by taking the initiative for development at each key stage in the value chain that the BBC has been able to extend its activities to the interactive sphere in a way that both complements and defends its existing role.

In developing the value chain for PSM the BBC has focussed on maintaining its distinctiveness. In turn, its marketing messages will have to increasingly reflect the transition from public service broadcasting. In addition to the use of traditional marketing channels (billboards, onscreen promotion, press advertising) the Corporation has therefore sought to embrace social and Web 2.0 marketing solutions in recognition of the importance of communities grounded in Facebook and MySpace, and in content platforms like YouTube. Such is essential for both marketing and distribution. These channels have also facilitated selling clips to end users, generating a small but growing element of BBC Worldwide's digital revenue which grew from £13.9 million to £21.9 million in the year to 31 March 2008 (BBC Worldwide 2009).

To preserve its role as the pivotal organisation within British television, radio and online, the BBC must demonstrate its ability to fulfil its remit and remain *distinctive*. The BBC's future funding is not directly and *necessarily* impacted by the weakening of the old scheduling models. Indeed, its predictable income stream (the licence fee) allows it to negotiate the shift to multiplatform and on-demand more easily than private sector counterparts. The BBC's role is however to try to position itself as a market-enabler, working with partner organisations to bring about the shift towards a more open, digitally enabled content market. This approach has attendant risks, e.g. while creating an open platform like Canvas establishes the BBC as a leader, it also lowers barriers for potential future competitors.

Critics of established PSB have long argued that in a market characterised by content abundance and extensive choice, subscription is a more appropriate revenue mechanism than either the license fee or state funding. With an increasing shift towards on-demand, and with aggregation and the combining of content being placed in the hands of the user rather than the network, this line of argument is likely to be extended. Critics of public funding may well shift their emphasis to suggesting pay-per-view or micropayment systems. But we think, and argue here, that the case for public funding remains very strong in the new environment.

At present, the signs are not encouraging that advertisers will engage with on-demand programming in the ways they have with paid search on the internet, a point highlighted in a recent report by Enders Analysis (Sweeney 2008). By contrast, a licence-fee supported BBC is able to draw upon an extensive archive of programmes, make them available on-demand without additional cost at the point of use, and cross promote them through its various channels and online services. Although BBC Worldwide would undoubtedly like to reap advertising revenues in international markets, at home the BBC is not faced with the challenge of finding a revenue stream for its on-demand operations. For public broadcasters, VOD is currently mainly a means of extending reach for already broadcast content, although many are experimenting with alternative revenue models. The BBC, for example, uses iTunes as means of distributing its programmes on a pay-per-view basis (for the international markets) and with the potential to retail them on a download to own basis. Most VOD services are made available on either a cable pay-per-view basis, or as subscription VOD (with premium content billed separately or via a Multiple Systems Operator) or as Free VOD (supported by advertising). BT Vision, for example, offers the iPlayer as part of its premium content collection.

Like other media enterprises, private broadcasters face the dilemma of whether to pursue paid-for models. Users have become used to free content online and although many state their willingness to pay for content they value, the imposition of subscriptions or pay per view terms tends to result in a dramatic downturn in income. The publishing industry has vacillated between these models and is currently turning, with some trepidation, back to the paid model. Rupert Murdoch has said that he wants to see his newspapers (starting with the *Wall Street Journal*) adopting payment models for an increasing amount of their content, and the *New York Times* is reviewing its position once again. In a sign, perhaps, that bets are being hedged, positive noises are being sounded with regard to the so-called 'freemium' model in which more commoditised forms of content are given away in the hope they will lure readers who can be up-sold to subscription and pay-per-view content, or sold some range of 'services' that make up the modern newspaper; not just content, in other words, but also discounts, memberships, and special offers.

Industry leaders, consultants and commentators are also investing hope that long-discussed models, such as micropayments, will overcome consumer resistance (Andrews 2009; Hughes 2009). Addressing a Westminster Media Forum

event, Tony Cohen of the UK-based Bertelsmann-RTL subsidiary, Fremantle Media, suggested that consumers might be prepared to pay for content, if *the price is right* – although in the lack of solid evidence from consumers such statements sometimes seem like executive ‘whistling in the dark’ (Andrews 2009).

Conclusion

The BBC has made significant steps towards reconfiguring its value chain and transforming itself into a public service media organisation. The public service character remains fundamental and is rooted in its remit and corporate values. These values are implicit in the way that it executes the value chain and in its constituent initiatives and activities for each component, and each link – as demonstrated in this chapter.

At the periphery, the BBC is beginning to explore how value is co-produced by stakeholders, echoing value network theories elaborated by theorists such as Normann and Ramirez (1993 & 1999). Partnerships with both commercial and non-commercial organisations are becoming increasingly important, and viewers and listeners are beginning to be involved in creating content and shaping services (particularly in the online sphere). Taken as a whole, the BBC’s digital activities show this organisation is in the process of transforming itself from a broadcaster engaged in one-way transmission to being the central node in a network as a producer of distinctive content, as a filter and aggregator of user-generated content, and as a market-maker. In doing so the BBC has sought to both adapt to changes in the audience, and to *lead* in this development. The experience of launching the iPlayer provides strong evidence of the BBC’s success in building a PSM model.

The role of market-maker is not a new one for the BBC, however. Repeatedly in its storied history the BBC has acted as an agent of pro-active change in areas including industrial policy, compensating for market failure (or weakness), and driving adoption of new media technologies. Lately the tradition has been evident with digital terrestrial broadcasting (in Freeview), domestic internet content (in BBC.co.uk and BBC News Online) and internet-based on demand services (the iPlayer). The BBC’s role has not always been universally welcome, and it has not always been uniformly positive. Moreover, even where it is successful the Corporation has had to contemplate the prospect of being compelled to draw back from a field of activity at the behest of either external regulators (for example the Competition Commission or Ofcom) or its own governing board (the BBC Trust). Nonetheless, it is arguable that this market-making role is one of the *principle* functions of the BBC as a public service media corporation. It is potentially one of its greatest strengths, as perhaps indicated by the fact that such features are among those most resented today by its commercial rivals.

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Audiences and Accountability

Quality Assessments and Patterns of Use

Conceptual and Empirical Approaches to the Audiences of Public Service Media

Uwe Hasebrink

The concept of public service media [PSM] explicitly states that the respective media are supposed to serve the public. As the ongoing debates on the remit for PSM show, however, it is far from trivial to decide on what “to serve the public” could or should mean. As several authors (e.g. Baldi and Hasebrink 2006; Mitchell and Blumler 1994) have pointed out this remit cannot be conceived as a list of formal or content related characteristics that concrete media offers have to provide. Instead, it has to be conceived as the procedures by which public service media ensure their accountability towards the public, i.e. by which they allow for users’ participation, invite (and listen to) the expressions of interests and needs of different parts of the public, transparently define their objectives, engage in evaluations of their products and production procedures, and seriously consider the public’s feedback and critique (see also Collins 2008).

Empirical research on users’ interests, patterns of use, and appreciation is one important part of the procedures that public service media themselves and other public bodies apply in assessments. But in connection with debates on the public service remit, empirical research on audiences and user behaviours plays an ambivalent role. Although omnipresent in the debates, data are often regarded as misleading. This chapter sets out to contribute to a more reflected and fruitful empirical approach to the users of public service media. It will develop two arguments: Firstly a conceptual clarification with regard to different user roles that shape users’ opinion and appreciation of public service media; this clarification shall help to involve the users’ perspective in discourse on the qualities of public service media. Secondly, with regard to concrete patterns of media use, a repertoire-oriented approach is proposed which provides indicators for the position of public service media within the comprehensive patterns of media use in different social milieus; this approach shall help to go beyond measures like the absolute or relative size of the audience of public service media.

Conceptual considerations on user roles in public service media

In scholarly discussions today it seems to be common sense to understand the audience as “active”. However, this conceptualisation merely focuses on the reception process of standardised media offers by selection, interpretation and understanding in contrast to the concept of a “passive” user simply exposed to media messages – a concept attributed to former eras of media effects research. Although the change of paradigms in research – i.e. the shift from perceiving the user as easy to manipulate towards an interpreting media user – has been an important step towards a more appropriate understanding of the user, the concept of an active media user includes an implicit presupposition: Users are exclusively regarded as individuals using the media for their individual needs, as consumers who select the media offers they like and avoid the media offers they dislike. In consequence, audience research measuring the figures of different kinds of media outlets is regarded as an appropriate indicator of what users want, so that in debates on media politics the respective figures serve as “the voice of the audience”.

Effects of this conceptualisation of the audience can be observed in debates on media quality or, in connection with recent debates on the remit of public service media, on the “public value” where ambivalent roles are attributed to media users. One position, starting from the observation that media offers which attract the masses are presumed to be of low quality, argues that users should not be involved in quality discourses because they do not seem to look for quality. The opposing view states that extensive audience research is able to reveal the interests of the users, who in this way are taken into account by media companies. In this perspective high audience shares are regarded as the best indicators of high quality. Neither position refers to the user as participating in decision processes in defining which kind of media could serve the public, but rather promotes a limited perspective of users as consumers expressing interests solely via their actual choices of concrete media offers.

The corresponding theoretical basis is the uses and gratification approach that postulates media use can be seen as the maximisation of individual gratifications. Approaches that attempt to understand what quality means for recipients, e.g. Greenberg and Busselle (1992 & 1994) or Gunter (1997), are theoretically as well as methodically very much connected with this theory. The central objective is to identify dimensions of gratifications for different media offers. Even in more comprehensive approaches towards models of quality and accountability in the media, e.g. McQuail (1992 & 1997) and Schatz and Schulz (1992), users are only taken into account regarding the satisfaction of their individual needs. These needs are usually contrasted with normative criteria extracted from theories on democracy and then taken as contradictory poles of these normative quality criteria. Accordingly, some studies showed that media offers that are normatively classified as high quality offers do not usually attract large audiences (e.g. Hasebrink 1997).

However this perception of the audience does not provide a complete picture of users. Transferred into the sphere of political participation this would mean merely the act of voting in elections as an expression of the interests of citizens, while crucial criteria for democratic participation like participation in public debate or sensitivity for the interests of citizens or, in this case, users in their everyday culture are ignored.

Webster and Phalen (1994) proposed to distinguish three concepts of the audience: users as victim, users as consumer, and users as commodity. The concept of users as a victim is based on the assumption that media strongly influence their users; therefore the users have to be protected against media influences. The concept of users as consumers regards users as rationally selecting the media offers that are expected to serve their individual needs. The concept of users as commodity refers to the concrete value the advertising industry is ready to pay to reach a specific audience. For the considerations on how public service media can serve the public distinctions between the concepts of consumers and commodity seem less relevant. More fruitful is the concept of users as citizens.

In the context of a study on instruments for the protection of viewers' interests Hasebrink (1994, see also Hasebrink et al. 2006) pointed to at least three dimensions of users' interests:

- a. Users as *consumers* have an interest in media offers which serve their individual needs and preferences. According to the corresponding concept as described by Webster and Phalen (1994), users act as customers of media companies. The plainest forms of this case are pay-per-view offers, but usually audience research measures customer interests by means of the number of contacts of specific offers.
- b. A second dimension of users' interests refers to users as *owners of rights*, respectively as individuals who need protection and with the possibility to defend their rights. This dimension corresponds with the above mentioned concept of "victims" articulated by Webster and Phalen (1994). For example, users can become objects of media reporting. As such they need protection against false or offensive statements. In addition they have religious and moral feelings and values and therefore need protection against programmes that violate or exploit these feelings, or restrict individual development. The latter point is particularly important for children.
- c. The users as *citizens*, i.e. members of a democratic society, have an interest that media contribute to the general aims of society, e.g. the prevention of monopolistic power in the media market and of biased news coverage, guaranteeing the interests of minorities and the promotion of a greater understanding of the issues and problems facing society.

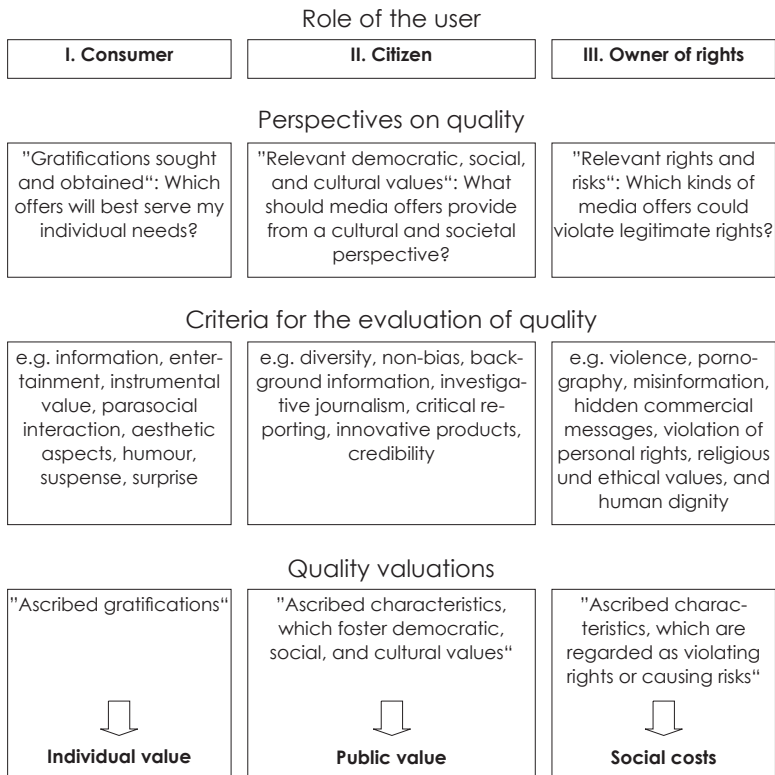
The two latter dimensions are so far not being systematically covered by audience research; in fact they are rather in opposition to the consumers' dimension. The argument here is that despite the tensions between them, the three

dimensions actually go together, i.e. each user has specific interests on all three dimensions. Users are aware of the contradiction that might exist between their consumer interests and the normative perspective, and thus they know from experience that they have to create a personal balance between them.

Regarding public service media and their remit to serve the public, these considerations show that it is not sufficient to regard users as consumers of media products only. They have to be taken seriously as both human beings who have to be protected against harm, and as citizens. This understanding of the users' role goes beyond the actual decisions to use any specific offer and regards users as participants of a public discourse on media qualities and media accountability.

With regard to investigations into the question of what the users themselves regard as qualities of public service media, these considerations lead to the conclusion that users' judgements will vary depending on their respective user role. Figure 1 provides a systemic overview indicating the three roles are linked to specific perspectives, which emphasise specific criteria for quality assessments, and which, as a result, lead to specific quality valuations.

Figure 1. User roles in quality valuations



From the viewpoint of a *consumer*, the users' perspective is defined by gratifications sought and obtained, i.e. the core question is how well public service media serve their individual needs. The relevant criteria for this perspective correspond with the catalogue of needs and motives elaborated by research within the uses-and-gratifications paradigm; e.g., users look for information and/or entertainment, and/or options for para-social interaction. As a consequence, quality valuations are based on the gratifications ascribed to the respective media outlet. Thus, these valuations indicate the *individual value* of the respective medium.

For *users as citizens* it is crucial whether a media offer fulfils certain democratic, social, and/or cultural values. The relevant criteria reflect traditional – but not necessarily undisputable – values and normative standards, e.g. the diversity of topics and opinions, the contribution to cultural innovation, or the investigative and critical potential of the content. The respective quality valuations of the users reflect their perceptions of the media's functions for society and culture; thus they indicate the *public value* of public service media. It has to be noted that this concept has got a specific denotation and connotation within the UK (see e.g. Collins 2008) where the aspect of “value for money” strongly shapes debate. For the present argument public value is conceived in more general terms and refers to what the users regard as PSM's (or other media's) democratic, social, and cultural functions.

For the role of users as *owners of rights or potential victims* the perspective is shaped by the question of which aspects of media offers might violate relevant rights? The criteria for quality judgements partly correspond with legal norms regarding the protection of minors, the separation of edited content and commercial messages, or the protection of personal rights. The valuations from this perspective indicate the extent to which media might cause harm, and thus refer to the *social costs* of public service media.

To summarise this first point of argumentation, an empirical approach to the assessment of the users' perspective on the qualities of public service media requires the consideration of (at least) three roles: PSM related quality assessments have to include the role of the consumer, but must not exclusively focus on this perspective; it must be complemented by evaluations from the perspectives of users as citizens and as owners of rights.

The role of PSM within comprehensive media repertoires

Research on media use in general and on the use of public service media in particular often analyses single aspects of media-related behaviour, for instance the (absolute or relative) amount of use of certain media or content, or the share of public channels compared with commercial channels. Little attention has been paid to the question of how media users *combine* different media contacts into a comprehensive *pattern* of exposure, here characterised as a ‘media repertoire’ (see Hasebrink and Popp 2006 for background).

There are at least two reasons for placing a stronger focus on the level of media repertoires. Firstly, accompanying the recent diffusion of the internet and mobile communication as new strong tools for information and communication, scholars, politicians, and even the media industry have been discussing the question as to what extent the new options would complement or substitute classical means of communication. In most cases the answer reminds us of Riepl's hypothesis (1972), according to which new media do not substitute old media but rather contribute to functional differentiation (see for example Scherer and Schlütz 2004). This necessarily leads to the question of how media users actually combine old and new media, and how they integrate the increasing number of options into their everyday lives.

Secondly and from an industry perspective, a repertoire-oriented approach is particularly relevant, since current strategies are increasingly designed as cross-media strategies. As a precondition for the systematic development of these kinds of strategies, media companies need to know how media users combine content from different media, and in so doing create their respective cross-media environments.

This perspective is particularly relevant with regard to public service media since the main point of reference for them is not to maximise their respective market shares but to contribute to an overall system of public communication, which serves the needs and interests of the public and the democratic system. Taking this perspective, typical normative claims regarding PSM's remit can be reformulated as follows:

- *Any media repertoire should include at least some PSM content:* This claim refers to the principles of *universality* and *diversity*, according to which PSM should serve the needs of all parts of the population. Whereas it is literally impossible for PSM to meet *all* communicative needs of *all* groups, it is a more realistic and operational objective to offer a range of options, from which each group can select at least some specific part. In order to put it differently: There should be no individuals or groups, whose media repertoires do not include any offer provided by public service media.
- *PSM content should function as a bridge between different repertoires:* Given the fact that different social milieus differ substantially in their media repertoires this claim emphasizes the *integrative* function of PSM. This function can be fulfilled by providing content that is common to different media repertoires, which therefore serves as a common point of reference or a "meeting point" for groups selecting quite different cultural environments.
- *PSM should particularly contribute to information repertoires:* While the remit of public service media includes all communicative functions, i.e. as information, entertainment, education, and orientation, this claim stresses that PSM should particularly contribute to *information* repertoires in a wide sense. These repertoires include all communicative offers that are

selected by the users in order to understand and make sense of the world around them – these might be classical information formats like news, or documentaries or even fictional or entertainment programmes.

- *PSM should provide substantial parts of certain minorities' repertoires:* For certain groups whose communicative needs are insufficiently served by other media, public service media should provide a particularly broad range of dedicated programmes. In doing this PSM contribute to societal and cultural *pluralism*.

It has to be emphasised that the above principles are not meant as indisputable normative claims. The main argument is that a repertoire-oriented approach to patterns of media use allows for a rather precise operationalisation of relevant PSM objectives, which go beyond classical indicators such as the reach or market share of a programme. This has consequences for processes of internal planning and of internal and external evaluation of PSM's achievements: Defining specific objectives regarding the role of PSM's outlets within the media repertoires of the population as a whole, as well as for specific target groups, can help to develop transparent strategies.

In the following several examples, empirical findings are provided by a German longitudinal study that is presented and discussed from the repertoire-oriented approach. Before that a short overview of the development of the German dual television system and its audiences shall help to contextualise the findings.

The German dual system

Private television in Germany started in 1984. Until then public broadcasting with its two national operators (ARD and ZDF) and a third channel for each of the regions were the only options available. Starting with regional pilot projects the new channels rapidly developed, accompanied by a rapid growth of cable or satellite households, which by the mid-1990s could receive more than 35 German language free-to-air TV channels (including public service channels). In the early years of the dual system the combined market share of the public service channels dropped from 100 per cent to around 40 per cent in 1994, reflecting a remarkable shift in the audiences' patterns of exposure. Since 1994 a remarkably stable balance between public and commercial channels has been reached; even today the relation is still about 40/60 between the two parts of the system.

From a repertoire-oriented perspective this market share can be based on two possible polarised scenarios:

- "Dual audience" – the total audience is split into one group (40 per cent of the population) with a TV repertoire that mainly consists of public service programmes, and another group (60 per cent of the population) with a TV repertoire dominated by programmes offered by commercial channels.

- “Dual patterns of viewing” – most parts of the audience combine some parts (about 40 per cent of their repertoire) from public service channels and some other parts (about 60 per cent) from commercial channels.

At this point these extreme scenarios are used for reasons of conceptual clarification. A closer look at audience data shows that the real patterns of exposure are a combination of the two. On the one hand different groups differ with regard to the quantitative role of public service programmes within their repertoires, e.g. younger people devote substantially less time to public service channels than older people (see for the most recent data Zubayr and Gerhards 2009). On the other hand almost all people combine public and commercial channels. As has been argued on the basis of a re-analysis of people meter data on the individual level (Hasebrink and Krotz 1996; see also Krotz and Hasebrink 1998) there are clear indicators that these patterns are the result of two combined construction principles:

1. *Complementarity*: Public and commercial channels are used for different programme types, e.g. public channels for information, commercial channels for entertainment.
2. *Competition*: Public and commercial channels are both used for any kind of content, depending on the specific programme.

According to these principles, PSM are selected because they are regarded as providing unique content or because they are regarded as providing better quality. A thorough analysis of which parts of the population compose their television repertoire along which kind of rationale would allow for deeper insights into the role of PSM in today's diverse and pluralistic societies.

Case studies on PSM's role in comprehensive media repertoires

Empirical basis

The empirical basis of the following findings is the German long term study, *Mass Communication*, and the respective surveys in 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005. The surveys are based on representative samples of the German population (14+ years); 1980: n=2,000; 1985: n=2,000; 1990: n=6,000; 1995: n=6,000; 2000: n=5,017; 2005: n=4,500. Until 1995 data were collected by means of face-to-face interviews. Since 2000 data are based on telephone interviews. The questionnaire includes a broad range of indicators for media use, e.g. the frequency and amount of use of television, radio, newspaper, internet (since 2000), magazines, books, video/DVD, CD/records. In addition there are some items asking for evaluations and opinions regarding the respective media.

Correlations between TV channels

The first question to be asked on this empirical level is how the amount of use of different TV channels is interrelated. The data required for this kind of analysis are available for the years 1985, 1990, and 1995, thus they allow for the analysis of the phase characterised by a rapid shift from public to commercial channels. The correlations between the amounts of use of the television channels available provided evidence that viewing times devoted to PSB channels are highly interrelated, the same is true for general commercial channels. Thus there is some kind of “system loyalty”, i.e. one indicator for a “dual audience”.

This argument can be supported by factor analyses on the same basis.¹

- For 1985 the factor analysis reflects the monopoly of public service, all three channels are attributed to one factor.
- For 1990 the factor solution for eight channels included in the questionnaire included two factors, which explained 63 per cent of the variance (in brackets: loadings):
 - Factor 1, PSB General Channels: ARD (.90), ZDF (.92), Regional Third Channel (.76);
 - Factor 2, Commercial and Thematic Channels: Pro7 (.81), SAT.1 (.77), RTL (.77), 3Sat (.75), Eurosport (.63); the only exception here is 3Sat, a joint channel of public broadcasters from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland with a focus on culture and information, which had been launched in the late eighties as an additional public channel distributed via cable and satellite; this indicates that in this early phase of the dual system the new distribution facilities shaped the patterns of exposure.
- For 1995 the factor solution for 19 channels included five factors, which explained 61 per cent of the variance. This indicates the strong differentiation of the TV market in the early nineties:
 - *Factor 1, PSB General Channels:* ARD (.91), ZDF (.92), Regional Third Channel (.73);
 - *Factor 2, Commercial General Channels:* Pro7 (.80), SAT.1 (.78), RTL (.74), RTL 2 (.78), Super RTL (.57), Kabel 1 (.57), VOX (.56); this factor is exclusively defined by commercial channels which provided an entertainment-oriented range of programme genres including news, fictional and non-fictional entertainment.
 - *Factor 3, Culture, News and Music Channels:* Arte (.74), MTV (.66), n-tv (.62), 3Sat (.57); this factor includes the two transnational public service channels 3Sat and Arte, which have a common focus on culture, the German version of the music channel MTV Europe and a commercial news channel (n-tv).

- *Factor 4, Sports*: Eurosport (.86), DSF (.85); this factor indicates that the interest in sports causes similar patterns of exposure to the German (DSF) and the European (Eurosport) sports channel.
- *Factor 5, Pop Music*: VIVA 2 (.82), VIVA (.69), VH-1 (.57); this factor includes three channels for popular music. It is surprising that MTV is not attributed to this factor (see above); this might indicate that at that time MTV was also regarded as one of the most innovative channels in terms of television aesthetics, which might have caused the link with the cultural channels.

As the findings for 1995 show, ten years after the advent of commercial television the market had reached quite a clear structure. The factors represent groups of channels that are very likely to be combined within the media repertoires of the population. The fact that public service channels on the one hand and commercial channels on the other build the two most important factors, indicates that the viewers make a difference between the two parts of the dual system. However, the fact that we can find these two independent factors also indicates that there are channel repertoires that represent all possible combinations from the two systems: high or low amounts of viewing for both public and private channels, a high amount for public and a low for private, and vice versa.

The argument here is that these concrete patterns of how viewers combine public and commercial channels provide relevant information on PSM's role in the respective media environment. Therefore systematic analyses of these patterns are needed.

Public service broadcasting in converging media environments

The second example for analyses from a repertoire-oriented perspective refers to ongoing discussion about how the increasing role of online media might affect the use of traditional media. The data provided by the above-mentioned study allow for the calculation of correlations between the frequencies of use of different media. Table 1 analyses the extent to which the frequency of online use correlates with the frequency of use of seven other media. The table is based on data from the 2005 survey in order to reflect the most recent situation of internet diffusion.

For the whole population the findings show that there are small but (due to the big sample size) highly significant negative correlations with television and newspapers and moderate positive correlations with listening to audio media and watching videos or DVDs. This finding could be read as follows: The more people use the internet, the less they watch television and newspapers – an interpretation quite in line with the public debate on the consequences of online media on traditional media.

However, as detailed analyses for more specific groups demonstrate, this interpretation does not hold at the more particularised level. Within the group

of adolescents the correlation between online and television is zero, and for newspapers there is a moderate and highly significant positive correlation. For young people these data say the more they use the internet the more they read newspapers, which is clearly against common assumptions on the relationship between the internet and newspapers.

Table 1. Correlation between the frequency of online use and the frequency of use of other media in 2005 (Pearson coefficients)

	Total population n=4,500	Adolescents n=444	Middle age, middle class n=915	Pensioners n=1,052
Television	-.15	.02	-.03	.00
Radio	.00	.22	.02	.11
Newspaper	-.06	.22	.02	.09
Magazines	.03	.21	.09	.06
Books	.02	.06	.05	.11
CD/records	.20	-.03	.12	.13
Video/DVD	.33	.20	.15	.17

The lesson to be learnt from this empirical example is twofold: Firstly, the patterns of how people compose their media repertoire are more complex than often expected. Research on media use has to systematically analyse the relationships between different media as they are reflected by patterns of exposure. Secondly, it is crucial to consider the role of demographic and other contextual variables. At first glance there is a negative correlation between the internet and television. However, when we look at specific groups there isn't one to verify this finding. Thus the correlation for the total sample can be fully explained by social factors – in this case the fact that older people watch a lot of television and are less likely to use the internet compared with young people.

Attitudes towards public broadcasting within different media repertoires

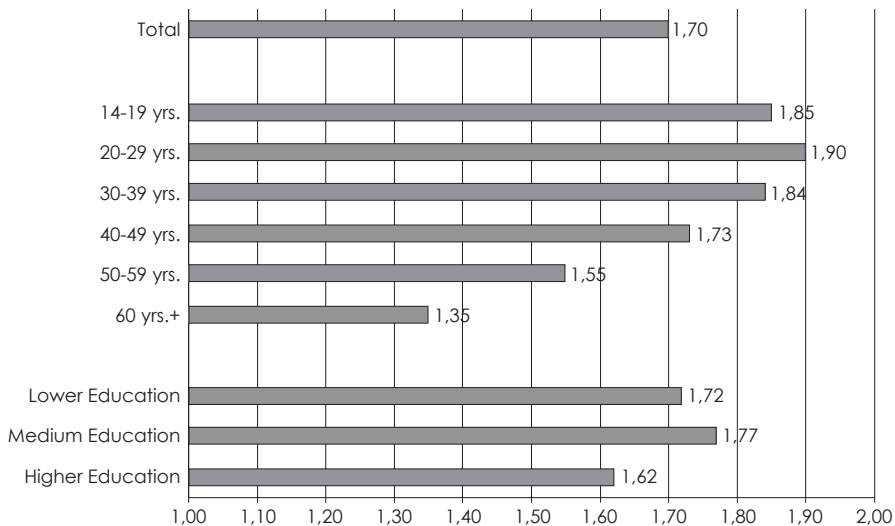
The third example for repertoire-oriented analyses starts with the question of how attitudes towards public broadcasting are correlated with the frequency of use of other media. For this kind of analysis, the *Mass Communication* surveys in 2000 and 2005 included the following question: "Public broadcasting (radio and television) remains indispensable"; the answer categories were 1=fully agree, 2=rather agree, 3=rather disagree, and 4=fully disagree.

In general the data provide quite positive news for public broadcasters: In both 2000 (82,7%) and 2005 (80,0%) a clear majority of the German population agreed with this statement. However there are relevant indicators for emerging trends:

- The highest (although still small) correlation of this item with any of the media use items is newspaper reading: The more often people read newspapers, the more they think that PSB remains indispensable.
- The only negative correlation is with the use of the internet: The more people use the internet the less they think that public service media are an indispensable part of the media environment.

As further analyses show, all correlations between the attitude towards public broadcasting and the use of different media almost disappear when age and education are controlled. As figure 2 shows, there are significant differences between the age groups and the educational groups with regard to their attitude to public broadcasting. Younger people are almost in the middle of the scale used here (some agree, some disagree), whereas older people strongly emphasise that PSM are indispensable. The effect of education is small, but the most positive attitude can be found among the group with the highest level of formal education.

Figure 2. Agreement with the statement "Public broadcasting stays indispensable"



Note: Total n=4,500; means; answer categories: 1=fully agree, 2=rather agree, 3=rather disagree, and 4=fully disagree;
Source: Massenkommunikation 2005.

This example in analysis of existing data from a repertoire-oriented perspective provides evidence that attitudes towards public broadcasting are partly linked with the frequency of use of other media (newspaper, internet), whereas there is no correlation with the frequency of television or radio use. This finding emphasises the argument that research on the public of public service media must analyse how PSM are integrated in *comprehensive* media repertoires which

include the whole range of media activities. From the users' perspective different types of media belong together as one coherent environment from which they select a meaningful composition, i.e. their personal media repertoire. As some of the above examples have shown these personal repertoires are partly shaped by structural and positional factors; as a consequence we can identify "typical" repertoires for specific social milieus. This allows for using the concept of media repertoires for analyses on an aggregate level, too.

Conclusion

The starting point of this article was the notion that the political and public discourse on the remit of public service media lacks systematic consideration of the users and audiences. To contribute to a more appropriate and fruitful conceptualisation of PSM's public, two approaches have been proposed: a) an analytical differentiation of different user roles, which can be used for quality assessments; b) the concept of media repertoires, which emphasises the fact that media users combine different media and that the actual role of PSM is determined by its position within these repertoires.

In connection with the debates on the public service remit and the qualities of PSM the users are often conceived only as consumers who seek to fulfil their individual needs. As a consequence there is a seeming tension between the users' perspective on the one hand and normative expectations on the other hand. The argument here is that this tension lays within the user him- or herself. Any user combines three perspectives on the media in general, and on PSM in particular: He or she is a *consumer* of media products that should serve his or her individual needs and interests; and a *citizen* evaluating media products against criteria of the extent to which they fulfil their democratic, social, and cultural functions; and an *owner of rights* who expects that the media do not violate these rights. Depending on which of these perspectives is more salient in a given situation the user will come to different evaluations of concrete media offers. None of these perspectives is per se more or less legitimate. Therefore any research that sets out to adequately involve the users' perspective in the discourse on the remit and qualities of public service media should cover *all three* perspectives and carefully analyse the *interrelations* between them.

As for research on concrete patterns of media use, a repertoire-oriented approach has been proposed. Media repertoires were defined as the actual composition of different kinds of media content as selected by an individual or a group. It has been argued that the role of public service media within specific media repertoires is a more appropriate indicator for their actual functions than the usual single indicators like reach or market share. From a repertoire-oriented perspective, important normative functions of public service media like diversity, integration, or pluralism, can be reformulated in an operational way. This helps to develop empirical indicators for the respective functions. Several examples for concrete empirical analyses of the position of public

service media within media repertoires in Germany and their relations to the use of other media have shown that such a perspective can provide fruitful evidence even for the general debate on the remit of PSM.

Public service media must serve the public. The approach proposed in this chapter shall help to adequately identify what the users *expect* from public service media and to evaluate what they actually *get* from respective offers.

Note

1. Principle component analysis, criterion: eigenvalue >1, with varimax rotation.

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Follow the Audience?

An Analysis of PSM New Media Strategies in Light of Media Use and Assumptions about Audiences

Andra Leurdijk & Matthijs Leendertse

“Follow the audience” has been a guiding principle for contemporary strategies of public service broadcasting [PSB] on digital platforms. Partly in response to and partly in anticipation of people’s changing patterns of media consumption, many European PSB organisations have diversified and expanded their online services. They no longer only broadcast on open, free-to-air channels but also offer digital TV and radio channels, on-demand services, websites and mobile services.

The transition from public service broadcasting to public service media [PSM] is a process with many challenges, obstacles and as yet unresolved questions (Lowe and Bardoel 2007). Firstly, the routes audiences take in the digital media landscape are not uniform and have often been hard to predict. Varying segments manifest differing preferences. For PSB organisations whose remit requires catering to the needs of a general audience (not just commercially attractive audiences) this poses questions about the extent to which they should redirect investments from their main general interest channels to additional, special interest digital channels and services.

Secondly, audiences do not equally embrace all new media services. Interactive TV, for instance, has not become the success that many media gurus predicted, while alternatives rapidly became popular, especially YouTube and social networking sites like Facebook. This has sometimes taken traditional media companies by surprise. PSB companies, like other traditional mass media organisations, must continuously decide whether to engage with new technologies and services.

Thirdly, following the audience is but one guiding principle in developing PSB strategies. These organisations must also take into account other considerations including costs, regulation, and competitors’ strategies. Moreover, their current organisational structures, professional ethics and internal work cultures sometimes conflict with the expectations of ‘digital natives’ and online users that PSB organisations aim to address with new digital services. The open-ended, user-centric, ‘cut-and-paste’ ethos that permeates online services is often difficult to reconcile with upholding quality, reliability and neutrality – principles that

are fundamental to PSB standards (Leurdijk 2007a & 2007c). In this complex and volatile context PSB managers must develop strategies based on analyses of *probable* future audience media behaviours in light of financial, legal and practical considerations.

Changes in media technologies and audiences' media consumption patterns can affect the PSB remit, part of which in most West European countries is to ensure a public space for shared experiences and democratic debate. Fulfilling this remit becomes more complicated as digital and online media take up a growing share of the time that people spend on media, as audiences fragment and as their media consumption patterns become more individualised.

In this chapter we intend to analyse how PSB companies have interpreted changes in audience behaviour and how they have subsequently formulated and motivated their strategies for developing a specific mix of media services for particular audiences. This analysis aims to identify and explore some of the contradictions and challenges that PSB organisations face in their relations with audiences in the digital media environment. To map the field we first describe some core trends in television and video services, and audience conceptions underlying these trends. Next we look at the strategies PSB organisations have formulated in response to these trends and with an interest in changing audience behaviours. The trends and strategies are then confronted with empirical data on actual media use. These data that show audience media consumption patterns are both more conservative than many gurus have claimed and more diverse and volatile than predicted. Our conclusions highlight possible directions for PSB companies in response to more demanding audiences whose media use is becoming increasingly difficult to track.

Our data and examples are derived from a comparative study undertaken for Netherlands Public Broadcasting and looking at the strategies of European PSB companies in two large (the UK and Germany) and two small countries (Netherlands and Belgian/Flanders)¹. This is supplemented with desk research and analysis of essential policy documents and currently available research on media use in the countries studied. We focus on TV and video, although radio is an important PSB service that is also partly re-invented on the web in the form of streaming audio services and downloadable podcasts.

Developments in television and changing audience perceptions

In mapping the field we distinguish between four main developments in television and video services over the last two decades. These developments are presented more or less chronologically. Each development has implied different ideas about audiences' roles and attitudes in relation to TV and audiovisual content.

*Assumption 1. Expansion of television channels:
More choice for audiences*

The rise of cable and satellite television, together with digital compression of television signals, has greatly reduced scarcity in broadcast frequencies. Consequently an abundance of new TV channels was launched after the mid-1980s, the majority of which focus on specific target audiences – e.g. youth and women's channels, channels targeting diaspora audiences – or particular niche markets: e.g. music, nature, history and sports channels. The assumption has been that viewers like to have access to a large number of TV channels and want to be able to select channels that match their preferences for particular types of (niche) content (Leurdijk et al 2006 & 2007b; Doyle 2002). The remote control became an indispensable device for exploring and selecting channels. Thus, 'homo zappiens' emerged.

Assumption 2. Time-shifted TV: More control for audiences

The digitalisation of television not only means more channels but also more control over the viewing time. The Personal Video Recorder [PVR] enables viewers to record TV programmes on a hard disc for watching at a time of their convenience, just as the VCR facilitated in the analogue era, but with greater ease, more features, more capacity, and a more user-friendly system. Hard disc recorders often use Electronic Programme Guides (built-in or offered by the network provider), making it easier to select and record programmes from a broadcast schedule. Some devices, such as TiVo, go so far as to automate recording based on preferences specified by the owner.

In addition to recording devices, time-shifted TV (also called delay TV or catch-up TV) is also offered through other platforms, especially via the internet. Complete TV shows (even entire seasons) can be downloaded legally (e.g. via iTunes) or illegally using peer-to-peer technology (e.g. Vuze or Bit-Torrent). In addition to downloads many broadcasters have launched streaming services that allow end users to watch videos over the internet, on dedicated sites, or external aggregation platforms such as YouTube. Various additional video services have emerged, for instance 'behind the scenes' footage or combinations of video with text and other online content. Furthermore, television providers such as cable networks or satellite operators are now also offering on demand TV services, often in cooperation with (public service) broadcasters. This freedom from time constraints has more recently been expanded to freedom of location with the emergence of mobile TV services, bringing TV into the domain of Any Time-Any Place.

Time-shifted TV offerings rest on the assumption that viewers want to become independent of broadcasting schedules to compose their own schedules with (pre-selected) programmes of their own choice to watch at a time of their convenience. This development is also referred to as a migration from linear to non-linear TV²; some even expect linear TV to become a relic of the past.

*Assumption 3. Interactive Television and SMS Television:
More audience interaction*

A third development is the emergence of interactive television in various forms. In interactive television a digital broadcast signal is combined with a return path through a set top box that allows viewers to interact with the programme by using the remote control. Interactive services in recent years range from changing camera angles during sports events and choosing split screen options to playing along with quizzes and tele-voting (Pavlik 2008; Leurdijk et al 2006; Leurdijk and Rietkerk 2005). A more sophisticated form of interactivity, so far mostly offered on a trial basis, allows viewers to affect the storyline by offering a range of branches to choose between.

An easier, cheaper to produce and thus far more lucrative version of interactive TV is the practice of broadcasters inviting viewers to respond to in-programme prompts by sending text messages. SMS-TV provides viewers with the means to interact with the television programme without online networks or set top boxes. This has become an important new source of revenues for broadcasters, particularly in reality-TV formats and contests or quiz shows (the pioneering hit was *Big Brother*). Another advantage is that SMS interaction promotes greater user engagement, which grows loyalty in programme viewing time (Leendertse et al 2002). Today SMS interactivity is mostly used in combination with traditional (live) linear programmes, and especially by channels focussed on young people.

With interactive television, the assumption is that viewers like to be actively engaged with programme content, to interact and even influence the course of events in the programme's story, instead of just consuming story lines invented by programme producers.

Assumption 4. Web 2.0 TV: More audience participation

Social media, or Web 2.0 as Tim O'Reilly coined the term in 2004, refers to web applications where users are in the driver's seat. The balance of control shifts from professional producers to amateur users who are also makers – the so-called 'prosumers'. Examples include Facebook, Wikipedia and Google Groups. "In the Web 2.0 era it less helpful to think of people as 'end-users' because they are now at the heart of the value chain. They have become important actors in virtually all elements of online services" (Slot and Frissen 2007). Many people think here of user generated content, but social media entail more than the development of content by users: they allow users to (co)create, tag, discuss, share, package and distribute content (Limonard 2008). The best known example from the audiovisual industry is YouTube where users can upload video clips created by themselves or from other sources, tag, comment on and rate videos, create profiles, link to other users and subscribe to 'channels' offered by broadcasters, other users, organisations, etc. The assumption behind social

media is that viewers like to be active participants in the creation, packaging and distribution of video material.

With the deployment of new media technologies, perceptions about the role of an audience have correspondingly changed. Traditionally the term referred to viewers and listeners for mass media content in broadcasting. In the case of television this view implicitly assumed passive consumption. New media technologies have changed that perception by providing improved access to content and more room for audience interaction; audiences became choosers, critical media consumers and programmers of their own TV schedules. With the rise of social media, audiences are increasingly understood as content producers. "The video user is becoming far more active; video is downloaded, accessed on demand, stored or saved for later viewing, fast-forwarded through, searched, sorted, edited, redistributed, uploaded, clicked on or otherwise manipulated in video games, and subject to a host of rapidly evolving interactive features. Only occasionally it is just being watched" (Pavlik 2008). Although this is perhaps too biased towards interactivity because the couch potato is not exactly an endangered vegetable, it does indicate a shift in thinking away from a view that presumes passive audiences to one that accommodates active users and (co)creators. To an essential degree this is about shifting the balance of relative power between source and receiver, terminology that in its self seems somewhat quaint today.

Is the historic PSB mission undermined?

These TV trends in combination with changing audience conceptions, plus of course actual changes in audience behaviours, serve as a kind of meta-driver for the reformulation of PSB strategies seeking to fulfil their remits as PSM companies. Traditionally, the PSB model is based on a commitment to the universal dissemination of content services as a public good (McNair 2005; Scannel 2005). Through daily news and current affairs programming they inform people about events at home and around the world. Their drama series, contests, talk shows, sports and other programmes create points of common reference, offer people subjects for 'water cooler conversations', and contribute to the formation of public opinions and tastes (Jauert and Lowe 2005). PSB programmes broaden and deepen the range of experiences available to everyone beyond their immediate surroundings. They confront people with views they do not share and with people whose lives they know little about to support dialogue and to build mutual understanding. PSB mixed programme services on national channels are therefore supposed to contribute to national coherence, social inclusion and the healthy functioning of democratic processes.

This traditional PSB model is very different from a model in which content is tailored, marketed and sold to individuals as efficiently as possible. In the liberalisation of media markets broadcasters have increasingly emphasised

opportunities for media consumers to enjoy an expanding range and greater freedom of choice, although increasingly at a price. Sophisticated ways of indicating personal preferences via EPGs and search engines, and ways of matching content to personal profiles, cater to self-involved communities of interest. Individual consumption of content tailored to personal preferences is further enabled by portable, lightweight devices. According to critics (e.g. Scannel 2005), such development inside PSB organisations means surrendering one of their main sources of legitimacy; the increasing emphasis on diversity, difference and choice may endanger democracy and the health of the nation-state. To those critics *broadcasting*, as opposed to *narrowcasting*, is essential for PSB.

Although thought provoking, Scannel's argument rests on a common idealised view of PSB's impact on audiences on the one hand, and on a rather pessimistic and narrow view of the qualities of new digital TV services on the other. Even in the analogue era when channels were quite limited, all people did not watch all programmes or necessarily watch any of them in the same way. Viewing preferences have always and to a considerable extent evidenced differentiation by age, class, gender and ethnicity, for example, making the idea of a 'general audience' rather abstract – if not actually mystifying. Moreover, TV viewing is for most people most of the time a leisure activity, not a pedagogic experience (although not to imply the two are mutually exclusive). Audience studies of TV viewing and news consumption have produced empirical evidence that contradicts some of the core claims of traditional PSB logic (e.g. Costera Meijer 2006; Morley 1999; Ang 1991). These findings fundamentally challenge the depth of PSB's actual contribution to citizenship and democracy and of viewing its television programmes as an educational experience. Most critics have not, however, completely discarded the idea that PSB can (and in most cases should) still contribute to shared experiences, provide a platform for the exchange of ideas and experiences, and thereby potentially contribute to the functioning of modern democracies.

PSM strategies: Case studies

BBC Britain

In its bid for renewal of the Royal Charter & Agreement for 2007-2017, the BBC published its vision on the future in a report titled *Building Public Value* (BBC 2004). The vision was further elaborated in a BBC editorial blueprint titled *Creative Future* (BBC 2006). In *Building Public Value* the BBC expressed high expectations of time-shifted, on-demand TV viewing. By 2016 the corporation expects everyone in the UK to have access to digital TV (the switch off of analogue TV is planned for 2012) and the majority of households to have access to broadband at home. Downloading and file sharing will be commonplace. The BBC foresees more video on mobile devices and more TV screens in public spaces, such as bus stations, airports and shopping malls. The report is imbued

with awareness of profound changes and the need to diversify the BBC's offer across new platforms for fragmented audiences and more individualised media consumption patterns. 'One-size-fits-all' broadcasting will become a relic of the past (BBC 2004: 50).

In response the BBC seeks a leading role in the transition to the digital media era. 'Creating a fully digital Britain is a public challenge which the BBC must help to lead' (BBC 2004: 6). That role has two dimensions: 1) as caretaker and promoter of core public values including quality, integrity, social inclusion and reliability in an expanding and increasingly competitive domain where these values are presumably at risk; and 2) by profiling itself as the organisation to bridge any digital divide by ensuring universal access in the online world. They propose achieving this by working in partnership with educational institutions, libraries and the industry to make BBC content available widely and easily.

Core to its strategy for realising this vision is the intention to transform the BBC into a cross-platform organisation. Programme content should be available 24/7 and the BBC must develop a relationship with audiences who are not to be considered as passive viewers and listeners but as potential contributors to BBC content.

In attempting to realise its vision the BBC has developed services in all of the four areas described above. They have launched a number of digital TV channels, beginning with News24 in the late nineties and followed by BBC3, BBC4, CBeebies, CBBC, and BBC Parliamentary Channel. Typically these new digital channels focus on genres and target audiences that fit well with the traditional PSB remit, such as a news and a Parliamentary channel and those that focus on programming for children. With these channels the BBC attempts to win back some declining and fragmenting audiences, especially in multi-channel households and most dramatically among young people and ethnic minorities. The launch of BBC digital channels has also been attuned with stimulating the roll-out of digital TV and consequent switch-off of terrestrial analogue TV in Britain. Its active role in this transition is most apparent in the BBC's investments in digital terrestrial television through Freeview, which offers users access to a package of approximately 50 digital TV and 25 radio channels at no extra cost apart from the one-off purchase of a standard set top box. Here the principle of universal availability and accessibility is evident in the fact that the BBC doesn't charge viewers or users extra and must finance everything with licence fee income.

The BBC has also been experimenting with interactive TV services in a number of ambitious projects. Between June 2000 and December 2003, BBC New Media launched 114 enhanced TV services. Among these were sports events such as *Wimbledon* (2001) and the *Interactive Olympics* (2004) where viewers could choose among different matches and camera angles. The BBC's most successful interactive programmes include *The Great British Spelling Test*, *Walking with Beasts*, *Karaoke Sound of Music*, and the 40-minute play-along live quiz behind *Test the Nation*, as well as a nine-week live 16 hour-a-day video stream for *Fame Academy II* (Leurdijk et al 2005).

To enable watching programmes at times of the viewer's own choosing instead of following the programme schedules, the company has introduced the BBC iPlayer, a branded media player offering access to BBC archives and on-demand, time-shifted TV services. The iPlayer is also available on some mobile devices.

With the BBC Creative Archive the BBC opened its programme archives to the public. Video clips and audio fragments were made available in categories such as news, history, and nature. People could download material, cut and mix to produce compilations for non-commercial, educational or personal purposes, and all under a creative archive licence. The stipulation being that the results, if made public, could only be released under the same conditions. This project exemplifies the BBC's ambitions that its investments in Web 2.0 and User Created Content services must be done in ways that combine people's urge to produce and co-produce their own content with historic public values including high quality, respect for authors' copyrights, and universal service. The Creative Archive pilot was discontinued in 2006.

The BBC has attempted to counterbalance the individualisation trend in media use by using digital platforms, services and tools to build and strengthen communities. Examples include the CBBC clubhouse, BBC Connectort and iCann, later renamed Action Network – an interactive community website with resource materials to help people launch social campaigns by putting them in touch with likeminded others who share their concerns, and with experts to provide advice on campaigning. In this service the BBC collaborated with others active in this field such as the NHS and Citizens Advice. The service was introduced in 2003 and dismantled in 2008, apparently due to a lack of active contributors and a consequent loss of momentum (Wilcox, 2007).

Of these new services, so far, Free View and the iPlayer have been successful. The other projects were discontinued or suspended, some for reasons related to competition complications and others because they could not compete with similar online services already available elsewhere (iCann/Action Network). In the case of the Creative Archive the BBC was unable to resolve IPR issues (Intellectual Property Rights). The digital TV channels have stable but typically small audience shares and the BBC does not intend to further expand these.

Despite practical difficulties, all of this importantly demonstrates a focussed effort to balance individualisation with common experiences and community building, in a nutshell the company's PSB heritage with its PSM developmental ambitions. The BBC's main general interest channels are therefore still at the core of its portfolio for fulfilling the historic mission. So most of the BBC's creative and production efforts, as well as its budget, go to the main general interest channels BBC One or BBC Two, and all landmark programmes have their first screening on these channels.

The BBC's budget for digital services is still relatively small, although not insignificant. Its budget for digital channels in 2006 was £228 million, about 6% of its total budget of £3.7 billion. In addition, 3% of its total budget was dedicated to online services and interactive TV. Two years later in 2008 the

budget share for digital services had increased considerably, but was still low compared to the budgets of general interest channels BBC One and BBC Two. In 2008 the expenditure for digital services were £551,2 million, i.e. a little over 15% of the total BBC budget of £3.5 billion. Of that, £369,2 million or 10% of the total BBC budget was allocated for the digital TV channels and £182 million or 5% for online and interactive services (BBC annual reports and accounts, 2005-2006, 2007-2008).

This makes sense as long as most people still spend more time watching linear TV and listening to radio-as-usual rather than surfing the internet or viewing online and on-demand video and audio. As a public service broadcaster, an obligation that continues even in the PSM context, the BBC must continue to serve all license payers and not exclude anyone from its services. Spending too much on services that are not yet universally available would undermine this.

ARD and ZDF Germany

The German PSB remit explicitly includes the task of contributing to technological and other innovations in the field of electronic media (Rundfunkstaatsvertrag 2009). In their performance promises both ARD and ZDF express their intention to contribute to audiences' individual needs for a more diversified content offer online and via mobile platform, while simultaneously also offering platforms and content that strengthen common interests, mutual understanding and exchange of viewpoints (ARD 2007; ZDF 2006 & 2008a).

ARD and ZDF consider the new digital channels an addition to their general interest channels. Their regular offer remains by far most important. Nevertheless it has proven increasingly difficult to cater to the tastes and preferences of diverging audiences on general interest channels alone. With their targeted channels, ARD and ZDF cater especially to younger audiences who are quicker to take up new services. The German PSB organisations legitimise their digital and online offer as a way to reach younger audiences, in particular, with high quality and reliable content³. The average age for their main channels continues to rise in line with an aging population, so they risk losing young viewers altogether. But they also see that other age groups are increasingly using online content, in particular for news and background information. Thus, these German PSB providers intend to make available reliable information and information on issues of social relevance across digital platforms.

ARD and ZDF were quick off the mark, too. Already in 1984 3SAT was launched in the German market, followed by ARTE in 1992 and Ki.Ka and Phoenix in 1997⁴. By launching these channels ARD and ZDF were responding to changing viewing habits, especially among young people eager to surf channels and watch commercial TV. Today all these channels are broadcast digitally. ARD and ZDF also launched extra digital channels (Eins Extra, Eins Festival and Eins Plus in 1997 by ARD, and ZDF Vision and ZDF Infokanal in 1996, ZDF theaterkanal in 1999, and ZDF dokukanal in 2000). The ARD and

ZDF digital 'bouquets' came with digital teletext and a limited red-button offer, including background information about programmes.

All German themed and targeted channels are in genres typically considered appropriate for PSB: children's TV, news and information, culture and education. Actually it was stipulated that the extra PSB channels could not be in the field of entertainment or fiction as these were considered to belong to the domain of commercial broadcasters. PSB channels would be seen as distorting the market. ZDF and ARD intend to strengthen but not expand their digital channels.

Foreseeing an increasingly on-demand TV consumption through IPTV networks (ZDF 2008c), ZDF and ARD expanded their online on-demand programme offers with the launch of the ZDF Mediathek in 2007, followed by ARD Mediathek in 2008. ZDF aims to make available 50% of its programmes in the Mediathek. In addition ZDF makes its offer available through a digital portal leading to radio and TV content from regional public service broadcasters. Due to regulatory constraints motivated by presumed market distortion claimed by commercial lobbies, the Mediathek programmes are only available until seven days after initial broadcast⁵.

Budgets for the new channels and online services are limited, however, so the special interest channel schedules are mainly filled with reruns of programmes earlier broadcast on the main general interest channels. The costs for the three channels co-owned by ARD, ZDF and others (Ki.Ka, Phoenix and 3Sat) are not published, but are estimated to be around €30 million per year. In 2007 ZDF spent almost €16 million on its digital channels and €17.6 million on internet services (ZDF 2008b). This amounts to 3.3% of its total budget. The costs for ARD's digital channels and online offers are also not published. Until 2009 spending on ZDF's online and digital services had to stay within the limit of 0.75% of its total budget. This limitation has been lifted in the new German PSB remit (Rundfunkstaatsvertrag)⁶ in 2009.

NPO Netherlands

In its long-term vision and strategy documents, the Dutch PSB operator, NPO, has paid much attention to future digital developments (NPO 2005)⁷. For the immediate future it predicted evolutionary rather than revolutionary change in audience behaviours, with most viewers still spending a major part of their time watching the main linear channels. But in the long run NPO expects fundamental changes in media markets and consumption and anticipates a situation in which open offer channels function as windows to a larger digital and on-demand programme offer. This may be followed by a networked media environment in which various junctions (or nodes) serve as navigation points. The role of broadcasters as aggregators would disappear. PSB organisations can only remain relevant by funding programmes with particular public value or as the producers and the owners of such content. In this context the position of PSB channels on the EPG, as well as developing strong brands that people recognise as the standard for reliability and high quality, are considered crucial.

In response to the changing environment NPO announced its intention to transform itself from a radio and television broadcaster to a multimedia and cross-media organisation present on “all relevant platforms”. A main idea has been to ‘follow audiences’ in their media consumption patterns. Thus, NPO sees the present situation as a transition period in which they know the direction but can’t know the pace of change. In preparing for a new position the organisation intends to develop cross-media formats and to reorganise its structure and production processes. It also sees opportunities for interaction with viewers and listeners and the formation of communities around particular themes and concepts. Expansion to a bouquet of different types of digital content is here, too, an integral part of NPO’s strategy, including themed channels, on-demand programmes and mobile content.

However in preparing its vision and plans for the next ten-year concession period, NPO shifted emphasis to a more cautious strategy. It continues to put audio and video on different platforms (not only radio and TV) at the core of its offer, but considers the linear general interest channels the most important for the near future. The transformation to a completely networked digital media environment with fragmenting audiences is considered less imminent than five years before. Notwithstanding this pull back in strategy as a result of changing environmental conditions, quite successful new content offers have been developed in recent decades, some at the forefront of implementation of new technologies by broadcasters in the Europe.

The Dutch PSB organisations have started a large number (17) of digital special interest channels (history, comedy, religion, news, parliament, documentary, best of... etc) that were originally only distributed as web channels. Each was run by one of the individual PSB organisations. When the cable companies launched their digital packages, PSB digital channels’ distribution was gradually expanded from the web to the cable companies and, later, also to satellite providers’ digital packages. In the development of digital channels two opposing views on their nature and function have been evident.

In the view of some the digital channels should be considered a way to open archives to the audience⁸. With little or no scarcity in distribution capacity on digital networks, the PSB operator can offer audiences many ways to access the programme catalogue. Digital channels are just one option that should be tested. Others are convinced that no programme offer can be successful unless its brand name is sufficiently strong to appeal to a large enough audience to be of interest to distribution networks. Digital channels thus require substantial investments 1) in promotion and marketing, 2) in new, original programming and 3) in building an identity for the channels through presenters and a clear programming strategy. When the offer is divided across many different channels none has much chance of being successful. Therefore the efforts and budgets should be focussed on fewer, bigger and better channels⁹. These opposing views have been (temporarily) resolved in a compromise where the latter view has become the official policy line – as part of a more general centralisation policy – but where the number of channels has so far been only been reduced (in 2008) from 17 to 12.

NPO's online on-demand service, Uitzending Gemist, has been quite successful. The service was launched in 2001 and is now also available in some digital TV services offered by cable companies. Recently the mobile version was launched and NPO also intends to make the service available through widgets on iGoogle and Hyves, a popular Dutch social networking site (similar to Facebook). Also Dutch PSB operators experimented relatively early with interactive TV services, although most failed to break through. Only in the simple SMS to TV interactivity has success been obvious, as evident in a variety of programmes including the Eurovision Song Contest.

There is no explicit policy about the development of Web 2.0 services to strengthen (local) communities. But there are numerous initiatives by the individual broadcasting organisations to create online communities connected to a particular programme, channel or broadcasting organisation's brand¹⁰. Examples are VPRO's Landroof (www.landroof.nl) that examines environmental planning with inhabitants, NCRV's Dichttalent (www.dichttalent.nl) for amateur and professional poets, and KRO's De Wandeling (<http://dewandeling.kro.nl/>), a community for hikers.

As in the British and German cases funding for internet and other digital services has been comparatively modest, although not insignificant. In the early 2000s the Dutch government earmarked a dedicated budget of €20 million for internet services. That has grown to a total spend of €33,3 million in 2008, including the online catch-up TV service. On top of this, approximately €12 million has been available for digital TV channels, totalling approximately 5% of the total PSB budget (NPO 2009). Now that digital platforms have legally become part of NPO's regular PSB activities there is no longer a dedicated budget for digital services (Mediawet 2008) and the levels of spending are expected to stay at approximately the same level.

Audience take-up of new TV services

The emergence of the new technologies described in the cases we have treated were accompanied early on with forecasts that television would be revolutionised in some way or other. In reality, the use of new platforms for video content has not materialised to the revolutionary extent predicted by enthusiasts. Furthermore, take up of new platforms and services has not necessarily led to much or any decrease in the use of traditional linear television. The time people spend on watching TV does not seem to have suffered from the increase in internet usage. In most cases the growth seems to be apace in comparing these media.

In Germany people spent on average 203 minutes per day watching TV in 2000 and 228 minutes in 2009, while they spent 17 minutes on the Internet in 2003 and 70 minutes in 2009 (Van Eimeren and Frees 2009b). In the UK people spent 224 minutes watching TV in 2003 and 225 in 2008 (Ofcom 2009) – essentially no change at all. In the Netherlands people spent 166 minutes per day

watching TV in 2000 and 191 minutes in 2008, while the time spent on the internet increased to 72 minutes (NPO 2009)¹¹. Although the time spent on internet has increased considerably in all three countries, this has *not* cannibalised the time spent with television. It has, however, clearly gone at the expense of the use of print media. In what follows we deepen our understanding by looking at audience data on these new services in relation to the assumptions noted at the outset. Does the empirical data confirm or disconfirm these assumptions?

Does expansion of TV channels produce audience fragmentation?

The increased offer of programme channels was expected to satisfy consumers' presumed demands for a large and diverse range of channels catering to specific audience tastes. This, in turn, was supposed to lead to audience fragmentation as viewers are dispersed over an expansive number of channels. This would consequently put an end to electronic mass media when large numbers of the population viewed the same programming at the same time. While an interesting conjecture and convincing on the face of it, audience data reveals a more nuanced picture.

In the Netherlands, a country with nearly universal penetration of cable television since the 1990s, Dutch audiences already had access to more than 30 TV channels even in the analogue era. In 2009 fully 47% of households have access to digital TV networks, as well (SKO 2009). Digital TV channels that can only be received on digital set top boxes reach on average 18% of the Dutch per week and 35% per month, yet only account for 1-2% of viewing time (SPOT 2009). The combined audience share of the top 10 channels has also remained remarkably stable at around 85% from 2000-2008, and even increased somewhat because of the growing popularity of Dutch PSB channels (SPOT 2009). These figures do not indicate much fragmentation in the Dutch market.

In Germany around 33% of the population has access to digital television (AGF/GFK 2009) and average viewing time hovered just above 200 minutes from 2001-2009 (ibid). The audience share of the 10 largest German TV channels in 2008 was 83.5%. Audience fragmentation is also far from reality in the German market.

Digital television is more established in Britain with 89.2% of UK households receiving digital television in early 2009 (Ofcom 2009a). The most watched digital special interest channels in 2008 were UKTV at 2.9% and Sky Sports1 at 1.8% (BARB in BBC 2007-2008). Audience shares for BBC special interest channels are all below 1%, except for Cbeebies – the market leader in children's TV channels. This despite the fact that the number of channels available in the UK increased from 294 in 2003 to 495 in 2008. The combined market share of the five main channels has decreased, however, from 76.5% to 60.8% in that same period (BARB in Ofcom 2009b). However one should observe that the decline in single channels was more than made up for through their portfolio of channels.

These data show that assumption #1, the idea that given the option people will use an expanded TV offer optimally, is not confirmed. At best the convec-

ture is only very weakly indicated in some markets. Most people still spend most of their viewing time on the same set of 5-10 TV channels. Consequently the expansion of TV channels does not necessarily or automatically equate with growing fragmentation. Although audience fragmentation has happened in the UK more than in the other two countries, general interest channels for large mass audiences remain a significant part of people's TV menus. And the ownership of new channels for niche audiences has not made much headway in taking away audiences from the main traditional broadcasting corporations, which clearly enjoy a strong foothold.

*Does more control over time of viewing lead to
an increase in non-linear, time shifted TV-viewing?*

In the Netherlands delayed viewing using a PVR accounts on average for 1.2% of viewing time (SPOT 2009). That is a low number, but it is increasing. Interestingly, recorded programs are typically watched on the same day they were broadcast (67%) or on the day after. Despite modest changes in the general pattern, the number of people who time-shift can be quite large for individual programmes. For example, a popular Dutch show called *Wie is de Mol?* (translated: Who is the Mole?) had the highest number of delayed viewers at 184,000, nearly 15% of its total audience. Similarly the hit American series, *Grey's Anatomy*, got 22.8% of its Dutch audience through delayed viewing (ibid).

Time-shifted and other TV-like offers on the internet are becoming increasingly popular. One-third of Dutch households regularly watch television on the internet (ibid). Public broadcasters and RTL Netherlands, the two main broadcasting groups, serve around 150 million streams a year and that number has been rapidly increasing (SPOT 2009). SBS, the third main broadcasting group in the Netherlands, has also started online broadcasting and international players including YouTube and MSN are very popular (ibid).

Time-shifted TV over the internet is similarly popular in Germany. Usage of online video grew from 28% to 62% among German internet users over the age of 14 in the period from 2006-2009. Amongst 14-19 year olds it grew from 51% to 98% in the same period (van Eimeren and Frees 2009b). Fully 18% of all online users accessed live television online in 2009 and 21% reported accessing the online non-linear supply of television programmes (ibid). Around 20% of all German internet users watch delayed television on the internet, and over 33% in the age range of 14-29. ZDFmediathek serves around 14.5 million streams a month to a relatively young audience (ARD-ZDF 2009). Nevertheless, in terms of usage linear TV is still the undisputed leader in German media consumption; on average 80% watch TV daily while only 45% use the internet daily (ARD-ZDF 2009).

Figures published by the German regulatory authority show that between 2008 and 2009 the use of video-on-demand [VoD] has remained at the same low level; of all German households, only 0.3% use VoD at least once per week. The use of live internet TV has increased modestly, from 1.2% to 1.9%

of all TV households. The use of Mediathek has ticked up from 2.7% to 3.7% (TNS 2009).

So whereas consumption of other media, especially newspapers and radio, are suffering decreases amongst the German population, TV even grew marginally in the period between 2006-2009. The time spent watching TV does not seem to have suffered from the increase in internet usage and it is still 3 times higher than internet usage (van Eimeren and Frees 2009a).

Time-shifted TV viewing is possible in many UK households because 27% now use PVRs (Ofcom 2009). Of all people owning a PVR, 15% record programmes offered on the five main PSB channels (BBC1, BBC2, ITV, Channel4, Channel5) and watch them either on the same day as broadcast (8%) or between two and six days later (7%) (BARB 2008 in Ofcom 2009). In those households that have subscribed to Sky services, this percentage rises to 19%.

Films, drama and documentaries are the content categories most popular for recording in the UK (Ofcom 2009). Interestingly, on the Sky+ platform – probably the most advanced TV service with PVR – viewing recorded drama series gets more audience than live viewing. Research indicates that many viewers with PVRs claim to watch more programmes they enjoy, and to see a greater variety of programming, since getting their device (Ofcom 2009). But the numbers remain relatively modest, nonetheless, even if delayed viewing through online TV services is also increasing in popularity in the UK. The data show that 23% of internet users access these services, of which a majority is under 35 years of age. The BBC's iPlayer, by far the dominant catch-up TV service in the UK, reached nearly 15% of internet users in spring 2009 (Nielsen data reported in Ofcom 2009).

So far there are no reliable and consistent figures available on the percentage of the total viewing time that is taken up by using online and time shifted or catch up TV, as internet TV use is not yet measured in the same systematic way as 'regular' TV viewing.

Assumption #2, the idea that viewers enjoy more control over the time of viewing, is partly confirmed. People increasingly watch TV and other video material on the internet and increasingly use PSB's online delay TV services (iPlayer, Mediathek, Uitzending Gemist). The time-shifted TV options offered by PVRs are relatively popular in the UK, but much less so to date in the other two countries. And even in the UK – at least for the PSB channels – the majority of TV programming is still watched at the time of broadcast and time-shifted TV is mostly used for particular content genres (film, drama and documentary). The increasing popularity of online and time-shifted TV offers has not so far had a significant effect on linear TV viewing.

Does interactive television lead to more audience interaction?

Growth in interactive television services has been slower than anticipated (European Commission 2006). In the Netherlands interactive television has never passed the stage of experimentation (Leurdijk and Rietkerk 2005). This

is true for both complex interactive television that invites audiences to affect the programme's story line, as well as for more simple red button services that only ask people to vote for a candidate or select the right answer to a quiz question. One explanation is that although digital TV penetration is relatively high (47%) most households have only basic set top boxes for digital TV and only a few households possess set top boxes that contain operating systems allowing two-way communication. In the UK digital interactive television services are more popular, not least because of Sky's red button services, but also in the UK the simpler forms of interactivity are more prevalent than the more complex forms.

SMS interactivity has been popular in all European countries, although mainly for reality-TV talent shows such as *Idols* and *Big Brother*, as well as some game shows and youth programming (Leurdijk et al 2006). SMS interactivity has in some cases led to more viewer loyalty in terms of viewing time, and to more viewers in absolute numbers (Bughin 2004; Leendertse et al 2002).

It is impossible to draw strong conclusions here as yet. There simply isn't enough data for all countries to make strong claims based on empirical evidence. We have included what we know about the situation because interactive television continues to be a common strand in developmental discussions and it is important to acknowledge this.

Assumption #3, the idea that viewers wish to participate in TV programmes, can be partly confirmed for the Netherlands and the UK. But in terms of actual usage it's so far clear that viewers mostly use the simpler forms of interactivity such as betting and voting and seem less keen on the options to interact with storylines. The reason is most likely because television is for most people, most of the time, mainly a medium for entertainment and relaxation and relatively passive consumption of news.

Do social media turn TV consumers into TV producers?

Social media have become very popular in recent years. In the UK fully 90% of internet users between 25-34 reported visiting a social networking site in May 2009 (Comscore 2009). Facebook has become very popular. In the Netherlands we see a similar picture with over 72% of the online population having a social network profile at Hyves.nl, the Dutch domestic equivalent to Facebook (Ruigrok Netpanel and the Next Web 2009). To give an indication of fast-paced development, the dominant online video sharing platform, YouTube, was only founded in 2005 and had more than 10 billion videos viewed in August 2009 in the USA alone (Gruenwedel 2009). In Europe online video sharing platforms are also increasingly popular. In the Netherlands in 2009 about 45% of the online population used online video-sharing platforms such as YouTube, and 14% were active contributors (Ruigrok Netpanel and the Next Web 2009). In Germany, we see similar numbers. Video portals are the second most popular Web 2.0 application for German internet users, with 52% using them occasionally in 2009 (up from 26% in 2007) and 26% at least once a week in 2009 (up

from 14% in 2007). Amongst young people, this trend is even more apparent as 93% use online video occasionally and 79% on a daily basis (ARD/ZDF 2009). In Britain the YouTube site is by far the most popular video-sharing portal with 15 million unique visitors in May 2009 (Ofcom 2009a).

Not all visitors of social network sites or Web 2.0 services are active contributors, however. Nielsen (2006) introduced the 90-9-1 rule when he found that for any given number of web 2.0 services only 1% of all visitors (and for some services even less) actively and regularly contribute, that another 9% will contribute from time to time, while a whopping 90% are 'lurkers' – visitors who are just reading and observing but not actively contributing.

In an extensive study on the use of Web 2.0 media in European countries, Heim et al (2007) concluded there is evidence of a digital divide but not so much in terms of access to computers and the internet as in terms of the skills needed to use different internet services in a beneficial way, and especially to contribute to online content. Of all internet users only a small percentage (mostly young, male and urban) actively contributes to the internet by producing content themselves. Ofcom research (2009a) also shows relatively low numbers of people actively contributing to social network and user generated content sites. Of all people using the internet in 2009 only 9% on average produced and uploaded video content (actually down from 10% in 2007). For other user generated content services this percentage was higher and, in case of uploading pictures (43%) or setting up a social network site or profile page considerably higher (38%). Unsurprisingly the highest proportion is among young people (age 15-24); 65% and 68% respectively. Of all internet users in this age group, 19% has made and uploaded video content. From these numbers it is clear that when it comes to video content viewing is still preferred over producing.

Therefore assumption #4, that viewers wish to become producers, is partly confirmed. Web 2.0 services, and in particular social networking sites and 'user generated content' sites, have shown phenomenal growth percentages in a relatively short period. However many more people are only visiting these sites than actively contributing, which leads to a more nuanced view on these phenomena. Also there is some differentiation in the kind of services that invite most active participation. Services that require relatively little effort, skills or bandwidth have more active contributors (such as the personal profile pages and photo-sharing sites) than those that require more effort, skills and bandwidth. Especially the video uploading sites are visited often, but have far fewer contributors. It is also notable that video sharing sites such as YouTube contain increasing amounts of *professional* video as opposed to user generated amateur content as more traditional media companies enter contracts with YouTube (owned by Google) to launch their own channels on the platform. Possibly the impact of social network sites is bigger in the area of distributing, discussing, rating and recommending video content than in the area of actually producing video content. This requires more study. The research discussed here also does not distinguish between uploading self-produced video and professional videos retrieved from other video services or

P2P networks, nor does it distinguish between video's made publicly available versus those merely shared among friends and family, each of which indicates a different usage and could lead to a more nuanced understanding of what the use of video sharing platforms actually means and how it connects to traditional TV viewing.

Conclusions: Following when, where and how?

From the discussion on the case company's strategic choices in the digital domain it becomes clear that PSB operators can never simply 'follow the audience' in the sense of chasing people's preferences indiscriminately. They cannot only follow the early adopters of new video services, either, but must take into account the widest frame and that especially includes audiences that stick to the traditional platforms and channels. Also, to legitimate public funding PSB companies must strike a balance between offering "distinctive quality content" on the one hand and achieving respectable audience reach on the other. In an age of higher competition this balancing work becomes increasingly more demanding – and precarious. The pressure on PSB organisations to provide distinctive quality programming is increasing simultaneously with the need to popularise their offers and refine scheduling strategies competitively. As Christian Nissen (2006) suggested, both are essential to remaining socially relevant. In the digital domain this familiar challenge acquires added dimensions as PSB organisations adapt to diversification, fragmentation and individualisation trends on the one hand, and simultaneously work to achieve particular public goals for a mass audience on the other.

Forecasts about the revolutionary potential of new digital services have rapidly succeeded each other over the past two decades. To date, however, these have only partly been realised and often the adoption and use of new video services has gone much slower than predicted. PSB companies have certainly kept up with the rapid technological changes. They have developed content and applications for new platforms and, in some cases, have been at the forefront of innovation in being the first to apply new technologies on a large scale within their national territories. Sometimes PSB organisations' visions about audience needs have been misguided, however. The big audiences' supposed interest to interact with storylines and affect what happens has never come true at any scale. Interactivity remains mostly confined to the occasional click of the red button in a game show or contest. Sophisticated interactive TV services have too often been technology driven, perhaps inspiring artists and producers to explore innovative ways of non-linear storytelling, but too far-fetched for the public's ingrained media habits.

Increasing availability of TV channels and online video content has led to some audience fragmentation, though more so in Britain than in Germany and the Netherlands and in all three countries the main general interest channels have kept substantial audience shares, notwithstanding the fact that especially

in Germany and the Netherlands large numbers of TV channels have been available for quite some time.

Increasing options to control the schedule for TV viewing through online time-shifted and catch-up TV services and VoD services indicate growing usage. That is important to note. But so too it is important to observe these have not led to a decrease in linear TV watching. Especially the growth figures for new online video services such as the iPlayer have been spectacular, but the actual impact on TV consumption indicates patterns that are more (and more often) evolutionary and complementary rather than revolutionary and cannibalising. The same is true for the increase in internet use in general. This increase is substantial but has largely not been at the cost of linear TV viewing. The internet seems so far to have a larger negative impact on print media than on TV. Another explanation is that people are multitasking by watching TV and using the internet simultaneously (Nielsen 2009).

However, it is still too early for definite conclusions on these developments and the argument here should not be understood to suggest that PSB organisations should ignore new video services. The argument is rather to counter assumptions that PSB general interest channels are redundant and that the mass audience for linear TV is done and dusted. The general interest channels remain important and widely viewed, both in real time and via time-shifting. It is important to keep them as strong brands and windows to a more diversified, in-depth and targeted online content offer.

Moreover, many PSB online video offers have only been available for a few years, and broadband penetration has not yet reached market saturation. Considerable growth is still possible in the coming years. Also devices to connect computer processors and the internet to the TV screen, services especially made to view internet content on TV screens and also mobile video services, are still in their infancy. When these become more common and make it easier to watch online video content on a large screen from one's couch in a 'lean-backward' mode, and also while travelling, instead of a 'lean-forward' mode associated with the computer, they may affect viewing patterns in ways yet unknown. However there seem to be limits to people's desires to expand TV diets and to interact with TV content. Preselected and prescheduled video content, passively consumed, has not lost its attractiveness for most viewers most of the time, even if they simultaneously might enjoy having the *option* of – if not the urge for using – limitless choice.

More promising seem to be innovations that originated in user-friendly Web 2.0 technologies. Though taken by surprise at the rapid rise of these social networking services and, in this aspect, nowhere near the forefront of developments, some PSB companies are increasingly active and working to employ these services in combination with linear TV programmes or as stand-alone internet activities. Such efforts are not so much indicating any intention to replace professionally produced content but rather to enlarge its impact by adding functionalities, for instance to link with programmes and to rate and discuss them.

The results of all this research support a less pessimistic view on the effects of new digital TV services than the view held by Scannel (2005). They are not merely an expression of individualisation but really do open up new ways of fulfilling the public service remit, for instance by supporting communities around programmes dealing with particular themes, sometimes even leading to real life meetings among its members, as in the case of the Dutch PSB hikers' community. By offering ways to co-produce, share and communicate about audiovisual content they can even improve PSB's democratic functions. Web 2.0 applications certainly expand the options for communication and participation and the opportunities to connect for individuals and communities suffering problems of 'distance', variously defined.

The ways in which PSB companies are taking up this task indicates new possibilities for treating audiences as far more than merely consumers. Web 2.0 services open more participatory and democratic ways of engaging people as audiences and users in the exercise of their citizenship, and also in the sense of enabling self-expression, creativity and participation far beyond any simple formula of 'receivers for sources'. The developments reported here, although modest in practice and impact to date, may be taken to represent a remarkable transformation in the thinking of PSB professionals about audiences in fundamental respects and keyed to their activities, abilities and attributes.

There is evidence in all that is reported and discussed here that the public already has a legitimate place in public service media, and that in general they have been involved with PSB content in various ways. Whether that will be enough in the future and how or when such might change, can't yet be known and must remain to be seen. What has definitely changed and on a fundamental level is that in an age of media abundance PSB organisations can't afford to neglect audiences interests, preferences and media usage behaviours. These companies will have to take these into account in ways that go far beyond the one-dimensional data on audience reach or even 'time spent on media' figures. While at the moment these figures are still among the core assessment tools used by PSB companies, the new TV platforms and video services make essential in-depth research into complex media usage patterns among different audience groups indispensable.

Notes

1. Data on VRT, the Flemish PSB company, have been left out due to space limitations.
2. In its new Audiovisual Media Services Directive [AVMS] the European Commission has defined linear video as: "(...) 'television broadcasting' or 'television broadcast' (i.e. a linear audiovisual media service) means an audiovisual media service provided by a media service provider for simultaneous viewing of programmes on the basis of a programme schedule" (European Commission 2007). In other words, with linear video the media service provider is in charge of the schedule. This is the case with traditional but also with digital television channels. Non-linear video on the other hand has been defined as: "(...) 'on-demand audiovisual media service' (i.e. a non-linear audiovisual media service) means an audiovisual media service provided by a media service provider for the viewing of programmes at the moment chosen

- by the user and at his individual request on the basis of a catalogue of programmes selected by the media service provider; programme, in return for payment or for similar consideration" (European Commission 2007).
3. See for instance the ARD Digital Strategie: ARD Pressemeldung ARD beschließt Strategie für die digitale Medienwelt – Tagesschau aufs Handy, 19-06-2007, <http://www.ard.de/-/id=620988/sbkl0v/index.html>, consulted -1-10-2009
 4. All four special interest channels are jointly owned by ARD and ZDF. ARTE and 3SAT are co-owned by the German, French, Austrian and Swiss PSB companies.
 5. The Mediathek offers access to both and the ARD Mediathek to the TV and radio programmes of all thirteen Bundesländer stored at local servers of these regional PSB organisations, as well as to DasErste Mediathek, the centrally produced programmes from the umbrella organisation ARD that are broadcast by all regional PSB organisations.
 6. See: Zwölften Staatsvertrages zur Änderung rundfunkrechtlicher Staatsverträge vom 18 Dezember 2008 (GBl. 27. März 2009).
 7. NPO stands for Nederlandse Publieke Omroep, the umbrella and licence holding organization for over 20 individual broadcasting organisations that together constitute Dutch PSB. Each of these organisations is an association grounded on memberships that represent a religious, social or lifestyle segment of the Dutch population.
 8. The digital channels were originally claimed by these organisations as channels on which they could exploit their own brand and programme specialisations.
 9. Fewer channels would also make it easier to have a coherent position in negotiations with network providers on the conditions for distributing the channels and prevent them from cherry picking only the most popular channels.
 10. The lack of online services serving local communities might be due to the fact that this is seen as the responsibility of public broadcasters and other public media at the local level. Unlike the BBC, in the Netherlands local Radio and TV are organised and funded separately from the national PSB organisation.
 11. The European Audiovisual Observatory Yearbook 2008 contains slightly different numbers, but reports similar trends for the average viewing time per person in the three European countries studied.

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Facilitating Participatory Audiences

Sociable Media and PSM

Lizzie Jackson

This chapter contributes to discussions about the public in public service media by considering how two significant PSM organisations, one in the UK and the other in the USA, are experimenting with practice for participating publics. Challenges and opportunities in facilitating *engager's* in multiple ways is the focus. Sociable media theory provides fresh insight on mediation and aggregation of media. The development of theories surrounding sociable media will be traced forward from 'old' media to 'new' media. Empirical study is grounded in a comparison of two production systems – the BBC in Britain (2002-2004) and National Public Radio in the USA (2009). In both cases the media outlets are learning to – and struggling with – efforts to engage with active, creative participants.

The internet 'has transformed large parts of the traditionally passive audience into active communicators, willing to engage in debate and expecting a similar willingness on the part of professional media' (Jakubowicz 2008: 5). This author doubts that audiences were ever passive but agrees that the public increasingly expects professionals to engage with them, particularly in the context of participatory media. It is firstly argued that viewers and listeners have participated in programming for many years; there is a corresponding body of theory about how broadcast presenters relate to active audiences. Mediation practices employed by broadcast personae when relating to engagers are examined across both the broadcast and online 'interactive' paradigms. Secondly the importance of facilitation by human agency is argued, particularly where it is valuable (or even necessary) to capture or guide the attention of participants.

Opportunities for the public to play an active part in public service media increase in internet-delivered content. For example message boards, live chats, and archives of content are created by engagers. User-generated content is often editorialised by producers and is also likely to have been filtered. The discussion therefore is how much facilitation should be offered and how much control should professionals have? Furthermore, where producers are inviting the public to contribute, are they doing it for the public good or to further their own creative efforts? There is ample evidence illustrating that successful

mediation requires facilitation, and we have a body of scholarly studies within the ethos of PSM on which to draw. The development of sophisticated, subtle, and appropriate facilitation practices, particularly for content requiring reification, is considered important. Reification, the making of meaning, is often the province of public service media.

The term 'audience' is not as useful for describing participating publics. The term 'engager' or 'participant' is preferable. 'Participatory media' refers to the comprehensive genre of participative content (message boards, blogs, online archives, voting, virtual environments, digital storytelling, interactive dramas, and the publishing of other user-generated content such as text, audio, video, and photographs, etc). The term 'social media' particularly refers to services that foreground communication between engagers.

The principal conclusion is facilitation practices by producers within participatory public service environments are nascent; crude and experimental. One of the principal techniques being foregrounded by public service media firms is moderation, the removal of content; clearly a defensive position. It is therefore suggested that producers would be better off developing mediation practices that motivate, lead and develop creative publics. Finally, professionals were found to be prone to using public creativity to enhance their own programming rather than offering the public opportunity to create their own narratives.

Sociable media theories

Social media theory is a useful lens through which to view the evolving relationship between professional personae and participating publics. Scholarly attention on mediators in broadcasting arguably began in 1956 with Horton and Wohl's influential paper, *Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance*. They identified a "new type of performer" whose "appearance is a regular and dependable event, to be counted on, planned for, and integrated into the routines of daily life" (Horton and Wohl, 1956: 216). The relationship between the human mediator and the audience was, however, para-social because reciprocity was impossible.

Livingstone (1990) identified an emotional connection between broadcast personae and audiences, in this case soap stars and viewers. In 1991 Scannell advanced the idea of a shared, imagined, sociable space between producers and audiences in the context of live broadcasting. Broadcast-centric thinking is fundamentally challenged in the context of online sociability. Mass adoption of the internet in the late 1990s in the industrialised world fostered fresh ideas about communicative spaces online. Tolson (1996: x) observed "Mediation offers the possibility of living in at least two communities – that is, both an immediate social network and an infinitely expanding mediated community of people with whom we share forms of communication, but are never likely to meet". Developments in computer-mediated communications are breaking down historic geographical constraints on "knowing distant others".

The mission of 'the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link), one of the first organised online communities, was to facilitate high quality communication in the San Francisco area through online conversation and email. Two of the founders, Matthew McClure and Kevin Kelly, realised this would require facilitators to encourage a critical mass of debate. As Rheingold (1994: 42) reported, "In Matthew's words, we needed a collection of shills who could draw the suckers into the tents". They called these facilitators "hosts", mimicking the facilitator role found in live radio and television talk shows. Within the broadcast sphere Scannell was observing how sociable broadcasts always had "at least three sets of communicative interaction always in play... (1) host and participant-performers, (2) host and audience, (3) host and listeners or viewers (sometimes there is an organised interaction between performers and audience)" (Scannell 1996: 25). He believed successful hosting required the *right amount of control*.

On the one hand there is the danger of too little control leading to disaster and chaos, on the other there is the danger of too much control leading to an awkward self-consciousness and an air of embarrassment all round. Somewhere in between lies the golden mean of a managed performance that controls with a light touch what's happening in the studio to bring off a collaborative interaction between all present as a sociable occasion produced *by them for absent listeners* (ibid: 29).

Public service media outlets have therefore learnt how to facilitate (or manage) active publics in the broadcast paradigm. Public service shared-space environments such as message boards, virtual worlds, chat rooms, gaming narratives and interactive dramas require the same kind of facilitation online as Scannell identified in the broadcast sphere. Public service media outlets must decide whether to engage as ratified participants or merely to observe. Each position has strategic and practical implications.

Jauert and Lowe (2005: 29-30) argued that public service media organisations "should be a beneficial socialising agent... a robust discursive medium... an essential civil society organisation... [and] about democratic mediation for intercultural communication". Still more recently Jakubowicz (2008: 24) argued for re-framing public service media as agents of communication: "Now is the time to take the next step and reconstruct PSM into a platform for open societal communication". The question is whether public service media provides merely the platform or a *facilitated* platform.

Slevin (2002) was particularly interested in how "deliberative mediated publicness" could be organised online to assist democracy. He identified a number of techniques to facilitate this, including keeping controversial questions open, being able to question "the rationalization underpinning the actions and projects of others" (ibid: 188), and the "preservation of overall goals, principles and rights" (ibid: 190). Slevin also pointedly suggested that public service media outlets in particular could facilitate shared space environments for the common good. The addition of websites to accompany broadcast programming offers

a way to make linear content 'interactive'. In addition, social media embedded within those websites offers the public a means to communicate not only with media firms but also with each other. It will be argued through two case studies, however, that public service media firms are not yet communicating with a few notable exceptions.

A level of sociability has been found to exist in both 'old' and 'new' media. Sociable media theory shows that for a true relationship to develop it must have reciprocity, a level of reification, and participation. The mediation of participatory media is as likely to involve an emotional connection between participants as reciprocity entails an exchange of mood as well as meaning. Social media theory also offers a way to change the focus from analysis of texts to analysis of audience behaviours within and between texts, a more suitable means of looking at networked and semi-converged media.

Facilitating purposeful participatory media

The body of knowledge on the facilitation of participatory media is in its infancy. Utopians would dispute that there needs to be any intervention or facilitation at all, believing all facilitation is intervention and inherently harmful – if not also unethical. Three scholars who have particularly explored nuanced facilitation, mainly in an online context, are discussed here. Etienne Wenger focuses on communities of practice, Amy Jo Kim considers shared space online gaming, and Gilly Salmon explores virtual learning environments.

Wenger evolved a theory of learning for online "communities of practice" based on the idea that social engagement is an ongoing process through which we learn and form identities. For him two elements are keenly important: participation and reification. These are interlinked and co-supporting, in his view. Wenger (1999: 58) defines *reification* as the action of "making into a thing", observing that "what is turned into a concrete, material object is not properly a concrete, material object. For instance, we make representations of 'justice' as a blindfolded maid holding a scale, or use expressions such as 'the hand of fate'."

Getting the balance right between control (direction) and freedom (expression) is a key element for Wenger, underscoring the importance of facilitation. He argues that acts of reification draw on processes which include "making, designing, representing, naming, encoding and describing, as well as perceiving, interpreting, using, reusing, decoding, and recasting" (ibid: 59). If the shared space within which activity takes place is too full of participants or cacophonous chatter, then meaning making and purposeful activity is less likely. Conversely, if the shared space is too directed "there may not be enough overlap in participation to recover a co-ordinated, relevant, or generative meaning" (ibid: 65). The question is how to effect facilitation properly, which is clearly about striking the right balance.

Like Wenger, Jo Kim (2000) believes purposeful online spaces need ongoing facilitation by human agency. The model she describes is quite linear showing

how a first time visitor progresses from novice to regular, and then for some to leaders and, later (for even fewer) to become community ‘elders’. For this ideal participatory development to progress depends on a socialisation process wherein the visitor is first welcomed and then supported by others in the space, over time becoming a member. The community elder in particular has a profound effect on the developing culture of the environment because his or her tone of voice and approach will affect the character and culture of the shared space overall. In Jo Kim’s view professional personae in hosting is vital because members need to understand how the social space works. If the tone is too directive members are more likely to interpret comments as offensive authoritative pronouncements.

They must be properly selected, trained, and then empowered to do their job effectively. This is not a trivial process: to start with you need to choose people who are genuinely enthusiastic about the community and eager to improve it, rather than those just seeking social status and power. (Jo Kim 2000: 146).

Salmon feels the qualities necessary for a facilitator of virtual learning environments includes knowing when to control groups and when to let go (Salmon, 2003). Like Jo Kim she believes a progressive “settling in” process takes place; engagers need to understand the technology before they are able to socialise with others and subsequently begin learning. Facilitators should be able to “act as a catalyst, foster discussion, summarise, restate, challenge, monitor understanding and misunderstanding, take feedback” (ibid: 54-55).

Clearly a facilitated environment is different from one mediated solely by technology. If human mediators are present there is an opportunity to develop a quasi-personal relationship with the media firm. Lacking that, it is a less personal interaction and there is no opportunity to take into account cultural sensitivity, language, or mood. To find out how public service media firms are facilitating participatory environments the two case studies, the BBC in the UK and National Public Radio in the USA, are illuminating. In both cases the operators were in the early stages of exploring how to engage with participating publics.

Developing participatory culture at the BBC

A brief history of the adoption of participatory media at the BBC is followed by a brief overview of a study which aimed to find out whether mediation by professional personae online was of importance to the participating public and the media firm. The study took place within the BBC’s New Media Division from December 2002–April 2004. The author completed the research project in April 2009. Methods relied on participant observation of developmental production workshops with twenty-two BBC producers and five ‘interactive

presenters' hired by the BBC's New Media Division to explore new mediation practices for interactive content. The workshop participants tested facilitation practices for message boards, live chats, user-generated content, pan-platform content (brands situated across both television and online) and media players, precursors of the BBC iPlayer. The workshops were recorded on video and these data were augmented by: 1) a fieldwork diary, 2) BBC audience data, 3) a small-scale audience study, and 4) observations of the audience in message boards and live chats.

The development of participatory practise at the BBC has been slow, although the Corporation launched online communities quite early in comparison with public service media companies elsewhere (1998). By 2002 the BBC was offering over 300 message boards, daily live chats and almost daily chat rooms, facilitated by over 600 online hosts who engaged with the public as an additional duty to their production work. By August 2003 the message boards alone were getting 30,000 posts a day, prompting discussions on whether to cap the online communities at a particular size, for example at 50,000 posts a day (Jackson Fieldwork Diary, March 2003). The combination of rising public participation and staff needs led the BBC towards a technologically determinist approach; they wanted to automate engagement and to foreground moderation (the removal of content) over mediation (facilitation to encourage meaningful content).

This was not likely to grow connections between the public and the BBC. A broadcast culture was dominant with the participating public being encouraged to cluster around broadcast brands, participatory media being typically kept in separated silos with few links and few 'in-programme' mentions. Facilitators were also reluctant to engage directly with the public either as individuals or as online crowds, preferring to editorialise content created by participants. In addition, active audience members were not usually celebrated in professionally made content.

The BBC's online hosts were, however, highly significant for the participating public. 'Lucy', one of the Interactive Presenters working with *Top of the Pops* (a weekly live television music programme) was encouraged by the producers to run events and to develop 'playful' activities for fans online. Her approach was creative and something of a hit, as she explained:

The experiment I set up was to eat cheese and stare at a poster [of their favourite band] before you go to sleep, chanting their names over and over...It was popular, some dreamt of their fave bods, but a lot complained of having nightmares! The thread still keeps coming back too, under the heading 'Cheese Dreams' ('Lucy', iPresenter, Video Transcript, 18 February, 2003).

The Top of the Pops message board fans developed a sociable and reciprocal relationship with Lucy over the seven months. The high significance of connectively for broadcasting in social media theory was equally significant in participatory media. This was particularly true of environments where reifica-

tion was important, such as topical debates or when the attention of the public needed to be captured or directed.

Although the participating public valued facilitation, the BBC's hosts were often ambivalent. Suzy (Administration Assistant, aged 30) said the Liquid News message board on BBC3 "hasn't had a host for so long that it only gets around seven or eight posts a week. It really suffers from not having a regular host". The audience would call out to hosts, encouraging them to appear. For example, 'Elizabeth' (Personal Assistant, aged 35) said, "come on [host] sort it out...All I want is a straight forward explanation of what has happened; at least then everyone would know".

Apart from decline in the quality of the online environment, the fact that many hosts were absent had a larger implication for the BBC: The producer-hosts managed the reputation of the firm as a provider of high quality participatory environments. Participants could be unruly at times, posting racist comments, spamming, being argumentative or generally disruptive. The problem is legal accountability. The BBC has a 'duty of care' to perform, which has become a particularly relevant issue in shared spaces. The term has legal status and requires that a person should act towards others and the public with the 'watchfulness, attention, caution and prudence that a reasonable person in the circumstances would' (Legaldictionary 2009). If an agent or person is found to be negligent, he or she can be prosecuted. Duty of care falls under the body of law known as 'tort' in the UK, which addresses civil wrongs and suggests remedies. A complainant may be able to use tort law to receive compensation from an individual or organisation found liable for injuries. BBC hosts were unclear how far their duty of care extended towards the engagers in participatory media.

The producer-host of the Today programme on BBC Radio 4 felt that giving advice was a difficult role. "We are not doctors and we are not psychotherapists and we are not financial advisors...I think one should really stop and think, 'well, am I really qualified to help in this situation or is it better in fact to refer that person to an organisation?'" (Today Host Interview, 22 September 2004). In addition to responsibilities under duty of care, the BBC had a duty to beware making any negligent misstatement that would also be grounds for legal complaint. They must be careful not to present themselves as competent to advise in matters where they are not in fact legally considered competent (*Hedley Byrne & Co. Ltd. v. Heller & Partners Ltd*, 1963). Legislation that has long applied to 'real world' activity is becoming applicable online, particularly in shared space environments.

Two types of activity were generally provided by producer-hosts: first, there were tasks that were 'editorially-led', such as updating quizzes or challenges, running events, inviting expert or celebrity guests to chat, liaising with moderators, or updating professionally-produced content. Second, a level of customer relationship management was (spasmodically) provided, such as offering technical help or acting as a membership secretary for groups. Individual mediation tasks were identified during the study such as managing archives,

promoting content, settling disputes amongst members, answering technical questions and so on.

It was thus recommended that the BBC share out these tasks between producer-hosts and the participating public, and explore how much of the routine mediation could be undertaken by automated means. Complex or sensitive mediation, such as facilitating debates or commissioning new content could remain the preserve of hosts. The public could assist new engagers, welcoming them and answering technical queries, and undertaking membership secretary duties. Repetitive tasks, such as answering simple questions, could be automated. The moderation of content (the removal of unsuitable material) had already been partly automated by the BBC.

Arranging for participants to undertake various tasks would have three beneficial outcomes. First, engagers would have a valued, visible role to play that is explicitly acknowledged and shared. Secondly, this would make participatory media more scaleable for the BBC, and thus more cost effective. Lastly, hosts would have more time to engage, and in a more meaningful and valued way with participants. Whether, how or when the BBC will act on these recommendations is uncertain in part because research also revealed a problem of long, deep duration: the BBC was preoccupied with large-scale internal re-organisations. The sociable relationship between staff personae and the participating public was a much lower priority. The danger with this internal preoccupation is that the BBC will not find ways to engage to a degree that relations can develop beyond the broadcast paradigm. This is problematic because the audience is increasingly involved with making media. Negotiating a new partnership with the BBC's stakeholders – the public – will have to be a priority if the BBC hopes to remain highly relevant in the emerging context of contemporary mediation.

Creativity and ambivalence at National Public Radio

The second case study checks the findings of the first and offers insights into the development of facilitation practices in a different cultural site. The study of National Public Radio [NPR] was undertaken in May 2009 in Washington, D.C. in the USA. A small number of NPR producers and presenters were experimenting with social media to support radio programming. NPR is a private not-for-profit network providing radio and new media content to 898 affiliated member stations across the USA. Network coverage is available for 99.6% of Americans and NPR has an audience of 27.5 million weekly radio listeners (NPR 2009: 7-9). NPR 'central' offers most of the linked web and radio content at www.npr.org, including podcasts, blogs, Twitter feeds, message boards, newsletters, and newsfeeds. The network began to offer social media in 2007.

A week of observations and interviews took place in May 2009. This included watching a live daily talk show, *Talk to the Nation*, and undertaking

semi-structured, forty-minute, interviews with nine staff from different departments including the social media team, producers, presenters and journalists, and the Executive Editor of the network. It should be noted that interviewees were selected by Andy Carvin, the Senior Strategist in Social Media. All the interviewees were actively experimenting with social media. They were a small percentage of the total production staff, however NPR was actively diffusing knowledge about how to engage with the audience from this core group.

The strategy is complex and has three dimensions. Firstly, NPR wants to make their website attractive by providing tools for the audience to engage with each other. Secondly, NPR wants to have an official presence on social media services such as Flickr, YouTube and Facebook. Thirdly, NPR is keen to find ways to weave social media into programming to enrich their content.

Carvin felt using social media without a clear editorial reason amounted to marketing or framing the audience as a resource. Contradicting himself later however, he suggested social media was like having thousands of interns or production assistants on call. Media outlets in the USA, said Carvin, often have “a journalist...do nothing but be assigned to Twitter – to look for breaking news” (personal interview, 11 May 2009). He felt the most interesting use of sociable media tools was the way reporters and presenters used them to inform news stories.

Eyder Peralter, NPR’s Community Manager, felt the visibility of NPR staff was important: “They have a blue gradient behind and it says ‘NPR Staff’. 1. I think it let’s people know that we’re listening and 2. it let’s people know that we’re around” (personal interview, 12 May 2009). Observation of the daily live talk show *Talk To The Nation*, however, showed the host role was often perceived as the province of junior staff. The senior producer screening incoming emails from the public explained that this was usually an intern’s job.

Conaway, Editor of the podcast and news desk *Planet Money* felt the adoption of social media significant to the relationships between NPR listeners:

I can watch them going to visit each other and watch them setting up blogs together. They are really people who met because my radio project had a Twitter feed and they hooked into it somewhere...this creates this tremendous extra dimension (personal interview, 14 May 2009).

Scott Simon, presenter of *Saturday Weekend Edition*, felt social media would result in a radical change in the relationship between media firms and publics: “The days of us occupying the podium and the communication going just one way, those days are numbered. I just don’t think people are going to be satisfied with that anymore” (personal interview, 13 May 2009).

David Greene, a journalist who had covered the White House for many years, went on a road trip to find out how Americans were responding to Obama’s first 100 days in office during the recession. *One Hundred Days on the Road in Troubled Times* sought to actively involve listeners. Greene explained that they used Google Maps so audiences could track their whereabouts with bubbles

on the map, photos and stories. It was also possible to link to Facebook and Twitter. An email address collected suggestions on stories to cover enroute:

A mailman in Florida...said 'I am seeing this recession every day through my mail route...Come down with me and walk the streets of Braden...we ended up at a shelter for the homeless. I met a guy who was homeless for the first time. He's lost his job. I met the woman who runs the shelter. Their voices were great and it was sort of letting the story come to me because of one email (personal interview, 14 May 2009).

But Greene firmly believed it was necessary that producers are "making the decisions and judgements about whether this would be a valuable story for our listeners" (*ibid*). In the same way the BBC was concerned about risk and control Wright Bryan, one of the NPR social media staff, felt: "When you give the power to the audience to talk back, to talk amongst themselves, it's very hard if not impossible to control what they say" (personal interview, 12 May 2009).

The contrasts reported here indicate ambivalence about sociable media in the context of broadcasting traditions. Some professionals see sociable media as a valuable tool for breaking down the historic barriers inherent in monological platforms, while others think their potential over-rated at best and threatening at worst. Clearly there is also a negotiation underway over professional control of content production versus freedom of expression for participant generation now at the start of NPR's progression in incorporating social media in their programming. On the one hand this could be understood as extending previous feedback practices (letters, emails and telephone calls) via new and more sophisticated tools. On the other hand what is happening is much different as evident in the provision of permanent archives of content generated by the public, which called for new practices in the curation of content and, especially important to argumentation in this chapter, demanding development in ongoing facilitation of a more intimate, perhaps more crowded, relationship with the public.

A comment from Gallivan is quite relevant. He expressed a wish that NPR's role become "less of a producer and distributor...more of a facilitator and an aggregator and a curator of quality stuff, whatever that happens to be" (personal interview, 12 May 2009). In addition to making programmes, work that has by no means decreased in the new media world, producers must now manage a much larger ingest of material from many and diverse platforms (audio, video, texts, tweets, photographs and so on). This ingest certainly offers a much larger palette of material from which to draw. One of the most exciting opportunities was the ability to create 'live loops' between those on-air, those present in the studio, those participating at home, and among the listening and participating public, who could also chat with each other about what was going on as they enjoyed the programming.

In common with the BBC, it was clear there is some framing of the audience as a resource. However some producers were excited by the creative possibili-

ties offered by involving the public in public service media. They were also aware of the importance of being seen to be listening and responding. The ownership of content associated with NPR remained with the media firm and sociable content was seen, as in the BBC, as supporting broadcast programming. Overall a strong demarcation between professionally and publicly generated content was found to exist at both organisations.

Sociable media theory and practice

The ‘lens’ of social media theory is a useful focus for examining the nature of sociable relationships between the public and public service media firms in ‘old’ and ‘new’ media. Two case studies, the BBC in the UK and National Public Radio in the USA provided empirical evidence that the adoption of participatory practice is not a comfortable process for producers who were able, in the ‘pure broadcast’ era, to control the visibility of participants.

It is increasingly imperative for public service media to join in with – indeed to become essential facilitators of – an ongoing conversation that has its own momentum and will go on whether PSM chooses to participate or not. To an important degree the issue today is first whether to participate in participation – a question already mostly settled in the affirmative – and then to what extent and how? It is these latter dimensions that pose the greatest opportunities and biggest challenges to traditional broadcasting companies, including especially PSM.

The argument has been made for nuanced mediation by human agency so that culturally specific and appropriate responses are given to the public, something technology is presently incapable of supplying. If there is no reciprocity there is a greater potential for disconnection between the public and the public service firm. Conversely, too much filtering, moderation or facilitation may be too restrictive and may indicate a protectionist stance, elsewhere expressed as “filter then publish” (Shirky 2008). This is counter to the sociable practices of the internet and of advanced networked societies.

The BBC and National Public Radio showed similarities in their approaches: 1) a reluctance to engage with the public, 2) broadcast-centric thinking, 3) a tendency to use the audience to ‘dress’ professional content, and 4) sometimes using public participation to indicate the popularity of a show or presenter, for example through the demonstration of ‘followers’. Having said this, producers in both organisations are exploring how to involve engagers in creative ways.

The practical challenge for public service managers is therefore two-fold. It is first in how to confront the considerable ambivalence of producers towards engaging with the public, and then how to ensure shared spaces are run in a high quality, ethical manner, for mutual benefit. Mutuality is likely to be embedded in the act of communication between public service media and their publics. This new role for public service mediators is likely to grow in importance:

Because the public mind – that is, the set of values and frames that have broad exposure in society – is ultimately what influences individual and collective behaviour, programming the communication networks is the decisive source of cultural materials that feed the programmed goals of any other network (Castells 2009: 53).

Nurturing the public mind is something public service media have been involved with since the beginning of the broadcasting era. But the traditionally paternalistic approach remains a problem. A new ‘shared caretaking’ framework is suggested, something more suitable for a networked society. It requires producers to work *with the public* to manage media where public participation is in desired or already evident. This entails a radical shift in governance at a micro level. As sociable partnership between producers and participants becomes more important, social media theory becomes more relevant for understanding the dynamics of the public in public service media.

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Quality Taste or Tasting Quality?

Excellence in Public Service Media from an Audience Perspective

Irene Costera Meijer

This chapter reports on a study in the Netherlands that compares television quality from an audience point of view with professional perspectives on quality television. While holding on to the concept of ‘quality’ as a normative standard for public service media, the study questions the discrepancy between a common definition of quality television as a particular reputation, a range of genres or a distinguishing sign of ‘good taste’ on the one hand, and on the other the decline in shares and ratings for quality programming, even among the traditional ‘quality audience’ (comprised of the political and cultural elite). The chapter’s objective is to explain this gap.¹ These findings are pertinent to growing concerns about *what constitutes quality* in public service media [PSM]. The first part of the chapter is devoted to analysis of the ‘crisis of quality programming in public service media. The second part seeks answers by approaching the issues discussed from the perspective of audiences.

The quality question in PSM

In professional media circles, the question of quality is commonly framed in conservative terms: quality television is something to be conserved. BBC star reporter and anchor, Jeremy Paxman (2007), compared it with an endangered species: “There is a fight going on for the survival of quality television right across this industry”. He suggested that putting the taste and preferences of audiences in the driver’s seat would be the doom of quality programming. Likewise Michael Kustow, the first Arts Commissioning Editor for Channel 4, pleaded: “A television channel, and its arts and cultural programmes exist to lead tastes and elevate appetites, not simply to reflect the reduced ones of a society of shoppers” (*Independent*, 5 September 2007). Both of these experts consider the increasing pressure to reach large audiences as the major threat to quality television. Even audience research itself has come under suspicion as a culpable agent of decline, as Paxman’s motto illustrates: “Let’s spend less time measuring audiences and more time enlightening them” (*Guardian*, August 24 2007).

In academic circles, the ‘quality question’ is also considered of central importance for public service broadcasting [PSB]. Most scholars have long agreed that quality is its defining feature (Born 2004; Brants and De Bens 2000; Wieten, Murdock and Dahlgren 2000; Corner 1999; Ishikawa 1996; McQuail 1994; Mulgan 1990). Some suggest that quality functions as the “brand name” for public television (Dries and Woldt 1996: 22), although others have pointed out that there is no good reason to reserve the epitome of quality to particular genres or elite tastes (Syvertsen 2004 & 2003; Gripsrud 2001; Schröder 1992; Mulgan 1990). I earlier pleaded for an increasingly encompassing and layered notion of quality within professional media discourse: Quality television by PSM should not only aim to address the audience as citizens but should be inspired to convey experiences of intense enjoyment and deep pleasure as well (Costera Meijer 2001, 2003, 2007 & 2008).

The occasion for the research project that grounds this chapter was a request from VPRO, the Dutch quality broadcaster, to account for why it has been losing viewers (Versluijs 2006a; Versluijs 2006b). Even ‘elites’ seem to be watching less quality TV. As a Dutch television maker in our study worries: “I felt the upper crust had a right to watch television as well, so I never saw it as a serious problem that we catered to the elite instead of a mass audience. I do see it as a problem that today we no longer even manage to reach those viewers”.

The Netherlands are not an exceptional case. Traditional quality genres, in particular PSM news, political current affairs programmes, and high drama, seem less popular with audiences in other countries as well, giving the impression of more people preferring light-hearted talk to profound information and easily digestible entertainment to uplifting education (Norris et al 2003; Holtz-Bach and Norris 2001; Tracey 1998). Especially among people under age 40, there has been a notable turning towards more ‘trivial’ genres including reality TV, sitcoms, soap operas and interactive contests formats such as *Idols* or *Farmer Seeks Wife*. Does declining attendance for quality programming indicate a degeneration in public taste, as several Dutch programme makers suggest, or a change in public taste as others claim? Or is this concern, as various Dutch broadcasting managers have argued, mostly related to the increased number of TV programmes and stations competing for viewers that makes it harder to find the gems?

This chapter provides some answers by focusing on the audiences’ relationship to quality programming in public service media. If excellence in storytelling, information, analysis, education and entertainment is still a distinguishing component of the PSM remit, and if PSM is simultaneously aiming to reach large audiences with quality programming, then it is imperative to understand ‘quality’ from an audience perspective. What kind of quality do they expect from PSM, in which terms do they describe quality, how do they experience quality in television, and what counts as a quality experience? Are media professionals right in their expectancy that putting the audiences’ desires and expectations centre stage will lead automatically to a lowering of quality?

The Quest for Quality project

From November 2005 to March 2007 a group of Dutch students and researchers embarked on a Quest for Quality project. The essential question was whether there is still an audience for quality television, and how such an audience understands quality today. The study approached this concern from three angles: reception, production and content (cf. triangulation in Denzin 1978). We used qualitative and quantitative methods to find answers (see Table 1). The first step was to operationalise the fuzzy concept of 'quality audience' as a relevant profile for PSM. The American concept was of little use because it is so closely linked with a niche market for quality products and hence with mainly commercial interests (Thompson 1996). But traditional understandings in European PSB were also problematic given elitist connotations associated with the conventional definition of quality audience. This study constructed a more encompassing quality audience [QA] profile consisting of 'public intellectuals', 'connoisseurs' of TV or specific genres of television programming, well-educated migrants, socially committed young people, and creative professionals.² This construction recognises audiences' potential leadership role in society.

How could PSM be of particular service to these (future) experts, managers and leaders? The objective was to investigate its dreams, wishes, preferences, criticisms and experiences of current quality programming. We were also interested to identify variance between quality broadcasters' and quality audiences' views of quality programming. Does the quality concept still hold meaning for professionals and viewers? Do audiences agree or disagree with the kinds of content professionals consider to be quality?

Answers were produced in three co-related studies conducted under the author's supervision by 19 student researchers from different Dutch universities, and by 3 junior researchers and 2 senior researchers at the University of Amsterdam. This chapter focuses on the audience study, but also makes use of results in the other studies (production, content) for explanatory context.

The host and main financier of the research project was the Dutch public service quality broadcaster, VPRO, one of the relatively independent public service media associations collaborating closely under the flag of the Netherlands public broadcasting organisation [NPO]. Each organisation represents a different religious, socio-economic or cultural segment of Dutch society. The VRPR was founded by liberal Protestants and has always catered to a political and cultural elite in providing their audience with programs on art, history and contemporary culture (satire, post modern reality television etc.), as well as (self-produced) documentary series.

Table 1. Overview of Quest for Quality research project

Reception

Large-scale audience survey among 3000 viewers

In-depth interviews with 251 informants age 15+ (from 'quality audience')

Production

In-depth interviews with 59 producers of quality programmes

An extensive survey of the professional views of quality. 211 of all 322 VPRO employees (average 66%, including 83% of the television makers) filled out an elaborate digital survey on programme quality.

Content

A qualitative content analysis of 50 Radio, TV & Internet 'texts' which professionals indicated as of high quality and more than 50 programmes from other national and from foreign broadcasters (SWE, BBC, Arte, Canvas, ARD) that the audience indicated as such.

The categorisation of interviewees is summarised in Table 2. Transcriptions of the interviews were analysed based on an interpretive repertoire analysis (see Wetherell and Potter 1987; Wetherell et al 2001). In each partial study we maximised variation in sex, origin, ethnicity, and age.

Table 2. In-depth interviews with the quality audience

In-depth interviews with people who fit the 'quality audience profile':	Informants
Active supporters of the quality broadcaster (VPRO)	36
Well-educated migrants age 20-35	24
Socially committed young adults age 15-25	45
Creative professionals	8
Opinion leaders	9
Lovers and 'connoisseurs' of 'new media'	9
Lovers & 'connoisseurs' of documentaries & films	30
Lovers & 'connoisseurs' of television	65
Lovers & 'connoisseurs' of radio	25
Total	251

What is quality broadcasting? Discovery in value clustering

Our first aim was to develop understanding of how the quality audience and quality professionals, respectively, characterise quality broadcasting and to compare their understandings for variance. Almost half of the 59 quality makers we interviewed manifest a condescending attitude towards the public. In light of declining ratings for quality programmes this led us to expect big differences in the views of professionals and audiences regarding quality television. We were wrong.

The answers proved close to univocal. Surprisingly, then, the quality audience and the quality professionals described quality broadcasting with very similar terms: Innovative, liberal-minded, creative, distinct, critical, global and progressive. Consider two representative quotes from audience informants:

Jacobien (age 25, assistant programmer): Slightly progressive eh, leftist, creative, slightly intellectualist, I feel, innovative, and, eh, yes, well also a quality name.

Albert (age 62, retired): The values of VPRO are innovation, idiosyncratic and being different from the others.

As it turned out, the professional values of employees of VPRO (see Appendix 1 p. 211) were similar to the values held by their (intended) audiences.

Moreover, the concept of quality as a 'binding' element was recognised by the audience as the very image of the VPRO – as its reputation and trademark.

Daan (age 42, project manager): When thinking of the VPRO it is not really about its programmes, but rather more about VPRO as a brand, one that I associate with being contrary, unique, progressive, curious, creative, well, uh, and in fact alternative.

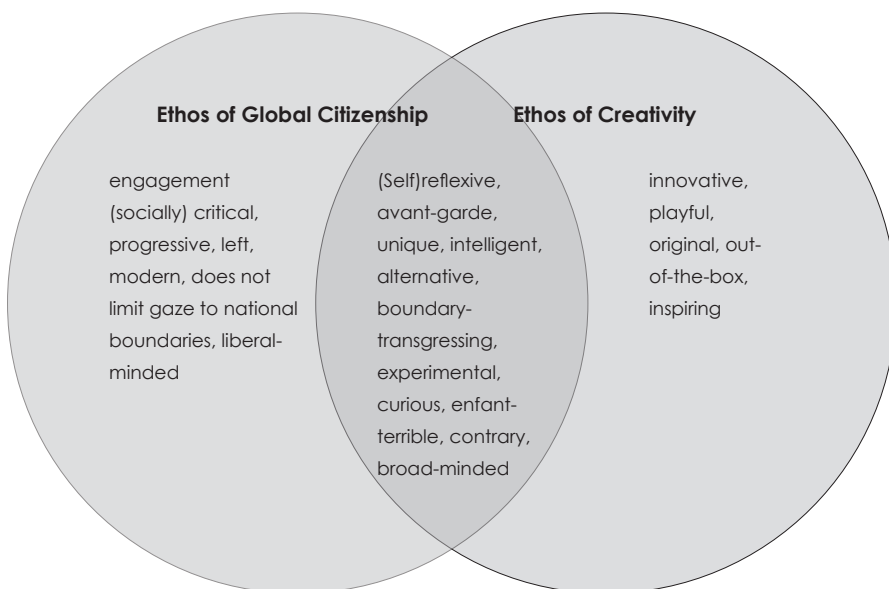
The fundamental character of these features was underlined because they coincided with the values that the informants (both quality makers and quality audience) aspired to in work and personal life. When describing quality broadcasting they frequently drew a connection with who they were or would like to be.

Julia (age 24, student): I have a warm feeling as regards the VPRO. Differently from any other broadcaster, the VPRO has a clear identity of being socially involved, critical, open-minded, opening up new horizons, while all this is also infused with a good sense of humour. ... *This is also how I live my life. At least so I hope* [emphasis added].

For both producers and audience, the notion of quality represented certain values they felt 'at home with' and were closely related to informants' (aspired) personal 'lifestyle' and professional objectives. These values formed a specific pattern that informants did not attach so much to a single programme, site or article, but rather to what can best be described as an *ethos* in Aristotelian terms. Our quality makers and quality audience agreed that a shared range of values offered a sense of direction and a general orientation and attitude in life, professionally as well as personally. Values associated with quality programming are solidly anchored in views that both professionals and viewers consider meaningful and worthy of pursuit, which makes them important as general guiding dimensions (Oppenhuisen 2000; Franzen and Bouwman

1999; Hofstede 1991). The interrelated values could be subsumed under two denominators: an ethos of global citizenship and an ethos of creativity (Figure 1) with a third common subset belonging to both.³

Figure 1. Value clusters resulting from the question 'what is quality broadcasting'?



Note: N= 521 (251 informants fitting the quality audience profile + 59 self-professed makers of 'quality TV' + 211 employees quality broadcaster)

Global citizenship, our informants suggested, represented social involvement and a grooved perspective characterised as an international orientation (cf. Küng 1991). This global orientation is particularly relevant for PSM, which almost as a rule takes a national perspective as the point of departure. Our informants instead expressed a *global* orientation as an integral part of personal identity. This consciously *chosen* identity emphasises affinity with humankind more generally than national or regional identities. This is in line with Dower (2000: 3) who wrote “namely that we have rights and duties qua humans to one another which are not the same as the rights and duties of citizens of a particular political community”.

For most second or third generation migrants, global citizenship was especially self-evident. They felt at home in more than one country and often used more than two or three different (inter) national media.

Meriam (32 jaar, Ph.D. student): ‘Black women, women with head scarfs, white men (...) My intimate circle of friends looks like that. When I go out, it is like that..’

Global citizenship could, however, also relate to a much less socially inspired, cosmopolitan *lifestyle*, as especially embraced by the younger segment of globe-trotters and by internationally orientated business people. The audience for quality programming would like PSM to cater to an ethos of global citizenship, referring to the moral attitude of being a global citizen and to the knowledge and expertise that enables one to practice this attitude.

The QA similarly emphasised the importance of an ethos of creativity, underscoring the importance of having a creative attitude with the knowledge and ability to live and think playfully – to be ‘out-of-the-box’ (cf. “play ethic” in Kane 2004). This quality profile mirrors research results from Rolf Jensen (1999) and Richard Florida (2002).

Individuals with higher education degrees, often working in the creative sector show much involvement in social problems, developments, and issues of meaning at work and in the private sphere.

Rudy (25 jaar, student): ‘Creativity is for me the *schwung* that everybody gives to his or her living) environment.’

Florida (2002) defines creativity as the fundamental spirit or character of contemporary Western culture. The ability to create meaningful new forms and to constantly renew and improve is essential in today’s economy.

Thus, we found that in the Netherlands the quality audience, the quality broadcaster and quality makers share a general global and creative ethos, and agreeing at some fundamental level on central values in life and work. It then becomes all the more incomprehensible as to why the quality audience is turning away from quality programmes. What explains the gap between collectively held (media) values and actual media behaviours? If quality still counts for PSM, then what characteristics of quality programming need development for PSM to attract large audiences for this instead of a small niche? We devoted considerable research to unravelling this riddle.

The gap between media values and media use

According to our research, six aspects go some distance in explaining the gap between media values and media behaviours. The rest of the chapter summarises these findings.

1. *The role of genre*

The first aspect explaining the gap between values and behaviours is linked to the notion of genre. When asked their opinions on quality media, users and makers alike associated quality closely with certain ‘exclusive’ genres that don’t generally attract a large audience.⁴ An earlier study by Wober (cited in Leggatt 1996a: 75-80) is instructive. He asked 3000 viewers which programmes had

quality and the response was unambiguous: informative programmes received the highest score, followed by drama and, at the bottom, light entertainment. Yet, when Wober asked respondents to describe ‘quality television’, 27% replied that it should be ‘entertaining’ and ‘enjoyable’. References to ‘informative’ and ‘educational’ came in a distant second with 12%. Similarly, in our study asking viewers’ opinions on quality elicited answers indicating a set of criteria associated with ‘serious genres’. Only when our respondents were invited to describe their *experience* of quality instead of their opinion about that did the *impact* of quality media enter the picture. Emphasising the experience of quality – the feelings, emotions and taste it arouses – turned out to have far more explanatory potential as to their viewing behaviour than canvassing people’s opinions about it, and pointed to a different kind of programming described next.

2. *The empowerment of the viewer*

For a long time, listeners and viewers of media have been collectively called ‘the’ audience or ‘target group’. Both concepts assume a transmission model of communication, sendings from an active source to a passive target, as well as a great deal of internal coherence. Yet, people no longer play by the rules of the sender-receiver model. They refuse to wait patiently for what a channel or programme offers and start surfing as soon as the programme fails to hold their attention. They no longer have any inherent reverence for either the programme or its creators. Their changing relations with media have a technological foundation that has revolutionised the old one-way flow between broadcaster and audience. The introduction of a plethora of personal control technologies have increasingly enabled the “empowerment of the individual” (Boswijk et al 2005: 45; Rutten, Leurdijk and Frissen 2005: 7; De Jong 2005: 124; Uricchio 2004). This representative quote illustrates how some media users creatively circumvent the station-directed vertical logic.

Gijs (age 52, commercial manager): I just downloaded a series from the internet, 24. And I downloaded all episodes and also watched them all. But not on TV; I just waited until the whole series was broadcasted in America, after which I downloaded them all so that I can watch them whenever I want to. And not just one fifty-minute episode, but for two hours if I feel like it, and, yes, then I watch three episodes in a row, without any commercials.

For broadcasters the effect of the media user’s emancipation is that the classic top-down pattern they deployed to reach audiences no longer applies. A new horizontal, user-directed, and communication-oriented logic is needed (Uricchio 2004). Offering important and relevant content is no longer a sufficient precondition for watching, as our informants emphasised. Getting pleasure out of looking is just as important. The audience wants to be *enticed*.

Gerard (age 54, actor/director): Being seduced again by that old VPRO élan and being able to rave about its programming is something I quite miss.

Julia (age 24, student): Its programmes hardly stir up my imagination anymore. I do *not* watch them, or with little pleasure and I hate that. ... That warm feeling, it is still there. But where am I left with my warm feeling if it is increasingly frustrated by what I see?

This 'quality audience' is communicating in terms that reflect Tim O'Reilly's (2005) 'television 2.0' language. Instead of obediently waiting to be served, today's audience is actively searching for quality programming and finding it in (sometimes) unexpected places – i.e. in commercial broadcasting and 'light entertainment'. They further assume that ideally television programmes go along with their needs and everyday rituals, rather than vice versa. For example, a well-educated multimedia literate TV-watcher was annoyed by the unavailability of a worldwide 'TIVO system' that would open television programmes for everybody, everywhere, and anytime.

Arjan (30, journalist): I find it extremely annoying that some crowd in Hilversum [the media capital of the Netherlands] decides for me that a series which is broadcasted now in the US will be available in the Netherlands in two years. I'm prepared to pay extra for it. But that seems impossible most of the time. Well sorry, but in that case I'll arrange something myself!

To the broadcaster such statements might at first be taken to reflect an attitude of I want it 'all for nothing' mentality. But media-users actually did seem willing to pay for extra services (e.g. no commercials, viewing-on-demand, etc.). Of course at the moment the PSM organisation of broadcasting, and the business models in use, prevent charging extra for these services.

3. Producing quality: Inspiration, not elevation; reciprocity, not paternalism

The joint force of technological change and postmodern culture is fundamentally reshaping relations between and among media organisations, programme makers and their many publics (Deuze 2007; Drok 2007; Deuze 2005; Harrison and Wessels 2005; Gillmor 2004; Spigel and Olsson 2004). In response to technological developments, our informants have become much more self-aware. Affordable and easy-to-use video and audio technology, together with higher disposable income, allow them to be more than consumers; they are increasingly producers of text, sound and image – an identity some are calling 'producers', a term that combines producer and user (Bowman and Willis 2003). Our informants want media to *inspire* them to achieve *their own* personal and professional goals.

Sylvia (age 27, consultant): I would like to cut a piece from one programme and glue it to a piece from another and make my own thing from it.

Although they expect this creative ethos from all media, a quality broadcaster must excel here. Although quality audiences want to deploy and explore their creativity and global citizenship *together with* media makers⁵, they felt the quality broadcaster continue to approach them as 'the Other', as a 'target group', or as a mass audience. VPRO was accused of not being able to handle creative initiatives from its audience. Members of a virtual community who explicitly used the quality broadcasters' name, calling themselves Happy VPRO, complained about the lack of interest among programme makers in their audiovisual productions. Although they met and uploaded their audiovisual productions and ideas at a website connected to the quality broadcaster [<http://www.happyvpro.nl/>], they felt ignored.

Hester (age 40, shoe designer): At first the intention was to sell [our work] to the VPRO, but after some time it became clear that the VPRO was not really waiting for it, that the VPRO viewed Happy in fact as a little odd, not quite knowing what to do with it.

The producers expected the broadcaster to be interested in them, but the professional TV makers did not seem to take this initiative seriously and never showed any interest in this particular audience.

Hester continues: 'While we all had something like: aren't they simply looking to the people that are in it? (...) [HappyVPRO] is of course like a pond brimming with talents, where you can fish for talented individuals.'

Thus, our informants expected a quality broadcaster to constitute a creative *community* together with its 'audience', to provide a forum, context and meeting place (cf. Van den Boomen 2003). Quality based on global citizenship and creativity as guiding principles was something they fashioned themselves, not something to which they merely wanted to be 'exposed' as the product of someone else's imagination. Instead of reproducing the conventional professional criteria of TV success, such as peer review by media professionals, attention from politicians and positive reviews in newspapers, this audience insists on the delightfulness, *usability* and communicative character of programmes.

Sylvia (age 27, consultant): 'One should make sure that things circulate. It is not so much that things end up in the newspapers, because we do not want things to be merely talked about. Instead, we want people to do something personal with what is offered to them, to literally be creative and do something with the material. Or that it becomes a topic of conversation or a means to bring people together. There is so much one can do with a program one has

made, and this potential should be mined. In this respect, I would rather say: make sure programming represents more value to society.

As people with a creative and a global ethos, our informants are looking for special stories – the kinds that touch them emotionally and broaden their horizons, that change the logic of cause and effect, and that reformulate social problems or break with familiar thought patterns and barriers in humorous and playful ways. Generally speaking (there were exceptions) the quality broadcaster still thought that thorough and reliable information was enough to capture this group's attention. Yet, these people want to be surprised, to be exposed to unknown worlds and realities, and to be nurtured with new ideas and perspectives (Florida 2002; Jensen 1999).

If PSM wants to stay in touch with their users, the traditional remit of elevating the public should be replaced with the goal of inspiring people and profiting from their knowledge and abilities. After all, quality plays an intrinsic role in their lives and is not only found 'out there' among broadcasters.

4. The compassionate turn in taste

Individuals who have a higher education and work in the creative sector tend to show more involvement with social problems, developments, and issues of meaning at work and in the private sphere (Florida 2002; Jensen 1999). Unlike in much of the previous century, however, such interests do not inherently mean that people are attracted to one specific political ideology (Franke and Verhagen 2005; Piët ,2003). The compassionate turn in taste ties in with the cultural aim of public broadcasters to contribute to social cohesion by creating a 'we-feeling' – not by excluding others, but by bridging gaps between them (Lowe and Jauert 2005). Yet, many informants were bothered by the elitist or judgmental attitude on all 'that is middleclass or commercial', which in their view typified many quality programmes. They disliked the 'snobbish' use of quality because – in the apt words of Judith Shklar (1984) – it made inequality hurt. Informants commented for instance on the highbrow attitude towards a particular talk show (aired by a commercial broadcaster) that often used self-made business men as experts on economic topics.

Marten (age 34, project manager): You notice it in the leftist self-congratulatory attitude of some people that they simply do not want to have anything to do with the Hans van Breukhovens of this world . While these same people also see themselves simply as people who work hard and enjoy what they achieve through their hard work. I often notice there is no empathy for that.

The customary 'critical' tone of voice in quality programmes too often suggested sour, superseded, prejudiced and a too easy professional stance, unjustifiably disguised as 'critical thinking' and a 'progressive' worldview (De Wolff 2005).

Erik (age 26, student): At times I feel the VPRO is a little, well, as if it is a kind of, as if everything is wooden there. Well, how to put it, it is as if the VPRO only employs sour vegetarians.

True criticism was valued however by a large group of informants if it were embedded in a more curious atmosphere and grounded in a professional attitude of 'empathetic' thinking and feeling – one that was taking account of the social-psychological and historical context, social conditions and cultural habits of 'others'. Criticism for the sake of criticising was not valued; the quality audience was keen to encourage a shift from an emphasis on a critical and detached tone to an emphasis on curiosity and understanding.

Murat (age 28, lawyer): Instead of merely running a book into the ground, you should make people interested in it, enthuse them!

The functions professionals wish their programmes to fulfil for their audience form an obstruction in this respect (see Appendix 1. p. 211) Programme makers are significantly more negatively disposed towards shocking, giving pleasure, envisioning the good life and consolation, all functions the audience very much appreciates.

5. The distinctive force of quality: good taste or tasting good?

A large part of the quality-loving audience describes itself as a 'community'. In light of our findings the notion of a 'taste community' is preferred over Herbert Gans' (1999: 180) notion of taste publics or taste cultures because of the (virtual) sense of communality and collectiveness expressed by our informants. Paradoxically, however, changing and fluid media use supports the emancipation of the *individual*. What kind of 'community of individuals' feels bound by media quality and what kind of quality connects such a community? Our research found a minority that still thinks of this as 'good taste', but a clear majority that rejects the traditional view to instead embrace a view that privileges 'tasting good'.

Good taste

Apart from a quality ethos, our informants share specific tastes, or more to the point a specific discourse about quality. A minority of our informants but a majority of the media makers use 'quality' as a common term to express an exclusive sensibility for 'good taste'. According to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1979/1984), good taste is not purely an aesthetic issue but characterises the knowledge and attitude, or the cultural capital, of an elite with which someone grows up and with which he can distinguish himself from the other.

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between

the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed (ibid: 6)

In the formation of a sense for quality, education plays a major role according to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990). On reflection, many an informant realised their weekly dose of *Villa Achterwerk*, the well-known and decade-old slightly absurdist VPRO kids programme they used to watch, had that function:

Jessica (age 24, student): And *that* is TV education. This simply determines your TV taste. Your parents like it, so you like it as well. This is how it goes, isn't it?!

As Hibbel and Ter Bogt (2000) argued, there are combinations of taste preferences that signify social and cultural distinction. By watching a quality broadcaster and reading a quality newspaper people give expression to a certain elitist identity (De Wolff 2005). The visible display of these papers, guides or memberships is crucial for some people because it gives them 'distinction'. The next quote typifies that insight:

Vicky (age 25, graduate student): When I was young, my media use was strongly influenced by my parents. They read the Volkskrant, were member of the VPRO, had a subscription to the VPRO-guide, watched the programming of the VPRO, and disliked the commercial stations. This also ties in with that I went to a Montessori school, played field hockey, learned to play the flute, did classical ballet, and took drawing lessons. I was a typical VPRO-kid: Sundays I watched *Villa Achterwerk* while ignoring *Telekids* [popular commercial children's programme] altogether.

Some informants experience this sense of affinity in taste as a sense of exclusiveness, as an expression of elite membership, of being different from the others (i.e., the masses). In these cases the binding force of quality is formed by an elitist taste profile that refers to a specific good taste for television.

Hester (age 40, shoe designer): it has to do with, you know, that you are a certain kind of people; that you are *different* than the common denominator. And this has to do with a preference for the VPRO and a particular lifestyle [emphasis added].

Janneke (age 39, welfare mother): Chances that you share interests are quite large. ... Generally, the people that visit [Happy] are more educated than average: often people from the culture sector, and a little more creative. So they are interested in culture, in music, books, theatre. This is nice and interesting.

When using the discourse of 'distinction', quality taste functions as a noun, as a form of cultural capital.

Tasting good

As Olivier and Fridman (2001) suggested, elites no longer form cohesive and tightly bounded status groups or classes but rather more diffuse networks of well-educated and geographically mobile professionals and upper managers. The ability to manipulate a diversity of cultural symbols has become a crucial resource in social interaction. “Knowledge of the cultural codes appropriate in various social milieus and the ability to culture-switch according to circumstances became more useful than knowledge of a restricted range of high culture symbols” (ibid: 5).

From this perspective, it is not surprising that for a much larger group of viewers quality was not centred around ‘good taste’ but on ‘tasting good’. Their concern with ‘shared taste’ was not about something that excludes others but rather on that which binds people *through* a common set of *experiences*. ‘Tasting’ is a matter of trying out, experiencing and enjoying (Mol 2007). In this line of thought ‘quality’ can’t be confined to particular media, genres, cultural capital or communities. Instead of being a noun or brand, taste functions as a verb referring to an activity. Tasting quality arouses all the senses, not only those that are intellectually cognitive ones. According to Johnson (2005) today’s viewers take pleasure in handling more informative levels simultaneously. The taste community felt that many programmes could benefit from a higher pace and a more ‘layered’ structure.

Julia (24, student): For instance, at DWDD a Moroccan artist who paints and who has an exposition in the Cobra Museum, also made a painting about Allah. People dislike that immensely and they take offense ... Yes, and all the time the paintings are the main subject, but in the mean time it’s about the dichotomy of natives and non-natives, white and black, *whatever they may be*. It is about the place of art in our society, about what an artist can or cannot say. It is about decency, about the limits thereof. Again, a small item, but loaded with content.

In a similar vein Sylvana pleads for the presentation of art in art programmes not as some bit of information or object of interest, but rather in a way that allows viewers to be emotionally moved by its artfulness:

Sylvana (age 27, innovation coach): EXPERIENCE, feeling, [A story] that fits in one’s personal world. Not, people like art and thus we broadcast everything about dance, art and painting and where that happens. No, you did not get it. I also love art, but don’t tell me about the latest dance performance or theatre play. That does not move me on a *personal level*.

Within a discourse of ‘tasting quality’ the act of enjoying is not conceived as unreflective personal consumption of popular culture, as it functions in the elite discourse on quality, but rather as a layered form of worthwhile, intellectually reflected appreciation that is emotional, sensual and aesthetic as well as cogni-

tive (cf. Peterson and Kern 1996). 'Quality enjoyment' is fundamentally open to all tastes, genres and media. This tasting group also has rules, however. This getting pleasure from and talk about the quality of a wide spectrum of cultural products ('high and low') should rely on actual use and real experience rather than, as Kuipers (2001) concluded about the elite, on opinions, norms, values or views of respected third parties.

This recognition of the primacy of *tasting over taste* creates a breeding ground for virtual communities. A good example is the VPRO music site 3voor12, a virtual platform for music lovers. This community does not share the same taste in music, but recognises among each member the true interests, openness, and curiosity that characterises the ethos of the omnivore, the always curious lover of new tastes, genres and preferences (Virtanen 2005; Peterson 1992).

Joop (age 23, student): Yes... yes, I think that I feel connected to the people who are attracted by it; perhaps because of the same ideas, or rather, *having the same attitude*. And that is a combination of curiosity and going slightly beyond the superficial in the area of music. It really appeals to me very much [emphasis added].

6. *From snobbish distinction to celebrating the omnivore*

Our 'tasting' group of informants suggests a sixth explanation for the gap between people's views on quality and their viewing behaviour: the strongly reduced appeal of the traditional social elite frame of distinction, which still too often functions as the natural angle for quality television, quality makers and managers.

Marten (age 34, project manager): And yes, now and then you notice that exclusionary attitude: we are the cultural elite, we know how things should be, and we know what to read. And this image crops up very strongly, very soon.

In this 'elitist' frame, popular among many television critics including the aforementioned Jeremy Paxman (BBC) and Channel 4's Michael Kustow, it is still the mission of an elite to elevate and enlighten the masses. That frame of reference was criticised, in particular, by well-educated viewers with a migrant background. They were even less attracted to the contemporary programming of quality TV than their 'native' counterparts. Quite often, they even felt offended. If migrants finally appear on television, it is often in the context of problems.

Salman (25 years, press officer): "A good example is *Rondom Tien* (quality talk show on current affairs). Last week, it dealt once again with the 'allochtone' problems, young people, blah, blah. And then the presenter asked a Moroccan woman who was invited what she thought about 'integration' blahdiblah. That word integration, another stinker. And then she answered,

'bad'. And they asked her to give an example. 'That I'm sitting right here', she answered. Why are you inviting me only when this kind of issues come up? I also have two children, last week the item was school canteens, and I am never asked to comment on that.' Well you had to see the face of the presenter. He stood perplexed and did not know what to answer."

Migrants also expected a quality broadcaster to take transnational identities seriously. It ought to replace traditional national orientations characteristic of mainstream media with a genuine global orientation, not only in its choice of subjects and topics but also in its way of framing them (cf. Hartley 2008; Hafez 2007; Höijer 2007; Barker 1999). The severe criticism of migrants points to a potential gap between global citizenship as a set of core values and cosmopolitanism as a popular lifestyle and taste among a white elite. Although many documentaries on international topics were broadcast by the VPRO, they still tended to be motivated by white curiosity or elite concerns (Shohat and Stam 1993). Moreover, the perspectives of migrants (mind the plural!) was rarely given serious attention, in the view of respondents, apart from matters related to their 'own' particular culture which also tended to be approached in a one-dimensional way, for instance with little sense of humour and as little place for diversity among views of migrants.

This audience criticism should be viewed as a plea for a situated and contextualised form of television quality in which every one's colour and cultural background (including white and liberal), and even the elites' culture, norms, and values, are grounded in a context of their own instead of taken as self-evident (cf. Saranovitz 2005; Shohat and Stam 1993; Haraway 1991).

Conclusion: The proof of the pudding is in the eating

I started this chapter by taking seriously the discourse on quality by TV makers like Paxman and Kustow. In order for quality TV to survive, they plead for a clear and unremitting focus on content with notably less attention on audiences, whose tastes they actually consider a liability to quality programming. The research reported here suggests otherwise: If quality television by Public Service Media is to survive, the primary attention should be given to the tasting experiences of audiences. The rationale is that audiences, in particular those who fit the 'quality audience profile' which is to say future leaders, managers and the creative class, are actively and impatiently searching for excellence in satisfying audiovisual experiences.

The first conclusion is reassuring for the makers of quality programmes. Quality experience is attached to particular core values of global citizenship and creativity, which serve as guiding dimensions for people's professional and personal lives. The audience for quality programming shares this fundamental framework with the makers of quality television. The remainder of our conclusions, save the last one, are more challenging than reassuring, at least

to the extent that a reader wants to hold tightly to historic traditions in quality TV programming.

Second, then, while (too) many programme makers assume that more attention to audiences will result in a trivialisation, the audience for quality is less likely to settle for what has been understood as 'quality content' and demands a quality experience. This demand is for artful programmes rather than programmes about art. The audience for quality programmes won't put up with programmes that only inform about politics and politicians; they want television that addresses and hails them as *active* citizens. For that reason, the ethos of global citizenship and the ethos of creativity should amount to more than a proclamation of views or values in an organisation's mission statement. It must refer directly to its praxis, a *performance* of its values in every programme, in every choice of content and every form, in every programme maker's way of working. To reach a larger audience quality standards need not go down – they must go *up*. The proof of quality is in the tasting.

Third, a well-rounded quality experience demands a different, more horizontal, approach to TV subjects and audiences by professionals. Empowered viewers insist on ending the paternalist frame and embracing instead one that is based on an equal standing of makers and audiences together. Instead of an exclusive emphasis on elevation and enlightenment, viewers prefer a form of communication with room for friendship, mutual respect, appreciation, reciprocity and inspiration. Furthermore, the community of *producers* is eager to be engaged in developing concepts and designing formats, repurposing existing content and contributing new content. The service in PSM today is not nearly as much about traditional transmission and increasingly about facilitating robust communication, as argued in Lowe and Bardoel (2007).

Fourth, taste has always been part of the creation of a distinctive group feeling. Yet, our informants take pleasure not in distinguishing themselves from others or in the sharing and exchanging of taste *preferences*, but rather in the sharing and exchanging of taste *experiences*. What counts as quality is changing. The audience for quality in our research is suggesting that Reality and Truth would be better served by a more empathetic, open and curious attitude, accompanied by a an encompassing good-humoured tone. This compassionate turn in taste reflects an accent on inclusion and bridging rather than exclusion and boundaries.

Fifth, this preference for dialogue and compassion over a highbrow, detached tone is rooted in the urgency felt by today's audience for quality programming that in an ever more complex, multicultural society, a new and truer understanding of the Other and otherness is needed. In the Netherlands as in other European countries with a growing population of migrants, Eurocentrism is no longer a productive assumption when an increasing number of citizens have roots in a wide range of countries, mores, religions and lifestyles. Quality broadcasters need to develop a less Eurocentric approach also because non-migrant viewers are as likely to enjoy the unconventional frame because it caters to their desire for stories that surprise and break with traditional patterns of thought.

Finally, however much the hierarchical, qualitative and moral distinction between public and commercial media is losing ground, within quality tasting discourse the distinction has not in itself become irrelevant. On the level of aspirations and remits, quality makes a difference. For PSM, quality content and quality experience go hand in hand today and should be available for everyone.

On the basis of this extensive audience and production research, I want to suggest the importance of further developing the notion of 'quality of life' as a 'sensitising concept' for Public Service Media.⁶ The audience that prioritises quality tasting operates not so much on the political ideal of 'informed and active citizenship' (cf. Zaller 2003) as on a much broader and more layered notion of 'quality of life' (cf. Nussbaum 2000). In their experienced view, media should do more than inform, educate or entertain. Aiming for quality of life is not simply about pleasing the audience or circumventing unpleasantness; quality of life in a media context is about 'richness' of content and *worthwhileness* of programmes (cf. Schröder 2005). The ultimate criterion for media quality appears to be the ability of media to truly enrich their lives.

This potential turn in the benchmark of media quality is linked to a more general social tendency reflecting the broader shift from information society to experience society. This compels PSM organisations to think deeply about a fundamental shift in their conceptualisations of media quality in every genre, news included. Media today must impress people; programmes must captivate audiences. Simply filling a function will not take a PSM company very far today. These companies must focus on continually privileging the construction of life-enriching mediated experiences. Quality content and quality experience are essential and inseparable for the public in public service media today.

Notes

1. Without the investigations of Christa Niekamp, Nikki Timmermans, Robert Adolfsson and the student researchers in the *Magic of Quality* (2007), this chapter could not have been written. Thanks very much to everyone!
2. Richard Florida's (2002) concept of a "creative class" covers more or less the same population as the quality audience (QA).
3. The layered notion of 'ethos' comes from Aristotle where it refers to "moral competence", to one's moral attitude or disposition to be and behave in a certain way, and the knowledge and expertise to bring that 'lifestyle' into practice. There are three categories of ethos for rhetorical practice: *phronesis* – practical skills & wisdom, *arete* – virtue, goodness, and *eunoia* – goodwill towards the audience. Thus in Aristotle's rhetoric ethos is a layered concept. It's useful to describe this ethos as a fundamental dimension of our informants' lives as well as a fundamental dimension in quality broadcasting as specific media praxis. In this study an ethos of global citizenship refers to the moral attitude to be a (global) citizen, and to the knowledge and expertise which enables one to practice such global citizenship. Similarly, the ethos of creativity points to a creative attitude, as well as to the knowledge and ability to live and think playfully and 'out-of-the-box'. It is important to notice that ethos is not an inherent quality of the speaker (or in the case of broadcasting, of the programme); rather, it is attributed by the audience.

4. Apparently this link was so close that TV critics even reproached programme makers in public broadcasting (hypocrites!) if their programmes appealed to a large audience. 'Scoring big' should be left up to commercial broadcasters (Maas 2001).
5. Unlike the policy of the BBC who adopted creativity as its leading principle by helping 'ordinary' people to raise their media and 'storytelling' skills (BBC, 2004), quality 'producers' did not appreciate this updated version of what they saw as the old 'elevation' concept. They viewed themselves as just as informed, creative and productive as the media makers themselves.
6. Sensitising concepts provide starting points for building analysis to produce a grounded theory. They can be effective in providing a framework for analyzing empirical data and, ultimately, for developing a deep understanding of social phenomena' (Bowen 2006).

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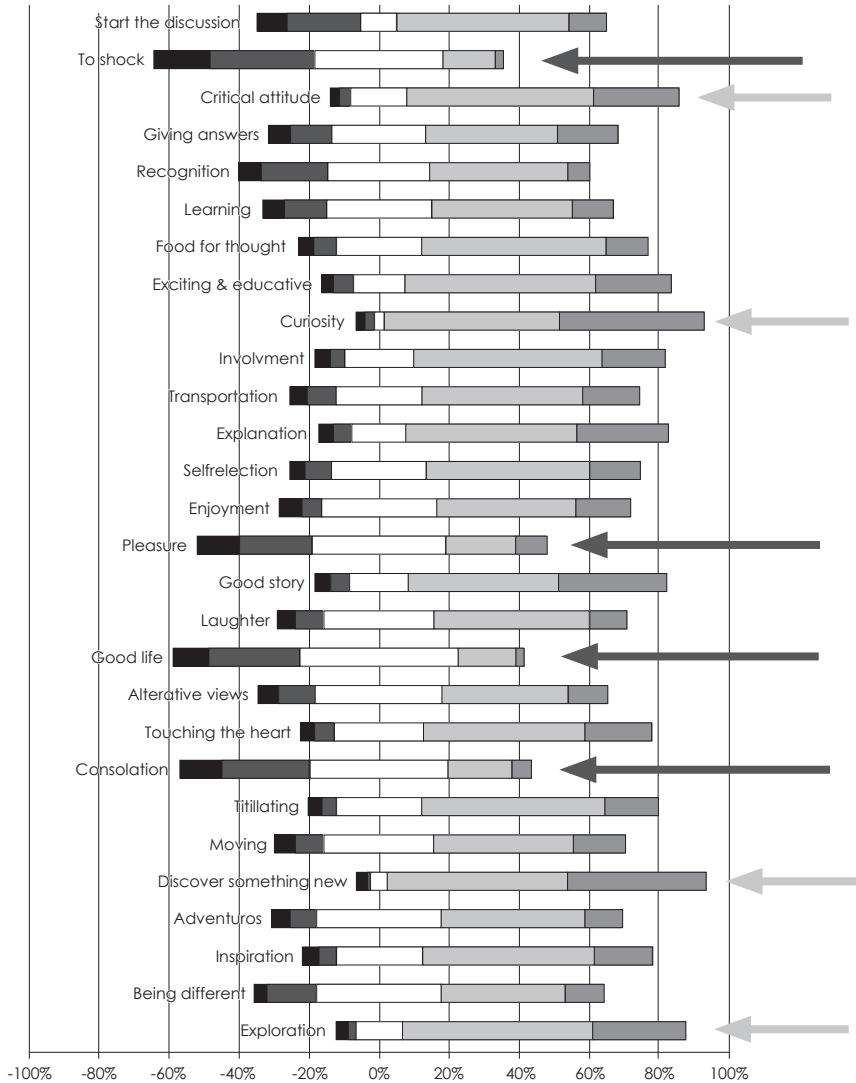
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Appendix 1.

Which function do you as a professional wish your programmes to fulfil for your audience?

Dark grey arrow= significantly negative

Light grey arrow= significantly positive



Public Service Broadcasting Councils in Germany

Making them Fit for the Future

Hans J. Kleinsteuber

The German system of broadcasting councils was a deliberate design in the post-war period to guarantee public involvement in public service broadcasting [PSB], and its accountability to the public is chartered to serve. These days Germany's broadcasting councils tend to be on the defensive as PSB wages a defensive battle at the European level against commercial competitors and their lobbies¹. ARD (the first public channel) and ZDF (second channel) have been accused of receiving non-authorised state aid, something incompatible with EU financing competition law. Proceedings of the European Commission [EC] were suspended in April 2007, but not before posing several uncomfortable questions concerning the authority of a broadcasting council, categorised as a "monitoring body internal to the institution", and the Courts of Audit (Rechnungshöfe) and the State Parliaments (Landesparlamente) because they regularly receive reports from the broadcasting councils. This smells of state control at worst and contiguity at least. A fundamental contradiction is also pointed out:

The radio and television broadcasting council determines the guidelines for the programmes and advise the programme directors on radio broadcasting activities and programmes. The fact that the radio and television broadcasting council is also in charge of checking out that these rules and guidelines are observed can lead to a conflict of interests between its function as a monitoring body on the one side and its role in broadcasting and programming on the other side (European Commission 2007: Point 256).

The situation begs reflection on how the tasks of Germany's broadcasting councils could be reformed and modernised, a discussion that has started already about options for improvement and strengthening the structure and practice (Lilienthal 2009). In 2009 they have been compelled, under EC pressure, to launch a "public value test" (similar to the UK) wherever they intend to introduce new programming. Each proposal is subjected to a rigid "three-step-test" that allows competitors to intervene. The final decision rests with

the broadcasting council which must fulfil additional duties – duties it was not prepared for. At this writing the new policy is just beginning and it is too early to discuss procedures and results. But it is certainly appropriate to question how it all started, what is going on and what is at stake.

The idea of a broadcasting council

The broadcasting council was an idea of Hans Bredow, self-appointed “Father of German Broadcasting”. How did this come about? In 1926 as the leading figure in the Post Department (Postministerium), Bredow became Director of the State Broadcasting Company (Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft) that administratively monitored all regional broadcasting bodies. Bredow was a top administrator charged with guaranteeing “non-partisanship”. There was no question of democratic control. In those days Bredow perceived radio clients merely as the authors of posted petitions – better than nothing, but only just (Bredow 1927: 34).

Bredow was by no stretch a Democrat, but he was steady and preferred to go to jail rather than collaborate during the dark years of the Nazi regime. In 1946 the Western Allies appreciated his advice and he submitted a position paper to the Hessischer Rundfunk that included the idea of a broadcasting council to bring together “representatives of central organisations and experts”. In 1947 he produced a report on the new regulation of broadcasting and there he argued this idea as “the way in which the audience could become a broadcasting stakeholder, in order to create real public broadcasting” (Bredow 1951: 24). This was not about handling economic aspects, which would be the purview of a separate administrative council. His idea of broadcasting councils was rooted in rejection of both the bureaucratic state of the Weimar period and the Nazi seizure of power. His notion was unprecedented, even at an international level. The concept of “Public Service”, promoted by the Allies, took on a uniquely German complexion.

Historians dispute whether Bredow’s aim was selflessly to establish democratic control over broadcasting or instead to establish himself as leader of the proposed body, i.e. to carve out a personal stronghold. In fact he did become the administrative council leader of Hessischer Rundfunk. Whatever the case regarding personal intentions, his idea survived and broadcasters in the Western zones of occupation created broadcasting councils. There were differences between zones. In the American zone (where Bredow was most influential) the delegates of civic associations obtained the most mandates (meaning seats or positions), whereas in the British zone the members of Parliament were also taken into account. Subsequently, wherever a new broadcast operator came along it received its own council. This was the case for ZDF (its council is called the television council), for the Deutsche Welle, and for the new states that joined the Federal Republic from Saarland to the more recent states of the GDR. The dual system existing since the mid ‘80s gave birth to the media

councils as a counterpart within the state media bodies (Landesmedienanstalten) with the aim of regulating commercial competition.

Broadcasting councils today

Although hard to believe, there have been no significant changes since the practice was formulated. With each change of government the composition of these councils is reconstituted: the conservative party CDU, for example, tends to involve associations of World War II refugees whereas the Social Democrats prefer consumers' associations. But the concept remained untouched. Indeed, the political conventions that produced Germany's broadcasting regulations continued to secure its influence.

Since its foundation in 1961, the television council of ZDF has been a playground for politicians. Among its 77 members, 16 come from the federal states, 12 from political parties and 3 from the national Federation. Since 2007 the leader of this council is CDU politician and MP Ruprecht Polenz, earlier the secretary general of his party (www.zdf.de). Many top representatives from the federal states and the Federation are sitting or former ministers and state secretaries as the parties delegate seats to high-ranking office holders. Social Democrat Kurt Beck, Minister-President of Rhineland-Palatinate is the current leader of the administrative council where many other minister-presidents, ministers and secretaries of state are also members; a triumph of the party-proportionality principle. Actually, ZDF was created during the CDU government, therefore the General Director (Intendant) and a majority of programme directors was initially appointed by the Christian Democrats, a smaller proportion by the Social Democrats. Black (CDU) and red (SDP) "circles of friends" met (and still meet) in the ZDF rooms and prepared the meetings of the television council together.

Even so, the socially relevant groups had 46 mandates (seats) and membership represents a cross-section of society's associations, employers, trade unions, churches, sports, culture organisations, and so on. In reality many influential social forces feel close to one of the two main parties and so the small parties barely appear. To avoid helplessness in dealing with the pressure of cliques led by the parties, the unaffiliated mandate-holders meet in a sort of "grey" circle of friends. New Social Movements, NGOs and citizens' groups, although playing an increasing role in shaping Germany's public sphere since the 1980s, are barely represented compared with the older established associations. Self-organised associations of broadcasting users as in the Netherlands don't stand a chance as sponsors of public service broadcasting in Germany. Thus, one must be cautious in stipulating how much and how far 'the public' is actually represented and has any real influence on public service media in these broadcasting councils.

Although things are not everywhere as politicised and political pressure on public broadcasters is decreasing as the dual system makes broadcasting councils

less important. Former Chancellor Helmut Kohl, once himself a ZDF bigwig, was able to demonstrate through his series “Zur Sache Kanzler” (translated: “Come to the Point, Chancellor”) on commercial channel Sat.1 that politicians could be far less inhibited when appearing on private TV channels than on ZDF. As for the Deutsche Welle, which the author knows very well, 7 out of 17 members of their broadcasting council are politically inspired selections from the Federal Government, the Parliament (Bundestag), and the second chamber, the Federal Council (Bundesrat) – mostly career politicians. However, there are no circles of friends, the proportionality principle has shrunk (formerly the two main political parties distributed among each other the directorship and council presidency), and conflicts between political parties seldom emerge. This trend is also due to the fact that career politicians are heavily burdened multi-functionaries and seldom attend council meetings, whereas the “greys” are firm fixtures. Therefore, there are no career politicians imposing a leader for the council or for the boards (Kleinsteuber 2007).

Amateurs and lay people in the council?

In recent years scholars have not written much about these broadcasting councils. And if they did, what came into their minds was mostly not very friendly. For example, there is a thesis that the councils are populated by amateurs who are unable to cope with the job. That point of view implies that the councils vis-à-vis the executive committees do not really have a say and only provide a kind of ‘democratic garnish’. This description is surely too harsh and does not match the author’s experience, although it is correct to define some representatives as amateurs with regard to broadcasting but who might have other areas of expertise coming from different political, economic and social fields to decide on key issues. This happens because, and peculiar to recruiting for Germany’s broadcasting councils, mandate-holders do not need any specific qualifications for performing the office. Some become gradually acquainted with the increasingly complex matters they must handle, while others rely on the makers and programme directors to work things out. Who is skilled enough and owns sound expertise in Video Journalism, Digital Radio Mondiale or Internet Protocol Television? And who is ready to admit that they do not know anything about such matters? The few surveys among members of broadcasting councils demonstrate that they are not very much at home with these subjects (Brosius 1999; Nehls 2007).

From the perspective of the many multi-functionaries who crowd the councils, it is attractive to be a member in order to meet at such a high level politically, economically and socially influential persons and be able to keep in touch with them. When the ZDF television council meets a great number of top politicians gather in a relaxed atmosphere – no other platform provides anything comparable. The politicians are not very reliable and attend the meetings especially when a programme director must be chosen. But usually the person appointed has already been selected in advance, and often not

by the council but behind the scenes. From the point of view of politicians membership is useful because the mandate is a resource of power and good for advancing one's career.

A few figures are pertinent to understand the scope of the membership system. In 2008 a total of 514 persons worked in the 12 broadcasting councils of German PSB. Of these, 157 were politicians. Others had seats in parallel bodies that oversee the commercial sector – altogether close to one thousand representatives. A study of all the PSB councils looked especially at the presence of trade union representatives – one of the core “groups” in Germany – and found 49 of them in the public councils (Nehls 2009: 71f). Thus, more than three times that many come from the ‘political bench’.

It has been clear for some time that things cannot go on like this. The broadcasting councils have made them selves at home, do not have as a rule much authority over the conduct of broadcasters, and do not attract attention in any significant way. If, by way of exception, a public debate on the broadcasting councils takes place (about the choice of programme directors or scandals, for example), they are portrayed in a critical way and publicly lambasted. It is apparent that the councils are partly to blame for this state of affairs. The potential for modernisation of Germany's broadcasting councils can benefit by investigating arrangements elsewhere. Britain in particular is a useful reference because there the leadership structure of the BBC, the ‘mother of public service broadcasting’, was subject to major reorganisation for partially similar reasons. The result was the BBC Trust, created at the beginning of 2007, which can be considered today's “state of the art” in this area (www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust). Much of that experience is applicable to Germany.

Driving politics back

German jurists always emphasise the notion that public service broadcasting is independent and at ‘arm's length’ from state control. This does not, however, prevent politicians from crowding Germany's broadcasting councils. It is not hard for them to do that because they are making the laws. While it is true that political parties represent relevant sections of society, they surely are not the only representatives doing that. In addition, by nature their party and personal self-interests encourage pursuing their own goals. They want to secure high positions for their colleagues and influence programmes because parties are constantly campaigning for the next elections. Due to well-trained inconsiderateness, their credibility continues to drop. This is evident in poor polling numbers, in the decline in co-operation, and in the shrinking loyalty of citizen members. The self-pleased appearance of party leaders acquiring positions of power and prestige very often is enough to promote these fruits of frustration. This is true especially for broadcasting councils and that is why it is so important to reduce the volume of black and red in the councils, and bring in more grey instead (“grey” is indeed a derogatory term for referring to

representatives of the civic society which of course comes in all colours).

I know from experience that chronically overloaded politicians, apart from attending the meetings when an programme director must be appointed, rarely materialise, that when they do they are often badly informed, and they are keen to make it clear that they have control over the broadcasters through regulations and licence fee arrangements. One often gets the impression that as the influence of politicians decreases they tend to be even more controlling in their behaviour. It is obvious that the dominance of politicians over broadcasting councils must be driven back, almost certainly by force as they are unlikely to surrender such easily or voluntarily. Big cliques of politicians inevitably induce politicisation and proportional distribution of mandates. Empirical investigation would all but certainly reveal that, apart from key decisions about the staff – which politicians like to partition among them selves – they do not leave much of a mark very often.

Keeping career politicians out of broadcasting councils actually should not be so difficult: one could simply incorporate in juridical principles the non-eligibility of politicians to take part in council tasks. There is a good example for this in the agreement stipulated by Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein in 2007, when these two German states joined their broadcasting bodies together. Under the paragraphs about “personal prerequisites”, it is clearly stated that those “who belong to a legislative or decreeing body of the European Communities, of the Council of Europe, of the Federation or of one of the States, or who are officials for one of the superior Federal or State authorities” cannot become council members ((Medienstaatsvertrag HSH 2006: § 43.1). How would the ZDF television council look if this regulation were valid in Mainz as well?

Expertise and civil society in the council

For a better composition of future broadcasting councils, ‘better’ meaning something other than political omnipresence, the importance of socially relevant groups should be promoted. Historically broadcasting councils have been taking into account, above all, established interest groups. In practice German society has developed into a pluralised entity over the past 30 years where new assemblages dealing with postmodern subjects abound (like the environment, human rights, consumers, women, migrants, citizens’ groups and so on). When composing new councils principles of modern governance should be the basis for design and formation. In this it is clear that politicians are not the only ones making decisions (government) because a “round table” of representatives from the three big sectors (politics, economy and civil society) meet, each with their own “benches”. In governance theory “stakeholders” – considered as participants or competent amateurs – are embedded in the decision-making process because they combine the necessary distance, commitment and subject-specific expertise that are needed for effectiveness. (Hintz 2009)

The BBC Trust is an example. It is composed by twelve members who meet at least once a month with many duties, like working in committees and speak-

ing in public. The Trust regularly invites citizens from throughout the United Kingdom to public meetings where questions are answered and suggestions obtained. The chairperson of the Trust – a university professor with great experience in politics at a municipal level – must be available for BBC work four days a week, while the work allocation of normal members is two days per week. The chairperson earns £140.000 a year, and members between £35.000 and £40.000. Backing the development of the BBC broadcasters continuously and actively is the focus.

How does one become a member of this distinguished body? Vacancies are advertised and the independent institution, “Commissioner for Public Appointments”, monitors the appointment of new members. Candidates must possess specified qualifications:

- Commitment to the goals of the BBC and sound understanding of the challenges that public broadcasting will have to deal with;
- Ability to understand and represent the point of view of fee-payers;
- Will to meet the audience at public events and swap ideas with them, and ability to act for the public interest;
- Ability to work effectively at the board level.

A commission including the BBC chairperson interviews the candidates. Then, it makes a recommendation that must be approved by the Home Secretary, by the Prime Minister and ultimately by the Queen, who in turn finally appoints new BBC Trust members. In 2009 members were expert in varied fields including radio, regulation, competition, economics, public sector and the public sphere, programme making and journalism. Some represented specific regions of the United Kingdom. Politicians are notably absent.

Of course everything is not perfect in the United Kingdom and Tony Blair was able to successfully put pressure on those in the BBC who were criticising his Iraq policy. Nevertheless, political interference in everyday business seems low, especially as the financing does not depend, as a rule, on politicians. Ultimately the BBC Trust perpetuates the successful, non state-operated policy of the old BBC board, building on its good reputation in Great Britain. There is no special emphasis on staging occasional inspections because Trust members must ‘know the ropes’ and give proof of their competencies; they serve as a kind of bridge between citizens and the broadcaster.

Certainly this model cannot be directly transferred to Germany (for a comparison of different national systems of media supervision see Holznagel, Krone and Jungfleisch 2004). But it is appropriate to think about ways to bring more expertise into the broadcasting councils. Mandates could be taken away from politicians and handed to media experts from different segments of society. In addition, first membership in the councils could benefit from a coaching or mentoring process by veteran members to pass on their experience and lessons learned to the next generation. German broadcasting councils are often

too large to run efficiently and the 77 ZDF council seats should be able to accommodate each segment of society. However, the high numbers reinforce internal hierarchies and leadership, and the effort of individual members is devalued. On top of that, all members obtain substantial expense allowances and are well taken care of – another reason why they hardly ever raise any objections. Much money could be saved. Moreover, the councils sit far too seldom to carry out any substantial surveillance, e.g. the Deutsche Welle council holds a regular meeting four times a year and the other councils sit six or seven times a year.

Access for every citizen: Working in Public

The Bundestag operates publicly, as required in the German basic law, (the Grundgesetz). In contrast, broadcasting councils, the small ‘parliaments’ of broadcasters, hold their meetings behind closed doors as a rule. I say “*as a rule*” because the councils of Bayrischer Rundfunk and Radio Berlin Brandenburg (RBB) operate publicly. This policy is the result of a decade-long tradition. RBB sessions could even be followed on the internet until 2007, when they were deleted without substitution – and without any explanation.

The lack of accountability to the public is in sharp contrast with the situation in other countries. The public has played an important role in the USA, perhaps more than elsewhere. Although the USA has been portrayed as a paradise of deregulation for many years, in fact the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) which is in charge of radio and TV licensing makes many decisions in open forums and works in a transparent house of glass. The logic is simple: everyone using a public frequency for transmitting (“public airwaves”) must give an account to the public of what they offer in exchange. All data concerning each licensing process are publicly available and the FCC comes to a decision during public meetings (www.fcc.gov). Citizens provide a degree of control by following the licensing process and being able to object at any time. All relevant documents are stored in databases that are accessible to anyone with an internet connection, and contestations can be lodged not only on site but also on line. Of course American media concerns do not seem any less grandiloquent for all that. Still, it is possible to know what their intentions are step by step, which offers citizens’ organisations new possibilities for taking action against excessive use of media power or depictions of violence in content. The BBC Trust also makes its meeting records available for the public and on the internet. All interested parties know their rights.

In Germany, by contrast, there is no clear procedure for dealing with the records of proceedings. Recently, a Ph.D. student requested a look at the protocols of a broadcasting council for her dissertation. Lacking clear instructions and procedures for handling such a routine request, this had to be examined by the whole council and was discussed for a long time before the request was ultimately approved. The Ph.D. student, degraded to the role of supplicant,

had in the meantime easily secured access to the protocols by the time the discussion was over. The sticking point was that she needed official permission to be able to quote them.

Broadcasting councils without the public are anachronistic. Because they are supposed to represent the breadth of society, they should represent that very part of society calling for more public involvement and accountability. It is oxymoronic to categorise as PSB an approach to broadcasting that denies the public it is supposed to serve, and by which any public company must be held accountable. Each sitting council should be public (including the online broadcasting of it) and the agenda, decisions and protocols should be uploaded on the internet as a routine matter. In this respect, the German Bundestag's Plenum deals with the public in quite an exemplary way. Special questions liable to data privacy laws, for example questions concerning personnel, can be tackled in non-public sittings.

Working in the sunlight: Transparency

We Germans don't deal well with transparency. The NGO "transparency international" confirms this, ranking Germany among the less transparent European countries (www.transparency.de). A central element of transparency policy consists of giving citizens access to the protocols and files of public institutions. Ultimately, all citizens are sovereign and administrations work on their behalf. But German Freedom of Information legislation concerning public access to protocols at a national level was only introduced in 2006, after years of dispute. The same happened only in half of the states (Länder) – providing more evidence for arcane policy. Laws concerning public access to protocols are restrictive too, since many inquiries cost money and can be expensive. On the whole, Germany is among the worst countries in Europe when it comes to providing information to the public.

The Federal Freedom of Information Act in Germany (Informationsfreiheitsgesetz) applies to "authorities" and is an attempt to provide "access to official information" (§1). Although public broadcasters are neither authorities nor agencies of the state, nevertheless the law could be applied to them given their public sector status. Indeed, a first commentary to the law includes among the "authorities" the German broadcaster Deutsche Welle, although stipulating that Deutsche Welle "however, is obliged to grant access to information only when operating beyond its mandate and beyond the exercise of broadcasting freedom" (Mecklenburg and Pöppelmann 2007). There are even clear exclusion criteria for the regulation department: "There is no right of access to information if the making public of it could have a negative effect on the supervision or monitoring activities carried out by ... regulation bodies" (Informationsfreiheitsgesetz 2006: § 3.1d). This affects the Federal Network Agency (Bundesnetzagentur) which, for example, is in charge of assigning transmission frequencies. The legal situation is partially unsettled and by no means citizen-friendly. In addition, broadcasters seem not to have the slightest intention of operating more transparently.

How does this compare to other countries? In the USA Freedom of Information Act regulations affect the FCC, too. A section of the FCC internet portal presents all access details, illustrates processes, and names the persons in charge (www.fcc.gov/foia) of the various FCC general activities (licensing and supervision activities are subject to the special prescriptions described above). The British supervising authority Ofcom and the BBC have similar arrangements. The BBC has a special Freedom of Information Website where all those interested can get information about the framework conditions. (www.bbc.co.uk/foi). Some answers to frequently asked questions are provided as well: for instance, in June 2007 the ten best paid BBC executives, the amount of all BBC expenses for taxi transportation, and the construction of prayer areas within BBC office buildings, were among the themes tackled.

Compared to this, the German legal situation is depressing. An invitation to take advantage of one's right to view broadcasters' protocols and data is nowhere to be found. Even in the absence of clear legislation on the matter, one would think the broadcasters themselves would want to improve their transparency given the importance of that for improving relations with the public in an increasingly challenged environment. One should think they would take every opportunity to become more credible in the eyes of the public and reduce public scepticism against them – as evident also in the case of their relations with the European Commission.

The broadcasting council as a legal entity

Currently, the council's concerns are dealt with, as a rule, by the directorship (Intendanz, the office of the general director). That is like saying the German Government manages the Bundestag. Already Hans Bredow, quite cleverly, had demanded that broadcasting councils be an independent body. Making that viable requires that broadcasting councils maintain a distinct legal personality. A council needs its own secretariat which prepares meetings independently, deals with inquiries from the outside, and can get information from the broadcasting house whenever demanded. A dedicated budget should be allocated, which would enable convening expertise and commissioning research (as Ofcom does) when useful or necessary. Such is required for a broadcasting council to be independent instead of being at the mercy of directorships with their information gloss. This guarantees that professionals from the broadcasters' elites do not wrap up council members.

The BBC Trust does not depend on the BBC for its lease on life; on the contrary, the Trust perceives itself as having a "sovereign" function towards the BBC. A substructure called Trust Unit supports it in its activities by dealing with subjects such as achievements, finances, strategic issues, audience and standards. For this the Trust Unit receives adequate funding of over £1m per year. That model could be adapted to Germany without hesitation. One really must wonder how is it possible to call the members of a broadcasting council "watchdogs of a system" if they only meet a couple of times a year, cannot

produce any independent enquiries and, organisationally, are attached to the very body they are supposed to be monitoring?

A place for complaints

In Germany there is no light and easy way to register complaints about problems and grievances. When investigating the German broadcasting system, the European Commission note that, "Third parties can complain by turning either to the monitoring bodies within the broadcasters, or to the federal states carrying out the legal supervision. Third parties can appeal against the decision of a federal state by turning to the relevant court" (European Commission 2007). Should one really write to a broadcasting council's chairperson, or even activate minister-presidents and the German courts, to simply express a critical opinion? Unsurprisingly, hardly anyone does.

Everyday complaints about issues like signal quality failure and violations against programme rules can only be proven by experts. Needed is a specified person or dedicated professional post responsible for gathering, proofing and dealing with incoming complaints. Elsewhere streamlined and independent bodies along the lines of ombuds-structures are increasingly important in the media because they have recognised the function as a valuable early warning system. In recent years much of the US daily newspaper press has been investing in quality management and in intensifying contact with readers. It is in their best self-interests to do so. Even in Germany the WAZ group, one for the largest newspaper groups, instituted an ombuds-council bound to a code of conduct in 2007 (Kaiser 2007). Usually these ombuds-persons are experienced journalists or academicians who personify independence and credibility.

In Switzerland there is also an independent complaint authority for radio and television (www.ubi.admin.ch) in charge of handling complaints about all suppliers, public and commercial alike. Before it is activated an ombuds-place vets the complaint (Elia 2007). The authority mostly intervenes if an established law has been violated or if access to a programme has been illegitimately denied. The authority's proceedings are public, as are its decisions. In the USA the FCC collects complaints and is expected to take them into account when deciding about renewing licences, although in practice this does not happen a lot. In Great Britain the highest authority is the regulatory authority, Ofcom, and the BBC maintains a sophisticated internal complaints procedure (www.bbc.co.uk/complaint). Each time a complaint is made, the BBC must react and both complaints and reactions are reported on the internet. A special committee of the BBC Trust deals with appointment issues. In this way not only complaints but also praise can be communicated.

In Germany the formal starting point for registering complaints should be the secretariat of each broadcasting council. There an ombuds-person would collect complaints, evaluate their legitimacy, and where appropriate clarify problems with the broadcaster. An ombuds-person should be an experienced journalist or other media expert able to distinguish between an unavoidable

weakness or occasional unintentional mistake and a clear or systematic trespassing of limits. The person should have an office and a vote in the broadcasting council to raise awareness. It is important to be clear in this respect: it is not a matter of complaining about the programmes or creating a gateway for political criticism. The aim is rather tackling basic issues for ensuring highest quality in public service management.

Germany's misery: Back to the state?

In the 20th century Germany pioneered the virtuous notion of including socially relevant groups in broadcasting council as autonomous members with responsibility for and authority to hold PSB companies accountable to the public they are chartered to serve. Unfortunately this can no longer be taken for granted. The media councils of public broadcasters are appointed by the federal Parliament and groups merely have nominating power. The party proportionality principle is direct and that is why socially relevant groups become appendages of political parties. In the MABB, the state broadcasting body for Berlin and Brandenburg, decisions and appointments of notabilities are made by a two-thirds majority of parliament. As for the broadcasting body MA-HSH (Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein, founded in 2007), the parliament chooses council members and the party proportionality principle ensures that those lacking political connections have no chance. Within this broadcasting council citizens are not allowed to attend 'secret' meetings while government representatives can take part in all meetings and intervene as they wish. The signed treaty allows this. It is not surprising that two of the fourteen members of this broadcasting council must be jurists, effectively excluding 99% of Germans from membership. This is a way of securing for them access to broadcasting and an absolute monopoly on its control through the back door, if you will. As broadcasting consultants in the state chancelleries, jurists prepare all laws and contracts, as well. Although the broadcasters' legal advisors try to repel their concupiscence, many directors of PSB media bodies come from this sector – and in some federal states they even legally *have to*. There is no constitutional reason for this – only paragraphs written by the jurists themselves. If Germans do not react the result will be an unbearable politicalization of all monitoring structures and increasingly disconnected from the citizens.

Currently, there is a grotesque fragmentation of private-commercial broadcasting supervision among more than 14 bodies. Recently they came together to create a federal Commission for Authorisation and Monitoring (Kommission für Zulassung und Aufsicht, ZAK). The directors of the supervisory bodies for commercial broadcasting take part in the meetings, but again representatives of socially relevant groups are not granted a place even at a federal level. Societal control is tacitly, gradually and systematically being dismantled. The very bodies supposedly representing all German citizens and constituting a kind of autonomous "fourth power" are under siege.

This becomes even more important during these times of severe attacks by commercial competitors in television and as new rules question the “public value” in media. Never have broadcasting councils been more important. But to be effective instruments of the public in public service media they must demonstrate that their work is competent, that they are independent and acting as watchdogs on the public interest, and that they will actively defend those interests. It is essential to oppose the culture of political secretiveness and control with a culture of openness, transparency and accountability, as the BBC exemplarily does. It is time to revitalise the tradition of the public in media as optimistically envisioned by Hans Bredow at the dawn of German broadcasting.

Note

1. Former contributions of the author to this topic include: Hans J. Kleinsteuber (2007) *Alle Macht den Räten? Für mehr Zivilgesellschaft*. *epd medien* 25.8.07; also: Hans J. Kleinsteuber (2007) *Rundfunkaufsicht zwischen Regulierung und Governance. Zur Rolle von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Donges, P. (Hg.): *Von der Medienpolitik zur Media Governance?* Cologne: von Halen 2007, pp. 43-66.

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Serving Children in Public Service Media

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In European countries with a tradition of public service broadcasting [PSB], children's content has usually been viewed as a socially important area of programming, central to the notion of public service (Messenger Davies and Thornham 2007; Blumler and Bilteryst 1997). This is reinforced by the view of perceived vulnerability of young audiences and the realities of a commercial market place whose objectives may be at variance with the perceived needs and well being of children (Messenger Davies 2004: 10). Although most public service media [PSM] institutions still subscribe to serving the young, doing so is becoming harder as children and young people become more actively involved in a variety of multiplatform media activities online and on demand. But if PSM fails to attract young 'digital natives' early on, their future legitimacy may be threatened as children become accustomed mainly to commercial content.

Bearing these developments in mind, this chapter considers how public service media can still serve children in the digital age when there is no longer the 'scarcity' associated with terrestrial television but rather an 'abundance' (Ellis, 2000) of content and activities on multiple platforms. Focusing on three public service media institutions in three different countries, NRK (Norway), RAI (Italy), and the BBC (Britain), this chapter identifies the context of public service media for children and pinpoints key issues confronting them, going on to examine strategies adopted by each organisation and their effectiveness in constituting a deliverable response that not only reflects the public service mission but also takes account of the changing nature of children's media consumption in terms of their participatory, interactive and collaborative experiences. The aim is to distinguish commonalities and differences, and to see whether these offer lessons on how public service media might serve and engage with children in ways that more usefully reflect their interests as a 'public' in their own right.

We start by briefly outlining the historical origins of public service media for children in each case country, the policy rationale for provision, and the ways in which public service content for children fits with competing channels and media outlets. We then pinpoint key issues confronting public service

provision for children in each case, including the impact of competition and regulatory initiatives as well as changes in the way that children engage with and consume content. Finally the chapter considers the strategies adopted by each case institution and the extent to which these responses represent an adequate strategy. The chapter concludes by identifying the degree to which these institutions have successfully managed to redefine their relationship with children, while also satisfying the wider public that they still represent a valuable investment in the public interest.

In outlining historical and policy contexts the chapter concentrates primarily on television before considering more recent developments associated with online media. Of course children's media only represent a small part of the general media marketplace and the obligations of public service media institutions. However, evolving strategies in response to digital developments and changing consumption habits have implications for the wider media industry for which the children's sector is a valuable case study for production and funding issues within the broader public service and digital media environment.

Contextualising the cases

From the very start of television, children's programming was a staple of BBC, NRK and RAI schedules. A paternalistic approach prevailed in these monopoly years.

This was perhaps most evident in Norway which broadcast a restricted diet of children's drama and arts content throughout the 1960s, and only on Fridays and Sundays to compensate for the potential damage presumably caused by television (Hake 2006; Bakøy 2000). In 1970, however, NRK established *Barne-TV*, a daily one-hour slot at 6pm – except on Mondays, which continued to be a television-free day for children until 1985 (Hagen and Wold 2009; Hake 2006). Similarly, in Britain the BBC monopoly approach to children was grounded on a paternalistic public service ethos that conceived television not simply as entertainment but as an uplifting endeavour to create good citizens, educated and informed through a range of programmes constituting public service broadcasting 'in miniature' (Oswell 2002; Buckingham et al 1999: 17). From 1954 a strong pedagogic intent also characterised RAI's early television provision for children, featuring an emphasis on programmes which educated children and contributed to their moral and civic development (De Benedetti 2003: 3-8; D'Amato 1998).

The arrival of commercial television forced a reconsideration of audience needs and conceptions for children's television. A key factor influencing different PSB responses was the way in which the new commercial sector was regulated. Britain was first to introduce commercial television with the launch of ITV in 1955, one year after television was introduced in Italy and before it launched in Norway. For the BBC it soon became evident that a programming policy based on children's perceived needs for educative and informative content

rather than their desire for less high-minded fare was not sustainable. Children chose to watch ITV's more populist, family-oriented drama and entertainment instead (Buckingham et al 1999: 21). As the BBC lost a large share of the child audience it was forced to reconsider its approach and think more about audience preferences. This was not the whole story, however, because ITV (and also Five) was later incorporated within a regulated public service system that required it to serve the child audience as well (see Messenger Davies 2007).

Settling into a 'cosy' BBC-ITV duopoly in the 1970s and 1980s, British children's television entered an apparent 'golden age' where a regulated public service ethos underpinned a model of children's programming that sustained high levels of origination across a range of genres, but in a limited number of slots on the BBC and ITV. Before the 2003 Communications Act, for example, terrestrial channel ITV1 was required to transmit ten hours of children's programmes a week and to commission 70 hours of preschool programming, 75 hours of drama and 52 hours of information programming annually (ITC 2003). Five, launched in 1997, was required to transmit 608 hours of children's programming a year, including 26 hours of drama and 478 hours of information and preschool programming (Ibid).

In stark contrast with Britain, no care was taken in Italy to ensure that the new commercial sector, which launched in the 1970s, operated within a public service framework. Commercial television, which by the early 1980s had consolidated into three main networks all owned by Silvio Berlusconi's Fininvest (now Mediaset), was allowed to operate virtually unregulated. The arrival of commercial television had a disruptive impact on RAI's finances and programming policy (Richeri 1990). With advertising income constituting about half of its revenues, RAI was fully exposed to the 'commercial deluge' brought about by the introduction of private television, a unique dynamic compared with the BBC where advertising forms no part of PSB revenues and with NRK where advertising is allowed online, but not for children's content.

Children's television in Italy was from the start identified as important by Italian commercial stations due to commercial eagerness "to capture fairly cheaply a significant segment of the audience of special interest to advertisers" (Fenati and Rizza 1992: 168). Subject to zero requirements on programme range or quotas, and lacking the financial resources, expertise or desire to produce in-house, the commercial networks turned to cheap Japanese animation to fill their schedules. This strategy proved popular with children with the result that by 1980 Italy was the biggest importer of Japanese animation (Richeri 1986: 30). In response RAI fundamentally changed its children's programming policy, retreating from studio-based in-house production of children's shows and dramas and increasing animation acquisitions (Fenati and Rizza 1992: 168). This strategy not only proved unsuccessful, but also undermined RAI's distinctiveness. By the early 1990s RAI had lost most of the child audience to its commercial rivals (De Benedetti 2003: 7). In the second half of the 1990s RAI's finances improved considerably as a result of rising advertising revenues. Combined with limited scheduling quotas for children's programmes and investment quotas on

animation (more about this later), this contributed to a renewed commitment to children's television by RAI and a higher public service profile as it began to invest more in home grown content (De Benedetti 2003).

NRK's monopoly lasted officially until 1981 when it was challenged first by local TV stations and then by transnational satellite channels, including TV3 (1987) and TvNorge (1988). The terrestrial monopoly over national television persisted until 1992 with the launch of TV2. The impact of commercial television on NRK was not as disruptive as had been the case for RAI. This was largely because, as in Britain, the liberalisation process was carefully managed. TV2 was established as a commercial channel with public service obligations, including a requirement to supply a daily children's service in Norwegian for children under twelve.

For a while TV2 children's programmes included domestic animation, such as the series *Snøbarna* (Snow Children, 2000) as well as the 3D series *Elias* – nominated for an Emmy in 2006. TV2 has been the most important commercial channel in the children's television market (NTB 2008), capturing a 13 per cent share in 2008 ahead of TvNorge (4.5%) and TV3 (1.2%), which broadcast from Britain and were therefore not subject to a Norwegian ban on television advertising aimed at children. Mainly airing children's programming in the early morning, on the weekends and during holidays, the commercial channels did not challenge NRK directly in its key 6pm slot. As television advertising aimed at children was banned in Norway, it was never economically attractive for commercial providers like TV2 to offer children's television in the early evening anyway. This regulatory factor partly explains, together with NRK's attempts to become more 'popular', why NRK has retained a strong position in the Norwegian children's television market. In 2009 TvNorge and TV3 withdrew from children's television altogether because of the rise of dedicated children's channels.

This early history shows how varied the backgrounds of public service children's television are, ranging from the more 'paternalistic' earlier approaches of the BBC and NRK to the more commercially driven strategies of RAI. In all cases however, there was little sense of the child 'public' in public service media, especially in what they wanted and enjoyed. Children were either defined by broadcasters as an audience requiring protection and content that met their perceived developmental and educational needs (as citizens), or, as was the case in 1980s Italy, they were a market segment to be fought over by commercial and public service stations (as consumers).

All three PSB providers experienced a second wave of competition starting in the 1990s with an influx of US-owned children's channels (Papathanassopoulos 2002: 227-243). In Britain the traditional public service model was strained by deregulation that facilitated the introduction of dedicated children's channels owned by Disney (1995), Nickelodeon/Viacom (1993) and Cartoon Network (1993). These competitors made their mark, fragmenting both audiences and revenues in a market that grew to include twenty-five dedicated children's channels by 2007 (Ofcom 2007a: 23). With over 112,000 hours of children's

television broadcast in Britain in 2006, the market was hardly characterised by a lack of quantity.

In Italy multichannel television took off later with the launch in 2003 of Sky Italia (a pay satellite platform controlled by News Corporation) and digital terrestrial television. At the end of 2008 an estimated 50 to 60 per cent of Italian television homes were connected to at least one digital platform, with children's television becoming one of the most crowded and competitive market segments. By 2008 there were nearly twenty mostly US-owned children's channels, including time-shifted versions (Starcom 2009 & 2007).

The Norwegian children's television market is less crowded, reflecting the smaller size of the Norwegian market. The pattern is nonetheless consistent. In 2008 there were ten commercial children's channels operating in Norway owned by Disney, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network, and NRK was facing the same competitive challenges.

Different contexts, similar issues

PSBs across Europe are confronted by similar challenges that are typical to a commercially driven multichannel environment – namely more competition and audience fragmentation among many channels. Children's viewing, in particular, is migrating from generalist channels to dedicated children's channels. In Britain, for example, Ofcom estimated that in 2006 only 18 per cent of children's weekly viewing of children's programming was for generalist channels like BBC1 and ITV1 (2007a: 97). While also true for other territories including France and Germany (Ofcom 2007b), it is less so in Italy where multichannel television is not yet as advanced. In 2008, RAI and Mediaset's terrestrial channels still accounted for 70 per cent of time spent watching television by Italian children aged 4-14, including viewing of adult programming (Mediaset 2009: 11).

While challenging, the market-driven context does offer opportunities, in theory at least, to showcase public service credentials and demonstrate *distinctiveness* against commercial rivals. There are two reasons for this. First, US channels operating in Europe rely heavily on animation and sitcoms produced by their parent companies. This wide availability of US-originated content has raised concerns about diversity, range and domestic content, particularly in small countries like Norway where the market is unable to support larger scale domestic production. Here public service broadcasters can make a distinctive mark.

Second, the fragmentation of audiences arising from channel multiplication has resulted in a decline in commercial terrestrial broadcasters' advertising revenues – a situation aggravated by the financial crisis since 2008. As noted earlier, in Britain and to some extent in Norway, terrestrial commercial broadcasters formed part of a public service system that made important contributions to the domestic supply of children's programming. Faced with challenging market conditions, commercial broadcasters are now reducing this commitment,

arguing that transmissions on multi-genre channels are no longer economically viable in the face of robust competition from such well-resourced rivals as Disney and Nickelodeon. With uncertainty about the future commitment of public service-oriented commercial terrestrial channels, publicly funded broadcasters are becoming the dominant providers and funders of domestic content for children across genres, giving much greater prominence to their interventions and strategies.

Recent developments in Britain provide an instructive case for this trend. A crisis in British children's television manifested itself soon after the passage of the 2003 Communications Act which effectively freed ITV and Five from transmission quotas. ITV, until that point the second largest investor in British children's television, took this opportunity to reduce its eight hour weekly commitment to children's broadcasts on ITV1, arguing that competition no longer made children's content a viable commercial endeavour (ITV 2007: 7). By 2009 most children's content had been removed from the channel. ITV also closed its in-house production unit, ITV Kids, in 2007 and reduced investment in originations from £25m in 2005 to about £4m in 2008 (Five 2008). Although ITV launched a digital children's channel (CiTV) in 2006, this service is not subject to public service content rules and largely relies on acquisitions. The situation was aggravated by Ofcom's decision, stimulated by government and lobby group pressure, to institute a ban on junk food advertising surrounding television programmes targeted at children under 16.

As a consequence the provision of British-originated children's content, particularly drama and factual programming for older children, is increasingly uncertain other than from the BBC. This has raised concerns about the range and diversity of what is on offer, as well as the plurality of supply as the commissioning of British content becomes ever more concentrated on the BBC, responsible by 2006 for 57 per cent of expenditure on first-run original programming (Ofcom 2007a: 46).

A similar story has begun to unfold in Norway with TV2 providing fewer hours of children's programming (458 hours in 2004), citing stringent advertising restrictions around children's television behind its failure to invest more substantially in children's content. With TV2's licence as a commercial broadcaster with PSB obligations expiring in 2010, children's content has become a key issue. As in Britain, the regulation of commercial public service broadcasting entered a period of uncertainty in 2008 with the result that NRK may once again become the sole provider of Norwegian children's programming. Thus, a key issue in some European countries is the trend for commercial providers to withdraw from children's provision as their public service obligations are reduced or ended.

Another key issue confronting European PSB companies is the growing popularity of online and mobile services. Children and young people are not only migrating towards dedicated channels, they are also increasingly active in social networking, file sharing and game sites on the internet, all of which fragment audiences and revenues further. Television is still the dominant medium in all

three case countries – particularly for younger children (Istat 2008; Livingstone 2008a: 176; Ofcom 2007a: 72). In Norway viewing among 3 to 11 year olds actually grew from 1.4 hours in 2007 to 1.9 hours in 2008 (Kampanje 2008) following the introduction of NRK's dedicated children's channel, NRK Super.

Internet use is growing quickly despite variations between countries. In Britain it accounted for 6.2 hours a week among 5-15 year olds and 10.5 hours among 12-15 year olds in 2006 (Ofcom 2007a: 78). In Norway 86 per cent of children have online access at home and internet use among 9-15 year olds totalled 1.2 hours daily in 2007 (Hagen and Wold 2009: 67). Italy is an exception, for the moment at least. While use of online media is growing, in 2007 half of 3-17 year olds had not used the internet at all during the year (Istat 2008: 19). But even where popular as in the UK, some have noted that access to the internet by children is uneven and much of what is on offer is highly commercialised with public service 'type' content often difficult to find (Livingstone 2008b: 101-102). The growing interest in web-based activities and other mediated behaviours by older children in particular, could be a sign of PSB failure to provide engaging content and opportunities to exercise their active participation across platforms.

These emerging issues (competition across platforms; changing media consumption patterns) demonstrate the need for a changing conception of children and young people both as users of and participants in public service media. While public media is active on the internet, there is little discussion or understanding of why and how this is important for children's civic participation and development. It also remains unclear whether children and young people are being addressed as part of an overall public service mission connected with public service purposes like the promotion and encouragement of citizenship, education, creativity and participation, or whether they are being addressed as any other segment of the audience being contested by commercial and public service players as consumers.

Comparing strategy

How then have public service broadcasters in Norway, Britain and Italy responded to the challenges facing them, and what do these responses tell us about their conception of youth publics? Are they focused on raising the distinctiveness of their offerings in keeping with a public service ethos, or are they much more concentrated on securing the attention of children as part of an ongoing competitive battle? Is PSB expanding into digital, online and interactive media as PSM mainly to colonise the children's market as a competitive property?

In spite of the increase in dedicated children's channels, European PSB companies in our sample continue to air children's programming on their generalist channels. For the BBC this is because of explicit requirements in service licenses and partly because of public expectations that generalist chan-

nels should cater for children on their universally available terrestrial services. BBC1 and BBC2 combined are therefore *required* to transmit 1,500 hours of children's programming a year.

The case for airing children's programming on mixed genre channels appears to be less convincing for those PSB organisations that are more reliant on advertising revenue, in this case RAI. In the early 2000s RAI moved its afternoon children's block from flagship channel RAI1 to the more public service-oriented and less popular RAI3 to maximise advertising revenues on RAI1. In recent years, it has also reduced the amount of time dedicated to children's programmes on its terrestrial services (Starcom 2007). But under its current service contract (2007 to 2009) RAI is required to devote at least 10 per cent of annual output on its terrestrial channels between 7am and 10:30pm to content for children and young teenagers (RAI 2007). For the time being, then, minimum provision of children's programmes on RAI's mixed-genre channels is guaranteed. Under competitive pressure and in the absence of stringent regulatory obligations, RAI might however shift its provision from generalist channels.

In Norway, NRK has no specific obligations on hours but is required to air daily programmes for children under twelve that contribute to the strengthening of Norwegian language, identity and culture (Medietilsynet 2008). This suggests commitment to distinctiveness and a public service ethos. The amount of children's airtime on NRK1, NRK's generalist channel, has remained constant at about 10 per cent of transmissions – about 838 hours a year. The launch in 2007 of the NRK Super children's channel increased total NRK provision to more than 4,500 hours a year (NRK 2009). However NRK has signalled that all children's programming will in future be confined to its dedicated service, NRK Super, following digital switchover in 2010. This decision does not appear to have generated significant opposition, but does mark a significantly different approach – one that positions children as an entirely separate market segment, and mirroring the approach of US-owned transnational channels.

Looking beyond provision for children on generalist television channels, the BBC, NRK and RAI have all identified children's channels for children under twelve as an ideal solution for the provision of children's programming in a fragmented, multichannel media environment, but with far less consideration given to young people aged 12+. All three players have pursued an online presence as well.

The BBC has undoubtedly pursued this strategy more consistently and successfully. Its initiatives served as a benchmark for other PSB organisations. The BBC's strategic response since 2002 has been characterised by a focus on two age-related brands that are applied across media platforms. CBeebies is a tri-media undertaking for children aged six and under, available as a digital television channel, online, on radio and as blocks on the generalist television services BBC1 and BBC2. CBBC is a brand targeting children aged 6-12, available online and on television both as a digital channel and as blocks on BBC1 and BBC2. Older children and teenagers (12-17) are served far less compre-

hensively through BBC Switch, launched in 2007. This is a lower profile service encompassing a range of output dispersed across radio (Radio1), an online portal, and television, whose performance has been 'variable' with particularly limited content and poor reach on television (BBC Trust 2009b).

Television still dominates the BBC's responses in respect of output and expenditure, but its contribution is not only about linear media. With 51 per cent of Britain's 9m children under twelve now accessing broadband internet at home (BBC 2008: 7), the corporation recently prioritised connecting with young audiences beyond television to engage their participation "in active and creative ways" (Ibid: 5) through "participative entertainment" and "interactive products and immersive learning" (Ibid: 6) that encourage children to develop their expressive capabilities. *MyCBBC*, for example, has been positioned as a safe online space for the over-sixes to create and share content and as a precursor to social networking sites targeted at older children such as Bebo and Facebook (Ibid: 42). *Adventure Rock* is a downloadable virtual world for the over-sixes to explore at home. In this turn we begin to see evidence of a broader understanding of the importance of the public in public service media, something to be recommended here especially given challenges inherent in understanding how young people use and think about media. Of course these are early days, and compared to other PSB providers the BBC has considerably more resources to develop such initiatives. More generally, however, as with all new initiatives in the multiplatform world the corporation can never be entirely sure how and if children, especially older children, will engage when they have access to so many other alternatives. It is nonetheless an encouraging early sign of potentially important changes in orientation.

Mirroring developments at the BBC, RAI currently runs two dedicated children's channels, one for preschoolers (Raisat Yo Yo) and one for older children (RAI Gulp). Both channels are available free-to-air on digital terrestrial television as well as via satellite. Over the years there have been several changes in RAI's channel line up involving a series of rebranding exercises. But until very recently part of RAI's provision for children (two dedicated channels, Raisat Yo Yo and Rai Sat Smash) was available only to Sky subscribers, undermining the idea that they were really public service initiatives. In the summer of 2009 RAI decided not to renew its content carriage deal with Sky Italia. As a result Raisat Smash, a service for girls launched earlier in 2009, was closed while Raisat Yo Yo became a free-to-air channel. RAI children's television services are now supplemented with an online video portal, *rai.tv*, launched in January 2007. 'Junior' is the gateway to children's on-demand services (RAI Kids and RAI Tween), podcasts, online games and activities, but does not appear to be particularly well integrated with the television brands.

Of the three case organisations NRK is the latest to introduce a children's channel with NRK Super for children aged 2-12 premiering on 1 December 2007. As the first Norwegian-owned children's channel, NRK Super was expected to help NRK 'win back the children'. The stated intention is to provide a national alternative to transnational corporations (like Disney) with NRK executives

presenting the channel as NRK's response in "a cultural battle" (cited in Mjøs 2008). NRK's strategy is profoundly expansive with the express goal of serving children on *every* media platform.

Like the BBC, the new multi-platform brand aims to draw children into the NRK Super universe by combining the internet, television and radio. Platform expansion, particularly online, is seen as a way of communicating with children in new ways that involve moderated participation and interactivity – split between younger children (Superbarn) aged 2-7 and older children (Superstore) aged 8-12. However in its online incarnation NRK Super goes well beyond what the BBC provides for children, offering a public service alternative to Facebook that invites children to register as community members, create profiles, and communicate with other members. Worried about safety considerations, the BBC has been more cautious. Other initiatives such as the interactive virtual adventure game, *Superia*, invite users to solve mysteries and create a narrative through their avatars. The fictional video diary *Sara* features a 12-year old girl who discusses her everyday problems on a blog. Children are invited to communicate with the fictional character (NRK 2009).

To be fair, of course the financial resources available to each organisation to embark on multiplatform initiatives vary greatly, not least because the population of Norway (5m) is less than a tenth that of either Italy or Britain. The volume of financial resources dedicated by the BBC to children's content allow more ambitious initiatives. According to *Screen Digest* (2007), the BBC spent £105m in 2006 on children's programming, compared to just £18m by RAI. In 2007-2008, the BBC spent £114.3m on all children's content, including £72.7m and £16.6m on CBBC and CBeebies television content respectively, and £6.1m on online and interactive content (BBC Trust 2009a: 49). The expectation is that the vast majority of BBC children's content should be produced in Britain, and a commitment to range, diversity and citizenship is reflected in stipulations that require, for example, the CBBC channel to broadcast 85 hours of news, 665 hours of drama and 550 hours of factual programming a year (BBC Trust 2008: 4-5).

The effectiveness of the Corporation's strategies was subject to a BBC Trust review, published in January 2009. Overall the Trust was approving of the Corporation's performance, underlining the BBC's significance as "a cornerstone of high-quality UK-produced children's content" (BBC Trust 2009a: 3) that was both distinctive as a public service and popular with children. The CBeebies channel with its high levels of domestic and non-animated content (76%) was singled out especially as a success in terms of quality, ratings, impact and parental approval, with a weekly reach among its target audience (43%) far exceeding that of its nearest competitor (30%) – even in multichannel homes (Ibid: 20). It also performed well online, engaging 1.5m unique users a month (Ibid: 15) with interactive content that deepened and extended children's experience of their favourite television programmes through games, activities and downloads.

The findings for CBBC were more mixed, reflecting older children's growing attraction to other channels and platforms in the digital playground. The

CBBC channel reaches 49 per cent of its target audience (Ibid: 5), but lags behind commercial rivals in cable and satellite homes, coming third after Disney and Nickelodeon (Ibid: 28). It has also found it more difficult to engage older children online, registering declining usage levels of 1.5m a month (Ibid: 6) as children exercise their participation and creativity elsewhere. Sustaining popularity clearly becomes more difficult as children get older.

Despite more limited resources and greater commercial pressures arising from mixed funding, RAI appears to play a role not dissimilar from that of the BBC as the main outlet, commissioner and funder of original Italian children's content. Profoundly aware of previous criticism that there has been little to distinguish its services from its commercial rivals, RAI has made more efforts to demonstrate its distinctiveness in children's content, but with questionable impact.

In a market dominated by US and Japanese animation, RAI does offer higher levels of national and European originated content, as well as non-animated programming. According to figures released by the European Audiovisual Observatory (2007: 186-187), 40 per cent of animation broadcast by RAI's three generalist channels in 2006 was of European origin and 14 per cent was produced domestically. More than half of RAI's children's output comprises programming other than animation, although in recent years RAI has also played a fundamental role in what has been described as the 'renaissance' of the Italian animation industry (*Screen Digest* 2006; Sarra 2006; Viola 2006). According to *Screen Digest*, in 2006 Italy was Europe's third largest animation producer behind France and Britain, producing approximately 86 hours annually between 2003 and 2005, compared to only two hours in 1997 (Ibid). The key driver behind this has been a licence condition since the late 1990s that requires RAI to invest 0.75 per cent of its total income in animation.

Distinctiveness through higher proportions of domestic and non-animated content does not seem to go hand in hand with popularity, however. Data (Starcom 2009 & 2007) suggest that RAI continues to be less popular with children than its commercial rivals. The main reason is likely prevailing cultural attitudes. Most Italian children, especially older ones, appear to be attracted first and foremost to Japanese and US animation, much like their parents who have little emotional attachment to RAI, having grown up with similar programmes on commercial television and on RAI itself. Turning these perceptions around has been challenging because RAI has a less than impressive tradition of serving children with distinctive content.

In comparison with RAI, NRK's efforts to combine distinctiveness and popularity appear to have been more successful, possibly because of continuity in provision over the years. True, viewing of NRK1's 6pm slot has declined considerably in recent years – from an average of 123,000 viewers in 2003 to 95,000 in 2006 (Kampanje 2007). However unlike RAI's digital channels and online brands, NRK Super appears to have quickly established itself as a major force in the Norwegian children's multichannel market, contesting market leadership with Disney. The channel has proven, like CBeebies, particularly popular among parents and younger children aged 2-6, with an audience share

of 35 per cent, but less popular with those aged seven to eleven where it only enjoys a 14 per cent share (TNS Gallup/NRK 2009). As with the BBC, there is a strong emphasis on locally produced content. NRK Super's schedule consists of a relatively high percentage (31% in 2008) of Norwegian first-run original transmissions, including drama, entertainment and information, in contrast to transnational channels which rely on US content (NRK 2009).

While each of the PSB companies in this study has demonstrated commitment to younger children, it is apparent they have not really *connected with older children*. This seems to indicate a truncated definition of childhood that fails to adequately bridge the transitional migration from services designed specifically for children to those designed for adults, the assumption being that older children will tend to consume media designed for adults. It is noticeable that all three organisations have concentrated their efforts on satisfying the under-twelves. There are different services for preschoolers and children aged 6-12, different platform offerings (television, radio, online) and different ways of accessing content (linear, non-linear, on-demand). Provision for children over twelve is far less comprehensive or specifically targeted.

Lessons for public service media

Comparing the BBC, NRK and RAI, this chapter has identified and discussed commonalities and differences between three public service media organisations' engagement with children. Historically, all three have followed a similar trajectory moving from PSB monopoly to competition, first with domestic commercial broadcasting and then with US-owned children's channels, before responding to the more recent transformations imposed by digitalisation and convergence.

The regulatory approach to children's content has, however, been quite different in these three cases. Norway has been significantly more conservative and restrictive than either Britain or Italy, as illustrated for example by its longer-lasting public service monopoly and early prohibition of advertising around children's programmes. Italy has applied considerably less regulation to the commercial television sector than either Britain or Norway, and RAI's position and ethos as a public service broadcaster has arguably been compromised by its reliance on advertising revenues.

Despite many and significant differences, this study does illuminate strategic features designed to enable public service broadcasters to function within a more complex media environment while also seeking to serve children according to the ethos and requirements of a PSB remit, which may or may not be clearly articulated. A key goal in this comparative study has been to identify lessons about how public service media might serve and engage with children in the future in ways that mark their content and services out as *distinctive* from commercial offerings in terms of both the public service mission and, crucially, as *popular* in terms of their ability to attract children's attention.

Analysis has shown that all three organisations have expanded activities for children on digital platforms, most notably by launching dedicated children's channels on digital television and expanding their online provision with audiovisual and interactive content. There are important differences, for instance in terms of the number of channels operated by each organisation, funding structures (until recently two of RAI's three children channels were rather dubiously available on subscription only), as well as the strategic importance accorded to the provision of online and interactive content.

The BBC and NRK have developed an integrated digital strategy, exploring new possibilities of engaging with children online by transferring their established television brands to the internet because they place value on the multi-platform experience. In contrast, RAI operates across platforms with different brands, an approach less likely to be effective in a crowded marketplace. What remains ambivalent, however, are the underlying motivations behind these expansionary multiplatform initiatives and whether they constitute something distinctive from all else available in the marketplace. A cynical view could posit that public service broadcasters are less interested in serving children as next generation citizens in new and distinctive ways on different platforms than in staking their claim to children as young media consumers.

Regardless of doubts about the motivations of public service organisations, it is clear that a strong commitment to domestic content represents one of the principal ways that PSB companies can still distinguish themselves from commercial rivals, particularly in a situation where domestic commercial broadcasters have reduced their commitments (as in Britain or Norway) and US-owned channels focus on US content. Of course, the extent to which public service broadcasters are able to sustain the origination of domestic children's content and services varies greatly depending on financial resources, with the BBC much better resourced than either RAI or NRK. Not only is the BBC the recipient of more public funding, but it is also a major player in the international marketplace, allowing it to secure co-production funding for more expensive series and to market children's properties globally through the corporation's commercial subsidiary, BBC Worldwide. It is no surprise then that both NRK and RAI supplement domestic productions with higher levels of imports, primarily dubbed animation, than the BBC.

However, it should also be noted that the BBC's ability to generate revenues from international sales and merchandising does pose some potential risks to delivery on its core purposes. The BBC Trust's 2009 report into the BBC's children's services suggested that the Corporation's policy of 'Fewer, Bigger, Better', which entails concentrating resources on fewer programmes (for example drama) in order to compete on quality rather than quantity, carries the risk of reduced range and more repeats, thereby diminishing the BBC's ability to meet the needs of a diverse audience (BBC Trust 2009a: 7-8). Equally the BBC's intention of raising commercial income twelve-fold from co-productions and secondary revenues by 2010 is seen as a potential risk to content range, particularly if the corporation concentrates on more commercially and inter-

nationally appealing content that may be less relevant to British audiences (Ibid: 58-59).

Without English as the “language of advantage” (Collins 1989), NRK’s productions have less export potential. Nevertheless NRK’s first-run original productions have undoubtedly played a key role in establishing NRK Super as a significant Norwegian alternative to US-owned channels. Investment in original productions legitimates NRK’s funding through the licence fee, and NRK has been able to demonstrate a competitive advantage over its US rivals by reflecting the everyday realities and national culture of Norwegian children. Yet the Norwegian market, because of its small size, has always had to rely on imports as well, particularly from the BBC and Disney, laying it open to criticism about popular US shows such as Disney’s *Hannah Montana* or *Little Einsteins*.

This study also indicates that European public service media are not serving children between 12 and 18 very well, admittedly one of the most difficult of publics to reach and the most resistant to institutional interests. At first sight a logical lesson to be drawn by public service media would be to strategically develop relevant domestic content and services for children and young adults aged 12-18 to fill a gap in the marketplace. For example in Britain the debate has focussed on how drama and factual television programming for older children and young teenagers might be more satisfactorily provided by producers other than the BBC (Ofcom 2007a). This debate does not fit well with current definitions of the child ‘public’ as broadcasters seek to limit their obligations to a more easily served and politically rewarding younger audience.

Moreover, any move into participatory and interactive services online for older children would certainly attract criticism that this is an area already well served by others. In this instance there are limits to what public service broadcasters are willing and also able to do. There may be a strong argument for multiplatform public service organisations to compensate for the declining scope of traditional content regulation and to ensure perhaps rather optimistically that all children, including older children, still have access to a wide range of quality home-grown content and services that inspire learning, creativity and participation. This is always closely connected to two features that are desirable but not always compatible – the need for public service media to be both distinctive and popular. Being distinctive will not necessarily attract children but being popular is not synonymous with distinctiveness.

Note

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Collaborative Financing and Production

Making Public Service Content at SVT Sweden

Maria Norbäck

Media scholar Denis McQuail said: “the contents of the media always reflect the interests of those who finance them.” (2000: 198). This reasoning has been a main justification for license fee funded public service broadcasting [PSB] because a broadcaster that is funded directly by the public will presumably broadcast content that serves audience interests above all other considerations. Unlike advertising funded broadcasting where programmes are an intermediate product to produce audiences that are packaged and sold to advertisers, fee funded PSB is said to afford greater opportunity to air controversial and challenging programmes that could offend advertisers or not appeal to audiences they desire (Robinson et al 2005). Such reasoning is a key component of argumentation legitimating the licence fee regime (Helm 2005).

Although the claim that fee funded PSB companies operate independently of either the state or commercial interests is rightly contested, among proponents it is nonetheless regarded as a corner stone in what facilitates PSB as a service to the public. Lowe (2009: 1) pointed to this relationship in writing: “It has often been remarked that ‘content is king’. Less often remarked is the fact that context is the kingdom. The mode of funding has decisive impact on which contents receive royal treatment, which audiences are courted, and which values are crowned”.

The point of this chapter is not to contest the degree to which PSB is in fact independent, but rather to consider complexities and complications characteristic when the public is no longer the *sole* financier of its contents and services. PSB firms are increasingly engaged with, and dependent on, co-production financial arrangements with independent production companies. As we will see, this is partly due to mandated quotas and partly to limitations on resources. The trend towards co-production is evident in northern Europe.

In 2008, 10 per cent of Swedish public television broadcaster SVT’s total programme budget was spent on co-productions, a doubling compared to 5 per cent in 2000 (SVT 2000; SVT 2008a). In Norway the share of co-production rose from 18 per cent in 2005 to 30 per cent of NRK’s programme spend in 2008 (NRK 2005; NRK 2008). Similarly in Denmark, the co-production share

of DR's total programme output (not including re-runs), although fluctuating somewhat, averaged 10 per cent during the past five years (DR 2003; DR 2008). And although the amount of co-produced programming (excluding news and sport) in Finland's YLE was the same in 2001 and 2008 at 21 per cent (YLE 2001; YLE 2008), this is a comparatively high percentage.¹ For the BBC in Britain there is a set quota requiring at least 25 per cent of total transmission hours be supplied by independent producers, and an additional 25 per cent can be outsourced as the result of competition between independents and in-house producers, what BBC calls the "window of creative competition" (BBC 2008; BBC 2009).²

To the extent that content character reflects the financiers' interests, how does a not-for-profit PSB company deal with commercial independents with their for-profit interests? This chapter deals with that issue in the context of Sweden's national public service television provider, SVT. Here co-financing refers to practices where content is financed by PSB firms together with external financiers; co-production refers to collaborative production of such content. Based on research for a doctoral dissertation at Jönköping International Business School, the chapter reports on how programme makers in such projects discuss issues related to control, independence, rights, and contractual relations keyed to co-financing programmes, among other things.

The data for the study was generated through reflexive interviews (Alvesson 2003) of one to two hours each with the persons involved in making five collaborative projects: one interactive children's series, one children's drama series, one documentary film, one science documentary series and one current affairs "reality-documentary" series. The persons interviewed include independent producers and SVT employees in positions like executive producer, producer, project manager, contract negotiator, web editor and web responsible, commissioner, financier, script writer and dramaturgic editor; all in all 45 people, of whom some key persons were interviewed several times. In addition to the interviews, the author engaged in participant observation in relevant meetings and at the recording site of one of the productions. She also reviewed archive material that includes policy documents, how-to manuals and four annual volumes of the SVT internal magazine to contextualise understanding of collaborative productions.

The empirical data illustrates a discussion about PSBs' commissioning of co-financed and co-produced content from commercial TV producers; a topic of importance for many PSB firms in Europe and elsewhere. This discussion will be of interest to sister licence fee funded public broadcasters engaging in similar co-financing and co-production practices because PSB development in the Nordic countries has been following much the same pattern for changes in the broadcasting landscape (Hadenius et al 2008; Lund and Edelvold Berg 2009), and given that Sweden and SVT have significant influence in the region.

Pressures for co-financing and co-production

In recent decades PSB companies in Europe have been enmeshed in tremendous changes in the media landscape. The days of monopoly are long gone, resulting not only in growing competition with private broadcasting companies but also increasing reliance on independent production companies for PSB content. As in so much else, the BBC led the way when it began commissioning programmes from external, commercial enterprises in the mid-1980s after the Peacock committee introduced the 25 per cent independent quota (Hutton et al 2005; Küng-Shankleman 2000; Peacock 1986). Other PSB operators including SVT and its Nordic colleagues were pushed to this in the late 1990s consequent to updates related to the Television without Frontiers directive (EU 1997). At this point there was already a budding industry of independent producers in Nordic markets following the introduction of commercial broadcasting a few years earlier. This happened in Denmark and Finland in the late 1980s and in Norway and Sweden in the early 1990s (Hadenius et al 2008; Engblom and Wormbs 2007).

It is probable that commissioning from and co-financing of content with independent companies will be of increasing importance in future PSB operations. The reasons are several, some originating from external sources and others from inside the organisations. One of the most important factors is economic. Increasing financial pressure is partly the result of political resistance to increasing, and often even maintaining parity, in the amount of public funding for PSB organisations. It is also partly the result of escalating costs for content and talent. Resistance to increasing the cost of licence fees or other forms of public funding (tax-based) is of course congruent with the wider ideological shift to market ideology beyond the European media field. The idea of publicly funded media has become increasingly questioned in recent years. Bardoel and d'Haenens (2008: 340) are persuasive that “as soon as PSB became the exception rather than the rule, its activities and funding, if not its very existence, began to be considered as a disturbance of ‘normal’ market relations”. Few politicians see opposing this trend as a position likely to engender much support.

The proliferation of public service platforms and channels, a condition that explains the re-formulation of PSB as public service media (see Lowe and Bardoel 2007), accounts for why the volume of needed content has grown rapidly at the same time as competition from the private sector. This has fuelled increased prices for broadcast rights to sporting events, programme formats, and media stars. The cost of new expertise in online environments and mobile platforms for design and operation should also not be underestimated (Lowe 2009). Financial strain prompts PSBs to look to the market for new ways to fund and produce content (Collin 2005; Reimer et al 2004). How these processes work will be elaborated later, as well as implications for both the content and the organisations involved.

Beyond the financial strains driving co-production and co-financing, regulatory requirements are another significant influence. Within the EU and among member states (at both levels) there is desire to strengthen the market for

independent audiovisual production for both cultural and economic reasons. The EU has set a quota for broadcasters requiring that at least 10 per cent of transmission time (or ten per cent of the programming budget) be for programmes of independent European origin, meaning producers unaffiliated with broadcasting companies (EU 1997). As already noted, in many countries the national quota for independent production is higher.

There are also reasons internal to public service organisations. Being able to utilise a spectrum of options for outsourcing, from fully externally produced content to collaboratively produced content, provides for flexibility in operations. This is keenly important given budgetary stress when broadcasters are downsizing and right-sizing to avoid excessive expenditure on in-house personnel and technical resources (SVT 2008c). Such costs are lower when contracted from the outside on an as-needed basis (Reimer et al 2004). This is also important because demand, supply and competition are cyclical. For example, a year with Olympic Games strains sports programming budgets. In such years a public broadcaster might put less money into drama productions, a costly genre, whereas in other years quality drama can be prioritised. From an operational management perspective, the volatility of production cycles favours external production (Aris and Bughin 2009). In addition, talent and expertise in professions such as directors, scriptwriters and stars who possess coveted skills often prefer to work freelance. If PSB companies want these people to create for them, they must offer short term deals since they seldom have the possibility to employ such people for extended periods.

In addition, by sourcing ideas and expertise from independent companies PSB firms try to facilitate a greater diversity of views and portrayals. For a company like SVT where the average employee is almost 50 years of age and has been with the company for 17 years (SVT 2008b), the use of independent producers is a way to incorporate a wider variety of voices and social groups (SVT 2008c). Co-productions are strategically useful for providing a relevant and up to date offering of programmes, and one way in which PSB can create relationships and form partnerships with the public (BBC 2008). Lastly, as the findings from this study indicate, another reason for increased reliance on external production sources is the increased bargaining power enjoyed by PSB programme commissioners. There is a shift in power relations when ordering content from independents as a demanding customer rather than ordering in-house from colleagues and other bosses, which typically requires more compromises and, perhaps, also greater diplomacy skills (Hutton et al 2005). But it is important to understand that all of this happens in a context that is characterised by colliding institutional logics that become highly visible in collaborative financing and production arrangements.

Among researchers studying public management there is consensus that in developed markets, a major shift discernable since the 1980s is the growth of “new public management” [NPM]. At base this trend is a shift from an administrative bureaucracy function to one that looks to the private sector for concepts and techniques, and wherein the introduction of quasi market forms

and competition is characteristic (du Gay 2004; Dunleavy and Hood 1994; Greener 2009). NPM introduces a view of organisations as “a chain of low trust principal/agent relationships (rather than fiduciary or trustee-beneficiary ones)” (Dunleavy and Hood 1994: 9). The development and popularity of NPM has been in parallel with what has been described as a re-direction of Western politics and ideology, from a left-wing focus on public administration and centralisation to a right-wing focus on market liberalisation, privatisation and decentralisation (March 1995; Spicer and Fleming 2007).

For employees in public organisations, NPM has introduced a new “institutional logic” (Thornton and Ocasio 2008); i.e. the principles by which members orient to organisations as paradigms of perception and standards for conduct. The redistribution of power and growing importance of managers over trade professionals (e.g. journalists), and of market value over public value, are fundamental to this form of market logic (Greener 2009), a logic which puts serving the individual customer before serving the collective and posits that market success is the arbiter of quality, rather than something innate to the product or service. In many traditional public organisations, including especially public service broadcasters, the introduction of market logic and associated practices collides with the traditional public bureaucracy logic (Friedland and Alford 1991). This collision has often created confusion and resistance (Spicer and Fleming 2007; Townley 2002).

In the study reported here, practices of co-financing and co-production are the setting for investigating how these colliding logics play out in a characteristic PSB organisation and how individual actors deal with them in the work of commissioning and producing programmes.

SVT Sweden

The national public television broadcaster in Sweden, SVT, was established in 1956 and is today (contrary to most other PSB firms) a separate organisation from Swedish public service radio (called SR). SVT is financed by a compulsory licence fee which, in 2008, produced €400 million (3.937 million SEK). SVT employed about 2300 people in the period (SVT 2008b). The firm has three main television channels: SVT1, a general channel with about 20 per cent share of viewing time; SVT2, a channel focussed on current affairs and cultural and factual programming with about 10 per cent share of the viewing time; and SVTB, a children’s channel with about 2,5 per cent share of viewing time (MMS 2008; SVT 2008c). In addition, SVT has complementary services including on-line streaming where all programmes are available for 30 days after broadcast transmission and an interactive internet page, as well as niche TV channels devoted to current affairs, documentaries and news. Its main competitors are advertising funded channels, mainly TV 4 and its sister channels which have about 24 per cent share of viewing time, and both TV3 and channel 5 with nine and eight per cent viewing share respectively (MMS 2008).

On an average day (2008) SVT broadcasts 66 hours of content, both national and regional. Excluding re-runs, 64 per cent are in-house productions, 2 per cent are “production outlays” (commissioned from independents but financed by SVT), 2,5 per cent are co-financed and co-produced with Swedish production companies, and 0,5 per cent are co-financed and co-produced with foreign partners. SVT bought 31 per cent from external sources, and out of this 3,5 per cent of Swedish origin (SVT 2008a).

Table 1. SVT's share of productions and acquisitions of its broadcasted output (%)

Hours of first time broadcasted content	
Production	
In-house productions	64
Production outlays	2
Swedish co-productions (co-financed)	2,5
International co-productions (co-financed)	0,5
Acquisition	
Swedish acquisitions	1
International acquisitions	30
Total time broadcasted	100

This means that in relation to the programme budget, where around 10 per cent is spent on co-productions, the in-house productions are cheaper and found in categories such as news and live broadcasts from parliament: these kinds of programmes take up more than their budget share in the TV schedule. If one instead looks at the other genres apart from sports and news, usually called “general production” (*allmänproduktion*), 30 per cent of that programme output is co-production (SVT 2008a). Co-productions are typically for costly products such as drama and documentary programmes. To produce one hour of drama is generally regarded to be four times as expensive as an hour of cultural, factual or educational programming, and ten times as expensive as news and current affairs (Tunstall 1993; YLE 2001).

Programmes produced for commercial broadcast enjoy certain financing schemes that are unavailable to many PSBs. A chief example is advertising funded, or direct sponsorship programming, where an advertiser pays for their products and services to be featured in the programme (product placement), or even for an entire programme because it promotes ideas or activities that are in the funder's interests or part of a brand development strategy. A 1996 Act governing radio and TV in Sweden (Radio och TV lagen 1996/844) states in chapter 6, paragraph 4 that: “Programmes that are not advertising may not promote commercial interest in an improper manner”. The SVT remit also prohibits broadcasting advertisements and makers are urged to behave “impartially and objectively”.

The modes available for finding co-financers for SVT productions vary somewhat from genre to genre and type of programme within each genre.

But a common aspect in deciding to jointly finance content is that there must be some characteristic that justifies for-profit investment in the programme. It must have attractive commercial potential in the form of DVD sales, format sales, cinema and festival sales or broadcasting rights in other countries and markets, for example. Or it may be attractive in fulfilling some other criterion of interest to a financier, some of which are not primarily interested in monetary return on investments – for example film and TV shows financed by the state to ensure the production of cultural products that would otherwise not be produced by market forces. There are also geographic funds that aim for production of programmes and films in a specific region to boost turnover of capital and labour there. If a programme has none of these qualities it will be hard, even impossible, to find a financier outside the company. Thus, SVT must finance it themselves out of internal resources provided by the license fee. The conclusion to be drawn is that only *commercially viable* content will find co-financers. Thus, if co-financing be regarded as part of a solution to stressed budgets, the public broadcaster must acknowledge that must steer production in directions that will be, in a broad sense, commercial products.

Control over process, content and rights in co-productions

An important difference between in-house and collaborative productions for SVT programme makers hinges on the amount of control that can be exercised over the process and outcome. One decisive aspect has connection to SVT's independence from commercial interests. It is argued that a responsibility of the SVT project manager is making sure the production company realised no products or services for free or at discount in return for exposure in the programme (what the Americans call 'payola' in the radio industry). Thus, the SVT project manager must have insight into the production and full access to all documentation and contracts the production company signed with participants and suppliers. The SVT employees in the study saw this control function as a vital part of the project management job since it was essential to keep public service "unpolluted" – to maintain distinctiveness in comparison with SVT's commercial competitors. This is critical to guarding the integrity of SVT in legal terms, competitive terms and with regard to the corporate brand.

Many independent production companies usually work for commercial broadcasters and are used to 'savvy' financing deals with suppliers, which provide access to goods and services in exchange for exposure in programmes. In many cases commercial broadcasters demand such constructions to lower their share of programming budgets (van den Brink 2009). When these producers work with SVT they suddenly meet opposition; in this setting such deals are absolutely forbidden. Although in most situations it is easy for a SVT project manager to decide where to draw the line in what broadcasting regulations denote as "improper promotion of commercial interests", in some cases the boundary is unclear. During the study of SVT co-productions several incidents

demonstrated difficulties judging whether concrete situations would violate the regulation – much to the confusion and distress of the collaborating independent production company. In one drama production a lead character wore a t-shirt with a characteristic pattern (the recognisable brand of a clothing manufacturer). In another production the cast was seen riding in a caravan of new Volvo cars, all together displaying the manufacturer's product range. In a third production the programme host dressed in a jacket with the distinctive Burberry plaids. In each case, decision-making was complicated over where to draw appropriate lines.

SVT control over co-productions, and how much control should be exercised, is thematic across programme makers' narratives. Their views differed, however, depending on which sector they belonged to. SVT programme makers saw the exercise of control as a way to ensure "public service" quality for viewers. Many SVT programme makers stressed the high expectations the public has for SVT regarding accountability, expectations that commercial broadcasters were not nearly as subject to. The pressure on SVT to always act responsibly in the interest of viewers meant that SVT should have the right to control the content of their productions:

But I absolutely think, we are the broadcaster for crying out loud, of course we shall have the right to "wash" the production any way we want. But then we still have to do it in a way that we think is good. That the viewers think is good I was going to say, that's what I mean (SVT project manager of current affairs series).

The comment by this project manager – that he and his colleagues are the interpreters of viewers' wishes and demands and guarantors of what is in the interest of the public – reflects what many SVT employees seem to take for granted, and is clearly congruent with the traditional public logic. They do not appear to spend much time questioning this "preferential right of interpretation", nor problematising it.³ For critics of PSB, this aspect, which Tunstall (1993) called "Producer Self-Service Broadcasting" where the producer's own taste is the dominate influence behind content (in contrast to audience, consumers or advertisers), is seen as evidence of the patriarchal and elitist ethos of PSB (Borg 1993) where the Reithian heritage is very much alive (Küng-Shankleman 2000).

SVT programme makers sometimes prefer to denote 'control' in milder terms, however, describing such as having influence on the content or an overview of the production process. In their understanding this was the prerogative of the broadcaster who is legally responsible for the content and whose reputation is on the line. In fact, independent producers understood SVT's need for control over the programmes they broadcast in their channels. Viewers in general are assumed by programme makers in both sectors to ascribe to the broadcaster the general responsibility for and accountability of all programmes on their channels. But although independent producers could sympathise with SVT's

need for control, many still thought the company demanded too much over both content and process. As one independent producer said:

It is as if they [SVT] still live in the days when they full-financed. [They have] stopped full-financing but demand the same things. And then you could think that if you [the production company] can afford it that: well, ok, we won't get full-financing but then at least we have the right to decide. But now you have neither the right to decide nor full-financing, which is pretty fascinating (Independent producer of science documentary series).

This independent producer highlights the notion that since other financiers put resources into a programme they should have a say proportionate to the amount of contributed financing. The feeling that SVT conducts business as if they were the sole financier, when they are not, causes irritation and stirs resentment.

Among independent producers as well as SVT's employees there were sentiments referencing PSB's lack of sensitivity to the fact that commercial producers must make a profit from production contracts both to earn a living and to invest in future productions. An SVT commissioner argued that the organisation had not yet come fully to terms with what it meant to collaborate with independent production companies driven by the profit motive. He saw a fundamental difference between the way SVT and the commercial producers conducted business, and argued that SVT must learn to accept the rules of the market:

Corporations make money and we at SVT engage in not-for-profit operations. So we have kind of a hard time to relate to this, that if [a production company] makes a production for us they have to make money out of it, otherwise they have no reason for their existence. And we must learn that is ok. That it costs more, because if somebody is going to make money, if you have a budget of 25 million and somebody shall make a 20 per cent profit, that is five millions going down the drain you could think. But those five millions is what the production company has as investment capital in their next programme series (SVT project manager of current affairs series and commissioner of current affairs programming).

PSBs engaging in co-production and co-financing need to overcome their sometimes strong cognitive-cultural barriers which are often deeply rooted in organisational history and mission. They must accept that the logic of the commercial market is quite different, and these realities must also be fairly accommodated by media policy-makers. Such a shift in an organisation's "world view" will often take some time and no little effort to achieve.

A vital aspect SVT and the co-financers and co-producers spend a lot of time discussing and energy negotiating is how the rights to the content in co-productions should be divided. When several financiers are involved the task of dividing the proceeds is the heart of the matter. This indicates differences

between owning control of process and owning content of products. The independent producers in this study were of the collective opinion that SVT's generic contracts were too stern on keeping "too much" of the rights to the content. These rights were kept long after the programme had been broadcast and were, according to independent producers, of little use to the broadcaster. They were, however, of use to independent producers seeking to capitalise on what they had done previously. As one independent producer explained:

It is much better if the rights stay with the producer. ...[because] preferably I would like to utilise what I have done. Say that I have made a film about lake Aral, then I would like to know that that film – at least sometime after it gone it's first round – is mine so I can use it and do a follow up some way. That is a very important part of being an independent producer (Executive producer of science documentary series).

From SVT's perspective, their increased broadcasting windows put great demands on having full access to content. Today most PSBs have several TV channels as well as on-line streaming sites where their material should be accessible for catch-up and repeat viewing after broadcast. For SVT, as for PSB colleagues elsewhere, it is important to have rights to "their" programmes so they can show them as audience demand and corporate strategy dictate. Accessibility of content for viewers was framed by SVT programme makers as a service to the public and part of their public service mission. Viewers' licence fees paid for the content and they should be able to access it. For the negotiators at SVT responsible for agreements about financing and rights in all co-productions, part of their job is seen as making sure viewers get full value for their license money. This meant they could not be too soft when negotiating deals with independent producers. At the same time, however, another part of being public service was treating co-financers fairly. For the negotiators this meant they could not be too hard by using their negotiation leverage to take advantage of independent producers' often weaker bargaining positions.

The issue of dividing various rights to co-produced material will certainly be of growing importance as more PSB content is produced and funded in collaboration with independent companies. If licence fee payers no longer fully fund programmes, it will be difficult for the PSB firm to justify having full and eternal access. The technical development and proliferation of platforms have now made content easy both to distribute and re-purpose. This has led to increased demand from the audience for access to content whenever they want, as well as the freedom to do with it as they please; a development which collides with co-financers' claims on the material rights for purposes of commercial exploitation. Expect this issue to be a thorny dilemma in the years immediately ahead. It comes down to a debate over the rights of the public to and for public service media.

Discussion

This chapter has considered issues related to the co-financing and co-production of public service programming that rely on commercial production houses. The issues are relevant to the debate about public service funding, PSB identity, and future operations in partnered collaboration with external funders and independent producers. This is not only or simply about PSB, but rather about the dynamics of comprehensive media markets where PSB is no exception (remembering Bardeol and d'Haenens 2008).

Firstly, it is clear that co-productions where several actors are co-financing programmes is only suitable for programming that is commercially viable. Programmes lacking profit-making value will not be financed by the market place. This need not be a problem for the public service mission; in fact one can argue that it actually increases the quality of co-financed programmes in the sense that the market-based sensibility steers decision-making to favour topics and approaches with wider appeal. However if achieving wider appeal requires sacrificing artistic quality or toning down culturally distinct features, the matter appears in a less positive light with regard to the distinctive aspects of the mission and mandates that ground PSB. But even so, co-productions may not be problematic as long as there are enough in-house production resources for these companies to produce sufficient non-commercial programmes to satisfy artistic and culturally distinct objectives. The important issue for discussion would then be whether the quota of co-produced programmes threaten production of the range and volume of non-commercial programmes deemed necessary for fulfilling the public service mission (Hutton et al 2005).

Secondly and specifically in relation to the insertion of market logic in public service broadcasting organisations, many independent producers as well as some PSB employees think these organisations lack sufficient understanding of, or at least sensitivity to, the “rules of the market place”. In their understanding, SVT employees are ‘stuck’ in a mental schema conditioned by the legacy of monopoly when a public logic alone ruled the corporate paradigm. Independent producers describe the symptoms as indicating that SVT is living in the past when they had the capacity to fully finance all their productions and consequentially could have full control over both the production process and the finished product. As this study shows, however, co-production and co-financing challenges for PSB programme makers to adopt and adapt *the business* of TV production.

Thirdly, co-financed productions put the independence of license-fee financed PSB in the spotlight. If McQuail is right, as noted at the outset, how are PSB firms to keep control over content when others are (co-)funding it? How much control is fair? Over which aspects? For how long and under what terms of use? These questions become pressing in PSB firms across Europe, and likely beyond. The discourse of independent producers indicates discontent with much of SVT's control policies and practices, seeing them as a misuse (perhaps even an abuse) of their position in the market place. This will almost certainly be an aspect

of “market distortion” discourse in the years ahead. Still, as a media scholar it is easy to sympathise with public service broadcasters’ desire to retain control over their programmes: they are under heavy and quite critical scrutiny from the public, from political governors, and from commercial media actors and their lobbies who are keen to limit their operations for self interested reasons.

PSB managers know that any misuse of their programmes or other content could too easily taint their reputation of independence; something that in the long run could prove disastrous for the public service brand and for their organisational mandates. The balance which PSB as an organisation must maintain is between behaving in the interest of licence payers and behaving in ways that are fair for their business partners in independent production companies. That fairness must be embodied in the activities of employees, commissioners and project managers. The discourse in this study indicates this balancing act is not easy. Thus, being fair and balanced is difficult not only for PSB journalists but also for programme makers trying to live their working lives in the context of contradictory institutional logics, and for managers who are ultimately responsible for the stewardship of the enterprise as a service to the public.

Notes

1. The data is taken from the companies’ annual reports and public service reports and gives an overview of the trends of co-production and co-financing in these countries. However, the way the data is reported differs somewhat across countries, which makes a full comparison difficult. For example the categories can entail only national or both national and international co-productions, and the output can be reported in hours of total first time broadcasted programming or share of total programme budget.
2. The way the independent sector has developed in the UK, where the independent market is both an older and much larger market (both for national and international productions) compared with Nordic markets, has lead to a somewhat different situation. The UK independent market can be described as having two “sets” of independent producers: the big profit driven companies (“the top twelve”) which have the power to dictate terms and prefer to produce content that can be formatted and exploited internationally (often low-risk programmes in long-running formats), and the many small lifestyle producers who have little power to dictate terms in their relationships with broadcasters. In the UK the situation reflected in this chapter – with the PSB dictating the terms of co-productions – seems to have changed after the introduction of the 2003 Communications Act, which requires that independent producers be able to retain ancillary rights to the programmes they make. This, argues the BBC, has transformed both the independents’ business model and the balance of power between the independents and broadcasters. (Hutton et al 2005). In the Nordic countries there are still relatively few large independent producers.
3. Ien Ang (1991) is seminal for her analysis of “the audience”, arguing that the audience becomes a discursive construction with less to do with the “actual” audience than with discourses about viewers that are reflecting and reinforcing the interests of broadcasters.

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“With the Support of Listeners Like You”

Lessons from U.S. Public Radio

Alan G. Stavitsky & Michael W. Huntsberger

Too often it feels to American media scholars that Europeans view the experience of public broadcasting in the United States as an aberration, a view that neatly neuters any imperative to take the case seriously. Europeans see PSB in the USA as an interesting novelty at best, and not infrequently as an irrelevant anomaly. In comparison with many European contexts the limited amount of public funding, the highly localised nature of its organisation and orientation, and the lack of a nationally owned public broadcasting conglomerate make the American case unique. But to acknowledge difference is not to justify any notion that the American case is insignificant to Europe.

The character of social and financial relations linking U.S. public broadcasters to their audiences in a dependency condition is especially important for European PSB given historical problems with insularity and lack of sensitivity to public preferences. It might also have implications in its mode of direct financial support from audiences given that the licence-fee regime is in trouble in much of Europe and the outlook for its preservation is uncertain. The American approach to PSB has of necessity always more strongly encouraged interdependence between the service and the public, and increasingly so since the mid-1980s as federal funding has been slashed and public broadcasters had to secure financial resources from direct supporter contributions and underwriting. The disposition to strengthen audience involvement has become even more pronounced with developments in digital platforms, particularly in public radio. This is not to say that all is sweetness and light in the American experience; it is to say there are pointed lessons Europeans should find useful in the current climate.

The path to public broadcasting

Interdependence between audiences and public broadcasters flows directly from the historically decentralised structure of American broadcasting, a structure which has also made funding a more uncertain and complex element than in

much of Europe, especially the grand old firms of northwest Europe. Whereas national broadcasting systems dominated the development of European radio (Avery 1993), in the United States it was developed as a patchwork of independent stations licensed to communities of all sizes and kinds. The context rather insisted on this approach given that radio had to ultimately serve a comparatively quite large 9.6 million square kilometres of territory under conditions of economic depression in the 1930s and in a society long and strongly favouring private commercial approaches to handling most civic needs. Several forces gave rise to this approach, most notably a government policy of localism that was central to conceptions of community life prior to the rise of contemporary urbanism. In association with the ingrained U.S. commitment to the concept and practice of market dynamics as the best way to organise and develop social services, localism brought together the forces of capitalism and communication. As Stavitsky (1994: 20) observed, "Within the local marketplace unfettered capitalism would lead to efficient exchange of goods and services, while unfettered discourse would yield the 'truth,' the best ideas to animate the democratic process". Accordingly, formative broadcasting policy in the United States drew upon utopian notions of radio as a tool to provide civic information and enhance democracy at the local level in a federal system.

The fundamental structure for the regulation of broadcasting in the U.S. was established in the Radio Act of 1927, provisions of which authorised licensing locally owned stations to serve the "public interest, convenience, and necessity" of host communities (U.S. Congress 1927). Perhaps surprising to many, the Act expressed only passing concern for the role of the then-nascent commercial radio networks, known as "chains," although of course these would quickly come to dominate American broadcasting. Though the law restricted chains to ownership of only a few stations, a few were enough as they owned big stations in major cities. They produced and distributed the bulk of mass-appeal entertainment shows that others rushed to access via affiliation. This amounted to abandoning much of the community-oriented programming that policymakers had sought to encourage in the localised structure, which in turn undermined the effectiveness of U.S. media policy from the outset because the nature of the broadcast service could scarcely be influenced by regulating local stations when market power rested with national networks (first NBC and later also CBS). Thus, the principles in policy and co-related ideals for realising its objectives were undermined by the practices of its systemic organisation. This raises interest in observing the degrees to which various structures and practices of PSB organisation in European countries either facilitate or obstruct audience participation at varied levels of developmental, managerial and production practice.

In the early days of U.S. *public* broadcasting, however, networking was not generally an issue because these non-commercial stations, primarily licensed to educational institutions, lacked funds to produce and distribute programming (Frost 1937)¹. Public broadcasters instead aired locally produced educational and cultural fare for small but typically loyal audiences, thereby cementing bonds (Stavitsky 1993). Nonetheless, from the 1920s through the 1960s these public

stations weren't especially concerned about accountability to their audiences and in this sense were little different from their European counterparts. Similarly driven by an enlightenment mission that defined their ethos, American public broadcasters also conceived their audiences as pupils they were mandated to elevate and educate. They were not sensitive to audience desires and in very many cases eschewed general tastes as crass populism. As in much of Europe, American PSB practitioners drank from the same cup the elixir of enlightenment, if not necessarily to the 'dregs'.

Because U.S. public broadcasters ceded 'popular' programming to the commercial sector and received most of their financial support from sponsor universities (which held the licences) or philanthropic foundations (such as Ford) they did not feel beholden to listeners and viewers. They conducted little audience research (Stavitsky 1995). The pedagogical relationship with audiences shifted markedly, however, in the years following passage of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 (U.S. Congress 1967). For the first time American public channels received federal funds to support their non-commercial status. With this change public broadcasters were impelled to justify this expenditure from the public treasury – to strengthen the view of such as an investment. The 1967 Act established the Corporation for Public Broadcasting [CPB]. This private non-profit corporation funded by tax revenue allocates federal funds to stations, producers and others involved in the public broadcasting system. In this, too, the American approach was in some ways 'ahead of the curve' as we view trends in Europe today where top-slicing and contestable funding, or whatever formulas pass muster in their respective contexts, seek to open funding to agencies beyond traditional (and not so traditional, as with C4 in the UK) PSB companies. Subsequently, CPB began commissioning audience studies to demonstrate to Congress that Americans tuned in to – and valued – public broadcasting.

Although audience research was initially used for such 'representational' purposes, even mainly rhetorical as has been the case in much of Europe over the years, some producers (particularly in public radio) realised that the data could be used to assess audience satisfaction and programme quality to focus developmental efforts and, ultimately, to increase audience size (Stavitsky 1995). Research consultant Tom Church sought to merge the public broadcaster's service mission with the commercial broadcaster's mission to build audience: "While non-commercial stations may define success in more esoteric terms than profit, the bottom line for all radio stations is that a mission...cannot be achieved if there are no listeners" (Radio Research Consortium 1986: 1). Many public broadcasting managers and producers initially resisted the application of audience research "as marking the ascendance of market considerations over (their) social and cultural imperatives" (Stavitsky 1995: 177). Garrison Keillor, the popular host of the renowned radio programme, *A Prairie Home Companion*, told a trade publication: "I think there has been an influx of commercial people....Guys in suits with charts and pages of numbers. I think that this is a pretty dreadful development" (Thoughts from Lake Wobegon 1994: 58).

Eventually, however, the advocacy of Church and other consultants, together with supportive public broadcasters, prompted a 'research revolution' in American public radio during the late 1970s and 1980s. That its depth and breadth was revolutionary was stimulated by budget exigency when the administration of President Ronald Reagan, with its so-called 'Reagan Revolution', threatened to eliminate federal funding entirely. Public broadcasters realised they *must* depend much more on private support in two forms: 1) direct contributions from "listeners like you", and 2) corporate funding via quasi-commercial underwriting announcements – akin, in fact, to the way programming was funded in the early days of private commercial broadcasting in the U.S. Audience research became increasingly sophisticated as a result; it changed from simple interest in *how many* people were listening to concern about *which kinds* of people were listening in terms of characteristic demographics, personal beliefs, attitudes, and buying behaviours. For example, a 1991 survey found that National Public Radio [NPR] news listeners were 47 percent more likely than the national average to own an expensive Acura automobile (Who is Listening 1992). Such data was valuable to public radio in the work of selling underwriting sponsorship to corporations such as Acura, and for identifying the interests of affluent listeners likely to support these stations with direct financial contributions.

Another force influencing the broadcaster/audience relationship was the emergence of a plentiful marketplace of national and regional programming in public radio. NPR was established as a result of the 1967 act not as a network but as a programme supplier, to provide the confederation of stations with news and cultural shows. Federal support also allowed for creation of a national satellite distribution network in 1980, permitting stations to interconnect and share programmes. No longer were stations limited to carrying programmes produced locally. As programme schedules increasingly incorporated regional and national productions, the public broadcaster's conception of localism changed (Stavitsky 1994; 1995). It had become strategically important to "superserve the core" – those audience members who spent most of their listening time with your station and would be most likely to support it financially.

Traditionally localism had been considered in exclusive geographic terms (i.e. cities, states, regions), a pattern in keeping with U.S. government policies in general. Over time, access to national programming, such as NPR news with its high production values, coupled with research data indicating that listeners enjoyed national shows, prompted schedulers to include more shows produced elsewhere. This led to a redefinition of localism in social (rather than spatial) terms; it was important to serve listeners sharing social interests, tastes and values. Of course commercial broadcasters had long mapped and mobilised audiences in this way, pursuing demographic niches with centralised programming. But for ideological and economic reasons this was a new approach in American public radio. With this definition of localism came larger audiences and increased private support. In fact, U.S. public radio has boomed in popularity and influence in this first decade of the new century. In markets from Boston on the East Coast to Portland on the West, public radio stations have

outperformed commercial competitors in key dayparts and in desired audience segments. With such close connections to local listeners, U.S. public radio is well positioned in its growing effort to reshape its relationship to its audience as digital technologies enable expanded opportunities in the emerging media marketplace.

The forces and pressures that caused American public broadcasters to become more sensitive to audience relations and to re-orient their missions during the 1970s and 1980s are remarkably similar to those that buffet European PSB today, not only the fear of reduced public subsidy but also the need to compete effectively in an expanded marketplace. The same essential pattern of emphasising the strategic and tactical uses of audience research have been evident in many European PSB firms in recent years as they, too, has moved from a view that utilised research results mainly for defensive and rhetorical purposes to uses for developmental purposes. It can be argued that the Americans have been dealing with these salient issues for decades longer because of historically lower levels of federal support.

PSB advocates in the U.S. regularly focus on *how little* public money goes into public broadcasting there, especially in comparison with military, health-care, and other public treasury obligations. In 2009, for example, the CPB, which allocates federal dollars to the PSB system, received an appropriation of \$400 million. With the U.S. Census estimating the national population at just over 304 million, federal support for public broadcasting comes to about \$1.32 per capita, a fraction of the amount provided by most European governments (Lowe 2009). This raises significant questions about the 'publicness' of PSB in the USA. For fiscal year 2007, the most recent PSB system data available, tax-based funds from the U.S. federal treasury made up less than 17% of revenues to the American public broadcasting system. Additional tax-based funds from cities, states, and other public authorities made up just over 22% of revenues. Thus, more than 60 percent of system revenues – nearly \$1.8 billion – originated from *private* sources. The majority of this, more than \$714 million, came directly from listeners and viewers becoming "members" of public stations via personal donations (i.e. "contributions").

In addition, public broadcasters received over \$450 million in charitable contributions from corporations and businesses (Corporation for Public Broadcasting)². This dependence on the financial largesse of often large and sometimes controversial corporations, including Wal-Mart, Monsanto, and Exxon Mobil, has sometimes been at odds with the values and sensibilities of individual contributors and consequently a source of contention (Simon 2009). As an example, in recognition of oil company underwriting, some critics have remarked that the acronym PBS – Public Broadcasting Service – stood for the Petroleum Broadcasting Service.

This history of tenuous funding and marginal status has played a determinant role in making American public broadcasters more successful than their commercial counterparts in responding to the tastes, habits, and interests of their audiences. In particular, American PSBs have led the way by integrating

new digital content forms and distribution strategies more broadly and more successfully than the commercial sector. Their success can be attributed in large measure to their consistent focus on the redefinition of localism, as well as an emphasis on promoting public service via audience engagement, i.e. *public participation*. Indeed, the very weakness of PSB's market position would seem to have fuelled their interests in a strategy of experimentation and entrepreneurship. On their own initiative, some public broadcasters undertook experiments with forms of digital distribution as early as 1994 (We Got Here First). Because U.S. commercial interests drove the overall direction of broadcasting policy and technical development in the 1990s, public broadcasters were not party to the prevailing movements toward ownership consolidation and digital implementation. Consequently, public broadcasters had more freedom to test new platforms, and in some instances paved the way for the convergence of digital technologies that has reshaped audience expectations, attitudes, and behaviours in recent years.

Innovation in American public radio

We treat three case examples of innovation in American public radio. The case of Oregon Public Broadcasting [OPB] reflects an attempt to bring the listening audience into the programme-planning process, and to make programming catalyse a conversation in which the public broadcaster acts as content gatherer, facilitator, producer, and active participant. The account of WFMU demonstrates how a radio service can reach listeners in circumstances where the broadcast signal is inaccessible, and how radio programming can serve as a starting point for a realm of more wide-ranging and personal social experiences. Finally, the inspiring story of WWOZ represents the importance of secondary platforms at times of crisis and the power of localism, conceptualised in terms of taste and values, to engage audiences.

Oregon Public Broadcasting

From a warren of offices, studios, and support facilities in the city of Portland, Oregon Public Broadcasting operates a statewide network of more than 50 full- and low-power television, FM and AM radio services. Established originally as an agency of the state of Oregon, OPB has operated as an independent non-profit agency since 1993. Ratings for OPB radio and television services are among the highest in the United States for public broadcasting, and the agency is the third-largest producer of programming for U.S. public television. With the assistance of capital funding from state government, OPB recently completed the transition of its television facilities from analogue to digital transmission (Bass 2007). The scale of broadcast programming and operations creates special challenges for the organisation as it integrates digital communication capacity into the agency's public service mission.

As Vice President for New Media, part of Lynne Pollard's mandate is to change workflow processes to accommodate the production needs of digital platforms. In some cases this requires preparing existing media files for online distribution, or providing server space and streaming capacity to make broadcast radio and television content available to online audiences. Such tasks are now considered a routine part of the processes in television and radio production. Some content adds components that are available only on line³. For example, the daily hour-long program, *Think Out Loud*, is accompanied by a real-time blog moderated by the producers. In the course of each broadcast comments from the blog are made available to the programme hosts and guests in a manner similar to 'traditional' listener phone-in calls. The programme's web site invites audience members to contribute ideas for future topics and guests, and to add comments to the blogs of previous programs (Think Out Loud).

According to Pollard, the programme currently registers about 25,000 page views per month and averages 40 posted comments per day. Some contributors post more than once per programme. Those listeners who post frequently help OPB break through the monolithic conception of the mass audience, emerging as unique voices and engaged participants in a broadcast-plus-online community. Access is controlled through registration, but discussions generally proceed without interference from the moderator. In a few instances where the substance has taken up particularly divisive topics, Pollard has observed that participants seem to be perfectly capable of moderating each other, posting reminders in a manner that upholds the values of democracy and civil discourse. Pollard describes OPB's online audience as "extraordinarily well mannered," and says members regularly express an appreciation of the mission of public service broadcasting "in a very authentic way".

In addition to streaming its broadcast FM news and information format (including content from National Public Radio), OPB offers a stream of hosted Triple A (Adult Album Alternative) music over its website and digitally distributed HD-radio channel. It's accompanied by a blog that provides a text-based forum for the programme host to introduce topics related to the music content. However, response comments from the audience are not limited to these topics and drift into personal conversations between the host and individual listeners. Additional audio content includes downloadable MP3 files of performances recorded in the OPB studios and links to podcasts from OPB and NPR.

Pollard says that the pattern of online listening to OPB runs counter to the classic "two humps" pattern of morning and evening "drive-time" broadcast listening. Online use rises in the late morning and early afternoon, falls in the late afternoon, and rises again in the evening as people return home and log-on to computer networks. This pattern suggests that radio remains the basic utility for the OPB audience during peak commuting hours (i.e. periods when mobility matters most), while online reception is more characteristic for stationary listening. Pollard cites anecdotal evidence from fundraising activities and listener communications to suggest that a sizable portion of OPB's online audience is located beyond the geographic limits of its broadcast signals.

The market for digital content has opened OPB to direct competition from its most prominent partner because National Public Radio is distributing directly to listeners online, and on satellite channels. OPB is responding by trying to recast itself as a unique, multi-platform content provider. OPB's digital initiatives anticipate a marketplace in which geographic boundaries no longer pose barriers for consumers. Interestingly, the loss of this traditional audience boundary is pushing OPB to develop a niche in the worldwide market that expresses a unique regional character. By creating and supporting interactive channels, OPB is allowing listeners to share in and shape a real community of people who share the values expressed in that regional character, and the values of public service media.

OPB's digital initiatives are hardly unique – radio stations in both the private and public sectors are undertaking similar projects in Europe and the U.S. What distinguishes the efforts of OPB is the degree to which the broadcaster has tapped into the culture of its community. The pre-existing combination of thoughtful programming and well-mannered listeners provides a strong basis to extend the station's conversations with the audience beyond the studio and on to new platforms where interactions are no longer constrained by the clock. OPB's success with *Think Out Loud* shows that public radio listeners want more depth and breadth in their discussions of local issues and concerns. This in turn is reflective of the culture of the city and the region served by OPB, which share a long history of popular democracy and grassroots involvement. While commercial broadcasters often focus their interactive capacities on instant polls and consumption opportunities, the case of OPB shows that the PSB audience wants to engage in more substantive and meaningful interactions.

WFMU New Jersey

Broadcasting at 1450 watts from East Orange, a gritty New Jersey suburban community, WFMU has served metropolitan New York City and the lower Hudson Valley with an eclectic mix of freeform programming since 1985 (About WFMU; Freeform Timeline). When the station mounted its first web site in 1993, station manager Ken Freedman anticipated that the internet could emerge as a new platform for delivering audio content to existing and, hopefully also, new audiences. WFMU began streaming its broadcast programming in 1997 and today supports seven live audio streams using five different codecs (WFMU Audiostream). In 2005, the station inaugurated fifteen hours per week of live programming exclusively for internet distribution; in 2006 it instituted streams for mobile devices using the Palm and PocketPC operating systems. Freedman believes WFMU was the first broadcaster to stream content for the iPhone in 2007⁴.

According to Freedman, WFMU has a weekly cumulative (i.e. unduplicated) audience of 200,000 listeners. Of these, 50 percent listen online at some point during the week and 15 percent listen online exclusively. Thus, the webcast primarily provides an alternate channel for the broadcast audience: Freedman

estimates that 60 percent of online listening occurs within the geographic boundaries of the station's FM coverage. Anecdotal data suggest that many of these listeners are capturing the stream while they are at work. WFMU currently distributes thirteen broadcast programmes as podcasts, and two programmes available only as podcasts (WFMU Podcasts). Although webcasting and podcasting have made the station's programming available through more channels and in more circumstances, WFMU has turned to newer technologies mainly to take advantage of their interactive capabilities.

Established in 2004, WFMU's *Beware of the Blog* serves as an ongoing forum for station staff and listeners to share interests in music and popular culture. Moderated by Freedman, the blog mirrors the station's freeform programming, offering discussions on a wide range of categories including music, art, current events, religion, real estate, travel, and books (WFMU's *Beware of the Blog*). Bloggers include a handful of listeners who regularly post on a variety of topics. For the most part the blog provides a multimedia forum for station staff members to share their interests with that portion of the WFMU audience that chooses to participate. Freedman observes that the nature of interactivity in the blog provides a distinct social experience that is related, but not integral, to the listening experience. Those listeners who choose to participate may be listening concurrently to WFMU programming, but concurrent listening is not a necessary condition of participation in the social experience.

A more complex relationship between the station and its audience can be observed in the WFMU programmes that offer real time interactive playlists online (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. WFMU interactive playlist

Playlist for Tony Coulter - September 9, 2008

Tuesdays Noon - 3pm on WFMU 91.1 fm 90.1 fm [wfm.u.org](#)

I play rhinoceros and psychedelic folk.

Listen live to WFMU:
[\[Rebroadcast\]](#) | [\[Windows Media Player\]](#) [\[24k AAC+\]](#) | [\[32k MP3\]](#) | [\[128k MP3\]](#) | [\[40k Ogg\]](#)
[Visit our audio streaming page for help](#)

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September 9, 2008

Now playing:
"Sibelius in His Radio Corner" by INGRAM MARSHALL from *Ikon* and *Other early works*

Artist	Track	Album
SABOTEN	Accel.	Saboten
SUBVERSE	Chance Romance	V.A.: Starforce Studios: Compilation 1
FETUS PRODUCTIONS	What's Going On	Fetalmania
DIETER MEIER	Madman	7"
ROBYN HITCHCOCK	Mr. Deadly	Invisible Hitchcock
UNDERGROUND LIFE	Noncurrence	7"
CHANCE OPERATION	Image Dance	Chance Operation (12" EP)
DER JUNGE HUND	Lotze Vuorode Urtime	Alte und Idioten Wirden Niecht Viel Gefragt
DER JUNGE HUND	Ghalla Ghalla	Alte und Idioten Wirden Niecht Viel Gefragt
SRP	Marianne's Tietet	SRP
NOTORISCHE FLÜHE	Breschnew Rap	7"
BERURIER NOIR	Vive le Rau	Joyeux Merdier (12" EP)
THOMAS LEER	Private Plane	7"
TRÉPASSÉS, W	Ice Cream Man	Kinder EP

Stations comments

[Pause comment auto-updates](#)

From: Kyle
Good day sir
Tue. 9/9/08 12:04pm

From: Brad Ronald
Tony C and the place to be!
Tue. 9/9/08 12:08pm

From: Dead Corporate
Eyes
gather round, now, for some f'd up tunes on Tuesday.
Suffice ya least week.
Tue. 9/9/08 12:10pm

From: Sean Daily
Fourth comment! Woo hoo!
Tue. 9/9/08 12:18pm

From: clueless but excited
can someone tell me about this show at all?
Tue. 9/9/08 12:19pm

From: Dead Corporate
Eyes
suffice it to say, it's THE BEST! I'll let Tony do the
Tue. 9/9/08 12:23pm

Post your comment to this playlist

Your name:

Email address (optional, only seen by WFMU DJ):

Your comment: (no HTML, please)

Available from a link on the station's home page, a web page for the current broadcast programme provides a frame on the left for the playlist. The producer

periodically updates the playlist throughout the programme and the updates appear on the web page in real time. Frames on the right side allow listeners to engage in real-time text-based conversations with the programme host and other audience members. The producer serves as the discussion moderator. Generally, conversations revolve around programme content. However, Freedman observes that participants are not obligated to limit their comments to programme-related topics and do engage in conversations that are completely unrelated to the programme. In this manner, the interactive playlists use the entertainment and information capabilities of broadcasting to provide the basis for the interactive experience of social media.

The recent history of WFMU demonstrates the value of experimentation with new technologies, and new approaches to the audience. The station's early experiences with streaming provided the basis for distribution on a series of increasingly accessible, powerful, and user-friendly platforms in succeeding years. The knowledge gained through these initiatives provided a substantial advantage in the rapidly growing market for online audiences. Concurrently, WFMU anticipated widespread interest in these technologies by appealing to early adopters, first as listeners, and subsequently as participants in an increasingly varied array of programming and program-related services. These developments followed from two aspects of the federal promotion of local service: 1) local operational control provides WFMU with the autonomy required to pursue innovative approaches to technology and program services, and 2) WFMU online channels reach listeners at work and in other environments where it is impractical to receive the FM signal.

The experience of WFMU demonstrates how broadcasters can use digital channels to alter the social relations of broadcasting. In the new reality of multi-platform delivery, receivers have the opportunity to establish direct contact with each other, suggesting and pursuing conversations of their own choosing, and exercising new degrees of control over the nature and content of messages. Ken Freedman compares this new relationship to hosting a party: Guests are invited to come in and listen to music, but as the party progresses the conversations move naturally to a variety of topics. This sort of spontaneity and participation is impossible with traditional transmission and reception. The case of WFMU demonstrates how public broadcasters can take advantage of existing capacities to move beyond broadcasting and into the channels of social media.

WWOZ New Orleans

Since December 1980, listener-supported non-commercial WWOZ-FM has served the New Orleans, Louisiana, area with a 24-hour mixed music format. Recognising a special responsibility to the population within its 4000-watt signal radius, the programming on WWOZ has always reflected the area's unique musical heritage, featuring jazz, blues, rhythm and blues, brass band, gospel, Cajun, Zydeco, Caribbean, Latin, Brazilian, and African genres (WWOZ Facts).

Throughout its history, WWOZ has broadcast live from the area's clubs and events, including Mardi Gras and the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. The station has cultivated strong and productive relations with local musicians, among them the city's most recognised recording artists (WWOZ History).

In 1995, WWOZ became the first public radio station in the United States to stream its programming on the internet in real time (Freedman 2008). Over the years the station refocused its approach to localism in social terms rather than only geographic, concurrently developing an international audience for its programmes (Freedman 2007). Because programming relied on numerous live performances and a substantial archive of its own recordings, WWOZ was less reliant on copyrighted materials and thus less vulnerable to complications associated with international restrictions on copyrights and performances than other streaming services. The extension of the station's programme service beyond its signal coverage through online channels opened the sounds and culture of New Orleans to listeners around the world, and proved especially valued by former residents of the city who had relocated – in many cases outside the U.S. For these expatriates, WWOZ's programme streams and associated online content offer "an opportunity to experience the grace of New Orleans, that redeem[s] what seem[s] at times the mortal sin of leaving" (Folse 2008). Similar expressions of appreciation are attributed to locations abroad, especially in northern Europe (WWOZ Forums). These forums provide the opportunity for listeners to interact directly with programme producers, staff, and each other through lines of communication unavailable to the typical broadcast audience.

Strong connections with the online audience were proven crucial to the survival of WWOZ in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. In conjunction with the general evacuation of New Orleans, WWOZ shut down its FM broadcast service to allow staff and volunteers to escape two days before the storms arrived. By Wednesday August 31, as the extent of the damage became apparent, station manager David Freedman recognised that the prospects for the future of the station's broadcast service were uncertain. Freedman worried that "the roots culture of New Orleans" that connected the station and its listeners was "itself greatly imperilled" (Freedman 2005).

Assistance in keeping WWOZ in contact with its audience came from staff at a sister public station, WFMU (described above). This channel offered to host "WWOZ in Exile," a continuous stream of audio programming from a local server linked to the WWOZ home page. Initially the stream consisted of CD tracks by New Orleans artists. But in the following days and weeks, WWOZ producers – *and listeners* – sent old reel-to-reel tapes and cassettes, and emailed MP3 files, of past programmes to WFMU. Gradually, producers began creating new programmes wherever they could secure production facilities. Recorded messages from manager Freedman, delivered by telephone, explained the circumstances of WWOZ in Exile for listeners and this rallied support for the station's continuance. For more than a month the WWOZ in Exile webcast was the sole connection between the station and its audience – those listeners who had always tuned in to the webcast and, even more crucially, for broadcast

listeners scattered across several states in the devastation that followed the hurricanes. The web site provided a central point of contact for musicians, producers, and listeners, and a collection point for more than sixty thousand dollars in donations (Troeh 2005).

The online presence superseded the broadcast service as the station's primary platform. When WWOZ began its streaming service in 1995 American radio broadcasters did not anticipate the emergence of social media. However, it was clear at the time that digital communication technologies were contributing to the development of powerful networks in many industries. The subsequent emergence of the World Wide Web provided the open standard necessary to utilise these networking capabilities to distribute media content to the public. The lessons learned from these early experiments allowed WWOZ to integrate new platforms into its broadcasting operations, and rely on them entirely when the broadcast service became inoperable. The lesson of Hurricane Katrina, in David Freedman's view, is that "we have entered the post-broadcast era" (Freedman 2008). The station's broadcast signal is now the secondary service: Since the fall of 2005, the primary services provided by WWOZ have been available on line. The experience of WWOZ demonstrates the primacy of shared tastes and values, rather than geography, in the "post-broadcast" era.

Potential lessons for PSB elsewhere

Broadcast radio has always been "a clearly defined medium with certain established social and cultural functions and distinct delivery networks". Broadcasters have relied on signal coverage and scheduled programs to be the foundation of their services. Their audiences have been described by geography and behavioural routines. This approach relied on historical conceptions of market and regulatory structures, and assumptions about technology that have turned out to be "too simplified and optimistic" (ibid).

The public broadcasters presented here have been open to other conceptions of public service. None of these cases is uniquely experimental or innovative: Other broadcasters in the U.S. and Europe are undertaking similar projects. What is notable in each of these cases is the degree to which these stations and their audiences depend on one another as supporters, contributors, sponsors, and members of communities that are established, nourished and sustained by public service media programming and other content. This interdependence has been born of the American tradition that is rooted in historical commitment to localism, and of economic necessity. These cases provide evidence that conventional public service broadcasting can be transformed into a multiplicity of public media services that engage and satisfy audiences in a variety of ways that are fundamentally about *communication* and not only transmission (Bardoel and Lowe 2007).

In the United States, this transformation has been made possible in large measure by the degree of independence afforded to licensees and stations un-

der the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, on the one hand, and their increased interdependence with audiences on the other. CPB grants have been used to foster entrepreneurial ventures, encourage investment in new technology, and promote experiments in audience engagement and participation. Encouraged to seek and acquire funds directly from audiences, businesses and foundations, stations have been empowered – indeed required – to develop strong connections with those people they intend to serve. The re-conception of localism as a social identity (rather than an exclusively geographic one) has allowed U.S. public broadcasters to target particular sectors of the audience that have historically been unserved or underserved by mass media, and to develop new service strategies to provide audience members with a variety of ways to engage public broadcasting – and each other – both locally and globally. This has significant revenue implications, of course. Research has shown that the more useful and meaningful public media channels are to a listener, the more likely that listener is to provide financial support, and the more likely it is that corporations will want to be associated with that public media organisation through underwriting (Stavitsky 1995).

Douglas (1999: 23), Breiner (2003: 95), Reader (2007: 655), and other scholars have drawn on Anderson's theory of the "imagined community" to describe the relationship of broadcast radio providers and audiences. While the imagined community provides a powerful metaphor for identity formation and social awareness, it also demonstrates the limitation of the disseminative nature of broadcasting: Broadcasting is about transmission and affords no opportunity for receivers to engage in direct contact with each other. While transmission systems have migrated to a variety of digital platforms, most radio broadcasting continues to operate within the long-established paradigms of one-to-many social relations and discrete delivery systems. The cases presented here demonstrate how the tools, processes, and practices of digital communication redefine *community* by breaking through the historic barriers to interaction, as cultural content and expertise are stored and retrieved across distributed networks of producers and agencies. Brecht conceived the ideal radio system as "an apparatus of communication...a vast network of pipes that organises listeners as suppliers" (1932). The technologies of digital communication allow public broadcasters to extend their mission to move much closer to Brecht's ideal of interactivity.

This new reality is common to both American and European PSB and is arguably fundamental to the shift to PSM (i.e. beyond broadcasting). The historic differences and legacies are central to understanding the nature and scope of public service broadcasting, but need not constrain the strategic development of services in the present, or in the years to come. Public service broadcasters on both continents possess knowledge, tools, and techniques to provide diverse, accessible, and responsive public services to citizens when the need for such is greater than ever. Media scholars on both sides of the Atlantic can draw valuable lessons from their experiences in efforts to involve the public *both in and through* public service media.

Notes

1. Prior to the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, noncommercial nonsectarian broadcast licensees in the U.S. were generally designated "educational" stations.
2. As an incentive for private support, donations and contributions to public broadcasting organizations and authorities are often exempt from federal taxes.
3. Comments by Lynne Pollard from unpublished interview with an author, August 6, 2008 (Greenville SC).
4. Comments by Ken Freedman from unpublished interviews with an author, October 19 2005 (Eugene OR); and March 27 2008 (Atlanta GA).

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The importance of reconceptualising what public service broadcasting [PSB] should be and do in the 21st century is a profile issue in media policy and strategic development planning. There is growing recognition that public participation is a necessary if problematic aspect of the transition to public service media [PSM]. This recognition correlates with a deepening understanding that the viability of the enterprise depends on the people paying for it and using its services.

This fourth RIPE Reader demonstrates how the historic insularity of PSB companies is changing in efforts to restructure and revitalise the enterprise. The substance features further development of research presented in the RIPE@2008 conference in Germany, titled Public Service Media in the 21st Century: Participation, Partnership and Media Development.

The authors included in this volume query what is required to achieve participation-readiness in many interdependent facets: strategy revision, organisational restructuring, retooling production processes, and redefining professional identities. Approached in two sections, the first focuses on theories and trends and the second on practices and performance. The contents document the significance of engaging the public in, with and through media services, arguing the crucial importance of the Public in Public Service Media.

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