PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY

NORDICOM

RIPE@2021 Edited by: Manuel Puppis & Christopher Ali

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Manuel Puppis & Christopher Ali (Eds.)

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ISBN (PRINT): 978-91-88855-74-9
ISBN (PDF): 978-91-88855-75-6

This work is Open Access and available to read free of charge and without registration requirement at www.nordicom.gu.se/en/publications/public-service-medias-contribution-society

DOI: 10.48335/9789188855756

CITE THIS WORK:
Puppis, M., & Ali, C. (Eds.). (2023). *Public service media's contribution to society: Ripe@2021*. Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756

PUBLISHED BY:
Nordicom, University of Gothenburg
Box 713
SE 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden

www.nordicom.gu.se/en

COVER BY: Karin Andén
GRAPHIC DESIGN BY: Henny Östlund

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Preface

Public Service Media's Contribution to Society is the tenth RIPE volume published by Nordicom. This collection is sourced from the discussions and presentations that took place at what was supposed to be the RIPE@2020 conference in Geneva, but which, due to a global pandemic, transformed into the RIPE@2021 virtual conference. The outbreak of Covid-19 made it impossible to host a physical conference on the premises of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) in Geneva that would have also provided an opportunity to celebrate RIPE's 20-year legacy and the seventieth anniversary of EBU. Nevertheless, the organisers at the University of Fribourg carried on their work and hosted the best possible conference given the circumstances. Making papers and video presentations available on-demand before the conference and meeting live only for discussion and interaction proved to be a format worthy of RIPE, as it allowed for high-quality exchange while at the same time preventing video-conferencing fatigue. Moreover, the virtual format allowed scholars and public service media (PSM) practitioners from around the globe to participate in fruitful discussions.

The conference's and book's theme – contribution to society – is a very topical one. PSM organisations across Europe and beyond are increasingly under pressure. Due to digitalisation, media use continues to rapidly change, with streaming services and online platforms gaining importance and making it harder for legacy media to hold their ground. Moreover, with users and advertisers shifting to search engines and social networks, the business model of newspaper publishers is at risk. This crisis of newspapers has fuelled attacks on PSM, as their online activities are perceived as a market distortion that makes it even harder for commercial media to succeed. In addition, many policy-makers are highly critical of PSM due to a belief in the efficiency of market solutions or – especially in the case of right-wing populist parties – for

Puppis, M., & Ali, C. (2023). Preface. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 6–8). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-p

political reasons. As a result, both PSM's role in a digital environment and its funding are under scrutiny, placing PSM organisations in a seemingly constant defensive position. Following attempts to demonstrate the "public value" of PSM, the discussion is now turning towards the concept of PSM's "contribution to society". The RIPE@2021 conference and this volume provide an opportunity for media and communication scholars to critically discuss the analytical value and usefulness of this concept.

As editors of this volume, we have many persons and organisations to thank for their support. The local organising committee for the RIPE@2021 conference consisted of Etienne Bürdel, Stefano Pedrazzi, Manuel Puppis (all from the University of Fribourg), and Roberto Suárez Candel (formerly at EBU). The programme committee consisted of Maria Michalis (Westminster University, London), Marko Milosavljević (University of Ljubljana), Julia Pohle (WZB Berlin Social Science Center), Manuel Puppis, Roberto Suárez Candel, and Hilde Van den Bulck (Drexel University, Philadelphia). Both committees were essential for the focus and quality of the conference. Obviously, all presenters, session chairs, respondents, and reviewers made important contributions to the success of the conference and the book. A special shout-out goes to the conference's keynote speakers, Abraham Bernstein (University of Zurich) and Gilles Marchand (Director-General SRG SSR). We are also grateful to EBU, and especially to Florence Hartmann, for sponsoring the conference's best paper awards, and to the former and current management team of the International Association of Public Media Researchers (IAPMR). We thank the authors of the chapters collected in this volume for their important contributions. Moreover, we would like to express our gratitude to Hilde Van den Bulck, who kindly agreed to write a concluding chapter – a commitment that involved an in-depth engagement with all the other chapters contained in this book. Last, but not least, we thank Nordicom for their support during the preparation of this volume. The community of PSM researchers is also grateful for the professional support that Nordicom has provided since the first RIPE volume was published twenty years ago in 2003. Nordicom and RIPE have mutually benefitted from a relationship that has produced the most comprehensive series of scholarly publications about PSM in times of digitalisation. We especially would like to mention the Open Access that Nordicom generously provided for the entire series, which has enabled researchers around the world to engage with the knowledge and insights produced by the many scholars who have contributed over the last two decades.

We hope that you, dear readers, enjoy this volume and that the chapters inspire you to think about PSM's contribution to society in new and fruitful ways. While this is the last anthology with Nordicom resulting directly from a RIPE conference, the work of PSM researchers, RIPE conferences, and

publication activities will continue. Most importantly, as PSM researchers, our aims remain unchanged: good research coupled with exchange between scholars and practitioners to better understand the role of PSM in society, both today and tomorrow.

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March 2023

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Contribution to society and public service media's neoliberal dilemma

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ABSTRACT

While many public service media (PSM) organisations remain in strong positions in their respective markets, digitalisation and convergence have led to new market constellations and changes in media use. These changes have led to fierce debates about the legitimacy, the remit, and the funding of PSM in the digital age. With its contribution to society concept, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) is trying to address these challenges. Based on new institutionalism in organisation studies, we argue that the contribution to society concept is bound to fail if it only reinforces the neoliberal discourse that dominates media policy today. Instead, a more ambitious interpretation of the concept would offer PSM the opportunity to shift the policy debate away from a market-based discourse and towards one based on PSM's core roles and responsibilities.

KEYWORDS: contribution to society, public service media, new institutionalism, media policy, neoliberalism

Puppis, M., & Ali, C. (2023). Introduction: Contribution to society and public service media's neoliberal dilemma. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 9–28). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg.
https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-1

Introduction

Launched in 2015 by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the contribution to society initiative was designed to measure and augment the impact of public service media (PSM) organisations in their respective media systems. The concept is intended to help PSM organisations "respond to criticism, renew their legitimacy, and bolster their political, market and social support" (EBU, 2015a: 11). Framed primarily as a communication campaign, PSM organisations "must improve their communication, becoming more […] influential within the decision-making and bargaining processes that define their remit and resources" (EBU, 2015b: 3). According to the EBU, this requires not simply reporting on the fulfilment of their remit vis-à-vis policy-makers, but also assessing their impact in a comprehensive way and addressing market players and citizens directly with an "inspiring and meaningful narrative about the value and benefits of PSM for the whole of society" (EBU, 2015a: 11). In other words, PSM organisations are instructed to take control of the narrative of PSM, and in doing so, improve relationships with three pivotal stakeholder groups: market players, citizens, and policy-makers.

This focus on PSM organisations' relationship with society and different stakeholder groups echoes earlier research that has been seminal in conceptualising PSM more clearly. In contrast to approaches that try to define PSM based on either the content of the programme remit or their non-commercial organisation, Søndergaard (1999: 22) proposed understanding PSM via their relationship with society: "The concept of 'public service' primarily refers to a set of relationships between electronic media and the society they operate in and are mandated to serve". Hence, what PSM are – and what they are supposed to offer – depends on the particular conditions of society, and since society changes over time, the remit and organisation of PSM must be renegotiated time and again. More specifically, scholars have argued that PSM should maintain relationships with the political system, private competitors, and the audience (Jarren & Donges, 2005; Moe, 2007). Indeed, the societies in which PSM operate are rapidly changing due to digitalisation, transnationalisation, and commercialisation. In Europe and beyond, these developments have led to heated debates about the need for PSM, their appropriate role, and funding in the digital era. While it is uncontroversial in communication research to claim that public service broadcasting must develop into PSM (Lowe & Bardoel, 2007), the (more) relevant stakeholders of public service tend to be less convinced: The support for the idea of public service broadcasting and media has weakened among policy-makers; given their financial problems, many private media perceive PSM and their digital services as a threat; and audiences have partly moved away from (private and public) media to online platforms like social networks and video-sharing services.

As a consequence, PSM organisations and their European trade association, the EBU, have started to develop new concepts to legitimise their role in

society. Already in 2004, the BBC began to tout its "public value", redefining a term that had been developed for the management of the public administration in the US (Collins, 2007; Lowe & Martin, 2014). This eventually led to the introduction of "public value tests" in several European countries (Donders & Moe, 2011). In the meantime, the discussion has turned towards PSM's contribution to society, with recent attempts by PSM organisations to persuade stakeholders as to their relevance, necessity, and legitimacy. Yet, as we argue in this chapter, in order to be meaningful for society and to have a transformational effect on PSM organisations, the contribution to society concept needs to be more than just an instrument of legitimacy management employed by organisations under increasing public pressure. While communicating the many valuable contributions of PSM is important, the task at hand is not solving a communication problem. The concept is useless if it is limited to the question of how to better sell the contribution of PSM to citizens instead of guaranteeing that PSM *serves* the public interest and makes a contribution worth paying for and talking about.

Communication scholars can make a valuable contribution not just to research but to PSM practice by critically discussing the analytical value and usefulness of new concepts that are circulated in industry and policy-making. Indeed, scholars tend to quickly pick up on new concepts like public value or contribution to society. Unfortunately, given the innate tendency of scholars to be defensive of PSM, critical analysis is sometimes not prioritised. To be sure, we subscribe to the statement that media are "not just any other business" (McQuail & Deuze, 2020: 235). Even in markets that do not fail from an economic point of view, media policy intervention is still needed. Commercial media and platforms mainly follow their own economic interests and treat audiences as a commodity sold to advertisers, with implications for the content produced and (algorithmically) distributed as well as for the cultural experience of citizens and the fulfilment of society's democratic needs. PSM has an important role to play in a public sphere transformed by digitalisation (Habermas, 2021).

Having said that, scholars of PSM need to be mindful of unacknowledged and uncritical normative assumptions of the importance of PSM. Many in the realm of PSM research implicitly believe that PSM is a crucial component of a healthy, diverse, and pluralistic media ecosystem, but such normative impulses should be checked and acknowledged. As critical theory teaches us, it is alright to take a political stand, but such normative commitments should be transparent (van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). More importantly, they should be complemented by systematic, transparent, and planned research design and methodologies that generate trusted findings, be they qualitative, quantitative, or mixed (Just & Puppis, 2012; see also Van den Bulck et al., 2019).

This RIPE volume aims to offer such a critical perspective on PSM, its contribution to society, and the attempts at using the concept for legitimacy

management. In this introductory chapter, we offer a theoretical background for analysing the contribution to society concept and a critique of its current limitations. First, we argue that new institutionalism helps to better understand the use of communication in media policy-making in general and in the governance of PSM in particular (Ali & Puppis, 2018). Second, we argue that the problem the contribution to society programme hopes to address is much more than just a communication problem; however, the EBU and PSM organisations mainly consider the concept as a strategic device of legitimacy management instead of embracing necessary organisational change. Third, we scrutinise the appropriateness of the current iteration of the concept to successfully make the case for strong PSM. We argue that the contribution to society initiative is bound to fail if it reinforces instead of challenges the neoliberal discourse dominating media policy (Freedman, 2008), and thus may lead into what we call a neoliberal trap. Instead, we argue that a more ambitious interpretation of the concept would offer PSM the opportunity to escape that trap and shift the media-policy debate. In doing so, we point out how the contribution to society concept is an "empty signifier" that could – if filled with an alternative vision of PSM – help alleviate neoliberal predominance in media policy-making. To conclude the chapter, we emphasise the need for critical PSM research and provide an overview of the chapters contained in this volume.

The role of communication in public service media governance

According to Black (2002: 164), "regulation is in large part a communicative process". On the one hand, traditional command-and-control regulation ("the stick") and incentives ("the carrot") are complemented by communication ("the sermon") as a soft tool of governance (Black, 2001; Vedung, 1998). Regulators not only make use of private regulatory conversations (Black, 2002), but also of public communication via the media to send messages to regulated firms (Coglianese & Howard, 1998; Deacon & Monk, 2001; Puppis et al., 2014; Yeung, 2005, 2009). On the other hand – and more relevant here – communication is an important element of how regulated firms respond to regulation (Ali & Puppis, 2018; Black, 2008). Companies make use of lobbying and public relations in their attempts to influence policy-making and prospective regulation.

Yet, *media* policy is different. While media always distribute chances for attention (and influence) with their decisions to cover or not to cover a certain political issue (Habermas, 2006), in media policy, they are political actors in their own right (Page, 1996; Pfetsch, 2003). And these actors can try to influence media policy not only by way of lobbying and public relations but also by utilising their own media for furthering their private interests.

This raises serious questions regarding the media coverage of media policy. According to McChesney (2008: 350):

> The corporate media are in an ideal position to control the public perception, or lack thereof, of any possible debate regarding the control and structure of the media. The media have shown two basic responses to efforts to challenge their legitimacy. First, they simply ignore the issue or provide it minimal coverage. […] Second, the […] media distort the issues to suit their own purposes.

This influence of media over the media-policy agenda and the debate of rivalling political solutions has been labelled as media-policy bias and media-policy silence, amplifying fears of a neoliberalisation of media policy (Ali & Puppis, 2018; Freedman, 2008, 2010).

And yet, media policy, political communication, and journalism research have shown little interest in the role of communication in media policy-making (Jarren, 1998). The few existing studies have almost exclusively focused on private media and their coverage of media mergers (Beck, 2001; Hackett & Uzelman, 2003; Kemner et al., 2008; Kweon, 2000; Müller & Donsbach, 2006) and broadcasting regulation (Gilens & Hertzman, 2000; Pratte & Whiting, 1986; Schejter & Obar, 2009) that affect them directly, or on the funding and online remit of their PSM competitors (Löblich, 2011; Maier & Dogruel, 2016; Udris et al., 2021; Weiß, 1988). These studies provide evidence of the existence of media-policy bias. In particular, press coverage is often critical of PSM, their online remit, and their funding.

However, PSM organisations themselves have not been at the centre of attention when investigating the influence of regulated firms on media policy-making and regulation via communication. While several studies have shown that PSM organisations are actively involved in media policy-making and often successful in defending their position (see, e.g., Sundet & Syvertsen, 2021; Van den Bulck & Donders, 2014), they do not focus on the role of communication. To be sure, we would not expect PSM to make use of their own radio and television channels to pursue their self-interests, as commercial media apparently do – simply because they are under heightened public scrutiny from their competitors and policy-makers alike. Yet, communication is part of their repertoire in advocating their position in the policy-making process and this, we believe, deserves scholarly attention.

New institutionalism in organisation studies is particularly well-suited for analysing the interdependence of media policy-making and media organisations as well as the role of communication in governance, as it helps to understand the recursive relationship between organisations and their institutional environments. Briefly, sociological institutionalism emphasises that it is important for organisations to conform to their institutional environments to gain legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Suchman, 1995). These

institutional environments shape organisations by way of taken-for-granted assumptions and collectively share understandings, normative expectations, and moral obligation, as well as coercion and the threat of sanctions in case of nonconformity (Scott, 2001). Conceptualising media governance as part of the institutional environments helps to understand how adhering to rules generates legitimacy for media organisations and that they are conforming to rules not only because of their punitive quality (i.e., coercion and sanctions) but also because of their normative and cultural-cognitive quality (Edelman & Suchman, 1997; Puppis, 2010). At the same time, sociological institutionalism draws our attention not only to the influence of governance on media organisations, but also to the way these organisations respond to rules and try to influence media policy-making to induce more favourable regulation. The relationship between organisations and their institutional environments is a recursive one, and organisations influence the process of institutionalisation both strategically and unintentionally (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). In this vein, Oliver (1991) has suggested distinguishing among five strategic responses of organisations to their institutional environments in order to manage their legitimacy: acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance, and manipulation. Communication is seen as pivotal in such legitimacy management (Black, 2008). In short:

> [Media organisations' communication is] at the same time influenced by institutional environments and a strategic device used to manipulate perceptions of the media's activities and performance. Communication can be used to conceal non-conformity behind a façade of acquiescence, to reject requirements or to lobby for a change of regulation. (Ali & Puppis, 2018: 280)

To better understand the use of communication by media organisations in this recursive cycle (put differently, how they depend on existing ideational structure to communicate their ideas and how they reproduce and change these structures) discursive institutionalism (Alasuutari, 2015; Ganter & Löblich, 2021; Schmidt, 2008) is helpful as it sheds light on the communicative process of generating, deliberating, and legitimising ideas. Thus, it allows us to trace the relationship of discourse and policy over time, contributing to a better understanding how policy is made (Ali & Puppis, 2018).

Such an institutionalist approach emphasises, first, that the governance of PSM is part of the institutional environments of PSM organisations; second, that PSM governance has a cultural-cognitive, normative, and punitive quality; third, that adhering to governance generates legitimacy for PSM organisations; fourth, that PSM organisations strategically try to influence PSM governance; and fifth, that communication is an important element of PSM organisations' response to governance. Accordingly, an institutional approach helps to understand that the political communication of PSM organisations

in media policy-making – including concepts like contribution to society – is at the same time 1) a strategic device of legitimacy management used to influence perceptions of the organisation's performance and, consequently, media policy-making, and 2) influenced by PSM organisations' institutional environments (Katzenbach, 2018; Löblich, 2017; Siegert & Hangartner, 2017). The following two sections focus on both aspects: the contribution to society concept as a communication strategy that is not necessarily in line with the public interest, and institutional influences on the concept that might turn it into a neoliberal trap for PSM.

More than a communication problem

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the EBU's contribution to society initiative aims to address the existential threats to PSM in the twenty-first century: Challenges to the existence and relevancy of PSM are levied from multiple vantage points, including a much more fluid and dynamic media ecosystem; the national limitations of PSM; the fact that new streaming services and online platforms often "do not operate within the same legal framework" as PSM (EBU, 2015a: 8); and the observation that PSM organisations have done a poor job communicating with market and citizen stakeholders. As a result, the EBU fears that the legitimacy of PSM in the new media ecosystem is at stake, or in some cases, already dissolved. This analysis is largely shared in communication scholarship (Leurdijk, 2007; Moe, 2007; Rodríguez-Castro et al., 2021).

According to the EBU, there are two remedies to this issue: 1) adapting to the new context and 2) demonstrating the value and benefits of PSM "to their multiple stakeholders, including not only politicians but also other market players and most importantly citizens" (EBU, 2015a: 10). In short, the contribution to society concept maintains that PSM organisations can no longer rest on their "intrinsic or moral values", nor can they depend on regulatory protection for survival (EBU, 2015a: 9). Rather, it is crucial, the EBU argued, that PSM organisations communicate their contribution to society to market and public stakeholders:

> PSM need to craft a comprehensive set of fact-based counter-arguments. These should be well-structured and holistic, covering all the issues in a particular way, yet also building a solid and convincing ideological framework. This should result in a renewed, inspiring and meaningful narrative about the value and benefits for PSM for the whole society. (EBU, 2015a: 11)

The goal, therefore, is first and foremost to regain control of PSM's narrative. In doing so, the EBU purports, PSM organisations will be able to shape their own "storylines" and rebuild legitimacy in the eyes of the market and of the public.

To accomplish this goal, the EBU recommends that PSM organisations engage in a series of impact assessments covering four interrelated quadrants: economy, technology, culture and education, and democracy. Moreover, the EBU noted how communication must be at the front and centre of these impact assessments: "The results need to be communicated in-house and outside […]. Without a proper communication plan, targeting as many stakeholders as possible with suitable messages, the outcome of the project will not generate the expected impact" (EBU, 2015a: 31). Crucially, the storylines should be adapted to different stakeholders' characteristics and needs to ensure the effectiveness of advocacy activities (EBU, 2015a). While PSM organisations in the past mainly directed their communication towards regulators and policymakers, the EBU recommended shifting narrative attention towards market and public stakeholders so that they may "be turned into strong supporters [and] even PSM ambassadors, helping to raise general awareness about PSM's contribution to society as well as build their case" (EBU, 2015a: 38).

Underscoring the importance of messaging, the final chapter of the contribution to society concept paper is devoted entirely to how PSM organisations can craft an impactful communication plan ("Communication Reshape"). The purpose of the concept is restated in no uncertain terms: "Communicating the value delivered by public service media is an essential part of the PSM contribution to society mindset" (EBU, 2015a: 36). Without an effective communication strategy, PSM organisations are told, the future of PSM in Europe is bleak indeed. And this is not seen as a recent development, as the EBU clearly explained:

> Many PSM organizations are not especially active or good when it comes to communicating their successes, the good things they do for the citizens and what they do for the market. Consequently, their value frequently goes unnoticed. This not only results in a missed opportunity to raise the profile of PSM, which could result in greater acceptance and support, but it also opens the door to a worrying situation: it is not unusual for commercial operators in many European countries to claim that they are the ones providing services and value that have traditionally been inherent in the PSM remit. (EBU, 2015a: 36)

The purpose of fashioning a series of clear storylines is to control the agenda of the PSM debate. Failing to do so, the EBU (2015a) stated, risks damaging the PSM organisation's public image. The path forward is therefore clear: Conduct impact assessments, craft both the process and results of these assessments into digestible and tailored narratives for market and public stakeholders, and in doing so, regain control of a lost narrative of PSM's contribution to society.

To be sure, the contribution to society initiative acknowledges that organisational change must occur within European PSM organisations. This is

made clear in its call for impact assessments along the economy, technology, culture and education, and democracy matrix. Purportedly, these assessments are necessary for rendering PSM organisations more responsive to the dynamic and fluid media environment of the twenty-first century and regaining a lost legitimacy. What is also made clear, however, is that any such organisational change takes a secondary position to communicating these assessments to market and public stakeholders in order to convince them of the value of PSM.

While communication is indeed a vital part of organisations' legitimacy management (Black, 2008; Price, 2012), the contribution to society concept reduces the challenges PSM organisations face to an ill-defined public relations strategy:

> Public service media organizations need to adapt their public relations and communication strategy. This is the only way for stakeholders to have the feeling that they are important to PSM, and this is essential to ensure their support. (EBU, 2015a: 38)

As the EBU (2015a: 39) has continued, if PSM organisations adopt the communication strategies listed in the concept paper, "they will [be] able to generate the facts, arguments and storylines that are needed to build a new narrative about how they bring value to society". The issue here is not that there is *not* a communication problem, but that the concept seems to reduce the *entire* PSM legitimacy challenge to one of communication and public relations.

This lack of attention to the organisational dimension is a recurrent theme in the discourse about PSM. When public value was *en vogue* in media policymaking as well as industry and scholarly circles, it was often reduced to new regulatory requirements for PSM organisations, culminating in the adoption of so-called public value or Amsterdam tests across Europe (Donders & Moe, 2011). Yet, for that concept to have any value for the *citizens* PSM purportedly serves, it should not underestimate the importance of organisational structures, procedures, and cultures (Puppis et al., 2013). Considering how the ethos of PSM has been maintained and transformed in the digital era thus becomes a crucial task (Brevini, 2010, 2013). There is a clear need for fostering an awareness of the distinctiveness of PSM within PSM organisations (Lowe & Jauert, 2005) that should involve institutionalised internal discussion about output quality and value. Moreover, as PSM organisations have an obligation to be responsive and accountable towards civil society, public value should be the result of consultations with citizens and stakeholders (Hasebrink, 2007). These insights also apply to the contribution to society concept.

As important as communicating the value of PSM and its contribution to society is – and as important as the regulation of PSM is – responding to changing societies also requires organisational changes. While it should

not come as a surprise that survival is an important goal of organisations (Scott, 2003), surviving for survival's sake is not enough for PSM to serve the communication needs of ever more diverse societies. Thus, it is important to stress that the self-interest in survival pursued with the contribution to society concept does not necessarily align with the public interest. As important as the model of PSM is for society, existing PSM organisations do not always live up to it. For instance, Freedman (2019) offered a critique of the BBC's elite capture (although that might be a particular British issue). Strengthening the self-preserving status quo of legacy PSM organisations simply might not be sufficient. It is, therefore, even more important to put front and centre the public interest when adapting PSM organisations to the digital era.

More worrisome than the prioritisation of communication over organisational change is that the concept fails to address the larger ontological threat to PSM looming in media-policy discourse. The contribution to society concept is mainly shaped by neoliberal ideology, forcing PSM organisations to legitimise themselves within the narrow framework of the market and preventing them from shifting the discourse with an alternative narrative. In the following section, we explore this in greater detail.

The neoliberal trap

Conceptualising the contribution to society initiative as a strategy of legitimacy management alone would underestimate institutional influences on PSM organisations (for a detailed assessment of the concept of legitimacy in PSM, see Fehlmann, Chapter 2 in this volume). Two strands of institutionalism help us fully grasp this problematic. First, discursive institutionalism, with its focus on how ideational structures shape the communication of ideas by organisations, is helpful for understanding the influence of a dominant ideology like neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is an all-encompassing discursive, political, social, and economic construct and is predicted on an unassailable belief in the free market, individual choice, and a market-support role for states, reducing society to transactional relationships (Brown, 2015; Freedman, 2010; Harvey, 2010). In media policy-making, it can lead to discursive capture, meaning that policy options "are constrained by market-dictated imperatives" (Pickard, 2015: 91): Ideas of the desirability of markets have so successfully captured or ensnared policy conversations, that such conversations only reflect neoliberal values, or what Pickard (2015) has called "market ontology." As a result, public interest organisations, like PSM, museums, galleries, or universities, must increasingly justify their existence in terms of their market value.

Next, sociological institutionalism helps us to understand that organisations follow this neoliberal logic not only because non-conformity might result in sanctions or because of expectations they are confronted with, but also because they adopt or internalise neoliberal values themselves. This is what

we call the neoliberal trap: a situation in which PSM organisations believe they must employ the language of neoliberalism and of market fundamentalism to justify and legitimise their place in (European) media landscapes. By refocusing attention on PSM's impact on the economy, the concept runs the risk of defending PSM's valuable contribution in a world in which it has no place at all. While creating jobs and stimulating the economy can be a *side* effect, this is neither the core value of PSM nor will it convince its opponents. Moreover, adopting a neoliberal perspective involves the danger of limiting PSM to the role of correcting a narrowly defined market failure which occurs due to public good characteristics, externalities, information asymmetries, subadditivity, or network effects (Puppis, 2023). Yet, even economically competitive media markets do not necessarily do justice to the fact of media being both economic and cultural goods, which implies that PSM have a much bigger role to play in countering the commodification and commercialisation of culture (e.g., Hardy, 2014). However, instead of building upon the idea of merit goods, which emphasises the societal role of media (Ali, 2016), or following the institutional thread of other extra-market institutions such as museums (O'Neill, 2008), the contribution to society concept subsumes PSM into neoliberal discourse. The concept is therefore bound to fail if it reinforces rather than challenges the neoliberal discourse that dominates media policy (Freedman, 2008).

For the contribution to society concept to successfully support PSM organisations in legitimising their public interest role in the media landscape, it should embrace an alternative to the neoliberal discourse of profit-oriented commercial media and online platforms. As Cammaerts and Mansell (2020: 145) argued about online platforms,

> by challenging the taken-for-granted common sense of the digital platforms, it is more likely that discursive practice can become generative of alternative visions for the design and use of digital technologies that work in support of (rather than against) democratically agreed public values.

The same can be said about media: Once this ontological threat to the future of PSM is recognised, the contribution to society concept can become a powerful instrument for shifting the media-policy discourse. If we consider the contribution to society concept to be an empty signifier, whereby "everything depends on who gets to fill it with meaning" (Harvey, 2013: xv), the void can be filled with an alternative vision. For this, we believe, "the commons" or "digital commons" would offer a powerful idea (Murdock, 2004; Ramsey, 2013; Schweizer, 2016, 2019). As Murdock (2004: 1) argued:

> We have to stop thinking of public broadcasting as a stand-alone organisation and see it as the principal node in an emerging network of public and civil initiatives that taken together, provide the basis for new shared cultural space, a digital commons, that can help forge new communal

> connections and stand against the continual pressure for enclosure coming from commercial interests on the one hand and the new moral essentialism on the other.

The commons can be conceptualised as "a resource shared by a group where the resource is vulnerable to enclosure, overuse and social dilemmas" (Hess, 2008: 37). In her work introducing the notion of the commons to PSM, Schweizer (2016) saw two ways in which the two are connected: First, PSM is an organisation "that contributes to and offers access to an intangible culture or knowledge commons", and second, it is a "specific infrastructure that creates a shared space for public deliberation" (Schweizer, 2016: 177). Similar calls for such a transition have also been made by those arguing for PSM to become an open platform for public communication (or a "public open space") that cooperates with public knowledge and cultural organisations, civil society knowledge organisations, and citizens (Dobusch, 2018; Dörr et al., 2016; Grassmuck, 2018; Mitschka & Unterberger, 2018).

Crucially, both ways that Schweizer (2016, 2019) connected the commons with the mission of PSM (knowledge commons and infrastructure) also find purchase with other public organisations struggling to reinvent themselves in a digital age. With this in mind, and drawing on Cammaerts and Mansell's (2020) push for "alternative visions" in digital media, we suggest that rather than negotiate a place for PSM within the market and vie for support from commercial competitors, PSM organisations should build coalitions with other public institutions like museums, academia, or cultural organisations to support the digital commons. This form of commons coalition-building was recently argued by Jolly and Goodman (2021), who consider PSM as part of a network of digital "anchor institutions" to support a new age of public media called the "public media stack:"

> Through technological characteristics such as open-data protocols and accountable-governance principles, the public media stack should be designed to devolve decision-making powers to end-users, while amplifying local information, opportunities for cultural exchange, and constructive engagement in the democratic process. By decentralizing control over the flow of information through the network, the public media stack should empower users, rather than platform authorities, with the tools to "boost the signal of good information" and "dampen the noise created by bad actors and disinformation." While public media commentary has long focused on content decision, technical and governance design choices that encourage informed civic discourse are just as important to combat information disorder. (Jolly & Goodman, 2021: 4)

With a contribution to society concept inspired by the public interest rather than market ideology, PSM organisations have a chance to rethink their role and challenge the neoliberal predominance in media policy-making that

narrows PSM's potential. Greater openness with respect to participation, transparency, and licensing of their self-produced content would make PSM distinct from commercial media and offer a foundation for its legitimacy in the digital space (Dobusch, 2018). In other words, "the commons concept can be a powerful narrative for legitimating PSM by representing the enterprise as a societal alternative to corporate commercial media" (Schweizer, 2016: 178).

Conclusion: The shape of things to come (in this volume, anyway)

To conclude this introductory chapter, we wish to emphasise that for PSM to re-legitimise itself in the twenty-first century, it will require more than a communication strategy. While it is important to engage in communication in the process of media policy-making, there is the very real danger that the contribution to society initiative is only trying to solve a communication problem without inducing real change within PSM organisations. Successfully communicating the need for PSM in society may satisfy the self-preservation instincts of PSM organisations, but it does not sufficiently acknowledge the needs of democratic societies undergoing a fundamental transformation of the public sphere. The contribution to society concept will only be successful in strengthening the legitimacy of PSM organisations if it is reinvigorated with an alternative vision of PSM as commons or a public open space.

At the same time, there is value for scholars in engaging with concepts like public value or contribution to society. Indeed, research can add to a better understanding not only of the ways in which PSM organisations try to legitimise themselves and make use of such concepts to influence media policy-making, but also of how such concepts restrict PSM organisations' scope of action and the visions about their future development. Consequently, such research can make important contributions to both academia and PSM practice. This, however, requires keeping a sympathetic but critical distance from PSM organisations. In this book, we hope to achieve this lofty goal and to continue the legacy of previous RIPE volumes of embracing, analysing, and scrutinising contemporary challenges to PSM.

The chapters found in Part I of this volume, "Theorising and testing contribution", continue the introduction's conceptual intervention by assessing and proposing various conceptual markers of PSM, notably legitimacy and universality. In Chapter 2, Fiona Fehlmann begins by introducing and challenging the different ways that legitimacy is conceptualised vis-à-vis PSM. Through an illustrative example of the earlier debates over the public value of PSM, she argues that we should reconceptualise legitimacy in terms of *perception* (rather than process). Such an approach may help us to better understand PSM's contribution to society. Cathrin Bengesser continues the conceptual discussion of PSM's legitimacy in Chapter 3 by employing Jürgen

Habermas's concept of lifeworld. She goes further, however, by adding an empirical element with a case study of the BBC's potential adoption of subscription services. In Chapter 4, Uwe Hasebrink echoes the mixed conceptual and empirical approach of Bengesser, this time focusing on PSM's contribution to social integration through a survey of German adults.

The chapters in Part II of this volume, "Beyond broadcasting", discuss the development of PSM with (algorithmically personalised) streaming services and on-demand offers, mobile distribution, and social bots on (third-party) platforms. In Chapter 5, Julie Münter Lassen and Jannick Sørensen examine the rise of PSM's video-on-demand (VoD) services in Denmark and the connected shift from volume to value. Tim Raats continues the discussion of VoD in Chapter 6 with his analysis of Streamz, the so-called Flemish Netflix. Yu-Peng Lin and Hui-Ju Tsai do crucial work in Chapter 7, moving the debate over PSM's streaming offers outside of Western countries and focusing on the launch of PTS+ in Taiwan. In Chapter 8, Aura Lindeberg and Marko Ala-Fossi shift the conversation again from video to the understudied audio-streaming services of PSM in their assessment of the transformation of Nordic public radio services from analogue to digital. Moving beyond the topic of on-demand services in Chapter 9, Imir Rashid and Seamus Simpson discuss recent efforts by PSM organisations to deliver content via smartphones. Lastly, in Chapter 10, Stefano Pedrazzi and Franziska Oehmer-Pedrazzi address the potential role played by automated social network accounts of PSM organisations, or "public service bots". For this chapter, they received the EBU Best Paper Award for Established Scholars at the RIPE@2021 conference.

While Part II focuses on the renewal of PSM's offers to ensure its ongoing contribution to society, the chapters that make up Part III examine "Organisational change and innovation." In Chapter 11, Marta Rodríguez-Castro and Francisco Campos-Freire analyse the role of public consultations in the development of public value tests for PSM, while in Chapter 12, Matthias Künzler, Fiona Fehlmann, and Ulla Autenrieth present empirical insights into innovation within the Swiss PSM organisation SRG SSR. Henning Eichler engages with contribution to society as a normative function in Chapter 13, examining how Germany's ARD manages the shift to digital. Lastly, Dominik Speck continues the inquiry into German PSM in Chapter 14 by examining the practice and regulation of transparency therein. This chapter was chosen for the EBU Best Paper Award for Emerging Scholars at the RIPE@2021 conference.

This volume concludes with an afterword by Hilde Van den Bulck, who synthesises and reflects upon the theoretical arguments and empirical data brought to light in the preceding chapters.

The theme of contribution to society opens up avenues of research, study, and contemplation, as exemplified by the chapters in this book. As a heuristic device, it also offers an opportunity for PSM scholars to reflect on their

normative assumptions and commitments, hopefully bringing them to the fore, rather than presumed. In other words, PSM's contribution to society should not be normatively taken for granted, but rather critically interrogated through theorisation and empirical research. A critical engagement with PSM and the concepts used to legitimise it, as is the aspiration of this volume, will hopefully help to advance research, contribute to PSM practice and media policy-making, and invite more scholars to contemplate the place of PSM in a digital world. For PSM organisations themselves, rethinking their contribution to society by exploring ways to collaborate with public and civil society organisations and integrating citizen participation may be the last best hope for media landscapes and public spheres besieged by commodification and commercialisation.

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PART I

THEORISING AND TESTING CONTRIBUTION

CHAPTER 2

The legitimacy of public service media

A suggestion for a change of perspective

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ABSTRACT

Although the legitimacy of public service media (PSM) is often mentioned in the context of frameworks, such as the European Broadcasting Union's contribution to society initiative, the emphasis is rarely on the concept of legitimacy and its meanings. This chapter provides different theoretical perspectives on the concept of legitimacy and argues that to conceptualise legitimacy as *perception* can be particularly helpful in research investigating PSM's potential contribution to society. To illustrate this argument, past debates in the context of public value are analysed to show how the legitimacy of PSM has been primarily understood as the result of strategic communication processes. In addition, several research questions, methodological approaches, and challenges that can be considered for research on PSM by understanding legitimacy as perception are outlined.

KEYWORDS: legitimacy, public service media, institutionalism, public value, social theory

Fehlmann, F. (2023). The legitimacy of public service media: A suggestion for a change of perspective. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 31–46). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-2

Introduction

Are public service broadcasting organisations still legitimate? This question is often at the core of current debates on public broadcasters in Europe (EBU, 2015; Larsen, 2010; Lowe, 2016). These discussions focus on the extent to which such organisations are still considered legitimate within a system of changing rules, norms, values, and definitions; with the emerging media structure of the digital era, in which societies are increasingly interwoven with a wide variety of information and communication infrastructures (Lowe et al., 2018; Suchman, 1995). However, legitimacy as a concept is only rarely brought into strong focus in the theoretical debate with regard to public broadcasting organisations and the changing media landscape in which they operate. Instead, research, as well as management reports, on public broadcasting organisations describe a variety of concepts that may be related to the concept of legitimacy, but rarely place the concept and its meaning at the centre of the analysis. Based on this circumstance, I set out to address the following research questions:

RQ1. What are possible theoretical perspectives on the concept of legitimacy?

RQ2. To what extent can the concept of legitimacy be a starting point to understand what the contribution to society of public broadcasting organisations might be?

The aim of the chapter is to provide three different theoretical perspectives on the legitimacy of public service media (PSM) organisations, and to discuss potential advantages of the "legitimacy-as-perception" (Suddaby et al., 2017: 463) perspective for research in this area. Therefore, the intention here is to provide insights on possible theoretical perspectives rather than providing a fully elaborated framework.

Today, there is a long list of concepts, each with a slightly different focus, that attempt to outline a new or changed identity for PSM organisations in the digital era. This is done by adapting the classic core values of these organisations, such as cohesion, universality, independence, diversity, quality, or openness. Typical examples of this kind are "Public Service Media" (e.g., Martin & Lowe, 2014); "Public Value" (e.g., Alford & O'Flynn, 2009; Gonser & Gundlach, 2015); "Public Open Spaces" (e.g., Dobusch, 2019); "Public Service Navigator" (e.g., Burri, 2015); "Commons" (e.g., Murdock, 2005; Schweizer, 2016); or with regard to the RIPE 2021 conference, "Contribution to Society" (EBU, 2015). The latter framework can also be added to this list, which is still far from complete.

As Karen Donders (2021) pointed out in her book, most of these concepts or frameworks – there are certainly exceptions – have not necessarily helped to better understand what PSM constitutes and how, from a normative point of view, their mission could be described:

> My main argument is that these mushrooming concepts give the impression that Public Service Media is everything and nothing at the same time. The question is whether one, from a theoretical perspective, can move beyond public service "anything" and come to a shared story and set of values and rules for Public Service Media in the digital age. (Donders, 2021: 40)

So, how can we try to describe a "shared story and set of values and rules for public service media in the digital age" (Donders, 2021: 40) in order to understand what potential contribution to society these organisations can and cannot deliver? In this chapter, I put forward the argument that such a question can only be fully answered by focusing research also on how citizens relate to PSM: Which norms, values, opinions, definitions, and attitudes do citizens have regarding PSM independent of an already given leitmotif or concept such as, for example, contribution to society? What services of PSM do citizens use and recognise as contributions to their lives? Only through a perspective that understands legitimacy also as the *perception*, or attribution of individuals ("legitimacy-as-perception"; Suddaby et al., 2017), can one identify which contributions create tangible value for citizens.

I further argue that attempts to develop theoretical concepts or frameworks for PSM have so far relied primarily on either the legitimacy-as-process or legitimation perspective, or they have attempted to describe legitimacy as a property that an organisation does or does not possess.

In order to clarify these arguments and the different perspectives on the concept of legitimacy and possible meanings, in the first section I explore the origins of the legitimacy concept and how it can be theorised in different ways. This is inspired by the work of Roy Suddaby and colleagues (2017) on the concept of legitimacy. In the second section, I illustrate, using the public value concept as an example, how the legitimacy-as-process perspective dominates debates on the legitimacy of PSM organisations. Among other things, this specific understanding of legitimacy resulted for a long time in research focusing primarily on the role of PSM organisations as active change agents in the negotiation of their legitimacy. Attention to members of the public as evaluators of the legitimacy of PSM organisations has become more relevant again in PSM research in recent years, with great interest in young target groups, for example. In the third part of this chapter, I discuss exemplary research questions and methodological approaches that could be brought into focus by adapting a theoretical perspective that understands legitimacy as perception in research on PSM.

Legitimacy as a property, a process, or a perception? The characteristics of different perspectives

Academic writings on the concept of legitimacy have a long tradition in the analyses of institutions and organisations, dating as far back as the nineteenth

century (Tost, 2011). Following Max Weber, numerous variations of the concept have been discussed and applied in a wide range of disciplines such as law, political science, sociology, economics, philosophy, and psychology (Krücken, 2020; Suddaby et al., 2017). The concept of legitimacy is particularly present in the broad field of discussion of the so-called new institutionalism (also referred to as neo-institutionalism). In the context of this broad research field, legitimacy is mostly defined as "a generalized perception or assumption that an entity's actions are desirable, correct or appropriate within socially constructed system of norm, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman, 1995: 574). Although some authors have pointed out that the word "desirable" misleadingly suggests that the concept of legitimacy is close to concepts such as reputation or status, it is this definition by Suchman (1995) that is used in most publications on the concept. Furthermore, studies focusing on the concept of legitimacy cover a broad range of topics. For example, the legitimacy of certain practices, management teams, company founders, governance mechanisms, or organisations as a whole have been examined (Deephouse, et al., 2017; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). Such research projects differ greatly in their focus and levels of analysis (micro, meso, macro) (Walgenbach & Meyer, 2008). However, what these studies with reference to new institutionalism generally have in common is the assumption that the survival, or raison d'être, of entities such as organisations depends primarily on their legitimacy – and not necessarily on the efficiency of their work and exchange processes (Hasse, 2013; Walgenbach & Meyer, 2008).

What is understood in detail by legitimacy, and how it is established, depends on the underlying epistemological approach chosen. Ideal-typically, three different perspectives on the concept of legitimacy can be described: 1) a property, 2) a process, or 3) a form of perception (Suddaby et al., 2017). In the following section, I first discuss these three streams of legitimacy research in more detail and then explain why the legitimacy-as-perception perspective is considered valuable for many types of inquiry in researching PSM.

Legitimacy-as-property perspective

Research that understands legitimacy as a property usually assumes that legitimacy is something that an organisation possesses in a measurable quantity, and then again can be exchanged between organisations (Suddaby et al., 2017). For example, some researchers speak of legitimacy as an "operational resource" (Suchman, 1995: 576) that organisations can acquire or lose. In order to gain this resource legitimacy, the assumption in this perspective is that there must be a certain fit, or congruence between, for example, structures, products, or routines of an organisation and the normative expectations of its external environment (Suddaby et al., 2017). Legitimacy is thus created between the object of legitimacy, for example, an organisation, and its exter-

nal environment, in that the organisation attempts to maintain congruence between internal and external norms, values, and characteristics through ongoing adjustments (Suddaby et al., 2017; Webb et al., 2009). In research on public service broadcasters, there are some publications that try to systematise this adaptation process. Although the connection between these adaptations and the concept of legitimacy is not the focus, Karen Donders, for example, described a very insightful systematisation of the phases in the context of the transition from public service broadcasting to PSM and adjustments in the distribution strategies. She suggested describing five phases: the experimental phase, the panic phase, the expansionist phase, the consolidation phase, and the maturity phase (for more details, see Donders, 2019, 2021). For example, while in the experimental phase, public broadcasting organisations are just beginning to discover the potential of Internet distribution, while in the maturity phase, these organisations have an elaborated online strategy and a concept to better connect with their differing audiences (Donders, 2021).

Legitimacy-as-process perspective

Another possible perspective on the concept of legitimacy is provided by researchers who emphasise that legitimacy is the result of a communicative process between various social actors rather than the fit of an organisation with expectations from its environment. In legitimacy-as-process views, actors can, for example, explain the existence of an organisation and strategically influence the ways of communication. In this communicative process, Suddaby and colleagues (2017) identified – along with strategies such as persuasion, translation, narration, or categorisation – theorisation as a key communication strategy. Through this strategy of theorisation, existing norms and practices of, for example, public broadcasting organisations are abstracted into generalised specifications or categories. Hence, legitimacy in the legitimacy-as-process perspective occurs between different social actors, especially when actors try to seek or oppose change (Suddaby et al., 2017).

Studies that focus on the legitimacy-as-process perspective typically attempt to identify through qualitative analyses certain environmental factors, as well as forms of narratives, that can influence these various communicative processes (Suddaby et al., 2017). For example, in her research on public broadcasting organisations in the US and Europe, Ellen P. Goodman (2013) identified three legitimising narratives for public broadcasting (democratic discourse, universal service, and educational excellence), which, on the one hand, are associated with functions for society, and on the other, from her point of view, are each inspired by the idea of market failure. She further noted that "market failure narratives" (Goodman, 2013: 205) endure the twenty-first century, but that new narratives' legitimisation for PSM are needed in the digital age – for example, related to innovation.

Legitimacy-as-perception perspective

The legitimacy-as-process view is in some instances criticised for overemphasising the relationship between actors with agency and passive audiences, thus neglecting the critical, nuanced role of individuals' perceptions and their judgments of legitimacy (Deephouse et al., 2017; Suddaby et al., 2017; Tost, 2011). Hence, some researchers studying the concept of legitimacy advocate for understanding the assessments and perceptions of individuals as the basis of legitimacy (Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Tost, 2011). In this legitimacy-as-perception perspective, individual judgments and perceptions constitute a sort of "micro-motor" of legitimacy (Tost, 2011). They influence the behaviour of individuals and ultimately ensure that an entity, organisation, or institution is considered appropriate or legitimate within a larger collective (Deephouse et al., 2017; Tost, 2011). Research on legitimacy-as-perception therefore usually adopts a multilevel approach but focuses on the perceptions of individuals. This means that in this perspective, it is assumed that individuals make legitimacy judgments, for example, towards an organisation, based on their perceptions, and subsequently act upon this judgment and thus possibly cause changes on a collective (meso or macro) level (Bitektine, 2011; Suddaby et al., 2017). In other words, legitimacy is attributed to an entity by a larger collective, but it is based on the perceptions and judgments of individuals (Hangartner & Fehlmann, 2019).

While legitimation, or the legitimacy-as-process view, focuses more on the active, goal-oriented role of actors as "change agents", the legitimacy-as-perception perspective describes individual perception as the fundamental mechanism through which legitimacy is constructed. Actors in this case are rather seen as evaluators – that is, those who make legitimacy judgments about an entity (Suddaby et al., 2017).

Empirical studies that have attempted to examine legitimacy as perception have partly relied on media coverage and compared it, for example, with corporate media releases. This is done to compare public perceptions in the media with public portrayals by the corporations themselves (e.g., Lamin & Zaheer, 2012). There are other studies that have attempted to investigate perceptions of legitimacy using a mixed-method approach with qualitative interviews (e.g., protocol analysis) as well as survey instruments (e.g., conjoint analysis). These studies have analysed, for example, which aspects of a company's "novelty" lead individuals to perceive it as legitimate and worth supporting (e.g., Choi & Shepherd, 2005). Research of this kind, similar to those focusing on legitimacy-as-process, have their roots in the work of Max Weber, on the one hand, and in *The Social Construction of Reality* by Berger, Luckmann, and Plessner (2018), on the other (see also Suddaby et al., 2017). Research in this phenomenological tradition highlights that reality, or in this case legitimacy, is socially constructed and inherent in the consciousness of individuals – and thus not a feature of an external force of any kind (Künzler, 2009; Meyer, 2019).

Thus, as with many concepts in the social sciences, the possible configurations of legitimacy elaborated here – as a property, a process, or a perception – show that the differing perspectives are based on various conceptions of the nature and constitution of social reality (Scott, 2014). Accordingly, we find ourselves in a similar situation when considering what the contribution to society framework might mean. PSM organisations want to be perceived as a contribution to society; however, it often remains vague what this terminology refers to. Depending on how one believes that social reality is created – whether one rather emphasises that individuals with their cognition should be in focus, or political structures and institutions or other entities – the answer to the question of what PSM's contribution to society is will probably be rather different.

In this chapter, I argue that PSM's contribution to society can be grasped to a greater extent if research on PSM in general focuses more on the concept of legitimacy, specifically on the legitimacy-as-perception perspective. Despite the interest in individuals and their beliefs, judgements, and cognitions that this calls for, this perspective should, at the same time, always be concerned with the "pitfalls of extreme individualism or a reduction of social processes to 'what occurs by individuals'" (Daft & Weick, as cited in Suddaby et al., 2017: 463). The objective here is therefore not to pit the individual against society, but rather to focus on their interplay (Hepp, 2020). The legitimacy-as-perception perspective is not limited to individual-level processes, as it remains committed to the co-constitutive relationship of meaning structures or sense-making in a collective and individual cognition and behaviour (Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Meyer et al., 2021; Meyer & Vaara, 2020). By applying the proposed perspective on legitimacy, the interplay between individual perceptions and "*Deutungsangebote* [interpretive options]" (Meyer et al., 2021: 162) of norms, values, definitions, or practices can be examined, for example, regarding the use and relevance of PSM services within a specific social context or audience.

To further illustrate this argument, in the next section I try to show how previous debates around new frameworks for PSM organisations – for example, in the case of the public value framework – typically rely on the legitimacy-as-process perspective. I subsequently look more closely at pertinent research questions as well as possible methodological approaches that could receive increased attention, assuming that legitimacy of PSM can be understood as a form of perception.

Legitimacy-as-process: From public value to contribution to society

To date, I argue, the guiding principles for PSM organisations have been developed with recourse to the legitimacy-as-process perspective (also referred to as legitimation). In this legitimation process, the "active" public broad-

casters (or other actors) – to exaggerate – turn to their "passive" audience to explain and justify themselves. Here, legitimacy is created via a strategic communication process by active change agents. This led to the situation in which abstract, complex categories and values (e.g., democracy, education, or universal service) were operationalised through top-down theorisation. As explained in the previous section, theorisation is a key strategy in the conception of legitimacy-as-process in which preexisting norms, values, and practices are abstracted into generalised categories or specifications (Suddaby et al., 2017). Public broadcasters communicate such values and at the same time are supposed to deliver those values a priori. Citizens can then provide their judgements on this in surveys afterwards.

For instance, if we look at the debates and controversies regarding the public value of PSM, the focus in these debates on the legitimacy-as-process perspective is quite noticeable. For example, Moe and Van den Buck (2014: 73) noted: "For some, it is a new regulatory concept meant to discipline public service broadcasters, while others see it as a way to 'defend' and promote what public service institutions do". This quotation indicates that the focus in discussions on the public value of public broadcasters is on the legitimacy-as-process view and not, as once intended with this concept, on outputs as well as on "*outcomes*, that is, impacts upon those who enjoy the value/good in question [emphasis original]" (Alford & O'Flynn, 2009: 175). Michael Moore (2000: 52), who is widely referenced in this context, wrote in the book, *Creating Public Value*, that "value is rooted in the desires and perceptions of individuals – [...] and not in abstractions called societies". Nevertheless, or precisely because of such polarising remarks, the emphasis on "intrinsic values" (Lowe, 2016: 7), as well as the theorising of top-down defined evaluation categories for public broadcasting organisations, remains strong in research, within PSM organisations as well as with policy-makers. Again, as mentioned in the previous section, the intention here is not to promote reducing processes from social to individual, as Moore's quote may imply. Rather, I strive to illustrate the benefits of the legitimacy-as-perception perspective that adopts a multilevel approach that considers the interplay between individual perception and (social) meanings of PSM.

Returning to the concept of public value, it is evident from numerous publications that analysing the public value of PSM and their impact on individuals and other parts of society is a complex undertaking. Such publications usually attempt to describe the public value of PSM by dividing the concept into dimensions such as "individual value", "social value", or "citizen value" (e.g., Gonser & Gundlach, 2015; Mazzucato et al., 2020; Süssenbacher, 2011). It becomes apparent when looking at these dimensions that, according to many observers, the values of PSM organisations lie somewhere between individual needs and public interests, although it is not always clear which aspects these two poles encompass. Despite such ambiguities, literature repeatedly empha-

sises the importance of values for the legitimacy of public broadcasters: "these organizations must bear in mind the values that they traditionally stood for, as well those that are arising [...]. Only through reinforcement of its values will PSM be able to navigate the storm" (Rodríguez-Castro et al., 2021: 8). How PSM may illustrate and measure its values has been outlined, for example, by Mazzucato and colleagues (2020). Their intriguing framework on the BBC's "dynamic public value" provides a very comprehensible account on how and with which values the BBC could portray itself as a "dynamic value creator" (Mazzucato et al., 2020: 29) for the individual, society, as well as the local economy. Nevertheless, the theoretical angle of the legitimacy-as-process perspective is again strongly articulated in this report by suggesting that the BBC can "demonstrate" (Mazzucato et al., 2020: 29) its values as an active, goal-oriented change agent.

While such a perspective is certainly relevant, it is among those – as mentioned before – that have been extensively discussed in debates on public value. Questions often remain unanswered in such debates regarding what happens when PSM organisations demonstrate their different value dimensions, but these are not understood or acknowledged by the general public. Additionally, several other questions often remain unanswered in this context: Who defines these sets of values for public broadcasting organisations? Is it bodies of national media regulation in exchange with other stakeholders in politics and the local media industry that define these values? What role do modes of operation and practices of globally active platforms and streaming services, such as YouTube and Netflix, play in the definition of the values of public broadcasting organisations? What role do media audiences or citizens play in determining these values? If these values are defined in an exchange between different interest groups, how exactly does this work, and who is allowed to have a say in these debates? The same questions may be equally applied to the concept of contribution to society. Who ultimately determines which contribution to which society is the valuable one? There is a possibility that debates on this presumably new framework will remain similar to past debates on public value.

Legitimacy-as-perception: Potential for public service media research

The introduction of the leitmotif public value has led to a theoretical refocusing of debates about the mission of PSM organisations – from the interests of political decision-makers towards what individual citizens and media users might consider valuable to them in PSM services. Nevertheless, the detailed, empirical examination of perceptions, views, and needs of users and non-users of PSM services (at least in academic studies) remains a rather rare endeavour (Just et al., 2017; Reiter et al., 2018). When evaluations and assessments

of media users are considered in empirical studies, concepts such as trust, credibility, or quality are often at the centre of the analysis (Jarren, 2019; Sehl, 2020). There tends to be more research related to PSM organisations that deals with how the public value, the mission, or the role of PSM can be described from the normative perspective of regulators and scholars (Goyanes, 2021; Sehl, 2020). Otfried Jarren (2019: 67, 83) accurately stated that this "normative foundation [...] is integral part of journalistic mass media's DNA" and that "public media can no longer be only the formative result of the so-called socially relevant groups, as they must have a minimum level of acceptance and social approval [translated]".

In order to be able to explore this "minimum level of acceptance" or recognition of the DNA of public broadcasters in a differentiated, fragmented social system, it is necessary, or at least desirable, to consider the legitimacy-as-perception perspective which I emphasise in this chapter. Accordingly, I argue that in order to explain and explore the contribution to society concept, the legitimacy-as-process research perspective should not again be the main focus, as in the case of public value. Rodríguez-Castro and Campos-Freire (see Chapter 11 in this volume), for example, show how ex ante public value tests do not result in citizen participation and can thus be seen as a "missed opportunity for PSM organisations to open up their decision-making structures" to participation outside "industry-related agents". This missed opportunity is again – among other factors – caused by the fact that legitimacy is rather understood as a result of a strategic communication process by active change agents rather than a form of perception.

When legitimacy is understood as a form of perception – as something co-constitutive by individual perception and meaning structures – questions about PSM come into focus that would remain rather hidden with regard to the other perspectives on legitimacy (as a property or a process). Again, as a reminder, legitimacy in this understanding can be defined as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995: 574). With such an understanding of legitimacy, it would become possible to compare the normative foundations of public broadcasting organisations and their interpretive options (Meyer et al., 2021) with individual everyday understandings of corresponding norms, values, definitions, and beliefs. Such a research perspective would make it possible to study the extent to which the *Leitidee* – or main idea – of PSM, as well as PSM organisations, are perceived differently by various social groups and audiences.

To mention just a few, the following questions could be addressed: How do individuals as a "micro-motor" of legitimacy perceive public broadcasting as legitimate? What norms, values, beliefs, and definitions do individuals judge public broadcasting organisations on? What role do normative core values

of PSM, such as diversity, cohesion, or independence, play in individual assessments of legitimacy? In the context of changing communication needs in the digital era, are there any new definitions, values, norms, and beliefs among media users that they would consider important in relation to public broadcasting organisations? Furthermore, on the basis of such a perspective on legitimacy-as-perception, it would be possible to ask, for example, with a focus on journalists and other employees of public broadcasting organisations: Which norms, values, and definitions do they perceive as desirable and appropriate for their (journalistic) work in these organisations? In this context, what role do the underlying values of PSM organisations, which are also laid down in the mission statements, for instance, play in everyday journalistic work? Are there certain norms, values, or beliefs that media professionals today consider more important than others when it comes to the legitimacy of public broadcasting organisations in the digital age? What overlaps and differences are there between the perceptions of norms, values, definitions, and beliefs between employees of public broadcasting organisations and the media users they want or need to reach? With questions of this kind (there would be many more), the understanding of the interaction between individuals and public broadcasting organisations would be enhanced and put into focus. In addition, such a perspective would make it possible to describe a *Leitidee* of PSM bottom-up and in an open, participatory dialogue with citizens.

Such a bottom-up perspective is similarly called for by researchers in journalism studies who argue for a radical "audience turn" (e.g., Costera Meijer, 2020; Swart et al., 2022). Swart and colleagues (2022) have provided a comprehensive description of opportunities, challenges, and dilemmas of such a perspective. Some of these are also transferable to the perspective proposed here of conceptualising the legitimacy of PSM organisations primarily as perception. Thus, also here, researchers are faced with the challenge of reconsidering which forms of legitimacy judgements, practices, participation, or engagement in relation to public issues or debates on PSM count as agency. Furthermore, it is essential to be aware of the designations of the objects of study, such as the public, citizens, or media users, as these have an influence on the research design (Swart et al., 2022).

In order to adapt the legitimacy-as-perception perspective on the above-mentioned research questions, a wide variety of methodological procedures and combinations would be conceivable. Perhaps qualitative methods or a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods could be considered first. Suddaby and colleagues (2017) proposed various methodological approaches to investigate (individual) legitimacy judgements. In particular, I consider the proposed method of "multisided ethnography" (Suddaby et al., 2017: 470) promising for an investigation of legitimacy as perception in the area of PSM. Such a method could attempt to analyse how different individuals

and actors – for example, in different PSM organisations in Europe or within specific PSM audiences – understand the legitimacy of PSM in idiosyncratic ways. Thus, individuals making judgements to groups of like-minded actors, to prevailing opinions in the media, and so on, could be considered (Suddaby et al., 2017).

In particular, the increasing differentiation of communicative intermediaries – ranging from streaming services to Tik Tok channels and other social media offerings – requires the diverse exploration of different perspectives on the legitimacy of PSM. This form of differentiation has led to an enormous pluralisation of norms, values, and definitions in the media and social sphere, with an increasing number of different social groups with different communication and information needs, as Jarren (2019: 72) has explained:

> Those who always offer the same thing, i.e., those who can't or don't want to create much variance (i.e., the mass media), are losing importance. This also affects public broadcasting, which is supposed to be broadcasting for all, and has an integration mandate and operates accordingly [translated].

By describing the legitimacy of public broadcasting organisations as perception, there is the possibility of identifying the societal variance described by Jarren (2019) and, if necessary, integrating parts of this variance into the institutional framework of PSM. If PSM organisations focus less on permanently and actively legitimising the status quo vis-à-vis "socially relevant" groups, and more on what role they fulfil in the context of citizens' everyday lives and their understandings of norms and values, they will be able to secure their legitimacy – and thus their future.

Conclusion

The digital age and the profound processes of social change that come with it impose numerous challenges on PSM organisations. In this chapter, I have attempted to illustrate the extent to which an analysis of the concept of legitimacy, and in particular the legitimacy-as-perception perspective, can provide a way of addressing these challenges and exploring them in depth. In numerous past and current debates on these challenges and possible new leitmotifs for public broadcasting organisations, their legitimacy is only marginally addressed and rarely brought into focus. It is rarely analysed in detail who ascribes legitimacy to public broadcasting organisations and for what reasons, and how these assessments are made. If legitimacy as a theoretical concept receives more attention in the context of PSM, it may be possible in the future to better understand the contribution to society of PSM from a citizen's perspective.

In this chapter, numerous questions remain unanswered, for example, the extent to which the norms and values of media users or citizens have changed

and to what extent potential changes in norms and values are compatible with the new frameworks for public broadcasting organisations. Another aspect not addressed here is the extent to which there may be (individual) preferences and values in society that conflict with the public mission of these organisations. The analysis of such issues needs an empirical investigation, in addition to the theoretical perspective presented in this chapter. My goal has been to demonstrate and provide a rationale for why the concept of legitimacy can be useful as a theoretical lens through which public broadcasting organisations may be analysed.

The first section of this chapter shows that research exploring the concept of legitimacy conceptualises legitimacy either as a property, process, or perception, depending on epistemological considerations (Suddaby et al., 2017). In the second part of the chapter, I have illustrated two points in particular by referring to the debates on public value: first, how the legitimacy-as-process perspective has very often led to PSM organisations being studied as active change agents that are able to theorise and thus legitimise their existing organisational norms and core values; and second, that this very perspective leaves many questions about the legitimacy of public broadcasting organisations unanswered. For example, the co-constitutive relationship between individual perceptions and behaviours of media users and meaning structures (e.g., public value or contribution to society) is often overlooked in debates on the legitimacy of public broadcasting organisations. In the third section, I have outlined why particularly the perspective that understands legitimacy as a form of perception can be fruitful when analysing public broadcasting organisations. By adopting such a perspective, it is possible to address certain questions, for example, to what extent do the perceptions of norms of media organisations match with the perceptions of norms by the media users or by the employees in these organisations?

On the one hand, it is not my intention to refer to such questions as a vote in favour of questioning the core values (e.g., diversity, cohesion, universality, etc.) of public broadcasting organisations, nor, on the other hand, to try to overemphasise the micro-level of institutions with the explanations given here. Rather, this chapter is an attempt to raise awareness of legitimacy-as-perception perspective and thus the values and norms of public broadcasting organisations and their possible meaning in the everyday lives of media users and media producers. Only with an understanding of how individual legitimacy judgments about public broadcasting organisations are formed can there be a new kind of mediation between the different interests of the diverse participants in the debate. In this respect, exploring the concept of legitimacy as a form of perception leads directly to the questions that have always been of particular interest to the social sciences in general and to communication studies in particular: namely, the questions of how society and the individual, the media system and actor, and the big picture and the

small particle relate to each other. The analysis of the concept of legitimacy as perception illustrates that even such traditional arrangements as those of public broadcasting organisations cannot survive if they are not perceived as worth supporting or as legitimate by a multitude of presumably small – but in fact crucial – individuals.

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CHAPTER 3

Public value after the news

A lifeworld-based approach to the legitimation of content universality as contribution to society

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ABSTRACT
This chapter addresses a theoretical blind-spot around the societal contribution of non-journalistic public service content, caused by the academic focus on public service media's (PSM) role in facilitating democratic public spheres. To broaden the focus, I propose a lifeworld-based approach inspired by Habermas's *Legitimation Crisis*, as well as the differentiation of the economic and political system and the communicatively structured lifeworld in *The Theory of Communicative Action*. This basis enables a view of content universality as the precondition for PSM's contribution to integration, cultural reproduction, and sense-making processes in society. The ideal of PSM as a connector of lifeworld horizons is proposed to highlight their value and distinctiveness within a fragmented media market and pluralised societies. Using the example of the BBC facing the potential transformation into a subscription service, I discuss the necessity, feasibility, and practical challenges of PSM acting as connectors of lifeworld horizons.

KEYWORDS: public service norms, BBC, content universality, subscription, legitimacy, lifeworld

Bengesser, C. (2023). Public value after the news: A lifeworld-based approach to the legitimation of content universality as contribution to society. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 47–68). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-3

Introduction

John Reith's "inform, educate, entertain" has been the holy trinity of the public service remit pioneered by the BBC in Europe. Though there is debate about how public service media (PSM) like the BBC should inform and educate, it is difficult to question the value of these missions to democratic society. The societal value of publicly funded entertainment, however, is more difficult to pin down and defend at a time when fiction and reality shows of considerable quality are in abundant supply from global streaming services, while PSM face funding cuts. Even more urgently, the prevalence of subscription as the gateway to audiovisual information, education, and entertainment challenges the universal funding of PSM. Most prominent is the British government's proposition of transforming the BBC into a subscription service by 2027 – a centenary after its launch as a licence-fee–funded public corporation. Such a move will be a powerful signal to governments across Europe, renewing the urgency to rethink the justification for universal funding of PSM.

While PSM's contribution to democracy through its supply of news has garnered substantial theorisation and empirical investigation (Donders, 2021) and is commonly used in public defences of PSM like the *Public Service Media and Internet Manifesto* (IAMCR, 2021), their contributions to other aspects of society are less present. The broader public service ideal we are concerned with here is content universality, that is, the idea that PSM shall supply a mixed programme that encompasses all genres and has potential appeal to all members of society. This broad understanding of public service programming is an integral part of the remits of European PSM. As Brett Mills (2018) pointed out, however, the justification of content universality is a dimension of universal public service not sufficiently discussed by either academics or (national) public service policy-makers and regulators. In fact, the prevalence of democracy-focused arguments has led to the normalisation of a hierarchy of public service genres that prioritises news and current affairs over entertainment (Mills, 2018). Popular genres, also abundantly supplied on the private market, have instead been met with much academic scepticism as to their fit with public service ideals of rationality and enlightenment (Biltereyst, 2004).

Their role in providing citizens with high-quality, trustworthy information to facilitate democratic processes is an almost intuitive justification of PSM, not only in the face of disinformation on social media platforms, but also when we consider that popular private channels and globally operating subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) services offer hardly any news or current affairs coverage.[1] Yet, relying on the equation of public service and democracy may ultimately pay a disservice to the justification of the broad range of content offered by PSM in Europe, because it risks reducing PSM to a service for news, current affairs, and other forms undersupplied by the private market.[2] Competition in popular entertainment forms is increasing. Netflix is making

headlines with its large investments in original content in Europe (Dziadul, 2021), particularly in the region's biggest markets (Afilipoaie et al., 2021). When cumulating its investment in European fiction, it is amongst the national commissions of BBC, ARD, ZDF, and France Télévision (Fontaine, 2022).

The spread of subscription models and the vast content catalogues of SVoD services, plus their local investments, challenge the legitimacy of universal funding as a necessary condition for supplying high quality content that goes beyond information and education. In a publication of the Institute of Economic Affairs, which has already been instrumental in the push for subscription-funded public service broadcasting under the Peacock Committee (O'Malley, 2009), Philip Booth (2019) has argued in favour of a subscription-funded BBC on several levels: Technologically, subscription has done away with the problem of non-excludability previously used to justify universal funding. Economically, he argued, the internationalisation of the media market has made previously undersupplied genres financially sustainable. Politically, he proposed that the goal of sustaining domestic production could just as well be achieved through other means of policy than publicly funded media.

Such arguments challenge PSM to make the case for the value that a publicly funded universal service brings to society and differentiates it from what is offered by individual suppliers on the private market. Therefore, I ask the following research questions:

RQ1. How can we theoretically conceptualise the societal contribution of PSM's universal content offer?

RQ2. Which ideals for a universal public service can be postulated to meet the needs of contemporary societies?

RQ3. How can such ideals be put into practice in today's media market and political environment?

The Habermasian public sphere has been a dominant theoretical framework for normatively assessing the contribution of PSM to society. It locates PSM's main function in facilitating rational deliberation as part of citizens' political-will formation. However, this equation of PSM and democracy does not easily stretch to genres of entertainment, which form an integral part of PSM's mixed programming. In this chapter, I seek to broaden the limited theoretical view on the public value of content universality by discussing PSM's role in the maintenance and reproduction of societies' lifeworlds. In the second section of the chapter, I detail current challenges to the ideal of content universality in the context of global SVoD services expanding in Europe, and national governments questioning public funding. In the third section, I use Habermas's *Legitimation Crisis* (1980) and *The Theory of Communicative Action* (2005) to consider the public sphere within the broader context of

the lifeworld. I do this for two reasons: First, it provides a framework for understanding the position of PSM at the intersection of the political and economic *system* and the cultural and communicative *lifeworld*, which allows us to see problems for PSM's legitimation emerging from this position. Second, it allows for abstracting normative ideals for a public service that acts as a connector of lifeworld horizons. In the fourth section of this chapter, I sketch such normative perspectives on PSM's contribution to societies' lifeworlds, and in the fifth, I discuss the feasibility of PSM living up to this ideal within the political, competitive, and economic constraints challenging their legitimacy. Throughout the chapter, the BBC serves as an example for the challenges to content universality. The BBC is a suitable case because many of the issues faced by licence-fee–funded PSM are already visible in the BBC's current situation. In the context of economic downturn and inflation, it faces a licence-fee freeze and intense competition from globally operating services on local territory, and it is looking towards potential transformation of the licence fee into a subscription. Many of these issues already affect or can be expected to hit other European PSM, particularly if the abolition of the licence fee in the UK moves forward.

Current debates about public service media's universality and public value

The European model of public service broadcasting is built on a broad remit for PSM as providers of a universal service that addresses everyone within a mostly nationally delimited society with a broad offer of content (see Hasebrink, Chapter 4 in this volume). This means that PSM are more than a mere counterweight to market failure, and their broad remit encompasses several ideals of universality. Drawing on the Broadcasting Research Unit's (1986) definition of universality for PSM, Barbara Thomass (2020) distinguishes between universality in 1) access and reach, 2) genres and services, 3) relevance and impact, and 4) financing with attendant obligations. Particularly the latter point is of key relevance at a time when the licence fee or other forms of public funding are challenged, since the legitimacy of funding by the entirety of society depends on the availability and relevance of the service to all. As charted in the RIPE@2019 volume (Savage et al., 2020), the idea of public service broadcasting's universality has been eroded by a proliferation and fragmentation of services in the globalised and competitive media market. While universality in reach is common to other public services, universality in content offered is unique to broadcasting – and the object of contest (Goodwin, 2020). Debate about content universality concerns normative questions, including which ideals of taste, quality, value, and choice should guide the content offers, as well as pragmatic questions for programme makers concerning how to adequately reach diverse sets of

audiences and meet their needs across genres. The cultural paternalism of the early years of public service broadcasting (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991) has given way to an acknowledgement of popular tastes and choice, but at the same time exposed PSM to criticism (Biltereyst, 2004). More recently, policy-makers and PSM have developed a greater awareness that the remit of catering to everyone in society also requires the production of content that serves minorities and diverse interests with the goal of integrating them into broader society (Horsti, 2014).

With the rise of commercial competition, the question of how the broad spread of PSM should be differentiated from the private offer became a key concern of policy-makers, challenged with balancing the interests of private actors with PSM's contribution to society. In the British context, policy discourse around PSM saw the rise of the concept of "public value" as the measurable contribution to PSM to society through their reach, impact, quality, and "value for money" (Collins, 2007), which also spread across Europe in the form of public value tests for new digital services (Donders & Moe, 2011). Another prominent discourse is that of PSM's "distinctiveness" from the offer of private media (Goddard, 2017), prevalently discussed in strategy papers from the 2010s (BBC Trust & BBC, 2011). Both concepts set limits to content universality in that they deem only offers that are distinct from that of the private market to offer sufficient value to society to warrant public funding. How to define distinctiveness and public value, however, is a matter of ongoing negotiation between governments, broadcasting institutions, regulators, and ultimately the public.

Today, on-demand viewing, pay-per-view, or subscription models, and their personalised services, challenge the very legitimacy of universality in financing, reach, and content. The rise of pay-VoD services has accustomed audiences to only paying for that which they intend to consume and to expect a service adjusted to their individual interests and needs. The idea of an opt-in subscription model, as proposed by the BBC Licence-Fee Abolition Act (Bone, 2022), transfers this individualisation of media consumption to PSM and effectively does away with universality in financing and reach, with likely consequences for content universality as well as relevance and impact across society.

The individualisation and personalisation of on-demand viewing has triggered discussions about how public service algorithms could safeguard the fulfilment of the universality remit (Van den Bulck & Moe, 2018; see also Lassen & Sørensen, Chapter 5 in this volume). The production boom coming with the investment of globally operating SVoD services in Europe also complicates the ideal of content universality, particularly in the British market, where the BBC's commissioning of original content worth GBP 1.2 billion (BBC, 2021) is not far removed from Netflix's spending of USD 1 billion annually in the UK (Sweney, 2021). Across the EU, investment obligations

and content quotas are imposed on global SVoD services, showcasing that public service policy is indeed not the only way for sustaining local production (Komorowski et al., 2021). These investments by global players in local markets weaken the justification of public service as a necessary support for the creative economy, and safeguard for the supply of domestic content across all genres – particularly when combined with programme cuts in response to PSM's funding crisis.

Despite these challenges to content universality, the idea still permeates public service policies. The Royal Charter's public purposes, for example, task the BBC to "provide high-quality output in many different genres and across a range of services and platforms" which are "distinctive from those provided elsewhere" and demands it to "ensure that it provides output and services that meet the needs of the United Kingdom's nations, regions and communities" (British Government, 2016: 5). These overall principles are necessarily vague, and problems can emerge when they become operationalised by regulators like Ofcom, tasked with assessing the BBC's fulfilment of these purposes through measures like standardised audience surveys (e.g., Ofcom, 2021a). Those yardsticks for PSM performance, however, cannot replace a more fundamental debate about the norms and ideals for publicly funded universal contents' contribution to society. The following section traces how the normative debate about the contribution of PSM has come into focus on their role in the democratic public sphere, and I explain how this focus is ill-suited for a defence of content universality. I then discuss how this narrow focus can be broadened by considering PSM's role within the lifeworld of a society.

From a public sphere to a lifeworld-based approach to public service

The normative debate about the legitimacy of PSM in the UK has been dominated by the ideal of the universal public sphere as the basis for deliberative democracy ever since Habermas's concept of the public sphere was discovered by British academics (e.g., Garnham, 1983, 1986; Murdock, 1992) and applied to PSM at a time where market deregulation and the ensuing spread of private broadcast corporations threated its legitimacy. The public sphere–inspired perspectives on the legitimacy of public service broadcasting consider PSM as a facilitator of the debate and discussion culture that is necessary for the public's political-will formation in democratic societies. Nicholas Garnham (1983, 1986) conceptualised public service broadcasters' role in their contribution to shaping an open and egalitarian public sphere that enables the nation's democratic processes by facilitating rational deliberation. Georgina Born (2006, 2018) returned to ideals of the public sphere when scoping norms for PSM in the digital age. Such applications of public-sphere

theory to PSM have also been critiqued based on the delayed reception of *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in the Anglophone study of (public service) media (Collins, 1993; Lunt & Livingstone, 2013). Moreover, the Habermasian public sphere ideal itself has been critiqued in the light of unequal and polarised societies (Fraser, 1990; Mouffe, 1999), which also affects the application of public-sphere ideals to the case of public service broadcasting. Elizabeth Jacka (2003), for example, criticised the orthodoxy of the alignment of PSM and democracy by building on literature that questions the existence and idealist status of an egalitarian and universal public sphere (e.g., Mouffe, 1999). Jacka (2003) argued that private media also fulfil aims that are supposedly unique to PSM and pointed out that the public-sphere inspired defence of public service privileges journalism above all other, supposedly lower, forms of content. Ultimately, Jacka used these arguments to question the legitimacy of public service broadcasting altogether. But even if one does not follow along to that conclusion, her critique raises an important point: Equating public service broadcasting with the defence of democracy via the Habermasian public sphere is problematic, because it rests on ultimately unattainable and possibly outdated ideals and because it narrows our focus to the legitimacy of news and current affairs. If we centre the discussion of the legitimacy of PSM on just their role in facilitating a nation's public sphere, legitimising PSM entertainment or fiction becomes, at best, a stretch. In the worst case, a democracy-focused justification of PSM can be turned into a market-failure argument against universal public service, restricting PSM to news and current affairs.

The concepts of the "cultural public sphere" (McGuigan, 2005) or "civic cultures" (e.g., Dahlgren, 2009) have been used to capture the role of forms of communication other than rational political deliberation in society. Both are developments from Habermas's idea that a "literary" public sphere had formed the precondition for the emergence of a political public sphere, bringing the public together in the first place and exercising its members in discussion of shared topics. This instrumental function has also been applied to PSM's non-news content. Georgina Born (2018: 132) frames it as facilitating "cultural citizenship", which Karen Donders (2021) also uses to discuss PSM's function in nation-building and developing shared identities. The citizenship frame, however, puts non-news content in the instrumental position of providing the space and personal formation for participating in deliberative democracy and thereby ultimately continues to look at entertainment, drama, or popular talk shows through the lens of the public sphere. This is not to say that these forms cannot contribute to debate within the public sphere and play an essential role in the cultural formation of citizens, but rather, it is to point out that this view limits us to a justification of popular entertainment on PSM through their contribution to democracy. Moreover, the equation between political and cultural citizenship contains a national frame, inade-

quate for challenges of contemporary society resulting, for example, from migration and globalisation (Fraser, 2014; for a more detailed discussion on how PSM can facilitate transnational connections of national cultural spheres, see Antoniazzi & Bengesser, 2022).

An alternative approach that allows us to address these shortcomings of the cultural public sphere or cultural citizenship concepts as a basis for PSM norms is, in fact, provided by Habermas's later work, which has been less thoroughly received and discussed in the British academic sphere (Lunt & Livingstone, 2013). In *Legitimation Crisis* (1980) and the *The Theory of Communicative Action* (2005), we find a broader perspective on the public sphere that enables us to 1) understand why it has become increasingly difficult to legitimise public service broadcasting as a state intervention in the media market, and 2) to think of PSM not merely as facilitators of a public sphere, but as connectors of lifeworld horizons within and beyond diverse national societies.

Habermas (2005: 124) defined the lifeworld as "a reservoir of taken-for-granteds, of unshaken convictions that participants in communication draw upon in cooperative processes of interpretation". He characterised the function of sense-making in the lifeworld as serving to "transmit and renew cultural knowledge", contributing to the social integration and solidarity of a group, and aiding the formation of personal identities (Habermas, 2005: 137). Though building on Schütz and Luckmann (1974), he criticised their approach to the lifeworld for being too focused on individuals and their perceptions, which makes it impossible to use the lifeworld concept for sociological theorisation and empirical analysis beyond a reformulation of trivial everyday knowledge and blinds it to external forces that impact human actions and communication (Habermas, 2005). This criticism makes it clear that Habermas's use of the lifeworld concept goes beyond a phenomenology of everyday life experience, and instead considers it as an element within the broader workings of societies. But contrary to systems theory, Habermas considers the lifeworld as more than another "cog in the system" of society. He presents the boundaries between system and lifeworld as the following:

> The subsystem of the economy and the bureaucratic state administration are on the one side, while on the other side, we find private spheres of life (connected with family, neighbourhood, voluntary associations) as well as public spheres (for both private persons and citizens). (Habermas, 2005: 310)

Hence, Habermas locates the public sphere *amidst* the lifeworld, which also contains everyday life within the various sub-communities of which individuals are part of. So, the first contribution of a lifeworld-based approach to the question of public service legitimacy is that it enables us to see the public sphere embedded within and not elevated or detached from the private sphere of everyday life. The lifeworld becomes the horizon of attitudes, experiences,

identity, and relationships that shape the interactions of individuals with the world – political deliberation in the public sphere being just one of those interactions. The other functions of the lifeworld include cultural reproduction, community building, and making sense of contemporary experience. This broadening of perspectives allows us to ask the normative question of how PSM can and should contribute productively to the maintenance and reproduction of the lifeworld as the gateway to our understanding of the world. But before delving into the terrain of norms for PSM's contribution to the lifeworlds of the societies that finance them, there is a second – possibly more important – issue to address: namely, the relationship between the economy and state, and the private and public spheres.

The administrative system is differentiated from the economic one, in Habermas's work, yet both are considered distinct from the lifeworld. This distinction provides two different perspectives on society. Habermas (2005) explained that a lifeworld point of view conceives of society from the perspective of its participating subjects, while a systems perspective observes a society as a system of institutions, whose actions ensure the society's continued existence. His analysis of the relationship between system and lifeworld focused on the process of their "uncoupling", which Habermas (2005) presented as characteristic for modern societies. As a result, the administrative and economic system becomes increasingly complex, abstract, and detached from the values, meanings, and motivations that circulate within the language- and culture-based lifeworld (Habermas, 2005). This process of uncoupling materialises in increasing bureaucratisation that makes the system more and more independent and detached from the lifeworld. But still, the system stays dependent on the supply of legitimation from the lifeworld which it cannot generate itself (Habermas, 1980).

Hence, the administrative system cannot itself generate the meaning that motivates citizens to support and thereby legitimate their interventions. The sense that generates meaning must come from *within* the lifeworld, but since the economic and political system have become detached from it, it becomes increasingly difficult to foster support for their actions within the lifeworld. Legitimation problems in late-capitalist societies thus present themselves as a consequence of a growing disconnect between the money- and power-based actions of the administrative system and its subjects' communicatively structured lifeworld horizons, which fail to make sense of the system's actions (Habermas, 1980). This lack of meaning can lead to a withdrawal of legitimation. This process of uncoupling between system and lifeworld described by Habermas is further complicated by the fragmentation and deterritorialisation of the lifeworld that were already observed in the early second half of the twentieth century (Luckmann, 1970; Shibutani, 1955), but became accelerated with the digitalisation of communication technology and processes of cultural globalisation (Volkmer, 2014).

So, what does this mean for PSM? The fundamental crisis dynamic of system and lifeworld drifting apart is also at the heart of PSM's legitimacy crisis, because PSM *are* an administrative intervention into the private market and society. From a system's perspective, increasingly complex remits, regulations, and accountability seek to balance the interests of the state and the economy and to demonstrate an effective output of policy. To retain their systemic legitimacy as an effective intervention into market and society, PSM must demonstrate to governments and regulators how they fulfil their remits. They do this in annual reports or commissioned research that adhere to the bureaucratised language and measurements required by the administrative system, such as "distinctiveness" or "public value". Yet, these arguments have limited traction among the public that experiences society as their lifeworld.

Television has been acknowledged and analysed as a medium that has integrated itself into the home and people's everyday life (Scannell, 2014; Silverstone, 1994). But beyond audiovisual media's unquestionable prominence in our everyday life, they also contain the abstract meaning strata inherent in the lifeworld, because they contain narratives. Habermas (2005) argued that narratives make visible and circulate taken-for-granteds in a society, because they are used to maintain and make sense of communities' internal structures in the face of new events, aimed at managing the situation at hand. This is exactly where content universality becomes crucial for achieving lifeworld proximity, because different forms of narratives process life differently.

Public service broadcasters in Europe have a rich tradition of issue-led social realism, which has distinguished their drama productions from commercial competitors as far back as the 1960s, but already then, they were accompanied by more popular serials to regularly attract audiences (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1997). Popular programming, as argued by Biltereyst (2004), is in fact essential to PSM's positioning as central reference points in a fragmenting society. Narrative traits of popular forms like soap operas or genre conventions of melodrama also facilitate the sort of "emotional realism", which Ien Ang (1985: 45) has identified as the key for the arguably socially unrealistic television programme *Dallas* to become relevant and relatable to audiences around the world, discussed and understood in relation to their individual lifeworld horizons (Katz & Liebes, 1990). Emotionality and argumentation based on individual identity are key to popular talk show formats and thus stand in opposition to the rationalist ideal of debate in the public sphere (Lunt & Stenner, 2005). Entertainment formats like reality or nature programmes allow PSM to travel around the respective country and thereby represent and take audiences to different regions (Thompson, 2010). But content perceived as relevant to audiences' lifeworlds is also not necessarily that which originates from within "their" national or local culture. As demonstrated by Eichner (2020) and Jensen and McCutcheon (2020), non-domestic content can also achieve high levels of lifeworld proximity and

allow audiences to work through issues like gender roles and to take a critical look at their own societies. Therefore, the relevance of a programme to the lifeworlds of viewers cannot be determined through hierarchies of genre, aesthetic qualities, or groundedness in specific national cultures. All of television's cultural forms, not just news, provide narratives that help organise and explain events, actions, and relationships in the lifeworld.

The importance of television in helping people make sense of their experience has been stressed by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (1993) in their critique of *Structural Transformation*, originally published in 1972. They described television production as a means for expressing, organising, and reproducing societal experience. Negt and Kluge claimed that failing to do so in an adequate manner with programmes close to the interests and needs of the public will cost public service broadcasting its legitimacy in the competition with private media. With this proposition that public service programmes should be close to the interests and needs of the public, we enter the debate of concrete norms for PSM's role in the reproduction and development of the lifeworld of the society that finances it. The following section sketches ways in which a lifeworld-based thinking about PSM can help us to avoid an instrumentalist and nationally delimited view and to formulate the inherent value of public service programmes beyond the news, which allows for determining norms for a universal public service.

Normative perspectives on public service media's contribution to societies' lifeworlds

If we follow Habermas's proposition that the legitimacy for political intervention into market and society can only originate from within the lifeworld, the lifeworld-relevance of public service programmes becomes key to achieving the public support necessary for retaining PSM's legitimacy. Thomas Bauer (2011) offered a lifeworld-based approach to the public value of entertainment programmes, which play with possibilities as well as in offering relief, alternative views, and new perspectives. An "emancipatory media culture", as proposed by Bauer, should aim for the development of individual and lifeworld horizons. This ideal entails that programme offers should meet viewers within their own lifeworlds, but in doing so, aim at getting them out of limitations posed by a lack of perspectives originating from everyday despair, provincialism, or self-sufficient opinions (Bauer, 2011). When programmes achieve such an emancipatory value, their public funding is justified, according to Bauer (2011).

For the normative legitimacy of public service broadcasting, this means that PSM should strive for facilitating exchanges of perspectives that enable audiences to critically examine the taken-for-granteds that compose their lifeworld horizons and structure their experience. Following from this, tele-

vision (and other PSM) is relevant within the lifeworld when they provide narratives that help people make sense of the world around them by offering new perspectives and locating or integrating them within their social communities. This approach views programmes as an intervention into the collective interpretation of societal experience. In contemporary pluralised societies, reaching collective interpretations necessitates bringing people together across political, cultural, or demographic divides.

Georgina Born's (2006, 2018) model of reciprocal connections between minority and majority groups takes membership of different societal communities as a starting point for determining whose experiences should be connected by public service media. This model is also applicable to a lifeworld-based consideration of PSM, but only when these identities also motivate the difference in experience, for example, regarding issues of racial discrimination. Yet not all differences in experience of society can be reduced to exclusive identity markers that create clear majorities and minorities in a society. Moreover, taking the individual and the groups they are part of as starting points for connecting different lifeworld horizons quickly spirals into an infinity of difference, where common denominators become scarce and tenuous.

A different starting point outside the identity of individuals is offered by Habermas's consideration of the lifeworld as the realm in which communication happens. While Benita Luckmann (1970) looked at different lifeworld horizons centred by the subject, Habermas looked at lifeworld horizons meeting in particular communicative *situations*. He described a situation as "a segment of lifeworld contexts of relevance" (Habermas, 2005: 122). These "contexts of relevance are concentrically ordered and become increasingly anonymous and diffused as the spatiotemporal and social distance grows" (Habermas, 2005: 122–123). Habermas thereby acknowledged the fragmentation of the lifeworld, whilst providing a way for analytically dealing with it by looking at specific situations as points that anchor and connect diverging horizons in a particular moment.

Centring relevant segments of lifeworld horizons around particular communicative situations offers an opportunity for connecting different perspectives to make sense of a situation. For the project of facilitating an emancipatory development of lifeworld horizons through PSM, this means that programmes should provide situations in which potentially limiting segments of lifeworld horizons become relevant and lifted from their taken-for-grantedness and subsequently become thematised and critically assessed. The task for PSM is to create communicative situations that encourage connections between the lifeworlds of the viewers to provide new or challenging perspectives for making sense of their experiences. For this task, programmes across all genres and modes of presentation on broadcast and VoD become relevant.

Another normative question concerns whose experiences should be presented and connected to render a comprehensive picture of a situation deter-

mined by the issues raised in the programmes. Nancy Fraser (2014) proposed using the concept of co-imbrication as the factor that determines who should be included in a public sphere within globalised society. Her concept of co-imbrication presents a development of the idea that all those affected by a political decision, and not just those who are citizens of a specific state, should ideally be involved in the deliberation about the decision. This helps break the link between the national delimitation that comes with ideals of civic and cultural citizenship as underlying ideals for PSM practice. Broadening Fraser's approach to the ideal of inclusivity in the public sphere to the lifeworld, programmes should make visible the experiences of those co-imbricated in the situation about which public service programmes speak.

How different experiences are depicted and linked on PSM can be guided by the ideal of an emancipatory development of societies' lifeworld horizons, as implied in the work of Negt and Kluge (1993) and explicitly proposed by Thomas Bauer (2011). An emancipatory development of lifeworld horizons aims to challenge the taken-for-granteds circulating in the lifeworld by enabling people to question them and see their own horizons in relation to others. In the process of connecting relevant experiences, the ideals of parity (Fraser, 2014) and multilevel reciprocity (Born, 2006) between the perspectives presented on screen help work against preconceived hierarchies between different points of view. These ideals proposed for public spheres in pluralised and globalised societies can be expanded to a lifeworld-based approach by arguing that PSM's contribution to a society's lifeworld lies in connecting the horizons of different groups.

Still, there is one important difference between the public sphere and the lifeworld that needs addressing. In contrast to the ideal of the public sphere – in which different opinions on a matter are exchanged, detached from the participants' personal background (Habermas, 1991) – a lifeworld-based ideal of public service broadcasting is interested in exactly these particular interests emerging from their diverging experiences of the world. While according to Habermas's original public-sphere ideals, participants in a debate can agree or disagree with each other's arguments based on their empirical or normative validity only (Habermas, 1980), there is no ground for disagreeing with another person's experience emerging from their personal lifeworld horizon. A dialogue between (genuine) experiences is not a teleological process in which consensus over the most convincing argument can be reached; instead, it provides a portfolio of different perspectives that challenge and complement each other. Therefore, a lifeworld-based conception about the role of PSM is closer to Chantal Mouffe's (1999) ideal of "agonistic pluralism", which acknowledges that oppositions cannot be resolved and passions not eliminated. Instead, the subjectivities and individual interests are what becomes central in the way PSM represent the diverse experiences that exist within the society that finances them. Programme forms like drama, talk, or reality

– built around the subjectivities and passions of individuals – can achieve a representation of such agonistic pluralism. While consensus becomes impossible, the ultimate goal of the juxtaposition of different subjectivities still aims to address shared communicative issues revolving around fundamental questions of how to live together in plural societies facing global challenges.

To sum up, a lifeworld-based normative approach to PSM seeks to provide representations of experience and emancipation from limited individual horizons of understanding these experiences. Such emancipation can be achieved by connecting people across different lifeworld horizons – that is, connecting different perspectives. The difference in the perspectives that are to be brought together is not necessarily grounded in differences of individual identities, but in the individuals' relation to a specific communicative situation. In contrast to the ideal of the rational public sphere, the outcome of the communication is not aimed at resolving difference through consensus, but at a form of connection between diverging lifeworld horizons that allows for challenging taken-for-granteds contained within them and thereby facilitating emancipation. Whose lifeworlds should be connected is not determined by shared political or cultural citizenship, but by co-imbrication in communicative situations of shared concern, which may make it necessary to connect PSM audiences across borders (Antoniazzi & Bengesser, 2022). The crucial question remaining, however, is how to implement these ideals using the full spectrum of content universality within constraints posed by the political and economic contexts in which PSM operate.

Challenges to the ideal of public service media as connectors of lifeworld horizons

PSM are challenged in their fulfilment of universality in reach and content by the diverse and often conflicting needs or interests of individual members of society, as well as by the ways in which their fulfilment of universality ideals is assessed. Ofcom's (2021c) measurement of the BBC's performance reveals that groups such as viewers over 65 years of age, people with disabilities, or those belonging to lower socioeconomic strata have a higher tendency to feel that the content offered is either not relevant to them or that their experiences are not sufficiently presented on-screen. Ofcom's (2018) more in-depth study on the representation and portrayal on BBC television has audiences voicing concerns over stereotypical images of members of Black communities seen predominantly as struggling or disadvantaged, or thematically skewed, for example, sensationalising transgender or gay experiences. In his argumentation against a universal licence fee for the BBC, Booth (2019) pointed to niche providers often being better at catering to minority tastes than the BBC. And indeed, the BBC's competitors like Netflix, as well as US-American content, are mentioned by members of Black and LGBTQ+ communities as services

managing to create greater relevance through the variety of portrayals offered (Ofcom, 2018). But the challenge to PSM goes beyond losing these audiences to the competition.

For fulfilling the ideal of PSM connecting different lifeworld horizons, it becomes relevant to see whether the representation of specific experiences manages to challenge taken-for-granteds held by broader society. Here, British PSM seem to fall short. A majority of Black respondents found representations of their ethnic groups to be fairly or very negative, while the overall public service audience did *not* see them as such (Puttnam, 2016). This gulf in perception evidences that British PSM not only fail to adequately represent certain experiences, but that they circulate negative images of minorities instead of facilitating an emancipation from limiting lifeworld horizons, for both the stereotyped groups and the viewers outside this group who perceive those representations as normal. This is where PSM could act as agents of change by exposing a broad audience to different lifeworld experiences instead of limiting minority audiences to the private "niche services" cited by Booth (2019).

Diversity benchmarks and monitoring schemes are supposed to help by making media institutions like the BBC more accessible (Ofcom, 2021c). However, this regulatory approach betrays a simplistic perception of creative input and output. Access to the industry by creatives from diverse backgrounds does not automatically translate into diverse experiences and stories on-screen. Limiting creatives from underrepresented backgrounds to write about "their" experiences risks perpetuating the very hierarchies it seeks to redress. This is not to argue against greater diversity on and behind the screen, but to highlight a problem with the underlying idea that PSM sufficiently fulfil the representational needs of a society if they only manage to hire, adequately represent, and reach individual societal groups defined by certain identity markers.

While instructive in highlighting the blind spots in the institution's representation of contemporary society, the regulatory assessment of the BBC's performance according to demographic subgroups presents a problem. The focus on how well the BBC does among different societal groups does not assess its performance in connecting people across different lifeworld horizons. Ofcom's consumer-research paradigm (Lunt & Livingstone, 2013) focuses on the parameters set by the legislation, operationalising the public purposes from the Royal Charter in its standardised audience surveys (Ofcom, 2021a). These reports therefore paint a picture of public opinion tailored to fit the governmental system's requirement to demonstrate publicly the efficacy of their policies, but in a bureaucratised way, removed from actual experience. Such modes of assessing PSM performance are thus unsuited for a broader debate about whether the way in which PSM's contribution to society is phrased in current public policy even relates to the needs of the society. The

core issue is the disintegration of the systemic and the lifeworld perspective on PSM, of which the increased bureaucratisation and measurement of public value is symptomatic. When pressured by the administrative system through funding cuts and increasingly detailed requirements for demonstrating public value to maintain public funding, PSM will most likely orient themselves to these demands rather than broader, ultimately unmeasurable, norms for lifeworld relevance or emancipation through connection of different perspectives.

Another challenge for PSM acting as connectors of lifeworld horizons is the fragmentation of the lifeworld into self-selected "small life-worlds" (Luckmann, 1970), catalysed by the proliferation of offers on the media market, which has contributed to an individualisation of media repertoires (see also Hasebrink, Chapter 4 in this volume). This situation, on the one hand, emphasises the necessity of PSM acting as agents of societal integration, while on the other hand, it complicates the project, because they not only struggle to reach all parts of society equally, but their competing SVoD and niche services brand themselves on personalisation and addressing the interests of specific groups. Thereby, the personalisation and individualisation of media consumption is working against the ideal of exposing viewers to a broad variety of content or connecting them to experiences that may take them outside their own lifeworld horizons.

As shown by Van den Bulck and Moe (2018), PSM increasingly move towards algorithmic personalisation of their services, but still combine them with editorial curation. Kelly (2021) argued that the BBC does not offer large-scale personalisation on its iPlayer, as he estimates that 80 per cent of content offered will be the same for everyone. The question is how these 80 per cent are presented. Kelly's two-year tracking of the iPlayer's interface shows that the presentation of content through the categories is mostly led by genre, popularity, and the featuring of box-sets (Kelly & Sørensen, 2021) rather than a topical curation and combination of different genres around certain themes or issues. In contrast to this, the Danish DRTV (discussed in more detail by Lassen & Sørensen, Chapter 5 in this volume), applies a more flexible strategy to content curation which includes thematic categories (Kelly & Sørensen, 2021).[3] Offering topical connections across the full range of genres is also a way to showcase the distinction of PSM interfaces from those of the commercial competition; not only in the way content is ordered, but also in the way it is embedded into a larger context of different forms and perspectives dealing with a shared issue.

The ultimate challenge to the ideals of lifeworld-relevance and connection of diverging horizons, though, is the transformation of public funding to subscription, because it entails an end to universality in reach – that is, to the idea that it is the purpose of PSM to serve and connect audiences across the entire society. With subscription funding, catering only to those who subscribe becomes acceptable and necessary for economic survival. This in turn has

implications for the range of content produced and the way it is presented. The customer relationship established through the transaction of subscription and the expectations derived from experience with different SVoD services' personalisation and niche content are likely to enforce an individualisation in the mode of address and content presentation. This may lead to a focus on the (small) lifeworlds and content preferences of those willing to subscribe, rather than a fulfilment of the ideal of a full range of programmes used to challenge such individualised lifeworld horizons.

Conclusion

For the theoretical debate about the contribution of PSM to society, the lifeworld concept provides us with a broader view on society than the concept of the public sphere, since it includes the societal processes of community building, sense-making, and cultural reproduction. Thereby, it becomes possible to adequately include the value of genres other than news and to understand them beyond their instrumental role in facilitating public spheres for democratic deliberation.

A public service practice which acknowledges that people living together in a society will have different experiences of issues that concern them accommodates the plurality as well as the agonistic tendencies in contemporary societies. Moreover, it makes public service's difference from the private sector more tangible. In contrast to private services, which can choose to focus on niches or the most lucrative strata of the audience, the universality principles of PSM charge them with striving to cater to all interests and societal groups. The key difference from the offer of the fragmented private market is that PSM are not simply catering to individual interests but aim to connect audiences across groups. From a normative point of view, bringing audiences together around issues in which they are co-imbricated is therefore the key contribution of a universal public service to society. To achieve this integrative function, PSM not only need the full range of audiovisual content but also must appear as a common provider for society.

In short, PSM's unique contribution to the maintenance and development of a society's lifeworld horizon lies in *connecting* different experiences to question the taken-for-granteds circulating in the small lifeworlds sustained by media targeting only specific groups. These taken-for-granteds are the basis for processes of cultural reproduction, community building, and making sense of contemporary experience – that is, the basis for how societies deal with change. Yet, PSM are challenged in their efforts to live up to an ideal of acting as connectors of lifeworld horizons. The fragmentation of the media market and their existing unequal reach across diverse social groups interferes with PSM's opportunity to reach everyone co-imbricated in shared issues. Competition, particularly in entertainment content, gives rise to calls

for a narrowing of PSM remits to underserved programme forms, curtailing their opportunity to use popular genres as a way of working through societal challenges. Logics of personalisation and ranking followed by some PSM come at the expense of using interfaces to facilitate topical connections, suited for exposing users to diverging lifeworld horizons. Finally, the fulfilment of the ideal of PSM as connectors of lifeworld horizons is challenged by regulatory frameworks focused on fixed and measurable performance indicators for their contribution to society rather than their broader role in society coming to terms with internal and external change.

Acknowledgements

Parts of this chapter are based on the author's unpublished PhD thesis "Legitimising Public Service Broadcasting in Europe: Crisis Dynamics, Legitimacy Performances, Normative Perspectives" (2019) at Birkbeck, University of London, funded by a doctoral scholarship by Cusanuswerk. Further research was conducted in the framework of ScreenMe-Net project (EU Horizon2020, grant number 952156).

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Endnotes

[1] In April 2021, the Netflix catalogue in the UK comprised just 5.8 per cent factual content, which includes documentary, news, and current affairs (Ofcom, 2021b), while between August 2018 and 2020, the catalogue of the BBC iPlayer contained on average 33.6 per cent factual content (Kelly, 2021).

[2] A move towards a content-based policy for public service has, for example, been advocated for in the House of Lords (2009: para. 13) recommending that PSM focus on the "provision of core elements including national and regional news, current affairs programmes, the arts, children's programming, programmes dealing with religion and other beliefs and UK content".

[3] A recent example is the category "Greenland – History, nature and culture", which explores Denmark's relationship to Greenland across all genres reaching from historical documentaries and current affairs programmes to the fourth season of the fictional series *Borgen* and Greenland-related episodes of popular travel, food, and lifestyle shows (e.g., *Nak & Æd* or *Hammerslag*).

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CHAPTER 4

Media use and social integration

An explorative study on public service media's contribution to societal cohesion

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the relationship between media usage and indicators for social integration. I seek to answer the following overarching research question: How can we assess the contribution of public service media to societal integration? The chapter starts with conceptual considerations on societal integration, and I propose a set of indicators for the empirical study of individuals' social integration. The empirical basis of this research is a representative telephone survey of adults in Germany in 2018–2019. Findings demonstrate the relationship between indicators of media use and indicators of social integration and the specific role of public service media (PSM) in this respect. In the conclusion, I discuss implications of this research for the assessment of PSM's contribution to society.

KEYWORDS: contribution to society, media repertoires, public service media, social integration, media use

Hasebrink, U. (2023). Media use and social integration: An explorative study on public service media's contribution to societal cohesion. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 69–86). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-4

Introduction

The focus of this volume, public service media's contribution to society, refers to recent academic, organisational, and regulatory efforts to redefine public service media's (PSM) remit and functions in digital media environments (EBU, 2015). It takes up earlier discourses on media performance (McQuail, 1992), media accountability (Baldi & Hasebrink, 2006; Mitchell & Blumler, 1994), and public value (Cañedo et al., 2022; Collins, 2008; Martin & Lowe, 2014). These discourses emphasise that PSM must prove that they perform in terms of certain quality criteria, that they are accountable to their audiences and the public in general, and that they offer some kind of public value. Compared with these concepts, the concept of contribution to society, as proposed by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU, 2015), puts even stronger emphasis on PSM's *societal* impact – that is, on the actual effects of its activities in society.

When it comes to investigating the performance of PSM, research often focuses on the supply side of the communicative process, that is, the content that PSM offer. As a rule, by means of content analyses, this type of research measures a range of performance indicators, for example, the relative amount of information, entertainment, education, and orientation, the public relevance of news, the diversity of genres, topics, and opinions, and the deliberative characteristics of PSM's output (Jandura & Friedrich, 2014). However, these indicators only reflect the communicative *potential* offered by the media – that is, a necessary but not sufficient condition for successful communication (Hasebrink & Hölig, 2020). In order to evaluate the degree to which PSM fulfil their communicative functions and actually perform – that is, contribute to society – we need to know why users consume this media, and which effects these reasons might have (see also Fehlmann, Chapter 2 in this volume; Just et al., 2017; Sehl, 2020).

The objective of assessing PSM's contribution to society faces several challenges. To the extent that media's contribution to society is understood as an impact or effect of these media, an assessment of this effect would require a kind of causal proof. Due to the complexity of mediatised societal processes, this kind of causal argument seems to be an unrealistic target for the regular assessment of PSM's contribution to society. However, to provide at least some substantial empirical evidence in this direction, this chapter offers conceptual considerations and empirical findings on the interplay between indicators of individuals' patterns of media use and their social integration. Correlations between these indicators would not prove that it was the media that led to a particular societal effect. Nevertheless, they still provide important evidence that can inform a comprehensive evaluation of PSM's contribution to society.

Another challenge for research that sets out to assess PSM's contribution to society is the wide range of media functions that might be regarded as

relevant for society (e.g., McQuail, 1992). Therefore, it is necessary to specify which particular function should be in the focus of research. The research presented in this chapter deals with media's contribution to societal integration, which is one of the key functions of media in general, and of PSM in particular (Thomass et al., 2015). Moreover, in recent years, the perceived decline of societal cohesion has become a major concern in many countries. This decline is often attributed to changes in the media environment and an increasing fragmentation of audiences. Several studies have provided empirical arguments for the decline of societal cohesion – in this case, in Germany – by stressing "a loss of the centre" (Zick et al., 2019), increasing social inequalities (Groh-Samberg et al., 2018), a general polarisation of societal debates (Krause & Gagné, 2019), and an increase of symptoms of group-related hostility (Decker & Brähler, 2018). However, the understanding of societal cohesion and integration underlying these discussions is rather vague and heterogeneous. Therefore, integration is not a static target in itself; instead, it should be an issue of public communication to find out, in a given societal context, how much and what kind of societal integration is regarded as beneficial or harmful. This societal discourse or self-understanding needs empirical indicators of how society integrates itself and of the role of media in general, and specific media in particular. This is particularly important for PSM: As part of their public remit and legitimation, PSM must provide evidence that they fulfil an integrative function as their contribution to society (EBU, 2015).

Against this background, I explore the relationship between media usage and indicators for social integration and seek to answer the following overarching research question:

RQ1. How can we assess the contribution of public service media to societal integration?

The chapter starts with conceptual considerations on societal integration, and I propose a set of indicators for the empirical study of individuals' social integration. After a short description of the method – a representative telephone survey of adults in Germany in 2018–2019 – I present findings that demonstrate the relationship between indicators of media use and indicators of social integration. In the conclusion, I discuss implications of this research for the assessment of PSM's contribution to society.

Social integration as part of public service media's remit

The objective of assessing media's contribution to societal integration is confronted with the challenge that the concept of societal integration or cohesion is not well defined (Chan et al., 2006). An important distinction refers to the level of analysis: On the one hand, the concept refers to system

integration, that is, the degree to which a society or public is integrated; on the other hand, it refers to social integration, that is, the degree to which an individual is integrated in the society (e.g., Lockwood, 1969). Furthermore, with regard to both levels of analysis, we must consider different or even contradicting opinions on how we can recognise integration, for instance, whether it is characterised by a high level of homogeneity of all members of society or rather by intense interactions between different parts of society.

This conceptual vagueness extends to theoretical and political debates on the specific remit of PSM that generally emphasise societal integration as one of PSM's key functions (Collins, 2008; McQuail, 1992). Even if the term is not literally used, many of the criteria that are supposed to characterise PSM are closely related to their integrative function. For instance, they are expected to provide their service to the whole population and not neglect certain groups, for example, young or less-educated people (Schulz et al., 2019). Accordingly, they are criticised for any strategy that might further audience fragmentation (Lassen, 2020). With regard to their role in modern democracies, PSM are supposed to reflect the diversity of societal topics and perspectives and thus offer an opportunity for all citizens to recognise their own positions and perspectives (Lund & Lowe, 2016). To conclude, while there is a consensus that PSM should contribute to societal integration, there is much disagreement about what kind of societal integration is needed. With regard to efforts to assess PSM's performance, public value, or contribution to society, this situation is a serious challenge. To solve this challenge, the argument here is that PSM should foster a broad societal debate on how these media should contribute to what kind of societal integration (see, e.g., Rodríguez-Castro & Campos-Freire, Chapter 11 in this volume). In order to substantiate this debate, research should provide empirical evidence indicating PSM's role in and contribution to society.

As one specific step within this broader ambition, this chapter proposes a conceptual framework for the empirical analysis of media's integrative functions, which focuses on the individual level of social integration (see Figure 4.1): The guiding question is how specific patterns of media use relate to indicators of media users' social integration. The reason for referring to "patterns" of media use is the following argument: Given the wide reach of media, the fact that an individual uses a particular medium, for example, television or the Internet, or a particular channel, for example, a public service or a private channel, is not very meaningful and does not tell much about the individual and their everyday life. In order to strengthen the link between individuals' everyday lives and media use, we must go beyond the level of single media to the level of media repertoires (Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012), that is, the composition of different media that an individual uses. Patterns of media use will be described on two levels: The first level refers to different types of media – legacy media and online media – which helps to

understand the implications of the digitalisation of the media environment for social integration (e.g., Lowe et al., 2018). The second level refers to different kinds of television channels – particularly public service and private channels – which helps to understand the specific role of public service and private channels.

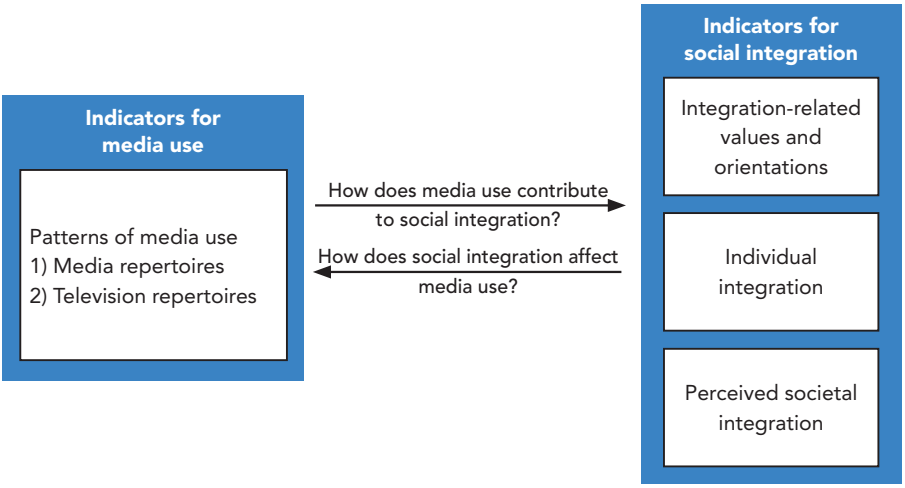
In order to grasp individuals' social integration, indicators that reflect three different aspects of social integration were included:

- Integration-related values and orientations: These indicators refer to how people think about societal integration and what kind of integration they favour. This aspect of social integration is only loosely connected to normative considerations concerning the remit of PSM. As outlined above, there are different conceptualisations of "good" integration; therefore, the open research question here is about how certain patterns of media use are related to what kinds of integration-related values and orientations.

- Individual integration: These indicators reflect to what extent people engage in social activities, for example, political participation, membership in associations and clubs, or engagement in social initiatives. Theoretical work on democracy often emphasises that one of the core prerequisites for this form of government is that citizens actively engage in opinion-building on issues of public concern and in political and social activities. Accordingly, PSM are expected to encourage and to stimulate media users' interest and engagement in political and social activities. Therefore, one might expect that the use of PSM goes along with a higher level of integration.

- Perception of societal cohesion: These indicators refer to people's individual perceptions of societal integration: How do they perceive and evaluate the current state of societal cohesion and of democracy in their country? These perceptions build a conceptual link between the individual level of social integration and the societal level of system integration. With regard to normative expectations from PSM, these indicators are ambivalent and context-dependent; therefore, again, it is an open question about how the use of PSM relates to the perception of rather strong or weak societal cohesion.

Figure 4.1 Conceptual framework



As indicated above, the relationships between the concepts in this framework cannot be clearly interpreted in either of the two possible directions. The arrows in Figure 4.1 indicate the mutual interaction between media use and social integration: On the one hand, social integration might lead to specific patterns of media use, and on the other, media use affects social integration.

Method

Sample and data collection

German public service broadcaster ZDF, together with mindline media (Berlin) and Leibniz Institute for Media Research | Hans-Bredow-Institut (HBI, Hamburg), conducted a study with the objective of developing and measuring indicators for integrative media functions in order to further the public discourse about media's contribution to societal cohesion (see Hasebrink et al., 2019). Data were collected by a telephone survey among the German population. mindline media conducted the fieldwork in December 2018 and January 2019. The sample (n = 1,205) is representative for German-speaking individuals in Germany aged 14 years and older.

Operationalisation of key indicators

In order to assess patterns of media use on the level of types of media, we asked for the frequency of use of 1) television, 2) radio, 3) newspapers and magazines, and 4) online media. These indicators are not distinctive, since respondents were asked to also consider the online channels of television, radio, and print organisations. As a rule, the majority of respondents claimed

to use the four media on a daily basis, except print media (43%). According to these results, television stands out with the highest frequency of use – only 6 per cent said they never use the medium (for radio, this figure is 14%, for print media, 16%, and for online media, 17%). As is well known from previous audience research, these frequencies of use correlate with indicators for social position: Women and older groups tend to watch television more often; older groups are more likely to listen to the radio; older groups and higher-educated groups are more frequent readers of print media; and younger and higher-educated groups are more likely to frequently use the Internet.

In order to identify cross-media patterns of media use, based on single indicators, we applied an explorative cluster-centre analysis and identified four general media repertoires that represent our first indicator for patterns of media use (see Table 4.1). The most frequent one (57% of all respondents), pattern A, is characterised by daily use of online media and radio; in addition, they used television and print media several times a week. Thus, they have a very broad media repertoire. In terms of social position, this group represents the average population, with a small trend towards higher education. The most significant characteristic of pattern B is that these respondents did not use online media, while they often used the other three media. This was the oldest group (on average, more than 63 years old), with women and individuals with lower education being over-represented. Pattern C is just the opposite, these individuals often used online media, and only rarely the other three media. This was the youngest group, included mainly men, and tended to be less educated. Finally, pattern D is characterised by daily use of online media, and frequent use of television and print media, while radio does not play a significant role. This group stands out with the highest formal education.

The findings reflect well-known differences between social groups with regard to their media use. However, they also illustrate the relevance of a pattern perspective. For instance, most studies on media use report a positive correlation between the use of online media and higher education – so does ours. However, the pattern-oriented analysis identifies one group (C) that mainly relied on online media but tended to be less educated. Thus, the main difference between groups with higher and lower education is not rooted in the frequency of use of online media, but rather in the fact that online media are combined with other media.

Table 4.1 *General media repertoires and their social characteristics*

Repertoires	*N*	% of sample	Average age (years)	Female (%)	Higher education (%)
A: Daily online and radio, often TV and print	695	57.7	46.5	51.2	39.6
B: No online, other media often	244	20.2	63.9	58.2	11.1
C: Often online, other media rarely	144	12.0	34.6	39.6	26.0
D: Daily online, often TV and print, radio rarely	122	10.1	44.3	48.4	45.0
Total	1,205	100.0	48.3	50.9	31.2

The second indicator for patterns of media use provides information about the use of television and the particular role of public service television. Based on how often the respondents reported watching the most relevant public service and private channels, we distinguished four television repertoires: regular viewers of public service and private channels, that is, those who watch at least one public service channel and at least one private channel at least four times a week; regular viewers of public service channels but not of private channels; regular viewers of private channels only; and those who do not regularly watch any channel (see Table 4.2). The largest group (36.6%) was regular viewers of public service channels; they were older than the average, a majority female, and more highly educated. The second largest group (28.4%) included those individuals who watched neither public nor private channels on a regular basis; this was the youngest group, a majority male, and rather well educated. Members of the third group (22.6%) regularly watched both public and private channels; they were older and less educated. Finally, the fourth group (12.5%) was rather young, female, and less educated.

Table 4.2 *Television repertoires and social characteristics*

Regular viewers (at least 1 channel at least 4 times a week)	*N*	% of sample	Average age (years)	Female (%)	Higher education (%)
Neither public nor private channels	342	28.4	36.6	46.1	39.6
Only private channels	150	12.5	40.9	60.7	19.1
Only public service channels	441	36.6	59.0	54.2	36.8
Both public service and private channels	272	22.6	49.8	51.8	25.0
Total	1,205	100.0	48.3	50.9	31.2

In order to assess integration-related values and orientations, respondents were asked how important they considered 13 different values. By means of explorative factor analysis, we identified three independent dimensions explaining 53 per cent of the total variance:

- Factor 1 "Tolerance/Respect": Tolerance towards other ways of living (loading: .74), respectful conduct (.72), justice (.67), equal opportunities (.67), to be taken seriously and to be heard (.64), helpfulness (.62), democratic thinking (.58), friendliness (.51).
- Factor 2 "Success/Performance": Success (.81), orientation towards performance (.74), fun and amusement (.65).
- Factor 3 "Connection to homeland/Safety": Connection to homeland (.76), safety (.59).

Each of these three dimensions reflect particular aspects of social integration that do not exclude each other: In statistical terms, they are independent from each other; thus, among the respondents, all kinds of combinations of the three dimensions are possible. The three dimensions vary with the respondents' social position: "Tolerance/Respect" was more salient among women and among people with higher education; 20–29-year-olds had the highest values on this dimension, and the oldest group (70+) had the lowest. "Success/Performance" stood out among younger groups, and among men, while education did not make a substantial difference. "Connection to homeland/Safety" was more important for younger and older groups than for middle-aged people; and less-educated groups rated this aspect higher.

The way in which people integrate themselves into society can be described by their social and political activities and their membership in organisations. In this study, we asked for membership in political parties (5%), religious groups (37%), unions (15%), clubs (37%), citizen initiatives (9%), environmental organisations (7%), or other organisations (5%). For the analysis, we calculated the overall number of organisations the respondents reported being involved in. 31 per cent were not members of any organisation; the average number of memberships was 1.2. This value was slightly higher among people with higher education (1.4) and 40–59-year-olds (1.3) – however, the overall differences between the age groups were not significant in this respect.

Beyond membership in organisations, respondents were asked to say how often they performed ten different social activities. Again, by means of explorative factor analysis, we identified three independent factors that explain 51 per cent of the total variance:

- Factor 1 "Helpfulness": helping neighbours (.72), donating money or goods (.66), engaging for the protection of the environment (.57), engaging on an honorary basis (.56), discussing societal or political issues with family, friends, or colleagues (.50).

- Factor 2 "Political engagement": participating in demonstrations (.73), participating in political assemblies or pre-election events (.73), signing signature initiatives or petitions on political or societal issues (.64).
- Factor 3 "Media-based activities": Writing letters to the editor or writing comments on online articles (.83), expressing one's opinion about political or societal issues (.78).

"Helpfulness" was more pronounced among women, 30–59-year-olds, and people with higher education. "Political engagement" was more likely for men, people aged 20–29 and 60–69, and particularly higher-educated people. "Media-based activities" were more frequent among men, and particularly among 14–19-year-olds.

In order to assess individuals' perception of societal cohesion, we used two items. First, respondents were asked how they perceived the societal cohesion in Germany. Almost two-thirds (64%) answered "rather bad", almost one-third (31%) "rather good", and the remaining (5%) had no opinion. This perception was independent of gender and age; however, less-educated people were more likely (69%) to have negative perceptions of societal cohesion than higher-educated people (55%). Second, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the status of democracy in Germany. 50 per cent claimed they were "(rather) dissatisfied". Less-educated people (59%) and 60–69-year-olds were even more likely to be dissatisfied.

Results

In the following, for each of the three aspects of social integration, I shortly describe their correlation with the frequency of media use and with the two levels of media repertoires.

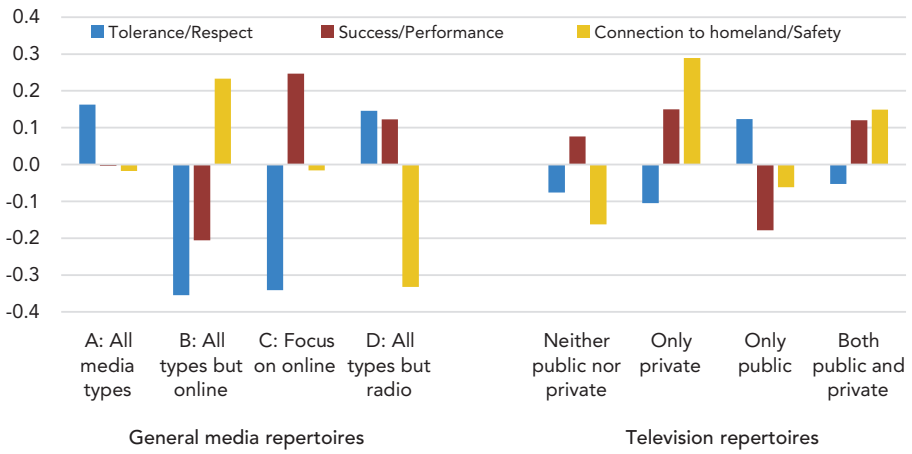
Integration-related values and orientations

Correlations with the frequency of use of all four types of media were positive for "Tolerance/Respect": The more frequently people used the Internet (r = .23), radio (r = .14), print media (r = .10), and television (r = .09), the more important they rated tolerance and respect. The dimension "Success/Performance" was positively correlated with use of the Internet (r = .12), but negatively with use of radio (r = -.10) and print media. This reflects the underlying role of age with younger groups being frequent users of the Internet and highly interested in success and performance within their everyday lives. The third dimension, "Connection to homeland/Safety", was slightly positively correlated with use of television (r = .10) and radio (r = .06) and negatively with use of the Internet (r = -.10) and print media (r = -.08).

Figure 4.2 shows the average factor values of the three dimensions in general media repertoires and television repertoires. General media repertoires are particularly characterised by substantial differences with regard to "Tolerance/Respect". In repertoires A and D – that is, those who frequently used all media types or all but radio – tolerance and respect are very important; in the other two repertoires, B and C – that is, those who did not use online media at all, and those who focused on online media – these values are rather unimportant. Interestingly, beyond this commonality, repertoires B and C show opposite results for the other two dimensions: While those who did not use online media (B) emphasised connection to homeland and safety as important values, those who mainly used online media (C) focused on success and performance.

For the television repertoires, the differences are less pronounced; nevertheless, we observed distinct patterns. Regular viewers of public service channels were highest on "Tolerance/Respect" and lowest in "Success/Performance", while regular viewers of private channels were highest on "Connection to homeland/Safety" and "Success/Performance" and lowest on "Tolerance/Respect". Those who combined public and private channels showed a similar but less accentuated pattern than those who regularly watched private channels. The fourth group – that is, those who did not regularly watch any channel – were mainly characterised by the low importance of "Connection to homeland/Safety".

Figure 4.2 *Integration-related values and orientations and media repertoires (factor values)*



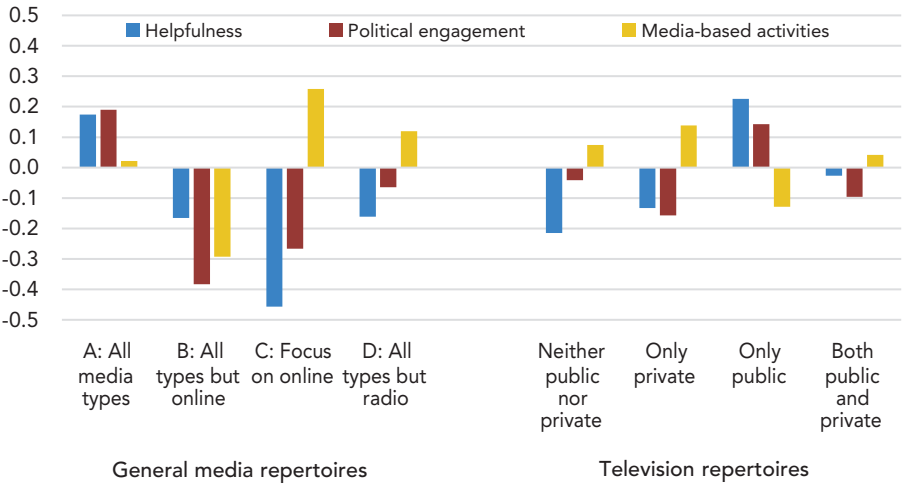
Individual integration

The analysis of correlations between indicators for social activities and the frequency of use of media types (without table) shows that, as a rule, more frequent media use goes along with more social activities and more memberships in organisations. Most of the coefficients are positive; the two exceptions – negative correlations between television and radio use with "Media-based activities" – are due to the specific items underlying this dimension, which explicitly mentioned online activities.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the level of social activities in the groups that were built based on their media repertoires. Both general media repertoires and television repertoires go along with significant differences in all three dimensions. As for general media repertoires, "Helpfulness" and "Political engagement" are highest in the large group of those who were characterised by frequent use of all media (A), while the other three groups are below the average. These two dimensions are rather low for both those who did not use online media at all (B) and those who mainly focused on online media (C). Plausibly, these two groups clearly differ in the frequency of "Media-based activities". Thus, high or low use of online media as such does not allow for implications regarding social activities; instead, the findings indicate that a broad repertoire that, besides online media, includes television, radio, and print media goes along with the highest level of social activities. This is supported when we look at the number of memberships in organisations (without table): The broad repertoire A has the highest average number of memberships (1.36), while groups B (0.83) and C (0.86) have the lowest.

As for television repertoires, "Helpfulness" and "Political engagement" were highest among regular viewers of public service channels; in the other three groups, both dimensions were below the average. For "Media-based activities", findings were exactly reverse. Interestingly, the pattern of activities for regular viewers of private channels and for regular viewers of both public and private channels were similar, with the former being more accentuated. In contrast, those who regularly watched public channels clearly differed from those who combined the two kinds of channels. The findings on membership support these observations (without table): regular viewers of public channels were most likely to be members of social organisations (1.37), and regular viewers of private channels least likely (0.97); the other two groups had only slightly more memberships (1.08).

Figure 4.3 *Dimensions of social activities and media repertoires (factor values)*

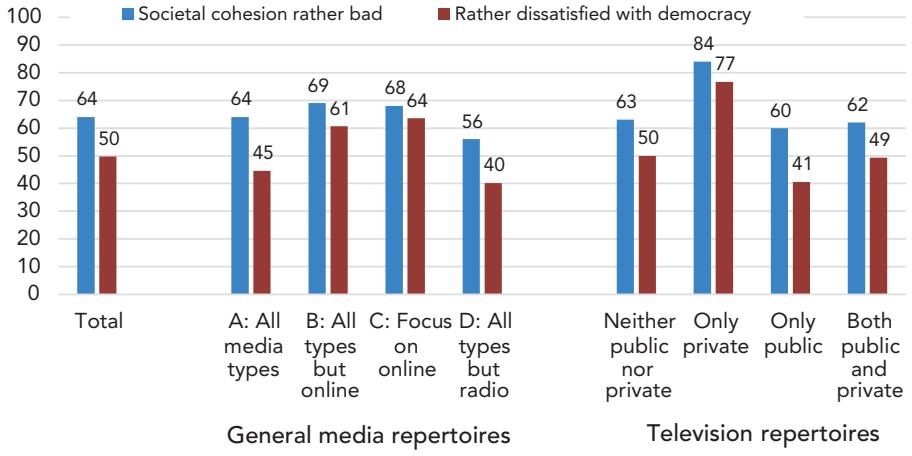


Perception of societal integration

More frequent use of print and online media correlated with rather positive answers to both questions. It may be assumed that formal education is the explaining factor. More frequent use of radio correlated with higher satisfaction with democracy. With regard to television use, there were no significant correlations with these indicators.

People with different media repertoires differed with regard to the perception of societal integration (see Figure 4.4); since the two indicators (perception of societal cohesion, satisfaction with democracy) are closely correlated, these differences are quite similar. As for general media repertoires, the perception of societal cohesion was most sceptical in the group that did not use online media (B); second was the group that focused on online media (C). These two groups were also least satisfied with democracy; in this respect, group C was most dissatisfied. The other two groups – those who frequently used all media (A) and those who frequently used television, print, and online media (D) – expressed a more positive view of societal integration. As for television repertoires, the striking finding is that regular viewers of private channels are much more negative about societal cohesion and democracy than the other three groups.

Figure 4.4 *Perception of societal cohesion and (dis)satisfaction with democracy in media repertoires (per cent)*



Comments: Questions (translated from German): "What do you think: All in all, how is social cohesion in Germany?"; "How satisfied are you with the status of democracy in Germany?"

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to develop indicators for the assessment of PSM's contribution to society, particularly regarding the integration function of media. The main argument was the following: If we find a relationship between specific patterns of media use and indicators for social integration, we can argue that media matter – not necessarily in a deterministic causal understanding, but as relevant factors in the complex process of individuals relating themselves to and forming society.

The data presented here refer to the quite abstract levels of media types and the distinction between public service and private television channels. They do not reflect characteristics of specific brands, genres, formats, or even single products. Nonetheless, the findings clearly show substantial differences between subgroups with different media repertoires: These groups differ with regard to their orientations towards social integration, to how they integrate themselves, and to their perception of societal cohesion.

This finding holds true when we analyse the role of single media types, of general media repertoires, and also of specific television repertoires, that were built just on the distinction between public service and private channels. As the latter analysis allows drawing conclusions with regard to the specific role of PSM, we focus on these channel repertoires (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 *Overview of indicators for social integration within television repertoires*

	Social position	Values and orientations	Individual integration	Perceived societal integration
No regular viewer	younger male higher education	- Connection to homeland + Success - Tolerance/Respect	- Helpfulness + Media-based activities - Membership	–
Only private channels	younger female lower education	+ Connection to homeland + Success - Tolerance	- Helpfulness - Political engagement + Media-based activities - Membership	- Societal cohesion - Democracy
Only public service channels	older female higher education	- Success + Tolerance - Connection to homeland	+ Helpfulness + Political engagement - Media-based activities, + Membership	+ Democracy
Public *and* private channels	Lower education	+ Connection to homeland + Success - Tolerance	- Political engagement, - Membership	–

The largest group, regular viewers of public service channels, is – in line with well-known findings from audience research – rather old, female, and well educated. This group emphasised tolerance rather than success and connectedness to their homeland; furthermore, their everyday life tended to include more activities related to helping others, to political engagement, and to membership in different kinds of organisations. On the other hand, they were reluctant when it comes to expressing themselves on social media.

From this pattern, the other three repertoires deviate in different directions. The second largest group, those who do not regularly watch either public service or private channels, is rather young, male, and well educated. This group was interested in success, while connectedness to the homeland and tolerance were less in focus. Integrative activities were rather seldom, except self-expressions on social media.

The group that combined regular use of public service and private channels is less educated. Their values refer to connectedness to their homeland and success; their political engagement and membership in organisations were rather low.

The fourth group, those who regularly watch private channels but no public service channels, is rather young, female, and less educated. Similar to but even more accentuated than the third group, they focused on connectedness to their homeland and success, while tolerance was less salient for them, and political engagement and membership in organisations were low. Different from the previous group, their everyday activities were less directed to helping others; on the other hand, they were rather interested in media-based activities. Furthermore, this group was by far more sceptical about societal cohesion and the state of democracy than the other groups.

These differences between the four groups that were built based on a simple indicator – that is, orientation towards public service or private channels – underline the eminent role of media use for how different groups integrate themselves and perform different patterns of social integration. In this respect, media – particularly PSM – matter. Regarding our objective to grasp the specific contribution of PSM to societal integration, the findings demonstrate that integration cannot be regarded as a one-dimensional concept, along which we can distinguish those who are integrated and those who are not. Instead, there are different ways to integrate oneself – and these are linked with specific media repertoires. Therefore, the question of what extent to which media in general or PSM in particular contribute to societal integration cannot be answered by stating that these media as such further or hinder integration. Media practices are interwoven into individuals' everyday practices, through which these individuals connect themselves to (or disconnect themselves from) society and specific societal groups. The findings can help us better understand who uses what kind of media for what kind of integration. For the debate on PSM and their specific contribution to societal integration, the findings show that PSM do matter in terms of social integration. Thus, the empirical evidence presented here can stimulate public discourse on the specific role of PSM (see Rodríguez-Castro & Campos-Freire, Chapter 11 in this volume): For which groups should PSM offer which kinds of service that can be used for which kind of social integration? Can PSM be satisfied with the result that their core audiences are more oriented towards tolerance and respect, but less towards success and connectedness to one's homeland? Is it a merit of PSM that their audience engages less in political activities and has a rather positive view of democracy? Alternatively, is it their failure that they are not able to reach those who are less interested in politics and highly sceptical of the state of democracy?

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PART II

BEYOND BROADCASTING

CHAPTER 5

Values in and values of video-on-demand services

The case of Danish DRTV

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ABSTRACT

The growing importance of video-on-demand (VoD) services as a way to expose television programmes to viewers implies that the study of public service media (PSM) must include VoD interfaces. On the basis of politically decided severe cutbacks, the Danish PSM organisation DR launched a new strategy in 2018, in which the VoD service DRTV was announced to become the main entrance to all of DR's content. In addition to this, DR announced a shift in its publishing strategy, from volume to value, and three programme types were highlighted as of special value to democracy, culture, and cohesion in Denmark: news, culture, and content for children and young people. This chapter examines DR's value-over-volume claim and the presence of the three programme types in the VoD service. Finally, it initiates a methodological discussion of how to study the constantly changing interface of a VoD service.

KEYWORDS: publishing strategies, curation, VoD services, Danish media policy, public service media

Lassen, J. M., & Sørensen, J. K. (2023). Values in and values of video on demand services: The case of Danish DRTV. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 89–110). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg.
https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-5

Introduction

The Nordic countries have a long tradition of a strong public sector, including the media (Syvertsen et al., 2014). The strength of the public service media (PSM) is historically reflected in profound subsidies, political support of the idea, and a high reach within the population. However, within the past few years, we have seen a change in how PSM is viewed in Denmark, and the PSM organisation DR has been hit by severe cutbacks as well as a politically decided prioritisation of the content (Kulturministeriet, 2018). As a consequence of the cutbacks, DR launched the strategy paper *Sammen om det vigtige* [*Together on the important*] in 2019, which stated the following:

> It is not crucial if each Dane spend 180, 90, or 45 minutes on DR's content on a daily basis. The crucial thing is that the content is being used and makes a difference to democracy, culture, and communities and is of value to each individual user and to the society as a whole. We name that *value over volume* [translated; emphasis added]. (DR, 2019: 11)

Thus, the 2019 strategy paper emphasises quality over quantity. Further, three types of content are identified as of key importance: news, culture, and content for children and young people (DR, 2019). These areas mirror the political prioritisation of DR's content (Kulturministeriet, 2018).

In this chapter, we study whether DR's proclaimed change of focus from volume to value and prioritisation of content can be detected in the way the streaming service DRTV is being curated. We do this by answering the following research questions:

RQ1. How prominently are the programme types of news, culture, and content for children and young people placed in the interface on the landing page of DRTV?

RQ2. Which methods and metrics are productive in evaluating the prominence of programming in a VoD interface?

What makes DRTV an interesting case to study is the digital turn DR has announced: In October 2021, DR launched a new digital-first strategy, which means that DRTV will play a still more vital part amongst DR's services (DR, 2021a).

This chapter is neither an evaluation of the value-over-volume strategy, nor an assessment of DR's fulfilment of public service obligations. Instead, our aim is twofold: First, we characterise DRTV's curation through the lens of genres to shed light on how the PSM organisation has reacted to the political pressure and how it – in the present situation – seeks to legitimise its value to society. Second, we reflect on the methodological challenges of studying a VoD interface.

DR and the political headwind

For this chapter, we have chosen the Danish PSM organisation DR as our case. Being one of the Nordic countries, many readers will recognise Denmark as part of Hallin and Mancini's (2004) democratic corporatist model and what Syvertsen and colleagues (2014) described as the media welfare state. This implies that Denmark has a long and strong tradition of public service broadcasting. However, the political view on public media, and especially DR, has changed within the last decade. DR is not the only PSM organisation in Denmark, but it is the oldest and largest – and it has gone through substantial changes since 2018. Some changes are initiated by technology and new patterns of media usage, and some changes are politically decided. In the following sections, we shed light upon the media political changes we have seen within the past five years and DR's immediate strategic response. This serves as backdrop for the following analyses of DR's curation of the streaming service DRTV.

The 2018 political downsizing of DR

From its foundation in 1925, DR has had the status of an independent public organisation. The activities of DR are governed by two instruments: the Danish Radio and Television Broadcasting Act and public service contracts, which are agreements made between DR and the Minister for Culture, based on the media political agreements. The media political agreements and the public service contracts typically run for four years. In 2016 and 2017, prior to the negotiation of the media political agreement, a severe political criticism of DR's size, and also of some of DR's activities and content, was aired by the right-wing and centre-right parties in the Danish Parliament. These parties had a majority in the parliament, and in the media political agreement for 2019–2023, they decided that the income of DR was to be reduced by 20 per cent and DR's radio and television channel portfolio was to be downsized. The political intention with both initiatives was to "secure better framework conditions for the private media [translated]" (Kulturministeriet, 2018: 1).

In January 2020, the art and culture–oriented television channel DR K was closed down, while the youth channel DR3 and the channel for children aged 9–14, DR Ultra, were transformed to an online brand and an online universe, respectively. As of 2022, DR runs three linear television channels: The main channel DR1; DR2 with a profile that is oriented towards society, debate, and current affairs; and DR Ramasjang for children aged 4–8. In addition to the downsizing of the channel portfolio, the cutbacks resulted in a (politically initiated) prioritisation of the programme content: While DR was to broadcast less of certain genres (sports, entertainment, and fiction from abroad), other genres (news, information, debate, culture, Danish music, and Danish drama) were regarded as core public service genres and

thus to be prioritised (DR, 2018a; Kulturministeriet, 2018). In 2019, a Social Democratic government took over, and in the new media political agreement, which covers 2022–2025, DR's subsidy is increased (Kulturministeriet, 2022).

DR's strategic response: "Value over volume"

As a consequence of the politically initiated changes, DR has published several development plans and strategy papers. One element of DR's strategic response to the cutbacks, which appears in the plan *The New DR* from September 2018 as well as the strategy paper *Sharing the Important* from 2019, is what is referred to as "value over volume" (DR, 2018b: 8; DR, 2019: 11). Value over volume as strategy refers to the fact that DR, as a result of the cutbacks, will offer less content, but will enhance its focus on value: "DR will become smaller with fewer channels and programmes. But our beacon will be that we will have a DR where value is prioritised above volume [translated]" (DR, 2018b: 8). In the subsequent strategy paper, this ambition was translated to two objectives: first, that three out of four Danes experience DR's content as being of value to them; and second, that Danes know of and make use of three specific programme types – news, culture, and content for children and young people (DR, 2019). These programme types (which mirror the political ambition of DR as expressed in the media political agreement for 2019–2023) are highlighted as of special value to democracy, Danish culture, and cohesion in Denmark. This reflects the findings of Bengesser (see Chapter 3 in this volume), who discusses the genres typically used for legitimising PSM. As such, our discussion of how value is being operationalised by DR takes its starting point in an analysis of how the three programme types are prioritised, placed, and promoted in the VoD interface of DRTV. First, however, we reflect theoretically on DR's role as a curator and the challenge of directing users' attention in a VoD service.

Curation and interaction: Characteristics of a video-on-demand interface

Since 2017, DR has, occasionally, verbalised its role as provider of DRTV as that of a curator, for instance, that it is a strategic ambition for the streaming service "that it must be a distinct alternative to the commercial streaming services – when it comes to the content and the way the content is connected, curated, and made available [translated]" (DR, 2017: 22). Also, in interviews we conducted, employees at DR have used the term curation to describe the editing of the VoD interface (Lassen, 2018; Sørensen, 2020). For DR and other digital public broadcasters, the idea of verbalising its online activities as curation is that it is platform neutral. As such, our reason for including the term here is that we consider the idea of curation to be a way for the digital broadcaster to legitimise its role as a provider of a VoD service.

The notion of curation originates in the art world, where it describes how a person – a curator – is "selecting artworks; directing how they are displayed in an exhibition; and writing labels, interpretational material, catalogues, and press releases. The curator is basically in this case acting as a kind of interface between artist, institution, and audience" (Graham & Cook, 2010: 10). In several respects, there is a clear parallel between the work of a traditional curator and an editor of a VoD service: They determine which programmes are selected, how they are displayed in the interface, and how they are presented through headlines, labels, and programme descriptions. As such, it is not a new idea to link curation with the work of a television company: Doyle (2016), Johnson (2013), and Sørensen (2014) have all described broadcasters' online activities as curation. By articulating its activities on DRTV as curation, DR points at its active editing of the service. But, what about the role of the user? After all, interaction is a key characteristic of *video-on-demand* services, as stressed by Chamberlain (2010: 86):

> Television interfaces demand interaction from viewers. They require viewers to make choices about how they will negotiate the streams and databases of possible viewing options, calling on viewers to scroll through choices, make selections, respond to prompts, and otherwise engage with the devices that control the delivery of content.

At the same time, Webster (2014) interestingly pointed at the fact that due to the comprehensive content supply, only a few services are actual pull media. Most often, recommendations and personalisation are used to guide and direct the user in choosing content. Thus, we must understand VoD services as a mixture of free choice and interaction on the one hand, curation and guided decisions on the other.

Within the past few years, we have seen an increased focus in academic literature on the power of interfaces. As stated by Johnson in her book *Online TV* (2019: 117): "However, beyond the actual content available within the service, the design of online TV interfaces can affect the user's ability to discover content". Also, Hesmondhalgh and Lotz (2020), Lobato (2018), Mazzoli and Tambini (2020), and McKelvey and Hunt (2019) have – with notions such as prioritisation, placement, prominence, and discoverability – pointed at how influential a good position in an interface is. This is due to the nature of the interface: As described earlier by Johnson (2017), the vertical axis of a web page entails a hierarchy of the content, in the sense that the content placed at the top typically gets more attention (viewing or clicks) than that at the lower part or bottom of the page. This structure is what Bideau (2020) termed prime space, as a spatial counterpart to the temporal prime time of the linear television schedule. The hierarchy becomes a self-reinforcing mechanism in that users do not necessarily scroll all the way down to the bottom of the page, and the curator of the page therefore places the content deemed most important at the top.

On VoD interfaces, we most often find that content is not only structured along a vertical axis, but also along horizontal rows. As rows are often wider than users' screens, users must click to view all the content presented on the row. Thus, with the words of Hesmondhalgh and Lotz (2020: 389): "Merely being available in a library of programs means relatively little; such programs must also be discoverable". As such, curators of VoD interfaces take on the role of gatekeepers, strongly influencing which content, and thus which kind of experience, the users will discover, pick, and choose "within complex information environments" (Lobato, 2018). Further, Hesmondhalgh and Lotz (2020) have argued how placement can either be guided by a wish to produce revenue or to be strategical. Predicting where users will look and click has thus created much research attention, for example, at Google (Granka et al., 2008) and for VoD recommender systems (Zhao et al., 2016). In the context of non-commercial PSM, the prioritisation of content reflects the strategy of the company. Following this, we suggest that studying the placement of programme types on DRTV provides us with valuable insight into DR's content curation, and thus the PSM organisation's response to regulation, competition, and usage.

Quantifying public service video-on-demand services: The case of DRTV

The counting of public service

The literature on public service provides many examples of quantitative research, for example, to assess the linear broadcasting in relation to public service obligations (Nissen, 2006; van der Wurff, 2004; Youn, 1994). For public broadcasters' VoD services (what is also referred to as BVoDs), we find, despite the growing importance of reach, relatively few research contributions. Kelly and Sørensen (2021) have presented a longitudinal comparison of BBC iPlayer and DRTV, and Lassen and Sørensen (2021) have offered an analysis of the relationship between DR's linear channels and its VoD service. Bruun and Bille (2022) compared the linear channels and VoD services of DR and Danish TV 2, while Bruun (2019) touched upon the VoD of TV 2. Within a Norwegian context, Spilker and colleagues (2020) have conducted a comparative study of the BVoD and linear channels of NRK and Norwegian TV 2.

For the present study, we have collected a comprehensive dataset of the videos (tiles) on DRTV.[1] Over a period of 17 months from November 2019 to May 2021, we have, on a daily basis, registered the titles and positions of the so-called tiles on DRTV's front page (www.dr.dk/drtv/) as well as several of the subpages. We borrow the term tile from Bruun and Bille (2022), as it is used in the television industry to signify the appearance of an on-demand video at a VoD web page. A "tile" typically consists of a thumbnail picture, a programme title, and supplementary text indicating genre, publication data, or

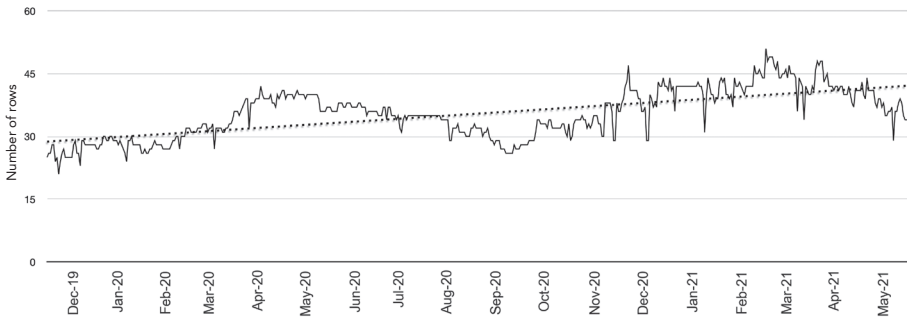
similar. Our unit of analysis is the programme title, thus, we do not consider thumbnail pictures or supplementary text. Tiles typically appear several days in a row; to signify this, we use the phrase "number of tile appearances", which means the number of days a specific tile has been shown. In some cases, a specific tile may be shown more than once at the web page on the same day, also known as shuffling or repurposing (Bruun & Bille, 2022). As this possibly provides more attention to the programme, we have counted all instances of the programme in our calculations. To the visual effect of showing the same tile in several places, we use the terms double exposure, triple exposure, and so on. The television and VoD industries use different terms for the horizontal organisation of the tiles, such as decks, collections, or rows (Bruun & Bille, 2022). We use the term rows to emphasise the visual appearance at the VoD page, indicating the length of the page.

The collected data was subsequently stored in a database and processed with python scripts. DRTV is available via different platforms (including smart-TVs, PC web browsers, tablets, and smartphones). In our case, we collected data via a PC web browser.[2] When preparing the data for analysis, we consolidated some programme or series titles to correct for typos in the collected material. We have completed missing cases of DRTV's genre information (the so-called display categories shown below the title of the programme) by inferring the display category or categories from other instances of the programme or series. For the 520 days between November 2019 and May 2021, we recorded in total 183,284 tile appearances on DRTV's front page, with an average of 352 tiles per day. We found 5,867 unique programmes, of which 4,023 belongs to one of the 472 series we identified.

Discoverability

The average of 352 tiles per day indicates a large VoD front page, but following Hesmondhalgh and Lotz (2020), the user could only see a fraction of this content without scrolling either vertically or horizontally. Below the top row, the user could see two or three rows of content, effectively limiting the number of tiles immediately visible to the user to about 23 tiles at one glance without scrolling. Of each row, only the first six tiles were visible, but on average, a row had 8–9 tiles and may have contained up to 36 tiles. DRTV's front page was also long, so that users must scroll vertically to see most of the content. With an average of 35–36 rows, it grew longer during our sampling period, as can be seen in Figure 5.1. The curation of DRTV has resulted, however, in a good circulation of programmes: 57 per cent of the programmes have at some point been shown at the top of the DRTV page.

Figure 5.1 *The number of rows at DRTV front page over 520 days*



Value over volume in the DRTV interface?

Over time, the content of DRTV's front page changed, but how did the display of content reflect DR's strategy of value over volume? Whereas we cannot say anything about the users' perception of value, we can at least assess the volume of content offered, as well as its novelty. DRTV's volume – understood as the number of tiles presented on DRTV's front page – fluctuated over time, but the total number of tiles per day (the solid line in Figure 5.2) grew over time. The growth can be partly attributed to an increase in the number of tiles with double or triple exposure, but the number of unique tiles per day also grew (see the dashed line in Figure 5.2). This contradicts somehow DR's strategy of value over volume. However, the strategy seems reflected in a relatively tight curation of the most visible parts of DRTV.

Figure 5.2 *Number of tiles per day at the DRTV front page over 520 days*

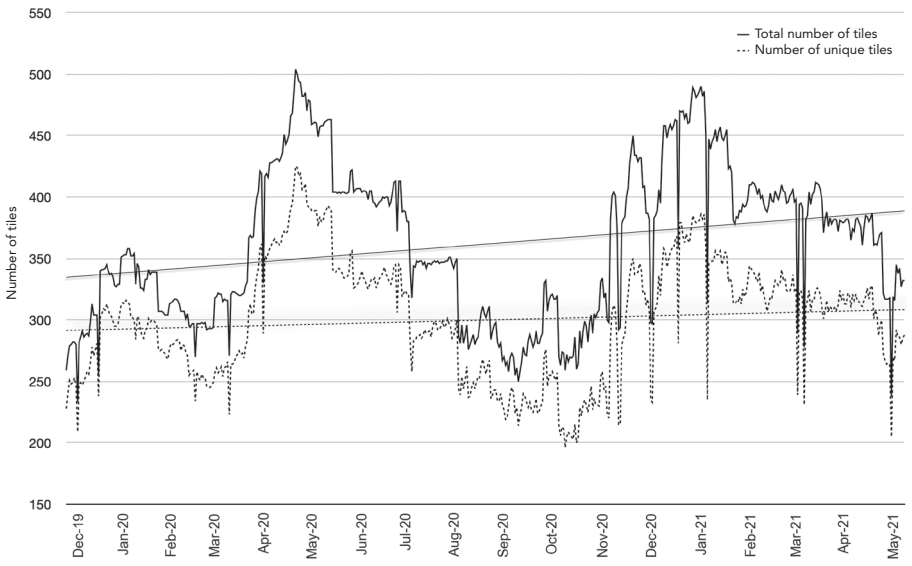
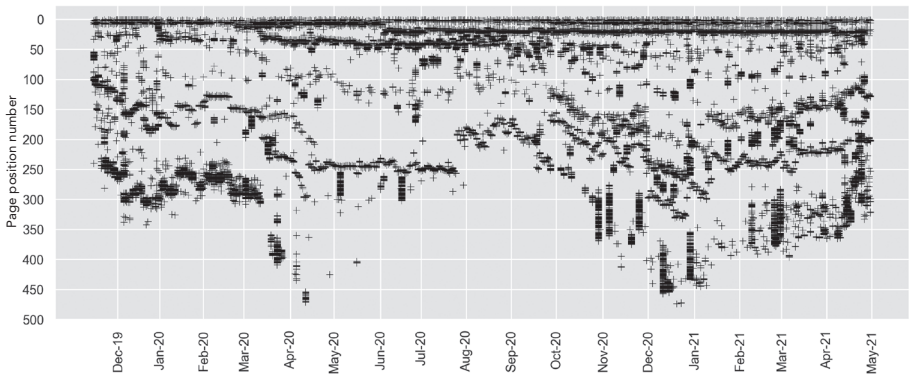


Figure 5.3 shows that the most intensively curated part of DRTV's front page, in terms of new content added, was the top, with each + representing a new or re-introduced tile. The vertical groups or lines of +'s show us that several new tiles were added on the same day. The horizontal group or lines show the specific areas of the page where new content was added. It appears that certain areas of the page were subject to intense curation, while the rest of the DRTV page was left untouched. The upper areas of the page were renewed very often, whereas curation for the rest of the page seemed to shift focus from one area to another.

Figure 5.3 *Positions of new or re-appearing tiles at the DRTV front page over 520 days*

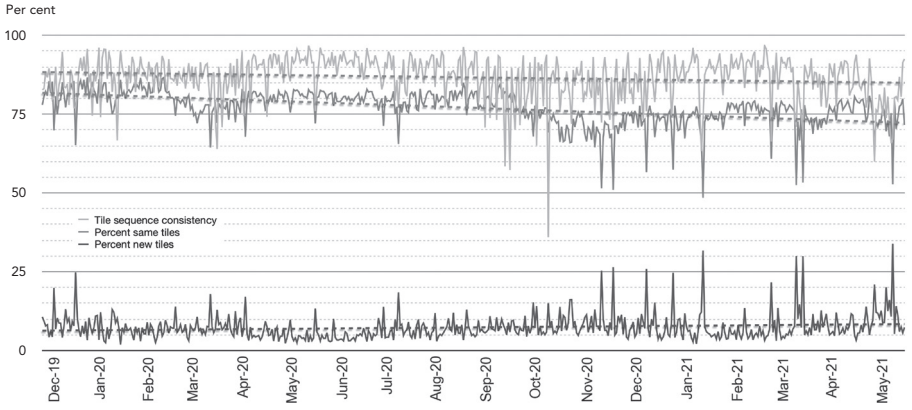


Comments: The y-axis shows not rows but video content position at the page, with "0" signifying the top-left corner.

The curation and publishing dynamics for a VoD interface is different from the scheduling of linear channels. In the latter case, the number of re-runs may be a topic for discussion when the value for the viewer is evaluated, but in the case of VoD interfaces, the questions might rather be how much new content is being added every day, and to what extent the composition of content in the interface is identical from day to day. Quantifying these two questions could help us to assess how actively the VoD service has been curated. In Figure 5.4, the upper light grey line illustrates the extent to which the composition of DRTV's front page was identical from day to day – that is, the tile sequence consistency. We see that the tiles – with small fluctuations – remained at the same positions on the page. On average, the DRTV front page was 92.5 per cent identical from day to day. As shown by Figure 5.3, the curation took place at selected areas of the page. The darker grey line in the middle of Figure 5.4 shows the percentage of content which was the same from one day to the next, regardless of its position on the page. From day to day, an average of 71.6 per cent of the content was also shown the previous

day; however, this declined over time. Finally, the dark grey line shows a slightly increasing percentage of new content being added to DRTV's front page every day. On average, 7.3 per cent new content was added every day.

Figure 5.4 *The percentage of 1) interface similarity, 2) same videos, and 3) new videos between consecutive days*



Comments: Peaks may be attributed to missing data.

During the 520 days, most of DRTV content changed. However, some genres seldomly offered new content (e.g., Politics, with 449 tile appearances of 2 programmes; Science and Technology, with 738 tile appearances of 9 programmes); Nature, with 845 tile appearances of 11 programmes; and Culture, with 8,239 tile appearances of 114 programmes). Six titles, for example, *Den Store Bagedyst* [*The Great Bake Off*], could be found on DRTV all 520 days.[3] DRTV was thus rather static in its curation, particularly at the lower part of the page. The overall impression of DRTV was more that of an archive, where users can access a large catalogue of programmes, than as a tight curated service (for a discussion of the size of respectively BBC's iPlayer and DRTV, see Kelly & Sørensen, 2021).

Categorising DRTV's video-on-demand content

The literature on linear public service offerings often discusses which types of programmes gain a high visibility from being scheduled in prime time, and how this visibility relates to public service obligations (Lassen, 2020; Van den Bulck, 2009; van der Wurff, 2004; Youn, 1994). This chapter takes a first step in analysing the visibility of content in a BVoD interface, which is relevant for future discussions of policies and public service obligations. Categorising DRTV's content is, however, a non-trivial task. Our research reveals strong tensions between two models for content categorisation: One is purposed for public service auditing of linear television; the other is aimed for helping

the user navigate the DRTV VoD interface. The first model – used for DR's yearly public service audit reporting of their broadcast programming to the Ministry for Culture (e.g., DR, 2020) – has nine broad categories agreed upon among Danish broadcasters: Dansk dramatik og fiktion [Danish drama and fiction], Aktualitet og debat [Current affairs and debate], Oplysning og kultur [Information and culture], Nyheder [News], Udenlandsk dramatik og fiktion [Foreign drama and fiction], Musik [Music], Sport, Underholdning [Entertainment], and Undervisning [Education]. This is a simplified modification of EBU's ESCORT (EBU, 2007), but extended to, for example, discern between Danish and foreign fiction.[4] In the following, we refer to these categories as the public service audit genres (PS-Audit genres). These PS-Audit genres are not shown in the DRTV interface.[5]

The other model of categorisation is what DR calls display category labels, shown under each programme. The purpose of display labels, according to DR (Søren Gjelstrup Jessen, as cited in Sørensen, 2020), is intended to help the user better navigate the content; the user should, via these labels, find DRTV more valuable. Analysing the tiles in our dataset, we found 19 different display labels that indicated genres such as Dokumentar [Documentary], Livsstil [Lifestyle], Kultur [Culture], and Nyheder og aktualitet [News and current affairs]. Particularly the documentary label is often used at the DRTV front page: 30.2 per cent of all tiles in our dataset feature this label, confirming findings from Bruun and Bille (2022). In addition to the genre labels, we found labels indicating an episode, season or series, publication date or time, or "teaser" text. Finally, some display labels referred to a channel brand, such as DR3 or DR Ramasjang.

As a means for categorising DRTV's content, display labels are not a stable source: Our processing shows that 104 programmes had two display labels, and four programmes had three. When calculating the number of appearances of display labels, this number may thus be higher than the total number of tile appearances. The coexistence of the two systems (i.e., PS-Audit genres and display labels) witnesses that the traditional public service categories are not assumed to be helpful for the users of the DRTV interface.

Value as an expression of public service objectives

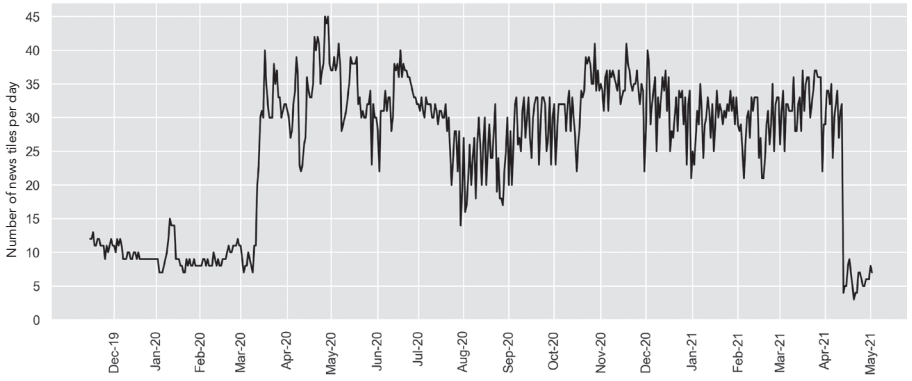
Categorising DRTV's content to determine how public service objectives are reflected in the exposure of the programming on DRTV's front page has been, as we see above, a non-trivial task: Should we have applied the PS-Audit genre categorisation from the linear channels on the VoD content, thus making the VoD and linear scheduling comparable? Or should we have applied the VoD display category labels? Confronted with the impossible choice, we show how the DRTV interface looks using both the PS-Audit genre and the VoD display label categorisation models. Having applied both

methods of categorisation, we analyse the presence of the three programme types of news, culture, and content for children and young people on DRTV to examine whether the pronounced focus results in prominent placement, thus reflecting DR's curation strategy.

News on DRTV's front page

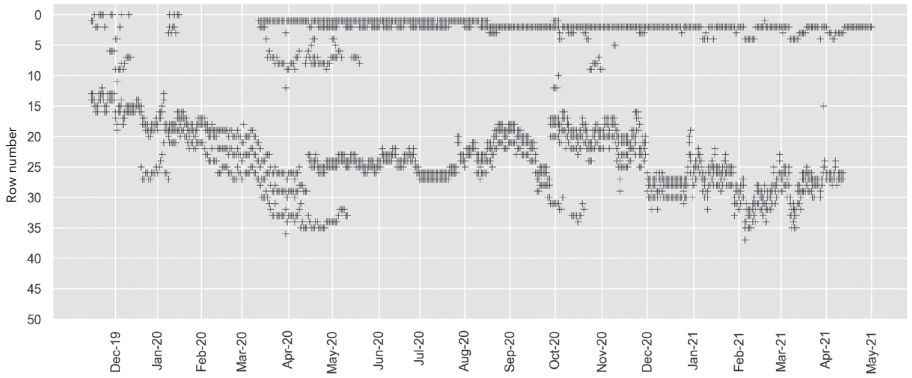
The News genre is an absolute key genre for DR – on television, radio, and DR's website. For the auditing of DR's public service obligations, we found two genres: News and Current affairs and debate. DR's use of the two genre categories was sometimes inconsistent: For nine programme titles, both genre categories were in the 2020 audit. Following the PS-Audit–based definition of news, we found 6,722 tile appearances of news over 520 days, excluding multiple appearances of the same tile the same day. Counting tiles with the display label News and current affairs, we found 5,141 tile appearances. News tiles were, however, for good reasons, labelled with publishing time and date; we found 13,161 such tile appearances. In total, we found 17,611 unique news tiles. This means that the method of using DR's PS-Audit genres did not reflect the actual number of news tiles on DRTV's front page. Many news tiles were produced specifically for DRTV and would thus not be found if we had only applied the PS-Audit category News on the VoD dataset. In terms of specific news shows (we selected 17 titles), we found 9,209 tile appearances over 520 days, equal to 6.15 per cent of all tile appearances. The news programmes, except the DR2-programme *Deadline,* were typically displayed at the top of the page, or near to it.

Figure 5.5 *The amount of news programmes on DRTV, including multiple appearances of the same tile*



The number of tiles with news grew dramatically around March 2020 and declined again, suddenly, in mid-April 2021, as it can be seen in Figure 5.5. This pattern is a direct consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic also caused news tiles to appear higher on DRTV's front page to a greater extent, as is evident in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6 *Positions of 13,351 tile appearances of 17 different news programmes*

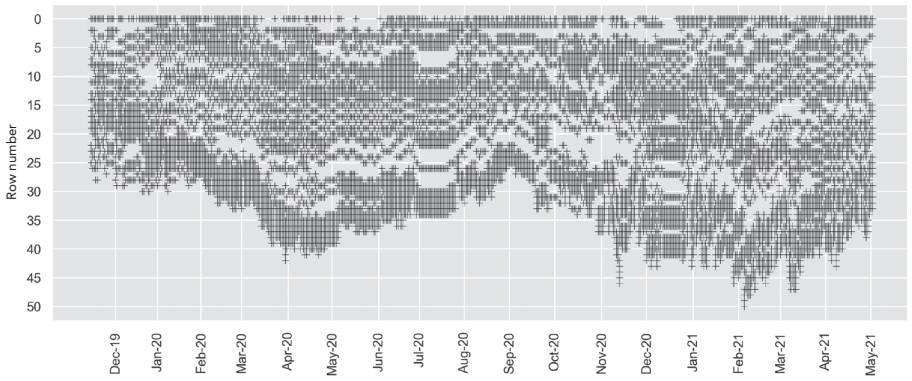


Thus, news tiles gained – triggered by external events – a prominent position on DRTV's front page as long as Covid-19 was considered a societal crisis in Denmark. Likewise, in March 2022, DR decided to hasten the launch of a more "clear and continuous" news offer, with frequent live updates and a prominent position on DRTV's front page as a direct consequence of the tragic invasion of Ukraine (Christiansen & Hansen, 2022).

Culture on DRTV's front page

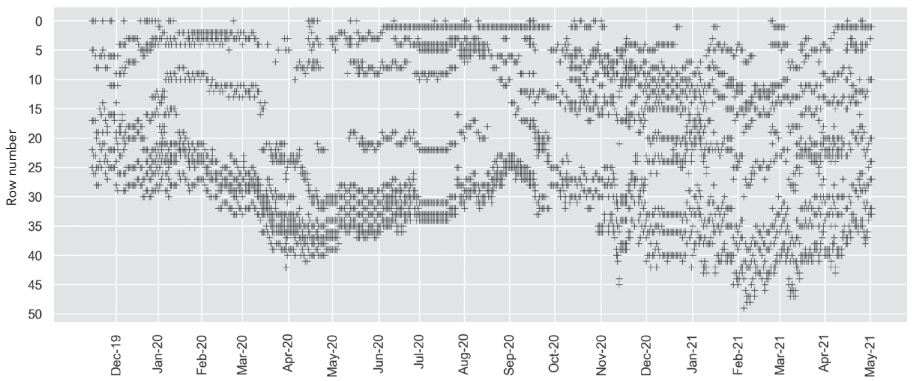
There were different ways to assess the presence of culture programming on DRTV's front page. Applying the broad PS-Audit genre Information and culture (purposed for auditing DR's linear programming) on DRTV, we found 74,789 tile appearances of 2,265 unique programmes, equal to 49.9 per cent of all tile appearances (see Figure 5.7). The double category begs the question, however, of how much is information, and how much is culture.

Figure 5.7 *Positions of 74,789 tile appearances of programmes in "Information and culture" PS-Audit genre*



If we instead applied the user-oriented display label Culture shown in the interface, the density of tiles declined dramatically (see Figure 5.8). We found 8,239 tile appearances of 114 unique programmes with the display label Culture, equal to 5.5 per cent of all tile appearances. As such, we noted that the Culture label is not used much by DR in the interface.

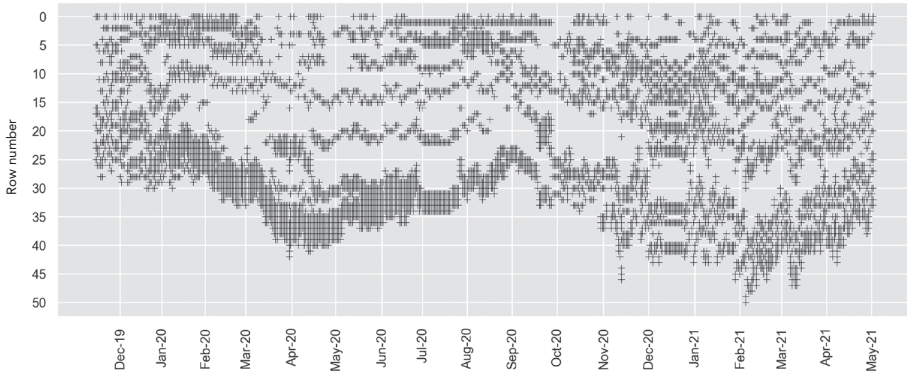
Figure 5.8 *Positions of 8,239 tile appearances labelled Culture on DRTV's front page*



The low number of tiles labelled Culture could have, however, been caused by a technical constraint. As mentioned earlier, a programme can have more than one display label; however, the design of the DRTV interface allows only one label to be shown. The display label shown is selected alphabetically; if a tile is marked with both the display category labels Documentary and Culture, only the Documentary [Dokumentar] label is shown, not the Culture [Kultur] label. We observed the effect of this by comparing DRTV's

culture page (www.dr.dk/drtv/kultur) with the front page: Only 92 of 283 programmes from the culture page were on the front page labelled as Culture, with 146 programmes labelled as Documentary and 25 programmes labelled as Lifestyle. However, if we used the appearance at the dedicated culture page as definition of culture, we found 22,621 tile appearances of 283 unique culture programmes, equal to 15.1 per cent of all tile appearances (see Figure 5.9). The culture genre may thus be more prominent on the DRTV interface than a simple categorisation based on the display label Culture reveals.

Figure 5.9 *Positions of 22,621 tile appearances, where the programme title has been featured on the culture subpage of DRTV*



The culture tiles remained longer on DRTV's front page than tiles in general. A few culture programmes were present for almost the entire sampling period, and 62 programmes were present for more than 100 days. On average, the culture programmes were shown almost 69 days on DRTV's front page (the average value for all tiles was 26 days). A possible explanation for this is that culture programmes are not as influenced by topicality as other genres.

Content for children and young people on DRTV

Content for children did not appear on the DRTV front page. Instead, the streaming service has three pages dedicated children's programming: DR Ramasjang for children aged 4–8; DR Ultra for children aged 9–14; and, since March 2021, DR Minisjang for children aged 1–3. DR Ramasjang and DR Ultra were launched as linear channels, and while DR Ramasjang continues to be available as both a linear channel and a VoD service, DR Ultra ceased to transmit in linear mode at the end of 2019. DR Minisjang was launched as a VoD offer and has never been a linear channel. At the DR Ramasjang page (dr.dk/drtv/ramasjang), we found about 1,800 unique programme titles; for DR Ultra (dr.dk/drtv/ultra), we found about 3,800 titles; while the DR Minisjang page (dr.dk/drtv/minisjang) offered 193 unique programme titles.

While children are targeted with separate web pages, the situation is different for young people. Until January 2020, this group was targeted via the linear channel DR3, but the channel was closed as an outcome of the before-mentioned media political agreement. The intended target group for DR3 – (young adults aged 15–39) has been reported as difficult for DR to reach (DR, 2014; Lassen, 2020). It is thus interesting to analyse which ways the channel brand was continued on DRTV's front page; for instance, was it promoted more intensively after the shutdown of the linear channel? One source to highlight this question is the mentioning of DR3 in titles of the rows of content shown at DRTV. Typically, these row titles indicate a thematic collection of content or another form of familiarity of the content in the specific row.

During the 520 days observing DRTV's front pages, we found 189 different row titles, but most were only shown for a short period. 170 of the 189 rows were shown less than half of the 520 days, indicating a high degree of curation at the row level. Considering row titles referring to the DR3 brand, we found six titles. While some row titles – like "De stærkeste DR3 dokumentarer" ["The strongest DR3 documentaries"] – were only present for a short while, the row title "Nyt fra DR3" ["New from DR3"] was shown 515 out of 520 days – a privilege only shared with the news show *Deadline* (495 days), *Løvens hule* [*Lion's Den*] (417 days), the generic rows containing most-seen programmes (492 days), and a row with "feel-good" programmes (519 days).

There were thus many references to the DR3 brand on DRTV's front page, confirming findings from Lassen and Sørensen (2021), who observed DR3's strong presence at DRTV during an earlier period (March–June 2019). Thus, we can conclude that the DR3 brand remains prominently visible on DRTV's front page, also after the closure of the linear DR3 channel. Furthermore, the "New from DR3" row was particularly prominently displayed on the DRTV page: For 13 August–11 November 2019, "New from DR3" appeared 87 times between row 3 and 13 – on average between rows 4 and 5.

Summing up, we can state that with three universes dedicated to children, and the prominent placement of DR3 on DRTV's front page, DR does have a noticeable focus on content for children and young people in the VoD service, as announced in the 2019 strategy paper.

From flow to abundance: How are we to understand value?

Evaluating the value and volume of DRTV's content has been, as we have seen above, methodologically a challenging task, making detailed and firm conclusions difficult. Different approaches can be applied when categorising the VoD programming, and the legacy of public service auditing partly inhibits the categorisation of VoD content, as some of this has never been broadcast,

and thus not reported in linear public service auditing. On the other hand, the display labels used to guide viewers are multiple and often overlapping, but they help us understand how DR wants to present its content. Finally, the subpages dedicated to a specific type of content, for example, culture or children's programmes, indicate a more explicit form of curation, although these pages are partly generated automatically based on display labels. Thus, the presence of news, culture, and programmes for children and young people changes depending on what we count.

Revisiting DR's strategy of value over volume, we are not in the position to judge whether users find DR's offer more valuable now than earlier – or more valuable than other offerings. We notice, however, that the value-over-volume strategy was born out of a shift from linear to VoD as DR's preferred way to provide content to users. Linear programming requires a constant flow of programmes, which obviously cannot be of the same high quality; linear programming – particularly in a multichannel set-up – inherently produces a demand for volume. One could understand the value-over-volume strategy as a departure from this craving for programmes: In a VoD service, a few quality programmes can be promoted. The shift to VoD as the primary platform for DRTV could thus have been a way out of the craving for volume. However, we did not see this. A few programmes, series, or collections are exposed intensively at DR, a phenomenon also noticed by DR's head of publishing, Peter Rosberg, at the annual Copenhagen TV Festival in August 2021. Users have plenty of programmes to choose from, but according to Rosberg, around 75 per cent of the time consumption on DRTV is spent on "the top content [translated]" (as cited in Olsen, 2021). In Rosberg's account, top content is not in the sense of high quality or a certain value – it is simply the most watched. Two such programmes are the Danish versions of *The Great Bake Off* and *Dragons' Den*. From a public service perspective, it is relevant that the population has experiences and knowledge in common – *The Great Bake Off* and *Dragons' Den* offer such experiences. But when consumption is concentrated around a minority of the content, "the specialised content drowns [translated]", as Rosberg expressed it (as cited in Olsen, 2021).

Since the very beginning of public service broadcasting, the balancing of content that is popular and content that conveys public service values has been a subject for intense political and scholarly debates. DR's value-over-volume strategy joins this old debate by rendering DRTV as a service for a new type of curation, a new start: The idealised on-demand usage inscribes an active (and critical) user who browses and searches for valuable experiences. This ideal, however, ignores the role of the interface presentation: Some content is immediately visible whereas other content requires an explicit search by the user to be found. DRTV's front page thus represents a curated collection of content prioritised by DR editors. However, our analysis has shown that curation primarily focuses on the top of the page, and that the large volume

on the lower parts of the page remain untouched for long periods of time. Of the three types of content – news, culture, and children's programming – only news found its way to the top of the page, concurrent with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Children are arguably well served with dedicated web pages, but for the culture programmes, our findings are mixed: They depend on how culture is defined. If the broad PS-Audit genre of Information and culture is applied, this programme type is well exposed, but looking at only the Culture display label, exposure is modest. This leads to a discussion of the value of categories: How useful are programme categories for the characterisation of a VoD offer, beyond public service auditing? DR's use of several genre labels for the same programme shows us the dynamic nature of VoD curation.

The rapid pace with which "old" content is presented under new row titles in the DRTV interface, as well as intense curation of the top rows, indicate that DRTV attempts to appear more dynamic to its users than the actual addition of new content enables. Thus, we witness a high degree of repurposing (Bruun & Bille, 2022), at level of the thematic bundling of content under row titles, in the positioning of rows on the page, and the appearance of the same content several places on the page (the double and triple exposure). This, as well as the long exposure of content, produces long pages (on average, 35–36 rows). We are thus left with the impression that DRTV wants to communicate "abundance" to its users – an apparent contradiction of the value-over-volume strategy.

Obviously, one could ask who defines value: the politicians who regulate the activities of PSM, the employees who curate the content according to the companies' strategies, or the users who decide which services and which programmes to watch? As the viewing numbers presented by Rosberg at the TV Festival suggest, DR does face some challenges in getting users to discover and choose more of the narrow content at DRTV. It is this content that makes DR stand apart from other broadcasters and VoD services. As pointed out by Raats (see Chapter 6 in this volume), distinctiveness has become an important argument in the debate on the societal value of PSM. In this light, DR's role as a curator must be taken seriously; by the politicians, by DR itself, and by the users who could try (just sometimes) to scroll down the page.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have analysed the Danish public service BVoD DRTV in the light of DR's proclaimed strategy of value over volume. Our point of departure in this context has been the politically initiated prioritisation of programme types, which has affected DR since 2018. This led us to a study of the presence of the three programme types of news, culture, and content for children and young people in the VoD service. These particular programme types have been highlighted, politically and by DR, as of special value to

the Danish society, culture, and community. As such, we can state that, at least within the context of DR, there continues to exist the idea that some programme types are of more value than others.

Our approach has been to highlight DR's role as a curator and the users' opportunities to discover different kinds of content within the VoD service. Why is curation and discoverability interesting? We argue that it is necessary for PSM (at least in a digital media market such as the Danish one) to offer on-demand services to stay relevant in the competition amongst domestic as well as global players. But this opportunity does come with a challenge: In a VoD service, users can pick and choose content from a catalogue without being forced to wait for a fixed schedule and thus being exposed to a variety of genres and programme types. Our findings suggest that DR can improve its curation of content: While we can establish that all of the three highlighted programme types are present in the VoD service, narrower content – which culture programmes tend to be – are typically not positioned in the discoverable prime space.

As such, our empirical findings suggest that the (political) ambition of highlighting specific programme types continuously coexists with an awareness of the necessity to compete. This echoes the ongoing discussion of reach versus distinctiveness. The VoD services must, like other services offered by PSM, strike the balance between, on the one hand, reaching the (many different) users, thus being able to legitimise its continued existence, and on the other, standing out in a crowded marketplace as a distinct alternative to the many private players. We recover this balancing act in DR's placement of the different programme types and in the mere transition to prioritising value over volume: Our findings indicate that moving away from being a voluminous archive requires a tighter curation of the VoD interface than DR has provided in the analysed period. But it is, in our opinion, not a new challenge or discussion, but a variation of what we have seen earlier with the transition from a few mixed channels to portfolios of several segmented channels. We do wish to emphasise, from our discussion in this chapter, that the meaning of value is equivocal, and it is arguable who is to define DRTV's value to the single user and to society. However, we find it indisputable that offering a VoD service is crucial if PSM are to contribute to the society with shared experiences, knowledge, and debates in the future.

Summing up, this chapter contributes to the ongoing discussion of PSM's role in society by shedding light on how DR has actively positioned itself in the debate of the value of programme types, and by arguing that the study of PSM must include VoD services. However, in continuation hereof, it is important to stress that our conclusion is not as clear and simple as one could hope for from a public service auditing perspective. Instead, our findings illustrate the complexity of evaluating PSM's output in terms of content types. Our intention with this chapter has thus also been to contribute to the technical discussions of how to study these kinds of services. It demonstrates

the problems related to a pure quantitative approach to the evaluation of the fulfilment of public service values. The data-mining approach may be a good source for discussions and interpretations, but it cannot stand alone as a statement on public service values in the publishing strategy.

Acknowledgements

Julie Münter Lassen's position is funded by the Independent Research Fund Denmark, ID No. 1024-00001B.

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Endnotes

[1] In total, 520 days. A few days are not included due to technical problems in collecting data. To avoid Geo-blocking of content, we visited dr.dk/drtv from a Danish IP address. We did not use a login when visiting the page, but kept cookies for all web sessions. We avoided playback of content which could produce (hidden) personalised recommendations.

[2] Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome for MAC OS, full window size, between 1,800 and 3,400 pixels. The DRTV web page scales to the width of the screen, showing three–six thumbnail photos, except for the top picture carousel, where only one full picture is shown at a time.

[3] Programme titles appearing on all of the 520 days: *Den Store Bagedyst*, *Hammerslag*, *Gintberg på Kanten*, *I Hus til Halsen*, *Kender Du Typen?*, and *Nak & Æd*.

[4] The Danish categorisation uses only five of ESCORTS's more than 520 categories, but it extends ESCORT's fiction categories with a distinction between Danish and Foreign drama and fiction. It merges EBU's categories Current affairs (key 3.1.1.2), and the format category Discussion/Talkshow/Interview/Debate (key 2.1.6) into Current affairs and debate. Finally, it introduces the category Information and Culture [Oplysning og kultur].

[5] For identifying EBU genres in the DRTV interface, we used DR's list of linear programmes and EBU genres for 2020 (DR, 2021b), containing 27,000+ titles. Assisted by scripting software, we conducted a manual EBU genre identification of the 5,878 titles on DRTV. For titles published in 2021 or before 2020, we manually identified the EBU genre. When we review the genre labels for the 27,000+ linear programme titles and series, we see that DR's categorisation is in 246 cases ambiguous (equal to 0.42 per cent). For DRTV's front page, the double categorisation implies that 69 of the 5,878 unique programmes have more than one "EBU genre" (1.17%). We chose to count every appearance of each genre to assess the presence of the different EBU genres on DRTV's front page.

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CHAPTER 6

Public service media caught between public and market objectives

The case of the "Flemish Netflix"

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ABSTRACT

Public service media (PSM) have been increasingly propagating their market importance in policy and public rhetoric to legitimate their relevance in times of cutbacks and increasing pressure. This chapter presents an in-depth case study of the policy and strategic process leading up to Streamz, a joint subscription video-on-demand service put forward as a strategy to economically sustain local content in an increasingly platform-dominated media environment in Flanders. The chapter follows a policy-analysis approach. I provide a chronological account based on an analysis of public documents, written and oral records of industry events, and a close reading of policy documents and newspaper articles. The case demonstrates the complexities PSM face in defending their multiplatform strategy, while at the same time being increasingly intertwined in different forms of competition with media players. The case study adds evidence to the research field investigating PSM's role in the digital marketplace and has wider significance for PSM in various European markets that are facing a policy push to increasingly support market activities.

KEYWORDS: public service media, contribution to society, multiplatform strategies, video-on-demand, media policy

Raats, T. (2023). Public service media caught between public and market objectives: The case of the "Flemish Netflix". In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 111–130). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg.
https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-6

Introduction

Public service media (PSM) have expanded their offerings to mobile and on-demand services since the transition from analogue to digital (Debrett, 2009; Jakubowicz, 2007; Lowe & Bardoel, 2008; Moe, 2008), which accommodated a gradually shifting audience as linear television still held significant market shares in most European markets. However, a lot has changed since the growing dominance of subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+. PSM have seen increasing competition with these players to reach audiences, especially younger audiences (Donders, 2019). PSM are responding to these challenges by, amongst other things, increasing investments in high-budget exportable scripted content (D'Arma et al., 2021), accommodating personalisation, algorithm-based and customised on-demand viewing, or experimenting with binge-viewing and online-only exclusive content (Michalis, 2022; see also Lin & Tsai, Chapter 7 in this volume).

For commercial broadcasters, on the other hand, the competition with streaming services only adds to existing challenges brought on by decreasing advertisement spending, due to ad-skipping and delayed viewing, and a shift of ad-spending to platforms such as Google and Facebook (Raats & Evens, 2021). This led to increasing claims for additional government support and relaxed advertisement rules from broadcasters, as well as independent producers for whom broadcasters are the main financiers. As a response, governments have increasingly tied the public broadcaster's remit to the health of its surrounding media ecosystem in various countries. This has resulted in, amongst other things, encouragement or explicit obligations for PSM to partner with local broadcasters or publishers, take part in joint ventures on media innovation and sharing of research and development output, or make increased commitments to commission content with the independent television production industry (Enli et al., 2019; Raats & Donders, 2017; Wauters & Raats, 2018). Public media themselves have been increasingly propagating their economic importance in policy and public rhetoric to legitimate their relevance in times of cutbacks and increasing pressure. The European Broadcasting Union included collaborations with other private media partners, as well as economic impact, as part of its contribution to society strategy (EBU, 2015), a framework that brings PSM's relevance to the forefront and prioritises impact over output. The strategy advocates for strong policy support (and funding) for PSM-based observable societal and market relevance.

For media scholars, it thus becomes relevant to analyse 1) the tensions that arise from partnering with market players and strengthening the market sustainability of media players as a form of societal contribution, with other aspects of the public remit, such as content diversity, access, or trust; 2) whether and when this economic and public impact are complementary or contradictory; and 3) how these tensions are managed at the level of PSM policy, strategy, and practice.

In this chapter, I present an in-depth case study of the policy and strategic process leading up to a so-called Flemish Netflix, a joint SVoD service put forward as a strategy to economically sustain local content in an increasingly platform-dominated media environment. As such, I aim to answer the following research question:

RQ1. What do discussions surrounding the launch of a joint SVoD initiative reveal about policy and market perspectives on the role and legitimacy of public service media and how this impacts VRT's own universality objective?

The case clearly demonstrates the tensions between Flemish broadcaster VRT's own public remit and its role to sustain the local media ecosystem, which were central in the previous and current management agreements from 2016–2020 (Flemish Government & VRT, 2016) and 2021–2025 (Flemish Government & VRT, 2021). The chapter follows a policy-analysis approach (Dunn, 2018; Van den Bulck et al., 2019). I provide a chronological account based on an analysis of public documents, written and oral records of industry events, and a close reading of the 2019 Government agreement (Flemish Government, 2019), the Media Cabinet's Policy Vision note (Dalle, 2019), VRT's management agreements (Flemish Government & VRT, 2016; 2021), and newspaper articles. There are also limitations to this approach, as a document analysis only reveals what has been written and not necessarily what has been discussed (Karppinen & Moe, 2019); however, this is not the emphasis of this chapter. Rather, the emphasis lies on how discussions surrounding a joint Flemish SVoD initiative were framed in public statements, and how these statements reflect specific stances on the role and position of PSM. As stated by Dunn (2018: 20): "By analyzing policy arguments, we can identify and probe the assumptions underlying competing policy claims, recognize and evaluate objections to these claims, and synthesize knowledge from different sources". I explicitly use combinations of different sources to reflect the multitude of claims and viewpoints regarding the policy discussion (Karppinen & Moe, 2019).

In the first part of the chapter, I set out from the market failure and social responsibility perspectives on the role and value of PSM today (Donders, 2012), and I link both perspectives to current scholarly work on PSM's shift to on-demand audiovisual services and the respective impact on production and distribution. In the second part, I briefly contextualise the Flemish market and VRT's position. I then present the case study analysis in the third part, followed by an evaluation where I reflect on what the debate on the Flemish Netflix initiative says about the role and position of VRT in Flanders, specifically. In the conclusion, I reflect on the legitimacy of universality and market strengthening as vital parts of the PSM remit more generally.

Of market failure and social responsibility in the platform age

Public service media must be online if they want to be effective

Within policy perspectives on the role and position of public service broadcasting, Donders (2012) distinguishes two large categories: market failure and social responsibility. Within media studies, most perspectives on PSM set out from the latter, as does the Council of Europe, which basically prescribes that PSM must be as broad and financially large as required to serve "the values of democratic societies, in particular respect for human rights, cultures and political pluralism", which in turn presupposes "a wide choice of programmes and services to all sectors of the public, promoting social cohesion, cultural diversity and pluralist communication accessible to everyone" (Council of Europe, 2007: para. 11).

Defenders of the social responsibility perspective consider PSM's traditional modernist values and emancipatory remit as still legitimate. Yet, in order to fulfil that remit, PSM must expand the scope of their activities across all platforms and develop a renewed understanding of audiences that transcends simple user interaction. More recent work within the field has increasingly emphasised and questioned the role of PSM in the platform age, not only with regard to PSM's strategic responses to new players such as Netflix, Facebook, and YouTube, but also to how PSM struggle with, and at the same time adopt, some of the platform strategies themselves. D'Arma and colleagues (2021), for example, building on the framework of Napoli (1998), have identified combinations of resistance (lobbying for increased regulation on prominence, quota for SVoDs, and additional support), diversification (focusing on domestic content to differentiate from global players), collaboration (seeking partnerships with YouTube, Netflix, and others), and mimicry strategies (copying strategies of large catalogues, exclusive content, and user-friendly algorithm-based distribution).

One strand of recent contributions within the social responsibility perspective has focused on PSM's struggle to connect with audiences, given the enormous competition with, amongst others, global platforms. Moreover, services like YouTube and Netflix interact with users in an entirely different way and use algorithms to curate content and allow personalisation. From a PSM point of view, this raises questions not only about the extent to which user data could be employed as part of a distribution strategy, but also about how to continue to play a role in guiding audiences to public service content, and thus balance universalism and personalisation (Hutchinson & Sørensen, 2020; Sørensen, 2020; Sørensen & Van den Bulck, 2020; Van den Bulck & Moe, 2018; see also Lassen & Sørensen, Chapter 5 in this volume). A prioritisation of online-first strategies warrants another difficult balance between a continued appeal to a significantly large (usually older) audience that is still

watching on linear television, with the necessity to appeal to (mostly younger) audiences, for whom online viewing has become the main form of content consumption (Lassen, 2020; Lowe & Savage, 2020).

On top of that, scholars have also pointed to the fact that PSM themselves have become a battlefield of increasingly complex and polarised societies, in which the legacy of "mainstream media" is being challenged by populist discourse, fake news, and disinformation (Holtz-Bacha, 2021; Sehl et al., 2022). Policy-makers have entrusted PSM with additional tasks to combat fake news and increase media literacy amongst viewers, while at the same time requiring PSM to be more impartial and more explicitly represent all views in society. Sceptics have accused PSM of over-emphasising urban, young, progressive voices while insufficiently capturing the broad diversity of opinions (Raats et al. 2022). Part of these "hidden audiences" are also lower-educated people with a limited digital and media literacy skillset, as well as ethnic-cultural minorities, who often disconnect completely from PSM news and other (local) offerings. In that regard, Hokka (2019) emphasised the importance of a more "nuanced universality" that replaces a strategy of reaching most audiences all the time, with a development of services that appeal to smaller audiences but manage to capture society as a whole.

This prioritisation of online over linear also comes, secondly, with a series of organisational and strategic challenges, not least because of organisational resistance to breaking through the silos of radio and television (Donders, 2019; see also Künzler et al., Chapter 12 in this volume). Managers stick to brands that have built up a reputation over decades, fearing the loss of market share and considering audience engagement opportunities valuable (Ramsey, 2018; Vanhaeght, 2019). The increasingly competitive global media environment (Lobato, 2019; Lotz, 2018) has also instigated new partnerships between broadcasters. On the one hand, some of these partnerships have fuelled more commercial behaviour by PSM, for example, in favouring exportable high-concept content (Raats & Jensen, 2021), or by negotiating profitable global deals with the same players that they accuse of impeding the production of original content on the domestic market (Donders & Van den Bulck, 2016; Steemers, 2005). On the other hand, the partnerships with global SVoD players, social media, and video-sharing platforms have also made PSM dependent on platforms such as Facebook or YouTube, whose revenue is not re-invested in public service content and whose uses of audience data often conflict with the core values of PSM.

Distinctiveness and market sustainability as the drivers for contemporary market failure arguments on public service media

Another strand of perspectives is rooted in neo-classical economics and strongly emphasises the importance of consumer choice. According to these perspectives, public service broadcasting is only legitimate in those areas

where the market insufficiently provides specific services of public interest, due to high costs, low consumption levels, or both (Armstrong, 2005; Armstrong & Weeds, 2007; Elstein, 2000). In the 1990s, these perspectives resulted in demands for PSM to be restricted to a limited number of core tasks. In the digital age, where spectrum scarcity is no longer a valid argument, defenders of this view consider the abundance of content and different forms of online services as a confirmation of a reduced need for PSM. Media policy-makers in most democracies have thus far only rarely adopted a strict market failure interpretation to legitimise structural transformations in the position of PSM. An example is the distributed public service models such as New Zealand On Air in New Zealand (Dunleavy, 2012). However, arguments of market failure have been continuously visible in governmental attempts to limit online offerings or digital services, in response to criticism from market players who accuse PSM of distorting the market in areas where they have been expanding in order to survive (Sjøvaag et al., 2019; Donders et al., 2020). This resulted in, amongst other things, the adoption of a set of prescribed requirements in the Broadcasting Communications as part of the European Commission's State Aid policy in 2001 and 2009 (Donders, 2012).

More recently, a market-failure-in-disguise argumentation took shape in discussions on distinctiveness, a concept that arose during BBC's previous charter renewal. This was also adopted in other countries, such as Belgium and Denmark, and aimed to define PSM's position in an increasingly competitive media market. Whereas BBC attached distinctiveness to its aim to set high standards in all its services, to "enable content of the highest quality, made in Britain, for audiences to enjoy" (BBC, 2015: 5), the concept was mostly adopted to urge PSM to be distinguishable, rather than distinctive, from market players. This reduced the distinctiveness discussion to a discussion on genre. It presented the Reithian adage (to inform, educate, and entertain) as a hierarchical one, and paved the way for anecdotal discussions on specific entertainment programmes or the acquisition of expensive sports rights (for a relevant critical account on the discussion on distinctiveness, see, e.g., Tambini, 2016).

Interestingly, market failure has also been used to make the case for strong and well-funded PSM. Wauters and Raats (2018) emphasised the growing importance of an ecosystem perspective that uses arguments of market failure, predominantly related to the sustainability of domestic original programming and the economic importance of PSM (i.e., market failure perspective) to support a strong, well-funded, and holistic public broadcaster (i.e., social responsibility perspective) (similar arguments can be found in, e.g., Barwise & Picard, 2014; Davies, 2002, 2005; Raats & Jensen, 2021). PSM themselves have increasingly adopted this more positive market failure position, especially in defending their role as drivers of domestic content in a global competitive marketplace. Partnerships with the market to sustain the plural-

ity of domestic offerings, as well as showcasing their own economic impact, have been central in this strategy.

Characteristics of market and policy in Flanders

As the Flemish (Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) and Wallonian (French-speaking part of Belgium) media markets are different in terms of market structure, language, and audience consumption, media policy in Belgium is a competence of the different Communities. The Flemish media market portrays the fragility of a small market, with few players, limited budgets, dependence on public support mechanisms, and continuous pressure on domestic production (Raats & Jensen, 2021). Yet, at same time, it can be characterised as a vibrant, highly competitive market with a strong independent production industry, high volumes of local content, and increasing international exports following the expansion of global SVoD services (Raats & Iordache, 2020). The public service broadcaster VRT takes up a large market share in both television and radio. Its online offering, VRTNU (rebranded VRT MAX in 2022), has gradually gained popularity amongst Flemish audiences. The two main commercial rivals are VTM (part of DPG Media group) and SBS (part of Telenet), a subsidiary of Liberty Global and the largest Flemish television distributor. The production landscape is scattered, with over 50 companies active in the production of Flemish film and television content. Netflix has been active in Flanders since 2014, while Disney+ started its service in Belgium in September 2020.

Media policy in Flanders is traditionally characterised by a strong market-oriented focus. However, at the same time, that market is heavily supported by various public mechanisms in the form of subsidies, investment obligations, or fiscal advantages (Raats et al., 2016). Since 2010, governments have been adhering to partnership strategies to address pressure on private players, but these have only partly resulted in successful collaborations, given the fierce competition in the Flemish market. The 2016–2020 management contract formulated the VRT's strategic objective as follows: "VRT plays its role as lever in the media sector. It stimulates a strong and economically viable media landscape to guarantee a pluralistic and diverse offer in an increasingly international context [translated]" (Flemish Government & VRT, 2016: 14). The VRT management contract 2021–2025 describes a need to sustain the media industry as a whole, not as a complementary task, but as a part of the public remit: "as part of its societal remit, the public broadcaster has the duty to support the Flemish media ecosystem through partnerships with private players [translated]" (Flemish Government & VRT, 2021). To date, the public broadcaster in Flanders has been left sufficient leeway in terms of its remit, yet at the same time, it has been confronted with significant cutbacks, which have only partly been compensated for by commercial income.

This in turn has increasingly fuelled frustration amongst private players, ironically going against the very partnership agenda that governments had attempted to achieve.

Analysis of arguments

The need for a Flemish Netflix as a way out

The two main private broadcasters in Flanders (DPG Media and SBS) have increasingly voiced concerns about their business models since the 2010s. Three shifts were considered detrimental and leading to a perfect storm: the uptake of delayed viewing and ad-skipping, which resulted in less advertisement income; the dominance of global players like Google and YouTube in the advertising market, taking away more than a third of all advertisement spending in Belgium already in 2016 (Caudron et al., 2014); and the launch of Netflix in Belgium. Following several claims from independent producers and broadcasters on the increasing pressure for production of domestic content, the Flemish Government increased the budget of the Flanders Media Fund to support the production of mainly scripted television series. Producers and broadcasters (including VRT) presented themselves as actively propagating a rhetoric of shared fate against a common new adversary, supported by terms such as "ecosystem" to underline the existing fragility and need for balance. The unity between DPG Media and SBS somehow broke, as SBS was fully acquired by Telenet, who vetoed the proposed solution in the form of blocking ad-skipping, fearing it would cost them subscribers. An interview with Telenet CEO John Porter officially killed the idea of imposing some sort of restrictions on ad-skipping:

> We cannot take away a service that our customers have had for ten years, that would be commercial suicide. Why are we always singled out when it comes to delayed viewing and ad-skipping? Broadcasters' programming strategies facilitate ad-skipping by offering their programmes online with much less advertising [translated]. (John Porter, as cited in Dumon, 2018)

Noteworthy as well is that the deadlock between broadcaster VTM and Telenet added to an already difficult relationship, caused by heated conflicts on the remuneration of broadcasters for distributing the broadcasting signal (Donders & Evens, 2011). It was at that time that DPG Media (owner of VTM) actively started voicing the need for a domestic SVoD initiative.

A clear policy push pro Flemish Netflix

The push from private players and the government for VRT to collaborate in a joint SVoD initiative dates already from 2008. The then minister of media, Ingrid Lieten, heavily favouring a collaborative agenda as well (Raats & Don-

ders, 2017), had been encouraging VRT to participate in a joint on-demand service with private players, who at the time heavily criticised VRT's online free offerings. Conflicting interests related to rights and revenues delayed the service but ultimately resulted in the launch of a separate, more modest collaborative venture between the three broadcasters, called Stievie. With Stievie, the broadcasters were able to offer an alternative to the cable and telco-controlled services that had become more successful in the mobile-TV market (Baccarne et al., 2013; Raats & Donders, 2020).[1]

It was only after commercial broadcaster VTM surprisingly launched its own online ad-based video-on-demand service, that VRT initiated a stand-alone online on-demand service similar to the iPlayer, SVTPlay, and other successful examples across Europe at the time.

The uptake of delayed viewing accelerated rapidly from 2017 onwards in Flanders. This was confirmed by a report commissioned by the Flemish Government. The report mostly emphasised the need for a solution for the increased ad-skipping, urging for an agreement between distributors and broadcasters (Econopolis, 2018). The possibility of launching a Flemish SVoD initiative was also explored in the study, however, only if sufficient scale and exclusive content would be included, with the additional precaution that existing examples of joint SVoD initiatives were all based in larger markets. Large scale and large volumes would presuppose all Flemish broadcasters, including VRT, to be included in the service. However, the media cabinet explicitly put forward the study as the proof that a Flemish Netflix would be feasible. In the different public discussions on a joint Flemish SVoD service that followed since then, feasibility of launching a joint service gradually became a necessity to launch a joint venture. The call for a joint streaming service was most prominently pushed by DPG Media, which presented a joint SVoD initiative as the panacea for sustainability of the Flemish audiovisual market (see, e.g., Raats et al., 2019). The fact that the SVoD initiative was dubbed "the Flemish Netflix" in public and policy communications further added to the idea of a feasible Flemish alternative, providing proverbial arms to defend Flemish players against common global adversaries. For the then minister of media, Sven Gatz, a shift in discourse toward a Flemish Netflix was also useful, as Gatz had received a lot of criticism following a public statement that the government would intervene and block delayed viewing if the industry would not come to an agreement – something that caused concern in public discussions, including within his own liberal party (see, e.g., Flemish Parliament, 2018).

Another explicit nudge from the government in favour of the joint SVoD initiative came just before the most recent elections in 2019, as the cabinet pushed for an additional article in the Media Decree, enforcing television distributors to carry a joint Flemish SVoD initiative in their packages (Flemish Government, 2021).

With DPG Media successfully lobbying for a joint SVoD initiative, and with the government now clearly defending the project, the path was paved for involving the public broadcaster in the joint initiative.

A highly ambiguous VRT

Only, VRT portrayed an ambiguous position, switching arguments more than once during the debates. VRT initially backed the plans for a Flemish Netflix. Paul Lembrechts, CEO of VRT at the time, expressed clear enthusiasm about the project in the press, and called it a "necessary collaboration" (Bonneure, 2018). However, VRT later shied away from contributing to the service, as strategic concerns were raised regarding the lack of return-of-investment for the public broadcaster (De Preter, 2019). In an interview with newspaper *De Standaard*, Lembrechts expressed concerns on "the viability of a separate streaming platform in a small market [translated]" and suggested a European partnership as a better solution, yet immediately admitted this would take years and would be as unlikely an option (Droeven, 2018: 4).

It is clear that VRT's biggest strategic concern was that a collaboration would impede VRT's own strategy to expand its online player VRTNU, which was considered of crucial importance to attract especially young audiences, and that provided VRT with an enormous amount of valuable user data. Adding to that, Lembrechts and the government clashed over a conflict with the director of media, Peter Claes. According to statements in the press, part of the growing conflict between the number one and two of VRT grew out of conflicting views on the participation of VRT in a Flemish SVoD initiative.

However, after the newly elected government took office in May 2019, the government agreement explicitly obliged VRT to collaborate in a joint SVoD initiative in its government agreement, "given VRT's large catalogue of Flemish quality fiction productions [translated]" (HLN, 2019; Flemish Government, 2019).

Following months of public silence on the Flemish SVoD initiative, in February 2020, the biggest rivals – distributor Telenet and broadcaster DPG Media – caught everyone by surprise when they announced they would combine forces to finally launch a Flemish Netflix, regardless of whether VRT participated. The SVoD would basically take over all subscriptions of Telenet's existing video-on-demand offering (which were estimated at about 480,000) and would expand that catalogue with SBS, VTM's back-catalogue, and new premium titles. In August 2020, the European Commission greenlit the partnership between Telenet and DPG (Feyten, 2020).

The newly appointed minister of media, Benjamin Dalle, was also highly visible during the launch of the joint SVoD service, now called Streamz. During a presentation of the service's launch on 3 September 2020, the Christian-Democrat announced Streamz as "a historic moment. A milestone in Flemish

television history, the biggest milestone since the launch of VTM [translated]" [i.e., the first commercial television station in Flanders] (Dalle, 2020). In fact, despite a promising number of exclusive Flemish titles (which would later appear on linear broadcasting), the service was mostly the rebranding of an existing service with additional catalogue titles (Raats & Evens, 2021). The minister and his media cabinet also actively defended Streamz against criticism from the opposition on the service in subsequent discussions in parliament.

Interestingly, only a few days prior to the launch of the service, VRT announced it would also provide content for Streamz, however, as part of a collaboration in the form of license deals rather than actively taking part in the joint venture (Rombaut, 2020). The participation of VRT was picked up and discussed in the press and the parliament. The VRT board of governors voiced concerns that they were unaware of these management plans, but the CEO refuted this claim by arguing that the joint venture with Streamz was an operational decision and thus not under the board's authority.

A "strong partner" with clipped wings? The position of VRT

VRT's role to participate in Streamz was negotiated in parallel with VRT and the government's discussions on the management contract renewal. The Flemish Netflix, unsurprisingly, was hyped in the press and dominated public discussions at the end of 2019 up until mid-2020, both in parliament and the press, thus feeding the discourse as well as the criticism of Streamz being a holy grail for the future of Flemish television.

The opposition parties (Groen [green], Vlaams Belang [ultra-right], and Vooruit [social democrats]) voiced concerns about VRT's participation in Streamz, calling on the universality principle of the public remit. Social Democrats defended the argument that VRT content needed to be widely available on any platform, including online, for all Flemish households. Vlaams Belang emphasised the fact that content paid for by taxpayer money must be available to taxpayers. While both arguments are valid, they do surpass the fact that scripted content (which is the only content that VRT would be offering) in Flanders is not actually owned by VRT. Instead, every drama series in Flanders is a coproduction initiated by Flemish producers and backed by public support in the form of the Flemish media fund, tax shelter funding, or both, thus leaving approximately one-third of the total financing for the broadcasters (Raats & Iordache, 2020). Private broadcasters, during the parliamentary hearings on the role of VRT, unambiguously advocated to limit VRT's own video-on-demand offering to give the new Streamz the opportunity to grow. The fact that VRT had been offering its own shows online entirely to binge-watch and had been increasingly active in negotiating rights deals to acquire non-domestic quality scripted content was considered market distortive by DPG Media. In a newspaper interview, the CEO of DPG Media voiced this as follows:

> If people have paid to get access to previews of good Flemish drama, and one player gives that content away for free, you undermine the business model. We plead for a healthy balance with clear rules for the three models: linear, digital-free, and digital-paid. And according to me, one of these rules is that binge-watching strong Flemish drama in preview for free is not an option [translated]. (Heremans & Deckmyn, 2020)

This time, however, VRT was able to hold the reins and enable significant expansion of VRT MAX as part of its online-first portal strategy. The new VRT management contract (2021–2025), agreed upon when VRT had already confirmed participation in Streamz, stipulates VRT's obligation to deliver content to the SVoD service Streamz. Yet, it does not significantly limit VRT's own online freely accessible service VRT MAX, something that private players actively lobbied for. On the other hand, VRT, according to its most recent management contract, is not allowed to provide previews of entire seasons of foreign scripted content for free online, so the government did follow private players to some extent in their claim to give Streamz all potential chances.

What Streamz says about views on public service media in Flanders

From the analysis of the process preceding the launch of a joint SVoD initiative in Flanders, relevant lessons can be drawn with regard to PSM's role and position in Flanders today.

First, the discussions show both the government's and private players' perception of VRT's economic role as self-evident. In policy discourse – by the parliament, the government, and competitors – VRT was discussed as a large catalogue of content and intellectual property, and it was rarely talked about as a media player with distinct strategic objectives, let alone public interest objectives. Arguments clearly reflected the ecosystem perspective (keeping the middle ground between market failure and social responsibility perspectives) in which VRT seems to be considered a part of the problem, as long as it does not open up or partner up to help sustain private players in the market.

Second, the case of Streamz confirms the importance of context, pragmatism, and path-dependency in policy-makers' vision on the role and position of PSM, much more than a long-term vision on what PSM needs to be in today's society (D'Arma et al., 2021; Van den Bulck & Moe, 2012). The most recent management contract between the government and VRT does show strong support still. However, the fact that VRT has been entrusted with ever more responsibilities and obligations, including investing in Streamz, while at the same time continuously being confronted with increased budget cuts, clearly shows policy-makers' ambivalence towards VRT and the role of PSM in contemporary societies.

Third, and most importantly, the Streamz case has shown that VRT itself is struggling with developing a clear vision on the role it wants to play in the platform age as well. Following the conceptualisation of D'Arma and colleagues (2021), during the process preceding the launch of Streamz, VRT's position shifted from complacency, to resistance, to eventually a combination of collaboration and mimicry strategies. The discussions on the partnership in Streamz led to significant criticism of the public broadcaster in the press and public opinion. Various statements reflected the difficult fit of putting taxpayer-paid content behind paywalls. Ironically, VRT's hesitancy to join the project was more informed by a lack of financial return-of-investments for VRT, rather than the difficult fit with its own public remit, although those concerns were repeatedly voiced internally. This reduces the discussion on participation in Streamz from a fundamental one to merely operational. In this particular case, VRT insufficiently developed a clear rhetoric on how it saw its own role in the market, and how and why a partnership with Streamz did not necessarily go against its mission.

Fourth, the case of Streamz shows the difficult balance between the core value of PSM, universality, and a new entrusted task in the form of market sustainability – two forms of contribution to society that might be complementary but that might also clearly contradict each other. From a core rationale point of view, the idea of providing VRT programmes in preview on a Flemish Netflix is contradictory to a shift towards a technology-neutral public remit, which is central in defenders' claims for strong PSM (see, e.g., Donders, 2012). However, participating in Streamz does not necessarily contradict that ambition. The current collaboration – much more than an actual joint venture – can simply be considered a form of additional licensing content, aiming to recoup revenue to fund public content, and to meet the significant costs for scripted drama in a small but vibrant audiovisual market (Raats & Iordache, 2020).

However, it does become problematic when the universality principle and a holistic strong public broadcaster is being submitted to a strict market sustainability perspective entirely, which would have been the case if the PSM's own online portal, VRTNU, would not be allowed to grow further because of Streamz. In the most recent management contract, the government partly followed private players' demands by prohibiting VRTNU from acquiring full foreign scripted series in preview on its service, to give Streamz more chances to develop a commercially viable service. This limitation still gives the public broadcaster sufficient leeway to further develop its online portal. Yet, it is likely that – given the persistence of the market logic in defining the PSM remit – the autonomy of VRT with regard to its online SVoD service could eventually erode, should Streamz struggle to succeed as a sustainable project (Raats & Evens, 2021).

Conclusion

The discussions preceding the launch of Streamz in Flanders provide a relevant case for analysing media policy-making on PSM in a small market confronted with severe pressure from digitalisation and new market challengers since the 2010s. Furthermore, the case also provides good insight on the complexities PSM faces in defending its multiplatform strategy, on the one hand, while at the same time being increasingly intertwined in different forms of competition with media players, on the other. This chapter demonstrates how a survival strategy of one private media company (DPG Media) resulted in a government push in which a Flemish on-demand streaming service was presented as a "no alternative" solution. This resulted in a strategic deadlock for VRT, ultimately contributing to an already heated conflict at management level. At the same time, the case also shows VRT's struggle to publicly defend and position itself in its collaborations with private players. As such, the case study adds evidence to the research field investigating PSM's role in the digital marketplace and could have wider significance for PSM in various European markets that are facing a policy push to increasingly support market activities. From a more theoretical point of view, the chapter invites readers to reflect on whether universality also means freely available. I argue that a more contemporary interpretation of universality could encompass a vision of PSM needing to make content freely accessible to its audiences. However, for PSM strategy, it is important to put the proverbial money where its mouth is and to reinvent core values and adapt them to the platform age. What are the red lines and what are the areas where collaboration would be beneficial? The same goes for collaborations with players like YouTube and Facebook, which PSM have been increasingly dependent on.

The case of Streamz again underlines the problematic nature of the ways policy-makers have pushed a partnership agenda on PSM (i.e., a policy strategy in which PSM is considered pivotal to sustain the media ecosystem), and the findings confirm other findings on PSM partnership strategies in Flanders, the Netherlands, and the UK (see Raats & Donders, 2017; Wauters & Raats, 2018). A partnership agenda remains problematic if the reasons to partner with private players are not tied to clear objectives (such as plurality, quality, trust, diversity, and innovativeness of content), and if a partnership agenda is solely considered as a push for public broadcasters to collaborate and open up, regardless of the public broadcasters' own interest. Additionally, increased media concentration following the competition with global SVoD players might provide a case for a more independent, instead of a more connected, public broadcaster. With the Belgian DPG Media becoming a continuously larger European media conglomerate, collaboration with the public broadcaster with the objective to sustain the market seems ironic, to say the least. Already, in France, public broadcaster France Télévisions announced it would give up its stake in the French joint SVoD service Salto,

after the two largest private broadcasters in 2021 (TF1 and M6) announced plans to merge (Easton, 2022).

On a more strategic level, the case raises questions as to whether economic value can be seen as a form of PSM's contribution to society, and thus part of the core rationale of a twenty-first-century–proof PSM project. It is problematic for three reasons. A focus on the economic contribution of PSM contributes to a worrying shift, where PSM value is reduced to measurable impact, while it is clear that not everything meaningful can be measured. Moreover, it creates unrealistic expectations from PSM as a panacea for all private media players' economic problems in a highly competitive, highly uncertain, and increasingly global media market. And lastly, an emphasis on market impact paves the way for a more market-oriented interpretation for policy-makers. The trade-off between economic and public value is often overlapping but also contradictory. PSM, for example, play an important role for music industries; yet a focus on contributing economically to the music industry could favour a strategy providing significant airplay for national "winners" and big upcoming artists, whereas a purely public-interest objective could prioritise showing the biggest diversity in genres, artists, and voices in the music industry. In a similar vein, a more economic focus on television drama could privilege big exportable collaborations with Netflix, return on investment, and big bold commercial productions, but might also impede purely domestic content or experimental comedy, for example. The question is whether both could be combined. In some cases, they can, but in a lot of cases, the trade-off is difficult if put on the same level. Economic contribution is useful as a legitimising instrument, however, only when it is considered a by-product of the public remit, not as something standing hierarchically on the same level.

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Endnote

[1] Because of a lack of subscribers, DPG Media gave up on the AVoD version of Stievie in 2019 and the paid platform Stievie Premium in 2020 (Haeck, 2020).

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CHAPTER 7

New challenges for public service media in the age of platformisation

A case study of Taiwan PTS+

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores how public service media (PSM) operates in the age of platformisation, especially in terms of distributing strategy. With the advent of platformisation, maintaining the public value of PSM has been quite challenging. This chapter takes Taiwan PTS+, a streaming service launched by Taiwan Public Television Service (Taiwan PTS), as its main case study. We suggest that PTS+ adopts online human-edited curating to maintain the diversity and universality of PSM. Through this type of curation, the audience can experience broadened archival programmes while being imbued with a universal value. Additionally, through one type of new collaboration with commercial subscription video-on-demand (SVoD), the maximum audience can be reached to attain universality. In other words, by combining new media distribution temporally, rather than relying on data-driven technology, PSM can properly adjust its current strategies to meet the problem of maintaining universality in an era of platformisation.

KEYWORDS: public service media, platformisation, SVoD, Taiwan PTS+, distribution strategy

Lin, Y.-P., & Tsai, H.-J. (2023). New challenges for public service media in the age of platformisation: A case study of Taiwan PTS+. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 131–150). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-7

Introduction

The global media ecology has undergone dramatic changes in recent years, with the rise of subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) services. US-based SVoD services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ have steadily gained in market power around the globe and have a huge impact on national and domestic media industries (Lobato, 2018, 2019; Lotz, 2017, 2018), challenging not only national media policies, but also influencing business models and the distribution of legacy media. Academic discussions have recently focused on these changes (Afilipoaie et al., 2021; Raats & Evens, 2021; Jenner, 2018; Wayne & Castro, 2021). For instance, some studies have investigated the interface and hardware of streaming services (Johnson, 2017; Hesmondhalgh & Lobato, 2019) and how the audience's viewing habits (e.g., binge-watching) have changed (Jenner, 2017; Pillpets, 2019; Steiner & Xu, 2020). Other studies have examined how domestic SVoD services and government regulations respond to global players (Lobato & Scarlata, 2022; Lotz, 2021; Raats & Evens, 2021; see also Lassen & Sørensen, Chapter 5; Raats, Chapter 6; Lindeberg & Ala-Fossi, Chapter 8 in this volume). To some extent, this rise of global streaming services means that the production, distribution, and consumption of television, as well as audience watching habits, have dramatically changed across the world (Johnson, 2019; Lotz, 2018).

Public service media (PSM) is undoubtedly influenced by this development (Raats & Jensen, 2021). Various studies have focused on the BBC and how it adjusts its strategy to compete in the new streaming market (Donders, 2019; Ramsey, 2018). In particular, the BBC has attempted to open up its transnational service through the Brit Box – a joint project with ITV – which is now available in the US and Canada. Furthermore, the BBC constantly rethinks its digital direction. Until this year, the BBC has been planning to concentrate mostly on its online streaming services in the future (Waterson, 2022).[1] In addition, scholars have discussed the strategies of other European PSM organisations as they face the SVoD trend (D'Arma et al., 2021; Donders, 2019; Michalis, 2018; Raats & Evens, 2021; van Es & Poell, 2020).

There is an essential challenge for PSM when responding to the rise of SVoD: maintaining PSM's public value and its contribution to society. Commercial streaming services usually apply algorithms and data-driven technologies as their main distribution strategies, meaning that they provide personalised services based on user data. However, for PSM, personalisation holds particular challenges: On the one hand, it may cause privacy issues, and on the other, it could lead to the exclusion of minority programmes or audiences due to the goal of satisfying personal taste, which actually leans towards a "mainstream inclination". As such, there is a potential clash between universality and personalisation, which has become a central issue for PSM (Aslama Horowitz & Lowe, 2019; Michalis, 2017; Sørensen, 2020; Sørensen & Hutchinson, 2018).

Meanwhile, in the Taiwanese context, the Taiwan Public Television Service (PTS) faces the same challenges. Taiwan PTS started in 1997 and was originally conceived as a niche service to complement the rapidly commercialising media market. Therefore, from the start, Taiwan PTS lacked sufficient funding and was marginalised in the government's cultural and communications policies. Unlike the BBC or NHK, which are funded by a licence fee and have a substantial budget at their disposal, Taiwan PTS has an annual budget of merely NTD 900 million (approximately USD 30 million). Given this severe restriction, Taiwan PTS has a marginal status in the Taiwanese television market. As such, its digital transformation has been slow because of its limited resources (Tsai, 2016).

In 2016, Taiwan PTS launched the streaming service PTS+7, which offers a seven-day viewing window for certain programmes in conjunction with same-day PTS scheduling and next-day broadcasting. It has attempted to respond to the new (online) viewing habits of young audiences. In 2017, PTS+7 was transformed and upgraded into PTS+, which offers an unlimited viewing option and the addition of past programmes. Additionally, PTS+ provides standard-definition (SD) and high-definition (HD) programmes, as well as ultra-high-definition (4K) broadcasting (Lee, 2018).

Strictly speaking, PTS+ is a relatively new streaming service. Therefore, this chapter considers the case study of PTS+ in Taiwan and mainly focuses on its distribution strategy. PTS+ was chosen for two reasons: First, the abovementioned scholarly works have rarely discussed non-Western countries, and this chapter can therefore offer a start in filling this gap; and second, due to its "special situation" in terms of its limited resources, PTS+ and its distribution strategy are worthy of further study.

The objectives of this chapter are 1) to identify the distribution strategies of PTS+ and 2) to determine how PTS+ implements its distribution strategies within Taiwan's SVoD ecology. In doing so, we aim to examine the impact of the strategy of PTS+ on the principle of universality, which is a core value of PSM. Two research questions are proposed:

RQ1. How can universality be maintained while promoting PSM content?

RQ2. How can universality be achieved in the strongly competitive SVoD environment?

These two questions can help us examine Taiwan's PSM situation in the age of platformisation.

In the next section, we discuss the state of research with respect to platformisation, universality, and PSM, highlighting the issue of the potential conflict between personalisation and universality as the main analytical framework. In the subsequent section, we focus on the case study of Taiwan PTS+ and its distribution strategy, looking both into curation and collaboration.

Platformisation, universality, and public service media

According to Nieborg and Poell (2018: 4276), "platformisation can be defined as the penetration of economic, governmental, and infrastructural extensions of digital platforms into the web and app ecosystems, fundamentally affecting the operations of the cultural industries". Platformisation has influenced almost every aspect of media production, distribution, and use. The GAFAM (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft) tech giants dominate this development, constantly expanding their impact on global media. Platforms play a digital intermediary role between users and content. On platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok, users can choose their favourite content outside of traditional media. This also means that data-driven technology is being widely applied: Through collecting user data, these platforms can target a user's personal taste. While algorithms may have benefits for users, there are also controversial issues, such as privacy infringement.

Similar to these tech giants, global SVoD services have become powerful players, with implications for legacy media. These global SVoD services rely on the control of infrastructure power, and they have a worldwide market advantage owing to content, consumer, connectivity, and capital (Raats & Evens, 2021). For example, in Asia, Netflix has notoriously made huge investments in the Korean audiovisual market, as evidenced by its most successful production to date, *Squid Game*, which resulted in a global craze and generated USD 900 million in profit for Netflix (Li, 2021; Shaw, 2021). This success has also accelerated the operation of other global streaming services, such as Amazon Prime Video and Disney+. Such rapid expansions and constant investments into local content can appeal to new subscribers and maintain the old customer base on a certain streaming service (Evens & Donders, 2018).

However, such rapid expansion can also be considered a new challenge and a threat to national and local media markets, including PSM organisations. Raats and Jensen (2021) identified three challenges faced by PSM: 1) whether to collaborate with these new streaming services; 2) whether to coproduce high-end drama with commercial SVoD services; and 3) whether public service broadcasters can still maintain their distinctiveness once they "go international". On the one hand, the problem of "collaboration" (i.e., content production) entails accommodating the requests of third-party platforms (Stollfuß, 2021). On the other hand, the distribution strategy adopted by PSM must seek balance amongst commercial, public, and even international interests and dimensions. This chapter specifically deals with new distribution strategies and the repercussions involved for the core values of PSM.

These core values of PSM include universality, equality, diversity, and quality (Nikunen & Hokka, 2020; Van den Bulck & Moe, 2018). In this chapter, we focus on the effects of SVoD on universality, a value with a multilayered meaning. Paddy Scannell noted that universality has four dimensions:

1) access and reach, 2) genre, 3) relevance and impact, and 4) finance obligations (as cited in Lowe & Savage, 2020). According to Van den Bulck and Moe (2018), "universality" refers to "universal access" and "universal appeal", the former representing the notion that the public must have access to public broadcasting content without discrimination due to sociodemographic characteristics, and the latter suggesting that public broadcasters must cater to a wide range of tastes and diverse interests. This definition is clearly focused on the level of content and access (EBU, 2012; Aslama Horowitz & Lowe, 2020; Jackson, 2020; Sørensen, 2020). Taiwan PTS chairman Hu Yuan-Hui (2018: 39) has also ever indicated that "the principle of universality emphasises the need to be accessible to all citizens and to the largest possible number of citizens".[2] With this chapter, we aim to examine Taiwan PTS+ from these two perspectives – universal access and universal appeal – within the context of platformisation.

The principle of universality faces a huge challenge in this age of platformisation. Streaming services make use of data-driven technology and algorithms for the production and distribution of media content in order to provide personalised services that satisfy viewers' personal tastes. Profit-oriented SVoD services, such as Netflix, fully utilise certain parameters, including demography, watching history, and content tagging (Álvarez et al., 2020). Such recommender systems help these companies to successfully promote and market their content.

PSM's SVoD offers may also rely on personalisation; however, personalisation can come into direct conflict with the principle of universality (Sørensen & Hutchinson, 2018), that is, the spirit of universality may be damaged by automated recommendations. For example, a recommender system may cause biased content distribution, indirectly excluding some audience or content based only on usage data. Additionally, algorithms lack transparency, making it difficult to achieve the universality of PSM on their own digital services. As Sørensen (2020: 193) mentioned, "the utility of universalism has been weakened in parallel with the growth of digital platforms and channels". Nikunen and Hokka (2020) also indicated that if PSM depends on user data and audience metrics, it will move away from its core principle of universality.

This issue has led to discussions among scholars, especially in relation to European PSM, some of which are already using algorithms for personalisation. According to Álvarez and colleagues (2020), one-third of PSM's VoD offers in Europe make use of a recommender system or at least feature some recommendation elements. The authors distinguished three different types of recommendation elements: While "direct appeal to the spectator" takes a user's profile into consideration and "content oriented" makes use of Big Data to organise content by format or popularity, "on behalf of PSM" does not involve any particular personalisation but relies on curation rather than algorithms to recommend certain content (Álvarez et al., 2020: 729). Van

den Bulck and Moe (2018) have discussed how personalisation based on algorithms affects universality by examining Norwegian NRK and Flemish VRT.[3] Their results show that the two PSM organisations have different attitudes towards the use of algorithms: While NRK is inclined to approve its use with a view to facilitate more effective personalisation, VTR holds a more conservative attitude, expressing concerns about the use of this technology. Martin (2021) investigated two PSM organisations in the US – the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR) – and highlighted the importance of considering the meaning of personalisation in public media and how public media should create public enthusiasm and interest in ways that differ from commercial SVoD services. Furthermore, he also recommended the integration of public television and radio offers into a single registration system, from which the generated data can be transformed into a basis for understanding public interest in public media, finding ways to improve it, and providing personalised experiences for users. Nikunen and Hokka (2020) also noted that the use of data should be more cautious and must not violate public values to avoid a loss of trust among the audience. Furthermore, they found that the BBC and Finnish YLE carefully followed the guidelines of ethical and fair data practice regarding, for example, transparency and piracy.

Making use of personalisation technology while preserving the value of universality is a challenge for PSM. According to Van den Bulck and Moe (2018: 890), the idea of a "public service algorithm" – a new approach to interpreting the principle of universality in the face of emerging personalisation strategies – can safeguard "alternatives and interests" based on transcending personal tastes. In this way, PSM can gradually integrate personalised services into new organisational policies. The authors further argued that PSM must use a public service algorithm that is more compatible with their universality and public service responsibilities. Martin (2021) has also reported that the algorithms adopted by the BBC are still primarily public service algorithms, and even if they are used, this should not necessarily mean abandoning the manual editing process. Instead, media organisations should adopt a hybrid strategy that pursues a balance between algorithmic and manual curation.

Such a hybrid strategy could be connected to "curating", which has recently been used as the main strategy of PSM (Grainge & Johnson, 2018). The term curation originated from the field of museum work, but in recent years, due to the huge amount of digital content generated, the process of classifying, selecting, and organising digital content for presentation has been labelled "digital content curation", in which the judgment of the final presentation relies on human judgment rather than artificial intelligence, algorithms, Big Data, or other tools (Rosenbaum, 2011). Based on Bennet's (2018) study of the curative development of BBC iPlayer, curation based on public service algorithms can make four new connections with the audience in terms of 1)

new content, 2) linking diverse audiences to shared content, 3) new experiences and forms, and 4) external services and content. Especially for the fourth point, content from PSM should go beyond "its own borders"; in other words, this content should be distributed to reach as much "external distribution" as possible, such as libraries and museums. Bennet further emphasised that public service algorithms can help strengthen the BBC's iPlayer service; moreover, Bennet argued that these four approaches can turn iPlayer into a new "guide" that broadens the prospects of potential audiences.

Although public service algorithms are potentially helpful in solving the conflict between personalisation and universality, they may be difficult to implement in practice. Thus, curation is one way to maintain the public values of PSM by adding a human editor to supplement the possible shortcomings of non-transparent algorithms. Taiwan PTS+, the case study in this chapter, also makes use of human curators, although its implementation has a nuanced difference, because it lacks the key technology used by other SVoD services: the use of algorithms.

Apart from the issues arising from the use of algorithms and data-driven technologies on their own services, another discussion-worthy topic is the potential collaboration of PSM with commercial streaming services. It is possible to distinguish two types of collaboration between PSM and its rivals (D'Arma et al., 2021): 1) distribution, which involves selling rights to commercial SVoD services, and 2) production, which involves PSM co-producing or co-financing projects with commercial SVoD services. Collaboration can help PSM organisations to increase their production budgets (D'Arma et al., 2021) and to create revenues through selling distribution rights for programmes (Steemers, 2016). For instance, co-production or co-finance agreements between Netflix and PSM comprise 80 per cent of existing European partnerships of this kind, due to the streaming giant's strong credibility (Afilipoaie et al., 2021). In their study, D'Arma and colleagues (2021) discussed how PSM use collaboration to rapidly expand SVoD by cooperating with their competitors to enlarge their production budget. In their work, the authors elaborated on the responses of PSM in the era of streaming using a framework proposed by Philip Napoli (1998) that distinguishes between 1) complacency, 2) resistance, 3) differentiation (i.e., transformation into a distinctly unique competitive position), and 4) diversification and mimicry (i.e., expanding activities to multiple platforms and beginning to adopt the core features of new, threatening technologies). Using the BBC, Flemish VRT, and Italian RAI as their cases, D'Arma and colleagues (2021) examined these four stages of evolutionary media response to new technologies. In addition to these four stages, they proposed the possibility of a collaborative stage, either through sale of programme copyrights directly to streaming services (e.g., Netflix and Amazon Prime Video) or of a co-production model. Their analysis shows that although PSM have gone through these four stages, the

process is not linear, and it basically depends on government policies (level of support and regulation), cultural factors, and the positioning and size of PSM in each country. For example, the UK has the advantage of international co-production due to its language advantage (English), whereas Flemish VRT may not be favoured for Netflix co-productions due to language and market size constraints, although Netflix will buy its high-quality drama content. As such, the complexity of the competitive environment, budgetary pressures, and organisational structures will influence distribution strategies. Collaboration with commercial streaming services like Netflix may also affect the principle of universality, for instance, by marginalising lesser-viewed content.

In this chapter, we examine the strategic response of a the PSM organisation in Taiwan to the development of SVoD services. Since 2016, when SVoD services entered the market, the media environment in Taiwan has been fiercely competitive. By 2020, there were at least twenty-five domestic and global SVoD services active in the country. Among these, Netflix, unsurprisingly, reached a market share of 61.9 per cent, which is significantly higher than any domestic SVoD players (Liu & Lin, 2022). The next two sections offer an analysis of Taiwan PTS's own VoD offer, PTS+, which represents an adjustment of its distribution strategy under the principle of universality amidst the rapidly changing media environment.

Our study is based on a document analysis (Bowen, 2009). Analysing existing material produced by news media or industry organisations is helpful in gaining insights into the operation of media organisations. According to Broughton Micova (2018: 79), "document analysis is a flexible method that can be adapted to the type of documents relevant to a particular case". In this research, because the launch of PTS+ is an important element of Taiwan PTS's digital development, document analysis allows us to better understand the operation of PTS+ (including its subscription model) and the development of Taiwan PTS's VoD strategy. Our analysis included annual reports, the official PTS magazine *Action Quarterly*, and relevant media coverage about PTS+ from its launch in 2017 through 2021. Additionally, the arrangement of the PTS+ website was reviewed from 2019 through July 2022 to explore its recommendation system. This two-fold analysis should allow for a comprehensive analysis of the distribution strategy of PTS+.

The distribution strategy of Taiwan PTS

Facing the challenge of platformisation, Taiwan PTS has adopted two strategies: human curation of online content and collaboration with other streaming services. Taiwan PTS chose human curation because of inadequate resources for developing a recommender system based on algorithmic personalisation. Moreover, the strong commercial media environment in the country makes it difficult for Taiwan PTS to survive. Thus, in order to widen access to its

content, PTS+ seeks collaboration with commercial streaming services. In the following, both elements of this distribution strategy are discussed in detail.

Human curation recommender system

PTS+ was first launched in 2017 and reached 260,000 registrations after a year of operation. Whenever some flagship or quality programmes (mostly dramas) were launched, PTS+ gained 10,000 more subscriptions in one month (Taiwan PTS, 2018). In 2019, registrations reached 500,000, thus representing a steady growth (Anon, 2019). Indeed, the establishment of PTS+ symbolised a new media experiment of Taiwan PTS, which still provides diverse services and innovative ventures despite the fact that it does not receive as much resources as its counterparts in other countries. Thus, PTS has been constantly rethinking its position in the Taiwanese media market.

Taiwan PTS+ adopted human-edited curation for its recommender system at this initial stage and does not make use of algorithms or data-driven technologies because of its limited budget. This system fully utilises archival programming curation to reinforce diversity and universality in culture. In Johnson's (2018: 226) study, she mentioned that for the BBC, "curation can also be used to offer increased access to the rich history of PSB and British culture". Similarly, PTS+ uses curation as a distribution strategy under the public sevice value of universality.

Before viewers can use PTS+, they must log in to its website. This means that they must register and provide personal information. To investigate how PTS+ curates its content, we began by examining its interface on the PTS+ website. On the landing page, as with other commercial SVoD services, the audience can watch banners of "Distinguished and now-playing programmes" on the topmost block. The middle block contains the "Popular recommendations" divided into two zones: time-limited watching and binge-watching, referring to programmes with limited time of availability (one week or one month) and those that are produced by Taiwan PTS itself, respectively. The lowest block is reserved for a section on "Wonderful moments", which mainly arranges series programmes under three categories: children, short dramas, and art and documentaries.

In the top-right menu, viewers can choose "Channel", which has twelve categories: live, documentary, drama, art, life, descriptive video service, Taiwanese-language channel, time-limited watching, best children programmes, Taiwan International Children's Film Festival, PTS Kids (for Covid-19), and the PTS Live Performance Hall. The layout of the web page of each channel differs from the layout of the front page and displays curated content. This type of programming curation is theme-centred and mainly promotes current programmes plus archival programmes. From its interface, the current programmes occupy the visual centre, whilst the spaces below this are reserved for related archival programmes.

PTS+ makes use of four forms of content curation. First, when promoting the latest seasons of a drama, variety, or reality-TV programme, the audience is pointed to "Previous seasons" placed below the current one. This allows new viewers to easily discover older seasons of these shows and existing viewers to re-visit them. This curation is simple, but it allows audiences to binge-watch shows.

The second form of curation depends on the theme of the current programme and recommends past programmes. For example, in the Drama category, one theme is "Migrant", in which the main television drama being promoted is *Merah* [*Red*] – a drama about family and love between an Indonesian migrant worker and her employer in Taiwan. There are five other television series that match this category, thus making up a small sample of online curation. A similar curation style is also seen in the "Documentary" category. For example, a featured documentary of the week in 2021 was *Fly So Far*, about 17 El Salvadoran women who struggled for freedom because their miscarriages were regarded as a "crime" in El Salvador. Five archival documentaries match this documentary and were thus recommended to the audience: *Amazonia Undercover* (about the local government and efforts to protect and save Amazonia), *We Were Smart* (about the Chinese subculture of young workers in the cities), *RCA Behind the Miracle* (about pollution of RCA and workers in Taiwan in the 1970s), and *Formosa Homicide Chronicle III* and *Formosa Homicide Chronicle I* (a series discussing the issue and problem of death penalty in Taiwan). From this curation, the audience can watch related documentaries that tackle various social issues ranging from world consumerism and youth culture to human rights. Thus, through the main documentary's theme, this kind of curation is expected to connect relevant programmes to the audience.

The third form of curation uses current events to attract viewers. The most common strategy is to launch a retrospective series about an actor or a drama director who has recently received an award to make the audience understand these people's growth trajectories and how Taiwan PTS cultivates them through retrospective curation. Moreover, PTS+ also responds to important events or days. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, Tawian PTS planned a series of programmes for children who were unable to attend school, with PTS+ focusing on different categories of school-aged children and youth. These programmes featured different subjects, including technology, health and physical education, general topics, language, and art, so that homebound children and youth could continue to learn without interruption. These programmes were similarly curated to provide immediate and functional public broadcasting services in response to the current societal context of the pandemic. Moreover, if an important person passes away, PTS+ also immediately arranges documentaries or interviews featuring this important person from the Taiwan PTS archive. For example, when former

president Lee Teng-Hui passed away in 2020, PTS+ soon launched from its archive a three-part documentary series about the former president, which was produced in 2006.

The fourth form of curation compensates for "physical distance" due to the Covid-19 pandemic and includes live performances. PTS+ established a specialised channel called the PTS Live Performance Hall, featuring over 40 performing arts groups, organisations, and individual performers from home and abroad. Additionally, the annual Taiwan International Children's Film Festival hosted by Taiwan PTS has been held by PTS+ since 2020, bringing overall positive feedback from viewers. For example, its 2020 opening film, *Fritzi – A Revolutionary Tale*, drew up to 7,683 online viewers (Taiwan PTS, 2020). By the end of 2021, the Taiwan International Children's Film Festival channel garnered 13,000 viewers (Taiwan PTS, 2021).

The curation strategy adopted by PTS+ requires human judgment to position various features and themes. As Robinson (2017: 22) noted, "the key difference is aggregation, and curation is human agency and evaluation". Human editors select valuable archival programmes to strengthen each theme that PTS+ wants to feature. In terms of universality, the design of PTS+ breaks the scheduled-time model, thereby changing the linear watching habits of audiences. Furthermore, the curated programmes properly extend content to facilitate the "discovery" of new (or archival) content, and such a tactic leads to "serendipitous discovery", as Grainge and Johnson (2018) noted. This discovery indicates a two-way relationship between the audience and content providers. In this way, viewers can broaden their tastes and familiarise themselves with various genre programmes from content providers to avoid watching just "more of the same". Hence, through this type of human-edited recommender system, the universality of PSM can be achieved without neglecting marginal or non-mainstream content.

Although this online curation seems to emphasise human-edited rather than user data due to limited technology, the log-in system offers the potential for a personalised service and helps PTS+ to better understand audience preferences. Since using PTS+ requires registration, audience profiles and viewing behaviours can be recorded more clearly. This, in turn, allows the VoD service to gather information about the types of programmes a viewer watches frequently, whether they stop watching halfway through, and how often they stop watching, for example. The analysis of such usage data can also facilitate a better understanding of how viewers divide their attention amongst multiple screens (e.g., mobile phones, tablets, and computers). This information can be of great help to the future development of PTS+ and to programme content marketing.

Therefore, although the mechanism of the registration system may seem to restrict the public's cultural access, it does not. Instead, the information obtained is based on the principles and values of PSM and, more precisely,

on the aim of understanding public needs and interests. PSM can thus adjust to public demands for diversified content in the era of streaming services.

Collaboration with commercial streaming services

In addition to the strategy of human curation to maintain the diversity and universality of its content, Taiwan PTS also adopts a collaboration strategy for external distribution (D'Arma et al., 2021). This means that Taiwan PTS co-produces content with domestic streaming services or sells distribution rights of its own programmes to commercial streaming services like Netflix. This model is based on collaboration between PSM and commercial streaming services, and it has been the main strategy employed by Taiwan PTS as it has positioned itself as the main content provider of high-quality drama in the market.

Given that PTS+ has a limited budget and a low penetration rate in the Taiwanese OTT market, collaboration is not only pursued due to economic considerations but also in order to create public value. Distributing content produced mainly by Taiwan PTS not only on PTS+ can help maximise audience reach and thus achieve universality.

Drama series are the pride of Taiwan PTS and enjoy a great reputation in the Taiwanese market. Since 1998, the year Taiwan PTS was established, the PSM organisation has always been a major winner of the Best Television Series Award in the Golden Bell Awards, the annual awarding ceremony for Taiwanese television productions. From 1999 to 2021, Taiwan PTS won this award nine times – more often than any other broadcaster. Therefore, PTS+ is focused on the distribution of these popular drama series.

A distinctive feature of the distribution strategy is the paywall system of PTS+. While a paywall seems to conflict with the core value of universality, the Taiwanese PSM has a limited budget and depends on other revenue streams, including its commercial profits from DVDs and books. However, this system faces legal issues because there is no definite law that allows PSM to implement a paywall system. Thus, Taiwan PTS sought the advice of the Ministry of Culture, pointing out that Article 28 of the Public Television Law states that Taiwan PTS can obtain revenue from commercial activities or other sources related to the Public Television Cultural Foundation. The Ministry agreed to this new model (Lee, 2018). Hence, Taiwan PTS collaborates with commercial SVoD services while PTS+ is gradually transforming into a paid VoD offer. This collaborative model attempts to maximise universality as it grants the analogue Taiwan PTS channel first broadcasting rights for drama programming co-produced, co-financed, and co-distributed with commercial streaming services.

According to our preliminary investigation, the new solution seems to work well. It is difficult to obtain the numbers of subscriptions or revenues of all

drama series because of confidentiality in business information. However, the phenomenon can still be observed through documents and news. For example, *On Children*, the ten-part television series about parents and children facing social pressure, which was released in 2018, ranked amongst the top three drama programmes in terms of traffic on the VoD service since its inception in September 2018 on LINE TV, with a single episode surpassing 1.3 million views (Tang, 2018). In 2019, the most high-profile programme for that year was *The World Between Us*, which was produced jointly by the Public Television Service, HBO Asia, and CATCHPLAY+ (domestic OTT player). The series, which premiered in Taiwan on 24 March 2019, consisted of ten episodes and dealt with the issues of the death penalty and mental illness. The series was also available in its entirety on PTS+ for a fee of USD 130 for three months. As a result, Taiwan PTS generated over USD 4 million in revenue, and the member numbers of CATCHPLAY+ increased by 220,000 in one month, easily doubling the number of paid members (Tang, 2019).

Another example is *Tears on Fire*, a 2021 drama series co-produced by MyVideo (domestic OTT service) and Taiwan PTS. This drama, which is about the life stories of firefighters, has attracted a significant number of new users to the MyVideo service, garnering the highest view rate in Taiwan in the first half of the year of 2021. In just one week, the number of viewers soared to more than 30 per cent compared with the previous week, with almost over 260,000 views (CNA, 2021).

Apart from domestic streaming services, Taiwan PTS also has a strong partnership with Netflix. However, unlike the investment modes adopted by domestic SVoD offers, Netflix did not invest or co-produce with Taiwan PTS, choosing to serve as a distributor instead. Sometimes, these quality dramas produced by Taiwan PTS premiered on Netflix, depending on the contract. Through the market advantage dominated by Netflix in Taiwan, this strategy can attract more audiences. One example is the 2022 flagship historical drama series, *Seqalu: Formosa 1867*, which tells the story of the conflict between American sailors and Indigenous people through the "Rover Incident" that broke out on 12 March 1867. This drama cost Taiwan PTS around NTD 200 million (approximately USD 6.5 million). When this flagship drama was launched, it immediately broke records, with its first two episodes reaching 1.19 million viewers on television and claiming the top spot on various online streaming services, including Line TV, MyVideo, and MOD. As for Netflix, the first two episodes took the top spot in the programme rankings (Chung, 2021).

We listed all dramas under this competition mode since 2018 to the middle of 2022 (see Table 7.1). This new strategy is implemented in two ways. First, it begins with the co-production and co-financing with domestic streaming services that then distribute the programmes on their own VoD offer, whereas PTS+ can release them at a later time. The second strategy is to be dependent

on a commercial streaming service's distribution, especially Netflix. What both strategies have in common is the paywall system adopted by PTS+ for these quality dramas. The Taiwan PTS television channel, PTS+, and other commercial streaming services have, together, produced content to maximise audience reach.

However, this payment system poses a great challenge to PSM in Taiwan. PSM is rarely connected to a payment system for its audience. Taiwan PTS has attempted to launch this system to supplement its originally inadequate budget and to test whether it could serve as a new business mode.

PTS+ also has better information about its paying members that enables accurate forecasting of viewing data. This new mode can further connect to the log-in system, and such a combination can overcome audience fragmentation and personalisation issues based on public value. By adopting this combination system, Taiwan PTS can know their audience's needs and preferences and adjust its programming accordingly. In addition, PSM must master its competitive relationship with global SVoD services and expand its digital public service advantage to achieve its true potential.

Overall, to actually achieve universality, collaboration with commercial streaming services is a necessary strategy for Taiwan PTS due to its weak status in the Taiwan television and SvoD markets. Indeed, the estimated sum of the viewing population of different commercial streaming services (domestic or international) can augment the distribution of content produced by Taiwan PTS. As D'Arma and colleagues (2021) have pointed out, a successful collaboration strategy can increase the PSM organisation's budget and the visibility of its content. However, there is also the possibility of losing one's brand. This is an issue that must be addressed as the Netflix Original brand grows stronger, thus overshadowing the real production unit: in this case, Taiwan PTS.

In other words, this collaboration runs the risk of marginalisation and of even eroding a PSM organisation's own brand (Raats & Jensen, 2021). Audiences watching various drama series on commercial SVoD services are not aware that these high-quality dramas are produced by, for example, Taiwan PTS, thus leading to the failure to cultivate brand loyalty. This is not a welcome development for Taiwan PTS in the future, even if the current distribution strategy is helping to grow audience numbers. As such, PTS+ must carefully consider this collaboration mode.

Table 7.1 *TV series with paywall since the launch of PTS+*

Title	Premiere date & time	Streaming with simultaneous broadcasting	Streaming with later broadcasting	
On Children [你的孩子不是你的孩子]	7 July 2017 Every Saturday, 21:00	Netflix	PTS+ Line TV	Every Saturday, 22:00
			My Video	Since 5 August 2018
The Teenage Psychic [通靈少女2]	6 October 2019 Every Saturday, 21:00	HBO HBO GO HBO on Demand	PTS+	Every Monday, 22:00
Green Door [魂囚西門]	16 February 2019 Every Saturday, 21:00	–	Netflix PTS+ HamiVideo	Every Saturday, 22:00
The World Between Us [我們與惡的距離]	24 March 2019 Every Sunday, 21:00	CATCHPLAY+ HBO Asia	–	–
Hate the Sin, Love the Sinner [噬罪者]	8 June 2019 Every Saturday, 21:00	PTS+ NETFLIX iQIYI TW FriDay LINE TV	KKTV MyVideo	Every other Friday, 12:00
Candy Online [糖糖 *Online*]	16 November 2019 Every Saturday, 21:00	Netflix PTS+	–	–
Ru: Taiwan Express [路~台灣 *Express*~]	16 May 2020 Every Saturday, 21:00	PTS+	CATCHPLAY+ LINE TV FriDay	Every Saturday, 22:00
			MOD (including HamiVideo) MyVideo	After this TV series was finished
Detention [返校]	5 December 2020 Every Saturday, 21:00	Netflix	PTS+	Every Sunday
Who Killed the Good Man [大債時代]	2 January 2021 Every Saturday, 21:00	Netflix	PTS+ MOD CATCHPLAY+ LINE TV	Every Saturday, 23:00
			MyVideo	Every Sunday, 20:00
The Magician on the Skywalk [天橋上的魔術師]	20 February 2021 Every Saturday, 21:00	MyVideo	PTS+ Netflix	Every Saturday, 22:00
Tears on Fire [火神的眼淚]	1 May 2021 Every Saturday, 21:00	MyVideo	PTS+ Netflix	Every Saturday, 22:00
Seqalu: Formosa 1867 [斯卡羅]	14 August 2021 Every Saturday, 21:00	–	PTS+ LINE TV	Every Saturday, 22:00
			Netflix MyVideo	Since 15 August, every Sunday,18:00
			MOD HamiVideo	Since 22 August, every Sunday,18:00

Conclusion

PTS+, the streaming service of Taiwan PTS, uses two distribution strategies to reposition itself in the strongly competitive SVoD environment in Taiwan. First, through human curating, both Taiwan PTS and the audience can benefit from archive programmes. To some extent, PTS+ temporarily circumvents the dilemma between personalisation and universality generated by the use of algorithms. The second strategy is collaboration based on a new, experimental business model: the paywall system. In terms of achieving universality, the collaboration strategy maximizes viewership of content produced by Taiwan PTS. Moreover, the paywall system supplements an inadequate annual budget.

Overall, this new two-fold distribution strategy can be expected to contribute to society. On the one hand, the curation mechanisms implemented solve the dilemma between personalisation and universality. On the other hand, this innovative strategy also benefits users in an algorithmically driven SVoD market. Even with its limited resources, Taiwan PTS tries to redefine public values that are conducive to society by offering an innovative curated VoD offer and by attempting to break through the boundaries of commercially dominated information and cultural entertainment markets to provide diversified content services in the spirit of the public good. The digital distribution strategy of Taiwan PTS is therefore based on maintaining the ethos of PSM in society and contributing to a diverse media landscape in a diverse society. At the same time, this strategy can help to reduce the problems of access to content caused by technology gaps in the digital age.

However, these strategies also need to be cautiously examined in the future. The potential future use of algorithms must be balanced with the goal of maintaining public value. How could this mechanism maintain flexibility and the publicity of human-edited curation? Or, how should this normal operation under limited resources be maintained (Tsai & Lin, 2019)? Is it possible to balance curation and personalisation, or does it deepen the contradictory concept of universality in an era of platformisation? Through proper disclosure of transparency of PSM, it is possible to balance curation and personalisation under the scheme of algorithm- and data-driven technology in a way that is also beneficial to society and enables citizen to obtain information from PSM (see Speck, Chapter 14 in this volume).

Furthermore, whether accurate viewership data can provide high-quality programme design that meets diversified public values must also be further investigated. As for external strategies, it is expected that the collaboration mode will continue to operate; however, we must simultaneously consider whether branding or the universality of public service would be diminished by commercial SVoD operation or promotion. Finally, the paywall system may be a cause of concern in terms of balancing the concepts of paid and public services because of the inherent dysfunction of the system. For example, how can one serve the needs of unpaid online viewers in the digital era?

What are the criteria for choosing a pay-per-view mechanism for dramas? Such intricate complexity can be addressed, and PSM should still be further studied to deepen its value in the future.

Acknowledgements

This chapter is the preliminary findings of Yu-Peng Lin's National Science and Technology Council project, "A Study of Public Service Television in the Age of Streaming Media: An Analysis of Critical Political Economy of Communication" (No. 111-2410-H-239-001-).

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Endnotes

[1] BBC has announced that it is moving BBC 4, CBBC, and Radio 4 Extra online, and will downsize by 1,000 people to become a digital-first PSM in the next few years.

[2] It should be noted that at the time of Hu's speech, Hu was not yet the chairman of Taiwan PTS.

[3] Although the latest developments have changed slightly, the development strategies of these two public media at the time are still worth discussing.

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CHAPTER 8

Embracing audio in Nordic public service media

How Nordic public service media have transformed their radio and audio services

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ABSTRACT
This chapter examines the radio and audio landscapes in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden in the late 2010s. How did the Nordic public service media (PSM) transform themselves from analogue radio broadcasters to digital audio providers, and how did they respond to the challenges of a changing media landscape? In addition, we investigate how Nordic PSM have strategically positioned themselves in the field of digital audio and what their distribution strategies have been in the age of digital platforms. Our thematic analysis of strategy papers and annual reports of four Nordic PSM organisations reveals that different countries' communication policy solutions involved different directions for the development of audio services, particularly in terms of the distribution of audio content and digital audio broadcasting (DAB) radio development. The organisations' strategic future directions exhibit a strong ethos of universal broadcasting. However, audiences are fragmenting, and Nordic PSM organisations are accordingly targeting smaller audiences, especially with their podcast offerings.

KEYWORDS: Nordic media systems, radio and audio services, public service media, Nordic broadcast media

Lindeberg, A., & Ala-Fossi, M. (2023). Embracing audio in Nordic public service media: How Nordic public service media have transformed their radio and audio services. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 151–174). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-8

Introduction

Public service radio has served Nordic audiences for almost a hundred years. However, by the late 2010s, the traditional role of radio and audio services had changed. As Fehlmann notes (see Chapter 2 in this volume), the profound processes of social change brought about by the digital age have had numerous effects on public broadcasters. The emergence of international platforms and changes in media consumption have made competition more diverse, and broadcasters have had to invent new ways of reaching their listeners. Therefore, it is crucial to study what contribution public service radio can offer to Nordic societies in the 2020s.

Although the challenges related to radio and audio services are the same, the Nordic public service media (PSM) lack a common strategy for digital audio development, and sometimes, their policies even contradict one another (Ala-Fossi, 2020). In this chapter, we examine how PSM organisations in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden have responded to a changing media landscape by transforming broadcast radio to include digital audio services and podcasts.[1]

More specifically, we compare Nordic PSM organisations and their audio strategies and decisions in recent years. We examine the media landscapes of the four Nordic countries in the late 2010s and map the radio and audio development strategies and markets. Furthermore, we look at how Nordic PSM have strategically positioned themselves in the field of digital audio and what their service distribution strategies have been in the age of digital platforms. Such comparisons of countries and media systems allow us to identify shared characteristics and traits across borders and over time.

The purpose of this study is to answer the following research question on the digital audio development of Nordic PSM:

RQ1. How are Nordic PSM transforming themselves from analogue radio broadcasters to digital audio providers, and how have they responded to the challenges of a changing media landscape?

The primary research question focuses on digitalisation-related changes in PSM and is followed by two sub-questions.

RQ1a. How have Nordic PSM positioned themselves in the field of digital audio?

RQ1b. What are the distribution strategies of Nordic PSM in the age of digital platforms?

The first sub-question is aimed at shedding light on organisations' understandings of audio market developments. Nordic PSM are leaders in the radio markets of their respective countries. However, emerging international competition in the digital audio market is changing the existing landscape.

We were interested in examining how the organisations described their current and future positions in the field of digital audio services. The second sub-question concerns distribution strategies. The digital audio market has changed profoundly as digital platforms and streaming services, such as Spotify, have entered the audio market. Radio audiences are declining across all age groups (EBU, 2021), with young listeners in particular turning away from traditional FM broadcasting. Therefore, we investigated Nordic PSM strategies for reaching audiences on different platforms.

In short, we examined strategic decisions regarding the future of radio broadcasting in the four countries and how these decisions are reflected in PSM strategies and annual reports. The structure of this chapter is threefold. First, we outline our study how Nordic PSM have developed their radio and audio services in the 2010s. Second, we analyse their organisational strategies in developing radio and audio services. Third, we discuss the role of Nordic PSM in national audio markets in the digital age.

Public service media in the Nordic countries

Particularities of Nordic countries

Our theoretical perspective combines historical institutionalism (e.g., Galperin, 2004) with Hallin and Mancini's (2004) classical media systems typology. The historical institutionalism approach adopts a broad view of institutions by looking at political structures and informal arrangements. This approach is particularly useful for international comparisons and the study of long-term policy patterns (Galperin, 2004). Moreover, it is suitable for analysing how PSM organisations handle digital disruptions caused by new technologies. We need to understand that the reconfiguration of new technologies, rather than following technological logic, is politically and socially contested (Katzenbach, 2012). This perspective allows us to look at the historical developments of PSM organisations in particular circumstances, including their relationship patterns with other institutions (Sjøvaag, 2019).

In Hallin and Mancini's (2004) iconic study of media systems, Nordic countries' media systems exemplify the democratic corporatist model of media. Nordic countries are considered the most similar with each other within the democratic corporatist model, in contrast to the liberal and polarised systems. Although the model is based on data from the development of printed press and does not consider the current hybrid, or digitalised, media systems, Hallin and Mancini's typology is still influential, especially in Nordic media research, where it has been used to highlight Nordic exceptionalism (Ala-Fossi, 2020; Skogerbø et al., 2021; Syvertsen et al., 2014).

Scholars agree that Nordic countries are stable democracies with solid infrastructures for democracy and media freedom, and they share a high level of public trust in the news media and political institutions (Newman

et al., 2019). Common features of Nordic political systems include strong rational-legal authority with established rules and procedures, a high level of state intervention, and a tendency to seek cooperative solutions. The mixed-media system means that a highly legitimate public media system coexists with successful commercial media outlets. The early digitalisation of communication infrastructures has resulted in high media use across the region (Benson et al., 2017).

In this context, it is unsurprising that the Nordic countries – with their largely shared history and culture, democratic corporatist media systems, and mostly social democratic welfare states – have been seen as a distinct group with unique features – the Nordic media system being one of them. These media welfare states rest on the four pillars of universal communication services, editorial freedom, a cultural policy on media, and a preference for lasting policy solutions based on cooperation between major stakeholders (Syvertsen et al., 2014). As the Nordic cultural policy framework emphasises continuity and stability, public service broadcasting, with its cultural mission, is an important policy instrument (Sjøvaag, 2019). Although the idea of the Nordic media welfare states is based on evidence from the twentieth century, scholars have claimed that Nordic countries share the same main principles in the digital age. However, more recent evidence suggests that the situation may be more complex (Ala-Fossi, 2020).

In our analysis, we focused on the following four organisations: Finnish Yleisradio (Yle), Norwegian Norsk Rikskringkasting (NRK), Danish Danmarks Radio (DR), and Swedish Sveriges Radio (SR). It is important to note that although all four organisations provide digital services, SR is a radio broadcaster and an audio publisher, while the other three organisations also broadcast television and publish videos online.

Media policy debates over public service media funding and remit

After decades of stability and strong support for welfare media policies in the Nordic countries, in the last few years, both the funding and the remit of PSM have come under increased scrutiny. All four countries have adopted tax-based PSM financing in the last ten years (Finland first in 2013 and Denmark most recently over a period of four years from 2019 through 2022), replacing the traditional licence fee with general taxation. Finland and Sweden have an earmarked a tax, whereas Norway and Denmark fund PSM from the regular state budget.

Moreover, there have been debates about the remit of PSM in all four countries. In Finland, the private media advocacy organisation Finnmedia lodged a complaint about Yle's online text services with the European Commission in 2017, which resulted in a narrower legal definition of Yle's remit

in 2022. More recently, the Sanoma corporation has also complained to the European Commission about Yle's online video services, while the association of commercial radio, RadioMedia, requested a pre-evaluation of Yle's audio publishing plans (Finnmedia, 2017; Pullinen, 2021; Yle, 2022). Similarly, in Denmark, DR's remit has been questioned during the negotiations for the current Media Agreement (Kulturministeriet, 2018). At the end of March 2021, Danske Medier, representing Danish commercial media companies, lodged a complaint with the European Commission regarding DR's online news service and its news application DR Nyheder [DR News]. Danske Medier has asked the Commission to investigate whether DR's textual content infringes on state-aid rules (Danske Medier, 2021). In Sweden, the strong position of PSM has been criticised by the commercial media sector and right-wing politicians (Nord & Ots, 2019). And in Norway, NRK's online offer has been criticised by commercial media companies as well. However, the Norwegian Media Authority reviewed NRK's services in 2021 and found no reason to restrict NRK's digital news and current affairs offerings (Medietilsynet, 2021).

Radio and audio in the Nordic countries

Aside from political pressure, PSM organisations in the Nordic countries – and elsewhere – are confronted with changes in media use due to digitalisation. The daily reach of radio among the entire population has decreased by approximately 10 percentage points in all Nordic countries over the last ten years (Nordicom, 2022a). Over the last twenty years, daily listening time has halved in the worst cases; for instance, in Denmark, the average daily listening time has shrunk from 197 minutes to 104 minutes (Nordicom, 2022b). However, the relative share of PSM in the radio market remains unchanged – or is even larger than before. In 2020, public radio received 78 per cent of total listening time in Denmark, 73 per cent in Sweden, 64 per cent in Norway, and 51 per cent in Finland (Nordicom, 2022a).

At the same time, podcast listening has been increasing. In 2020, the percentage of daily listeners of all ages consuming podcasts and audio-on-demand was 22 per cent in Sweden, 14 per cent in Denmark, and 12 per cent in Norway (Nordicom, 2022c). In Finland, podcast listening is measured over a three-month period, and in 2020, the percentage of listeners of all ages was 30 per cent (Statistics Finland, 2021).

While broadcast radio remains strong among older listeners, it has trouble attracting younger audiences. Despite the different methods for tracking radio listening in different countries, the declining trend of broadcast radio listening among younger generations is clear (EBU, 2021; Nordicom, 2022a). For instance, in Finland, under-24-year-olds listen more than twice as much to other audio services than to radio (Brun, 2022).

FM and DAB radio in the Nordic countries

Despite these common trends, one factor that differentiates Nordic PSM is Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB). Finland and Norway have chosen simpler paths in DAB development, while Denmark and Sweden are dealing with more complex situations. FM radio remains strong in Finland, and DAB has been halted completely. The new FM licences for commercial and private radio (2019–2029) were granted for free through a political process. There is no digital radio broadcasting in Finland and no plans for any kind of switchover (Ala-Fossi et al., 2018). In contrast, Norway is the only Nordic country whose nationwide radio is based entirely on DAB, with only local channels still using FM. In Norway, geography constituted a powerful economic motive for different actors in the radio industry to develop DAB, as radio digitalisation was expected to save money and reinvigorate radio as a medium.

The situation is more nuanced in Denmark and Sweden. In Denmark, after a decade of DAB, the parliamentary Media Agreement of 2012–2014 (Kulturministeriet, 2012) contained two proposals regarding digital radio. First, it was suggested that Denmark abandon the original DAB digital standard completely and replace it with DAB+. The second suggestion was to close all FM radio services within a few years with certain conditions based on the share of digital radio listening. The transition from DAB to DAB+ was completed in 2017. However, the decision to shut down FM radio in 2021 was cancelled in 2018. The Media Agreement 2019–2023 (Kulturministeriet, 2018) still included an FM switch-off, but as the idea lacks political support, it has not returned to the agenda by 2023.(Ala-Fossi, 2013; Irwin, 2018; Kulturministeriet, 2022). And in Sweden, even though there is both FM and DAB broadcasting, the government is determined to keep FM radio on air. The future of DAB remains unclear: although SR has recently closed three DAB channels, DAB transmissions continue for the time being. The closure of the DAB channels was related to the organisations' decision to develop a P3 FM channel and a podcast offering for young audiences (SR, 2020).

Online services of Nordic public service media

While the situation differs with respect to the digitalisation of terrestrial broadcasting, all four Nordic PSM organisations offer audio content over the Internet, such as podcasts, audio-on-demand (AoD), and live-radio streaming. While Finnish Yle Areena offers video and audio content via the same application, the PSM organisations in the other three countries have separate applications for audio services (Swedish SR Play, Norwegian NRK Radio, and Danish DR Lyd).

Nordic PSM maintain a comprehensive and growing set of online activities, which entails more competition among public and private sectors in each country, as audiences are enticed to subscribe to different services. For

example, the Swedish music-streaming giant Spotify has a stable presence in the Nordic audio market. Among those who listen to podcasts on a daily basis, 37 per cent listen via Spotify and 20 per cent via Apple Podcasts. The public service AoD services run by Yle, DR, NRK, and SR are the third most popular streaming services in their respective countries (Mediavision, 2021).

Methods

Given this situation, we were interested in investigating strategies for radio and audio development in Nordic PSM organisations. Our primary research method was qualitative document analysis. We analysed 30 documents in total, including Nordic PSM annual reports from 2016 to 2020 and corporate strategies from each PSM organisation published between 2014 and 2021 (see Tables 8.1 & 8.2). The number and length of the documents published by each PSM organisation varied, but they were all publicly available for download on the organisations' websites. Quotations included in this chapter have been translated into English.

We chose to use qualitative document analysis because the examined documents differed in terms of length, style, and writing manner, requiring close qualitative reading to identify underlying themes and to understand *how* Nordic PSM organisations describe and report on audio-related developments.

By analysing documents, we can uncover determinants behind policy developments and understand the organisational aspects of the documents (Altheide & Schneider, 2013; Karppinen & Moe, 2019). We were interested in how the documents portrayed the digital development of audio services in PSM, and we wanted to identify the differences and similarities in the policies of the four PSM organisations. Finally, we examined how the analysed documents were related to the cultural, historical, and political developments of the studied countries.

Table 8.1 *Annual reports gathered for analysis*

Organisation	Year	Document language	Number of pages
Yleisradio	2016	Finnish	39
	2017	Finnish	44
	2018	Finnish	40
	2019	Finnish	40
	2020	Finnish	45
Sveriges Radio	2016	Swedish	175
	2017	Swedish	177
	2018	Swedish	169
	2019	Swedish	174
	2020	Swedish	232
Norsk Rikskringkasting	2016	Norwegian	115
	2017	Norwegian	97
	2018	Norwegian	86
	2019	Norwegian	38
	2020	Norwegian	42
Danmarks Radio	2016	Danish	68
	2017	Danish	68
	2018	Danish	72
	2019	Danish	72
	2020	Danish	72

Table 8.2 *Organisational strategies gathered for analysis*

Organisation	Year	Document language	Number of pages
Yleisradio	2015–2017	Finnish	3
	2017–2020	Finnish	7
	2020–	Finnish	6
Sveriges Radio	2014–2019	Swedish	Included in annual reports.
	2020–2025	Swedish	Included in annual reports.
Norsk Rikskringkasting	2015–2020	Norwegian	10
	2019–2024	English	5
Danmarks Radio	2015–2018	Danish	5
	2017–2020	Danish	5
	2021–	Danish	17

During analysis, data were classified and sorted according to different themes (Kuckartz, 2014). The analysis consisted of three stages. In the first stage, we read the entire set of documents and concentrated on the textual content to establish an overall picture of the material.

In the second phase, we re-read the documents, identifying recurring abstract categories. Then, separate passages were associated with the categories. At this stage, the passages and quotations from the documents added up to 17 pages. We identified the following six recurring categories: 1) current media policy changes, 2) PSM's role in society, 3) technological drivers of change, 4) PSM digitalisation, 5) the role of audio development in the organisation, and 6) future predictions and distribution plans. As the analysis progressed, the observations made during the second phase were examined from the perspectives of the research literature and the research problem. Our analysis concentrated on radio and audio developments in the PSM organisations – that is, how the cultural policy framework (Sjøvaag, 2019) and its ideals of continuity and stability were represented, and how the principles of the media welfare state (Syvertsen et al., 2014) were interpreted.

The third phase consisted of synthesising the categories that were identified in the second phase into three main themes. We once again read the documents and categorised the findings from the second phase, concentrating on audio and radio developments and descriptions of digitalisation-related changes and challenges. The three main themes identified during the third phase were as follows: 1) digital development, 2) fragmented audiences, and 3) challenges and future predictions.

Four Nordic public service media organisations – four approaches to audio development

In this section, we report our findings regarding the three themes. According to our analysis, Nordic broadcasters are increasingly paying attention to the digital development of audio services while balancing the need to maintain traditional broadcast radio. Moreover, there are significant differences between the organisations in terms of DAB radio.

Digital development

> In 2018, DR will continue the digital transition, so both users on the more traditional platforms and users of digital media are served in the best possible way. (DR, 2017b: 22)

As the quote above illustrates, the strategic approaches of all organisations primarily emphasised that broadcasting and digital publishing work side by side. In their annual reports, the organisations underlined that broadcast radio still enjoys large audiences; thus, the PSM organisations saw a need to maintain broadcast offerings and linear radio channels. Yle was the only organisation that brought up the possibility of "assessing the number of linear channels according to changes in the operational environment" (Yle, 2020b: 3). Meanwhile, in 2018, DR reported shutting down three DAB radio channels due to budget cuts. At the same time, our analysis shows that the need to invest in the digital environment has been identified by all Nordic organisations since at least 2016. This was explained both by changes in the operational environment (especially in the case of Yle) and by changes in audiences' usage patterns and needs (especially in the case of DR). The importance of digitalisation and associated investments was emphasised more strongly the closer we got to the 2020s. The accelerating technological development was mostly seen as a positive force for PSM organisations and their content, as NRK described this change in 2017:

> Technological developments and the changing media habits of the audience have given us new opportunities to convey our content. It is both about technology and the way we use new opportunities. (NRK, 2017: 134)

Nordic broadcasters have closely followed the development of streaming services in their respective markets. The rise of international streaming services was another reason why developing their own on-demand services was important for all PSM organisations. The importance of having one's own services was mentioned on several occasions. For instance, DR predicted in 2017 that "more and more people will use online services as their primary gateway to radio, television and other media content" (DR, 2017a: 4). However, there were differences in the priority attributed to the digitalisation of

audio services. For example, in 2016, DR stated that it would first invest in the development of its video-streaming service, DRTV, mentioning growth in digital audio consumption for the first time in 2018, while one of eight strategic development targets in Yle's 2015–2017 strategy was "bringing radio to the digital environments and developing easy-to-use audio services, especially for mobile and in-car devices" (Yle, 2015: 4).

According to our analysis, podcasts have become a main staple for Nordic PSM. All organisations had the same notion of increased podcast consumption, especially from 2018 onwards, and particularly by younger audiences. Other technology-driven developments in audio services were discussed as well. Yle was the most technology-driven of all the organisations: Its documents mentioned several development projects, such as content development for smart speakers and immersive audio (Yle, 2018), 5G technology (Yle, 2019; for a discussion of PSM and personal mobile communication, see Rashid & Simpson, Chapter 9 in this volume), and voice-controlled assistants for cars (Yle, 2020b). The other organisations also recognised the need to research and develop new audio-related applications, even though they did not mention as many development projects as Yle did. For instance, SR was investigating voice-related media use:

> In 2018, work has continued developing the Swedish Radio Play app to become the company's primary digital platform, with more personalised content. Voice control, voice assistants and smart speakers are becoming increasingly popular and gradually changing the audience's media use. (SR, 2018: 40)

Despite the fact that all four Nordic PSM organisations have been investing in digital audio, their strategies of radio and audio distribution differed. Yle was the first to talk about drastic changes in broadcasting, anticipating the digitalisation of audio and radio services as early as 2016. In 2020, it stated in its annual report that Yle Areena, the Finnish PSM's video- and audio-streaming offer, was one of the organisation's main services, while none of the other organisations described their digital offers as the main service during the examined years. However, SR based its operational strategy on the following three pillars: linear, digital, and social presence. Other organisations did not have such clear guidelines for separate developments on different platforms, with digital integration being part of the overall strategy.

The biggest differences between the analysed organisations were related to radio distribution. Of the four Nordic countries, Norway was the only one to use DAB for nationwide radio broadcasting, with local stations remaining on FM (Libell, 2017). However, the results of the digital switchover in nationwide radio broadcasting have not been very encouraging. In 2018, daily radio-listening numbers were the lowest ever recorded in Norway, and in 2021, daily radio listening (49%) was still below what it had been

in 2017 (54%). In 2018, DAB radio listening (39%) had increased by only one percentage point since 2017 (Statistics Norway, 2022). Nevertheless, in the NRK annual reports, the effects of the transition to DAB radio were not given much prominence; the transition from FM to DAB was mentioned only in 2017, when radio-listening figures fell sharply due to the transition. Despite significant investments in digital broadcast radio, NRK described the future of audio services as an opportunity for the public to choose the content that they listen to: "NRK works on the assumption that the use of 'radio-on-demand' will increase over time" (NRK, 2017: 80). In Sweden, DAB broadcasts will continue at least until 2025 (SR, 2019). SR had no desire to develop digital radio further: "It is unfortunate that no [political] decision has been made on whether Swedish Radio should be included in a digital radio expansion [...]. That means that there are no reasonable conditions for Swedish Radio to develop digital radio" (SR, 2019: 34). In Denmark, although there have been many discussions at the political level regarding the future of DAB radio, there was no mention of DAB radio's future in the analysed documents, with the exception of yearly charts focusing on radio and audio consumption. Therefore, it appears that DR's audio development and national communication policies are not in line with their objectives, as DR has strongly focused on Internet-based developments – for example, as evidenced by the DR Lyd application launched in 2020.

As noted earlier, in Finland, DAB development has been halted completely, and Yle has been investing in developing an Internet-based audio streaming service on Yle Areena.

Fragmented audiences

According to our analysis, all Nordic PSM deem it important to retain a large audience for radio and audio services, because such services are considered to be the foundation of their operations. This common goal was described slightly differently among the studied organisations. For example, Yle described its aim as serving both large audiences and small target groups, while DR and SR established strategic goals measured by the use of public services on a weekly or daily basis. NRK described its audience-related mission as "staying close to the public" (NRK, 2021: 1).

Therefore, all four PSM organisations paid attention to the fragmentation of audience behaviour and the strong changes in media use patterns. The organisations are developing their services to fit the needs of changing media use, such as NRK's predictions on the rise of streaming services in 2019:

> Media use and technology are changing. The audience can decide for themselves when they want to watch the programmes. Media use is increasingly on its way to streaming services where the public chooses content, whether video or audio. (NRK, 2019: 5)

The strategy of Swedish SR, however, differs from PSM in the other countries: As SR provides radio and audio services only, it is thus able to focus on radio and audio services alone. Its stated aim is to have "the listener in focus, regardless of the content being on linear radio, digital audio or social [media]" (SR, 2018: 9)[2] – and no other factors were mentioned that could have a particular impact on the relationship between SR and its radio and audio audiences. For the other PSM, video and television services have been more important development targets than audio services, perhaps due to the more strongly changing competitive situation in the online video markets during the years reviewed. However, podcasts are a way for all organisations to reach younger audiences, and specific podcasts popular among young audiences were even named in DR's annual reports (e.g., DR, 2018).

All PSM organisations referred to the decreasing listenership figures for radio only briefly. In its 2017 strategy, Yle stated that "the importance of radio in the daily lives of different audience groups must be ensured" (Yle, 2017: 2), which suggests that broadcast radio was understood as central to reaching audiences.

The increasing personalisation of content in response to audience fragmentation was seen as an important factor, especially in Yle and SR documents. However, personalisation was not as apparent in NRK and DR documents, where changing audiences were addressed slightly differently. NRK highlighted changes in media use and the need to understand audiences' changing consumption habits: "We don't see the same content, at the same time, on the same platform to the same degree as before" (NRK, 2018: 5). Competition for audiences was mentioned by DR for the first time in 2019. The organisation stated it would respond to the competition by developing its digital channels and providing content that Danes know and use.

Based on our analysis, the organisations saw the continuation of broadcast radio as a rational act for keeping large audiences tuned in. The organisations understood that media use patterns have been undergoing a dramatic change, which also affects audio and radio audiences. We did not find a strong emphasis on building audio-specific digital offerings, except for the notion of encouraging podcast use. This finding can potentially be explained by the limitations of the studied data, as strategies and annual reports have limits in describing internal changes in a detailed manner.

Challenges and future predictions

> Traditional media is having its date with destiny. (Yle, 2020a: 1)

Concerns about the future of traditional broadcast media were common in the analysed documents, as the quote above from Yle shows. All four organisations were also the subject of media policy debates during the studied period, which influenced the analysed documents in terms of justifying the

relevance and strategies of PSM. Such debates and the changes they bring to PSM played a part in how the organisations described their future possibilities and challenges in their strategies and annual reports, as evidenced by NRK:

> Rapid technological development and digitalisation have changed the entire population's media habits. [...] Global and boundless competition from strong players demands even higher innovation. (NRK, 2018: 8)

Global actors and the change they bring were considered by all organisations as a big challenge for the future. Our analysis showed that the digitalisation of media use and content significantly challenged Nordic PSM during the studied period. All organisations named digitalisation, changing media use patterns, and technology as significant factors in their operations that challenge both their existence and day-to-day operations. While the organisations saw digitalisation of media use having a particular impact on television and video services and content, audio and radio services received significantly fewer mentions throughout the documents, although all organisations reported an increased consumption of podcasts. For example, DR reported that podcasts strictly aimed at target groups resulted in listening growth:

> Custom-produced podcasts generally achieve a large digital audience compared with the regular programs produced for broadcast radio [on the web application]. (DR, 2019: 12)

With the digitalisation of society and media use, all four organisations saw the growth of global competition as a challenge to their operations and national markets. During the studied period, the PSM organisations focused on the global video and television markets, as the change has been more dramatic there than in the audio market. Only SR mentioned changes in the audio market with the rise of audiobooks and popularity of podcasts:

> Companies that previously offered large distribution platforms are now increasingly investing in making their content. This includes companies such as Spotify and Apple, which invest in audio content, [...] and the audiobook and podcast markets are growing in Sweden. (SR, 2019: 5)

The Nordic PSM organisations had different understandings of the importance of their own offers versus third-party platforms. Yle had the clearest position of preferring its own on-demand services over those of others. The organisation stated that broadcast media – in both television and radio – are important outlets, but that more and more content is published digitally or via mobile services. Yle decided to publish all of its content primarily on its own offers (Yle, 2020a). Meanwhile, SR had a publishing strategy resting on the following three pillars: linear radio, digital audio services online, and social media. SR attached great importance to reaching audiences via diverse channels. SR also found it important to continue publishing its content on both its own offers and external, third-party platforms.

For DR and NRK, the question of digital distribution was not as clearly defined as for Yle and SR. In 2016, DR stated that the organisation cannot and should not dictate how its content is used, but should offer quality content on the platforms and services used by Danes. No further discussion of its own versus external offers was detected in our analysis. DR has been more concerned with the digital reach of its content than with defining the priority of platform use. In its 2021 strategy, DR noted that Danes are spending less time on domestic content, which puts pressure on the organisation to create interesting content. For NRK, NRK TV and NRK Radio are becoming increasingly important streaming services (NRK, 2018), and the organisation has invested in building its own apps beyond established media platforms (NRK, 2019) to reach target audiences. While NRK did not express any plans for delivery on external platforms, its intention has been to bring the audience back to NRK's own services.

Discussion

Our intention was to study how Nordic PSM organisations are transforming from analogue radio broadcasters to digital audio providers and how they have responded to the challenges of a changing media landscape. In addition, we wanted to analyse how Nordic PSM organisations strategically position themselves in the field of digital audio services and what their distribution strategies are in the age of digital platforms. In the following, we examine the results by answering our research questions and discussing our central findings (see Table 8.3) to understand why Nordic broadcasters have chosen different paths in their audio-service development strategies.

Table 8.3 *Main findings*

Digital development	Fragmented audiences	Challenges and future predictions
Investments in digital platforms and content	Digital audiences are smaller, and the needs of the audiences are fragmenting	Digitalisation is a key challenge for all PSM organisations
Balancing broadcast radio and digital presence for the time being	Broadcast radio is still important for keeping the relationship with the public alive	Global actors and platforms are seen as big game-changers
Podcasts are a viable medium, especially for reaching younger audiences	Personalisation and development of digital content are seen as important factors in reaching new audiences	The role and importance of third-party platforms varies among the PSM organisations

Regarding the main research question (RQ1), about how Nordic PSM are transforming themselves from analogue radio broadcasters to digital audio providers, our analysis shows that all four PSM organisations had a clear digital approach to audio distribution for the future. Broadcast radio is still an important medium with an impressive share of listenership, and this listenership was seen as vital for the time being. Nonetheless, the organisations were also working on improving digital audio services and developing their own digital offers. The role of DAB, which is still unclear in Sweden and Denmark, was discussed surprisingly little in the documents of the studied organisations. PSM organisations continue to be strong players in national audio markets with significant market shares in audio listening; however, PSM must increasingly link their future with digital services, as all the studied organisations mentioned digitalisation as the main challenge to their future existence.

In Sweden, a dedicated radio PSM organisation closely focuses on audio service development, aiming to "keep sound in focus for all content development" (SR, 2017: 46). The idea of reaching an audience on multiple platforms was most strongly present in SR's strategies.

Norway chose DAB as its direction in broadcast radio. This decision has had a strong impact on the listenership figures of broadcast radio (Libell, 2017; Statistics Norway, 2022). However, NRK seems to believe in the growth of podcast content and on-demand listening, even though the DAB transition has not achieved pre-transition numbers for radio listeners.

In Denmark, cuts in public broadcasting resulted in the downsizing and closing down of DR radio channels. Moreover, the decision to switch off FM radio has been postponed. (Kulturministeriet, 2018). DR does not have strong enthusiasm for DAB, as the organisation has invested in Internet-based distribution, for example, via its audio application DR Lyd.

Although FM radio remains important in Finland, Yle has strongly invested in digital audio services. According to organisational documents, Yle has been the strongest of the four organisations in terms of technological experiments with audio, for example, by building and testing voice applications for smart-car technology. Finland seems to be more technology-driven in its audio broadcasting policy than the other Nordic countries. This may be at least partly due to the fact that, for example, spectrum policy decisions are made solely by the Ministry of Transport and Communications instead of, as in the other Nordic countries, by the Ministry of Culture (Ala-Fossi, 2020). However, Yle's technology-driven approach may be slowed by Finland's dependence on mobile broadband and the slowest network connections among the Nordic countries.

With respect to the first sub-question (RQ1a), about how Nordic PSM positioned themselves in the field of digital audio, results show that all four PSM organisations have invested heavily in audio applications and the

growth of digital Internet-based audio services during the studied period. The organisations have also stressed changes in listenership: Audiences' needs are fragmenting, and, for example, podcasts are produced to attract younger audiences. Digitalisation is seen as particularly important for reaching young people, and the podcast offerings of all organisations are aimed at younger age groups. Third-party platforms were not addressed in detail in the strategies other than in relation to intensifying competition.

More specifically, SR's strategy showed that the organisation bases its operations on three pillars for reaching the public: linear radio, digital presence, and social media platforms. The organisation's use of social media platforms raises the following questions: How can large technology giants be kept at a necessary distance from national players? Is audience reach as essential as controlling your own platforms? These strategic choices may have increased the dominance of platforms, as media organisations try to adapt the operations of the platforms to, for example, maximise the dissemination of their contents (Rashidian et al., 2019).

The Nordic political system has had a significant impact on the structural conditions and developments in the media sector in the early days of digitalisation. The dominant institutional force in the emergence of broadcasters has been the Nordic welfare state. However, the gradual shift to Internet-based media systems is challenging and transforming the institutional logic that has regulated the structural conditions of mediated communications of the last century (Flensburg, 2021).

Due to international competition, broadcasters have become increasingly detached from state regulation, for example, as shown by our findings on DAB development. However, broadcasters still consider themselves as actors at the national level, in line with the principles of the media welfare state model. At the same time, the competitive situation is determined in the international arena, which affects PSM operating logic.

Although Nordic policy-makers continue to support their PSM organisations, the Nordic system appears to be increasingly vulnerable due to globalisation, digitalisation, and personalisation. As Nordic media policies are largely reactive, regulators have struggled to adjust the policy framework to effectively address the effects of the Internet, such as more fragmented audiences and powerful platforms like Google and Facebook. It is possible that the Nordic countries are approaching more segmented markets (Sjøvaag, 2019).

Finally, considering the second sub-question (RQ1b), about what distribution strategies Nordic PSM employ, it becomes evident that the four organisations are market leaders in audio services in their respective national arenas, and radio is important for keeping listeners tuned in to broadcast channels, whether using DAB or FM. Nevertheless, PSM also recognise changes in the competitive situation. In the field of Nordic audio, international competition and changes in audiences' media use habits intensified during the studied

period, which has led to the organisations seeking new ways of reaching audiences. Particularly Yle and SR have emphasised the personalisation of their digital offering as an important way of responding to their audiences' changing needs.

The most notable variation in PSM digital strategies had to do with the organisations' approaches to third-party platforms in content publishing. SR chose the strategy of publishing content on all available external platforms to help users find their content, whereas Yle decided in 2020 to launch its own streaming service, Yle Areena, as the main tool for expanding its online presence. For DR and NRK, the question of digital distribution was not clearly addressed.

During the studied period, all four countries witnessed discussions over PSM financing. It is noteworthy that despite the long PSM tradition and strong audience relationships, PSM organisations were being questioned in the Nordic countries, both by politicians and commercial competitors. Therefore, PSM organisations have had to justify their new services and roles more strongly, which has also impacted PSM influence over audio developments in the new competitive environment.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on radio and audio developments of Nordic PSM. More specifically, we analysed how the cultural policy framework of Nordic media systems (Sjøvaag, 2019) and the ideals of continuity and stability are represented in PSM strategies, and how universal communication services, editorial freedom, cultural policy for media, and consensus-seeking media policies – the pillars of the media welfare state model (Syvertsen et al., 2014) – are interpreted.

Based on our results, continuity and stability are emphasised in the Nordic PSM strategies for development of radio and audio services, with the PSM organisations considering reaching large audiences an important goal and believing that this mission unites societies. Broadcast radio still has a fairly strong position and a stable listenership. In addition, incumbent positions have enabled legacy media organisations, including PSM, to maintain strong positions in the digital market and to innovate (Sjøvaag et al., 2019). This has allowed PSM to change and develop new digital services; there is a clear turn towards Internet-based distribution strategies in the operations of all four organisations. However, it is important to note that the analysed documents only indicate what the organisations want to say *publicly* about their activities. For example, very little was said about the actual situation of DAB radio in Norway, although DAB has met much opposition there (Saugestad Hatlen, 2019).

It is difficult to say how strong the ideals of continuity and stability will remain in the future. PSM are facing a new phase in the development of

radio and audio services in a more complex media environment with more actors and increasing competition. While closely following tendencies of the international competitive audio market, we consider the current state of Nordic PSM organisations' audio and radio services development and their emphasis on Internet-based means in their distribution strategies to be somewhat conflicting with their respective national communication policies and the traditional Nordic media welfare state model.

In many countries, attempts have been made to reevaluate and restrict PSM (Sehl et al., 2020). Although these attempts are usually not directly targeted at audio or radio activities (except for Finnish RadioMedia's request in 2022), these campaigns against PSM may also affect what new technologies PSM organisations can try to adopt, which can further affect their competitiveness in the audio market. As Lassen and Sørensen noted (see Chapter 5 in this volume), the changes and challenges that DR has faced over the last five years have been partly driven by technological and media use changes and partly by the initiatives of Danish politicians. In our analysis, we came across similar findings. The challenges that Nordic PSM organisations face in radio and audio development are related to global actors, platform and media use digitalisation, and audience fragmentation, coupled with pressure from commercial media outlets challenging the justifications of PSM presence in the markets. This combination of external and internal pressures, together with the limited power of national media policies, has made media welfare in the Nordic countries more vulnerable, as the pillars of universal communication services and consensus media policies are threatened.

Although nation-states remain critical in shaping media policies (Flew & Waisbord, 2015), their abilities to regulate global players are limited. As long as the media policy decisions made in response to acceleration in media use digitalisation, global digital platforms, and audience fragmentation are aimed at national players, media welfare in the Nordic countries will remain vulnerable if the values of universalism and consensual and durable media policies are questioned.

To conclude, the shift from nationally controlled broadcast radio markets to the era of global streaming has been rapid. That was reflected in PSM strategies and annual reports, where this issue has been extensively addressed since approximately 2017–2018. Our study shows that the radio and audio developments of Nordic public broadcasters have involved establishing a digital direction, although broadcast radio remains an important channel for reaching large audiences. Different national communication policy solutions have, to some extent, led to broadcasters going in different directions, especially in terms of distribution and DAB development strategies. The organisations' strategic directions for the future still show a strong ethos of universal broadcasting, evidenced by the fact that radio and audio services continue to be available to everyone. Nevertheless, audiences are fragment-

ing, and Nordic PSM are aiming to attract also smaller and more specific audiences, especially with their podcast offerings.

Public service radio has been and continues to be an important contribution to society in all four studied Nordic countries. It first served as a tool for nation-building by providing the same trustworthy information and high-quality entertainment to everyone across each country.

However, it is an important task to rethink the role of PSM and the role it serves in the society, as universal broadcasting is facing accelerating competition due to audience fragmentation and media digitalisation. While the core mission of PSM remains the same as before – to increase social cohesion and strengthen democracy – its value and importance are just increasing.

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Endnotes

[1] In this chapter, we use the term broadcast radio to refer to both FM and DAB broadcasting. The terms digital audio and podcasts are used when the audio content is intended to be listened to over the Internet.

[2] SR uses the term linear, as it covers both broadcast FM and DAB radio as well as streaming over the Internet.

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CHAPTER 9

Innovating free-to-air broadcasting

Social value, broadcast content, and personal mobile communications

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyses recent evidence of efforts by broadcast players to move into personal mobile communications through the delivery of broadcast content to smartphones. It explores innovation strategies related to the broadcast distribution channel, rather than content, and illustrates what can be described as defensive and progressive elements in the activities of European digital terrestrial television (DTT) service providers. The chapter points to the enduring resilience and social value of public service broadcasting in increasingly online, predominantly alinear, electronic communications. We outline the case for this in terms of the social value added which these providers bring to two linked and complementary core elements: technological research into 5G broadcast delivery and strategies to protect existing control of scarce ultra high frequency (UHF) infrastructural spectral resources. We argue that both elements contribute to the public purposes of providing access to – and securing universality of – media services.

KEYWORDS: broadcasting to smartphones, technical standards, public service media, 5G, mobile communications

Rashid, I., & Simpson, S. (2023). Innovating free-to-air broadcasting: Social value, broadcast content, and personal mobile communications. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 175–192). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-9

Introduction

This chapter analyses recent evidence of efforts by digital terrestrial television (DTT) broadcasters to move into personal mobile communications through the delivery of broadcast content to mobile smartphones. In so doing, it adds to the broader debate on future distribution strategies of free-to-air broadcasters, many with a public service underpinning, on which there has been little research to date. Over the last decade or more, considerable academic attention has been given to the role of public service media (PSM) and their providers in general online environments, though, within this, there is an understandable gap in knowledge on the prospects for free-at-the-point-of-consumption PSM content delivery in personal wireless broadband communication environments, such as those being developed through 5G technology. That (on the surface, counterintuitive) action of this kind by broadcasters could manifest itself gives rise to the core line of enquiry and research questions of this chapter:

RQ1. Why would traditional terrestrial broadcasters wish to move into personal mobile communications?

RQ2. What is the nature of the action taken by digital terrestrial television providers, and what does it tell us about their perspective on the future of terrestrial broadcasting?

Personal mobile communications – an adjacent sector to broadcasting – has been established since the 1980s and is structured and functions according to wholly commercial values and practices. It is already inhabited by highly powerful and often globally branded equipment manufacturers and service providers hailing from the telecommunications sector. This chapter provides recent evidence to account for DTT provider activity aimed at delivering 5G mobile broadcasting services to audiences. We undertake two core tasks in pursuit of our research questions. First, we seek evidence of the continuing role of DTT sector players, and PSM providers in particular, in technological research, in this case to enable wireless and mobile consumption of broadcast content. As such, we explore innovation strategies related to the broadcast distribution channel, rather than content. According to Donders (2019: 1021):

> [There is] little evidence that much reflection has taken place on the important matter of how the connection with the audience can be restored or improved in an environment where […] all the means of distribution are (in one way or another) controlled by companies that are not PSM institutions.

In this chapter, we unearth evidence that such organisations are indeed undertaking such reflection, as well as strategic action in service of its realisation. Our focus on innovation resonates with the analysis of Künzler and colleagues (see Chapter 12 in this volume).

Second, we illustrate the keen interest of PSM broadcasters and DTT network operators in translating the fruits of their research to continue to provide socially progressive and innovative delivery methods for their services. In this way, these organisations continue to present themselves as trusted custodians of scarce public communication resources through providing the extra dimension of wireless and mobile consumption. Yet, in a different way, this chapter demonstrates how this activity also exhibits a strategic, defensive purpose, where broadcasters have shown evidence of their ability to formulate arguments and develop sophisticated proactive strategies in order to mount a strong defence of the territory they hold – in this case, the 470–694 MHz (megahertz) band, which they argue can be used to deliver new broadcast to mobile services alongside traditional television services. This issue is particularly important, since the spectrum in question is also of interest to mobile broadband players wishing to expand their online electronic service portfolio and has emerged as something of a ground of resource contestation. Ultimately, this chapter highlights strategic action taken by terrestrial broadcasters to assert the enduring resilience and social value of broadcasting with a public service character in increasingly online, predominantly alinear, electronic communications. These relate directly to providing access to – and securing universality of – media services.

The next section presents insights from the academic debate on the ability of broadcast service providers to deliver social gain from their activities (in their original incarnation) and now expanded to include online (broadcast) consumption environments likely to develop even more widely in the coming decade. We articulate the main contributions of public service provision over what has become a rival alternative, counterpart system of commercially underpinned personal communication services provision which, with some justification, is able to claim the delivery of its version of "public utility" to a public mass of consumers.

In the subsequent section, we first show how prominent terrestrial broadcasters have devoted research and development resources to explore the technical feasibility of delivering high capacity, large-scale, broadband (broadcast capacity) content services within wireless 5G environments. We then explore the recent and ongoing international debate on current and potential future use of the part of the ultra high frequency (UHF) spectrum occupied by DTT players, which has brought into often fractious focus the role of broadcast and mobile broadband providers in the future development of electronic communications. We link the two issues by providing evidence of a highly proactive-defensive stance by broadcast players to argue the case for the continuation of their assigned exclusive primary rights to operate in the 497–694 MHz UHF spectrum bands, a newly introduced element of which is the declared intention to offer 5G broadcast services, enabled by recently concluded technological research. This might be seen as a bold

counter-manoeuvre into the territory of mobile broadband personal mobile communications providers. To conclude, we reflect on the continual and future social value of broadcasting with a public purpose by focusing on the distinction between the concepts of public service-realised social utility and commercial market-realised mass public consumer utility in online wireless broadcast network environments. Methodologically, we employ a critique of literature on the public and social value of broadcast media, analysis of interview evidence on multistakeholder participation in technical standards-making for online services, and documentary analysis of publicly available recorded video footage of two sessions involving DTT and mobile broadband representatives on the future of the 497–694 MHz band.

Thinking about social value and public service media

PSM's role in society has been an ongoing concern of media scholars for at least the last 20 years, despite – or maybe because of – the growing and seemingly inexorable commercialisation of the (increasingly online) media system. The defence of traditional television provision in the Internet era has been strong, with Bailey (2019: 153) having argued that the former "remains a common source of information and entertainment and is characterised by meaningful continuities". In thinking about future approaches to public service broadcasting, Jakubowicz (2010: 14, 17) asserted that "tasks subsumed under the general rubric of 'socially valuable content' need to be modernised and adjusted to new circumstances [… where …] almost everything in the way that it performs its mission should change". After a decade and a half of online social media, Bourdon and colleagues (2019: 1) argued that "the idea of an independent media providing quality material, trying to give universal access to relevant content which addresses audience needs and wants without manipulating them or selling their data, actually feels more urgent than outdated". Belair-Gagnon (2012: 62) earlier raised a concern about the "diffuseness and absence of a communicational centre" in social media, something which sits in contrast to – and challenges – traditional understandings of the value of public service broadcasting (PSB). It has recently been argued that the scale advantages accrued by public service broadcasters can even allow them to act as an important counterpoint to social network platform power (Sundet & Syvertsen, 2021), where the idea of the PSM provider as a prominent and trusted brand could be significant.

The adoption of new communications technologies by service providers could lead to a consideration of "complex behaviours, practices and attitudes that influence changes in professional identities and practices" (Belair-Gagnon, 2012: 62). Here, authors such as Bennett and Strange (2008: 108) have focused on "the shifting parameters of television's technological, cultural and textual form and the place and purpose of PSB within these", with a

particular focus on content creation. Their relatively early analysis of some British (BBC-run) projects led to an assertion of the future importance of the PSM provider as a manager of "user flows […] through the creation of public partnerships that often involved users moving out into public spaces as part of a *mobile citizenry* [emphasis added]" (Bennett & Strange, 2008: 116). Goodwin (1997) noted that in the UK, as far back as 1984, the BBC was asserting its resolve to lead on the development of new technologies with its public service remit in mind. Brevini (2010) charted the BBC's engagement with online provision, noting how expenditure on the BBC Online service nearly tripled between 1998 and 2001, a service licence which required content to comply with at least one of the core PSB constituents of being high quality, challenging, original, innovative, and engaging. She argued that PSB activities online should transpose and take forward the core staples of "citizenship, universality, quality and trust" (Brevini, 2010: 360), thus validating the legitimacy of broadcasting with a public purpose (see Fehlmann, Chapter 2 in this volume). Debrett (2010: 187), too, has argued that universality "is generally considered the most important of the PSB principles because of the social value of mass audience reach" and that online "on-demand, cross-platform access is the new universality [… which …] needs to be addressed across the full range of media platforms in order to aggregate sufficient fragments to reach a general public". From this, other core staples of public service in media delivery have the opportunity to be pursued and realised. Such a perspective tends to consider both content creation and delivery as essential parts of the social value of online PSM.

Despite these assertions, in an increasingly commercial media landscape, it is inevitably the case that scrutiny would focus on the extent to which the activities of PSB and PSM providers might be anti-competitive in character or – in a more long-term perspective – might crowd out investment from private sector players. As broadband fibre rollout has proceeded, and television consumption through the Internet has become possible, the UHF spectrum occupied by DTT providers has been eyed enviously by mobile broadband providers, increasingly scrutinous of (and sceptical about) television providers' use of this scarce, and thus valuable, resource. Regarding the activities of public service broadcasters in online environments, criticism has tended to focus on an aversion to the idea of these providers acting for commercial purposes. Raats (see Chapter 6 in this volume) explores the potential tensions between economic and public impacts of PSB, yet, as D'Arma (2018: 433) has pointed out, "many of these organisations have long supplemented the funding they receive from the state with income derived from either selling advertising or engaging in various ancillary commercial activities". Similarly, Donders and Van den Bulck (2016) reminded us of the significance of BBC Worldwide, a far from uncontroversial commercial endeavour with an avowed public service underpinning. Criticism from commercial competitors

has followed the BBC, in particular, since its move into the online world, and it has been argued that the corporation has in response in fact cultivated something of the commercialisation-competition agenda from whose quarters such criticism has emanated with the "internalisation of a pro-market and pro-competition ideology at the BBC's top management level" (D'Arma, 2018: 443) and even evolution into a "neoliberal bureaucracy" (Mills, 2016). Yet, more broadly, in her recent study of the content and distribution strategies of a selection of public service broadcasters, Donders (2019: 1013) has found that they "have so far failed to develop distribution strategies that match the theories relating to PSM".

Academic analysis, too, illustrates fraction in the debate on the future role and position of PSB. From an economic perspective, Sieg and Stuhmeier (2015: 443) have argued that "digitalization of content, subscription models, and changing viewer behaviour erode the grounds of public intervention in broadcasting markets" to an extent that it should only occur in key areas like "news and cultural content if it is desired from a social perspective, but too costly to produce in the private market". Yet, Michalis (2012: 945), in a study of the BBC's withdrawal of its online BBC Digital Curriculum, found evidence challenging "the suggestion that the entry of PSBs into a market necessarily displaces commercial activities since, following the BBC's retreat, there has been no flourishing of private investment in the markets the Corporation intended to serve".

Goodwin (1997) set out three core arguments as to why PSM should not be limited to activity beyond what the market is able and willing to deliver: the danger of PSM being marginalised in society; the fact that PSM has raised across-the-board quality standards in media; and the empirical difficulty of establishing what the market would and would not wish to provide. Goodwin took these arguments – historically generated in respect of media content – further, by asserting that "if they apply to public service as traditionally delivered, surely they apply to *public service use of new distribution channels* [emphasis added]" (Goodwin, 1997: 72). Harker (2011) reminded us that whilst customer segregation and exclusion through pricing may now be technically possible in broadcasting, the idea of the undesirability of exclusion on welfare maximisation grounds – and thus a persistent public good character – in broadcasting remains. This opens up the possibility of recognition of the cultural and societal value of broadcasting, where "PSB should, therefore, be seen to have a wider role than simply filling the 'gaps left by the market': it may play an important role in shaping preferences prior to the market" (Harker, 2011: 558).

Recent evidence from the UK suggests the endurance of considerable support for public service television, where the Puttnam Inquiry asserted "a comprehensive and lucid defence of television's social purpose" (Bailey, 2019: 163). One particular view emanating from some government circles which

it challenged was the criticism that the BBC had forsaken the pursuit of so-called distinctiveness in its programming in a move to be something of a ratings chaser, the policy implication being that the BBC might be effectively reined in to focus on less generalist content and its audiences. The "distinctiveness debate" and its threat to the idea of progressive PSB (Tracey, 1998) has recently received considerable academic attention. It has been asserted that "offering high quality and being distinctive is not the same as being a niche player" (Donders & Van den Bulck, 2016: 301). Goddard (2017: 1093) argued that the idea of distinctiveness has developed "a rather elastic and sometimes contradictory" character. An undesirable outcome of the recent distinctiveness debate in the UK has been the BBC's positioning of itself as an organisation which Braman (2016) characterised as a bifurcation between creating expensive content to take on newer global media players like Amazon and Netflix, on the one hand, and seeking to provide content which the market chooses not to, on the other.

The debate on the continuing relevance of live free-to-air television has been bolstered by trends in media convergence where users are increasingly viewing media content alinearly and on the move. The growth of mobile broadband communication has led to a view that the twenty-first–century electronic communication needs of consumers can be delivered to a significant extent by mobile broadband providers. For several years now, they have presented the argument that to do so, they require a reallocation to them of UHF spectrum used by DTT broadcasters. The capacity efficiencies from digitalisation of the airwaves created the well-written-about "digital dividend" to allow this to occur; and the growth of television consumption through the Internet added further weight to their case. In policy and practical terms, such arguments have gained considerable traction with the clearance of, first, the 800 MHz and then the 700 MHz bands by DTT providers and their allocation to mobile broadband providers (Rashid & Simpson, 2019) with current focus on the sub-700 MHz band (470–694 MHz). In contrast to the arguments which have sustained the development of public service provision in broadcasting historically, and, as noted above, are utilised for its proposed extension in the online world, the mobile broadband sector has asserted the rationale for its own expansion in terms of commercial market-realised mass public consumer utility in online wireless broadcast network environments. Evidence suggests some development of these ideas even into the realm of the so-called digital divide (see below).

Thus, there are two markedly different ideological viewpoints on the future of public value in media which continue to shape the debate on the development of online media consumption. The remainder of the chapter shows how DTT providers have been active in asserting their position in what has become a notable arena of media policy contestation.

Social value and terrestrial television with a public purpose

Technological research

New technologies offer PSB a chance to perform its role better and to serve the audience in more varied ways than before (Jakubowicz, 2010). Evidence from the UK suggests that the 2020s may mark a pivotal moment of transition in the history of broadcasting. On the one hand, in February 2020, Enders Analysis released a report highlighting the "surprising endurance of UK broadcasting media", and concluded that, with some 13 per cent of adults still not using the Internet, the prospects of witnessing an online-only (broadcast) media environment in the UK were not realistic in the near future. Yet, on the other hand, mobile traffic rates and mobile data consumption are increasing, where video content has been one of the main drivers of data demand, accounting for over 60 per cent of all data traffic on mobile networks (Miller et al., 2021). Online video consumption time has increased by 85 per cent since 2016, reaching almost eight hours in 2020 (Miller et al., 2021).

In order to respond to audience trends, the European broadcasting industry has devoted research and development resources to explore the technical feasibility of delivering high capacity, large-scale, broadband (broadcast capacity) content services within mobile 5G environments. A working group – 5G in Content Production (5GCP) – involving European Broadcasting Union (EBU) members, suppliers, and other interested parties was established in May 2018 (Waglin, 2019). The driving force behind the work of the group, as explained by the chair, Ian Waglin (BBC), is the already well-known problematic for the broadcasting community of "the potential of the technology [combined] with the threat of spectrum currently in use by broadcasters and production teams being eaten up by future 5G" (Waglin, 2019: para. 6).

Further, in terms of collaborative efforts, broadcasters within the EBU have called for active participation in developing new mobile standards within the European mobile standards body, 3GPP, as well as the European standardisation authority, the European Telecommunications Standards Institute. Elements have been added to the current 5G standard to enable content delivery to mobile devices, utilising the available spectrum to broadcasters in the UHF band. The broadcast-specific downlink-only addition – called 5G Broadcast – allows for "free-to-air content to mobile phone users without the need for additional receivers to be built into handsets and for the user to get a subscription" (EBU, 2021a: para. 2). The DTT broadcasters are keen to highlight that the new technology conforms with the International Telecommunication Union GE06 Agreement and current World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC) regulations (Puigrefagut, 2021, 2022), which means that no allocation of further new spectrum to deliver 5G services is immediately required. The 5G Broadcast standard is also being developed to ensure coexistence with

DTT and programme-making and special events services in the same spectrum band. Therefore, this technology is the preferred system for broadcasters for serving PSM users, as it can complement the services offered by DTT since it neither replaces it nor competes with it for the same spectrum. Granting further spectrum in the sub-700 Mhz UHF band (see discussion in the next subsection) to mobile broadband operators – whose technical capability to deliver the same content to a mass audience as efficiently as DTT or satellite broadcasting has been questioned (Lombardo, 2019) – is a fiercely opposed alternative by broadcasters, as coexistence between DTT and mobile services is considered problematic (Faisan, 2021) from a technical perspective. Another prominent argument made by the broadcasting constituency is that the technology may allow additional flexibility due to its complementarity with DTT. Here, in countries where DTT take-up is low, the digital terrestrial broadcasting system can be replaced with 5G Broadcast, while in countries with higher DTT provision, the digital video broadcasting–based services can continue to operate and serve audiences for as long as they are needed (Hemingway, 2021).

If possible, public service broadcasters want to benefit from the availability of both downlink (e.g., terrestrial or satellite television, suited for mass, live broadcasting with no return channel) and uplink (mobile broadband) infrastructure, acknowledging that while "most of the population still massively relies on traditional broadcasting to consume live content" (Lombardo, 2019: 29), there is some evidence of growth in consumption of live and on-demand television services on smartphones. The EBU has argued that as "no single solution represents the optimum", maintaining DTT while at the same time creating technical solutions where 5G can be integrated into existing broadcasting infrastructure (Lombardo, 2019) should be the adopted approach. Two more technical reports published by the EBU have confirmed reliance on this direction: One report (EBU, 2021c) concludes that using available DTT frequencies in the sub-700 MHz band is the most practical way to introduce 5G Broadcast services, and the other (EBU, 2021b) proposes a hybrid technical approach incorporating layers of existing broadcasting infrastructure with mobile-level networks as a possible compromise for delivering 5G content services.

Incorporating 5G broadcasting technologies and building them into the existing DTT solutions is argued to be a realistic approach, considering that "even in the most developed countries, 4G coverage has exceeded 95% household penetration only after 10 years", with an even lower adoption rate of 42 per cent of total connections (Lombardo, 2019: 31). In addition, although content is shifting to Internet Protocol, the transition is happening slower than anticipated, with more than 80 per cent of viewing and listening served through terrestrial, satellite, and cable platforms (Hemingway, 2021). Therefore, "assuming that these patterns and trends will not change in the

future, we can expect to see a full 5G rollout for developed countries in 2030, and a satisfactory adoption rate in 2035" (Lombardo, 2019: 31). In addition, the feasibility of achieving universal coverage, including for rural areas, seems very low, as the price of covering these areas is as high as "half the entire running cost of the network for the whole country" (Lombardo, 2019: 31).

In the UK, the BBC's research and development department has been involved in the first 5G broadcasting content trials and an exploration of opportunities around 5G delivery. The BBC, as part of a wider consortium, has begun testing live radio broadcasting over 5G in remote rural locations on the Orkney Islands in Scotland. The 5G RuralFirst consortium, led by Cisco alongside BT, Microsoft, and several higher education institutions, has focused on the Orkney Islands due to their "limited fixed broadband, little or no mobile signal and poor digital radio (DAB) coverage" (Murphy et al., 2019: 4). The private sector companies involved in the consortium are interested in exploring a niche business model, beyond that covered by the major 3G and 4G service providers. For the latter, the cost of providing affordable and reliable coverage to remote rural areas is high, leaving expensively acquired spectrum unused in those areas. Therefore, claims about the public social value of the 5G RuralFirst consortium must be tempered by this realisation.

Nevertheless, in terms of public value of the provision, Murphy and colleagues (2019) reported that the users' response to the service and its impact was generally positive. Nine out of ten people were satisfied with the trial for Internet services, describing it as faster and more reliable. In addition, the better quality of the Internet signal diversified the content choice for listeners. It has been argued that "while listening habits broadly reflect trialists' existing service preferences, there is evidence of a broader repertoire of stations being listened to via the trial app" (Murphy et al., 2019: 7). Thus, this innovated provision increased the variety of stations and flexibility to listen on the move, affordances underscoring Lin and Tsai's argument (see Chapter 7 in this volume) about the need for broadcasting with a public purpose to be receptive and responsive to changing public audience preferences.

5G networks are also expected to play a vital role in the development of virtual and augmented reality. Trials of immersive broadcasting services and so-called 360° visual media on mobile devices have involved, in the UK, collaborations, including the BBC, to test virtual and augmented reality user experiences based on smartphone applications displaying virtual reconstructions of the historically important moments during the era of Roman Baths in Bath, UK (BBC, 2019; Murphy et al., 2019). The project, titled 5G Smart Tourism, "examined how 5G might change the types of media experiences that would be practical on a mobile device and how they might enable the BBC to inform, educate and entertain in new ways" (Murphy et al., 2019: 9).The two projects concluded that although "the trials have demonstrated the opportunities that 5G could enable for distribution and content […], details

relating to the costs to broadcasters and the associated business models will require further investigation" (Murphy et al., 2019: 12).

Other trials on the performance of 5G broadcast opportunities in Europe have been conducted with the involvement of broadcasters and broadcasting network operators in Germany, Italy, Austria, and Spain (5G Mag, 2021). In Germany, the 5G Media2Go project is exploring the opportunity to distribute media content (linear and alinear) in the integrated "infotainment" systems of cars and public transport vehicles. The project unites broadcast, automotive, and telecommunication industries' efforts to develop 5G-enabled consumption services, offering innovative pathways to distribute media content and reach audiences on the go. Another trial project – 5G Today – implemented in Munich, has explored the potential of the 5G Broadcast standard to bridge the gap between unicast (one-to-one) and broadcast (one-to-all) modes of content distribution for mobile devices and tablets, reporting promising results for deployment in the near future. In 2020, the ORS Group (Austria's broadcasting service provider) started trials in Vienna to compare the quality of coverage and signal of the DTT advanced standard DVB-T2 with 5G Broadcast (Phase 1), and to test the new 5G standard as regards the interaction between broadcasting and mobile communications in the provision of hybrid services and the distribution of disaster and crisis information (Phase 2). Most recently, the Italian broadcaster RAI, along with other members of the EBU, showcased 5G Broadcast in Europe, delivering the Eurovision Song Contest live to 5G Broadcast–enabled mobile phones, through the use of existing digital television transmission networks (EBU, 2022).

These and similar trials and tests have informed the work on standardisation and demonstrated, in theory and practice, the opportunity of convergence of fixed, mobile, and terrestrial broadcast networks for integrated media user experiences. Yet, none of the trials have drawn clear conclusions on the costs to broadcasters or offered concrete business model pathways. Further investigations are therefore continuing. In addition, as much as there is cooperation between the broadcasting and mobile communication sectors in adjusting standards (mostly driven by the former), the competition for spectral infrastructure and resources is an ongoing issue.

Use of scarce infrastructural spectral resources

The debate on future use of the sub-700MHz (470–694MHz) bands re-emerged in 2021 in the context of preparations for the International Telecommunication Union World Radiocommunications 2023 conference (WRC-23). The conference agenda required participants "to review the spectrum use and spectrum needs of existing services in the frequency band 470–690 MHz in Region 1 [comprising Europe, the Middle East and North Africa] and consider possible regulatory actions […] in accordance with Resolution

235 (WRC-15)" (ITU, 2020: §1.5), something which has acted as a catalyst reigniting the debate across Europe. In 2017, in the European Union, after an intense debate post the 2015 WRC conference (WRC-15) and the findings of the Lamy Group on the future of the 700MHz band (Lamy, 2014), the European Council resolved that the sub-700 MHz band would remain available exclusively to DTT and programme-making and special events services at least until 2030, but that the European Commission would report to the Council and the Parliament on the developments in the use of the band by 2025 (European Union, 2017).

Evidence suggests that in the renewed and ongoing debate on the future of the 470–690 MHz band, arguments are centring around the rollout of 5G mobile services, crystallising many of the arguments elaborated on in this chapter. In the process, incumbent interests in the band, principally from DTT service provision, DTT network operation, and the programme-making and special events sector are mounting strong arguments for no change to the status quo to be agreed on at WRC-23. Here, progressive arguments around universality have been presented through technological change–underpinned new service provision, where it is argued that DTT broadcasters in Europe need continued exclusive primary access to the band to allow them to innovate. A related argument is that the provision of DTT and 5G broadcast services possess something of a public service complementarity, with consumption of services by audiences occurring through traditional DTT in the home and through 5G services on the move (Faisan, 2021; Forum Europe, 2021). Underpinning this is the claim of efficient technological management of the band through maximal signal compression. DTT, thus viewed, supports European policies and values in a way other platforms do not. Any move to create a co-primary allocation of the band between broadcasters and mobile broadband providers at WRC-23 would undermine this by creating disruption and uncertainty for broadcasters. More emotively, it has been claimed – based on the experience of the repurposing of the 800MHz and 700MHz bands – that a co-primary reassignment of the band would culminate in the "eviction" of DTT players and, ultimately, "the end of free television for European citizens" (Faisan, 2021).

Puigrefagut (2021) provided an EBU perspective in the debate by arguing for the public and societal value of the UHF band, as well as rehearsing the argument about the benefits to the media production sector through DTT broadcaster investment in content creation, where it was claimed that 89 per cent of television output is domestic or from the European Union, with EUR 19.5 billion per year invested in content creation. Puigrefagut (2021) noted the innovation occurring in technical standards produced by 3GPP and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute such that 5G Broadcast can support a new one-way (downlink) distribution channel for free-to-air services and network configuration flexibility for optimal coverage. The argument for regulatory stability was again asserted since this

activity is still a work in progress. It was further argued that 5G Broadcast is a "broadcast service" that is technically compatible with both DTT and programme-making and special events services, and it can be introduced in the UHF band under the international Geneva GE06 Agreement, which sets out conditions for bilateral and multilateral coordination arrangements for DTT services planning. More defensively, it was argued that any changes to the allocation and use of spectrum between DTT and other services in the band could require potentially complex and time-consuming work to ensure compliance to avoid signal interference problems. Puigrefagut (2021) argued that since DTT broadcasters are evidently innovating without asking for more spectrum, could mobile operators be asked to try to do the same in a status quo situation?

As might be expected, a rather different perspective on the future of the band has emanated from the mobile broadband sector. In their recent analysis on the future of the sub-700MHz (470–694MHz) band, Miller and colleagues (2021) argued overall for co-primary reassignment of the band to occur at WRC-23 between broadcasters and mobile broadband providers. Much of their argument was framed in terms of universality, where the proposed change could realise 5G "ubiquitous coverage". More critically, it was contended that "while DTT standards are technically efficient, the characteristics of broadcasting networks [...] mean there are parts of the allocated UHF frequencies being left unused at a particular time" (Miller et al., 2021: 39). It was argued that DTT is unevenly deployed across Europe, where "Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Netherlands and Norway have less than five national DTT services each, while others such as Albania, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Italy, Spain, Ukraine and the UK have more than 20" (Miller et al., 2021: 39). It has similarly been argued that future demand for DTT is uncertain, with growing demand for streaming and the increased possibility for consumers to receive television services through the Internet. Notable here is the decision of the Flemish (VRT) and Swiss (SRG) public service broadcasters to close their DTT networks in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Whilst acknowledging the likely continued use of DTT into the next decade in states such as Italy and Spain, and for purposes of ensuring free-to-air access for older people and low-income households, Miller and colleagues (2021: 48) nevertheless argued that "the level of demand is likely to be much reduced in many countries".

A particularly interesting aspect of this version of the pursuit of universality refers to closing the "digital divide" between rural and urban environments. It has been argued that 5G provided by the mobile broadband sector can positively impact what is termed "economic well-being", such as providing better access to inputs to improve production processes in businesses; provide better access to finance; better access to the labour market; and improvements in employment. Separately, Rehfuess (2021) has argued that 5G use requires the kind of high-quality bandwidth available in the 470–694 MHz band to

deliver services to rural areas. More broadly, he contended that networks would evolve in the future in a convergent direction, and a co-primary allocation of the band at WRC-23 would allow options to be kept open when the need to build momentum in ecosystems is necessary.

Conclusion

Media systems have a well-established history of developing new means of asserting the value and societal contribution of PSM (Bardoel & Lowe, 2007), and they have provided regular instances where broadcasters with a public purpose find themselves in an existence-justification, defensive position (Sundet & Syvertsen, 2021). This chapter provides evidence of the importance of innovation in the infrastructures to deliver free-to-air broadcast services to audiences in the twenty-first century, something which can be viewed as a part of this kind of exercise. It also reminds us that deploying the airwaves to provide communications services still requires media-policy decision-making on a scarce public resource to develop and sustain its societal contribution.

The multichannel era of broadcasting at one point led to the view that the period of spectrum scarcity that had characterised the evolution of the sector for much of the twentieth century had ended. Convergence of media infrastructures, services, and content – underpinned by a desire for wireless mobility – has dramatically terminated this hiatus of abundance. As a consequence, broadcasting with a public purpose has entered the latest phase of challenge to its territory requiring a (re-)assertion of its purposes and societal contribution. The evidence of this chapter suggests that such a defence is robust and pluri-dimensional. In this chapter, we have placed emphasis on the pursuit of the related goals of technological change and universality. Providing 5G mobile broadcast services sustains into the future the core staple of free-to-air communication service provision. It also considers dynamically and progressively long-held ideas of engaging with audience members to provide them with personal utility and satisfaction, a key societal benefit still relevant in the mobile Internet era. Writ large, this chapter exemplifies the cornerstone ideas of the public broadcasting system to pursue equality of access and, in so doing, the promotion of communications citizenship. These issues comprise the citizen-focused social value and contribution to be derived from free-to-air 5G mobile broadcasting.

Yet, the chapter also provides evidence of the continuing social contribution of broadcasting with a public purpose in the realm of technological research (see Table 9.1). Regarding work to realise 5G broadcast distribution, this involves arguments showing the role of DTT providers as flexible innovators working with existing capacity resources. It illustrates the keen interest of PSM broadcasters and network operators to translate the fruits of research to continue to provide progressive and innovative delivery methods for their services. Here, they continue to present themselves as trusted custodians of scarce public communication resources.

Table 9.1 *Approaches to online content delivery through 5G*

Public service broadcasters	Mobile broadband providers
Universality: free-to-air	Universality: customer subscription
Universality: audience member engagement	Universality: customer quality of service focus
Universality: promotion of citizenship	Universality: promotion of individual welfare
Universality: provision of equality of access	Universality: provision of service to narrow digital divide
Technology: trusted custodian of scarce resource	Technology: proactive new entrant
Technology: flexible, complementary innovation with existing resources	Technology: ambitious, resource-demanding, system-disrupter

The need to preserve for DTT primary use of the sub-700MHz UHF band is thus justified by broadcasters in the light of growth in on-demand television content provision for smartphones, tablets, and mobile devices in cars. The 5G Broadcast method is seen as a complementary technology which does not require changes to the (sub-700MHz) UHF band and amendment to the International Telecommunication Union's radio communication regulations in WRC-23. 5G Broadcast, it is argued, will complement existing usage and will not replace DTT and programme-making and special events, as they can fairly coexist in the UHF band, while co-existence between digital terrestrial broadcasting and mobile broadband services is not possible (Forum Europe, 2021). This chapter also provides further evidence of the ability of these organisations to formulate strategic arguments and develop sophisticated proactive strategies in order to mount a strong defence of the territory they hold – in this case, the 470–694 MHz band. According to Broadcast Networks Europe (BNE), the success of 5G Broadcast deployment depends on long term regulatory certainty (Faisan, 2021). This can provide a route to successful innovation, rather than a co-primary allocation of the spectrum as suggested by the mobile broadband community. It has been argued by the BNE that:

> There is a history of mobile being given co-primary status with broadcasting in different parts of the UHF band and that leading to either the spectrum being cleared for mobile services or discussions about the spectrum being cleared. It is therefore inevitable that a co-primary allocation to mobile in the 470–694 MHz band would lead to uncertainty regarding the future of DTT's use of spectrum – and given that this is the only remaining spectrum that DTT uses for transmissions – uncertainty regarding the future of DTT as a television platform. (Aetha Consulting, 2014 cited in Faisan, 2021)

The classic arguments that sustained the public service character and societal contribution of television – free at the point of consumption, openly available, and accessible to viewers – have also been put forward. Beyond this, however, ideas of ongoing engagement with audience members on their terms and, in the process, sustenance of the idea of a connected citizenship are in evidence. Overall, the chapter points to the enduring social relevance and contribution of broadcasting with a public purpose in the online world. Yet, evidence also suggests that broadcasters continue to face challenges in countering arguments about commercial convergence with those of public sector convergence (Humphreys & Simpson, 2018; Jakubowicz, 2010). As shown in the chapter and summarised in Table 9.1, mobile broadband personal mobile communications players have presented themselves as high technology, proactive new entrants with an ambitious, resource-demanding, even system-disrupter character. They assert the pursuit of universality through the market mechanism – customer subscription delivered with a consumer quality of service focus. Here, the promotion of individual (primarily economic) welfare has been emphasised, which, when realised at scale, can tackle the digital divide, particularly between rural and urban environments.

From the perspective of some broadcasters, the required approach is to involve mobile counterparts in a cooperative manner and may ultimately present a way forward in the debate. Here, stress is placed on both "cooperative network" and "cooperative content" (Arcidiacono, 2019: 2). In terms of network development, the idea is to combine the broadcasters' capacity to serve a mass of users simultaneously with the speed and capacity of 5G networks to provide interactive and personalised services to individual users (Arcidiacono, 2019). In terms of content cooperation, the idea is to combine 5G one-to-one and one-to-many (broadcast) technologies to enable the provision of both linear (live) and alinear (on-demand) content at the same time (Arcidiacono, 2019).

In the lead-up to WRC-23, much will depend on the view taken on these respective arguments by policy-makers at the national and international level, and these will hold important consequences for the future shape of the social value and societal contribution of broadcasting.

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CHAPTER 10

Governance of misinformation by public service bots

The potential of automated social networking site accounts operated by public service media for correcting misinformation

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ABSTRACT

The rapid dissemination of reliable information from credible sources is of particular relevance in combating misinformation. Such information can be provided by public service media (PSM). This chapter addresses the potential of automated social media accounts operated by PSM for the correction of misinformation. The legitimacy of this governance option is examined through a legal analysis and its effectiveness tested through an experimental survey (N = 113). The results of the legal analysis show that a legitimate claim can be derived for the use of automated communication agents by PSM within social networking sites, which can also be used in the fight against the spread of misinformation. The results from the experiment indicate that accounts operated by PSM enjoy higher credibility and generate more interactions than accounts operated by social peers. However, labelling accounts as automated tends to limit the effectiveness of accounts operated by PSM that provide corrective information.

KEYWORDS: correction of misinformation, platform governance, social bots, mixed-methods design

Pedrazzi, S., & Oehmer-Pedrazzi, F. (2023). Governance of misinformation by public service bots: The potential of automated social networking site accounts operated by public service media for correcting misinformation. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 193–218). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-10

Introduction

Social networking sites (SNS) allow users to access and exchange information from various sources and participate in discussions (Valenzuela et al., 2019). However, they are also considered to be a place where problematic content such as misinformation and defamation is spread (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Since SNS serve as a primary source of information for a notable number of people, the dissemination, exposure, and use of misinformation through these channels is associated with a wide range of far-reaching societal consequences: They have been linked to propagating conspiracies (Bessi et al., 2015; Wood, 2018), compromising public health (Loomba et al., 2021; Roozenbeek et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2020), inciting violence (Jolley & Paterson, 2020), affecting trust in mass media and political authorities (Ognyanova et al., 2020; Shin & Thorson, 2017; Vosoughi et al., 2018), and undermining democracy (Clayton et al., 2019; Lewandowsky & Van Der Linden, 2021).

Automated software agents such as social bots can be employed to reinforce the diffusion of mis- and disinformation due to their potentially unlimited communication and networking capabilities. As a consequence, a distorted online discourse can be observed, as studies on the influence of social bots on elections, popular votes, and polarised debates with regard to political and other socially relevant topics such as vaccinations or the emergence and spread of diseases show (Bessi & Ferrara, 2016; Broniatowski et al., 2018; Ferrara, 2017; Howard & Kollanyi, 2016; Swire-Thompson & Lazer, 2020).

Unsurprisingly, policy-makers are increasingly discussing or even implementing measures aimed at countering the spread of mis- and disinformation (by social bots). The debate focuses on an interplay of governance options by regulators, platforms themselves, and users, including measures such as bot disclosure regulations, automated and manual content moderation, and the strengthening of users' media literacy and digital skills (for an overview, see Oehmer & Pedrazzi, 2020).

We argue that the rapid and widespread dissemination of reliable information from credible sources such as public service media (PSM) is of particular relevance in combating misinformation (Hjarvard, 2018; Horowitz et al., 2021). Using a combination of legal analysis and experimental survey, in this chapter we aim to examine the legality, suitability, and effects of corrective information to misinformation provided to users of SNS by means of automated accounts operated by PSM. In order to investigate this, we take a three-step approach, in which the first two research questions serve as the premises to test the third:

RQ1. Can the use of SNS accounts operated by a public service media organisation for the purpose of correcting misinformation in SNS be considered legal?

RQ2. Based on the credibility perception of SNS users, can accounts operated by a public service media organisation be considered suitable for correcting misinformation in SNS?

RQ3. What are the effects of labelling an SNS account (operated by a public service media organisation) as automated that provides corrective information on misinformation on 1) users' assessment of its credibility; 2) users' intention to like, share, or use the corrective information provided; and 3) opinion?

We first discuss problems that arise from the spread of mis- and disinformation, followed by a discussion of available governance options with a focus on corrective interventions. Subsequently, we address the special role of PSM and their suitability as originators of corrective information on SNS from a legal standpoint, using the case of Switzerland. Our experiment was theoretically based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), an information-processing model allowing for assumptions related to attitude change by persuasive messages depending on several factors, such as the source of a message and the individual relevance of its content. Participants were exposed to a corrective message in response to misinformation posted on SNS. The account from which the corrective message originated was presented as affiliated with the PSM or not, and marked as an automated account or not. In addition to the source's credibility, the effects of the corrective intervention on users' intentions to interact with it (e.g., like, share) and on opinion were examined.

This chapter contributes to the research area in three respects: first, to the hitherto underresearched area of the effectiveness of different sources as originators of corrective information; second, to the effects of labelling SNS accounts as automated, as required by bot disclosure regulations; and third, to the legitimacy and suitability of automated accounts operated by PSM in combating the spread of misinformation in SNS.

Challenges posed by misinformation on social networking sites

Various terms such as fake news, misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, and so on, are often used inconsistently to describe different forms of false and misleading information (Tandoc et al., 2018; Vraga & Bode, 2020). Thorson (2016) understood misinformation to be information that is initially presented as accurate but is later shown to be false, while Vraga and Bode (2020) have emphasised the contradiction of misinformation with the best expert evidence available at the time of its publication. Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) defined misinformation as false information that is not created for the purpose of causing harm; disinformation as content that is

created with an inherent harmful intent; and malinformation as content that is not false but is intended to cause harm. And Zimmermann and Kohring (2018) defined disinformation as the "communication of knowingly and empirically false information about new and relevant facts with a claim to truth [translated]". The differentiation between mis- and disinformation often takes place at the level of the originator of the information, who is assumed to have malicious intent or at least to act knowingly. Whether a deceptive or malicious intent can be assumed from the (often unknown) originator of content is not clear-cut in most cases. Accordingly, the term disinformation lacks discriminatory power for empirical investigation, which is why in this chapter we use the term misinformation when referring to false or deceptive content, regardless of the intention behind it.

The spread of misinformation poses several challenges to individuals, institutions, and society. Accordingly, measures are being discussed and implemented at various levels (state, organisations, users, technology) to curb the spread of misinformation and its negative effects (Saurwein & Spencer-Smith, 2020). To this end, new legislation has been introduced or is being discussed in various countries, which orders the removal of harmful or illegal content and the prevention of its further dissemination or requires the labelling of automatically operated accounts by SNS operators. However, misinformation is not illegal in itself, and determining the legality and distinguishing between content that is actually punishable or merely undesirable often cannot be done beyond doubt, and it is not uniformly regulated in international contexts (Oehmer & Pedrazzi, 2020). SNS operators are also making adjustments to usage policies and socio-technical arrangements, such as the network architecture; verification of a profile's authenticity; design options that allow users to report illegal or misleading content; the way in which engagement metrics are displayed; the limitation of high-speed liking or sharing; algorithmic recommendations; content moderation; and flagging, refuting, or correcting controversial content through references, fact-checks, or links to verified journalistic sources (Avram et al., 2020; Clayton et al., 2019; Gillespie, 2014, 2018b; Grinberg et al., 2019; Hameleers et al., 2020; Hameleers & Van Der Meer, 2020; Lazer et al., 2018; Li, 2020; Napoli, 2015; Pennycook & Rand, 2021; Shao et al., 2018; Thorson, 2016). However, SNS operators are neither suited for nor able to combat misinformation (spread by social bots) on their own (Gillespie, 2018a). These forms of governance are not only prone to error, but they also privatise decisions with respect to freedom of expression (Helberger et al., 2018; Langvardt, 2018; Pennycook & Rand, 2021). Moreover, the business model of platforms is not conducive to effective self-regulation (Puppis, 2020; van Dijck et al., 2018). Further, SNS users can also play an important role in preventing the spread of misinformation. However, the prerequisite for this is that users recognise misinformation and behave in such a way that they do not support the spread of such content (Pedrazzi & Oehmer, 2021).

The speed at which misinformation spreads on SNS – and the often inconclusive and time- and resource-intensive processes for assessing its factuality and for rebutting it – mean that it is often impossible to prevent an initial wave of misinformation from spreading, possibly additionally supported by social bots. Once spread, false information and beliefs can persist among users despite correction (Lewandowsky et al., 2012) and continue to exert an influence in the form of so-called "belief echoes" (Thorson, 2016). We therefore argue in this chapter that the tradition and expertise of legacy media, especially PSM, in providing independent, verified, and trustworthy corrective information could thus be of great value in dealing with misinformation spread via SNS.

The correction of misinformation

One of the most discussed instruments for combating misinformation is the corrective intervention, for example, of fact-checking organisations or news media. Studies on when and how corrective content has an impact or success show mixed results (Carey et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2017; Clayton et al., 2019; Lewandowsky et al., 2012; Mena, 2020; Pennycook et al., 2020; Walter et al., 2020b; Walter & Murphy, 2018; Walter & Tukachinsky, 2019): Although corrective interventions show an overall positive influence in various (meta-)analyses, unintended side effects have also been observed, such as that they can adversely affect the credibility attribution of other (correct) content or implicitly validate misinformation that is not labelled; moreover, a continued influence effect of misinformation has also been demonstrated.

Researchers have examined how the type and content of a corrective intervention – which can range from simple warnings that challenge the correctness of a piece to detail-enriched rebuttals – are related to its effectiveness. For example, detail-enriched, coherent, fact-based representations that offer an alternative narrative were found to be more likely to be successful than simple rebuttals (Bode & Vraga, 2018; Chan et al., 2017; Lewandowsky et al., 2012; Walter & Tukachinsky, 2019). Studies of misinformation related to health topics, however, have not found significant differences between these types of corrective messages, nor have differences been found when correction is purely textual or in combination with images (Walter et al., 2020a).

The topic on which misinformation is circulated is also related to the potential for corrective intervention. It was found that misinformation related to crime or health topics can be corrected more easily than misinformation related to political topics, which is attributed to the fact that preconceptions and political identities or ideologies are more strongly anchored (Walter & Murphy, 2018). The duration of time until users are confronted with warnings or corrective content is also considered a critical situational factor for correction. On the one hand, misinformation can be better remembered with

longer duration, and on the other, there is also the possibility of complex contagion processes in SNS (Mønsted et al., 2017). That is, if users (also supported by social bot activities) encounter the same misinformation several times, its reception is further promoted, a phenomenon also referred to as "illusory truth effect" (Hassan & Barber, 2021). No significant differences were found between studies analysing corrective interventions on Facebook or Twitter (Walter et al., 2020a).

A key element for the success of a corrective intervention lies in the receptivity to it. Lewandowsky and colleagues (2012) have identified cognitive parameters that, in a neutral scenario (i.e., when individuals have no intrinsic motivation to resist correction), may explain the persistence of false beliefs following exposure to misinformation, despite correction having occurred:

- The corrective intervention may create an uncomfortable gap in mental models about events or topics that is most easily remedied by ignoring the retraction.
- Memory may fail and there may be confusion at recall about which information or source was actually false.
- A sense of familiarity with the misinformation and possibly fluency in processing may also cause it to persist.
- Corrective interventions may trigger reactance that leads to rejection of the correction.

In addition, ideologically or politically motivated reasoning can lead to identity-protective actions, such that information that is consistent with one's worldview is overly believed, with related research providing evidence that individuals are less accurate in judging the veracity of content (Pennycook & Rand, 2021). In general, people who are more reflective or have higher political knowledge or media literacy are better at discerning false from true news, irrespective of whether the information is consistent with their worldview (Pennycook & Rand, 2021).

The role of (automated) sources in correcting misinformation

Another element in the correction of misinformation that has been investigated relatively rarely is the source of the corrective intervention. The credibility and expertise of a source of information is considered essential for the persuasiveness of a message (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Petty & Briñol, 2010; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984): The more credible a source, the more likely people are to be persuaded by the arguments. This is also true for recipients of a message who lack the motivation, ability, or expertise to carefully examine or process the content of the message, who then tend to transfer the credibility

of the source to the content of the message. This heuristic-based form of information-processing was found to be the dominant form in online environments (Metzger et al., 2010), thus including exposure to misinformation and corrective information in SNS. A few studies have investigated which sources or source characteristics are conducive to corrective intervention: In particular, in the area of health, it has been shown that official authorities or experts can correct misinformation more effectively than unknown users in SNS (Vraga & Bode, 2017; Walter et al., 2020a; Wang, 2021); that adding a link to an external, credible source increases the effectiveness of the intervention (Vraga & Bode, 2018); that corrections from users with whom one has a strong social connection are more effective (Margolin et al., 2018); while social endorsements (e.g., number of likes) showed no influence on the effectiveness of a source of a corrective intervention (Bode et al., 2021), but on that of a corrective message (Wang, 2021). Of particular interest to this study is the finding that news organisations can be an effective source of corrective messages (Van Der Meer & Jin, 2020), with the reputation of a news organisation being a determining factor in whether users rely on it as a source of information (Winter & Krämer, 2014). In addition to the potential suitability, the legality to engage in automated communication activities by PSM serves as a premise for being a corrective source to misinformation. Our first two research questions follow from these arguments.

Still largely unexplored is the effectiveness of corrections provided by automated accounts in SNS. Bode and Vraga (2018) have examined the effectiveness of corrective information suggested by Facebook in an automated way, and their results show that it does not differ in effectiveness from corrections by social peers. A key factor in the effectiveness of the correction, even if it comes from an automated account, is its perception and assessment by users. For bots, studies in the tradition of the Computers Are Social Actors approach (Reeves & Nass, 1996), which investigates interactions with computers or other automated agents, show that individuals unconsciously apply the same social rules and heuristics as when interacting with human users. For example, Edwards, Edwards, Spence, and Shelton (2014) showed in an experiment that bots are perceived as credible, attractive, and competent in communication, and that there was an equally strong intention to interact with a bot or a human user on Twitter. Users also exhibit similar levels of effort and motivation in information-seeking and cognitive processing when receiving information from a bot or a human user (Edwards et al., 2016). As yet, the consequences of labelling an SNS account as automated, as required by bot disclosure regulation, are unknown. It is quite conceivable that labelling may lead to more scrutiny of the content by the user, if the motivation and capacity are available (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Little is also known about whether and how the source of a corrective message can influence the behaviour of users, more precisely in terms of the intention to like or share the corrective message in SNS and to seek further

information about it. Research on this has shown that the reasons for sharing true (but also false) information in SNS can vary widely; these can include reputational considerations, signalling group affiliation, or political motives, among others (Chadwick & Vaccari, 2019; Pennycook et al., 2020). The perceived accuracy of a message (Pennycook et al., 2020) and the identification of a source as true (Bauer & Clemm Von Hohenberg, 2020) tend to lead to a greater intention to share a post on SNS. The effect of warning labels, on the other hand, is ambiguous, as they were able to reduce the intention to share misinformation in the studies of Pennycook and colleagues (2020) and Mena (2020), whereas they failed to show any effect in the study of Oeldorf-Hirsch and colleagues (2020) in this respect, and also with regard to seeking further information. Our third research questions results from the fact that no clear predictions can be made about how users perceive and interact with automated SNS accounts of PSM that provide corrective information about misinformation, and labelled as such.

Legal analysis: Purpose and legal basis of the (online) activities of the Swiss public service media

To investigate whether and to what extent the use of automated communication services by the Swiss PSM as a governance tool to correct false information in SNS can be considered legal (RQ1), we conducted an analysis of all legal documents relevant to the Swiss public service remit. "Public service" refers to services in the infrastructure sector which, due to their particular social relevance, cannot be entrusted to the "free play" of the market and are thus regulated by law. The aim is to guarantee the population permanent access to the relevant goods and services at an affordable price. Due to their special importance for public opinion-forming processes, the media have also been granted the status of public service since 1984, according to the Swiss Federal Constitution (Swiss Confederation, 1874, 1999; Saxer & Brunner, 2018). This is to ensure that the population can be provided with diverse and unbiased media content. However, due to the technical circumstances prevailing at the time of the drafting of the constitutional article (e.g., scarcity of the frequencies), only broadcasting – namely radio and television – was addressed (Dumermuth, 2016; Saxer, 2017; Saxer & Brunner, 2018): There was no need for regulation of the press due to its comparatively unlimited availability and thus also the expected diversity of content. The Internet and social media and their importance as a source of information could not yet be foreseen in the 1980s. Accordingly, the Swiss Federal Constitution (1999: Art. 93, para. 2 BV) commits only broadcasters to "contribute to education and cultural development, to the free shaping of opinion and to entertainment". Furthermore they "shall present events accurately and allow a diversity of opinions to be expressed appropriately".

The Swiss PSM is SRG SSR. In the Federal Act on Radio and Television (RTVA), its programme mandate is specified as follows: "The SRG SSR contributes to free public opinion-forming through comprehensive, diverse and accurate information especially regarding political, economic and social matter" (Swiss Confederation, 2006: Art. 24, para. 4). Despite the restriction to broadcasting in the constitution, the public service of the SRG also covers online activities according to its charter. However, these activities must have a reference to a programme or, in the case of news, sports reports, or local information not in the Romansh language, a limited number of characters in order to not compete with private media content providers (Swiss Confederation, 2020).

Looking at these regulations, we can certainly derive a claim to a public service in the online sector, and thus to online activities of the SRG SSR in Switzerland. This is for the following reasons:

1. The purpose of Article 93 of the Swiss Federal Constitution is to provide the population with access to undistorted and accurate media content that serves as the basis for unbiased opinion-forming processes. Radio and television were identified as particularly influential media types during the drafting of the constitutional article and were accordingly named in the constitution as public service providers. However, in view of media change and shifting patterns of media use, a restriction to these types of media must be regarded as too narrow and thus as not purposeful (Dumermuth, 2016). In modern democracies, broadcasting is no longer the only important source of information. Online media are increasingly being used, particularly by young people (Newman et al., 2019; Schwaiger, 2020). The main function of the public service in the online sector would then be to provide trustworthy and correct information and thus ensure an undistorted opinion-forming process. This broad reading of Article 93, paragraph 2 is also supported if one considers the reasoning of the paragraph immediately preceding it that grants the Confederation regulatory competence not only for radio and television, but also for "other forms of public broadcasting of features and information" (Swiss Confederation, 1999: Art. 93, para. 1 BV).

2. The more specific norms for the regulation of the public service (RTVA, SRG charter) already explicitly approve – notwithstanding the provisions of the constitution – an engagement on SRG's online platforms.

However, to be able to assert this claim to online activities of the public service, two conditions must be met: The communication must be public and relevant, and thus also suitable for influencing public opinion- and will-forming processes (Dumermuth, 2016). If these conditions are met, then not only

can the online engagement of the public service be justified, but an activity on social media can also be considered necessary and meaningful. After all, SNS such as Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram are also increasingly advancing as important sources of information. At the same time, however, they are also the place where misinformation is spread, often also via automated social bots or semi-automated accounts, such as trolls. The participation of PSM as a reliable provider of factually correct information about political, economic, and social issues – also in an automated way – on these online platforms thus seems legitimate and necessary.

Experimental method and design

After the legal analysis revealed the legitimacy of automated SNS accounts operated by the Swiss PSM SRG SSR, we investigated, with an experimental online survey, the potential of PSM to combat misinformation by promoting independent and trustworthy content in a timely manner through automated agents. A 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial design was used (i.e., account labelled as automated: yes vs. no; and account owner: Swiss PSM vs. unknown peer). Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions.

Sample

A total of 113 persons fully completed the experimental online questionnaire. Participants were recruited in courses we taught at our respective universities as well as in our personal environment. The mean age of the participants ranged from 17 to 60 years old (M = 29.70, SD = 9.10). Approximately 58.6 per cent of the participants were female and almost 33.6 per cent had a university degree. Controls were in place to ensure that participants either resided in Switzerland or were familiar with the Swiss PSM from their daily lives, so as not to compromise the account holder manipulation. Data collection took place 29 March–8 April 2021.

Procedure and stimuli

After the participants had given their consent to participate in the study, they were asked some questions about their use of media and SNS. This was followed by an instruction that a conversation on Twitter would follow, in which a labelling of automated accounts by Twitter would be tested by means of a symbol depicted in the instruction. To do this, we created a symbol specifically for this study that mimicked the Twitter symbol for official accounts in both design and positioning, but instead of the checkmark, showed a robot symbol inside the blue ring. Participants were then asked to look at the depicted Twitter feed in a way that corresponds to their normal way of using SNS.

Subsequently, the participants were shown the Twitter feed in the form of a screenshot. This consisted of a post, either from the Swiss National Bank, which informed about a successful test with a digital currency, or from the Swiss Federal Supreme Court, which announced a ruling to increase the maximum permissible return on rental properties. Both events were real. This initial post was followed by five comments. The first comment was from an author marked as automated, who advertised Bitcoin as an investment opportunity immediately after the post was published. This served the purpose of ensuring that all participants also encountered the symbol for labelling automated accounts. This was followed by two comments from accounts not marked as automated on the content of the tweet according to the different experimental conditions, including a reference to the fact that the Canadian National Bank had conducted a similar test with digital currencies and that the Highest Court in Australia had made a similar ruling. Then came a comment from another, unknown account that was not marked as automated, which contained the misinformation. In the tweet about the National Bank's test, the comment said that the goal of the test was to create the transparent, controlled citizen, and in the tweet on the Federal Court ruling, that rent increases would only be very small, with a false fictitious calculation example.

The fifth comment was the corrective intervention, which rejected the preceding comment as incorrect and included a link to an online article from the Swiss PSM that could be consulted for verification. In the various conditions, the originator of this comment was manipulated so that it was either posted by an unknown user (marked as automated in one condition), by the official account of the Swiss PSM (account name: SRF News), or by an account of the Swiss PSM marked as automated (account name: SRF Newsbot). In total, there were four different authors of an identical corrective message. All account names and account images of the previous commenters, temporal aspects, engagement metrics, and content were kept constant across conditions.

After the participants had viewed the Twitter feed, they were asked questions about the correcting post, namely whether they would interact with the content of the post, about the credibility of the author of the correcting post, and about their opinion, prior knowledge, and relevance assessment of the topic of the Twitter feed. This was followed by questions on digital media skills and news elaboration before they gave an assessment of the journalistic services of the Swiss PSM. The questionnaire ended with questions on sociodemographics and a debriefing regarding the test of labelling accounts and the manipulation of certain content.

Measures

- Credibility of the source of the corrective post: Participants rated the credibility of the source of the corrective post with a single question using a 7-point Likert scale (M = 3.81, SD = 1.83).

- User engagement intention with the corrective post: Participants could indicate their intention to interact with the post or its content using yes/no. 15 per cent of participants responded that they would like the post, 1 per cent would share the post, and 2 per cent would post a comment themselves. 50 per cent of participants said they would click on the article linked in the post and 14 per cent would recommend the article to another person on another channel (e.g., via messenger service).

- Opinion on the topic of the Twitter feed: Participants expressed their opinion on the topic of the Twitter feed using a 10-point Likert scale to the following questions: "Are you in favour of or against the replacement of the Swiss franc by a digital currency by the Swiss National Bank?" (M = 3.83, SD = 2.00); and "Are you in favour of or against the change in the calculation of the return on rental properties introduced by the Federal Court ruling?" (M = 4.87, SD = 1.76).

- Prior knowledge on the topic of the Twitter feed: Using a 7-point Likert scale, participants expressed their assessment of their prior knowledge related to the topic of the Twitter feed: digital currencies (M = 2.39, SD = 1.34); and maximum allowable rental return (M = 2.26, SD = 1.29).

- Issue relevance: Issue relevance was assessed using three items combined into an index on a 7-point Likert scale that asked about relevance to oneself, to one's personal environment, and to society (Kaiser et al., 2018) (M = 4.22, SD = 1.38, Cronbach's α = .79).

- Digital media skills: Using a 7-point Likert scale, participants answered questions about their information-seeking and privacy behaviour when browsing the Internet and SNS deriving from the Information Literacy (4 items) and Privacy Literacy (3 items) scales (Hoffmann et al., 2019). Due to insufficient scale reliability coefficients (both Cronbach's α < .45), digital media skills were excluded from the analysis.

- News elaboration: This variable measures the intensity with which individuals cognitively engage with news by two items (Shahin et al., 2020) using a 7-point Likert scale (e.g., "I often find myself thinking about what I've encountered in the news"), which were combined into an index (M = 5.00, SD = 1.08, r = .59).

- Trust in the journalistic services of the Swiss PSM: Trust in the journalistic services of the Swiss PSM was operationalised with the help of five items based on the dimensions of the "Trust in News Media" scale (Kohring & Matthes, 2007). Using a 7-point Likert scale, participants could indicate, for example, whether SRG SSR reports in detail and correctly, covers the important topics and events, or pays attention to balance in its reporting (M = 5.70, SD = .75, Cronbach's α = .90).

Check of internal validity

In order to verify that the different experimental conditions did not produce unexpected effects, we conducted various checks. No differences resulted in the assessment of one's own news elaboration or the journalistic offering of Swiss PSM depending on the topic, the labelling of the originator as automated, or the institutional affiliation to the Swiss PSM of the account. Only with regard to the issue relevance assessment did a difference result as a function of the topic: "ruling to adjust the return on rental properties" (M = 4.98, SD = 1.21) was perceived as more relevant than "introduction of a digital currency" (M = 3.54, SD = 1.16; $t(111) = -6.44$, $p < .001$). In contrast, the overall low level of prior knowledge did not differ between the two topics.

Results

Credibility perception of source providing correction

To test the suitability of PSM as providers of corrections to misinformation in SNS (RQ2), we conducted a t-test independent samples for source credibility. An account that could be assigned to the Swiss PSM (M = 4.75, SD = 1.72) was perceived as significantly more credible ($t(111) = 6.23$, $p < .001$) than an account of an unknown user (M = 2.89, SD = 1.44). The mean credibility of an account that could be attributed to the Swiss PSM was also significantly higher than the scale mean ($t(55) = 3.27$, $p = .002$), overall indicating a suitability of PSM for providing corrective interventions to misinformation in SNS.

Effect of labelling on source credibility

To investigate whether and what effect labelling as automated exerts on the credibility of an SNS account that provides corrective information about misinformation (RQ3.1), we conducted a factorial between-subjects ANCOVA with the perceived credibility of the source of the corrective post as the dependent variable, the experimental factors and their interaction as independent variables, and prior knowledge, issue relevance, news elaboration, and

trust in Swiss PSM's journalistic services as covariates. The model proved significant and explained 46 per cent of the variance ($F(7, 105) = 12.65$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .46$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .42$).

As shown in Table 10.1, both main effects – labelling the account as automated and account affiliation with the Swiss PSM – proved to be significant, such that labelling negatively affected perceptions of source credibility, whereas accounts identified as belonging to the Swiss PSM were perceived as more credible than accounts from unknown social peers. Moreover, the interaction of labelling as automated and affiliation with the Swiss PSM also proved significant. This suggests that the effect of labelling on perceived credibility differs depending on whether the account belongs to an unknown social peer or to the Swiss PSM: The official account from the Swiss PSM was rated most credible ($M = 5.68$, $SD = 1.33$), followed by the account from the Swiss PSM labelled as automated ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.56$), the account from the unknown social peer ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.71$), and finally the unknown social peer labelled as automated ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.08$). A post hoc test with Bonferroni correction shows that the unlabelled account of the Swiss PSM was perceived as significantly more credible than all other accounts; moreover, the Swiss PSM account labelled as automated was also perceived as more credible than the account of the unknown user labelled as automated. In addition, we found a significant relationship between prior knowledge as well as between news elaboration and perceived source credibility, such that participants who had greater prior knowledge tended to rate the credibility of the source of the corrective post more positively, whereas participants who were more cognitively engaged with news tended to rate its credibility more critically. Somewhat surprisingly, there was no link between trust in the Swiss PSM's journalistic services and the perception of source credibility, although in all conditions, reference was made to an external article by the Swiss PSM.

Table 10.1 *Analysis of covariance in the perceived credibility of the source of the corrective post*

Source of variation		Type III *SS*	*F*(1,105)	*p*	η_p^2
Source Bot		42.39	21.87	< .001	.17
Source PSM		81.75	42.18	< .001	.29
Source Bot × Source PSM		16.91	8.73	.004	.08
Covariates	Prior knowledge	8.38	4.33	.04	.04
	Issue relevance	0.80	0.41	.52	.00
	News elaboration	13.32	6.87	.01	.06
	Trust in PSM	0.01	0.01	.94	.00

Comments: $N = 113$; $R^2 = .46$ ($R^2_{adjusted} = .42$)

Effect of labelling on intention to engage with the corrective information

To study the effect of labelling an SNS account that provides corrective information about misinformation as automated on intended interactions by users (RQ3.2), we again performed a factorial between-subjects ANCOVA. To this end, we consider the intention for social endorsements and for information-seeking activities first individually and then in the aggregate, since in SNS interactions are not limited to one and interactions can affect algorithmic selection processes. Again, the experimental factors and their interaction acted as independent variables and prior knowledge, issue relevance, news elaboration, and trust in the journalistic services offered by the Swiss PSM acted as covariates.

Since only single participants expressed the intention to share or comment on the correcting post, a further analysis of this form of interaction was omitted. As for the intention to like, the model proved significant and explained a total of 14 per cent of the variance ($F(7, 105) = 2.35$, $p = .03$, $R^2 = .14$, $R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .08$). As shown in Table 10.2, the main effect of the account's affiliation with the Swiss PSM proved significant: There was a greater intention to like corrective interventions by accounts from the Swiss PSM than by accounts from unknown social peers. In contrast, there was no significant main effect associated with labelling the account as automated, meaning that the intention to like a corrective post didn't vary between sources marked as automated or not. The interaction of being labelled as automated and belonging to the Swiss PSM was significant: A post hoc test with Bonferroni correction reveals that the intention to like was significantly higher for the corrective intervention by the official account of the Swiss PSM than for all other accounts. No significant difference resulted for the other comparisons. No statistical correlation was found between the covariates examined in the model and the intention to like the post.

Table 10.2 *Analysis of covariance in the intention to like the corrective post*

Source of variation		Type III *SS*	*F*(1,105)	*p*	η_p^2
Source Bot		0.24	1.99	.16	.02
Source PSM		0.75	6.31	.01	.06
Source Bot × Source PSM		0.78	6.52	.01	.06
Covariates	Prior knowledge	0.01	0.09	.76	.00
	Issue relevance	0.04	0.37	.54	.00
	News elaboration	0.15	1.30	.26	.01
	Trust in PSM	0.06	0.52	.47	.01

Comments: $N = 113$; $R^2 = .14$ ($R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .08$)

As for the intention of information-seeking, the model proved significant, explaining a total of 13 per cent of the variance ($F(7, 105) = 2.26$, $p = .035$, $R^2 = .13$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .07$). Only the main effect of account affiliation with the Swiss PSM ($F(1, 105) = 8.24$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$) proved significant, such that the intention to obtain more detailed information on the topic by clicking on the linked article was greater for corrective interventions by accounts from the Swiss PSM than for accounts from unknown social peers (64% vs. 37%). No significant main effect was found in connection with the labelling of the account as automated, meaning that the intention to search information didn't vary between sources marked as automated or not. The interaction of being labelled as automated and affiliation with Swiss PSM also proved to be non-significant. We did not find any statistical association between the covariates examined in the model and the intention to search for information.

Finally, we tested the effect on participants' overall intention to interact with the corrective information. The model proved significant, explaining a total of 16 per cent of the variance ($F(7, 105) = 2.77$, $p = .011$, $R^2 = .16$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .10$). As shown in Table 10.3, the main effect of account affiliation with the Swiss PSM proved significant. There was a greater intention to engage with the corrective information provided by the accounts affiliated with the Swiss PSM compared with the accounts from unknown social peers. In contrast, there was no significant main effect associated with labelling the account as automated. The interaction of labelling as automated and affiliation with the Swiss PSM proved marginally significant. Labelling accounts as automated tended to equalise the intention to engage in a user interaction with corrective information provided, whereas for accounts not labelled as automated, affiliation with Swiss PSM ($M = 1.36$, $SD = 1.10$) led to significantly more user interactions than did the account of an unknown social peer ($M = .39$, $SD = .50$). No statistical relationship was found between the covariates examined in the model and the intention to interact.

Table 10.3 *Analysis of covariance in the intention to interact with the corrective post*

Source of variation		Type III *SS*	*F*(1,105)	*p*	η_p^2
Source Bot		0.25	0.28	.60	.00
Source PSM		9.78	11.21	.001	.10
Source Bot × Source PSM		3.33	3.82	.053	.04
Covariates	Prior knowledge	1.29	1.48	.23	.01
	Issue relevance	0.09	0.10	.75	.00
	News elaboration	0.52	0.60	.44	.01
	Trust in PSM	1.40	1.60	.21	.02

Comments: $N = 113$; $R^2 = .16$ ($R^2_{adjusted} = .10$)

Effect of labelling on opinion

To test the effect of labelling on opinion (RQ3.3), the mean values of the opinions on the two topics were recoded so that positive values represented a deviation in the sense of the corrective intervention. To do this, first the mean on the topic of the federal court ruling was inverted, then both means were mean centred and merged into one variable. Subsequently, a factorial between-subjects ANCOVA was performed again, with opinion as the dependent variable, the experimental factors and their interaction as independent variables, and prior knowledge, issue relevance, news elaboration, and trust in the journalistic services of the Swiss PSM as covariates. The model proved significant and explained 18 per cent of the variance ($F(7, 105) = 3.20$, $p = .004$, $R^2 = .18$, $R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .12$). Both main effects and the interaction proved non-significant, only prior knowledge was positively related to opinion ($F(1, 105) = 8.51$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$).

To further elaborate on the role of trust in the journalistic services offered by the Swiss PSM on opinion, we additionally performed a moderation analysis using PROCESS (Model 3), in which the mean centred trust in the Swiss PSM was included as an additional moderator in the model. The model proved significant ($F(10, 102) = 3.59$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = .26$, $R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .19$). As shown in Table 10.4, prior knowledge remained significant. Additionally, trust in Swiss PSM's journalistic offerings also proved significant, as did the interactions between accounts labelled as automated and trust in Swiss PSM, the interaction between account affiliation with Swiss PSM and trust in Swiss PSM, and the interaction between an account labelled as automated, account affiliation with Swiss PSM, and trust in Swiss PSM. The Johnson-Neyman significance value for the mean centred trust in the Swiss PSM is .24.

Table 10.4 *Moderation analysis of effects on opinion*

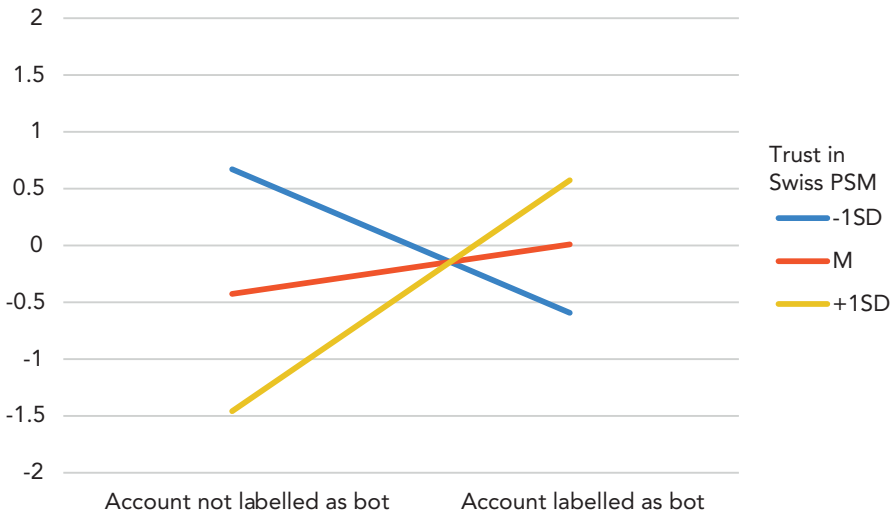
Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Intercept	-0.28	0.33	-0.93	0.36	.39
Source Bot[a]	0.21	0.46	-0.69	1.12	.64
Source PSM[a]	0.71	0.47	-0.21	1.64	.13
Trust in PSM[b]	-1.37	0.55	-2.46	-0.28	.01
Source Bot × Source PSM	-0.77	0.68	-2.11	0.57	.26
Source Bot × Trust in PSM	2.12	0.65	0.83	3.42	.002
Source PSM × Trust in PSM	2	0.69	0.623	3.36	.005
Source Bot × Source PSM × Trust in PSM	-2.71	0.94	-4.58	-0.83	.005
Prior knowledge[b]	0.43	0.13	0.18	0.68	.001
Issue relevance[b]	0.13	0.12	-0.11	0.38	.28
News elaboration[b]	0.27	0.16	-0.05	0.59	.10

Comments: $N = 113$; $R^2 = .26$, $R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .19$; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

[a] 0 = no, 1 = yes; [b] mean centred

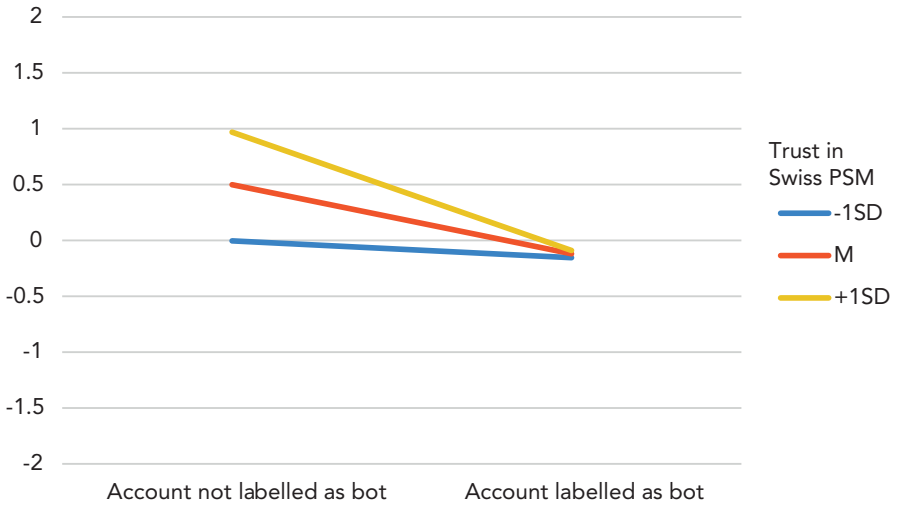
The analysis reveals a more complex picture. As shown in Figures 10.1 and 10.2, high trust in the Swiss PSM journalistic service had a positive corrective effect on opinion when the corrective information came from an account not marked as automated or affiliated to the Swiss PSM, while for unknown peers, high trust tended to have a positive effect when the corrective information was provided by an account marked as automated. One possible explanation for this is that the corrective information from an unknown peer marked as automated was examined more thoroughly, so that it was also more likely to be noticed that the corrective information included an external link to an article from the Swiss PSM.

Figure 10.1 *Opinion after receiving corrective information from the account of an unknown peer*



Comments: N = 113

Figure 10.2 *Opinion after receiving corrective information from an account affiliated with Swiss public service media*



Comments: N = 113

Conclusion

Misinformation and disinformation spread quickly and persistently online and on SNS, making its correction a major challenge. Therefore, "we need to pursue multiple avenues – many of them political – to contain misinformation and redesign the information architecture that facilitates its dissemination" (Lewandowsky & Van Der Linden, 2021: 374).

We have addressed this concern in this chapter by examining the potential of PSM as promoters of timely and trustworthy content through accounts operated by them in an automated way, as a possible governance option in the fight against misinformation. Thus, we have explored one possible way in which PSM can make a contribution to society with regard to a highly relevant and urgent challenge such as the spreading of misinformation on digital communication channels, while also accounting for changing media usage habits. From the legal analysis of the documents relevant to the Swiss PSM, a legitimate claim can be derived for the use of automated communication agents by PSM on SNS, which can thereby also be active with corrective interventions against the spread of misinformation. Despite the similarities of the legal and regulatory conditions, it is the subject of future research to determine the legality of such activities performed by PSM in other countries.

Moreover, whether PSM could also make such a contribution to society in other countries not only depends on the regulatory conditions, but our study also indicates that the credibility attributed to PSM as a provider of journalistic content among the population may influence how successfully it

can perform such a task. The findings from the experimental survey suggest that the high credibility of PSM contributes to users interacting more with corrective information provided by PSM on SNS (via likes and clicks) and that this corrective information can also be effective in terms of opinion – combine this with the fact that higher user engagement can also influence the algorithm-based dissemination of corrective information. Thus, the findings of this study are in line with other studies on the role of sources, including news organisations (Van Der Meer & Jin, 2020), in correcting misinformation, where the credibility and expertise of the source and linking to an external, credible source positively impacted the effectiveness of a corrective intervention (Bode & Vraga, 2018; Walter et al., 2020a). However, the results of our experiment also show that labelling automated accounts, as required by bot disclosure regulations (assuming an indubitable identification could be achieved) could be accompanied by several potential implications (e.g., lower credibility attribution, more intense scrutiny of content) or even side effects, possibly similar to those observed with misinformation labelling (e.g., implicit validation of unlabelled content) (Pennycook et al., 2020).

Previous research on the spread and correction of misinformation has identified another critical factor that can help or hinder the persistence of misinformation, namely the duration of time until a correction is encountered. The temporal sequence that misinformation precedes correction is inherent, but as the duration of time increases until a corrective intervention is made, misinformation can become embedded in memory more strongly; moreover, on SNS there is also the risk of encountering the same misinformation several times, also facilitated by social bots. Therefore, real-time rejections and timely debunking are also considered to be promising responses (Van Der Linden, 2019), which can only be achieved through automation. Users with the appropriate digital media skills could be a valuable resource in the rapid identification of misinformation (Pedrazzi & Oehmer, 2021). This is also the subject of future research.

At this point, it is necessary to highlight the limitations of the study and its results and interpretation. First, the legal analysis is limited to Swiss media regulation. Although similar to many (Western) countries, there may be differences that should be examined in order to determine the legality of engaging in such activities by PSM outside Switzerland. Second, it is necessary to point out the limited ecological validity of the experimental survey, which used an unknown bot disclosure label that the participants encountered for the first time. Third, the artificial SNS environment did not correspond with their account and was represented by a screenshot. Fourth, two rather unfamiliar topics were selected: Research on misinformation correction in particular has shown that misperceptions about more familiar, polarising topics are more difficult to correct. In addition, it is also important to note the small, non-representative sample with which the experimental online survey was conducted.

Despite the limitations, our study was able to show that PSM (through the operation of automated accounts) can be a valuable resource in combating misinformation on SNS. Automation would allow misinformation to be corrected in a timely manner by credible sources such as PSM, which can have an additional positive impact on their effectiveness. Platform operators are under pressure in connection with the spread of misinformation through their networks, as are PSM, whose legitimacy has been challenged in recent times by political actors in various countries (for a discussion of the legitimacy of PSM, see Puppis & Ali, Chapter 1; Fehlmann, Chapter 2 in this volume). Both SNS operators and PSM could thus benefit from cooperating in the fight against misinformation. However, the form that cooperation between platforms and PSM could take in this regard has yet to be defined. Initial media policy regulatory proposals are moving in the direction of online prominence regimes, which oblige platforms to give content from PSM and other legacy media more relevance through their algorithms. But platform operators are also taking action themselves, for example, as part of a collaboration with news agencies Reuters and AP, Twitter is testing the possibility of disseminating information from credible sources about significant events quickly and prioritised. As we have tried to show in this chapter, there are many possible avenues for curtailing misinformation. Future research should accordingly focus on identifying further governance options for dealing with misinformation and testing their effectiveness.

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PART III

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND INNOVATION

CHAPTER 11

Public value tests and citizen participation in public service media's decision-making

Story of a missed opportunity

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ABSTRACT

The public value tests that are used to approve the new services of public service broadcasters must include a public consultation open to all stakeholders. However, these consultations have not been studied from a comparative perspective. In this chapter, we approach the participation of citizens and civil society in these public consultations from the point of view of multistakeholderism practices in media policy-making and structural participation in media governance. Our research design is focused on the cases of the UK, Ireland, Germany, and Austria and relies on document analysis to study how their respective public consultations have been implemented and which level of participations they have achieved. The results allow us to conclude that ex ante tests can hardly achieve citizen participation through their public consultations, and thus constitute a missed opportunity for public service media organisations to enhance their contribution to society by opening their decision-making structures to structural participation.

KEYWORDS: public value tests, media policy, multistakeholderism, participation, public service media

Rodríguez-Castro, M., & Campos-Freire, F. (2023). Public value tests and citizen participation in public service media's decision-making: Story of a missed opportunity. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 221–242). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-11

Introduction

Public service media (PSM) organisations around the world have been facing, to a greater or lesser extent, major challenges affecting their ability to fulfil their public service remit. The increasing market power absorbed by global digital platforms (D'Arma et al., 2021), the stagnation (if not reduction) of their budgets (Campos-Freire et al., 2020), the drop of audience figures (Gesto-Louro & Campos-Freire, 2020), and the alarming attacks from far-right political parties (Holtz-Bacha, 2021; Sehl et al., 2020b) are just some of the many problems affecting the legitimacy of PSM organisations.

One of the strategies that could help PSM organisations regain at least some of this essential legitimacy (see Fehlmann, Chapter 2 in this volume) is the implementation of participatory strategies that open the governance of these institutions to the citizens and civil society. While participation is a deeply contested concept (Carpentier, 2011), it has become a key principle in both the definition of the distinctive values of PSM (Vanhaeght & Donders, 2015) and in the shaping of PSM regulation. This chapter explores a specific aspect within European PSM governance and regulation that could have opened a window for structural participation but didn't: the open consultations included within public value tests. In this regard, we try to answer the following five research questions:

RQ1. Which stakeholders are more active in public value tests' open consultations?

RQ2. Is there room for citizen participation in these consultations?

RQ3. Do the organisations in charge favour citizen participation in the public consultations?

RQ4. Are the public consultations fully transparent in terms of calling for opinions, publication, and reporting on the results?

RQ5. Are there remarkable differences between countries in terms of stakeholder involvement? If so, which factors are likely to influence such participation?

First, we turn to how the involvement of the audience and the civil society in media policy decision-making has become increasingly important for PSM organisations, due to the promotion of multistakeholderism practices. As part of the framework within which this chapter is developed, we also offer a brief perspective on how public value tests have been implemented across Europe to regulate PSM's new media services. After explaining our method, we present the results of this research regarding how public consultations within public value tests have been designed and implemented and which level of participations they achieve. We conclude that due to their ex ante nature and to the complexity of these processes, public consultations within

public value tests do not constitute an effective way of promoting citizen participation within the regulation of PSM.

Audience participation in media policy: Between deliberative democracy and tokenism

Participation, in its many understandings and articulations, has always been both a goal and a challenge for policy-making as well as for media governance. Media scholars such as Uwe Hasebrink have pointed out the role of audiences as independent and pluralistic civil society actors with "a special sensitivity for the problems and concerns of media users" and "oriented towards the common welfare" (Hasebrink, 2011: 329). By conceiving the audiences as citizens rather than consumers (Livingstone & Lunt, 2011), policy-makers, institutional actors, and PSM organisations could open their governance structures to place them in the centre of PSM decision-making, therefore contributing to boosting their own legitimacy (Horz, 2016).

In the field of PSM governance, for instance, establishing more bidirectional relationships with the audiences and involving them in content production and in decision-making practices was considered by PSM organisations as a means of enhancing some of their core values, such as universality, creativity, diversity, social cohesion, and participation in democracy (Vanhaeght & Donders, 2015). Although most of the strategies put into practice by PSM organisations in the last few years have been linked to content production, there is also a chance for a participatory turn (Bonini, 2017) that would allow for structural participation (Carpentier, 2011) within the decision-making processes of PSM organisations and for a consequent distribution of power, thus contributing to the legitimation of PSM organisations (Vanhaeght, 2019).

Within European media policy, the trend toward more audience (and civil society) involvement in policy-making has been propelled by the European Commission that, as pointed out by Donders and colleagues (2019: 348), has encouraged member states "to evolve from top-down to bottom-up policymaking". This has affected PSM regulation since the implementation of the 2009 Broadcasting Communication (the one where the incorporation of a public value test is recommended). This text was partly the result of a policy transfer process that considered the UK's consultation tradition as a best practice and thus promoted multistakeholderism within the member states' regulation of PSM (Donders & Raats, 2012; Donders et al., 2019).

Defined as the "diversification of the actors involved in framing issues and problems, defining priorities, negotiating possible solutions, and taking relevant decisions in relation to any policy area" (Padovani & Pavan, 2011: 544), multistakeholderism has been widely considered as a more suitable approach to developing more inclusive and better evidence-based policy-making (Donders et al., 2019; Walter, 2009). Donders and Raats (2012), for instance,

have studied the multistakeholder approach developed in the Netherlands and in Flanders (Belgium) from a deliberative democracy framework. Despite the many advantages that could stem from this perspective, such as granting policy-making processes more independence and pluralism, the analysis of these two case studies – and further research on the Flemish case by Donders and colleagues (2019) – allowed them to identify some of the most persistent pitfalls of multistakeholder policy-making.

The first shortcoming of audience participation in multistakeholder practices is the interpretation of participation itself. Andrea Cornwall (2008: 269) defined participation as an "infinitely malleable concept" that can be easily reinterpreted, reframed, and reshaped to "meet almost any demand made of it". This malleability has led many scholars to question the alleged benefits of multistakeholderism, arguing that "the normative values and democratic aspirations also tend to be lost easily in the translation of the concept into concrete governance practices" (Padovani & Pavan, 2011: 546). In the specific case of the Flemish multistakeholderism practices involving PSM regulation and governance, Donders and colleagues (2019) pointed to four specific flaws: 1) the scarce influence of the stakeholders in the outcome of the policy process, as the policy-makers in control cherry-pick the arguments that better suit their original position; 2) consultation fatigue among stakeholders, especially when considering the previous pitfall; 3) the abuse of multistakeholderism as a transparency practice deployed to contribute to legitimate policy processes (e.g., by the number of actors involved), while their views are not that identifiable in their outcomes; and 4) the lack of political will to actually give stakeholders the chance to influence policy-making.

In this regard, multistakeholderism could be understood as an umbrella term covering different means of participation depending on the actual political will to open regulation and governance practices to different actors. Multistakeholderism could include practices that range up and down Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, from delegating power and establishing functioning partnerships with different stakeholders, to mere consultations with no further value besides pure tokenism: mere symbolic concessions that grant stakeholders little capability to overturn the status quo.

The object of study in this chapter, public consultations, has been pointed out as such an expression of tokenism. Cornwall (2008: 270) considered this practice as a widely used method to legitimate "already-taken decisions, providing a thin veneer of participation to lend the process moral authority". As policy-makers act as gatekeepers of the policy process, "such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views" (Pretty, 1995: 1252).

Public value tests: A chance to turn a challenge into an opportunity

It's been over a decade since the BBC first applied its public value test, an ex ante procedure to decide over the approval of the public service broadcaster's new services by counterbalancing the proposal's public value and its market impact (Michalis, 2012), a tension that has traditionally been a core dilemma within the regulation of European PSM (Sehl et al., 2020a; see also Raats, Chapter 6 in this volume). After the European Commission considered the BBC's public value test a best practice to solve this policy crossroad and recommended to member states that they introduce a similar procedure to regulate the transition of their public service broadcasters into PSM (Lowe & Bardoel, 2007), ex ante testing spread irregularly across Europe (Donders & Moe, 2011; Gransow, 2018, 2020).

At the time of writing, nine member states had introduced a public value test in the regulation of their PSM system: Germany, Belgium (both in Flanders and in the French Community), Ireland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Hungary, Finland, Croatia, and Spain (even though in these last two countries the ex ante test was never actually developed). Beyond the borders of the European Union and the UK, two other countries of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Norway, also regulate the new media services of their public service broadcasters with public value tests. Table 11.1 provides an overview of the main aspects of these 15 European ex ante tests.

The definition of the services that must undergo an ex ante test, the length of the procedure, or the agents in charge of the evaluation and the decision-making vary widely from country to country (Rodríguez-Castro & Cañedo, 2021). Major differences can also be found in the results of these procedures. While the trend is to approve the services under evaluation (until the end of 2020, 41 tests concluded with the approval of the service, another 45 accepted the proposal with some changes, and only 5 services were cancelled), some countries seem to make it harder for their PSM organisations to pass this assessment. Austria's PSM organisation, ORF, saw three of its proposals rejected, one was not approved in the UK under a public value test due to the market impact of the proposal, and in Flanders the only ex ante test that has been applied concluded with the cancellation of the project to create a new television channel for children under the Ketnet Jr. brand (Donders & Van den Bulck, 2020).

Table 11.1 *Overview on the expansion of public value tests across Europe*

Country	Name of the test	Year of implementation	Legal text	Number of times applied
UK	Public Value Test/ Public Interest Test	2007/2016	Royal Charter	5/3
Denmark	Værditest [Value Test]	2007	Executive Order on the approval of DR's and the regional TV 2 companies' new services	3
Germany	Dreistufentest [Three-step-test]	2009	Rundfunkstaats-vertrag	53
Ireland	Public Value Test	2009	Broadcasting Act	3 (7 services)
The Netherlands	Nieuwediensten-procedure [New services procedure]	2009	Media Law	5
Flanders (Belgium)	Advice on new services	2009	Media Decree	1
Spain	Evaluación ex ante [Ex ante evaluation]	2010	General Law on Audiovisual Communication	0
Norway	Forhåndsgodkjenning [Ex ante test]	2010	Norwegian Media Law	2
Croatia	Ex ante test	2010	HRT Law	0
Austria	Auftragsvorprüfung [Preliminary examination of the mission]	2010	ORF-Gesetz [ORF Law]	11
Sweden	Förhandsprövning [Preliminary test]	2011	Broadcasting and audiovisual services law	0
Finland	Ennakkoarviointi [Ex ante test]	2013	Laki Yleisradio Oystä [Yle Law]	4
Iceland	Ex ante test	2013	RÚV Law	0
French Community (Belgium)	Ex ante test	2013	Media Decree	0
Hungary	Közszolgálati érték-teszt [Public value test]	2015	Hungarian Media Law	3

One core aspect that has been shared by all the countries that adopted a public value test has been the introduction of at least one public consultation. The European Commission picked up this element from the British public value test and recommended that member states base part of the ex ante assessment on an open consultation where all interested stakeholders could express their views and concerns about the service under evaluation:

> In the interest of transparency and of obtaining all relevant information necessary to arrive at a balanced decision, interested stakeholders shall have the opportunity to give their views on the envisaged significant new service in the context of an open consultation. The outcome of the consultation, its assessment as well as the grounds for the decision shall be made publicly available. (European Commission, 2009: para. 87)

The considerable pressures exerted by commercial media lobbies against the digital expansion of public service broadcasters leaned the Commission towards a pro-market approach that leveraged the influence of private broadcasters and publishers within European Union policy-making (Brevini, 2013). As Donders and Raats (2012: 166) have pointed out, "the main idea underlying the demand for the *ex-ante* test […] is the introduction of consultation-based or multi-stakeholder regimes at national level, in order to prevent complaints being filed constantly at the European level". Therefore, even though such consultations can be considered a step towards good governance and multistakeholderism, and thus greater structural participation, they are also a new way for commercial media's lobbying.

This chapter departs from Donders and Raats's (2012) analysis of multistakeholder consultations in the Netherlands and Flanders. This first study on the type of participation that dominates public consultations within ex ante tests concluded that there is a certain tendency "to over-focus on market questions relating to the future of public service broadcasting" (Donders & Raats, 2012: 164), a situation that might hamper the ideals of deliberative democracy. The main aim of our study is to expand Donders and Raats's analysis to different national contexts, in order to determine which agents are influencing the decision-making of PSM's new services.

Method

In connection to the five research questions, the main objective of this chapter is to analyse the way public consultations within public value tests work as a multistakeholderism practice, how they are developed, and which actors (if any) have greater influence in the results of the ex ante evaluation.

In order to fulfil this purpose, we have selected a sample of four countries: the UK (BBC), Ireland (RTÉ), Germany (ZDF, ADR, NDR[1]), and Austria (ORF). The main reason behind this choice is that all these countries have experienced at least three services evaluated through an ex ante procedure, thus allowing for a broader comparative perspective. Due to the heavily textual component of public value tests, document analysis (Karppinen & Moe, 2019) was the method applied to study all of the ex ante tests within the sample.

Results

The UK

The British "Public Value Test" is the most well-known ex ante test, mainly because it was the first among this kind of procedures and thus led to much academic analysis and reflection. The seed that led to the "Public Value Test era of the BBC" (Brevini, 2010: 357) was the development of BBC Online, which triggered heavy protests from commercial broadcasters and print media. The concern about the possible negative market impact of the BBC made its way into the Royal Charter renewal and led to the implementation of a public value test in 2007.

A total of five public value tests were fulfilled between 2007 and 2015 (BBC on-demand, High-Definition television, Gaelic Digital Service, local video, and changes to BBC television and online services). In the most recent Charter renewal (2017–2027), the public value test was rebranded as the public *interest* test, and major changes were introduced in the procedure, the most remarkable one being the replacement of the BBC Trust by the Office of Communications (Ofcom) as the organisation in charge of the evaluation. At the time of writing, three public interest tests had been fulfilled (BBC Scotland, changes to the BBC iPlayer, and the relaunch of BBC Three as a television channel).

Both the public value test and the public interest test include public consultations. In the public value test, there can be up to three public consultations, but the most relevant one is the consultation on the provisional conclusions of the BBC Trust, once both the public value assessment and the market impact assessment (which can include specific public consultations as well) are completed. The BBC Trust then consults on its provisional decision during a period of 28 days, although this timeframe can be expanded if required. As both the consultation and the arguments that ground the decision of the BBC Trust are part of the same document, stakeholders can have access to the main features of the service under evaluation and to the main results of both the public value assessment and the market impact assessment.

The consultation is structured around a series of questions to gather information on the main issues that the BBC Trust would like to explore with the different stakeholders. Interested parties can provide their perspectives on the new service through an online form on the BBC Trust's website, through e-mail, or through postal mail. In just one specific public value test (on the changes to the BBC television and online services), comments posted on social media platforms such as Twitter and Change.org have also been considered by the BBC Trust.

Once the consultation period is over, the BBC Trust analyses all the responses, in order to critically include them in its final decision. The Trust published two documents in this regard: one with the full responses presented

by organisations and another including a report of the answers sent by the public, mostly on an individual basis. Table 11.2 summarises the number of answers received by the BBC Trust on its provisional decisions within public value tests.

Table 11.2 *Participation in public consultations within public value tests*

Responses	BBC on-demand	HD Television	Gaelic Digital Service	Local Video	Changes to BBC TV and online services
Individuals	10,579	913	246	24	5,383
Organisations	21	8	34	11	12
Total	**10,608**	**921**	**280**	**35**	**5,395**

These participation data are characterised by major disparities: While the first public value test obtained over 10,000 responses, the local video proposal only received 35 answers. The high number of responses of the first procedure was never repeated, although the public value test on the changes affecting BBC television and online services (consisting mainly of the conversion of BBC Three into an online-only channel) triggered a remarkable participation boost. The social movement in support of keeping the regular broadcast of BBC Three, branded as "Save BBC Three", was very active both on Twitter and Facebook and launched a collection of signatures on the Change.org platform. This led to the BBC Trust considering tweets and statements within the Change.org campaign as responses to the public consultation for the first (and by then, only) time. This way, the BBC Trust received over 5,000 citizen responses to this consultation through the online form (307 through e-mail and 76 through postal mail) and complemented this feedback with 1,787 comments and an unknown number of tweets.

Regarding the type of organisations participating in the consultations, there was an important presence of industry associations (commercial broadcasters, television production companies, independent producers), but there was also a remarkable presence of cultural, religious, and political associations in cases such as the evaluation of the Gaelic Media Service. Other agents always part of the consultations were the BBC Audience Councils and the Voice of the Listener and Viewer.

In the case of the public interest test, we included several consultation periods: one within the BBC's Public Interest Test, and two others opened by Ofcom (one at the beginning of the Competition Assessment and another one on its provisional decision). Table 11.3 summarises the number of responses received in each of these three consultations for the two public interest tests fulfilled between 2016 and 2020.

Table 11.3 *Participation in public consultations within public interest tests*

Service	BBC's public interest test consultation			Ofcom's first consultation			Ofcom's consultation on provisional decision		
	Ind.	Org.	Total*	Ind.	Org.	Total*	Ind.	Org.	Total*
BBC Scotland	4	36	45	7	9	17	10	11	24
Changes on iPlayer	51	32	83	2	11	13	2	10	12

*Total includes responses marked as confidential

However, despite the many opportunities for stakeholders to express their views on the BBC's proposals, participation in public interest tests is even lower than in most public value tests. A difference in the number of answers received depending on the agent in charge of the consultation can also be noted: The consultation opened by the BBC in its public interest test achieved greater levels of participation than the two opened by Ofcom combined.

Ireland

The Irish public value test was the result of the pressures exerted towards its PSM's funding, which was investigated by the European Commission between 2005 and 2008 and was heavily influenced by the traditional relationship between the Irish and the British media systems. The public value test used for the approval of the RTÉ and TG4's new services proposals was introduced in the Irish Broadcasting Act in 2008 and has since then been applied on three occasions (2011, 2016, and 2018) to approve 7 RTÉ new services (a pack of digital services, Oireachtas TV and improvements do RTÉ One +1, and the creation of RTÉ2 +1).

The minister of tourism, culture, arts, gaeltacht, sport, and media is the agent in charge of the Irish test, which is also structured around a public value and a market impact assessment. In the Irish public value test, the public consultation opens when the minister decides to formally launch an ex ante evaluation. This public consultation is usually open for a period of four weeks, is structured around different questions that the minister seeks to be informed about, and provides plenty of information about the services under evaluation.

Interested stakeholders can submit their responses via e-mail or through postal mail, and they are reminded by the minister that their responses will be published on its website in order to promote openness and transparency. Those stakeholders who want to protect delicate information from being disclosed should mark such information as confidential. Moreover, a summary of the results of the consultation is included in the minister's decision

along with the main conclusions of both the public value and the sectoral impact assessments.

One peculiarity of the public consultation of the Irish public value test is that it combines an open model – where anyone can express their opinion – with an invitation to comment to those organisations (cultural, social, political, or media-related) whose perspective is deemed relevant by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. Despite this effort, this model does not lead to a significant participation. As shown in Table 11.4, the first public value test conducted in Ireland was the one that obtained a greater number of responses. Even though specific organisations where directly asked to participate in the second and third public value tests (17 and 26, respectively), participation was lower, especially considering the scarce involvement of individuals (just one in the consultation on Oireachtas TV and none in the one on the enhanced services).

Table 11.4 *Participation in public consultations within the Irish public value test*

Responses	RTÉ One+1; RTÉ 2 HD; RTÉjr; RTÉ News Now; Aertel Digital	Oireachtas TV	Enhanced Services (+1 Channels)
Individuals	11	1	0
Organisations	18	8	10
Total	**29**	**9**	**10**

Regarding the type of participation that was achieved in the Irish case, there was a predominance of organisations over individuals' participation. When looking at the type of organisations that took part in the consultations, there was a predominance of media-related stakeholders (press organisations, telecoms, and producers, mostly), but there was also an important presence of cultural and social associations, such as organisations supporting the Irish language and culture and educational associations.

Germany

Germany has one of the most complex ex ante tests in Europe, the Dreistufentest [three-step-test]. The three-step-test was introduced in the Rundfunkstaatsvertrag [German Media Law] in 2008 and entered into force in 2009. The German procedure, as the Irish one, is also the result of an investigation of the European Commission into the funding of the German PSM system. As this PSM system is constructed on a regional basis, where a wide array of both regional and nationwide public service broadcasters coexists, the three-step-test is also the most used ex ante test. At the time of writing, over 50 procedures had been completed.

Also due to the regional structure of the German PSM system, the three-step-test can have small variations depending on the public service broadcaster that conducts it, but overall, the process always consists of five phases: 1) the public service broadcaster sends its proposal to its Broadcasting Council, which conducts a preliminary assessment to determine whether a three-step-test is required; 2) the broadcaster prepares a detailed description of the service where it connects it with the three steps of the test (how the service fulfils society's needs, how it affects editorial competition, and which financial resources are required to launch it) and sends it to the Broadcasting Council; 3) the Broadcasting Council assesses the proposal by conducting a public consultation and commissioning a market impact evaluation; 4) the Broadcasting Council decides on the approval of the service considering the three steps of the test; and 5) the decision undergoes a legal control, that is, it is published in the corresponding official journal.

The public consultation included in the three-step-test is thus managed by the Broadcasting Council and is located in the information-gathering phase. The consultation is opened after the new service's concept is published and divulged. Even though the three-step-test's legal framework establishes that the consultation must be open for six weeks, in practice, this period has been widely extended to eight, ten, or even twelve weeks. As in the Irish case, interested stakeholders can submit their responses to the Broadcasting Council by e-mail or postal mail, and confidentiality is guaranteed if required, although commercial media were never keen on sharing strategic information directly with an internal body of the public service broadcasters (Humphreys, 2010).

The three-step-test's public consultations offer enough information about the service under evaluation, but they are not structured, so interested stakeholders may expose their views freely and send them to the Broadcasting Council either through e-mail or through postal mail. To curb the criticism shown by commercial media towards the requirement to share their strategic plans with the public broadcasters, in some cases, the Broadcasting Council offered these stakeholders the possibility to send their responses directly to the external consulting firm in charge of the market impact evaluation.

The ZDF's Television Council is the only one that published the responses to the consultation in full (respecting confidentiality when required). In all the other procedures, the information collected in the public consultations are only divulged through the mentions to them included in the final decision of the corresponding council. In any case, this last document of the three-step-test always includes a general assessment of the responses received in the public consultation.

The level of participation reached in these public consultations varies depending on the reach of the services under evaluation: Nationwide services that affect a greater number of stakeholders receive more answers than regional proposals. Thus, the number of responses can range from 53

answers on the 2010 three-step-test on ZDF's digital services to just one or two responses on the consultation on RBB Mediathek (2011) or BREMEN Next (2016).

However, there is a common thread among all these public consultations: the predominance of media stakeholders over other civil society organisations and individual citizens. In 22 out of the 53 three-step-tests completed in Germany, no citizen responses were received. In the other 31 consultations, citizen participation was limited, reaching a maximum of 18 responses in the evaluation of the SWR new media services.

The four case studies selected for this research depict this participation fluctuation in the public consultations. As shown in Table 11.5, the service that triggered a greater number of responses was Tagesschau. The launch of the popular news bulletin's app was heavily confronted by commercial media, namely press outlets, as they considered this service too press-like and not directly connected to the traditional broadcasting services. Nine industry agents expressed their views in the public consultation on Tagesschau, including the association of commercial broadcasters (then VPRT, now VAUNET), the association of press editors (BDZV) and the alliance of producers [Produzentenallianz], as well as media groups such as ProSieben, Sat.1, and RTL. Another remarkable feature of this public consultation is the relatively high number of responses sent by individual citizens, as well as the participation of an exceptional number of non-commercial organisations with interests ranging from education to religion, unions, libraries, arts, or sports.

Table 11.5 *Participation in public consultations within the three-step-test*

Service	Length	Responses published?	Responses			
			Individuals	Non-commercial organisations	Media industry	Total
NDR Mediathek	6 weeks	No	0	0	16	16
Tagesschau	8 weeks	No	16	18	9	43
KiKA Telemedien	8 weeks	No	1	0	4*	5*
ZDF Telemedien	6 weeks	Yes (14)	1	0	16	17

* In the consultation on KiKA Telemedien, the BDZV and the VDZ sent a joint response. The table's data refers to the number of agents that participated in the consultation, not to the number of documents.

On the opposite side, the public consultation on KiKA Telemedien (the new media services of the children's channel) only received five answers, four of which were from industry agents (RTL, VPRT, a shared response by BDZV

and VDZ, and the Association of German Magazine Publishers) and one from a professor. Overall, the participation of organisations outweighs those of individuals, although organised civil society plays an important role in the exposure of cultural, social, and educational perspectives that can counterbalance the dominance of market-led comments of industry actors.

Austria

In Austria, the Auftragsvorprüfung [preliminary examination of the mission] was introduced in the law that regulates the ORF in 2010, also as a consequence of a European Commission investigation on the funding of the public broadcaster. The Austrian ex ante test is a heavily legal procedure by which the services proposed by the ORF are evaluated by the media authority KommAustria, which oversees gathering the opinions of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO), the Chamber for Workers and Employees (AK), the national competition authority, and a public value advisory council.

At the time of writing, the Austrian ex ante test had been applied on ten occasions: ORF III, Ö1 macht Schule, Focus Sendungsarchiv, TVthek.ORF.at, Ö3 – Live/Visual, radiothek.orf.at, a proposal for social media, two fiction-based on-demand services, and online short pieces of news. The eleventh procedure on Topos.ORF.at was under way. Austria is one of the countries that rejected more services after an ex ante test: Of the ten procedures that were completed, seven were passed (three of them including major changes) and three were rejected (Ö3 – Live/Visual, the social media proposal, and the first fiction-based video-on-demand service).

The public consultation is opened when the ORF sends its proposal to KommAustria, the WKÖ, and the AK and publishes it on its website. The law establishes that the consultation must be open for at least six weeks. Once the consultation is closed, the ORF should determine whether any changes should be included in the original proposal, forward the responses to KommAustria, and publish them on its website, always safeguarding confidentiality when required. The responses to the public consultation conform to one of the multiple information sources for KommAustria to decide on the future of the service under evaluation.

Despite the transparency stipulations that require the pertinent information around the procedure to be published and made available to the wider public, the preliminary examination of the mission is still an opaque and hardly accessible process to the citizens, a feature that confers advantage to organised media-related stakeholders defending their commercial interests over social, cultural, or democratic interests. That is reflected in the analysis of the responses received in the public consultations, summarised in Table 11.6. Only one of the ten consultations received comments from individuals and civil society: Four citizens responded to the consultation on ORF III, which

added to the contributions of four civil society organisations (associations for blind people, deaf people, the unemployed, and pensioners).

All the other preliminary examinations of the mission achieved very low participation, with just the institutional comments of the AK and the WKÖ as well as representation of the media industry by the associations of commercial broadcasters and newspaper editors (VÖP and VÖZ), which sent comments to most of the public consultations.

Table 11. 6 *Participation in public consultations within the preliminary examination of the mission*

Service	Responses				
	Individuals	Civil Society	Official institutions	Media industry	Total
ORF III	4	4	2	5	15
Ö1 macht Schule	0	0	2	0	2
Focus Sendungs-archiv	0	0	2	0	2
TVthek.ORF.at	0	0	1	4	5
Ö3 – Live/Visual	0	0	2	2	4
Radiothek.orf.at	0	0	2	2	4
Social Media proposal	0	0	1	2	3
Fiction-based VOD I	0	0	2	1	3
Fiction-based VOD II	0	0	2	2	4
Online short news	0	0	1	0	1

The complexity of the legal procedure, as well as its opacity, drives citizens away from this structural participation possibility, while it leaves an open door for industry stakeholders, better funded and organised, to express their views on the service under evaluation.

Discussion

Our analysis shows how different designs of public consultations within different public value tests can achieve different levels of participation, from the remarkable results of the British public value test to the scarce comments received in the Austrian procedure. The differences among these public consultations are also latent in their design, from the location of the consultation to how the results are analysed and divulged, as summarised in Table 11.7.

For instance, the British public value test and its successor, the public interest test, include several consultation periods, although the most relevant one is placed at the end of the procedure, where either the BBC Trust or Ofcom consults on its provisional decision. On the other hand, Germany,

Ireland, and Austria place the public consultation at an earlier stage, just at the beginning of the procedure. This would be the most advisable design, as this way the agent in charge of the evaluations will be able to consider the feedback of stakeholders from the start and include any potential changes over the original proposal in its provisional decision already.

Table 11.7 *Comparison of the public consultations of the UK, Ireland, Germany, and Austria*

Country	Timeframe	Duration	Structured	Published	Citizens and civil society involvement	Industry involvement
UK	During the evaluations and on the provisional decision	4 weeks	Yes	Yes	Medium	High
Ireland	When the test is launched	4 weeks	Yes	Only in the first test	Medium	High
Germany	When the test is launched	6 weeks (sometimes more)	No	Only by the ZDF-Fernsehrat	Medium	High
Austria	When the test is launched	6 weeks	No	No	Low	High

Regarding the length of the consultation period, the UK and Ireland opt for a four-week consultation, while Germany and Austria establish a minimum of six weeks. However, these official timeframes are often exceeded, especially when the service under evaluation is far-reaching or complex. That was the case in most of the German three-step-tests, which usually extended their public consultations to eight, ten, or even twelve weeks. The length of the consultations should be enough to allow all interested stakeholders to prepare their responses, but not so long that it can slow the ex ante evaluation even more. One of the major problems that these public value tests present are how long they take to be completed, hampering the innovation of public service broadcasters, that must wait for the pertinent authorisation before launching the service.

Another relevant component of a public consultation is whether it is structured around given questions or topics that stakeholders should cover in their responses, or if it is just open, so interested parties can freely organise their answers. The UK and Ireland opt for the first option and provide a list of questions around the topics they are interested in receiving feedback on, while Germany and Austria opt for free models. In this regard, it should be noted that Ofcom's consultation guidelines consider that being clear about

the questions that are at the centre of the consultation might contribute to ease the participation of less organised stakeholders. Therefore, structured consultations could help prompt the participation of civil society organisations and individual citizens.

To guarantee transparency, it is also important that the stakeholders who participate in the consultation, as well as their responses, are published. While all four public value tests studied in this chapter are open about the stakeholders who send their responses to the public consultations, not all publish such responses in full. The procedures in the UK (both the public value and the public interest tests) publish in full the responses sent by the stakeholders (deleting information when confidentiality prevails), while in Ireland and Germany, this was an exception that happened in some tests. The most common option is to publish a summary of the answers received for the consultation, contrasting different points of view on different issues pointed out in the responses (something that is also done by the BBC Trust and Ofcom, even when they publish all the answers). This summary is most often included in the final document that determines whether the proposed service is approved or not and is used as a substantiation for the corresponding authority's decision.

In terms of participation, we observed in all the ex ante tests that industry-related agents are the ones that dominate the consultations. We can conclude that, the way these procedures are currently designed, they do not encourage citizens' participation, and only organised civil society can counterbalance the influence of commercial media in these public consultations. We consider that there are two main reasons that explain this lack of citizen mobilisation: the ex ante design of these tests and their complexity.

The fact that public value tests are applied prior to the launch of the analysed services constitutes a major boundary for the establishment of a connection with the audiences and mobilising them into participating in these public consultations, as there is no previous link between citizens and the services under evaluation. In this regard, the public value test that assessed the conversion of BBC Three from a broadcasting to an online-only channel demonstrates how an increase in citizen participation is achieved when the service under evaluation (this time, also at risk) has been widely experienced and is familiar to the citizens. This also leads us to the idea of "negative public value" (Michalis, 2012: 27) and the challenge to counterbalance the negative public value implications of removing a service with the market impact derived from this decision. While this task might be challenging for the authority in charge, citizen participation has been easier to achieve when the audiences believed that the public value of the BBC could be diminished.

On the other hand, public value tests are complex and bureaucratic processes, embedded in a legal and regulatory sphere and targeted to the formal approval of new media services. Therefore, the presentation, structuring, and

wording of both the ex ante tests and the consultation documents hamper citizen participation. Even in those cases where individual citizens send comments to these consultations, they are usually people with a high level of education or somehow related to the academic field. This kind of individual participation thus arises from specific interests and experiences that cannot be transposed to the whole society.

Conclusion

Considering the results and the discussion presented in this chapter, it can be concluded that ex ante tests can hardly achieve citizen participation through their public consultations, and thus they constitute a missed opportunity for PSM organisations to open their decision-making structures to structural participation. The hopes and expectations placed in multistakeholderism practices as a means not only for PSM organisations and policy-makers to contribute to society, but also for the society itself to contribute to a more balanced, fair, and transparent media environment vanish when public consultations are analysed in detail. The predominance of industry actors and the scarce impact of stakeholder comments in the results of ex ante tests seem to consolidate the idea that "being involved in a process is not equivalent to having a voice" (Cornwall, 2008: 278).

Still, the participation of the organised civil society, as mentioned above, should be positively assessed. Even if these associations and institutions (educational, cultural, religious, and unions, among others) also face difficulties when approaching complex public consultations, their organisational capacity enables them to participate and counterbalance the predominance of industry agents. Considering this, it would be advisable that all public consultations are directly sent to all the relevant civil society organisations that can provide interesting insights that could improve the service under evaluation, as it is done in the Irish public value test. This good practice can of course be complemented with more traditional audience research with representative samples of the population, as already done in the UK, although this will increase the costs of a procedure that is already excessively expensive for some countries.

Even though we conclude that the spaces opened up by public value tests through public consultations cannot be considered a successful environment for citizen participation, the study of the design of such consultations, as well as the results they obtained and the context within which they are embedded can contribute to identify and learn from good practices that could improve the participation levels, help build communities, and legitimise ex ante testing. This way, policy-makers and PSM organisations could redress their approach to public consultations, compensate this cascade of missed opportunities, and enhance their contribution to society by opening their decision-making structures to structural participation.

Acknowledgements

The results of this chapter are part of the PhD thesis of Marta Rodríguez-Castro, funded by a grant awarded by the Ministry of Education (FPU16/05234), as well as part of the research project "Public Service Media in the face of the platform ecosystem: public value management and evaluation models relevant for Spain" (PID2021-122386OB-I00), funded the Ministry of Science and Innovation (Government of Spain), Agencia Estatal de Investigación (AEI) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

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Endnote

[1] Due to the high number of Dreistufentest [three-step-tests] completed in the moment of writing (n = 53), we selected four case studies that represent the different articulations that the German ex ante test can present: a service by a regional PSM (NDR Mediathek, 2009); a service operated by the ARD through the collaboration of regional broadcasters (Tagesschau, 2010); a service operated conjointly by the ARD and the ZDF (KiKA Telemedien, 2016); and a service operated by the ZDF alone (ZDF Telemedien, 2020).

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CHAPTER 12

The attempt to be up front despite major challenges

Innovation in Switzerland's public service media as a contribution to society

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ABSTRACT

One of the core values of public service media (PSM), as described by the European Broadcast Union, is innovation. While innovation is usually written as an important contribution to society by public service broadcasting, there are only a few studies that examine how public service broadcasting organisations practice innovation management. This chapter uses a case study of the Swiss public broadcaster SRF to examine the ways in which innovation management has been practised in this organisation. Results show that SRF was able to foster innovation in terms of products, technology, and processes despite organisational inertia and various setbacks. These experiences of transforming the organisation in the direction of an innovation-promoting PSM might be its main contribution to society.

KEYWORDS: public service media, innovation management, organisational transformation, case study, Switzerland

Künzler, M., Fehlmann, F., & Autenrieth, U. (2023). The attempt to be up front despite major challenges: Innovation in Switzerland's public service media as a contribution to society. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 243–264). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-12

Introduction

Public service media (PSM) face major challenges not only with respect to developing new formats for so-called digital natives, but also in respect to distribution, production processes, organisational structure, and organisational culture. Especially the viewing habits of young audiences fundamentally differ from traditional ways of using audio(visual) media. The new viewing culture is characterised by the ubiquitous presence of social media platforms as well as by mobile and non-linear use of content (Newman, 2020; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2022). Along with this shift in media use comes a shift towards new audiovisual formats, many of which are produced by less-established providers (e.g., content creators). Furthermore, these formats are also characterised by breaking with traditional rules of television production (e.g., direct view into the camera or the use of jump-cuts). Some of these formats feature new forms of interactivity, for example, by including gaming elements, reporting on various topics from a more subjective point of view, and so on (Cunningham, 2014). For these reasons, among others, the demands to once again reinvent PSM during the last decades (Bardoel & D'Haenens, 2008; Galán-Cubillo et al., 2021; Iosifidis, 2010) and to innovate its services and organisation seem to be appropriate.

The realisation of innovation is particularly challenging for public broadcasting organisations, since they are mandated to offer a contribution for the whole society. This means they must still serve existing audiences mainly using traditional (linear) PSM formats, as well as young people attracted by the new viewing culture. However, some countries restrict PSM's online activities even though the development of new online formats is essential for reaching young audiences (Donders, 2021). At the same time, politicians, stakeholders in media, and other actors concurrently demand "innovation" in PSM organisations as a distinct contribution to society. This demand is intended to empower PSM organisations to become a role model for the national media industry, to promote growth and development, and to win back target groups that have hardly been reached so far (e.g., young audiences). In the UK, Belgium, and Switzerland, the charter or licence explicitly requests innovation from public service broadcasters (Lindmark et al., 2013).

This often-vague demand for innovation raises questions about the feasibility and management of innovations in the PSM sector. Based on a case study about organisational change in the German-speaking enterprise unit SRF as a part of Switzerland's public broadcaster SRG SSR, in this chapter we aim to answer the following questions:

RQ1. How does the Swiss public service media try to foster innovation within its organisation to reach young audiences?

RQ2. To what extent can innovation of the Swiss public service media be considered a contribution to society?

Management of innovations in public service media: Theoretical considerations

The disruptive change of the media landscape poses an immense challenge, not only for PSM, but for all media organisations. They must adopt formats, services, editorial processes, business models, and organisational structures (García-Avilés et al., 2018). Innovation is seen as "a crucial asset to the survival of the media industry" (Schmitz Weiss & Domingo, 2010: 1158). In response to the need for transformation, media organisations should thus actively develop "innovative organisational strategies to adapt to these dynamics" (Baumann, 2013: 77) by means of innovation management.

Innovation management is generally understood as "the conscious and controlled process of generating, developing/conceptualising the actual innovation (e.g., new technology) and its implementation in the company or on the market [translated]" (Schawel & Billing, 2017: 161), respectively the creation of conditions for "cooperation processes between the actors affected by (potential) technical, economic or social innovations and for linking their social practices [translated]" (Zerfaß & Möslein, 2009: 33). According to a broad understanding of innovation as "introducing something new into the socioeconomic system" (Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013: 13–14) – respectively as the implementation of a new or already existing idea that adds value to customers, a (media) organisation, or the society that allows for helping to solve an identified problem (see García-Avilés et al., 2018; Trappel, 2015)[1] – innovation management relates to changes in products or services, processes, (market) position, paradigms, or social life (Krumsvik et al., 2019). This means that media innovation may relate to changes in how products or services are created and delivered (Shtern et al., 2013), how services are positioned in the market (involving, e.g., marketing or packaging), or to changes in mindset, business models, and so on (e.g., not focusing on linear television but on non-linear online services).

These forms of innovation "can represent a gradual improvement, or they can embed more fundamental upgrades" (Krumsvik et al., 2019: 197). Whilst incremental innovation comprises gradual improvements, radical innovations have far-reaching consequences that may end in a disruptive turn of a whole market or field of society (García-Avilés et al., 2018; Krumsvik et al., 2019). The management of innovation is not limited to the commercial sector; it can also be implemented in the not-for-profit sector, like PSM (Krumsvik et al., 2019). However, innovation management of news media, and PSM in particular, is more challenging, since it needs to incorporate PSM's normative purpose in the management of innovation by "maintaining a commitment to quality and high ethical standards" (Pavlik, 2013: 183).

Strategies of innovation management

The way organisations manage innovation differs according to their objectives, culture, and environment. Traditionally, innovation is developed within in-house research departments. In contrast:

> [Media organisations rarely have] research and development (R&D) functions or budget lines. On the contrary, they have traditionally relied upon suppliers of technology […] to conduct R&D and come up with new ideas to stimulate the creation of adequate new media content. [Companies] manufacturing continuous creation products focus on improving their selection and packaging of content. Both activities emerge from daily operations and do not need a dedicated R&D department. (Dal Zotto & van Kranenburg, 2008: xvii)

This observation may have applied to print media, whereas audiovisual media have always had the need to develop, or at least to adapt, new formats. Within television production companies, this task was often centralised within a specialised unit located at the upper management level (Deuerling, 2016). This way of institutionalising innovation is a common feature of companies operating in industries with low market complexity or in stable markets, which television relatively was before the diffusion of online services (Baumann, 2013). It allows for fast decisions and is suitable for incremental innovations (that is, "gradual improvements") (Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013: 17). However, this approach entails the risk of ignoring problems and ideas that exist in the organisation, especially on a lower level (Schawel & Billing, 2017). This may result in bootlegging, which is the development of innovation without official approval or allocation of resources outside current schedules (Hauschildt & Salomo, 2010).

In any case, this form of gradual innovation is no longer sufficient in today's disruptive change in use, formats, content, and so on, triggered by digitalisation. Media companies, and PSM organisations in particular, are faced with the challenge of implementing radical innovation to fulfil their tasks and maintain their legitimacy in society (see Fehlmann, Chapter 2 in this volume). Thus, companies have come to more complex and diverse forms of institutionalising innovation within their organisations. Unlike the formation of a centralised unit, there are two other basic forms to implement innovation within the organisation.

First, innovation can be organised peripherally by one or more production or service units on a lower level. This fosters the inclusion of employees' ideas and experience from various areas but bears the risk that management loses sight of the different activities. Therefore, some companies coordinate decentralised innovation units with a centralised unit on the higher management level or an "innovation board/team" put together with members of the

upper management level and employees from the various innovation units or teams (Deuerling, 2016).

Second, the development of innovation can be set up in "innovation incubators", which are units operating with their own staff independently from the rest of the company and often accountable only to the top management. Such units are usually implemented if an organisation aims to develop radical or disruptive innovation. The advantages include the possibility to try out various forms of innovation without having the pressure of immediate success, preventing the daily business both from disruption and from struggles between employees promoting innovation and others who oppose it (Weber et al., 2018). Furthermore, innovation incubators can be structurally implemented in different forms: by building a new business unit with its own staff, administrative control, and so on; by setting up a new subsidiary; by setting up a new subsidiary in cooperation with another company; and by acquiring an innovative company (often a start-up) instead of developing innovations themselves (Hauschildt & Salomo, 2010). In the latter two forms, external resources are involved in the innovation process as idea providers, developers, or implementers, regardless of their organisational affiliation; thus, it's a form of "open innovation" (Möslein, 2009: 16). This allows the possibility to include more perspectives to address problems and to expedite the innovation process by networked communication (Benkler, 2016). On the other hand, it may lead to questions about who retains control over the information disclosed and whether the organisation is able to coordinate the flow of information and use it profitably (Weber et al., 2018).

Innovation as a holistic transformation process

However, implementing innovations in specialised, usually project-based units does not only have advantages. It also bears the risk that innovation does not diffuse in the organisation and that most resources are still used to produce existing products or services and that conventional ways of producing or solving problems based on existing skills, but also existing power structures, remain. By implementing innovation in incubators or similar forms first, the development of innovation and a major organisational change at the same time can be avoided. This may lead to a weakening of the organisation's position compared with its new competitors in fast-changing markets such as the media market. To further increase a successful innovation management process, some literature suggests that the development of innovation should not remain the domain of one or some individual departments or incubators; rather, the structure and culture should be designed in such a way that the entire company is attuned to the development of innovations, thus transforming itself into an innovation-conscious or innovation-promoting organisation. Such an organisation tries to implement the development of innovation at

various levels and includes this objective in everyday decisions on budgets, projects, and so on (Hauschildt & Salomo, 2010).

Nevertheless, in most organisations, (radical) innovations are first developed in incubators and then gradually spread throughout the organisation. Among other benefits, this has the advantage that the autonomous organisation unit grows and evolves more easily with the market (Küng, 2015). Simultaneous development and implementation of innovation would slow down the process and limit the opportunities to innovate.

Innovations in general, and radical innovations in particular, require profound changes in many organisational aspects. In addition to work processes, technologies, and the employees' skills, changes usually occur in corporate goals, business models, and organisational culture. Therefore, innovation management mostly causes organisational change, at least in the medium and long term.

With this organisational change, driven by innovation, the knowledge base in an organisation also changes. This organisational knowledge is created through the interaction of perceptions and behaviours within certain organisational structures (which are specified, for example, by organisational charts, policies, procedural instructions, etc.).This form of knowledge is often understood as the basis of processes and norms stored within the organisation and manifested in organisational action. Thus, organisational learning and transformation are based on a shift in the construction of knowledge about the environment (e.g., development of the relevant market, competition, technical innovation, and customer needs), the self-perception of an organisation (objectives, values and norms, processes, formal and informal networks, etc.), and the knowledge of the individuals (expertise, experience, perception of the customers, and the market) (Miebach, 2012).

Throughout this process of organisational learning and transformation, knowledge constantly changes, and thus innovation strategies and strategic decisions can also undergo further shifts. This is often a conflictual process and by no means a linear one. There are various issues that can cause conflicts, such as violating core values or challenging accepted problem-solving methods. Especially in PSM organisations, whose identity is strongly influenced by traditional values and contemporary developments, such conflicts are probable (Lowe & Maijanen, 2019). If innovation management wants to be successful, it must address these potential issues and elements in its strategy by specific approaches. Table 12.1 shows some of these potential elements that foster either change or inertia within an organisation.

Table 12.1 *Elements fostering change or inertia within an organisation*

Elements fostering change	Elements fostering inertia
Creation of creative leeway and incentives for employees (e.g., by making time or financial resources available)	Innovation violates personal core values, personal disadvantages expected (devaluation of own expertise, dismissal, restriction of power)
Networking of actors to motivate and support learning processes	Innovation challenges accepted ways of problem solving
Mastering ambidexterity: using existing resources to develop both incriminating and radical innovations at the same time	Lack of "error culture" and management
Encouragement: making the real value of the project clear; participation	Lack of encouragement and reward of creativity and critical thinking of individuals

Source: Disselkamp (2012); Hauschildt & Salomo (2010); Küng (2017); Schawel & Billing (2017); Weber et al., (2018)

Innovation as a challenge in public service media organisations

Many of these theoretical assumptions about innovation management and associated challenges are also relevant in the context of PSM. Various case studies show that a variety of PSM organisations have engaged in innovation projects seeking to transform their organisational structures. On example is an anthology about PSM's innovation activities that shows a wide variety of such projects in various countries (Túñez-López et al., 2021). Similarly, Donders's (2021) comparison of European PSM depicts a tendency to implement different dimensions of innovation: Some focus on content-related innovations, others on process-related aspects. Somehow contrary to this result is the latest study by Direito-Rebollal and Donders (2022): Comparing PSM in three European countries, they concluded that PSM innovation strategies remain on a "technology-centric approach" that rarely encourages public participation of the citizens.

Other studies indicate the difficulties in implementing innovations within PSM organisations. Lowe and Maijanen's (2019: 15) study on how four European PSM organisations redefined their remit in order to become more attractive to young audiences suggested that balancing "the heritage broadcasting logic and an emerging digital media logic" is a challenge for management in the context of "strategic development as a value transformation process". In a similar vein, van Dijck and Poell (2015) pointed out that new innovative formats made for social media platforms put PSM in dilemmas between their core values and the affordances of social media platforms. Nevertheless, they also concluded that experimental formats can strengthen PSM's mission or even set benchmarks for the industry, which may encourage replication of such formats as well as collaboration.

Yet, some studies show that organisational inertia is another obstacle for a successful implementation of innovation. For instance, Küng (2007) showed the BBC's difficulties in introducing online news due to various resistance within the organisation. Different forms of organisational inertia often arise from the fact that there are usually diverse visions within these organisations regarding the identity of PSM in the Internet era and the notions of traditional PSM values and traditional journalistic standards (e.g., Burns, 2008; Cunningham, 2015; Lowe & Maijanen, 2019).

Hypotheses

Based on these theoretical considerations, we derive three hypotheses which we test on our case study on the introduction of innovation at Swiss PSM unit SRF. Considering that especially radical innovation is mostly developed in "incubators" and later overtaken in a process of organisational change that is also based on shifting perception and the knowledge base of the organisation, we make a first assumption:

> H1: When SRF introduced innovation, it first did it in incubators, later by transforming the organisation.

Since some of the latest studies on innovation projects showed that PSM take a technology-centric approach, we make a second assumption:

> H2: SRF mainly introduces technological innovation rather than other forms of innovation (e.g., products, processes).

As some of the mentioned studies have shown, innovation faces resistance from within the organisation, thus our third assumption:

> H3: Organisational inertia is strong and hinders the introduction of innovation.

Methodology and case study

In the following, the way that PSM implements innovation is analysed via a case study on Switzerland's German-language PSM unit SRF [Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen]. This case was chosen for several reasons: SRF is the biggest among the five enterprise units that are part of Switzerland's PSM organisation, SRG SSR, that produces radio, television, and digital content for each of Switzerland's language regions. This unit has also introduced the most ambitious innovation project ("SRF 2024") of all the business units. At the same time, PSM in Switzerland are under political pressure despite being dedicated to informing and entertaining audiences in a way that contributes to social cohesion (Künzler, 2013). Especially the licence fee that makes up approximately 75 per cent of the SRG's revenues has been the subject of

controversy. In 2018, there was a referendum regarding the abolition of these fees (Tresch et al., 2018). Despite this rejection by citizens in 2018, PSM opponents have again started collecting signatures for a new referendum aimed at halving the household fee.

Media policy has responded to this development by requiring SRG SSR to make financial savings, produce more efficiently, and at the same time increase its capacity for innovation by expanding its digital offering. In the current remit of 2018, the Swiss federal government obliges PSM to achieve "a high degree of creativity and innovation through a particular willingness to take risks" (Art. 9.2), to develop "new formats characterised by a high degree of innovation concerning the creative work" (Art. 11.1), and to implement "an innovation management system" (Art. 11.2) [translated] (UVEK, 2018).

The following analysis of how innovation is fostered within the Swiss PSM organisation is based on a combination of document analysis and expert interviews. We collected and analysed different documents shedding light on the structure of the organisation and its strategies. These documents include annual reports, organigrams, websites, and strategic papers (publicly available or handed out by members of the organisation). The analysis of these documents allowed, on the one hand, the reconstruction of the organigram and its changes. On the other hand, some of the management objectives and knowledge gaps could be identified, which were subsequently taken into account when creating the questionnaire and interviewing the participants (for the method, see Karppinen & Moe, 2019).

In addition to the document analysis, we conducted 32 semistructured, half-standardised expert interviews with producers, journalists, representatives of management, and former employees of SRF and SRG SSR headquarters between 2019 and 2020.[2] Four of the interviewees did not work at SRF and SRG SSR anymore, and eight more have left the organisation at the time of writing. We held interviews with employees from various hierarchical levels (from "newbies" to management) who were responsible for innovation or digitalisation. In addition to focusing on innovation within the organisation, this approach allowed to take differences between the various departments into account.

The interviews were conducted by Fiona Fehlmann and Matthias Künzler, recorded with the approval of the interviewees, and afterwards transcribed. At the end of each interview, we asked for recommendations for other potential interviewees. This allowed us to identify new respondents and also identify personal networks within the organisation. This strategy of "convenience sampling" (e.g., Marschlich & Ingenhoff, 2021; Robinson, 2014) in combination with theoretical sampling turned out to be appropriate: Each interview conducted with the first two-thirds of the interviewees always produced new and sometimes surprising or contradictory findings. After that, statements were sometimes repeated or led to only a few new findings. Additionally,

during the interview phase, it became apparent that the entire organisation was undergoing a reorganisation process. This – in addition to the Covid-19 pandemic – initially hindered the analysis and planning of the interviews. Ultimately, it was a coincidence that allowed us to observe the organisation's transformation as it was happening.

The analysis of the interviews was conducted computer-assisted using MAXQDA. We derived codes both from theoretical assumptions about innovation management and inductively from the interviews as well. The quotations that appear in this article have been translated from German, French, or Italian into English, and the participants' names have been replaced with alphanumeric codes.[3]

The long and bumpy road to innovation: Strategic responses to the perceived changes of the media market

The following analysis is divided into two parts. In this first section, we analyse the strategies SRF has adopted over the last ten years to try to implement innovations. This allows us to respond to H1 and H2. In the following section, we show how SRF has dealt with organisational inertia and test H3.

SRF's strategic response in the 2000s

At the end of the 1990s and in the 2000s, the development of innovation followed the traditional approach and was mostly centralised on an upper-management level at SRF. A former manager remembered that some projects designed to introduce digital services such as websites were mandated hierarchically. A project team received the financial means for the implementation of new digital services, then it successively expanded its staff until it eventually received its own editorial department and became a division of its own (M9).

This approach resulted in some innovations but caused negative effects of hierarchical mandated innovation, as described above. Innovation was disapproved of by many employees due to two reasons. One was the lack of financial resources for developing new services: Editorial departments often had to provide for these resources which diminished their budget for daily operations, as one former manager remembered (M9). The other obstacle to innovation was the mentality within the organisation. One interviewee illustrated this with an example: He remembered how one of his colleagues developed a "puzzle radio" that allowed users to put together their own radio programme with music, news, and talk shows of the organisation (M9, confirmed by E5).

> It was innovative and won an award at the Prix Europa. And the discussion at SRF was how quickly can we close it down again, because it endangers the identity of our corporate design, it endangers the identity of existing formats and profiles of the radio stations. (M9)

This integrating of a newly developed service into the corporate identity was generally a further challenge that had taken weeks or months, according to a former manager (M9).

The centralised development of innovation did not allow for incorporating ideas from employees sufficiently either. This led to the above-mentioned bootlegging, that is, the development of innovations outside the existing planning by intrinsically motivated employees. As an example, one former editor explained how they developed an online music portal for non-professional bands. This portal was intended as a kind of event that operates for only three months but turned out to be a huge success:

> After three months, 4,500 bands participated, and we almost couldn't stop it. The director was upset. We then said, this is going to be a [so-called] speedboat for SRF. We added a night programme, implemented an interactive musical request programme, etcetera. [...] We were three people who accompanied the project. We also had to look for sponsors. We then launched a backstage radio with a sponsor with DAB and everything. Though at some point, the money ran out. (E5)

Strategic responses from 2011 onwards

More than a decade ago, SRG SSR seemed to perceive these difficulties and became aware of an increased need for innovation, especially in order to reach young audiences. Thus, it started to intensify its activities in this field under a new director general: "The goal was to bring innovation into the organisation through the strategy. To achieve more innovation. To reach a younger target group" (M10).

Initially, an attempt was made to implement this goal through a centralised approach at the level of the national holding of the different PSM organisations in the various language regions again. An innovation team was formed, and an innovation concept was written, which then was to be applied in all business units; however, the resistance to this approach was strong. Therefore, a rather decentralised concept was chosen, as a former manager recalled (M10).

This concept combined different strategies and forms of institutionalised innovation within the organisation. On the level of the enterprise units (including SRF), new departments dealing with digitalisation and innovation were formed. Existing editorial offices were added with young staff responsible for social media, and an innovation fund was established to promote promising projects suggested by the employees. Employees were upskilled to new techniques, helping to generate ideas and to develop innovation, like Kanban-boards, design thinking, and so on.

In addition, two new business units with their own staff were set up as incubators to promote innovation within the organisation. One unit was dedi-

cated to content for young target groups, aiming to produce new online-first formats (it has indeed developed numerous new online formats – some with their own brand name). Its production methods and organisational structure differ from the rest of the organisation. Based on audience research data, the formats are dedicated to topics that are assumed to be of interest to young people (e.g., travel, sexuality, job, society, and politics). Some formats are produced in cooperation with small production companies outside of SRF, some in collaboration with young talents, influencers, and so on (partly like "funk", the German PSM's online-based offerings for young adults, is doing).

The other innovation unit was implemented within the technical department. It was mainly responsible for scouting new technologies, improving production processes, and developing new production facilities (e.g., a mini outside broadcast car and a portable production bag) and informing employees across the whole organisation about new technical trends and their impact on PSM (e.g., 5G). This unit also established analogue and digital tools to collect ideas (Kanban-Boards, Intranet, etc.). In the meantime, the unit has been incorporated into SRF.

From innovation to transformation: The "SRF 2024" strategy

In terms of impact on the media market, SRF succeeded in developing new formats oriented towards the needs of young people, in enhancing its presence on social media and in launching new online services, such as the "PlaySuisse"-media player that offers curated PSM content in all languages spoken in Switzerland, including the corresponding language synchronisation.

However, quantitative and qualitative surveys have shown that many of these formats are unknown to young people. They are more familiar with the traditional formats they learned about through their media socialisation in the family (Autenrieth et al., 2021). One reason for this might be that the organisation's initial focus was strongly on producing new formats and establishing new workflows. In doing so, too little attention was paid to social media distribution strategies and the associated branding strategies.

In the meantime, SRF's and SRG's management have become aware of this problem and have initiated appropriate measures. They have started to bundle the various online brands into so-called hub-brands to make them more visible and increase their discoverability. Furthermore, SRF plans to better advertise their content in the digital space. Search engine optimisation, social media market research, and improvements in market research are core elements, according to various managers (M1, M12, and others).

At the same time, SRG is confronted with further challenges: Funding has been declining since the federal government capped the amount of the licence fee, and advertising revenues are decreasing. This led SRF's management to realise that it needs to tackle the various problems more fundamentally:

> Thus, if it's our mission to be the media organisation for the whole society, we have to make a real effort [to reach the non-users]. [...] Especially this young target group we have to understand better. We have to think about how to reach them [...]. Concerning distribution, we have to understand the peculiarities of the channels, and then we have to build that up organisationally as well. [...] [At the same time] we had to [ask ourselves], against the background of the fee cap and the collapsing advertising revenues, how to fulfil the mission in the concession. [...] We said, we have to combine this because just saving money, you save linearly, and you don't have a perspective, and at the same time media use is changing rapidly. [...] These are several challenges, and you can't just let go. [...] We must shift [between traditional broadcasting and digital]. (M2)

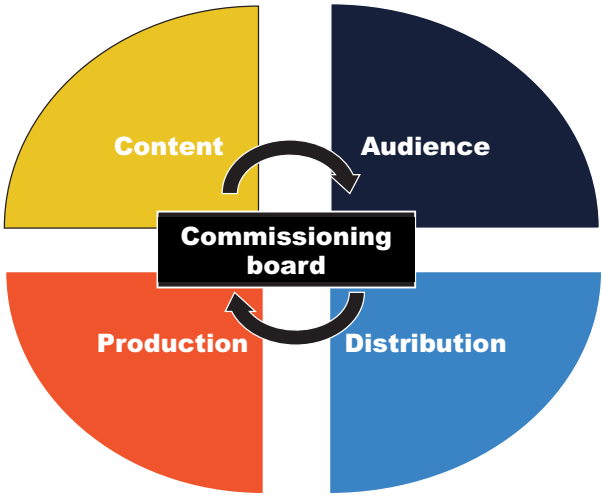
By becoming aware that a deeper transformation of the whole organisation would be necessary to become more successful in the digital market, SRF launched a project to transform the whole enterprise into an organisation strongly dedicated to digitalisation and innovation. In order to include the employees, the new strategy was developed in a (partially) participatory process by building various working groups with employees from different departments and different hierarchical levels, accompanied externally by the consulting firm Bain. Other experts were called in as needed.

By mid-2020, the strategy was communicated publicly. The new strategy aimed to introduce a new operating model that would enable "the content, distribution, and all decisions within the framework of the concession to be even better aligned with our audience [...] especially for people under 45 [translated]" (Wappler, forthcoming). In fact, this means that financial resources are shifting more from linear to digital production as funding decreases.

At the core of the new operating model is a so-called four-forces model [Vier-Kräfte-Modell]. The four forces represent four competencies important for PSM in the digital world, from the organisation's perspective: market research, distribution, production, and content (see Figure 12.1).

This four-forces model provides the basis for the development of new formats or the adoption of existing formats, services, and other innovations. A "commissioning board", consisting of representatives from all four forces, should initiate new innovations or evaluate existing services. This interdisciplinary approach aims to promote collaboration, to enable shorter decision-making processes in a rapidly changing digital world, and to put audience needs at the centre of journalistic work. However, the journalistic sovereignty lies with the content department, which decides on and is responsible for key messages (Wappler, forthcoming). To implement the new strategy, some existing departments were dissolved and a flatter hierarchy was introduced.

Figure 12.1 *Four-forces model*



Comments: Content competencies include responsibility for editorial content and realising interdivisional content. Audience competencies include market research and ensuring that the target audience is served according to its needs. Distribution competencies include ensuring that the target audience is reached, through both digital and linear channels, and digital marketing. Production competencies include responsibility for technical production, and differing efforts between defined standards per format or production (smart, standard, bold).

Source: adapted from SRF (2020) and SRF policy papers

Summing up the analysis of how the development of innovation has been managed during the last decades at SRF, H1 (when SRF introduced innovation, it first did it in incubators, later by transforming the organisation) can be mainly verified but needs differentiation. In the early years of digitalisation, innovation was introduced in the traditional centralised and hierarchical way. The introduction of specialised units dedicated to innovation (incubators) but also by setting incentives for innovation and interconnecting innovation units within the whole organisation hastened the implementation of new online formats and technologies. This phase has now been replaced by a new strategy to transform the entire organisation. Thus, the establishment of innovation incubators seems to be very important to gain experience with new production technologies and the development of online formats before transforming the whole organisation.

The whole processes depict that innovation at SRF did not only relate to technology, but strongly to products (new online formats for a young audience), services (e.g., new media player), and production methods. Thus, H2 (SRF mainly introduces technological rather than other forms of innovation) can clearly be rejected.

Dealing with inertia

In retrospect, the portrayed phases of innovation management seem to be a consistent development; this must not hide the fact that it faced persistent resistance. The statements made in the interviews indicate that SRF's innovation process was facing many of those difficulties that appeared in other companies as well and that are described in the corresponding literature on innovation management (see Table 12.1).

Especially in an early phase, trial-and-error methods seemed to be frowned upon, according to former employees: "When it came to trying out something, the beta culture [i.e., trial-and-error culture] was missing. That was not wanted either" (E6). Such an error culture was also seen as a violation of PSM's core values: "That's why I also tried to power up this beta [culture] […]. Then they always said: 'No, that's not possible, because public service stands for quality. And quality certainly doesn't mean beta'" (E5).

Likewise, it seems that some of the employees and the management had seen a disadvantage in innovation for themselves since it challenged existing ways of problem-solving. Especially younger editors stressed that new formats need new skills, but also partially new production norms: "The production times, the effort, the need for discussions are different [with digital formats]; community integration requires a different way of thinking. That needs its own creativity" (E3).

However, as one manager explained, the fear of changing existing workflows resulted not only from self-interest (e.g., fear of losing jobs and positions), but also out of a sense of duty towards staff: "That also has a lot to do with the sense of responsibility of our staff. You don't want to commit yourself to risky projects, you are criticised for having squandered licence fee money" (M11).

Managers responsible for innovation management were aware of this resistance and took various measures to foster innovation. They tried to encourage a creative leeway with an innovation fund that provides financial resources for innovation projects and by familiarising employees with new working methods like design-thinking in order to foster creative work (M7, M8).

Another important measure was the establishment of a network of the various actors involved in innovation:

> We formed an innovation community with intrinsically motivated people who were already active in the field of innovation. They shared their experiences and approaches. That worked quite well; we realised that something was happening. And the next step after that was to "get out of the rather hidden submarine mode" and become visible across the organisation. (M10)

The exchange of experience and information within this innovation community made it possible to implement certain projects that would have otherwise

failed. One example is the creation of a so-called WeTube-Studio, "where everyone, young, old or whoever wants to produce content, has access" (E2). This idea was intended to pursue several objectives: to increase the interest of young people in PSM by offering a service, but also to scout new talents who may later work for the organisation. This idea was rejected by SRF. Due to the "inno-community" (the national innovation network), SRG's Italian-language enterprise unit implemented this studio with great success. This success has led the other enterprise units to consider introducing it as well.

The establishment of incubators, new work processes in most departments, building a network of innovators, and so on, made it possible to introduce content-related and technical innovations to the market. However, changes within an organisation normally happen slowly, and that seems to be the case at SRF as well. This demands a high level of patience and understanding of frustrations from management and also much encouragement of those employees involved in innovation processes (see Table 12.1). Some employees in various positions indicated that they missed this encouragement:

> Sometimes you just have to accept setbacks. And it takes serenity, perseverance. And that takes years. All the change stories are eternal. [...] Behind it, you need the strongest force. [...] It really needs a radical attitude [from the organisation] that really stands for the new. And that's what I've missed so far, both when I worked at the private media company [XY] and now at SRG. Or I still miss it. And honestly, I see this problem at all the other companies as well. (M4)

> If you work here and you realise that you are a digital person and you burn for the digital, but you are still not heard, [...] because other people with less expertise overrule you. Simply because they have been working for the organisation for a longer time. That is extremely frustrating. (M1)

This perceived lack of encouragement may have been a major shortcoming in the whole transformation process. Some innovation drivers seemed to not be able to realise their ideas within a reasonable time or felt that resistance toward these ideas were too strong. Thus, some employees and managers deeply involved in innovation decided to leave the organisation.

These results show that H3 (organisational inertia is strong and hinders the introduction of innovation) can only be partially justified. Though inertia within the organisation has been strong, according to the literature, this is to be expected (see Table 12.1). Nevertheless, it did not hinder the implementation of various innovations as already shown.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have asked how PSM try to encourage innovation within its organisation in order to reach young audiences and to what extent PSM's

innovation may be a contribution to society. These research questions were analysed based on a case study on innovation management at the Swiss Public Broadcaster SRF, which produces audiovisual content for the German-speaking part of the country. The case study was methodologically based on expert interviews and document analysis.

Our study shows that SRF implemented innovation at various levels. Different from other countries, SRF has not only introduced new technologies but also developed numerous new online formats and working processes. This has also had an impact on organisational culture; for example, some of the staff have tried to implement the trial-and-error principle and have partially developed new professional norms for digital formats. However, the process to foster innovation has been challenging and has had setbacks.

Based on the analysis, we were able to identify three phases of innovation management. During the 2000s, when the organisational environment was still stable, (digital) innovations were mainly introduced hierarchically and were therefore met with rejection from many employees. At the same time, intrinsically motivated employees were bootlegging by developing innovations on their own.

About a decade ago, the development of innovation was intensified. Innovation management was decentralised but coordinated by a central department. Incubators were set up, which either started to produce new formats for young audiences or developed new technologies and work methods. In addition, various innovation management tools were also introduced, such as an innovation fund, on-the-job training in new working methods (e.g., design-thinking), or a national network of employees working on innovations.

These measures led to a major increase in new digital formats and the development of new technologies and work processes (see Lassen & Sørensen, Chapter 5 in this volume). However, the diffusion of these innovations to the audience and within the organisation was not successful: Many online formats remained unknown to young people, the intended target group. Within the organisation, there was resistance to the introduction of newly developed work processes.

These difficulties cannot just be attributed to misapplied innovation management: Almost every element and strategy of innovation management – like the creation of creative leeway and incentives for employees, networking of actors, mastering ambidexterity by partially separating the daily business from innovation developing in incubators – were applied. Only the constant encouragement of those employees ambitious in promoting digital media production seems to be missing. At the same time, the surrounding conditions worsened, especially media policy that pursued a reduction of the revenues by reducing or even abolishing the licence or household fee.

Nonetheless, the organisation managed to identify these difficulties. It realised that on the one hand, it had to save money, but on the other, it

also had to increase its efforts in distribution and brand management. The response to these challenges was a massive change in strategy: The four-forces model as the core of the new SRF 2024 strategy should allow promoting collaboration between different departments and for aligning all processes with the audience.

The future will show whether this model is successful. On the one hand, the potential for success remains intact for two reasons: first, distribution and brand management as the two weak points in the diffusion of innovative audiovisual formats are recognised; and second, in the light of declining funding, attempts are now being made to address these challenges by a major restructuring of the organisation rather than by individual measures. According to the literature about innovation management, this new strategy seems to transform SRF into an innovation-promoting organisation that tries to implement the development of innovation at all points.

On the other hand, the new strategy is also very courageous. There is a great danger of scaring away existing audiences and politicians, as initial public reactions to the new strategy show: Some critics bring forward the argument that the new strategy indulges in a "technocratic enthusiasm" that degrades the audience to "marketing objects" and damages journalistic quality (Anker, 2021). Moreover, there is in fact no guarantee that the new strategy will help bond young audiences to PSM, or to generally help the organisation continuously adapt to the rapidly changing media that are to a great extent influenced by strategies of international tech companies like Alphabet or Meta.

And this may be where Swiss PSM's contribution to society lies: Hardly any other private media company has dared to make such a radical change and focus on innovation and a younger audience – certainly not in small states, where resources are limited and fewer risks can be taken. PSM's focus on both innovation and a young audience may become a role model for all media, whether it succeeds or not (see Puppis & Ali, Chapter 1 in this volume). Media companies will benefit from the experience with the new strategy, both by observing which new formats are successful in the market and by getting insight into how legacy media transform under changing circumstances. These experiences will also show the extent to which young people in the digital world can be (re)connected, if at all, to PSM content.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by grants from the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) as a part of the "Public Service Media: Audience Acceptance and Future Opportunities" project (project nr. 10001C_176466).

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Endnotes

[1] The introduction of something new into the market, respectively into the socioeconomic system, is the key feature of innovation allowing us to distinguish it from invention and diffusion. Different than innovation, "an invention is the original discovery of technological or social improvements" (van Kranenburg, 2017: 5). Diffusion occurs if an innovation is broadly accepted in the market, respectively society, and if other organisations try to adopt it, which often leads to further incremental innovation (see Dal Zotto & van Kranenburg, 2008).

[2] We conducted some more interviews in the French- and Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland. Since these units operate autonomously and have implemented other innovation strategies, we did not have the space to include it in this chapter.

[3] We indicate managers (from middle to the highest management) with "M" and editors and technical operators in various fields with "E".

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CHAPTER 13

Cross-media and platformised journalism

ARD's innovation attempts at becoming a multiplatform contributor to society

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ABSTRACT
This chapter presents results of a comprehensive research project which examined strategies with which ARD (a joint organisation of public service broadcasters in Germany) attempted to manage the challenges of digital media change related to future legitimation, journalistic offerings, and organisational change. The chapter shows that expectations concerning cross-media structures regarding product innovations are too high and that digitalisation questions the federal structure of ARD. I discuss basic strategic goals and focus on case studies that explore journalistic formats produced for social networks. A key finding is that journalists align these formats with the respective platforms used. The question arises, therefore, of how strong the influence of platformisation on journalistic work should be. ARD must enter an ethical discourse on how to guarantee and develop its values on commercial platforms. Also, there is a need for an innovation process in ARD regarding its paradigmatic orientation as a federally structured organisation in a digitalised media world.

KEYWORDS: ARD, cross-media, innovation, social networks, platformisation

Eichler, H. (2023). Cross-media and platformised journalism: ARD's innovation attempts at becoming a multiplatform contributor to society. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 265–288). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-13

Introduction

Public service broadcasting (PSB) in Germany is under pressure like it has never been before. Main causes are a legitimacy crisis of the existing broadcasting regulations and profound changes in media usage. Jens Lucht (2006: 311), for instance, argued that "the future of public service broadcasting [...] is not secured against the background of rapid developments in media technology and competition".

Younger people in particular prefer non-linear media offerings and inform themselves about current events primarily via social networks. Moreover, in the German media policy debate about the legitimacy and future orientation of the public broadcasting organisations, the discussion about the amount and legality of the broadcasting fee is controversial, even after the Federal Constitutional Court declared the latest fee increase to be legally valid in its decision from July 2021 (Aigner et al., 2017; Bundesministerium der Finanzen, 2014; Hain, 2016; Haucap et al., 2015; Holznagel et al., 2017; Lucht, 2006).

This constellation has put ARD in a state of crisis, from which the future viability and legitimacy of the country's largest public media association are being questioned. It is disputable whether, under these circumstances, PSB can still adequately fulfil its "constitutional task as an information intermediary" (Holznagel et al., 2017: 13). Far-reaching innovations in the way ARD organises itself as a network are necessary, and innovative journalistic offerings must be developed through which young users can be reached. This need for reform at ARD was recognised by former ARD chairwoman Karola Wille, who described the processes of change as "the greatest challenge in the history of the ARD" (Medienpolitik.net, 2018).

In Germany, trust in PSB still is high (Meßmer et al., 2021). It is particularly true in times of crisis, like the Covid-19 pandemic or the war in Ukraine, where a majority relies on journalistic offerings provided by ARD and ZDF [Second German Television], the two largest public service media (PSM) organisations in Germany. In contrast, the willingness to pay higher licence fees is decelerating (Hölig & Hasebrink, 2021), with some politicians and scholars demanding the abolition of licence fees (AfD, 2018; Bundesministerium der Finanzen, 2014; Haucap et al., 2015; Siebenhaar, 2012).

This chapter summarises findings of a larger research project that explored the question of what strategies ARD used to respond to these aforementioned challenges (Eichler, 2022a). The core research questions are the following:

RQ1. What process innovations are being developed at ARD? What journalistic product innovations are being developed and produced?

RQ2. Which influence do platform logics have on editorial decisions and journalistic action?

In the first section of this chapter, I point out the causes for the crisis and lay out possible ways for renewing the legitimacy of PSB, namely convergent structures and product innovations. In the second section, I introduce the concept of public network value as a framework to identify and evaluate innovations. Following this, I describe the focus of the research and methodology, and then present key results from interviews with editors and journalists and observations in innovative editing units. The conceptual framework of public network value was applied to identify quality and innovation features in four case studies.

The conclusion shows that ARD's goal of developing into a cross-media content and structurally integrated media association has been achieved at best in rudimentary stages. On the level of products, there are indications of innovation developments. It remains to be seen, therefore, if cross-media strategies will be successful.

Pressure to innovate: Crucial areas

Changing media usage and tipping points

2018 marks a turning point in media use in Germany. For the first time, the majority of 14–29-year-olds preferred audio streaming to linear radio. Regarding video, streaming services are also ahead of linear offerings in this age group. This trend continues into the older age groups and applies to both fictional and journalistic offerings (Frees et al., 2019; Schröter, 2018).

Younger people prefer to receive content via third-party platforms, especially social networks. In contrast, about half of the regular users of linear public service broadcasting in Europe are aged 55 or older (Schulz et al., 2019). The 2018 JIM Study shows that 12–19-year-olds use more private commercial media than PSM (Feierabend et al., 2018). That said, trust in public service providers is still relatively high in all age groups. For instance, 69 per cent have very high or high trust, with higher numbers in the group of 18–28-year-olds and those older than 50 (Feierabend et al., 2018; Meßmer et al., 2021). Conversely, these levels are not reflected in actual user behaviour. Only 23 per cent of 14–29-year-olds watch news and information on television daily (Holznagel et al., 2017). Especially related to journalistic offerings, these developments pose a growing problem for all public service broadcasters. Since the use of streaming services, social networks, and video and audio platforms continues to increase (Koch & Beisch, 2020), the question arises as to how ARD can fulfil its mission and contribute to society under these circumstances (on the effects of changing media usage and societal integration, see Hasebrink, Chapter 4 in this volume).

The debate on the legitimacy of public service broadcasting

Against the backdrop of these massive changes in media usage and growing political pressure, global debates on the ongoing legitimacy of PSB and the necessary evolution towards PSM have been going on for about 20 years.

Karen Donders (2012), for instance, pointed to the rising political pressure in the context of market-led policy that led to the end of the era of PSB monopolies in Europe. In Germany, according to market-liberal critics, public service organisations are losing their special status due to the effects of digitalisation, as a greater variety of offers, content, and information emerges (Haucap et al., 2015). The argument that PSB is indispensable as a merit good[1] is also disputed by market-liberal critics, who argue that certain characteristics of a public good no longer apply to the PSB due to technological developments, and that it is no longer necessary, for example, to ensure diversity of opinion. As a consequence, the reform of broadcasting regulations is demanded. Reforms include subscription models (Bundesministerium der Finanzen, 2014) or privatised competitive tendering (Haucap et al., 2015). ARD reacted to this debate with, among other things, a comprehensive structural reform which included developing into a cross-media and integrated federal media network (ARD, 2017; this is subject to my aforementioned research project, Eichler, 2022a).

Media scientists and journalism researchers have made several proposals for new directions, strategies, and restructuring for legacy media. According to Bardoel and Lowe (2007: 16), PSB need "a rigorous mental and cultural shift in organisational arrangements and perceptions". The core challenge, according to the authors, is the mental transition "from supply-oriented PSB thinking to demand-oriented PSM thinking" (Bardoel & Lowe, 2007: 21). To open up new perspectives for platform strategies and avoid a monopoly state of the BBC in the UK, for instance, Ofcom proposed the concept of a public service publisher (PSP), which would serve as "a new competitive supplier of PSB content" (Freedman, 2009: 103). Following this model, a PSP would curate and commission content from independent media producers and make it available to the public. Although the PSP concept had never been realised, it stimulated the debate about the relevance of non-commercial media and raised the question of whether the BBC should have exclusive access to the licence fee (for an analysis of the failure of this concept, see Freedman, 2009).

To this day, in recent publications scholars demand a paradigmatic change of PSB. Schulz and colleagues (2019) have pointed to the urgency of reinventing PSB, otherwise it risks the further undermining of its legitimacy. Concurring, Hermann Rotermund (2018) argued that, given the losses in linear use, the relevance of PSB for public communication in online environments must be proven.

Ways toward a renewal of legitimacy

Larrondo and colleagues (2016) argued that public service organisations must address structural and content-related changes. Similarly, Suárez Candel (2012) recommended reorganising structures and processes, evolving organisations from linear PSB to a holistic understanding of PSM, and reaching and engaging younger people with a "multiplatform scenario". Bardoel and d'Haenens (2008) emphasised that public service organisations should adapt more user-oriented cross-media structures and develop new genres and formats to promote interaction and participation (see also Rodríguez-Castro & Campos-Freire, Chapter 11 in this volume).

A fundamental requirement is to design and produce journalistic content for distribution via commercial third-party platforms, like social networks. For the project presented here, research was used that focuses on three areas for a reorientation of PSB:

- A reform of the organisational structures
- A defined multiplatform strategy with specific formats in each case
- The formulation of public value for offerings on third-party platforms (the concept of public network value)

Convergent structures and product innovations

So far, process innovations have been the focus of research on European PSM organisations (see, among others, Bro et al., 2016; Larrondo, 2014; Larrondo et al., 2012, 2016; Sehl et al., 2018; Wallace, 2013). One consistent finding of these works is that convergent structures are not a sufficient condition for developing and producing innovative products. Research from the early years of convergent newsroom practices in Europe, for instance, shows that quality journalism and diversity of content only played a minor role, even at PSB organisations, although a value-oriented approach could function to counterbalance trends of commercialisation and market concentration (Trappel, 2008).

Research of a newsroom at Radio Canada indicates that reporters hardly changed their working practices to become multiplatform journalists because of time constraints, and each medium "had been found to have its own personality and […] a distinct set of working practices" (Francoeur, 2016: 173). Francoeur (2016: 186) proposed the idea of a "single-medium multi-platform journalism". The question arises, therefore, under which organisational conditions journalistic innovations can develop particularly well. In these explorations of the contexts of process and product innovations, there is a notable research gap in the study of new formats from ARD.

Public network value and platformisation

A fundamental component of renewing legitimacy is the expansion and further development of public value into non-linear environments. For this purpose, Steinmaurer and Wenzel (2015) developed the concept of public network value, the basic idea of which is to make the specific qualities of public services justifiable and usable for non-linear formats as an added value oriented towards the common good. Some of the core dimensions of public network value are as follows (Steinmaurer & Wenzel, 2015):

- Universal access: PSM content should be multiplatform available without financial or technical discrimination of users. Part of universal access is presence and findability as trusted brands in social networks and unlimited access of content on owned and third-party platforms.
- Interaction and participation: Discourse-oriented presence in social networks with a critical reflective participation in these communication processes. Moderation of participative content and community management, integrating tools that stimulate constructive debate.
- Innovation and research: Exploring new applications to combine linear and non-linear formats, establishing units for research and development, developing value-oriented algorithms, personalised service offerings, generating metadata for non-commercial use.

Criteria from this catalogue are applied to the journalistic formats explored in the case studies of the mentioned research project (see Table 13.2).

The concept of public value is multidimensional and, in addition to evaluation criteria that can be formulated in concrete terms, includes the aspect of a processual approach. According to this, all stakeholders should have the opportunity to discursively negotiate and further develop the concept of public value for the respective applications (Hasebrink, 2018; Moore, 1995; Rotermund, 2021). In the area of PSB, these are the broadcasting companies and their supervisory bodies, the media professionals themselves, and the users. The involvement of a critical audience can strengthen the legitimacy of PSB companies as a whole, argued Süssenbacher and colleagues (2011). This involvement can even be seen as a prerequisite for the fact that PSM are guarantors of a deliberative public sphere (Rotermund, 2021) and therefore contributors to a democratic society.

For reasons of limited space and applicability, the study presented here is limited to the dimension of public value as an evaluation concept. Nevertheless, for a renewal of the legitimisation of PSM in non-linear media environments, the processual approach must be considered. The requirement to create journalistic content for commercial third-party platforms, especially social networks, gives rise to an area of conflict, which I briefly discuss in the concluding section. The fundamental question here is how PSM organi-

sations can ensure public values while being forced to align their strategies towards used platforms (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; van Dijck et al., 2018). How pronounced is platformisation in editorial teams that create content for commercial platforms? Do they become infrastructurally dependent? (Nechushtai, 2018). Here, PSM organisations have the task of maintaining their strategic autonomy while adapting to the growth of platforms (Sehl et al., 2018). In short, they must find their place as contributors to society in a platformised world.

Methods

The empirical work was divided into three phases in order to get an overview of both process innovations and an insight into product innovations:

1. Content analysis of strategy papers, essays, annual reports, and grey literature from ARD and individual state broadcasters on the topic of digital transformation and reform processes.

2. Semistructured interviews with representatives of all state branches on reform projects, strategic orientation, and restructuring of editorial units.

3. Case studies on four editorial units creating journalistic content for third-party platforms or social networks, including semistructured interviews and observations (see Table 13.1).

In phase 1, 19 documents from 2016–2018 were analysed and evaluated. In phase 2, semistructured interviews were conducted with 11 representatives of all nine state branches.[2] As part of the case studies, I conducted six semistructured interviews with editorial heads. Based on the interviews with editorial heads, the editorial observations took place and in-depth interviews with editorial staff (four in total) were conducted as required. All interviews mentioned were between 35 and 55 minutes long and were held between August 2018 and August 2020. Each editorial office was observed non-participatively for two to three consecutive days.

The methods were combined in a category-led manner and the results were related to each other. Categories were developed starting with key concepts from literature on journalism innovation and identifying these in the analysed grey literature. In order to identify and determine characteristics of innovations in processes and products, for the evaluation of the texts, interview transcripts, and case studies, the definitions for media innovations formulated in the contributions of Storsul and Krumsvik (2013) and García-Avilés and colleagues (2019) were applied. After this first deductive step, all documents and interview transcriptions were coded with a set of codes that was further developed and adapted inductively during the research

process (Mayring, 2015; Meyen et al., 2019). Some initial key words were "Crossmedia Newsroom", "Multimedia", "Process Innovation", "Product Innovation", "Synergies", "Format Development", "Digital Strategy", and "Platform Strategy".

In the case studies, only journalistic formats for distribution via third-party platforms or social networks were considered to examine the effects of this platform orientation on journalistic working methods and forms of presentation and how promising this orientation is in view of the challenges of fragmented media markets.

Table 13.1 Overview of the case studies

	Hessenschau in 100 Sekunden	News WG	Y-Kollektiv	Deutschland3000
Provider/ regional branch	Hessischer Rundfunk	Bayerischer Rundfunk	Radio Bremen and Sendefähig GmbH	Labo M GmbH
Media type	Audio	Video, text and picture news, postings	Video, text postings	Video, text and picture news, postings
Primary distribution/ platform	Smart speaker systems, Spotify	Instagram	YouTube	Facebook, Instagram
Produced since	August 2019	July 2018	October 2016	June 2017
Product/format	Regional news	Explanatory, orientation	Narrative documentaries, reportages	Orientation and opinion-forming
Processes/ organisational form	produced within newsroom	outside of broadcasting centre	Cooperation between regional branch and external company for ARD/ZDF network "funk"	external company for ARD/ZDF network "funk"

Key results

Analysis of strategy papers and interviews

The evaluation of strategy papers, programmatic texts, and sections of annual reports yielded many general findings but comparatively few reliable indications of practical changes and innovative projects. Of particular importance is the ARD Bericht an die Länder [report to the federal states], in which the media association formulated a comprehensive reform programme. A central statement in it is that ARD wants to develop into a "cross-media content and structurally integrated federal media association" (ARD, 2017: 3). However,

the documents did not reveal a coordinated platform strategy for the entire media network.

The results from the interviews with representatives of the nine state broadcasters show both a clear orientation towards the development of convergent structures and the development of innovative formats for non-linear distribution, also via social networks. In particular, younger audiences are to be better reached in this way. The interviewees were asked about projects which they considered to be particularly progressive in terms of a reorientation of the editorial organisation and products. They named the following aspirational product innovations:

- Multimedia forms: integrating several media genres into one narrative form, formats for social networks
- Interactivity: exchange with users, feedback channels to the editorial team, recognition of users' needs and interests
- Orientation towards user habits and user needs in the choice of topics and implementation

Beyond that, no concise characteristics of a uniform product or portfolio strategy of ARD could be identified. Even though most interviewees expressed the expectation that cross-media structures should also yield product innovation, new formats mostly emerge in independent units, not in cross-media newsrooms. This finding is in line with research results from other European broadcasters (see also Hogh-Janovsky & Meier, 2021).

With regard to the interplay of process and product innovations, it becomes clear that the formulated goal of reaching younger audiences with journalistic content can only be achieved to a limited extent through the introduction of convergent editorial structures. In the time-pressured processes of cross-media newsrooms, there is hardly any freedom to work creatively and develop innovative formats. Another major obstacle is different working cultures in the media domains. Also, spatial proximity is insufficient to promote product innovation (for corresponding results, see Bro et al., 2016; Francoeur, 2016; Larrondo et al., 2016).

It is noteworthy that while there is a systematic exchange between the state branches on reform processes, product innovations, and strategic orientation for ARD joint bodies, it is not the case for individual projects of the broadcasting organisations at the level of individual states that form ARD. Knowledge transfer between the branches only takes place on an informal level and through personal initiatives.

Case studies: Journalistic formats for social networks

Schmidt and colleagues (2017: 98) came to the conclusion that "opinion-forming processes are no longer conceivable without intermediaries". This

gives rise to new responsibilities for PSM: helping to shape these processes, also in social networks. Troxler (2013: 71) argued that young media users have a "legal right to participate and to have a voice in defining public value objectives". From this perspective, the requirement arises for PSM to offer their content where young users can find it, namely on third-party platforms such as social networks.

Accordingly, the legal framework has been expanded in Germany. The reformed telemedia mandate allows PSM to use commercial platforms, including social networks, for the dissemination of their offerings, insofar as this is required for journalistic-editorial reasons in order to reach the target groups (ARD, 2019, 2020).[3] Based on these findings, the focus of the case studies was on journalistic formats that are developed and produced in independent units specifically for third-party platforms.

The interviews with the editorial directors of the formats show that the strategic decision to produce for and distribute content via social networks and other third-party providers is considered indispensable. For example, a strategic goal of the *News WG* format is to establish a forum for opinion formation for a target group that hardly uses linear media, explained project manager Katrin Pötzsch: "We said we have to go there also for political discourse. [...] We have to address users and target groups that cannot be reached through our own channels" (as cited in Eichler 2022a: 205). Jochen Grabler, editor-in-charge of the documentary format *Y-Kollektiv*, points out that PSM media and video-on-demand libraries have not proven successful in reaching a younger audience: "Roughly speaking, we have gone where the people are. All dreams of a European or German special path alongside YouTube have been dashed so far. So, it was absolutely clear: We're going to YouTube" (as cited in Eichler 2022a: 238).

All interviewees emphasised the importance of interacting with the audience through social media. Participation as a part of the public service remit can be realised by communicating with users and incorporating their thoughts and proposals into the journalists' work. Eva Schulz, member of the editorial board of *Deutschland3000*, saw great potential for public service journalism to get into exchanges with users in social networks: "I still see social media as a great opportunity, especially for us as public broadcasters, who can really make a difference if we say we also feel a responsibility for the debates we trigger (as cited in Eichler 2022a: 270).

All interviewees were aware of possible dependencies on platforms regarding technical infrastructure and dissemination of journalistic content. But they were willing to take the risk, as Jörg Rheinländer, responsible for the regional audio news format *Hessenschau in 100 Sekunden* said:

> They can tell us in three years that we don't need you anymore and we'll throw you off [referring to platform operators]. That would be bad luck, but if I always think it through to the end? [...] Be where the people are. (as cited in Eichler 2022a: 189)

These quotes clearly show that media managers at ARD focus on producing and distributing innovative journalistic formats primarily on social networks. They see great benefits in reaching younger target groups and making use of the "social" functions. This goes for all the big social networks like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat. The interviewees said that, as a part of this strategy, they accept risks of dependency on commercial platforms, like content moderation, overblocking, or general dependency on technical infrastructures and recommender algorithms.

Each format examined was designed and developed from the outset for a specific platform. This approach has a comprehensive impact on editorial structures, working methods, and the design of the content. In the following, connections and references from the editorial observations and interviews are compiled.

Characteristics of innovations: Structures and processes

Three of the four editorial units studied work in organisational forms that are not integrated into broadcasting centres or cross-media newsrooms. Both spatially and technically-infrastructurally, there is little or no operative connection to existing structures. An exception is *Hessenschau in 100 Sekunden*, which is integrated into a newsroom. For this innovative regional news format, developed and produced specifically for voice assistant providers or smart-speaker systems, integration into editorial structures is not only obvious, but indispensable to ensuring fast and comprehensive exchange of information between media genres. The other three editorial units explored use infrastructures or resources of the associated broadcasting companies only in individual cases, for example, to obtain expertise from specialist editors, for cross-promotion or cooperation with linear formats, or for the exchange of information when planning topics. Then, a principle of flexible cross-mediality is applied. Cross-media work and publication is not manifested by fixed structures or procedures; it is practised as needed and is not a declared strategic goal. When practising flexible cross-media, single-platform journalists can become multiplatform journalists (see also Francoeur, 2016). In all the offerings examined, the respective working methods and internal organisational forms have emerged in format development processes and are oriented towards the products and their users.

Community management and the integration of follow-up communication are significant for editorial structures and processes. The principles of process journalism (see also Meier, 2016) are anchored in the editorial offices of *Deutschland3000*, *Y-Kollektiv*, and *News WG* and determine large parts of the editorial work. Community management and social media editing are integrated into the processes of journalistic work. The processes of finding and developing topics, researching protagonists and opinions, promoting content, platform-oriented implementation, and follow-up communication

take place together and in continuous coordination. The exchange between journalistic and social media editorial perspectives is crucial. On the one hand, this is guaranteed by conference and meeting routines, and on the other, by physical proximity. Journalists learn about user reactions to their contributions in a bundled and direct way; social media editors can already participate in the planning and production phase of journalistic contributions and bring in their competences.

Use of algorithmic functions for content and distribution

The specific acting and research in platform environments are established processes in the editorial offices observed. It stands, for example, at the beginning of the research for a possible topic and also serves to find topics and protagonists (for consistent findings on the role of community managers, see Assmann & Diakopoulus, 2017). One example of this is the research routines of the *Deutschland3000* editorial team. Journalists conduct targeted research on specific topics in suitable Facebook groups. They pursue several goals in this way: Moods, opinions, and attitudes toward possible journalistic topics are to be captured, the relevance of planned topics for the target group is assessed in this way, and finally, protagonists for videos can be found via Facebook groups, as explained by editor Viktoria Reichelt:

> When I start looking for protagonists, I post calls in these groups. [...] Especially when it comes to sensitive topics, people are initially happy if it's public service. I then reveal that relatively quickly when I get in touch with them. (as cited in Eichler, 2022a: 284)

Focusing on the platform, also referred to in the editorial team as beat reporting, is intended to help identify sub-target groups within the main target group of 20–29-year-olds, and to get to know their needs and realities of life. Another important effect is to identify networks and groups within Facebook through which editorial contributions can be distributed specifically, so that they are in turn disseminated via these groups and achieve high quantitative and qualitative coverage. Eva Schulz spoke of "seeding" by the social media editors:

> After the release of the film, one editor does nothing else for a day but seeding the video. That means they go to the Facebook groups where we have done research, where it could be relevant, and post it there. They write to Facebook pages with a wide reach to ask if they want to share it. They approach influencers to share the videos. At best, these people appear in the videos themselves. (as cited in Eichler, 2022a: 277)

This distribution strategy relies on certain algorithmic mechanisms of Facebook: *Deutschland3000*'s contributions are not only disseminated via

the editorial team's own account, but to a significant extent via distribution in and through Facebook groups, as well as by prominent hosts or influencers from other PSM formats.

An example of the alignment of journalistic action with algorithmic functions is content that conveys opinions. After publication, the follow-up communication on Facebook and Instagram is controlled and practised by social media editors. To stimulate this communication, the video contributions are often deliberately designed to be opinionated, said editorial director Markus Ehrlich:

> That's quite often the case with us, that we represent a thesis to which one can also have an opposing point of view and then discuss that with the people in the comment columns. The video or other content doesn't stand on its own, there's always community management involved. And for us [...] that's a discussion of the content with the feedback from the users. (as cited in Eichler, 2022a: 276)

Taking a stance in the produced content is intended to promote follow-up communication and at the same time strengthen the dissemination of the content. Producing journalistic contributions that are as balanced, neutral, and detached as possible is therefore not a goal of this format.

Another example of purposeful employment of algorithmic functions to increase reach was revealed during observations in the *News WG* editorial team. An Instagram story by the editorial team had an exceptionally wide reach, and the editorial team reacted to this with intensive community management. The aim of the intensification in this phase was also to increase the number of followers and to gain new users, which the editorial team succeeded in doing, among other things, by linking to the Instagram account of leading news providers like *Tagesschau*, *FAZ*, and *Spiegel Online*. Through these actions, the number of followers increased by more than 10 per cent in two days (Eichler, 2022a).

Evaluation of metrics and analytics as a process routine

In all the units studied, there were defined quantitative target goals to be achieved within a set timeframe. For this purpose, the editorial teams analysed usage and user data provided to them by the platforms. These metrics and analytics were discussed in daily, weekly, or occasional routines in feedback sessions and became related to the journalistic content. In some cases, the data analyses were in-depth: For individual video posts, certain metrics of the platforms such as retention rate, click-through rate, playout rate, and engagement rate were evaluated and discussed. This feedback has impact on the journalistic products as positive or negative reinforcement. The editorial teams retain best practice examples and change products that achieve poor

reach or engagement. Overall, one can speak of a data-informed – but not data-driven – way of working (Sehl & Eder, 2020; Sehl et al., 2019; van Dijck et al., 2018).

The interviews and observations clearly show that journalistic work and editorial decisions are oriented towards metrics and analytics of the platforms. For the interviewed editors, they have a compass function for journalistic and editorial activities. In the interviews, there were no hints of a direct impact of metrics on journalistic content, decisions for or against certain topics, or managerial surveillance.

Structural dynamics of digital-first newsrooms (Cohen, 2019) seem not to play a big role in public service editorial units, because the pressure of commodifying content is low compared with commercial media producers. Nevertheless, editorial topic discussions and decisions are significantly oriented towards the defined target groups and the prospects of success of the topic on the platform being used. In audience orientation, the criterion of a topic's relevance is central. The dissemination potential via social media functions and how this can be increased is also assessed in editorial conferences and plays an important role in the decision for or against a topic proposal.

In the interviews and editorial observations, however, positions also became clear that are predominantly oriented towards journalistic values, especially those of public service. For example, topics are occasionally implemented that have no prospect of above-average coverage or are deliberately intended to appeal to users who do not belong to the target group in the platform's environment.

Features of product innovations

The content analyses of the explored formats show that journalistic content is being optimised for dissemination on specific social networks. *Y-Kollektiv*, *Deutschland3000*, and *News WG* in particular are strongly oriented towards the conventions of the respective platform in terms of presentation and design. Aesthetics, visual implementation, graphics, editing style, typographies, dramaturgy, language style, and tonality are aligned to the environment of the platform used. In the editorial offices, the use of resources for platform-specific formatting is high.

The different forms of presentation used for these three formats are also geared to the respective platform. Common forms such as reportage, interview, report, and analysing report are starting points for the development of independent variants of these forms of presentation. Each format works with one or more clearly defined storytelling paradigm, which are used according to their suitability for the reporting topic. In these paradigms, the reporting journalists and the featured protagonists have assigned roles that differ from conventional reporting. In particular, the distance to the subject matter or persons of the report is often less than in linear formats.

It is also noticeable that the authors in their functions as reporters or hosts take a stand in many cases. This is justified with a stimulating effect on follow-up communication, a higher emotional impact, and more authenticity of the authors. This becomes clear, for example, in the reportages of *Y-Kollektiv*. They follow the approach of narrative journalism, in which the reporter reports from a subjective, participatory perspective:

> Our approach was participatory observation, getting close to the people, making it clear that the reporter is in this story, gets to know people, gets into situations, is not neutral in these situations, but also making it as transparent as possible that the reporter has an attitude towards the theme of the film [...] and thus offering the viewers something to rub up against. (Grabler, as cited in Eichler 2022a: 238)

Deutschland3000 also works with platform-specific forms of implementation for the video contributions. Four different defined forms, oriented towards conventions of the platform, are produced. The editorial team analyses which of these forms of implementation achieves particularly high usage figures and concludes that the posts in which protagonists are at the centre of the reporting generate the most views. This is one of the reasons why *Deutschland3000* produces about 60 per cent of its video contributions in the implementation forms of "protagonist film" and "encounters".

As an interactive and participatory format, *Y-Kollektiv* has set up the YouTube channel *Y zwei*. Videos are published there in which the reporters take up and answer users' questions. Beforehand, the social media editors bundle these questions into topic clusters that the film authors specifically address. These include questions about understanding the content, the role of journalists, and editorial decisions. Here, too, community management and journalists work closely together to strengthen the bond and discourse between the editorial team and the user community.

Public network value: Application to the case studies

With reference to the concept of public network value (Steinmaurer & Wenzel, 2015), specific criteria can be applied to the working methods and contents of the case studies. In Table 13.2, selected criteria are used to check which specific public service requirements are realised. The investigated units largely observe the criteria, and thus the format profiles are decisively sharpened and the uniqueness of the journalistic offerings in the respective media environment can be demonstrated.

Table 13.2 *Quality criteria in online communication and public network value applied to the case studies*

	Hessenschau in 100 Sekunden	**News WG**	**Y-Kollektiv**	**Deutschland3000**
Navigation and orientation	News orientation	Explanatory and orientating format	Confrontation with niche topics, change of perspective	Representation of diversity of opinion, change of perspective
Reduction of complexity	Short messages/ news	Format Insta-Story and function of the host	Breaking down to personal stories	Personal stories, forming poles of opinion
Accessibility	Website and third-party platform	Website and third-party platform	Website and third-party platform	Website and third-party platform
Transparency	In the further development of the format, user survey	Reactions to user questions/comments, indication of sources, further development of format, cooperation with specialist editorial offices	Indication of sources, follow-up communication, Q&A	Response to user questions/comments, indication of sources
Convergence, linkages	Occasion-related references to own websites	Linking to PSM content and within Instagram network	Linking to formats of network "funk", linear format "Rabiat"	Linking to corresponding formats of network "funk", podcast format
Diligence obligations	Four-eyes principle, two-sources principle	Six-eyes principle, editing of scripts, depth of research, citation of sources, consultation with specialist editorial offices	Editing and proofreading of the treatments, multiple approval of contributions, feedback during research, indication of sources	Depth of research, feedback during research, acceptance of contributions, indication and archiving of sources
Update	Several times a day	If required	Through format Q&A	If required
Dialogue, participation	User survey in the further development of the format	Community management, survey on further development of the format	Social media editing, users as protagonists	Social media editing, research in network groups, users as protagonists
Promotion of user competence	Voice assistants as an environment for PSM content	Call to discourse, references to further content on the topic	Call to discourse, references to further content on the topic	Call to discourse, references to further content on the topic

Comments: The term public network value comes from Steinmaurer and Wenzel (2015).

Journalism for third-party platforms as part of a renewed legitimacy

A consistent finding from the case studies is that the journalistic offerings examined are aligned with the platforms used. Journalistic content and editorial practices assimilate to the rules, algorithmic mechanisms, and practices of the platforms: Journalism is not just done on platforms, but specifically *for* platforms.

In the units studied, innovative formats were created that reach younger audiences successfully. By January 2022, the *Y-Kollektiv* channel had gathered more than one million subscribers on YouTube (Funk, 2022). In May 2022, *News WG* had a little more than 150,000 followers (News WG, 2022), and *Deutschland3000* recorded about 260,000 followers on Facebook and Instagram (Deutschland3000, n.d.).

With these offerings, ARD taps into markets that could not be reached through other distribution channels. This approach counteracts the described developments of a generation gap. Users are involved in discourses around reporting and the development of new topics through participation and interaction. This promotes participation and makes users, who would otherwise probably remain excluded, participants in opinion-forming processes.

To counteract the loss of social relevance and to ensure the function as an enabler of discourse, journalistic content for third-party platforms is therefore an indispensable component of a digital strategy and thus of a renewed legitimisation of PSM. Required and mandated services such as inclusion, participation, diversity of opinion, integration, and participation, and the general task of creating a deliberative public sphere, can be realised in the formats studied. They thus make an essential contribution to society by expanding the conception of PSB by the dimension of a PSM approach.

Opportunities and limitations of cross-media and federalism

The research results show that product innovations can be successfully developed and produced in structures created specifically for this purpose. Against this background, it becomes clear that the expectations of cross-media newsrooms regarding innovation development are too high. Cross-media organisation and cooperation is indispensable for current affairs and regional reporting; however, it is important to consider the resources that must be invested to achieve certain strategic goals. In which cases is the effort to build up and maintain an extensive cross-media structure justified against the background of the objective to reach new audiences? When might it be more effective to develop and produce an offer only for a specific channel or platform?

It must also be questioned how purposeful the federal structure of ARD still is. To what extent can and should ARD structurally diversify regarding the

development and production of platform-specific formats? On the other hand, for which tasks are convergent structures expedient? How can non-linear offerings, especially those that have nationwide relevance, be coordinated and jointly curated within the network? These questions are not dealt with systematically enough by ARD, although this further strategic orientation of the regional branches and ARD as a whole determines its future viability.

Against the backdrop of the formulated goal of developing into a cross-media and structurally integrated federal media association (ARD, 2017), a clearly growing need for coordination within ARD is emerging. The usefulness of the federal structure is being pushed to its limits by digitalisation. Distribution strategies and the distribution of tasks must be adapted more precisely to changed markets and user routines. Since the distribution of non-linear content is not bound to federal or national borders and needs to be much more user-centric, a more central organisation for content coordination will be necessary. In turn, branches will have to hand over competences and responsibilities. On the other hand, federalism offers potential in terms of knowledge transfer. To this end, a network should be established to secure and develop innovation expertise.

Public value and platformisation

The case studies show that platform logics and algorithmic functions are considered in editorial decisions and actions. While such points of orientation are routinely incorporated into daily processes, the negotiation of classic journalistic quality standards is less obvious and less determining in editorial routines. Nevertheless, influence on journalistic independence through prioritisation of algorithmic logic against editorial logic (Nieborg & Poell, 2018) was not identified during the editorial observations. All the same, clear characteristics of platformisation in relation to the forms of presentation and the organisational structures of the editorial offices were recognised. By following a platform-native or off-site strategy (Sehl et al., 2018), the units studied become complementors (Nieborg & Poell, 2018) of platforms and place themselves in increasing dependence, as they are "forced to operate within the logic of social media" (Stollfuß, 2021: 132). The question arises of "how public democratic values [can] be promoted in this environment" (Van Es & Poell, 2020: 2). In the case studies, this goal is largely achieved because there is a shared understanding of public service values. But to ensure that these quality criteria are observed and adhered to, there is a lack of standardised procedure for a value-oriented quality management that can be applied in all editorial offices that create content for third-party platforms.

In the sense of independent PSM quality journalism, and with regard to possible future conflicts of interest, there is a need for ethical guidelines that allow for a demarcation between assimilation to platforms and journalistic quality standards. The following questions should be considered:

- Journalistic autonomy: How do PSM ensure that they decide independently of algorithmic logic in the selection of their topics and content?
- Design and presentation: How are PSM quality standards ensured in the environment of platform-specific conventions?
- Diversity of opinion and depth of content: How is it ensured that PSM content reflects and disseminates diverse perspectives and positions and is mindful of algorithmic effects that favour popular and easily consumable content over complex ones?
- Infrastructural independence: How do PSM counter the danger of infrastructural capture in increasingly monopolised third-party platform landscapes?
- Public interest and user needs: What criteria do public service editors use to balance user interests and public interest?

Because it can be assumed that PSM content will be distributed even more intensively and in greater quantities via third-party platforms in the future, there is a need to address these questions. It is recommended that these conversations be conducted jointly between all public service providers in Germany, or even in Europe, to arrive at a valid result that is as unanimous as possible.[4]

Conclusion

ARD's goal of developing into a cross-media content and structurally integrated federal media association has been achieved at best in rudimentary stages under innovation criteria. While there is evidence of innovation developments at the level of products, this is only true to a limited extent at the level of processes. Regarding knowledge transfer, more attention should be paid to how successful innovations could diffuse from small units into larger structures of broadcasting centres.

The development process towards becoming a PSM organisation has been initiated but is coming up against limits due to immanent structural conservatism. The need to coordinate media offerings and content in the context of non-linear distribution already in the conception phase and to curate, bundle, and promote them in a user-oriented way in distribution is great and will continue to increase. There is a requirement for more centralised organisational forms that make decisions for the entire media network in programme management and the use of platforms.

These findings show that ARD has so far failed to overcome many challenges to remain an indispensable contributor to society in terms of enabling opinion formation by providing all with high-quality journalism. It becomes clear that ARD must enter a civic discourse to clarify how it can guarantee

and develop its values on third-party platforms. Part of this discourse must be an examination of ethical issues concerning the limitations of platformisation. There is also a need for an innovation process at ARD regarding the paradigmatic orientation (see also Francis & Bessant, 2005; Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013). At this point, too, the future role of ARD as a contributor to society will have to be proven in the context of the legitimacy debate.

Acknowledgements

Before and during the making of this study, the author was a staff member of Hessischer Rundfunk in Frankfurt, Germany. There are no conflicts of interest or dependencies with regard to the research subjects. No funding was received for this chapter.

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Endnotes

[1] Goods for which private demand falls short of the desired social level or impact.

[2] I translated all original quotations assisted by the software DeepL Pro.

[3] The renewed Interstate Media Treaty underlines this task.

[4] For more empirical insights and an in-depth discussion of these aspects see Eichler (2022b).

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CHAPTER 14

Enabling visibility

Online transparency practices of German public service media organisations

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ABSTRACT

Transparency has become a buzzword of public sector reforms in recent decades, evident as well in public service media (PSM) frameworks such as the European Broadcasting Union's contribution to society concept. At the same time, the interventions of the European Commission to PSM governance were accompanied by new reporting obligations in many member states, although to a varying extent. In Germany, media legislators, public broadcasters, and their governance bodies have increasingly implemented transparency regulations and practices following a 2014 decision of the Federal Constitutional Court. Taking a visibility perspective on transparency as a means to provide for an informed citizenry, which is necessary for a legitimising dialogue on PSM, I set out to explore these measures in this chapter. I draw on a qualitative document analysis of legal and self-regulatory documents and online information-sharing practices of all twelve German PSM organisations and their governance bodies. The results reveal noticeable differences between the various broadcasters, both regarding legal obligations and voluntary disclosures.

KEYWORDS: transparency, governance, regulation, reporting practices, reporting requirements

Speck, D. (2023). Enabling visibility: Online transparency practices of German public service media organisations. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 289–310). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg.
https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-14

Introduction

In the wake of current political, social, and technological changes, public broadcasters face increasing demands to reach out to the public and maintain their relevance within society. Consequently, rethinking transparency practices may be an important cornerstone of the legitimacy management of public service broadcasters (PSBs). A notion of showcasing contribution to society through impact measurement and public communication to build legitimacy is evident in the initiative of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) (2015a) of the same title. An expectation for transparency to cause a boost in legitimacy is also evident in a guide developed by the EBU to advise its member organisations on how to disclose organisational information online. The advocacy coalition of public broadcasters argues that "the long-term benefits in terms of legitimacy and case-building for [public service media] outweigh any possible disadvantages of being transparent" (EBU, 2015b: 7).

However, organisational transparency is hardly considered "a feature of public broadcasters' DNA" (Donders & Raats, 2018: 43), due to their reliance on the path dependencies of media policy and their notoriously bureaucratic character. It is, though, fair to say that more recent developments such as the European Commission's interventions with PSB in several European Union member states have contributed to more transparent funding and governance mechanisms in a range of countries (Donders, 2021; Ganter & Sehl, 2018). Furthermore, the implementation of the public value framework and new public management reform doctrines during the 2000s may be regarded as a spill-over of "audit society" (Power, 1997) paradigms to PSB governance and management. Since then, the measurement of performance indicators, new reporting obligations, as well as public consultations have become a crucial part of public service media (PSM) regulation and governance in many European states. This has fostered a multistakeholder approach in PSM policy (Baldi, 2007; Donders et al., 2019), opening spaces for public debate on PSM performance. These developments have been widely criticised though, for instance, for their focus on quantitative rather than qualitative data (Rodríguez-Castro et al., 2021) or on regulators, experts, and competitors instead of citizens (Van den Bulck, 2015; Donders et al., 2019; see also Rodríguez-Castro & Campos-Freire, Chapter 11 in this volume).

Despite the pervasiveness of transparency as a buzzword of these reforms and the great expectations towards it being an enabler of legitimacy, both empirical research on and theoretical conceptualisations of public broadcasters' organisational transparency have remained rather scarce. To name a few exceptions, an anthology edited by Herzog and colleagues (2018a) has described the status quo of funding transparency of PSM in 15 countries and pointed out important issues such as the transparency of PSM policy-making itself (Donders & Raats, 2018) or a lack of inclusion of the public into relevant decision-making processes (Kuhn, 2018). Yet, it also describes

how difficult it is "to get the licence fee payers involved in internal PSM matters" (Nissen, 2018: 101). Rivera Otero and colleagues (2021) have surveyed experts and analysed corporate websites to assess the transparency policies implemented by PSB in nine European states. Thomass (2016) has interrelated the concepts of transparency, civil society, and the public sphere with regard to PSM supervisory bodies.

In this chapter, I take a closer look at the case of PSM transparency in Germany. I draw from a qualitative document analysis of online information disclosure practices and legal reporting obligations of all twelve German PSBs, including their governing bodies. I aim to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. Which legal and self-regulatory reporting and transparency obligations must German public broadcasters and their governance bodies fulfil?

RQ2. Which information is being made available online by German public broadcasters and their governance bodies?

The analysis is based on a previous study (Speck, 2019) commissioned by the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB). The indicator grid underlying this first study was refined, and the analysis repeated in August 2021 to capture more recent developments.

Transparency: A definition

In Western democracies, public expectations towards the transparency of both public and private organisations have increased throughout the last decades in line with "the rise of the right to know" (Schudson, 2015). A plethora of monitory mechanisms and practices, with varying degrees of institutionalisation, have emerged within the "monitory democracy" (Keane, 2018). "Rituals of verification" (Power, 1997) have put accessible performance measurement at the core of public institutions and private organisations alike. Transparency has become a pivotal concept in areas such as policy-making, public administration, and economy, and has been idealised as "the key to better governance" (Hood & Heald, 2006), almost regardless of whether one talks about a political party, a public authority, or a commercial enterprise. Transparency is also regarded as closely connected to the accountability of organisations and the individuals acting within them (e.g., Fengler et al., 2014; Fox, 2007; Williams, 2015). In public policy research and organisation studies, transparency has often been discussed as a tool to increase efficiency (Hebb, 2006; Stasavage, 2004), trust (Bentele & Seiffert, 2009; Heald, 2018), or legitimacy (Curtin & Meijer, 2006; De Fine Licht et al., 2014).

However, the actual effects of transparency mechanisms remain highly controversial, as research indicates that "the transparency-trust-legitimacy

path is fragile" (Heald, 2018: 331). Scholars point to unintended – or even intended – consequences, such as an information overload, which comes at the expense of true transparency (August & Osrecki, 2019; Etzioni, 2010; O'Neill, 2002; Stohl et al., 2016; Tsoukas, 1997). Critics also warn against its potential to sow distrust rather than building legitimacy or to establish regimes of expertocracy instead of facilitating the participation of citizens (O'Neill, 2002; Valentinov et al., 2019; Wever, 2014; for PSM, see Donders & Raats, 2018) – to highlight just a few of manifold critiques of an overly enthusiastic stance on organisational transparency.

A common understanding relates transparency to proactive information-sharing of organisations and describes it as a means to reduce information asymmetries between those inside and those outside (e.g., Florini, 2000; Forssbaeck & Oxelheim, 2014; Heald, 2006). Rather than solely emphasising the act of disclosure and its effects on the sender, transparency efforts may thus also focus on the quality of the information and its relevance for the intended receivers. Michener and Bersch (2013) defined two necessary conditions for the quality of information: visibility and inferability. While the former implies the degree to which information is available, complete, and easily located (i.e., visible), the latter refers to the degree to which the information enables its intended receivers to draw accurate conclusions. Referring to this approach, this chapter focuses on the visibility of selected indicators of PSM transparency, describing the availability of organisational and governance information.

While one should avoid the pitfalls of techno-optimism, as for many other organisations, digital technologies present an opportunity for PSM to share information not only with an expert audience, but with potentially everyone in society. This is essentially the intended target audience if adhering to universalism as a core principle of PSM (Savage et al., 2020) and defining it as an institution to strengthen citizenship and democracy instead of as a mere tool to cure market failure (Donders, 2021). Whereas "it cannot be expected that a general public would dig into all of the regulations […] of PSM, the possibility to do so is a normative prerogative for a public broadcaster, which lives up to its name" (Thomass, 2016: 307). From this perspective, it is possible to distil a normative understanding of PSM openness that goes beyond an instrumental framework of transparency as a means to exhibit the distinctiveness of PSBs during policy debates. In this understanding, transparency practices have "the potential to transport discourses among the elites to a broader public sphere and to provide them with the necessary information and insight to participate and engage in those discourses" (Thomass, 2016: 303). This is important, given that "a public sphere that is well informed about issues of regulation is necessary, so that a legitimating dialogue can take place", as Thomass (2016: 303) argued concerning PSM supervisory bodies.

However, we should acknowledge the fluidity of transparency, with no clear endpoint or ideal "amount" to be reached. The wide array of infor-

mation already available in many sectors has not stopped calls for even greater transparency. According to Wallis (2020), this is not surprising, as the availability of more data increases social complexity, which in turn stipulates demands for transparency. Hence, the question of which transparency measures are needed is a contextual and processual one requiring interaction and negotiation between organisations and their environments (Heimstädt & Dobusch, 2018; Meijer, 2013).

Setting out from these presuppositions, I present in this chapter a descriptive assessment of online information-sharing practices by PSM organisations and their governing bodies. This includes both the provision of information required by law as well as self-imposed practices going beyond legal reporting obligations, thereby contrasting transparency regulation and actual practice. This is pivotal if we consider PSM not necessarily as "victims of evil and malevolent governments" (Donders, 2021: xiv), but as organisations having a certain degree of agency over introducing new corporate practices. Arguably, this is the case in Germany to a considerable extent: Internally organised governance bodies play a crucial role, and the Federal Constitutional Court has been constantly safeguarding the freedoms of PSBs.

Public service media transparency: Outlining the case of Germany

In Germany, transparency measures addressed at wider parts of the public have rather slowly been implemented as an element of broadcasting regulation compared with particularly Anglo-Saxon media systems (Thomass, 2016). The 2014 ZDF Decision of the Federal Constitutional Court (BVerfG, 2014) marks a milestone here. Whilst a decrease of the number of state representatives in PSB governing bodies was at the core of the ruling, it also called for an increase of transparency of these bodies (Speck, 2014). The court demanded legislators to ensure "a minimum of transparency" of governing bodies to counteract the misuse of power and influence of vested interests. This implies, according to the judgement,

> easy access to information on the organisational structures, the composition of the bodies and committees, as well as upcoming agendas, and that, at least in principle, the minutes of the meetings be made available in a timely manner, or that the public receive substantial information on the subject matter and the results of the deliberations. (BVerfG, 2014: para. 85)

Following this, public broadcasters and their governance boards increased their efforts to provide information to the public (Horz-Ishak & Thomass, 2021; Thomass, 2016). Traditionally, German PSBs have seen their Gremien [governance bodies] as the main addressee of accountability and transparency measures, rather than the general public (Dörr, as cited in Wagner, 2016; as

cited in Herzog et al., 2018b). Unlike in other countries, "at last, the boards are composed of members of socially relevant groups, and in turn, represent the public" (Herzog et al., 2018b: 6). Yet, a notion of transparency as a requirement towards citizens would need to set focus on society at large, including individual citizens (see also Donders, 2021; Fehlmann, Chapter 2; Rodríguez-Castro & Campos-Freire, Chapter 11 in this volume). Furthermore, the Federal Constitutional Court has repeatedly stated that the members of governance bodies are to represent the public instead of serving the interests of the organisations they are attached to (BVerfG, 2014; Schulz, 2008).

PSM transparency was a key issue in German media policy in 2017, when the then-chairperson of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland [ARD – Working Group of Public Service Broadcasters in the Federal Republic of Germany], Karola Wille, declared the topic a priority (Herzog et al., 2018b). For the first time, ARD published an overview of the salaries of directors-general of its nine member organisations on a dedicated transparency website during that year and increased the amount of information provided online considerably (ARD, 2017). However, the debate on transparency of German PSM has not stopped, and the fierce discussion on the licence fee increase in 2020 and 2021 has once more put the legitimacy of public funding under scrutiny.[1] In 2021, ARD initiated a "future dialogue" with citizens, including an open online consultation and workshops with selected members of the audience (ARD, 2021).

Admittedly, the picture of PSM transparency in Germany is somewhat more diverse and difficult to capture compared with many other European countries due to the sheer size and complexity of institutional settings: Nine regional broadcasters constituting ARD are active in the market,[2] alongside Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) [Second German Television] and Deutschlandradio (DRadio) operating on the nationwide level, and Deutsche Welle (DW) as an international broadcaster. Organisational cultures differ between these twelve organisations, as do legal requirements. Broadcasting law and regulation is a task performed by the Länder [federal states], except for DW, which it is the sole PSM organisation legally constituted on the federal level and receiving its funding from state budget instead of licence fees. PSM governance is fairly complex, too, as 24 bodies perform tasks which are entrusted to only a few, or even a single entity in other countries. There are two bodies per broadcaster: The Rundfunkrat [Broadcasting Council, hereafter, council; TV council in the case of ZDF] and the Verwaltungsrat [Board of Governors, hereafter, board]. Whereas the (much bigger) council usually deals with questions related to programming and public remit, the smaller board takes care of controlling the finances of public broadcasters, approving greater investments, and holding the director-general to account.[3] As mentioned above, the councils consist of members representing socially

relevant groups, including political parties, religious groups, labour unions, or employers' associations. Within the boards, often, but not in any case, the state governments are represented, whereas a certain number of seats are reserved for representatives elected by the councils, and sometimes representatives of PSM employees. Board and council members serve in an honorary capacity but receive some expense allowance. It is important to note that it is not always easy to distinguish between the supervisory bodies and PSM themselves, as the former are internally organised, and thus play a considerable role in decision-making processes of PSM organisations, even though critics argue that they rarely exert their power (Wolf, 2013).

Summing up, while "the opaque decision processes in PSM as public institutions are a topic of concern" (Horz-Ishak & Thomass, 2021: 235), in Germany, "for a few years now, public service media published comprehensive online data on facts and figures such as the spending of broadcasting fees" (Horz-Ishak & Thomass, 2021: 239). In this chapter, I set out to explore these increased practices of online information disclosure of German PSM in more detail.

Methodology

The analysis looks at practices of information disclosure published at PSM corporate websites and available to potentially all citizens; rather than practices mediated through other fora or dedicated to more specific and closed target audiences.

To answer RQ1, about legal and self-regulatory transparency obligations, the relevant laws and corporate charters constituting the twelve German public broadcasters have been analysed. The corporate charters are decided upon by the governance bodies and thus considered self-regulatory. The analysis only comprises transparency obligations specific to these laws and regulations, not taking into account general rules for transparency of public bodies or large corporations set out in other laws (e.g., compliance to GDPR rules or FOI laws, if not further specified in broadcasting laws).

To answer RQ2, about the information made available online, the corporate websites of all twelve German public broadcasters and their 24 governing bodies have been analysed. Additionally, the joint corporate website of ARD members and their common governing body GVK [Committee of the Chairpersons of Governance Bodies] as well as the Programmbeirat [Programme Advisory Board] has been taken into account.

All relevant documents (e.g., PDF files of laws and charters, screenshots of websites at the time of analysis) were gathered, coded, and evaluated using the qualitative research software MAXQDA. Additionally, relevant media reports, press releases, academic literature, and policy documents accompanying related law-making, governance, or organisational decision-making processes

were added to the analysis as "background material" (Karppinen & Moe, 2019: 256), for instance, to clarify when a certain practice of transparency had been introduced or whether there had been broader discussions about it.

To assess which information is released or must be released according to the relevant laws, a checklist of relevant indicators (see Table 14.1 below) has been created. The indicators have been identified deductively by consulting a checklist developed by the EBU (2015b). During an initial coding phase of the document analysis, the EBU checklist was adapted inductively by assessing the information available at the corporate websites and required to be published by law. Consequently, the list presented here deviates from the one put forward by the EBU, to better capture the specifics of the German PSB system.

Five categories have been created to group the indicators: Governance transparency relates to transparency practices and obligations of the supervisory bodies. This category has been added to the original EBU list of four categories to reflect the particular focus of this study on governance bodies. Adding this category was also considered appropriate to capture the specificities of the German PSB system, with internally organised bodies taking over tasks executed by external regulators in other European countries – a situation not necessarily reflected within the EBU guide. Corporate transparency refers to more general information about a public broadcaster, such as its structures and management. Financial transparency relates to all funding-related indicators, such as the publishing of annual reports. Remit transparency assembles those indicators which are closely related to the public remit, programming, or editorial issues, such as complaint procedures or transparency obligations concerning public value tests. Social transparency relates to information on areas such as inclusion, diversity, or sustainability.

Table 14.1 *Transparency indicators*

Category	Indicators
Governance transparency	Public meetings Meeting agendas Attendance records Session templates Summary of relevant decisions & outcomes of a meeting Meeting minutes Names of members Profiles (bio/CV) of members Structures (e.g., existence of committees, executive board) Legal framework & self-regulatory rules for governance bodies Remuneration of members
Corporate transparency	Corporate structure Profiles (bio/CV) of managers Legal framework & self-regulatory rules for corporate management Statements in policy processes & other consultations Corporate FAQ Information on request; right to information Corporate blog Corporate codes of conduct Information on subsidiaries (e.g., annual subsidiary report) Production reports; Rules for cooperation with production sector Results of corporate research Number of employees Additional personnel data (e.g., gender breakdown)
Financial transparency	Results Budget of current year Annual report Information on licence fees Breakdown of licence-fee spending (for different programmes or departments) Management salaries Salary structures Total income; Sources of income Compliance rules (Links to) audit reports Guidelines for advertising & sponsoring (Average) costs of selected programmes
Remit transparency	Reports on fulfilment of remit & evaluation Other remit-related reports & mission information List of offers Editorial guidelines Correction site for all offers Information on right to complain & complaints management Complaints reports & statistics Programme statistics Public value concepts & proceedings for digital offers
Social transparency	Information on data privacy & data protection policies Core values Sustainability policies Diversity & inclusion policies & reports Contribution to culture Contribution to economy

Source: adapted from EBU, 2015b

While this methodology is suited for obtaining a broad picture of publishing requirements and practices across the German PSB system, it has several shortcomings. Notably, online content is highly volatile; meaning that some information might have been added to the websites under study just shortly after the analysis. Moreover, while it is reasonable to suggest that the information under study will be provided within specialised corporate sections of an organisation's online offer, the analysis may overlook information published elsewhere. Further, it only assesses whether organisations "score well against formal checklist criteria" (Heald, 2018: 323), instead of considering the demand side as well and analysing how potential users perceive the information being made available. Using the terms introduced by Michener and Bersch (2013), the analysis thus remains at the level of visibility rather than also considering the inferability of information.

Results

In general, the analysis reveals that legal and self-regulatory PSM transparency obligations differ considerably between the twelve organisations. Likewise, the degrees and practices of online information disclosure vary, unfolding a muddle of different PSM transparency policies within a single country, and even between those organisations constituting ARD. In the following, I take a closer look at the results for the five categories of transparency outlined above. For reasons of space, the analysis provides insights for only a selected range of particularly relevant indicators outlined in Table 14.1, that is, indicators relating to aspects of PSM transparency which have frequently been subject to public discussions in recent years.[4] If not explicitly stated otherwise, all data refers to the status quo of August 2021. A more recent decision by the German federal states in 2023 to introduce at least some harmonised transparency requirements for all PSBs came after the deadline of this volume and could thus not be considered anymore.

Governance transparency

In principle, eleven of the twelve councils hold their meetings publicly, meaning that interested citizens are allowed to visit the sessions. Commonly, this is explicitly stated in the relevant laws constituting the PSM organisations, which usually contain rules on which agenda items are to be dealt with behind closed doors. Unsurprisingly, these are typically issues touching privacy and secrecy concerns of the broadcaster, staff members, or third parties. The number of councils obliged to meet publicly has increased considerably following the 2014 ZDF ruling (BVerfG, 2014): In 2013, only four councils had to meet in public (Wolf, 2013). After a decision from HR's broadcasting council to convene publicly from 2022 (Nünning, 2021), the DW broadcasting council is now the only one left to generally meet behind closed doors.

Principally, though, visitors of the meetings are not entitled to ask questions or participate in the discussions; additionally, they usually do not get insight into the session templates before or during the meetings (see also Dobusch, 2020; Hoff, 2019). Some broadcasting councils do occasionally provide video streams of particularly relevant meetings. The sessions of the committees, however, which usually prepare the plenary sessions, are not open to the public; this is usually explicitly stated in the relevant laws. The same holds true for the boards, which admittedly take care of more delicate financial issues.

Eight councils are required to publish summaries of the meetings and the most relevant decisions, the detailedness and completeness of which differs from organisation to organisation. These are typically not verbatim records or otherwise detailed minutes providing insights into discussions. A legal obligation to publish (the more detailed) minutes rather than just a summary exists for RB only. For six councils, such summaries are to be published for committee meetings, too. A legal obligation to publish meeting agendas exists for ten councils (all except the broadcasting councils of DW and RBB). Seven councils must publish attendance records – a measure often implemented following discussions about low attendance rates of particularly state and political party representatives (Rosenkranz, 2016). A legal obligation to publish summaries of the meetings as well as the agendas exist for six of the twelve boards; only three of these must publish attendance records. At WDR, the members of both supervisory bodies are obliged to publish self-disclosures about their jobs as well as functions in associations, institutions, political parties, or other governance boards once a year. A similar practice exists for the members of the ZDF and DRadio councils and boards.

Looking at the information disclosed on the websites of supervisory bodies, only four of the twelve councils and five of the twelve boards publish more detailed information, such as a short CV, about their members, beyond a mere mentioning of their names and the organisations delegating them. For most of the councils, more detailed information is available for the chairpersons only.

For DRadio, ZDF, and RB, reporting obligations for both supervisory bodies are almost equivalent. For some other organisations such as MDR, NDR, and WDR, legislators have foreseen wide-ranging transparency obligations for the councils, whereas the boards of these organisations must disclose only a minimum of information, such as their composition. The broadcasting councils of RB (as set out in law), RBB, SR, and SWR (voluntarily) publish rather detailed minutes of their meetings, which do include more information on who said what in discussions, rather than just representing the results of the meetings. The TV council of ZDF does publish some templates for its plenary sessions on a regular basis, including the activities reports of the director-general and the complaints report. However, there is no obligation to publish all templates discussed within the public meetings, and a respec-

tive proposal to introduce such a mandatory disclosure was dismissed by the council in 2020 (Dobusch, 2020). Still, the TV council is the only body which does publish such templates in a structured and regular manner – publishing the most information among the councils. The governing bodies of ZDF also introduced a self-obligation to publish annual attendance quotes for all members, besides the mandatory attendance lists for each session.

GVK, the governing body at ARD level, does not publish any structured summaries of its meetings or even the agendas, aside from some information included in press releases, and it does not have any legal obligation to do so. The Programme Advisory Board, which monitors and discusses the joint national television programme of ARD, publishes only basic information about the topics covered during its meetings. Even though this body, being constituted by one member from each ARD broadcasting council, does not have any mandate to exert its decisions, this has been widely criticised as a lack of transparency. The members of the Programme Advisory Board have been described as "clandestine TV critics [translated]" (Niggemeier, 2014). It is only via the detailed minutes published by some broadcasting councils through which the public can get insights into the discussions of this body, as its members are expected to provide reports of their activities to the councils.

In sum, whereas the information disclosed by the governance bodies has increased in recent years, the degree to which information must be made available and is made available still differs considerably in between organisations, and often even between the two governing bodies within an organisation. While it may be considered reasonable that the boards are subject to higher secrecy due to the issues they deal with, in many cases, reporting requirements for them are still very limited. This is the case even within the two most recently reformed laws, the MDR-Staatsvertrag [Interstate Treaty on MDR] and NDR-Staatsvertrag [Interstate Treaty on NDR]. To a lesser extent, this observation holds true for the committees of the council as well, which arguably are the places for more "open" discussions compared with the plenary meetings (Dobusch, 2020; Wolf, 2017).

The fact that some governing bodies already introduced enhanced policies of information-sharing before such rules have been implemented by law, or that they move beyond legal obligations (see also Thomass, 2016), underlines the agency they have here. However, an arguably important part of the German PSM governance and decision-making processes cannot be regulated by law, as it does not formally exist: the Freundeskreise [circles of friends]. These groups of councillors typically meet before plenary meetings to discuss their standing on the agenda items and "reflect political leanings towards the leading social democrats and the conservative party" (Horz-Ishak & Thomass, 2021: 238–239).

Corporate transparency

Two of the twelve broadcasters should provide for maximum transparency vis-à-vis the public, according to the laws constituting them: RB and ZDF. The Interstate Treaty on NDR introduces a general right to information towards the broadcaster, ruling out access to journalistic-editorial information. It is the only law analysed here explicitly stating such a right of citizens towards a PSM organisation.

All broadcasters publish an overview of their corporate structures, alongside profiles of the director-general and the other members of the executive board. Every organisation discloses the total number of employees working for them (and sometimes the number of freelancers); increasingly, additional personnel statistics such as a gender breakdown are provided. For example, RB publishes an annual report on the situation of its female employees.

The vast network of subsidiaries and sub-subsidiaries of German public broadcasters remains an often-debated issue. These direct and indirect shareholdings include production companies and advertising sales houses, but also several non-commercial organisations. In many cases, these are operated jointly by several or even all German PSBs. Frequently, these structures have been criticised for a lack of transparency (Rau & Hennecke, 2016). The Medienstaatsvertrag [Interstate Media Treaty], a law implemented by all 16 federal states and setting basic rules for the media landscape across the whole of Germany, implies that PSM organisations must submit an annual report of these shareholdings to their governing bodies as well as to the court of auditors and state governments. It does not state, though, that this report must be made available to the greater public, too. Such an obligation is implemented by only some laws constituting the individual broadcasters, such as the WDR-Gesetz [WDR Act]. However, seven organisations do publish their subsidiary report on their corporate websites, despite the missing legal obligation for most of them. Typically, the annual reports disclose at least basic information on the subsidiaries as well. Many organisations also provide a list of at least the most important subsidiaries on their websites.

Closely related to the subsidiary debate, the relationship between PSB and the independent production sector has repeatedly been an issue of concern. The important position of PSB production subsidiaries in the market has been steadily criticised, and broadcasters have been accused of privileging "their" companies over independent producers (Meier, 2015). In 2013, ARD and the Producers' Alliance, the association of independent producers, reached an agreement according to which ARD had to disclose its commissioning policies in a structured manner. For the first time in 2015, ARD published its annual Produzentenbericht [producers report] (Nünning, 2015), comprising figures for all regional ARD members and breaking down the shares of productions commissioned to dependent and independent companies. Four ARD organisations also publish corporate-level production reports on their

websites. The Interstate Media Treaty requires PSM organisations to publish an overview of the share of productions commissioned to dependent and independent companies within their annual reports.

Financial transparency

As it is elsewhere in Europe, PSM executive compensation has consistently been an issue of heated debate in Germany. Eight of the twelve organisations are required to publish management salaries in some form. The relevant laws differ considerably though, concerning the degree to which these figures must be disclosed: Whereas the obligations for the director-general are usually most far-reaching, in some cases, it is sufficient to publish the average salary across all top-level management members (executive board) rather than the annual or monthly pay for each of them. Only three laws oblige broadcasters to disclose the payments PSB top executives receive for the functions they perform at subsidiaries.

Even without legal obligations for all organisations, it is meanwhile possible for citizens to find out the salaries of most top-ranking PSM managers, at least approximately: Since 2017, ARD has been publishing the annual basic salaries of the directors-general of its regional member organisations on a dedicated website, alongside the average monthly salaries of the other members of the top management (directors). ZDF and DRadio must publish that information by law, whereas the DW-Gesetz [DW Act] does not contain such a provision.

Six organisations must publish an overview of the wage structures for staff on collective wage agreements, as well as the general wage structures for employees outside such agreements. Typically, the boards must approve contracts with such staff members. Some laws contain an obligation that the boards must mention the salaries of such employees within the summary of the meeting in which such contracts are approved; arguably, this is a rather difficult place to find the information. So far, German PSB do not publish "star salaries" or the remuneration of middle-level management staff on a regular basis, as, for instance, the BBC does (BBC, n.d., 2021). Fees paid to star hosts, sports experts, or journalists are usually kept secret. A 2021 amendment of the Interstate Media Treaty on MDR, though, establishes that the annual report of the broadcaster must in going forward contain information on agreements with freelancers receiving more than EUR 150,000 per annum.

As for the annual reports of broadcasters, most are obliged to publish a "summary of essential parts" only, aside from the mandatory publication of the annual results. Many organisations do provide comprehensive information on the spending of licence fees, such as a breakdown of which shares of the fee are used for what programmes. A comprehensive overview of the organisations' budget of the current year is provided online by five broadcasters.

Remit transparency

According to the Interstate Media Treaty, all PSM organisations must publish reports on how they have been fulfilling their remit during a two-year period, as well as reports on their future corporate and remit priorities. The law also contains rules on the publication of the public value concepts underlying newly launched or relaunched digital offers, alongside regulations on publicity throughout the different stages of a public value test.

The question of how PSM organisations deal with formal complaints from citizens about violations of standards within their programmes is closely related to remit transparency. It is only the laws constituting RB and WDR which require the organisations to regularly report on the formal complaints they receive from viewers, listeners, and users. At ZDF, a complaints report is published at the occasion of each TV council meeting. Usually, the complaint procedures foresee a multistep process, in which formal complaints are answered by the director-general's office, deciding whether rules of conduct have been violated or not. Complainants can then decide whether they want to uphold their complaint, in which case it is transferred to the council. The council may then approve or dismiss the complaint. With the above-mentioned exception of ZDF, none of the councils publishes regular structured reports or comprehensive regular (e.g., annual) statistics on the complaints that have reached that final stage. In many cases, the only way to track the decisions is to look at the summaries of council meetings; though, the latter do not always contain comprehensive information about what a complaint has been about, or on which grounds a decision has been taken. Moreover, for most organisations, it is impossible to get structured information about initial-stage complaints that have not been passed on to the councils. Consequently, citizens may only hardly inform themselves about the complaints filed with most German PSM and the issues of concern behind these complaints. In this regard, German PSM fall behind organisations such as the German Press Council, which publishes its decisions as well as annual statistics. The BBC has been obliged to provide fortnightly complaints reports by its regulator, Ofcom, in 2017, a move which has not gone unchallenged (Preston, 2017).

Social transparency

A range of reporting obligations exists in the field of data privacy policies. Topics such as sustainability have also increasingly been put on the agenda; even though there are rarely any reporting obligations in this field so far. In 2020, ARD published a sustainability report for the first time. Far-reaching reporting obligations or self-regulations in the field of diversity (e.g., diversity schemes off-screen and on-screen) could not be identified; yet, some broadcasters have increasingly started to publish such information. Generally, indicators of social transparency are less prominent in both legal frameworks and the information published online.

Conclusion

Summing up, the analysis demonstrates that German PSM organisations and their governing bodies do indeed publish a wide range of information, and that an increase of both legal transparency obligations and voluntary practices has occurred in recent years. However, the degree to which information is revealed and must be disclosed according to legal requirements differ considerably between broadcasters. While the most recently revised acts constituting PSM organisations (the Interstate Treaties on MDR and NDR, amended in 2021) do impose new transparency regulations, these also differ. Further, the two acts deviate from the transparency rules agreed upon in the Interstate Treaties on DRadio and ZDF, which are constituted jointly between all 16 federal states.

The respective broadcasting acts constituting RB, ZDF, and DRadio may be considered particularly advanced regarding transparency measures. In contrast, only very few legal obligations are to be found in the Interstate Treaty on RBB and the DW Act.[5] As DW is the only broadcaster constituted by federal law, the federal level has not yet reflected the rise of transparency measures discussed and implemented on the state and interstate level following the ZDF ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court.

The degree of voluntary information disclosure also varies considerably between the different PSM organisations and their supervisory bodies. Most notably, both governing bodies of ZDF publish a wide range of information. Whereas the councils do generally disclose more than only basic information, many of the boards still lack increased transparency. Considering the importance of this aspect for an informed dialogue with society, strikingly little information is available regarding the processing of citizen complaints. The degree to which PSM organisations publish funding figures also differs starkly. Social transparency, comprising data on issues such as diversity and sustainability, has mostly only recently been put on the agenda.

Consequently, despite an increase of information-sharing by German PSM and their governing bodies, some considerable "black boxes" remain, even for those organisations and supervisory bodies which have implemented more advanced practices of information-sharing. PSM organisations and their supervisory bodies should thus make efforts to harmonise transparency practices across the country to enable citizens to obtain an equivalent degree of knowledge of their broadcasters' activities. While this could be regarded as a task for legislators, PSM organisations and their supervisory bodies may also introduce self-commitments to achieve a greater degree of information sharing.

This study analyses which information is available for the public – and hence visible. However, it does not reveal how receivers digest that information, that is, whether it is inferable (Michener & Bersch, 2013). It does not assess whether the publishing of the indicators under study lives up to

transparency aspirations such as an increase in public trust or legitimacy, or whether it really "transport[s] discourses among the elites to a broader public sphere" (Thomass, 2016: 303). As Rivera Otero and colleagues (2021: 15) rightly argued in their comparative study of PSM online information-sharing, "transparency, both theoretically and practically, goes beyond the publishing of data and reports on the website of the corporation to become something that must be approached holistically". Further research could thus shed light on the processes through which public broadcasters react to (differing) information demands from their institutional environments (for a conceptualisation of organisational transparency as negotiation process, see Heimstädt & Dobusch, 2018), and the question of whether a culture of transparency has been embraced within public broadcasters (see Donders, 2021). A cross-country comparative perspective could serve to map different (best) practices and regulations, and to identify common information demands and obstacles to greater PSM transparency.

Certainly, debates on the future of PSM and their contribution to and legitimacy within society will not stop anytime soon. A constructive legitimating dialogue will, however, require an informed citizenry (Thomass, 2016). Taking on a society-oriented stance, studies could assess which information citizens would wish to obtain from public broadcasters and how they perceive the information being shared. Enhancing audience participation in PSM decision-making processes, for example, through (online) consultations or citizen assemblies, could be an additional step towards more transparency (see Rodríguez-Castro & Campos-Freire, Chapter 11 in this volume). Potentially, this would foster an approach to transparency that exceeds an understanding of PSM organisations and their governing bodies as "active" information providers on the one hand, and "passive" audiences on the other (see Fehlmann, Chapter 2 in this volume).

An enhanced culture of accountability and transparency towards society at large is crucial in order "to make sure public broadcasters behave in an accountable manner towards citizens instead of governments" (Donders, 2021: 216). If contribution to society is to be understood as a concept that moves beyond the mere pleasing of governments or competitors towards one that sets particular focus on the needs and interests of citizens, both the theoretical framework and practical implications of the calls for transparency evident within it deserve further discussion and elaboration.

Acknowledgements

The author received funding from the German Trade Union Confederation (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB) for a previous version of the study presented in this chapter.

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Endnotes

[1] The increase from EUR 17.50 per month and household to EUR 18.36 was finally enacted by the Federal Constitutional Court in July 2021, after the state government of Saxony-Anhalt had refused to put the vote on the state parliaments' agenda in late 2020 and thus stopped the increase planned for January 2021. Subsequently, ARD, ZDF, and Deutschlandradio had filed complaints at the constitutional court.

[2] These are (in alphabetical order): Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR), Hessischer Rundfunk (HR), Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR), Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR), Radio Bremen (RB), Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (RBB), Saarländischer Rundfunk (SR), Südwestrundfunk (SWR), and Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR).

[3] The size of councils varies, ranging from 74 (SWR) to 32 (RB). The number of board members ranges from 18 (SWR) to 7 (BR, DW).

[4] For more detailed tabular oversights of the results, please contact the author.

[5] Though, it must be noted that an initial draft discussed in early 2021 to reform the Interstate Treaty on RBB contained new transparency obligations, also reacting to the requirements set by the Federal Constitutional Court in 2014 (Grimm, as cited in Hartung, 2021). Yet, the reform was halted later in 2021 and postponed following debates about the future of two radio stations.

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PART IV

CONCLUSION

AFTERWORD

When "everything" is still not enough

Expectations and realities regarding public service media's contribution to twenty-first–century digitalised society

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ABSTRACT
Based on the chapters in this volume, an answer to the question of what constitutes the expected contributions of public service media (PSM) to contemporary society could be "everything". Here at the conclusion of this volume, I set out to explore two related questions: How did we get here, and how can we tone the expectations of PSM down a bit without losing the core and historical responsibilities of these organisations? I explore these questions by discussing central notions including public sphere, public service, public value, and public interest, as their use and evolving meaning play a part in the power dynamics of defining both the problems and solutions that PSM should be involved in. I conclude by suggesting that, rather than focusing on the second halves of the portmanteaus, we should revisit writings about "the public", for instance, in the work of John Dewey.

KEYWORDS: public service, public value, public interest, the public, public service media, John Dewey

Van den Bulck, H. (2023). When "everything" is still not enough: Expectations and realities regarding public service media's contribution to twenty-first–century digitalised society. In M. Puppis, & C. Ali (Eds.), *Public service media's contribution to society: RIPE@2021* (pp. 313–326). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855756-a

Introduction

There are two potential explanations for being asked to write the concluding chapter of an edited volume, and both start from the external validation of the fact that you are old: The editors either consider you too old to have original ideas but do not want you to feel left out, or they think you are old enough to have had tea with Lord Reith, giving you a longer-term perspective. In this case, it is probably both. Although, I would like to point out that as far back as my undergraduate education in the 1980s, Lord Reith was already part of the history of broadcasting. Being young at heart, I decided to take up the challenge of finding the *filles rouges* through this book and how they relate to wider conversations in the field of public service media (PSM) studies. The latter is not a small feat, given that, at least in Europe, PSM are amongst the most-studied legacy media. There is not an aspect of PSM left unearthed, a PSM manager uninterviewed, a PSM stakeholder unidentified, or a PSM policy document unanalysed. And the more we PSM scholars know, the more questions we still have, also because of the ever-changing realities of PSM organisations. Having accepted the challenge, I decided to speak my mind at the risk of upsetting people – a prerogative of the old as much as the young.

But first, let me give a general appraisal of the book, the tenth in the impressive RIPE series encompassing many aspects of PSM. There are almost exclusively nice things to be said about this edition, a result of the quality of the diverse range of submissions and of the skills and efforts of the editors (yes, I know the editors quite well, so I may be biased, but the fact that you have read all the way to the final chapter speaks for itself). The book is well-organised, with a returning structure for each chapter and cross-references to other contributions that, together, create significant coherence. The book takes you from chapters regarding more theoretical to more empirical approaches, including a range of macro, meso, and micro issues. Next to the inevitable attention to the BBC, the "mother" of all PSM, there is an interesting range of PSM organisations being scrutinised, also from outside of Europe. Different theoretical perspectives are complemented by a range of methodological tools and empirical data. The result is a broad overview of current questions, fascinating findings, and worthwhile reflections, with a focus on PSM's contribution to society. The overall quality of this edition is in keeping with the high standards of the series.

What follows are not evaluations of the individual chapters but thoughts and reflections that were triggered when reading through this impressive body of work. The contributions provide new insights, some help to question long-held beliefs, and others raise follow-up questions or suggest new trajectories – all are thought-provoking. In writing down my thoughts, I shamelessly break away from the neat chapter format the editors provided and from the more rigid rules of academic writing. I hide behind the tight deadline to limit referencing authors, publications, and data, very much appreciating

that I am in no way doing justice to all the amazing PSM-related work out there. Equally shamelessly, I use the deadline pressure to reference my own work – way more than is polite – mostly because, in them, I have built my arguments better than I can do here.

Contribution to what, exactly, in society?

After reading this edited volume, the short answer to the question of what constitutes the expected contributions of PSM to contemporary society seems to be "everything". Both in theory and practice, PSM is supposed to instigate, create, articulate, maintain, amplify, rectify, curb, and generally help with "everything" in society. In that regard, PSM's relevance is absolute in expectations, reflected in the breath and width of the topics in this edited volume: Demands regarding technological innovation, be it by extending existing media like radio (as discussed by Lindeberg & Ala-Fossi, Chapter 8) or by moving into personal mobile communications (elaborated on by Rashid & Simpson, Chapter 9); meanwhile trying to balance universality with personalised PSM, as in the case of PSM in Taiwan (analysed by Lin & Tsai, Chapter 7), Denmark (discussed Lassen & Sørensen, Chapter 5), and Flanders (treated by Raats, Chapter 6); the push for innovation in management (as explained for the Swiss case by Künzler, Fehlmann, & Autenrieth, Chapter 12); a multitude of expectations with regards to content as PSM are expected to provide all forms of information, inspiration, and entertainment, but increasingly also to recommend and curate, mostly with a dominant focus on news and journalism, as in the case of ARD's pressures to innovate (as discussed by Eichler, Chapter 13) and on combating misinformation (as analysed with regards to automated PSM accounts by Pedrazzi & Oehmer-Pedrazzi, Chapter 10), but also with regards to other types of content (discussed by Bengesser, Chapter 3); the need for diversity in reach, aiming to affect the individual as well as society at large (something Hasebrink interestingly tries to capture, Chapter 4); the push to improve transparency, visibility, and accountability, increasingly by involving the audience (as discussed with regards to ex ante tests by Rodríguez-Castro & Campos-Freire, Chapter 11, or with regards to online practices, as in Speck's analysis of the German case, Chapter 14). Together, these expectations are part of a continued push to secure PSM's legitimation (as discussed by Fehlmann, Chapter 2).

Elsewhere, Tim Raats and I have recently observed a similar trend in how policy-makers write into PSM management contracts ever-growing lists of responsibilities, often to be accomplished within a shrinking budget, while hardly ever considering a responsibility as obsolete (Van den Bulck & Raats, 2022). Certain stakeholders continue to expect PSM to balance "doing everything" with "nothing that upsets the market", an impossible tightrope walk. However, current media ecosystem thinking emphasises less

PSM's potential as disrupter of the level playing field and more its role as a crutch for commercial players (channels, production companies, newspapers, etc.) in national media systems struggling to survive the onslaught of global streaming services and platforms. I share the editors' concern (expressed by Puppis & Ali, Chapter 1), that this is part of a neoliberal view of PSM that contributes to the problem of, rather than the answer to, what should constitute PSM's contribution to society.

Like Atlas in Greek mythology, PSM organisations carry not just the weight of the world but of the celestial orbs on their shoulders, it seems. This is deeply ingrained in almost all writings on PSM (including my own!), from the paradigmatic to the empirical, the theoretical to the pragmatic. If we are to acknowledge the criticism that PSM studies suffer from normativity, then, to me, this is where that is located. Apart from a few staunch neoliberals for whom the market makes PSM obsolete – think James Murdoch's (2009) MacTaggart Lecture – even the average critic of PSM would see a place for PSM in contemporary media landscapes.

These exhaustive expectations set PSM organisations up for failure and criticism, even the most well-funded, agile, and adaptable ones. Two related questions come to mind: How did we get here and how can we tone the expectations down a bit without losing the core and historical responsibilities of these organisations? In the words of music royalty, Madonna: "When you're trying hard to be your best could you be a little less?" In my mind, this is a struggle over the power to define both the problems and the solutions that PSM should be involved in. Aiming to reflect on this, I start from the theoretical rather than the empirical.

Public sphere

Bengesser (Chapter 3), reminds us that the normative position and the decades-long debates around the important role of PSM to a very large extent go back to "the ideal of the universal public sphere as the basis for deliberative democracy ever since Habermas's concept of the public sphere was discovered by British academics". This, not surprisingly, coincided first with the translation into English of Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

To return to my opening comments one final time, I am indeed old enough to remember when PSM were not discussed through the lens of the public sphere. In my years as a candidate (undergraduate), Habermas's public sphere was a difficult chapter (in German) in a course on social theory, while PSM, its inception, and core tenets were discussed "unrelatedly" in a course on social responsibility theory of media. In Europe, the introduction of public sphere thinking about PSM also coincided with the breakdown of their monopolies as the result of a "perfect storm" of technological (spectrum scarcity supplanted

by cable and satellite), political (neoliberalism), economic (creatives' demand for media "industry" and advertisers for commercial vehicles for advertisements), and cultural (evolving tastes and audience expectations) developments. This perfect storm forced PSM "believers" from government, media, and academia to build a strong, defensive case for PSM – a position that continues to this day (note how very few of the contributions in this volume are openly critical of PSM, reflective of this protective attitude). As a result, the notions of public responsibility and public sphere became conflated in the thinking about PSM, leading to the above-mentioned idea that PSM should do "everything" because, otherwise, democracy itself will fail.

I do not have the intention or knowledge to discuss decades-long debates about Habermas's theory of the public sphere. However, all relevant criticism (e.g., Fraser, 1999; Mouffe, 1999; for an overview, see Rauchfleisch, 2017) notwithstanding, the suggestion that we have reached a "post-public sphere" era appears preliminary (Schlesinger, 2020). Rather, I agree with Bengesser (Chapter 3) that conflating the defence of democracy with the defence of PSM through the public sphere concept has been a key factor in creating unattainable goals and, thus, pushing PSM towards disappointment, if not outright failure, given that the concept of the public sphere cannot be limited to one particular media organisation.

What is more, PSM are not just expected to guarantee the communication and exchange of ideas that are central to democracy, complementing efforts of democratically chosen governments in other areas of society; PSM organisations are also roped in to correct the failures of governments in critical areas including the economy (e.g., the idea that PSM first and foremost must sustain the national media market, as Raats describes in Chapter 6), the social fabric (PSM is to promote inclusion while social policies too often sustain exclusion; see also Hasebrink, Chapter 4), culture (compensating for cuts in cultural budgets and failing cultural policies), and education (PSM needing to take the lead in flashing out misinformation, as discussed by Pedrazzi & Oehmer-Pedrazzi in Chapter 10, and creating media literacy in that regard to compensate for governments' unwillingness or inability to curb "big tech"). Can we really expect these, often poorly funded, PSM organisations to do all that? Or are there other conceptual ideas that can give direction to a more realistic idea of PSM's contribution to society?

Public service, public value, public interest

Between the abstract notion of the public sphere and the specific objectives described in legislation and management contracts are a range of terms that are employed to typify the functions of PSM organisations. The above-mentioned struggle over the power to define both the problem and the solution is very much a matter of establishing a characteristic terminology.

Public service

The longest running term is public service. In its most basic interpretation, the portmanteau refers to a service set up – usually by the government or a government agency – to address particular needs of (the aggregate members of) a community. In relationship to media, the notion of public service was developed in the early twentieth century under a specific set of technological, political, and social conditions (Van den Bulck, 2001). Throughout time and space, the perspectives on this relationship changed, however, "an overlapping consensus on certain core normative criteria" remained (Born & Prosser, 2001: 671). Born and Prosser (2001) categorised these criteria into three main principles, the latter two deriving from the first: 1) enhancing, developing, and serving social, political, and cultural citizenship; 2) universality; and 3) quality of services and output. Various chapters of this book de facto deal with contemporary interpretations hereof, either quite specifically, as in the case of the Danish PSM organisation DR's decision to focus on three types of content (even though the policy-makers use the term public value, see Lassen & Sørensen, Chapter 5) or in the discussion on distinctiveness (as mentioned by Raats, Chapter 6).

One long-standing aspect of public service – which has been pushed to the forefront of conversations again by new opportunities created by artificial intelligence and which was the central topic of the ninth book in the RIPE series (Savage et al., 2020) – is universalism (Van den Bulck & Moe, 2018). From the start, it was considered a dual ideal (Van den Bulck, 2001) of both universal access – which is realised more easily since cable, satellite, and digitalisation made scarcity of airwaves an obsolete issue – and public appeal. The latter means that PSM must provide a range of programmes that inform, inspire, entertain, and appeal to the diverse interests of the young and the old, the higher and less educated, across the community and, catering to every taste, also outside of the mainstream. This should contribute to democracy's informed citizenry and the nation-state's imagined community of shared cultural background and identity, realised through a careful selection and combination of programmes that encourages people to engage with a bit of everything, even programmes that appear to be not to their taste or interest. Traditionally realised in linear scheduling, today, several chapters in this volume refer to curation as an "emerging" (but, I would argue, not fundamentally new) service in a world of "too much" content, especially information. At the same time, scholars and PSM alike struggle with how to evaluate the new opportunities for "personalised PSM" offered by artificial intelligence. Views differ but tend, again, to go for a maximalist interpretation of public service as a combination of universality of basic supply and universality as a full portfolio of services (Jakubowicz, 2007), some for a general audience, others for niche tastes, through new, personalised consumption practices. As

such, current interpretations of public service seem to continue the "everything" interpretation of universality and PSM's contribution to society.

Public value

An alternative term, which appears in various chapters in this book, is public value. The sixth edition of the RIPE book series (Lowe & Martin, 2014) was dedicated to public value as a "new" concept to capture the contribution of PSM to society. Back then, Hallvard Moe and I argued that the term has the characteristics of a buzzword (Moe & Van den Bulck, 2014): a term that originates in one area with a very particular meaning, gets picked up and transported to other areas, often for ideological reasons (as a new means of legitimation), and becomes increasingly popular but loses or changes meaning along the way. Several authors have described how public value, under the influence of a neoliberal and neoclassical public management doctrine, moved from British policy-making to BBC strategic communication to the European Commission's deliberations and, thus, into use in various countries and languages, changing and diversifying in meaning along the way, while remaining vague. Our comparative analysis of the use of the term at the time revealed that the concept invoked a redefined remit for PSM, incorporating an economic variable and pushing PSM beyond traditional broadcast radio and television.

While the term has the advantage of simplifying something unusually complex, it loses depth of meaning and, as a simplification, can be mystifying. I also agree with the point, made by Puppis and Ali in Chapter 1, that introducing new terms does not necessarily add much to the conversation. Reading through the chapters in this volume, it seems that public value has become a more generally used term in discussions of PSM's contribution to society. Note, though, the continued use of public service to identify the organisations, even in contributions that otherwise speak of public value, suggesting confusion. Moreover, few explicit definitions of public value are provided. As "accepted terminology", it cannot be expected that every contribution defines it, which implies that it is now considered self-evident that PSM must be justified mostly from a market logic and comes with a related call for accountability instruments. As written by Moe and Van den Bulck (2014: 71), "'Buying into' the buzzword therefore implies buying into a whole paradigm of economic rationality". As such, the term does not add to a renewed thinking about PSM as a democratic endeavour in its own right, regardless of market conditions, meaning that the identification and solution of problems that PSM should help solve through the notion of public value is ultimately determined by the market rather than the citizenry.

Public interest

A final term is public interest. In its applicability to media, the term predates the early twentieth-century idea of public service, and it was and remains a main basis for media and communication policy in the US (Napoli, 2001) and elsewhere. It has been associated more with a "free press" than with PSM; however, PSM is one element of media policy expected to contribute to the realisation of the public interest (as Puppis & Ali discuss in Chapter 1). Put simply, the public interest is relevant for a majority of people that together make up society. This is not the same as interest groups, seen mostly as groups that are driven by profit and, in a media context, by audience maximisation. According to the ideal of media for the public interest, these media may be public or private in ownership structure, and either can defend or act in the public interest, including by challenging those in power.

However, the reality is, historically and up to today, that PSM by and large are mainstream media. Elsewhere, I analysed the origins of PSM as a project of modernity (Van den Bulck, 2001). As such, PSM were given an important role in the homogenisation of audiences around the nation and around bourgeois intellectual ideals. For instance, inclusion was mostly about "seeing how the other half lives", and "universality of content" was rooted in middle-class notions of taste, interest, and decency – maybe not unlike the bourgeois nature of Habermas's public sphere. While very much evolved with the times, PSM organisations have not changed much in that regard. They are not grassroots or activist media organisations (Mouffe, 1999). So, while diversity and inclusion appear as key objectives in many management contracts, it is unlikely to expect the radical change that is required in most countries to make PSM in itself, and in its contribution to society, truly diverse and inclusive. The latter would require a public interest quite radically removed from the powers that be. This is not to say that PSM are by nature conservative, nor are they obsolete, but rather that it is impossible for PSM to remain loyal to the broad public interest and contribute overnight to a radically more inclusive and equitable society.

What public?

So, how to move forward? I want to encourage us, PSM scholars, to think in different directions when trying to understand the contemporary contribution of PSM to society and to move away from the idea of solving "everything". While we seem preoccupied with the second part of the portmanteaus (service, value, interest), we pay less theoretical attention to the first part: the public. This was the topic of the fourth book in the RIPE series (Lowe, 2010), but much has happened since its publication. Here are three reasons why it may be worth renewing our attention to the public.

First, several chapters in this book and other recent work appreciate "public" in relationship to PSM mostly in terms of "ownership" and "funding", and thus in opposition to privately owned and commercially funded media. Today, however, this equation is not at all self-evident. To start with funding, it is well known that almost all PSM organisations have a mixed funding model of a levy or tax combined with various commercial revenue and, meanwhile, many private media receive subsidies (Puppis et al., 2020). Even the BBC, while continuing to fly the non-commercial flag within the UK, is commercialised in its international operations, most obvious in its subsidiary BBC Worldwide, an aggressively competitive global player. Moreover, in PSM policies – dominated by notions of market failure and media ecosystem – we witness public funding being "commercialised" or "privatised". This happens in several ways, touched upon in chapters in this book, for instance, through contractual obligations that force PSM to invest a considerable portion of their public funding in private production, forgoing in-house production for external commissioning. As such, PSM public funding de facto becomes a form of indirect subsidy for private corporations, such as production companies that, all too often, are subsidiaries of global companies whose shareholders (and dividends) are located outside of the countries whose taxpayers funded this in the first place. In this regard, one can wonder to what extent PSM is still thought of first and foremost as a publicly owned organisation with an aim in its own right or as a "front" through which public funding gets passed on to private enterprises. As such, limiting or equating the understanding of public to ownership and funding alone seems insufficient.

Second, recent developments have attracted attention to the notion of public in opposition to private. We see this mostly in discussions of "emerging" responsibilities of PSM regarding the protection of privacy of audiences in relationship to Big Data and artificial intelligence, mentioned in several chapters in this book. PSM are invited to take on a responsibility in a domain (the protection of private data of its audiences) that previously was not considered relevant to their public task (Sørensen et al., 2020). Discussions on how to deal with this centre heavily on a sense that audiences' and users' data should be treated differently or, at least, more conspicuously by PSM than by commercial media. Some suggest this points to ethical obligations that cannot necessarily be captured by legal approaches to privacy, while others have pointed to possible shifts in the distinction between the private and the public that require conceptual rethinking and practical realignment. The de facto acceptance by large sections of audiences and users of the trade-off between giving up their "private" data to commercial trade and analysis (also by PSM) in return for more personalised and user-friendly offerings, seems to confirm the need to rethink the public–private dichotomy in certain regards. PSM can figure centrally both in the more abstract reflections, as benchmarks and cases, but also in the practical realisation of evolving understanding of the public and the private.

A third issue with the public, as it relates to the contribution to society, revolves around the relationship between the public as the individual citizen, or PSM user (micro level), and the public as society as whole (macro level). This tension between micro and macro level is a returning issue in the book that pays much attention to the audience. From a policy perspective, the public – as an aggregate of individual audience members – is the most important stakeholder of PSM. However, it is not really a policy actor because, as the least-organised stakeholder, it is hard to be heard by policy-makers (Van den Bulck, 2019). Media translate their interest mostly from listening, viewing, and click ratings. Some important exceptions notwithstanding (see, e.g., Hasebrink, Chapter 4), audience researchers tend to show little interest in translating their findings into policy advice (Livingstone & Lunt, 2011). Policy researchers, however, increasingly pay attention to the audience, as several chapters in this book illustrate. Fehlmann (Chapter 2), makes a strong case that legitimacy cannot just be seen as a property or a process: "Only through a perspective that understands legitimacy also as the *perception*, or attribution of individuals […], can one identify which contributions create tangible values for citizens". Likewise, Rodríguez-Castro and Campos-Freire (Chapter 11) point to the importance of citizens having a voice in ex ante evaluations but conclude that "ex ante tests can hardly achieve citizen participation through their public consultations, and thus constitute a missed opportunity for public service media organisations to enhance their contribution to society by opening their decision-making structures to structural participation". When thinking of successful contributions to society, there is an assumption that PSM must reach every member of the audience in hopes of having the societal effect on the entire public and, thus, society. Hasebrink's contribution in this book (Chapter 4) deals with this issue most directly. Identifying social integration as one of the key societal contributions of PSM, Hasebrink shows how we can empirically try to bridge this gap between the individual and the public as an aggregate. The question that remains unresolved, it seems, is whether PSM need to affect each individual audience member (each member of the public) to contribute to society, that is, to the public.

Conclusion: The public and its problems

I wish I could finish with some sweeping insights that will guide us pronto towards solutions for a more pragmatic yet fundamental role for PSM contributing to society. Alas, that is not the case. Looking for the *filles rouges* throughout this book, I observed that stakeholders, including academics, overwhelmingly expect PSM to do "everything", with new responsibilities added to existing ones. Trying to come to grips with where this comes from, I revisited – all too superficially and broadly, for sure – some of the key concepts that underpin these expectations, as conceptualisations and their

evolution towards "accepted knowledge" play a major part in the ideological battle over who gets to define the problems and solutions when it comes to PSM's contributions to society. I guess, at best, that I have contributed a little to dissecting the problem.

Two more considerations. First, if reading this afterword has made you suspicious that behind my criticism of inflated expectations towards PSM is some warped "leave it to the market" message, I'm afraid you have not paid attention (or I really am a terrible writer). No, I am not. Quite the opposite. What I am trying to argue is to stop discussing PSM from an explicit or implicit market perspective and, instead, return to considering PSM in their own right. In my mind, PSM have a rightful place in society and the media landscape, and they can and should build their own agenda based on the needs of society regardless of media market offerings. As Puppis and Ali indicate in Chapter 1, even if media markets function well, as part of a healthy democracy, PSM would still have their place. If I am frustrated by the fact that we expect so (too) much it is because PSM's remit (and expected spending of its budget) increasingly is defined in support of the market rather than the public, and because we do not pay proper attention to what exactly society and the public's main needs are today and how PSM can support them. Discussing concepts and theories that deal with the fundamental relationships between the individual and the public and the state, and between the public and the private and other relevant conceptualisations, in my mind, can contribute to this – regardless of the market. This does not mean that we must think of PSM in isolation. In that respect, Puppis and Ali's suggestion in the opening chapter to think of how PSM can collaborate with other public institutions like libraries and museums and, indeed, with the public, could be a fruitful way forward.

Second, am I implying that we need a clean sweep and to come up with new concepts and theories to understand PSM's contribution to society in a way that is more realistic and more focused on its role sui generis? Not necessarily. Puppis and Ali argue quite rightly in Chapter 1 that "contribution to society" is not the new "wonder concept" it is sometimes presented to be. A more inspiring route can be to revisit the literature on the public. Recently, I started reading John Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems* (1927/2016). In Europe, Dewey's philosophical writings have not received much attention beyond his work as an educational reformer (no mention of Dewey in my philosophy-heavy undergraduate, in case you are still wondering about my younger years). His absence from discussions on PSM could be related to European perceptions of the American tradition of the "invisible hand of government" in all things media (although that overlooks several periods in American media policy). Dewey writes extensively on the position of media and communication in society and has specific ideas regarding the role of the state when it comes to the public. With regards to the former,

like Habermas, Dewey considers thinking, discussion, and debate as the most important aspect of a democracy, which must come before democratic voting. Discussion and debate, association, and interaction are the basis for an individual's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural being, the development of which makes the individual a social animal. Dewey offers interesting ideas about what constitutes the public, the relationship between individuals and the public, and how it relates to the private. He starts from the fact that individual human actions have consequences for others. In some cases, actions only affect the parties that are involved in the interaction, while in other instances, they affect those that are not directly involved. This is what distinguishes the private from the public, with the latter consisting of all individuals who are impacted by indirect consequences of interactions. This is where the state comes in. For Dewey, the state as an aggregation of funds, infrastructures, and institutions – I would argue, including PSM – must act in those instances where indirect consequences to the public are such that they require systematically being cared for. Dewey's notion of state intervention is moderated by criteria to evaluate whether the indirect consequences of interactions warrant state interference: Are the consequences far reaching across time, space, and groups affected? Do the consequences affect the most vulnerable individuals? Are consequences systemic, recurrent, and ingrained?

Revisiting the thinking about the relationships between the individual, the public, and the state, along the lines set out by Dewey, may help to define a theoretical and *realistic* range of expectations of PSM as a crucial democratic instrument, regardless of the market and in answer to contemporary developments in media and society.

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Public Service Media (PSM) across Europe and beyond are increasingly under pressure, with both their role in a digital environment and their funding widely scrutinised. As a result, PSM organisations are constantly in a defensive position. Following attempts to demonstrate their "public value", discussion is now turning towards PSM's "contribution to society", a concept pushed by the European Broadcasting Union. Yet, to be meaningful for society and to influence PSM organisations, the concept must be more than just an instrument of legitimacy management. While communicating the valuable contributions of PSM is important, the concept is useless if limited to the question of how to better sell the contribution of PSM to citizens instead of guaranteeing that PSM actually serves the public interest and makes a contribution worth funding and discussing.

This volume critically engages with the analytical value and usefulness of the contribution to society concept, related both to the EBU's conceptualisation and to the larger, normative question of contribution. Such critical analyses are not only a worthwhile task for communication and media scholars, but also for practitioners and policy-makers involved in debates about PSM's future. The first section of this volume defines and refines how PSM can serve the public interest by meeting the communication needs of society in unique ways that commercial media cannot. The second section discusses what PSM can be beyond broadcasting, touching upon personalised on-demand services, new forms of mobile distribution, and public service bots. The third section focuses on organisational change and innovation, ranging from citizen participation to transparency.

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UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Nordic Council of Ministers

Nordicom is a centre for Nordic media research at the University of Gothenburg, supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

ISBN 978-91-88855-75-6