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Public Service Broadcasting:
the Challenges
of the Twenty-first Century

By Dave Atkinson
and Marc Raboy (ed.) et al.

With an introduction
by Pierre Juneau

Preface

In the last years before the end of this century, it would seem that time is running at an accelerated pace and it would therefore not be out of order to look backwards a few years to gain a richer perspective for today and for the future.

The year 1989 could be described as a turning point in many ways. Undeniably, with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of that year, it was symbolic of a major transition for many countries from totalitarian regimes towards a process of democratization, abrupt in most cases, dissatisfying in many, and deceptive in some. But most of those undergoing this process, while fully aware of the hardships and uncertainties ahead, would rather not turn back to the failed systems. Even beyond the frontiers of Europe, many other countries around the globe were experiencing their own 'Berlin Wall', that is, they were engaged in various aspects of the struggle towards a culture of peace and the reinforcement of democratic processes.

But it was also the year that multi-billion dollar mergers in media industries had begun, enabling transnational satellite and cable distribution services to set up shop in entire geographical regions covering whatever populations lay beneath the satellite's footprint, thus bringing down the 'walls' of national barriers to broadcasting. The earlier concerns and fears of direct satellite broadcasting expressed in the 1970s now appeared in full force and with visible changes for the television public and an impact whose effects are still being felt and analyzed: wider ranges of programme choice, though often it is a case of the same programme or series in different languages or different seasonal segments of the same series; presentation of violence, sex and pornography with little attention to time scheduling and the possibility of young children watching; hourly and daily transmission of programmes dealing with social, cultural or political ideas with little or no regard for the sensitivities of the viewing publics in different parts of the world.

This conjuncture of space technology and audio-visual marketing has thus dealt public service broadcasting its greatest challenge, to provide an educational, social and culturally-oriented audio-visual service that is not solely dictated by marketing decisions.

And 1989 was also the year that UNESCO defined and launched its new communication strategy, ending decades of contentious debate and rallying all under the universal belief in freedom of expression as formulated in Article XIX of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For UNESCO, the one specialized agency of the United Nations with a special mandate in communication, 1989 was in every way a turning point. The new communication strategy reinforced the operational aspects of the key constitutional concept, the free flow of information. Endeavours to achieve a wider and better balanced dissemination of information were made subject to a higher principle, the freedom of expression. And underpinning all these efforts was the recognition of the need to build communication infrastructures and train communication

manpower in the developing countries. As approved by the twenty-fifth General Conference in November 1989:

Its objective throughout is to render more operational the concern of the Organization to ensure a free flow of information at international as well as national levels, and its wider and better balanced dissemination, without any obstacle to the freedom of expression, and to strengthen communication capacities in the developing countries, so that they can participate more actively in the communication process. (Paragraph 243 of the Third Medium Term Plan, 25C/4.)

This was a strategy that aimed to be relevant especially to the new countries in transition to democracy. Press freedom is certainly an integral part of this strategy, but so also is public service broadcasting, particularly as state-owned and controlled broadcasting in many countries operated mainly as monopolies and served for the most part only as the propaganda outlets of their political administrations. Leaping over the barriers of literacy, space and time, broadcasting has an even greater potential to reach mass audiences. Hence it is all the more important that broadcasting maintain high professional standards, credibility and impartiality, despite the onslaughts of commercial marketing and political influences.

This is why UNESCO encouraged in 1992 the organization of the World Radio and Television Council, an association of pioneer and leading broadcasters dedicated to the mission of public service, and has supported its activities to analyze the situation of public broadcasting and disseminate information with a view to strengthening public broadcasting, especially in the transitional countries. Much of this work culminated in the international round table organized by UNESCO from 3 to 5 July 1995 at its Headquarters in Paris to discuss the educational and cultural functions of public service broadcasting. Being a round table, this forum brought out various and variant views, but did not attempt to formulate any unanimous recommendations. None the less, the overriding sentiment at this round table was the need to strengthen public service broadcasting.

It is timely then that communication researchers, specialists, managers and planners should review past and recent thinking about public service broadcasting and seek to appreciate more fully the interplay of technical, commercial and political factors that today make highly tentative the future of all broadcasting, but especially of public service broadcasting.

Former Chairman of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and currently President of the World Radio and Television Council, Pierre Juneau, opens this issue with an introduction recalling the social and cultural role of broadcasting. In Part One, Dave Atkinson provides a thorough review of key researches and papers on public broadcasting to arrive at the essence of public service broadcasting today, and determine how it can maintain and strengthen its legitimacy against the dictates of solely market-driven logic.

In Part Two, Marc Raboy presents an exhaustive synthesis of the actuality of public service broadcasting today in the face of increasing globalization. This is followed by case-studies from sixteen countries, each illustrating different aspects of how the problem is being met in different regions and countries.

Both of these studies, examining public service broadcasting from the literature and specialist writings, and from case-studies, were planned together and should be studied together.

Public Service Television in the Age of Competition will be published in a longer and fuller version by the Centre d'Etudes sur les Médias, Quebec, Canada. Similarly, *Public Broadcasting for the Twenty-first Century* will be published in a longer and fuller form by Luton Press, Luton, England; the project on which it was based was undertaken on behalf of the World Radio and Television Council, with the additional support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the University of Montreal. UNESCO acknowledges with gratitude the co-operation of both publishers in the preparation of these abridged versions for its Series of Reports and Papers on Mass Communication.

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Acronyms used in the text

ABC	American Broadcasting Corporation	IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Company	IMF	International Monetary Fund
ABS	alternative broadcasting system	IPAL	Instituto para América Latina
AIR	All India Radio	ISDB	Integrated Services Digital Broadcasting
ALER	Latin American Educational Radio-broadcasting Association	ITC	Independent Television Commission
		ITV	Independent TeleVision
AMARC	World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters	KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
		KTN	Kenya Television Network
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	MPT	Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation	MTV	Music Television
BRU	Broadcasting Research Unit	NBC	Namibian Broadcasting Corporation
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation	NBC	National Broadcasting Company
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System	NGO	non-governmental organization
CBS	Community-based broadcasting	NHK	Japan Broadcasting Corporation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency	NRC	National Radio of Cambodia
		OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States		
CNN	Cable News Network	PBS	public broadcasting service
CPB	Corporation for Public Broadcasting	PSB	public service broadcasting
CRTC	Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission	PTNI	People's Television Network, Inc.
		RTB/BRT	Radio et télévision belge/Belgische radio en televisie
DBS	direct broadcast satellite		
EBU	European Broadcasting Union	SABA	Southern African Broadcasting Association
EU	European Union	SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade	SWAB	South West Africa Broadcasting Association
GDR	German Democratic Republic (former)	TVK	Television Kampuchea
HDT	high-definition television	UK	United Kingdom

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	VCR	video cassette recorder
		VOA	Voice of America
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia	WTO	World Trade Organization

Contributors

PIERRE JUNEAU contributed the introduction to this volume in the light of his long experience as broadcaster and particularly as President of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, one of the earlier models of public service radio and television. Since 1991, as Chairman of the World Radio and Television Council, and organizer of several international forums, he has led major public service broadcasters all over the world in the struggle to strengthen public service broadcasting against the challenges of commercialism and new technologies. Previously, during his long career, Mr Juneau has also held several government positions, notably as Deputy Minister of Communications and Under-Secretary of State of Canada.

DAVE ATKINSON, author of Part One, has been with the Quebec Centre for Media Studies in Canada as Researcher since 1990 and for three years previously with the Quebec Centre for International Relations, where he worked on comparative studies of national broadcasting systems. Maintaining a firm focus on public television and cultural policies, he has participated as research director, author or co-author of several works, such as *Cultural Development and the Globalization of the Economy: A Challenge to Democracy* (Quebec Institute for Cultural Research, 1994); *The Crisis of European Public Television or the Propagation of the Canadian Syndrome* (Quebec Institute for Cultural Research, 1993); *Sovereignty and Protectionism in Cultural Affairs: The International Circulation of TV Programmes in the Light of the American-Canadian experience* (University of Quebec Press, Quebec 1991).

MARC RABOY, editor of Part Two, is Full Professor and Director of the Communication Policy Research Laboratory in the Department of Communication, University of Montreal, Canada. A former journalist and broadcaster, he is the author or editor of ten books and several dozen articles on media and communication. In addition to consulting to UNESCO, he has performed contract research for various Canadian and international organizations, and has held several grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. He is a member of the communication task force of the Institut Canadien d'Éducation des Adultes and the World Radio and Television Council, as well as a frequent contributor on media issues to various journals, radio and television programmes.

MARCUS BREEN is a consultant on multimedia and broadband services to the Department of Business and Employment, Victoria, Australia, and former Research Fellow at the Centre for International Research on Communication and Information Technologies, Melbourne.

JEAN-CLAUDE BURGELMAN is Professor of Media Policy and Director of the Centre for the Study of New Media, Information and Telecommunication at the Free University of Brussels, Belgium.

NAHUM GORELICK is Director-General of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation.

WOLFGANG HOFFMANN-RIEM is Director of the Hans-Bredow Institute on Radio and Television Broadcasting, Hamburg, Germany.

OLOF HULTÉN is Head of Strategic Analysis in the Unit of Corporate Development at Sveriges Television, Stockholm, Sweden, and teaches in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Goteborg.

KAROL JAKUBOWICZ is Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Polish Television, Chief Expert of the National Broadcasting Council of Poland, and Lecturer at the Institute of Journalism, University of Warsaw.

CHARLES OKIGBO is Executive Co-ordinator of the African Council for Communication Education, based in Nairobi, Kenya.

PETER PERCEVAL is a doctoral candidate and former researcher at the Centre for the Study of New Media, Information and Telecommunication at the Free University of Brussels, Belgium.

GARETH PRICE is Director of the Thomson Foundation, the international media training and consultancy organization based in Cardiff, United Kingdom, and formerly Controller of BBC Wales.

RAFAEL RONCAGLIOLO is Director of the Instituto para América Latina (IPAL) in Lima, Peru, and president of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC).

FLORANGEL ROSARIO-BRAID is President and Dean of the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication and chair of communication of the Philippines Commission for UNESCO.

PADDY SCANNELL is Reader in Media Studies in the Centre for Communication and Information Studies, University of Westminster, London, England, and an editor of *Media, Culture & Society*.

SHINICHI SHIMIZU is the auditor of the Hoso-Bunka Foundation, Tokyo, Japan, and former Director of International Co-operation of the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK).

NIKHIL SINHA is Assistant Professor, Department of Radio-TV-Film, at the University of Texas at Austin, United States.

MICHAEL TRACEY is Professor and Director of the Centre for Mass Media Research at the University of Colorado at Boulder, United States.

OLGA V. ZERNETSKAYA is Senior Scientific Researcher for the Institute of the World Economy and International Affairs, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

General introduction

Pierre Juneau

The renowned novelist and member of the l'Académie Française, Jean d'Ormesson, wrote that the two most important institutions that can contribute to the broad cultural development of his country were education and television. By cultural development he meant not only the arts but generally the development of mental and imaginative faculties that enable people to give higher meaning to their lives and to society.

When broadcasting – that is radio – was invented in the 1920s, many leaders of our societies marvelled at its promises and at what this extraordinary instrument could do for the culture, education and information of the people. Today, the rhetoric often remains, and it now includes television, but the will to make the proper use of these technologies has weakened.

Policy makers in all countries have allowed radio and television often to become a marketing vehicle rather than a cultural element. Having started in North America, this development has spread quickly to European broadcasting and is reaching the rest of the world. Third World countries will not be spared, despite their obvious need for a kind of television that pays attention to the cultural, social, educational and economic needs of the people.

In developing countries, as elsewhere in the world, TV viewers are naturally entitled to some entertainment from the small screen; the role that can be played by comedy or drama in expressing culture and identity, together with peoples' hopes and sorrows, is well known. Nevertheless, should we not be concerned about the probability that such extraordinary instruments of communication might be completely dominated by industries catering to audiences not as citizens but as mere consumers to be delivered to the business of advertising?

According to author Dominique Wolton, Eastern Europe for example is also 'ready to take the plunge into the alluring world of commercial television and deregulation, even though the price to be paid for the delights of market-driven broadcasting will be certain loss of cultural identity – along with the attendant risks of cultural backlash'.

The communications landscape has undergone obvious changes, and change will continue. More and more television services are becoming available. In the liberal democracies, governments and regulatory bodies find they have little room to manoeuvre. They are faced with a host of socio-economic pressures in favour of a greater number of television channels; demand from audiences for access to the wonders of new technologies; competitive pressures from neighbouring countries that have been faster off the mark with new services; pressures, as well, from business interests that want to develop these new services, and from advertisers who are always on the look-out for new ways of delivering their messages.

A further factor to consider is the great fascination audio-visual activities have held for young people over the last several decades. This too has played a part in the proliferation

of television services around the world. All these social pressures are making their effects felt.

The multichannel television universe is made possible in part by many technological developments – hertzian waves, co-axial cable, fiber optics, satellites, digitalization and the compression of signals. The increase in the number of channels will inevitably lead to even greater competition among broadcasters for the attention of viewers.

In North America and in countries of Western Europe, people spend on average around three hours every day watching television or listening to radio. Many do not watch at all; others watch or listen a lot more. Business organizations spend billions of dollars to reach these audiences with their commercial messages. As to politicians, they often think, rightly or wrongly, that radio and television are the key to their success or the cause of their failure.

If television and radio attract so much attention, why is it that we have not used these media more actively, more imaginatively for educational, cultural and social development?

At the advent of broadcasting in the early 1920s, prime ministers, presidents and many political leaders, were immensely excited by the potential of this new media for the betterment of society. In Canada, Prime Minister R. B. Bennett told the House of Commons on 18 May 1932:

In this stage of our national development, we have problems peculiar to ourselves and we must reach a solution of them through the employment of all available means. The radio has a place in the solution of all those problems. It becomes, then, the duty of parliament to safeguard it in such a way that its fullest benefits may be assured to the people as a whole.

In the United States, Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, and later a Republican President, declared to a House Committee in 1924:

Radio communication is not to be considered as merely a business carried on for a private gain, for private advertisement, or for entertainment of the curious. It is a public concern impressed with the public trust and to be considered primarily from the standpoint of public interest to the same extent, and upon the basis of the same general principles, as our other public utilities.

In the United Kingdom, Lord John Reith, the first Director-General of the BBC said that

to have exploited so great a scientific invention for the purpose and pursuit of entertainment alone would have been a prostitution of its powers and an insult to the character and intelligence of the public.

Certainly, we should not condemn all of contemporary broadcasting but there is no doubt that the fear of people like Bennett, Hoover, Lord Reith and others, namely, that commercial advertising might drag broadcasting more in the direction of amusement and triviality than in the direction of social and cultural development, was well-founded.

As years went by, the development of broadcasting in North America and in Western Europe was indeed driven – barring very few exceptions – by the logic of the advertising business and the entertainment industry, the 'fun industry'. In the ratings game that rigorously controls that industry, success and failure are measured not in days, weeks or months, but in terms of minutes and even seconds. And these successes and failures translate into revenues amounting to millions if not billions of dollars.

In a strictly commercial, competitive system, programmes that lower audience ratings are out. What remain are entertainment formulas with a proven ability to draw large audiences. Moreover, an integral part of this approach is the systematic use of violence and the ruthless suppression of programmes which demand too much concentration from the viewer or dampen the pace of the action.

A further trend is the extent to which even public television broadcasters often feel obliged – or are, in fact, compelled by financial constraints – to compete with private sector television. In effect, whether they are large or small, they have to deal with a difficult quandary. They make use of a medium that has traditionally addressed mass audiences. This means rivalling with commercial broadcasters, who, as just noted, have to deliver the largest possible audiences to their advertisers, from quarter hour to quarter hour. If, on the one hand, the audience of public television is too small, political authorities may consider them to be an élitist luxury. If, on the other hand, they try to expand their audience by resorting to more lightweight programmes like those offered by private competition, then people question the purpose they serve.

Therefore, when one looks at the nature of television in so-called Western countries, or listens to most of radio, it is normal to wonder whether these media can really serve development in developing countries. It is not surprising that people, who, by their occupation have to deal with very

concrete issues of society like housing, unemployment, poverty, health, migrations and violence, do not put broadcasting at the top of public priorities.

However, the consequence of this chain of circumstances is that developing countries in the South or in the East, or countries that are emerging from totalitarian regimes, may not benefit from media systems dedicated to the imparting of knowledge, to the understanding of the problems of their society and of their future. Very often, through a sort of dumping process, they are more likely to inherit the by-products of our northern 'fun industry'.

We are facing a problem here that obviously applies not only to the role of broadcasting as an instrument of development for poorer countries, but to its role in richer societies as well.

In a speech to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in February 1992, Vaclav Havel, the President of the Czech Republic, was describing what he considered some of the greater problems of civilization. After referring to some of the key environmental contemporary issues, he went on to list 'the dramatically widening gap between the rich North and the poor South, the danger of famine, the depletion of the biosphere and of the mineral resources of the planet' and 'the expansion of commercial television culture' as part of what he calls 'the general threat to mankind'.

If this appears to be a too pessimistic or exaggerated perception, it may be so because the communications environment that has developed around us is so overwhelming that we have become accustomed to it and find it difficult even to imagine any other set of circumstances. Perhaps we have lost the capacity to react, and therefore we need philosophers and dramatists like Havel to alert us to the drama of our world.

The misgivings concerning the perception of frivolity that our radio and television programming often projects may well be founded, but why must we accept this state of affairs as a basis for national or world policy? Why can't we react like those who marvelled at the potential of broadcasting technology at the outset, and why can't we try to imagine how it could be used?

Why not use the media much more imaginatively so that, in developing countries, they can help people to understand the problems and possibilities of their own societies?

Isn't democracy the constant and progressive improvement in the level of participation by all citizens in the decisions affecting their lives? Democracy is not only the greater

ability of professionals – politicians, professors, accountants, engineers, officials, artists or thinkers – to debate and manage the affairs of the community. This is why the so-called mass media which are accessible to ordinary people and which can address society as a whole can be so strategic, provided they are used for the benefit of citizens and not only as a vehicle to reach potential consumers.

There is a great deal of talk and excitement about the accelerating pace of technological development in electronic communications. The constant reference to the information highway has become a somewhat fastidious cliché carried by an ubiquitous bandwagon. At the same time as so many are waving their hands on that bandwagon, can anyone seriously claim that there is a great improvement in the content of the media that the mass of the people watch and listen – these ordinary people who are the basis of democracy?

Yes, there is – and there will continue to be – a remarkable improvement in the communication technology that serves business, industry, government and academia. But there is hardly any improvement in the way we use the 'community media' – that is radio and television. Will we in fact have sophisticated information highways for business, government and academia, and fun and games for the majority of people – 'for the masses', as the phrase used to go?

A public service approach to television and radio, as opposed to a strictly commercial approach, would also contribute to cultural diversity in our world.

'A diversification among human communities', said A. N. Whitehead, in *Science and the Modern World*, 'is essential for the provision of the incentive and material for the odyssey of the human spirit. Other nations of different habits are not enemies: they are godsends. Men require of their neighbours something sufficiently akin to be understood, something sufficiently different to provoke attention, and something great enough to command admiration.'

'When we consider what I call the satellite culture,' said T. S. Eliot, 'we find two reasons against consenting to its complete absorption into the stronger culture. The first objection is one so profound that it must simply be accepted: it is the instinct of every living thing to persist in its own being. . . . It would be no gain whatever for English culture, for the Welsh, Scots and Irish to become indistinguishable from Englishmen. What would happen, of course, is that we should all become indistinguishable featureless 'Britons', at a lower level of culture than that of any of the separate regions.'

Depending on the circumstances and the person who

speaks, the word 'culture' may mean the arts or the way people behave, the way they cook or eat, or it may refer to intellectual property or entertainment. And the phrase 'cultural industries' is now frequently used, meaning film, television, pre-recorded entertainment, periodicals and so forth.

In his *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, T. S. Eliot says that culture 'includes all the characteristic activities and interests of a people: Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth-century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar'.

While this is a wonderful definition, it is more practical when we speak of public policies to adopt a somewhat more focused definition. One that refers to formalized expression and interpretations of nature, of human behaviour or human hopes or goals. We may say therefore that culture is what a country says to itself, and about itself to others, whatever the technique of expression may be: theatre, film and television, novels, recorded entertainment, painting, architecture or ballet.

It is of course what makes a people interesting, worthy of attention by the rest of the world. It is how the people – the individual members – of a country express their dreams and hopes, and how they talk about their past and their future. It is what they care about.

Like life itself it is infinitely diverse and constantly evolving. The identity of a country is of course expressed by the style and works of individuals. Not by the definitions of government. It is the result of a process, not of definitions. That is why in democracies governments are expected to establish only broad frameworks for the facilitation of cultural expression by the people. They must not get involved in content or style.

Culture is, of course, the conservation and appreciation of past accomplishments, but it is also innovation, creation. It is what makes one nation feel equal to another, not in richness perhaps, but in dignity. It is sovereignty of the mind. Indeed, culture lies at the very heart of political sovereignty. There can be no political sovereignty, therefore no authority over our own lives, our own future, without cultural autonomy and vitality.

Some believe that market forces will bring about the best possible broadcast service for the population. We, in the World Radio and Television Council, believe that broadcasting is a matter of social interest like education and that public

policies and institutions are necessary for the benefit of citizens and society. And we believe that this can be achieved without compromising independence and freedom of speech.

Such an attitude is sometimes interpreted as anti-American. It is not so. American culture is something we should seek, not fear. Just as we should be curious about African, Arab, Chinese, French, German, Japanese or Spanish culture. In our view, there is a broader more fundamental issue than the threat of American 'culture' which policy-makers should be facing – namely what should be the role of television in our midst.

Most countries in the world have taken the position, when radio was established and later when television was developed, that these media would be used for education, culture, information, entertainment and enlightenment. Countries have not always pursued these objectives with consistency, commitment or ability. Moreover, present technological and industrial developments pose tremendous challenges for them as to how these original purposes should be achieved. But the important point was and remains for countries to establish fundamental policies. How to achieve chosen policy is indeed a difficult matter, but it becomes enormously more complicated if the basic choices are not clear.

I have sometimes described a broadcasting system which associates broadcasting entirely with marketing and industry as an unfortunate error which has caused grave cultural deprivation not only to the United States but also to the rest of the world. It creates a cause for concern for the development of broadcasting everywhere and particularly in those countries where television may switch from being an instrument of political control and boredom to become only a medium of merchandising and commercialized entertainment.

The basic issue therefore is whether broadcasting will be considered mainly as an industry turning out a commercial 'product' and associated totally with marketing. Or will it be first of all an institution to permit access to culture, knowledge and enlightened entertainment for all the people? In other words, should broadcasting be assimilated to education and other public services or strictly to business?

Moreover, is culture a value that should be accessible to all people, like education, or should it remain a luxury available for those who can afford it? And in this respect what use should we make of these enormously potent instruments called radio and television?

There are considerable efforts by the United States

entertainment industry to combat the kind of cultural policies described here. This, for sure, has nothing to do with a defense of American culture, and even less with a greater diversity of cultural choices in the world. It has everything to do with trade, industry and profits.

Interestingly, I have never heard an American writer complaining that his books are not allowed in countries like Canada or a filmmaker deploring that his films are not seen in Europe.

Cultural or broadcasting policies should not be intended to preclude the entry of the works of writers, composers, producers and actors from other parts of the world, including the United States. And generally they do not. They should be intended to ensure that people of talent in any particular country will be able to find audiences for their works.

It is clear that a strictly commercial approach to television – even in large and rich markets – is not reconcilable with cultural goals. Such an approach is even more unrealistic in smaller countries and in most countries of the world.

As a consequence, the most basic element of broadcasting policy in our view is the maintenance, development and support of strong and politically independent public institutions. The history of public radio and public television over the last fifty or sixty years has revealed the many pitfalls that such institutions can fall into, the many weaknesses they can develop or the many faults they can commit. It is wiser however to find the ways to improve these institutions then to change the system.

The private sector in television should not of course be exempted from all social and cultural responsibilities. If the implementation of such responsibilities requires some fiscal incentives or direct assistance similar to the techniques that have been applied in the film industry, then they should be considered.

Technological developments, and the so-called information highway, will allow the creation of a much larger number of audio-visual channels – call them pay-television, pay-per-view or interactive television. One unfortunate result will be greater and greater competition and aggressive commercialism. Currently, there is a great deal of concern about violence on film and television. There is a chance that in a more commercially competitive context there will be more violence, not less.

Countries will need to insist more on the positive, that is on a type of radio and television that is based on the idea of public service. Marketing is fine. We need more trade, more economic activity. But we also need more and better education, more training, more enlightenment, more understanding of what our world is all about. We need it for the public at large because in a democracy it is the public at large that is entitled, and fortunately sometimes empowered, to participate in our basic political decisions.

There is hardly any task more important in the broad area of culture than rethinking the role that radio and television could play concerning education, citizenship, democratic values and the enlightenment of our societies and their people.

Where both imagination and statesmanship are needed, is in the area where profits cannot be the motivation, that is: providing all the people, in developed as well as in developing parts of the world, with the material for the mind, and the imagination, that are needed to make them free citizens and inspired human beings.

Part One

Public service television in the age of competition

Dave Atkinson

Chapter I

Overview
of a crisis

Origins of the public service model

For a long time public television channels and, before them, public radio channels were predominant practically everywhere.

In the conclusion of a collective work on the development of radio broadcasting throughout the world, the British researcher Blumler stated the following:

(. . .) almost all democracies have included some public-service element in their broadcasting arrangements. In part this reflected the notion of first radio and later television as special media. Due to scarce spectrum resources they exploited, their presumed great social, political and cultural power, and the privileges conferred on their providers, radio and television were expected to be 'principled' media, the best summary expression of which was 'public service'. In part too it reflected awareness of market insufficiency – the ability of a fully commercialized system to cater for all expectations.[1]

This argument encompasses the three reasons which historically have been used to encourage the creation of public broadcasters first in radio, and then in television.

The first reason is technical. Since radio broadcasting required using the frequency spectrum, and since these frequencies were limited in number, it proved necessary to lay down rules on how they were to be used if only to avoid having several broadcasters transmitting on one and the same frequency and thus causing interference in reception.

All states have in fact provided themselves with roles concerning the attribution of frequencies, whether allocated to private broadcasters or reserved exclusively for public operators, the important point to bear in mind here being that the technical nature of radio broadcasting imposed a first level of state intervention: a rare resource, Hertzian frequencies were part of the public domain and had to be used in accordance with the public interest.

The second reason put forward for creating public operators is related to the role assigned to radio broadcasting as a whole. This mode of communication raised questions practically throughout the world as to its usefulness and its potential. And the potential of radio seemed enormous, as did that of television later, from the political and from the social and cultural point of view. Equipped with a receiver, citizens could have access to instantaneous information, and to cultural products which they otherwise would have been unable to receive.

The question of how it should be organized in order to maximize its potential was a subject of impassioned debate. And broadcasting was perceived almost everywhere as an instrument of social and cultural development much more than as an economic activity, as Rowland and Tracey stress:

(. . .) broadcasting originally was seen principally as a cultural enterprise. Broadcasting organizations were taken to be part of that sector of society – along with theatres, museums, opera and symphony

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companies, universities and education – that is responsible for generating and examinating its linguistic literary spiritual esthetic and ethnic wealth.[2]

At the political level the capacity of radio broadcasting for informing citizens on state affairs was valued. It was also understood in many countries that if citizens were to be properly informed it should also be ensured that the political class did not control this medium for its own interest. Thus in these democracies it seemed to be necessary to guarantee the political independence of broadcasting.

At the social level it was argued that broadcasting could fullfill certain roles, but the most important was doubtless its educational role. Educating by alerting the public to certain social problems, educating by broadcasting a wide range of knowledge on a large scale.

At the cultural level radiobroadcasting could beyond a doubt give rise to new interest in the population for a wide range of cultural fare. It was thought that the public could be introduced to music, theatre and books through this mode of communication. In the same vein the creators of culture saw radio as an effective means of introducing themselves and establishing contact with the public.

And other roles and missions were added depending on the political culture of the states where radio broadcasting was being set up. Whether used for promoting national identity, or regional or ethnic identities, for strengthening moral values and democratic ideas, for refining tastes – whatever the purpose – radio must be seen as a primary instrument for achieving a series of non-economic objectives.

This vision of the role and the importance of broadcasting presupposed on the one hand that all broadcasting should be seen as a public service and on the other hand that the authorities concerned should define the mission of broadcasting which would be considered a public service. This mission still exists in many countries, the best known being to inform, to educate and to entertain. Contrary to the case with the frequency spectrum which required only minimal state intervention in order to be shared, this role to be conferred on radio broadcasting presupposed more direct intervention on content.

The third reason preceding the establishment of public operators is more of the order of distrust with regard to the capacity of the market for fulfilling the public service mandate imposed on broadcasting.

Whereas in the United States there were private enter-

prises operating broadcasting services, enterprises which rivalled one another and sought to maximize their audience by broadcasting popular programmes and which were financed with income from advertising and only had to comply with minimum regulations, in most countries which regarded broadcasting as a public service, a completely different system was adopted which, to all intents and purposes, was intended as the antithesis of the American model. It was preferred to leave it to a public operator to provide the service of broadcasting, public financing was given precedence over financing through advertising, and the monopoly option was chosen as opposed to competition.

Basically the idea was rejected that in broadcasting the public interest could be accommodated with the private interests of private enterprises which were seeking first and foremost to make their activities profitable.[3] This attitude also explains the distrust of income from advertising as a means of financing, as McQuail points out:

While there are many examples during the old order of significant funding from commercial sources – especially through charges from spot advertising – the balance of revenue in hardly any European country came from advertising. There was a widespread policy that broadcasting should not be dominated by the search for profit, but by the priorities of professional broadcasters and audiences. Where income from broadcasting was allowed, it was under strict conditions, designed to shield programme-making from the need to make money. This gave management and broadcasters considerable scope and created a 'space' in the system that could be used for cultural or social purposes that were not necessarily profitable.[4]

Furthermore, recourse to public funds seemed to be absolutely justified so that the public operator would know to whom it owed the service.

It is understandable that competition should have been rejected given American practice in the field. Competition accentuated the tendency of private broadcasters to resort to programmes which focused on entertainment rather than on other less 'profitable' formulas in order to attract income from advertising – it was considered dangerous. However, recourse to the 'brute force of monopoly' was obviously also connected with the argument that using the frequency spectrum which itself is a public good confers a public service mission on broadcasting as a whole which can only be fulfilled satisfactorily by one single operator.

The idea that enterprises which aimed more at making profits than at providing a public service programme should

be made to compete in order to extract maximum income from advertising was vigorously rejected. Whereas advertising and competition seemed liable to aggravate their tendency to depart from the mandate of public service assigned to broadcasters whose interest was to seek profit, the most logical measure seemed to be to set up a non-profit-making enterprise which would be financed in part, if not entirely, by public funds.

Thus the main reason behind the establishment of public broadcasting corporations was the firm belief that a public service function and other functions such as maximizing profits were totally incompatible for a broadcasting operator.[5]

It is understandable that with these three reasons for justifying the creation of a public service body for broadcasting (the frequency spectrum as a public good controlled in the public interest; the role of public service assigned to broadcasting; the rejection of commercialism which ran counter to the objective of a public service), countries which had equipped themselves with public broadcasting bodies for a long time resisted the temptation of changing a system which, when all was said and done, seemed to satisfy the population as a public body itself.

It was in this form that public broadcasting, radio at the start and subsequently television, had its hours of glory.

Reaching wide audiences, public television channels seemed to play the role believed to devolve on television in general: that of informing, educating, entertaining, playing the role of cultural intermediary and acting as a social link which enabled the general public to be part of the current events and public debates. That public was not yet 'fragmented' by the proliferation of channels; television was watched by individuals or in small groups and its content was discussed in public places, at work, during 'leisure' time.

Given the general public interest in television, public television channels held a strong position, and although the need was felt here and there to add one or two public channels in order to satisfy a public which wanted to have more for its money, the golden age of public television corporations continued until the advent of a new environment which imposed its own logic, a logic fundamentally incompatible with that of public service.

The new television environment and the public service model

The public service model which was applied to television to begin with and developed 'quietly', remote from competition and commercial pressures, was unable in the end to withstand the rise of a much more commercial and competitive environment, particularly from the beginning of the 1980s. This clash between the old model and the demands imposed by the new context was particularly harsh in Europe where a series of public monopolies which were, so to speak, the epitome of the public service model, crashed one after the other giving way to systems which were termed, more or less aptly, mixed systems. It is appropriate to point out the main traits of this new environment and of what remains, in this context, of the traditional public service model.

THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

Several monographs published in various countries relate each in their own way how a predominant public service model was forced to develop into a new environment which was designed to be more dependent on the laws of the market, commercial logic, and competition. Depending on the country concerned, these monographs underline the importance of state intervention or the determination of a private actor to penetrate the television market which had previously been out of bounds.[6]

The dawn of a new era

There were many reasons contributing to the rise of a commercial and competitive environment which was not compatible with the traditional order characterizing the public service model. Blumler summarizes this transformation which was to undermine the old model as follows:

The systems in place were bound to change due to a conjunction of destabilizing factors: the availability of new media technologies, offering a vastly expanded channel capacity; their extended transmission reach, enabling the projection of programs and advertising from foreign sources into domestic hearts; the subjection of television to industrial policy considerations for enhanced competitiveness in international hardware and software markets; the application to broadcasting of principals of economic and political liberalism by conservative minded governments; hard lobbying by powerful,

formally excluded, private interests (notably print publishers, advertisers, and emerging international communication conglomerates) on behalf of commercialization and deregulation; and the onset of financial problems for public broadcasters as production costs rose in the wake of competition and the value of their licence fees income declined in real terms. (. . .) In these circumstances, it was politically inconceivable for the lure to technologically based abundance to be resisted; yet in the main, only private entrepreneurs could afford significant investment in its supply.[7]

If one were to pick out one of the factors listed by Blumler to explain the transition from the old television order to the new order, the technological factor would probably rate high with analysts in the field. Several commentators in fact consider that the improvement and development of distribution technologies, of cable and satellite technologies, played a very major role in destabilizing the old television regime.

It is known on the one hand that these technologies in some countries directly influenced the proliferation of television channels. In the 1980s, the development of distribution technologies was in fact accompanied by the emergence of new channels whose growth depended directly on those technologies. In Germany, for example, new private channels came into being as the result of the expansion of cable networks. In Sweden, satellite transmission connected with cable networks played a major role in enabling private operators to enter the television sector which was until then off limits.

On the other hand, owing to the promise it held, this technology prompted certain countries to accept the inevitable: a multichannel television universe where private actors cannot be kept out. Thus, in most countries, new private channels did not wait until cable or satellite facilities had been developed in concrete terms, but were opened up through the wave lengths still available on the frequency spectrum. The number of channels in Italy and France, for example, doubled, although the technology required did not really develop during the 1980s. Thus the actual anticipation of what television would become through the possible use of distribution technologies was enough to convince people of the need to change the old television order.

On the other hand, it is important to underline that cable and satellite did not become established spontaneously as factors for changing the general television set-up. At the end of the 1970s, cable distribution was widely developed in Canada and in Belgium, for example, as a means of retrans-

mitting national or foreign channels. Cable thus acted as an extension of conventional television by hertzian wave propagation. What changed at the beginning of the 1980s was the idea that these technologies were not mere extensions of conventional television, but could and would be used to allow new channels to emerge which used these means exclusively for distribution. Indeed this idea was already firmly established in the world of research, in the communications industry, and in government ministries or departments which, often combining efforts, concocted the information society which was heralded back in the 1970s. Cable and satellite were regarded as imperative, not as a means of increasing the number of television channels, but as a means of developing new infrastructures which could promote economic development and the competitiveness of national industry. Communications and information technologies were thus regarded as factors of economic growth. Indeed, in his article on cable and satellite technology, Richeri underlined that the utilization of this technology in television had been 'conditioned largely by factors outside the media, produced by political and economic situations which came to a head during the 1970s'.[8]

From the middle of the 1970s until the beginning of the 1980s, many government reports, particularly in countries which were endeavouring to develop these new technologies and to anticipate the services economy which should caracterize the information society, underlined the importance of striking a new course in technology in order to ensure the growth of the national economy.[9] To judge by the arguments put forward in those reports, the competitiveness of the state on the world market depended to a large extent on its ability to establish and to take advantage of these technologies as rapidly as possible. The Cable Plan which was launched at great expense in France at the beginning of the 1980s is an example of this eagerness to monopolize these technologies. That plan, which aimed to provide France with a sophisticated cable distribution network using optical fibre, is to be explained more by the will to master a technology which could be used at the national level as a powerful information exchange network (a sort of electronic superhighway) and which could be marketed and sold on foreign markets than by the desire to increase the number of television channels offered to viewers (which came about despite the failure of the said plan). What is more, a further development almost everywhere over the last few years has been the emergence of new services and new channels whose official purpose is to offer a wider choice to viewers, whereas they also serve as a bait to

entice consumers to subscribe to the cable network and thus pave the way for the future electronic superhighways which are constantly heralded. Broadcasting became an easy way of attracting consumer interest and of making consumers participate in the financing of these infrastructures which were needed for this vast and costly project so 'essential' to the national economy.

Television was – and still is – subject to the technological developments which affect communications as a whole, to the economic interests of the firms involved in the production of communication materials, and to the industrial calculations that are carried out within ministries and government departments. But the fact remains that distribution technologies combined with the other factors identified by Blumler have opened television to a new environment, which is steadily involving and growing in complexity.

Market domination

The most noteworthy feature of the major upheaval which took place in the early 1980s was the proliferation of private entrepreneurs -- channel operators, programme producers, distributors, etc. These actors, whose primary objective was profit, became active in a market where competition was becoming stiffer and stiffer. That competition had many different forms and affected all actors in the television sector. Channels vied with one another for income from advertising, for listener and viewer ratings, for subscribers to their services, for broadcasts which would flesh out their programmes, for TV personalities, for the rights to retransmit sports events. Producers competed for outlets for their productions, they fought to obtain designers' services, to obtain funding from financial institutions. Teledistribution, cable distribution and satellite operator services, and soon telephone companies, were also competing to attract consumers. This competition became manifest on the national market and increasingly on the world market, for the expansion of all of these actors now depended more then ever on the ability to compete with foreign competition. Channels extended more and more beyond national frontiers, enterprises developed coproduction agreements or tried to penetrate foreign markets by setting up subsidiaries, producers tried to cover their costs by developing products which would find buyers abroad, and so on.

This movement of internationalization has, moreover, been facilitated by the forming of large regional markets. Television without Frontiers in Europe is an expression of this will of states to provide their television industry with access to a larger market at the expense of greater permeability of their own markets for foreign products. Television is no different from the general economic trends which have come about in the past few years and which are tending towards a more open economy.

Competitiveness is now the criterion for assessing the performance of all actors on the market. Firms must appear to be more productive, they must adapt constantly to market development, and they must anticipate changes which might affect them.

The new television environment is marked by commercialism – understood to mean, as Siune and McQuail point out,[10] a series of phenomena ranging from the privatization of activities which were formally the sphere of the public sector to the move to deregulate the television sector, from the tendency to reduce the obligations and charges imposed on private actors to that of obliging the public sector to develop commercial activities, from the tendency to reduce or restrict the proportion of public funds for financing television to that of more frequent recourse to advertising and to direct financing by the consumer. And commercialization is also understood in television to mean the tendency to drop activities which are considered to be unprofitable (for instance, in the case of channels, the programming of cultural broadcasts) so as to promote others which are more popular and likely to generate profits.

This new context centres around the consumer. Formerly regarded as a means of educating individuals and 'refining their tastes', television is now dependent on the taste expressed by consumers. The whole ideology of 'consumer sovereignty' has welcomed technology developments which give greater control to the consumer over the range of television broadcasts. From this point of view, television à la carte and direct payment per programme are regarded as the outcome of a long process towards the ultimate victory of consumers, who should pay only for what they really consume. Over and above this ideology it has to be admitted that the current environment is indeed tending to facilitate individual consumption of television more and more, is offering viewers a wider choice and is thus calling more frequently on consumers to pay for various services.

And finally, in this competitive market context, the state is finding itself at the core of a complex set-up where it is obliged to contend with the often widely diverging interests of the various actors directly involved in television (producers

may want wider access to national channels, whereas the latter may want to free themselves from the obligation to procure programmes from those producers), to consider the requests and expectations of various social groups with regard to television, to collaborate with the equipment industry in financing the development and establishment of techniques which can promote economic growth but which are also liable to have important repercussions on the television market (the electronic superhighway is yet another example of this), to take account of the forms of intervention to which it is entitled while bearing in mind the international agreements it has signed or the general constraints imposed by the rules of international trade.

Faced with this new environment which englobes in television and which has been outlined only too briefly in the present paper, one is forced to state that the public service model of bygone days is disintegrating.

VICISSITUDES OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE MODEL

The public service model presented above has been based traditionally on three types of justification. These justifications, taken as an ensemble, have been eroded and there are only a few fragments left whose meaning and usefulness are gradually becoming lost.

The technical justification, the scarcity of frequencies, which was quoted in former days to justify tight public control of television or quite simply to keep private enterprises out, has been eliminated, as we have seen, by cable and satellite techniques. With other technological advances such as digital compression, it is no longer far-fetched to foresee an era of abundance regarding channels and all sorts of services offered to consumers in the years that lie ahead.

Another reason put forward to justify the establishment of the public service model was connected with the actual role that one wanted to see television play. With the advent of private entrepreneurs in the television field, the idea that only public television could effectively fulfill the mission of public service assigned to television as a whole has gradually been abandoned and the fact has been accepted that private channels can also be asked to contribute.[11] Indeed the British example illustrates this situation rather well. The private network ITV (independent television), under the auspices of a public body whose task was to ensure that the public service mission was complied with, fulfilled this task for several years (although in order to undertake such a task ITV enjoyed a

monopoly of income from advertising which was a strong incentive for it to respect its 'public role'). Imposing all sorts of responsibilities and public service obligations on private channels did, paradoxically, reduce the symbolic importance of the role of public television in this respect. If 'private' channels can fulfill public service missions, what is the point in having public television? Although he does not agree, Achille stresses this idea explicitly at the end of a recent work on public television in Europe:

In this complex and profoundly evolving context, arises the question of the general privatization of public television networks in Europe. In the liberal logic, the public sector has no role except in relation to a public service mission, and that mission can be fulfilled perfectly well by the private sector. It is possible to impose certain constraints by regulation alone without any need for a system financed by the consumer or by the state.[12]

In the course of the past few years new regulatory bodies have been set up in several countries with the more specific task of 'monitoring' how private broadcasters are fulfilling their public service responsibilities and obligations. This movement further strengthens the idea that the private sector is sharing in the public service idea and gives this sector important political arguments for requesting protection from foreign competition or aid to promote the expansion of the sector and, above all, is tending to subordinate the public service idea itself to the economic and commercial success of this sector. Guillou and Padioleau have already underlined the complex problems which can arise between the regulatory body and the controlled sector, where what might be termed a sort of complicity becomes established, the body becoming more and more sensitive to the needs of the 'controlled sector' which in turn takes advantage of the notoriety and legitimacy of the former in order to boost its own importance.[13] What is more, the regulations applied to the private sector now take account of market conditions and competition. Public service missions themselves compete with other commercial and industrial objectives, whether it be a question of taking account of technologies or the need to develop new services at the national level before they are offered by foreign enterprises.

In short, the idea of public service has now been watered down. In fact one could almost say that what was at one time considered to be incompatible, that is having commercial television and maintaining a public service, has now, or will

soon, become synonymous. The watering down of the public service idea is connected with the fact that it is adopted or used for every case. Is it a public service mission to further cultural promotion at the national level? If it is, the idea of public service can then be applied to any attempt to dynamize the production and programming of endogenous products independently of the private or public organizations which produce or broadcast them. Is television as a whole considered to be a public service? If it is, then all channels, whether general-interest or special-interest channels, and irrespective of how they are financed, must be recognized as a party to this service. Is it a public service mission to ensure the pluralism of the programmes offered? The proliferation of channels, and in particular of the number of special-interest channels, which broadcast non-stop newsreels or programmes for young people, sports programmes or weather forecasts, films or horoscopes, fulfill this mission entirely.

It is understandable that in an environment where the very concept of public service has become so elastic, public television is navigating in troubled waters. Formerly protected from competition and commercial pressures, public television, where it still embodies the old idea of public service, is seeking its place. Having lost the exclusive right to provide a public service, it has lost part of its legitimacy. Subject more and more to commercial pressures, it has gradually had to convert to a commercial enterprise. Before taking a closer look at how this crisis is being experienced within public television, it must be underlined that it is not the cause.

In an article on television and communications in Ireland, Bell and Meehan concluded the following:

(. . .) the state itself is presiding over this restructuring process within the communications sector. Indeed the public service bodies are themselves being used as vehicles to achieve the integration of the domestic communication sector into an international market place for cultural products and media hardware.[14]

In the past few years, public television has been called upon to contribute in many countries to promoting the research and development of certain technologies (ranging from direct satellite transmission to high resolution television), and it has also been used, for example, for promoting the expansion of a private audio-visual production industry (public television is being called on more and more to commission programmes from private producers rather than produce those programmes itself).[15] When one considers other incentives which

are pushing public television to become commercialized, such as opening up to income from advertising in order to compensate for a relative decrease in public funding, one discovers the rather ludicrous situation where public television acts as a private commercial entrepreneur and serves various industrial purposes and private television channels are forced to serve certain public service purposes.

It is in this confusion of genres that most public television channels, which previously seemed to have a clear-cut role in a much simpler environment, are now struggling.

Public television trapped

Public television, the last bastion of an obsolescent model, is in the throes of a crisis. It is expected to do better than the private channels in embodying the public service ideal of which it is no longer allowed the monopoly and whose meaning has to a large extent been forgotten, and in order to achieve this it is expected to adopt a mode of operation which no longer distinguishes it from the commercial channels. It is expected to be productive, efficient, capable of generating its own income and able to attract 'consumers'. It is also expected to differ from the private channels in its programming. So it is expected to be similar and different at the same time.

THE CRISIS IN QUESTION

From the point of view of public television itself, that is to say as experienced within an actual organization, the present crisis is being caused by the competition to which it is increasingly exposed. And this competition can only intensify as technologies are developed and as private capital is attracted to television. For public television, this means competing harder for an audience, for purchasing programmes, for qualified staff, for TV personalities, for the rights to retransmit sports events, for financial resources, and even for winning over the political authorities to its cause.[16]

According to Hultén and Brants, public television today has been plunged into a context of competition which is limiting its strategic choices. It can adapt, playing the competition game by taking a resolutely commercial stand; it can seek to purify itself, that is to say, to concentrate on its public service mission understood to mean providing a service whose programme is composed of broadcasts which the commercial channels consider to be unprofitable; or it can play both cards at once, that is to say it can compensate by navigating between

the commercial game and public service.[17] All public television channels currently operate on this continuum.

Largely dependent on the competition situation and on the available income, these two strategies are subject to criticism: the first reduces the distinction between public sector and private sector television, whereas the second transforms public television into a marginal and minority television channel.

In general the effect of the proliferation of private channels has been to fragment the audience: the more channels there are, the greater the fragmentation. The public television audience is decreasing in every country. Normal and predictable though this phenomenon may be, public television is suffering from this drop in the number of viewers, for rather than examining what the public television audience might be in a predetermined context and how its capacity to interest as wide a public as possible by providing a varied programme might be ascertained (for example by seeking to combine all audience ratings for public television for one week or one month), the tendency is to use the much-vaunted viewer ratings as a general evaluation criterion. In adopting a commercial method for assessing its performance, public television has no choice but to take it into account to justify the public funds which it receives, for the political authorities which are authorized to determine the amount to be guaranteed behave towards public television as advertisers behave towards private channels financed by advertising. On the other hand (barring exceptions), advertisers care little about how those channels manage to maximize their audience. In the case of public television, the relationship with political decision-makers is different, as is the relationship with the public at large.

Seeing its audience melt away in the course of the past few years, public television has opted to change its programme and to play the commercialization card, by increasing the number of broadcasts likely to win the widest possible audience. More films, more fiction, more sports events, more entertainment, as the Americans say. The bill for broadcasts has also been changed through efforts to develop a more 'flamboyant' style 'calculated to appeal'. It is well known how fine the line is between information or 'serious' public affairs and 'reality shows', and how much it is simply a question of taste. And changes have also been made in the scheduling of broadcasts by relegating cultural broadcasts or documentaries to later broadcasting times and broadcasting more attractive programmes at times when there is a wider audience. The

tendency, however, is to react to this type of strategy with suspicion. If public television is capable of winning an audience, this means that it is becoming commercialized. This attitude to competition, which tends to court the hostility of certain purists who would prefer public television to produce only high level culture, but also of the private channels, which see it as a threat to their own income (particularly in the case of channels which are financed through advertising), has even greater consequences as regards the public, who may no longer be able to distinguish public television from its competitors. People are thus less interested in paying taxes to finance a television channel which is just like all the others. Similarly, and particularly in the context where budgetary restrictions are the order of the day, it becomes tempting for the political authorities to reduce or even to withdraw the public funds which are guaranteed to public television since, or so it would seem, it could operate through its own means if it were privatized. In the present context, too large or too small an audience thus becomes problematical for public television.

It must also be pointed out that this competition for the audience is even tougher if public television is financed partly through advertising, for the incentive 'to go commercial' increases tenfold. To the best of our knowledge, there has been no example to date of a public television channel financed through advertising which in a context of competition for this type of income has managed to adopt an attitude of falling back on its public service mission or to gain more independence regarding its share of audience on the 'market'.

The proliferation of channels and thus the increase in competition is having a further appreciable effect on public television: that of entailing considerable inflation in the price of the shows serving to flesh out the various programmes offered to viewers. Of course this problem also affects the strategy adopted by public television with regard to its programme. If there are not enough funds to purchase costly programmes, fiction for example, public television will tend to resort to broadcasts which are admittedly less costly but are also liable to reduce its audience, with the consequences already discussed. If it still has the means, it takes part in the outbidding tactics which in turn increase its need for income, and if that income is not forthcoming from public sources it will come from commercial activities, thus increasing the channels' propensity for developing into a commercial enterprise. This type of attitude is always liable to invite the criticism that public television is squandering the public funds which it is granted on broadcasts that are not necessarily

compatible with the concept of public service, a concept which has now become extremely vague and is a factor of unfair competition *vis-à-vis* the private channels, which do not benefit from this type of income.

Competition thus affects public television by causing it gradually to lose its audience and by increasing its operating costs. Its main problem in these circumstances remains that of maintaining an audience threshold which is acceptable to the 'advertiser state', that is to say, to the political authorities which merely go by viewer ratings that are easy to understand, and that of rationalizing its operations, which consists not only of seeking new forms of income, but of applying management roles more similar to those applied by commercial enterprises. Here we have an enterprise which seeks to produce more with less, to obtain the maximum with the minimum. The idea of being efficient and productive is not bad in itself; it is what is expected of any public institution. The question is whether in this process towards efficiency and productivity the objectives for which public television was originally created have not been forgotten. In the literature on the subject, several commentators stress the growing convergence in the mode of operation of public and private television channels as well as in the management of their services.[18]

Even the language used in public television has changed. In an article on television in Norway, Syvertsen underlined the change in phrasing which was affecting Norwegian public television:

Whereas policy documents put out as late as 1982 were phrased in the traditional paternalistic NRK style (. . .), the manner of speech changed towards the end of the decade. In 1987 the institution went as far as describing its public service obligations as a competitive handicap. Furthermore, terms like products and customers are now increasingly used by broadcasters to describe programmes and audiences.[19]

The argument that certain public service obligations, such as that of offering broadcasts addressed to minorities, are a handicap when it comes to contending with competition is understandable from the point of view of a commercial channel. But when it is used by public television it is worrying.

According to another researcher, Tracey, who has carried out intensive research on public television channels throughout the world and who has met numerous officials from those channels, public television is engaging more and more management technocrats who perform the task of mak-

ing cutbacks in both programmes and staff without devoting any thought to how these cutbacks might possibly affect certain functions of public television.[20] For example, public television formerly had means at its disposal for training its staff, 'maturing' its projects, and developing its ideas. In a context of cutbacks and frantic efforts to achieve flexibility, it now no longer has the 'time'; it has to react rapidly, find rapidly, pleasing rapidly.

As Tracey says again, 'It is clear that the ability of most public broadcasting organizations to develop talent is even more diminished: no "space", no institutional memory, more dependence on an independent sector whose only concern is survival'.[21]

What is more, it has been observed in the past few years that certain public television channels have started to develop new services, either on their own or in collaboration with private enterprises, in the hope of attracting new forms of income. For example, some public television channels have embarked on producing special-interest television, which is financed by subscription or by a combination of advertising and subscription. The logic behind these initiatives and the argument which has been put forward to justify the rush for income from advertising or the establishment of public TV enterprises, which are the commercial subsidiaries of public television channels, is simple: it is necessary to commercialize public television activities in order to ensure that certain public service obligations can be maintained. What is profitable finances what is unprofitable. From this point of view, the argument is the same as that put forward by the private channels to the regulatory bodies when they depart from their responsibilities and obligations. Less responsibility means more profitability and, it is promised, will ensure that the remaining responsibilities are better fulfilled. For public television, or at least for certain public television channels, the ability to fulfill public service obligations properly now seems to have been subordinated to that of developing commercial activities in order to have access to income from advertising or to more of such income. They are compensating for public disinvestment and demonstrating their ability to respond to the competitive environment.

Of course not all public television channels have to contend with the same degree of competition. Some of them are continuing to interest a wide audience, others can even boast of having various substantial budgets at their disposal. But this competition is nevertheless continuing to grow; we have not yet seen the end of it. If the ability of public

television to fulfill its public service obligations and to resist the temptation to play the commercial card is due here and there to a certain sluggishness in the development of new services and to temporary resistance on the part of the authorities concerned to allowing new channels to make their entrance on the market, then there is reason for concern for the future of that television, and that concern is openly expressed by several analysts of the television scene.

WHAT WILL BE THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC TELEVISION?

It is difficult to be optimistic about the future of public television in the medium and long term. In the present context, it seems to be trapped for whatever strategy is adopted to enable it to continue, only the short term would seem to be assured. Silj summarizes this problem as follows:

Public broadcasters are trapped between two stools, both very risky: either to remain true to itself and its mission as a public service as it is traditionally defined (. . .), or that of facing up to its competitors by imitating their models, especially as regards programming, but without the means necessary to achieve superior quality.[22]

On the one hand, public television might become more and more commercialized, which would justify its privatization. On the other hand, the image of a television channel which focuses on fulfilling a few traditional public service obligations would suggest the creation of a sort of cultural ghetto which would only draw an extremely limited audience: a public television channel which would merely offer programmes off-loaded by private channels because they are unprofitable. As Souchon points out, this strategy would be welcomed by the commercial channels, which 'continually remind the public service of the purpose of its responsibilities, of its duty to uplift the mind, to inform and to educate, without too much entertainment and arousing only moderate interest according to the well-known role-sharing: culture is for you, the audience is for us.'[23] In the same line of thought, Brown points to the attitude of the communications magnate Rupert Murdoch, who, at the end of the 1980s, argued that it was necessary to maintain a public television channel in the United Kingdom, but in a very American view of what such a channel might be like:

Murdoch saw a continued need for a public service component in British broadcasting, but he wanted it to operate more as the public

broadcasting service (PBS) does in the United States (. . .). Presumably, this arrangement would relieve UK commercial broadcasters of the need to provide less profitable programming, just as such PBS-programming as Sesame Street and Mister Rogers Neighbourhood has provided US commercial broadcasters with an excuse for neglecting children.[24]

This idea of seeing the BBC in the United Kingdom or the various public television channels throughout the world become transformed into PBS clones cannot portend a great future for those channels at a time when American public television is the subject of constant criticism, draws an extremely limited audience and is faced with increasingly stiff competition from special-interest channels which offer the same programmes. [25]

Even for researchers, those who analyse the phenomenon in the hope that they will find solutions to maintaining public television worthy of the name, finding the right words to express what public television should do in such a context is a real headache. In an article on public television in Western Europe which was published in 1992, Blumler and Hoffmann-Riem argued that in the present context public television should 'compete complementarily' with the private channels.[26] The authors themselves were careful to put the expression *'compete complementarily'* in italics, since they probably realized full well that it was not explicit. For at the moment that expression describes not so much what public television should do in the future as what most public television channels throughout the world are already doing or attempting to do, and it summarizes their current problem more than a solution for the medium or long term.

If one agrees on the hypothesis, which, when all is said and done, is quite plausible, that the commercial environment which currently prevails in television is here to stay and that it will even continue to increase, that competition itself will also intensify in the years that lie ahead as new services of all sorts are developed (which means more competition for programmes, the audience, and income), and when one considers that public television has no miracle strategy to offer for contending with this global movement, the worst must be expected. The worst because the basis, the principles which can justify the presence of such a television channel have not been redefined in terms of the new environment. By giving the impression that the former incompatibility of the commercial and the public service model was a mistake and that they could very well be reconciled, public television, which

saw itself as the embodiment of the old regime, has been destabilized. Since the public service model no longer exists, since its visions and justifications have been trampled underfoot, public television is close to being sacrificed. Quite apart from the crisis in its operating methods, public television today is facing an identity crisis, a crisis of legitimacy.

Its role, programme, financing and the evaluation of its performance depend on the place it is expected to hold in the present and future environment. All of this depends on the acknowledged purpose of and need for maintaining an idea which was formerly called public service and which should be rethought in the present context. This tallies with Silj's argument:

Perhaps the moment has really arrived (. . .), to reappraise and renew terminology by now out of date and perhaps not only the terminology. Perhaps the time has come to redefine the responsibilities, the role and the modus operandi of the state in the television sector in wholly new terms instead of altering what exists already, instead of becoming entrenched in a model which has become confused and involves behaving in the manner of commercial television even if this is not the intention (or, if you like, simply involves public sector television competing for viewers against private sector television), and is called public without truly being so.[27]

One cannot overemphasize the confusion observed by Silj. Either the market with its underlying commercial and competitive logic can cope with all the expectations and needs which one may have regarding the television media (and with which public service is synonymous), or else it is inadequate and the public service should provide a means of identifying a different form of television which complies with a different logic and could justify the presence of a television channel whose organization and *raison d'être* differ from those of private sector television. This is not the case at the present time. As has already been mentioned, there is a tendency to believe that the commercial private sector in television participates, or can participate, in a public service enterprise, however vague it may be, which would see itself as non-commercial. In parallel, as the result of indifference or ignorance, public television is being forced to change into a commercial enterprise.

If public television has a future, that future depends on the reasons which can be put forward to justify its existence within the framework of the commercial environment which prevails in the television sector. That future also depends on

the objectives which are set for that sector, on the mission which one decides to assign it and which does not seem to be realizable in that environment. In this sense, it can be argued that one of the unfortunate developments connected with the disintegration of the old public service model is that that model has been forced to merge with the new environment rather than having been distinguished from it.

Notes

1. J. G. Blumler and T. J. Nossiter, 'Broadcasting Finance in Transaction: An International Comparison', in J. G. Blumler and T. J. Nossiter (eds.), *Broadcasting Finance in Transition, A Comparative Handbook*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1991, p. 407.

2. W. D. Rowland Jr. and M. Tracey, 'Worldwide Challenges to Public Service Broadcasting', in *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 40, No. 2, Spring 1990, p. 12.

3. For Salter, the primary factor defining the broadcasting public service is that no gain is sought in its operation: it is run 'on a not-for-profit basis'. L. Salter, 'Reconceptualizing Public Broadcasting', in R. M. Lorimer and D. C. Wilson (eds.), *Communication Canada, Issues in Broadcasting and New Technologies,* Kagan and Woo Limited, Toronto, 1988, p. 234.

4. D. McQuail, 'Western Europe: "Mixed Model" Under Threat?', in J. Downing, A. Mohammadi and A. Sreberny-Mohammadi, *Questioning The Media, A Critical Introduction,* Sage Publications, London, 1990, p. 128.

5. In the United States, the creation of PBS in 1968 – quite apart from its problems – demonstrates that the main reason justifying the need for public television stems more from the belief that public service and commercialism are irreconcilable than from any technical justification. It was hoped that public television would be able to provide a programme different from what the large commercial networks were offering, since it did not operate on the basis of profit-seeking at all costs.

6. E.g., D. Atkinson, *La crise des télévisions publiques européennes, ou la propagation du 'syndrome canadien'* [The crisis of European Public Television, or the Propagation of the Canadian Syndrome], Institut Québecois de Recherche sur la Culture, 1993; J. G. Blumler and T. J. Nossiter (eds.), op. cit.; or R. K. Avery (ed.), *Public Service Broadcasting in a Multichannel Environment. The History and Survival of an Ideal,* Longman, New York, 1993.

7. J. G. Blumler and W. Hoffmann-Riem, 'New Roles for Public Television in Western Europe: Challenges and Prospects', in *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Winter 1992, pp. 21–2.

8. G. Richeri, 'Television and New Technology – Satellite and Cable in Europe', in A. Silj, *The New Television in Europe*, John Libbey, London, 1992, p. 72.

9. Several of these influential reports are to be found in G. Richeri, op. cit. Many texts have been written illustrating the industrial interests behind the new technologies; interests that have been at the root of various policies which were bound to affect the television order, but were virtually ignored. For an overview of these interests and the issues at stake see, *inter alia*, B. Stubbe Osterguard and H. J. Kleinsteuber, 'The Technology Factor', in K. Siune and W. Truetzschler (eds.), *Dynamics of Media Politics, Broadcast and Electronic Media in Western Europe*, Euromedia Research Group, Sage Publications, London, 1992, pp. 57–74.

10. K. Siune and D. McQuail, 'Wake up, Europe!', in K. Siune and W. Truetzschler (eds.), op. cit., p. 193.

11. To quote but two examples of this fact: in Canada, the Broadcasting Act considers television as a whole to be a public service, which means that the private sector partakes fully of that service, public television thus differing from that sector only through additional obligations; in France, the private channels enjoy 'public service concessions', which implies that they participate in public service through the responsibilities and obligations attaching to those concessions.

12. Y. Achille, with the collaboration of J. Ibanez Bueno, *Les télévisions publiques en quête d'avenir* [Public Television in Quest of its Future], Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, Grenoble, 1994, p. 314.

13. B. Guillou and G. Padioleau, *La régulation de la télévision* [Regulating Television], Commission Nationale de la Communication et des Libertés, La Documentation Française, Paris, 1988.

14. D. Bell and N. Meehan, 'Cable, Satellite and the Emergence of Private TV in Ireland: From Public Service to Managed Monopoly', in *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1989, p. 111.

15. W. D. Rowland reports the statements of a German researcher (whom he unfortunately does not name), i.e., 'The question being posed is not really how to help develop public services through the new technological capacity, but how to make public-service broadcasting susceptible to private interests and associated commercial and political pressures', in W. D. Rowland Jr., 'Public Service Broadcasting: Challenges and Responses', in J. G. Blumler and T. J. Nossiter (eds.), op. cit., p. 319.

16. O. Hultén and K. Brants, 'Public Service Broadcasting: Reactions to Competition', in K. Siune and W. Truetzschler (eds.), op. cit., p. 116.

17. O. Hultén and K. Brants, op. cit., p. 117.

18. For example, Y. Achille and B. Miège, 'The Limits to the Adaptation Strategies of European Public Service Television', in *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1994, pp. 31–46, and Y. Achille, op. cit.

19. T. Syvertsen, 'Serving the Public: Public Television in Norway in a New Media Age', in *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1992, p. 235.

20. M. Tracey, *A Ceremony of Innocence. An Interpretation of the Condition of Public Service TV*. Paper prepared for the second annual meeting of Public Broadcasters International, 16–18 December 1992, Brussels.

21. M. Tracey, ibid., p. 5.

22. A. Silj, 'Domestic Markets and the European Market', in A. Silj (ed.), op. cit., p. 47.

23. M. Souchon, 'Qu'attend le public de la télévision du service public?' [What Does the Viewing Public Expect of Public Service?], in *Médiaspouvoirs*, No. 14, April–June 1989, p. 98.

24. D. Brown, 'Citizens or Consumers: U.S. Reactions to the European Community's Directive on Television', in *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1991, p. 8.

25. For a caustic criticism of American public television see L. H. Lapman, 'Adieu Big Bird. On the Terminal Irrelevance of Public Television', in *Harper's Magazine*, December 1993, pp. 35–43.

26. J. G. Blumler and W. Hoffmann-Riem, op. cit., p. 27.

27. A. Silj, op. cit., p. 48.

Chapter 2

Legitimacy
of public television
in the era
of the market

Economy versus culture

A public television channel that is forced to compete and to
operate commercially and a private television channel which
is being asked to fulfill public service objectives – such is the
confusion which reigns today at a time when the concept of
public service is dying out in a context dominated by the
market concept. And the crisis of the legitimacy of public
television seems to point to a much deeper and more global
crisis which is in fact affecting all public service institutions.[1]
For some this crisis falls within the context of an historical
tension between economy and culture,[2] for others, in a struc-
tural conflict between capitalism and democracy,[3] and for
others again it demonstrates the extent to which economy and
politics are separate spheres and conceive of the individual
differently, either as a consumer in the case of the former or
as a citizen in the case of the latter.[4] In general, as a result of
the public television crisis, more thought is being devoted to
how culture, the social field and politics are being dominated
by the economy, as though the economy were no longer
simply one of the spheres of life in society, but the sphere
which must take precedence over all others.

   This conflict between 'spheres' is quite noticeable in
the literature on television. Researchers are clearly worlds
apart depending on whether they claim to be or can be
identified with what could be termed very generally the
'market school' or the 'critical school'. Although some believe

that these two schools can be 'reconciled' by becoming more
familiar with each other's outlook,[5] others consider that the
postulates, hypotheses and analyses of these schools make
them incompatible.[6] It must be stated that with their different
concepts of the individual, the state, and the role of the media
and of society as a whole, these schools propose visions of the
place which public television must hold in the contemporary
audio-visual world which are equally different. One can ac-
cept Tracey's position:

In the first instance one cannot have a discussion of the nature of the
television one wants which runs ahead of a debate about the kind of
society which is desired. A philosophy of broadcasting can only be
born out of a philosophy of society since broadcasting can only ever
be a symbolic articulation of the value and expectations and needs of
the wider society.[7]

It must therefore be considered that the crisis of the legiti-
macy of public television can only be understood if it is related
to the 'philosophy' which for several years now has been
causing its marginalization and indeed its disappearance.
Likewise, this television can only find legitimacy if the prin-
ciples of the philosophy which justify it are made known.

   Before examining these philosophies, we must immedi-
ately identify our own vision, if only to be consistent with
Tracey's position, which we support. In our opinion, tele-
vision falls within the province of both the economy and

culture. Television can lend itself to the market as can other cultural products and services, but neither television nor the other cultural products can be reduced to mere commodities. Nor do we believe that the opposing philosophies on public television are reconcilable if this is understood to mean the possibility of merging them (just as we do not consider it possible to merge the market and public service, public television and private television). To illustrate our idea we believe in the coexistence of these philosophies, the coexistence of economy and culture, where each sphere expresses its own particular mode of organization regarding television. In other words, we refuse the approach which accepts only all market or all culture.

And finally we must bear in mind, again as regards television, that the coexistence of or the balance between these opposing philosophies, between economy and culture, is currently threatened by the domination of one over the other. We therefore consider it important to retrace the limits of the all-market approach which prevail at the present time and to lay greater emphasis on the philosophy through which the legitimacy of public television can be restored.

THE 'ALL-MARKET' OR THE 'READY-THOUGHT' APPROACH

It has been emphasized that the economy seems to predominate all else in the past few years. The globalization of the economy, the opening of markets, free trade agreements, major economic areas, GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, now replaced by the World Trade Organization), the IMF (International Monetary Fund), etc. are the topics of the day. In television there has been talk of liberalization, privatization, deregulation, and so on.

In television, as in other fields, the market school has eclipsed the critical school.[8] As though the latter had been discredited because it is too closely associated with the memory of public service (or state) monopolies in the television field. The rapid expansion of the private sector has been welcomed as a liberation, and the real attraction of the new private channels, whether of general-interest or special-interest, for viewers will have served the arguments of the supporters of the market school, who have called and are still calling for more extensive liberalization of television. The popularity of this school by far exceeds the advantage or the originality of the theory on which it is based, for, as Rotstein points out, the market school is nothing other than a revival of

classic economic doctrines.[9] As has been the case in the past, this school merely reiterates the theory that a market which is free of all constraints is the ideal mechanism for achieving the well-being of all. The consumer's freedom of choice is a salient feature on that market, and the producer benefits if he or she succeeds in satisfying the consumer. Supply and demand seek each other and are matched on this market, where prices determine the value of the goods and services exchanged.

Applied to television, the market is seen as superior to state intervention for ensuring that viewers' needs are satisfied, not to speak of the numerous corollary advantages connected with the competition which producers engage in order to satisfy consumers and which Gallagher presents as follows:

It is increasingly recognized that the public interest standard is meaningless outside the normal mechanism of the market place, where the actual interests and needs of viewers are usually best perceived and served by competitive entrepreneurial venturing. Several decades of experience confirm that regulatory efforts have generally inhibited television's growth, service to the public and economic benefits – whereas freeing market forces has encouraged innovation, the expansion of services, and consumer choice.[10]

At a time when private channels are steadily increasing in number, and when special-interest television services are multiplying, it is easy for the market school to see the new audio-visual deal as confirmation of the superiority of the market over state control and to see each new channel or service as another step in the right direction.

In this market place, where barriers to competition and market entry have been removed, each new television entrant must offer viewers something of increased value in order to prosper. For example, new services must offer alternative programme choice, or a larger quantity or quality of already favoured programmes or television service at a lower cost, with better value for money, or with greater convenience than existing services.[11]

Let us leave aside the criticisms and surveys which call in question the capacity of the market to offer real diversity in television and let us focus on the criticisms which the market school levels at the old television order where public television channels dominated and where the state limited the number of channels. These criticisms, according to Syvertsen, can be summarized as follows:

This critique is based on a number of intellectual views on the nature of the television commodity. This is, firstly, the view that television is no different from any other commodity, therefore it should relate to its audience as individual consumers and give people 'what they want'. Secondly, it is argued that protection from market pressures breeds complacency and wastefulness, and makes the broadcasters insensitive to the wishes and interests of their 'customers'. Finally, it is argued that when the number of channels increases, the need for regulation correspondingly decreases. This is firstly because the exercise of choice by viewers will safeguard the range and quality which was previously guaranteed by regulation. Secondly, a large number of channels makes it economically viable to appeal to more narrow interests and smaller taste cultures.[12]

As the old television order gave way to more extensive use of the market and new technologies opened up the possibility of relating television supply more directly to consumers by enabling the latter to pay directly for the services they want to have, the market school perhaps achieved the crest of its wave during the 1980s with the widespread 'consumer sovereignty' craze. The Peacock Committee, which drew up a survey on the financing of the BBC in the United Kingdom, is still the most frequently quoted example with regard to this idea of consumer sovereignty so dear to the market school.[13] The authors of the report issued by that committee identified their views on what British television should become right from the outset:

British broadcasting should move towards a sophisticated market system based on consumer sovereignty. That is a system which recognizes that viewers and listeners are the best judges of their own interest, which they can best satisfy if they have the option of purchasing the broadcasting services they require from as many alternative sources of supply as possible.[14]

For the committee the central objective was to strengthen consumer freedom of choice and to make it possible for the range of programmes offered to consumers to be expanded. The Committee acknowledged that it drew its position on broadcasting from a more general philosophy whose inspiration was clearly identified:

Our goal is of course derived from aims much wider than applying to broadcasting alone. They are abandoned, for example, in the first amendment to the US Constitution (December 15, 1791). (This lays down *inter alia:* Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech or of the press.) It is often taken by US writers to mean both that television monopolies are to be prevented and that government intrusion of a negative, censorious kind is to be avoided.[15]

This philosophy is based on fundamental principles: freedom of choice for the consumer, freedom of expression for the 'producer', refusal to a third person, or, even less, a group or institution, to decide for the individual what is good for that person. Centred on the individual, and more specifically on the individual's capacity as a consumer, this philosophy looks benevolently – as does the committee – on the expansion of television services, which are synonymous with freedom for the consumer, and the direct payment of those services by the consumer, which ensures economic efficiency through the price mechanism.

In fact the Peacock Committee was merely expressing the traditional principles of economic liberalism, the new aspect being that until then television had been regarded as a product which could not lend itself to the market, both because of the type of industry to which it belonged (we shall come back to this later) and owing to its social and cultural role. The advantage which the committee can immediately be conceded is that of recognizing the philosophy from which it claims to draw its inspiration, which distinguishes it from many market theorists, who often distance themselves from the critical school and take refuge in the rigour of their theory, the technical language of the market, or the refusal to make value judgements, for example, on the role of television or on its content.[16] Has not market television favoured the propagation of 'infotainment' (entertainment information), 'infomercials' (commercials disguised as reports) or reality television (a type which is included in what one refers to more generally as trash TV in the United States)? It is of little consequence. As long as it all meets consumer demand.

It is important to look more closely at this point concerning the distinction to be made between the philosophy underlying the market, the liberal economy, and the cold and rigorous scientific approach adopted by certain theorists of the market school. For, as we shall see, where one can contrast the liberal economy with certain principles of liberal democracy and of political liberalism (thus asserting that liberalism presupposes the coexistence of separate spheres of life in society), it would seem that many more difficulties arise today when it comes to proposing modes of organization for television which are based on values which must not first be translated into the language of the market, a language which precisely imposes its own values. As Smith points out:

The market is the magic potion which brings efficiency to all mortal projects and straightens out all minds into a state of readiness to serve

the viewers and listeners. The great strength of the argument for privatization was and is that it is so easy to express. There is no need to prove anything and it doesn't take a moment to explain. It is easily understood.[17]

There is such infatuation with the market that it is becoming difficult for many researchers not to legitimize measures to maintain public television or indeed other institutions without using the language specific to the market. This is the case with many analysts (some of whom are economists who themselves are somewhat embarrassed by this all-market approach who use a whole panacea of concepts ranging from public good to externalities and including market failures, market power or merit good.[18]

These concepts, however useful they may be, remain as many parasites on a general economic theory which is in no way affected in its general principles. Having to defend television, and, in particular, public television's contribution to maintaining democracy or having to stress its cultural role from the point of view of external programmes merely confirms the idea that television must be considered first and foremost from the market perspective, that it is addressed to consumers, and that it falls primarily within the economic sphere. Using these concepts to justify the need to have a more cultural and more social vision of television is a daunting challenge for market critics and puts them in a position where they do not always master the language, and where they are obliged to accept the general postulates on which market theory is based.[19]

This explains why certain advocates of the critical school simply refuse to use that language to defend their theories.[20] The citizen, political equality, the community, rights, the public sphere, are so many concepts foreign to the classic economic theory used by market theorists. The only value which television has is the value attributed to it on the market[21] – which is hardly surprising, since the value of culture itself is conditional upon that same market.[22]

In general, in this context where the market school predominates, where the economy and the all-market approach are the salient features, and where the 'ready thought' market concept is becoming inevitable to the point where it becomes no longer a theoretical tool but an ideology, public television is navigating in a context where the public service concept has virtually lost all meaning, where any institution that departs from the market is suspect, where culture boils down to a system of goods and services that can be converted

into cash, and where television is regarded like any other product or service. Veljanowski illustrates and supports this idea:

The media is like cheese. (. . .) it is an industry or service which is like any other economic activity. It is subject to the laws of supply and demand and it reacts in a predictable fashion to changes in the economic conditions of production and distribution. Media are commodities.[23]

BETWEEN THE MARKET IDEAL AND MARKET REALITY

In its report, the Peacock Committee put forward the idea that the BBC should perhaps offer its services to consumers in the form of a subscription. In the short term, the committee considered that the BBC should continued to be financed through licence fees. It is interesting to note that a committee which is an open supporter of the idea of consumer sovereignty should be reluctant, *hic et nunc*, to recommend that the television market should be completely 'opened' or 'deregulated'. In fact the committee considered that, at the time of its survey, the real television market did not allow the consumer to enjoy all of the 'benefits' which were connected with the absolutely competitive market in a way different to what the theory implied. In other words, there was a gap between the ideal market and the real market which the committee could not ignore, since it was examining that very reality. Of course the committee did not lose hope of one day seeing the ideal model realized, but realities reduced it to believing that the time had not yet come.

Basically one might also wonder if that 'time' will ever come, for this example clearly illustrates the gap between theory, the intellectual tool which the market remains, and its philosophical counterpart which transforms it into a project of society and an ideology.

Many of the criticisms levelled at the market school come from analysts who, rather than imagining what the ideal television market would be, concentrate on studying the real television economy, the concrete television market, which is by no means completely competitive. Although these analysts do not deny that there is a television market, they do not make it a universal panacea. Moreover, several discuss the place held by public television channels on that market and the problems which it comes up against, yet accept at the same time that the rationale of that television does not reflect that

of the private channels. They note that public television is a matter of the public service principle, which itself is based on a philosophy that has little to do with the market aura which today pervades the entire television environment.

It must be understood at this point that these analysts who study the real market do not claim to belong to the market school, nor can they be considered to be so. Although some of them may even be associated with the critical school, others merely analyze the status of the market, the development of the industry, the consequences of competition amongst programme suppliers, the content of television broadcasts offered to viewers, the impact of technological development on the market.

The market and television discussed in these surveys differ notably in the way they are described by the theorist-ideologists of the market school.[24] What are the points raised in this literature and these surveys? They discuss the concentration of media property and point to the industrial strategies pursued by the big communication groups.[25] They thus demonstrate vertical or horizontal integration processes which aim, inter alia, to enable large scale enterprises to protect their investments in a sector where financial risks are extremely high, particularly in the case of audio-visual production. They demonstrate the importance of economies of scale which, in particular, have for years been enabling the American film industry to dominate the world market in this field and also to maintain this colossal domination in the field of major television fiction. They also discuss how distribution technology and the fragmentation of income from advertising which has come about as the result of the proliferation of channels and rising production costs have stimulated the trend towards globalization of the market and of competition. As Salaün points out:

Competition in the communications field has moved to the international level. Those who seem like giants on the scale of a European country are often mere dwarfs at the world level.[26]

This is an interesting phenomenon where competition at the world level is now calling for concentration at the international level.[27] And it is also interesting because it shows how the state is continuing to intervene in this free television market by pursuing policies which promote closer business links or, for example, by supporting the industry through various measures such as funds for supporting audio-visual creations[28] which benefit private producers. In general, as was pointed out in Chapter 1, the role of the state, which conspires with industry to decree policies enabling the latter to contend with foreign competition, is discussed at length.

The importance of distribution means is also being underlined more and more, an importance which gives those who control those means certain power over what can be conveyed through them.[29] Again the effects of inter-channel competition are analyzed. Salaün argues the following:

In television, competition mechanisms are inducing commercial television channels to optimize the audience/cost ratio of the programmes. This trend is leading to channel uniformity through a dual phenomenon: that of the 'less objectionable programme' where the programme to which viewers object least attracts the largest audience; that of the lower cost, where the programmes which attract the largest audience and the highest amortization rate are the most popular and the least costly when resold and thus the most frequently rebroadcast.[30]

According to some analysts, rather than bring the diversity promised by the market school, the proliferation of channels merely brings more of the same and even causes diversity to be reduced, not to mention the deterioration in the quality of programmes since, in their opinion, the fragmentation of the audience means, in the last analysis, that income is dispersed and consequently the capacity of 'suppliers' to embark on production which is innovatory and original but which is also costly and involves risks is reduced.[31]

All of these analyses have their faults of course, but the salient idea is that there is a tremendous gulf between the study of the real market, and of television in all its complexity, and the ingenuous vision which the market school proposes of its ideal market. This idealism is one of the things for which the report of the Peacock Committee and its consumer sovereignty fad have been criticized. Blumler and Nossiter commented as follows on the report:

Its vision of a subscription-financed future, in which pay-per-view gives an open sesame to experimental, innovative and other would-be individual programme makers to offer their wares to the public, is innocent of market-based power distributions and the blockages and distortions that would result.[32]

Phrasing it more bluntly, Budd puts the committee's vision of the future of television, where the mirage of the perfect market would be realized, aptly summarizing the fundamental problem of the market school as follows:

But it may be wrong about the future and come perilously close to confirming the old joke about the economist faced with the un-opened tin of meat and a missing tin-opener: 'Let us assume the tin is open'.[33]

There is absolutely no denying that there is indeed a television market or that supply and demand are of no advantage as useful concepts for understanding in part how that market operates. Our purpose is more to bring the market theory which has been used too ideologically by the market school in the past few years into perspective. By doing so one can demystify – at least in part – the 'authority' of that school, which in the name of the ideal market has constantly repudiated the regulation of television and in particular the legitimacy of public television as well as the concept of public service.

And although it is true that the ideal market can be contrasted with the real market and theory can be contrasted with its ideological utilization, in order to restore the legitimacy of public television the predominant economic philosophy must also be contrasted with a philosophy which can restore to the cultural, social and political spheres the importance which is their due.

An overview of the conflict between the economic and the democratic philosophy

The domination of the economic sphere in the last few years is to be explained in part by the infatuation with the market as presented by the school which has promoted it. Based on a well-known classic economic theory whose principles are relatively simple, this school has benefited from bases which the critical school has been unable to enjoy. For there is no theory of culture in the same way as there is a market theory. This explains to some extent the difficulties which that school has had in making its voice heard and in making itself understood. What is more, as Smith emphasizes, the arguments which have been put forward in favour of public television and which have called for a way of thinking running counter to the all-market approach were even regarded as anti-capitalist in the 1980s.[34] Yet the public service concept and public television are inventions of liberal democracies.

Despite the dispersal of the approaches adopted by the supporters of the critical school[35] to argue the need to maintain public television or to justify the public service concept, several elements can be singled out as leads for outlining what

may be the philosophy that can counter the predominant economic philosophy – not in order to deny the importance of the economy in society, but to reaffirm that of other spheres.

Before setting out the details of the democratic philosophy of culture, the main ideas of that philosophy can be outlined by contrasting it with the predominant economic philosophy. The table opposite shows where they are in conflict on three essential questions: their concept of the individual, their perception of culture, and their vision of the social fabric.

We must now examine how the importance of and need for the public service concept in television can be deduced from these main ideas – which are those of the democratic philosophy of culture – as well as the need for a body or institution which is assigned the specific mandate of giving that concept concrete form.

From culture to public television

Before entering into the details of the logic underlying the democratic philosophy of culture, several warnings are called for.

Great emphasis has been laid on the presence of a predominant economic philosophy which is tending to raise the economic sphere above all of the other spheres of life and society including the cultural sphere. Re-establishing the legitimacy of public television thus cannot resolve all of the ills of the cultural deficit from which citizens may be suffering in a world which is dominated by the economic philosophy. Access to an education of high quality, to political information, to the arts, to knowledge, and to all forms of intellectual works cannot be solved merely by the presence of a strong public television which is well defined, however effective it may be. On the other hand, if we succeeded in re-establishing that legitimacy a balance could consequently be restored between the importance attached to the economic and that attached to the cultural philosophy in other cultural fields.

Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that the democratic philosophy of culture to which we are referring here is not entirely new. Some of its concepts may be new, but as is the case with the economic philosophy and the way the market is used in that philosophy, it is based on certain principles well-known to anyone who understands even the rudiments of liberal democracy. Public television likewise is not presented as a new institution, an invention, but as a
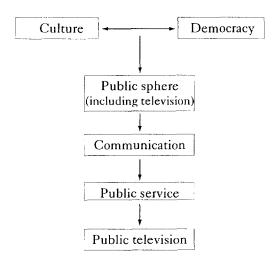
	The economic philosophy	The democratic philosophy
Individual	In this philosophy the individual is presented as a producer and/or consumer. He must be free to act on the market as he thinks fit. No one can claim to be able to make choices on his behalf. His choices are personal and inalienable. Consumer inequality is not called in question.	In democratic philosophy the solipsism of the individual as *homo oeconomicus* is contrasted with his social dimension as a political 'animal' living in interaction with others. He is a citizen. As a member of the *polis*, he is acknowledged the right to participate in public life on the basis of equality; this is the *sine qua non* of democracy.
Culture	One of two things: since this concept is foreign to the economic philosophy, it is either completely ignored or it is adapted by being reduced to a series of goods and services which can be converted into cash on the market. In the latter case, culture is limited to its market value. The same logic applies, of course, to television.	Culture is regarded as a vast aggregate of information and knowledge through which citizens can develop, adapt, and participate in their environment. Culture is conferred a value which cannot be reduced to its market value alone. The same applies to television.
Site of social relationships	The marketplace is where social relationships are formed. Social relationships amount largely to market relationships and to the market-state relationship. The state actually remains necessary, if only in order to ensure that the market operates properly, to protect private property, and to ensure that individual freedoms are respected. Its role is thus subordinated to the market.	The market is only one of the places where social relationships are formed. The state is another. But neither the market nor the state exhaust the complexity of these relationships which are formed in civil society. Moreover, it is from civil society that the state draws its legitimacy and it is also on civil society that the situation of the real, and imperfect, market depends. Civil society takes precedence over the market and over the state. Social relationships within civil society are expressed in what is called the public sphere.

necessity, which explains its past as well as its present and future relevance.

This democratic philosophy of culture will be presented in outline and the details will be limited. Illustrating the origin, scope and pertinence of a concept such as 'public sphere', which has already been the subject of numerous very specialized analyses, could fill scores of pages. The 'market' concept itself could have been presented in greater detail. We shall thus merely depict the outline of this philosophy so that the reader can understand its underlying logic.

The simplest form of that logic is set out in the diagram below, the various elements of which will be detailed in the following pages.

CULTURE, DEMOCRACY AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

It has been underlined that culture is composed of a vast aggregate of information and knowledge which allows individuals to develop, to adapt and to participate in their environment. If that culture is not minimally accessible to all, if participation in culture is only possible for some, then we are confronted with a major problem of democracy. For it must be understood here that culture defined as an aggregate of information and knowledge (some would say an aggregate of symbolic goods) necessarily includes a political dimension, and several researchers of the critical school do not hesitate to state that democracy cannot be limited to the political sphere alone but must apply to culture as whole, as Kellner points out:

Cultural democracy would provide everyone access to education, information and culture, enabling people to fully develop their individual potentials and to become many-sided and more creative.[36]

It must be stressed that access to and participation in culture as objectives of democratic societies are not recent inventions. The efforts which have long been made in those societies to promote access to education, to the arts, to means of communication, and so forth[37] must not be overlooked in the contemporary all-market approach, but it would seem that many researchers fear that the commercialization of culture could today call those objectives in question. When culture is reduced to goods and services which can be converted into cash on the market, the result is a misappropriation of the rights which citizens have been acknowledged in favour of the proclaimed freedom of consumers to procure that culture.[38] This misappropriation means that the principle of the equality of individuals is abandoned. And to maintain that these individuals are equal by arguing that they all have the same right to procure whatever they like on the market would amount to sophistry. As consumers, these individuals are not equal; they do not have the same purchasing power.[39] And this inequality could have important social consequences, as Scannell points out:

The privatization of informational and cultural resources may create a two-tiered society of those who are rich and poor in such resources.[40]

Given consumer inequality, a democratic philosophy of culture should place emphasis on the equality of citizens, which of course presupposes a completely different vision of the predominant philosophy. As Mulgan explains:

Citizenship arguments (. . .) conflict with market arguments because they stress the importance of equity. Starting from an assumption of equal human rights, there is an inescapable drift towards some notion of equal rights of information and communication.[41]

Equal rights to information and communication mean here in a broader sense equal rights to procure access to and to participate in culture. It must be underlined that a philosophy of this nature presupposes a vision of democracy which goes far beyond the simple process of delegating the powers of citizens to government, to the electoral system. This broadening of the democratic principle is in line with what Watson argues in the following statement:

People who equate democracy with the electoral process are missing about 90 per cent of what democracy is all about. It is really about *empowering citizens. And that, in turn, is linked to finding ways to express ourselves and to see ourselves as part of a community.*[42]

The idea of promoting citizens' access to and participation in culture in fact aims to strengthen their own power, to make them better citizens who are able to become involved in public life and in their environment. We are clearly talking about a dynamic democracy here, which can in no way be reduced to mere politics. This democratic philosophy of culture entertains the vision of a society where interaction among citizens in a sort of civic forum where they can discuss issues, exchange views, and compare their ideas and interests, allows all of those citizens to form a 'public'. It is a concept foreign to the predominant philosophy, which Aufderheide seeks to outline as follows:

What a public is not, (. . .) is consumers. Consumers have defensible individual and group interests, but they are not the same thing as a public. The public is also not individuals whose aggregate individual opinions add up arithmetically to public opinion. The public is a social concept and as such needs social spaces in which to exist, to learn about the public interest, to debate it and to act. Social spaces such as town meetings, community groups, and electronic bulletin boards for virtual communities of interest are all potential vehicles for public activity through communication, insofar as they grapple with the challenges of defending the public interest.[43]

Arguing that unless there is a public there can be no real democracy, Aufderheide also stresses that the public interest does not coincide with private economic interests or with the political interests of government. To illustrate this point, for example, it can be pointed out that neither private television nor state television are synonymous with public television. In the liberal democratic philosophy, the 'public' is identified as an entity different from the 'private' and from government.

This 'entity', this public, is formed by communication. Without communication there is no public: there are only isolated individuals. That is why Aufderheide underlines that the public cannot exist without a space where the 'forum' and the above-mentioned exchanges can be actualized. Strengthening citizens' access to and participation in culture and, by so doing, maintaining an active public requires preserving what is now commonly referred to in the critical literature as the public sphere.[44]

Whereas the term public is easy for some to understand if only intuitively, the term public sphere requires some explanation. The concept of public sphere associated with the work of the German philosopher Habermas comprises several difficulties which we shall not dwell on here. According to Syvertsen:

The concept of the public sphere is used in many different contradictory ways. It is not clear, even in the work of Habermas, whether this is intended as a theory of rational communication, a normative political ideal, a description of actual historical forces or a reconstruction of the self-perception of a particular social class (the liberal bourgeoisie) at a particular point in history.[45]

For our part, the public sphere is defined as the place where citizens can have free access to information and knowledge and can express their own points of view. This place is independent of private economic interests and of political authorities. As the place par excellence where democracy is expressed, it is characterized by communication, exchange (not to be confused with commercial exchange). To illustrate this sphere researchers occasionally refer to the Greek agora, where citizens would meet to discuss matters public, life in the 'polis'. This sphere is also present in church squares and gardens, cafés, political assemblies, everywhere where citizens meet to discuss affairs and to communicate their values and interests.

Commenting on the significance of the concept of public sphere, Skogerbo agrees with Garnham, who argues that this concept must be based on a vision which is pragmatic although always a little idealistic (from this point of view, even democracy is an idealistic concept), of a sphere which provides citizens with information while giving them the opportunity to express their interests.[46]

It is in this public sphere that citizens seek solutions to major contemporary problems. It is here that environmental questions, the problems connected with drugs, women's rights, abortion, AIDS, racism, are discussed. These issues, although they have become political and can even involve aspects of an economic order, are only imposed by the force of a public which discusses them freely within the public sphere.

The concept of public sphere has the added advantage of providing a means of synthesizing the topics important to the philosophy of culture which have been presented here. Equality of citizens in access to and participation in this place; a place of active democracy in that everyone can express their

views on this basis of equality; a place which is protected from basic private and commercial interest and from the political power of government; a place where citizens find the information and knowledge necessary to their development and adjustment to their environment (which amounts to culture in the broad sense); a place where the public is formed by communication; if this public sphere is denied, this will imply the refusal or obsolescence of all the rest.

Having thus presented the public sphere, we gradually approach the idea of public service and the need for public television. It is communication which forms the core of the public sphere, and it is indeed through communication that the public is actually formed. Culture itself makes little sense unless there is communication. Several examples have been cited of these physical places where citizens can communicate and exchange (church steps, cafés, etc.), but communication must now be considered to go far beyond the boundaries of these physical places in a world where it is effected more and more through the media.[47]

Efforts to maintain, preserve or strengthen the public sphere must thus be accompanied by concrete knowledge of the ways in which communication is revealed to us today, and it has to be admitted that the media play a determining role in contemporary communication.

THE PUBLIC SPHERE, TELEVISION AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Considering that for most observers the concept of public sphere is the imperative reference for analyzing the media, Salaün adds to this concept:

The contemporary public sphere, of which the mass media are one of the main channels, is the place where the representation of society is constructed, one of the places where the symbolism of the social consensus is formed. It is a means of defining national frontiers.[48]

The national character of the contemporary public sphere is hardly surprising in that its main media, the mass media still (for the moment?) have national bases. What must be stressed here is the role of the media in question with regard to the public sphere. In another work we underlined the importance of the media as follows:

Since the media are among the constituent elements of our era, the production and consumption practices which they generate and the way in which they transform reality by transmitting it – in a word, mediatization – are crucial to social, collective, intercultural and international relations. At all levels, from the local to the global, contemporary culture is becoming more and more mediatized.[49]

The relation between the public sphere and the mass media is obvious. The media are a major source of information and knowledge for citizens. Apart from the education system, there are no other channels as important as the media as a vehicle for modern culture. The written and electronic media are thus an important part of the contemporary public sphere. Each medium participates in its own specific way, the participation of radio being different from that of the dailies (if only in that radio does not require citizens to be literate in order to be accessible), and that of television differing from that of radio (because of the role played by the visual in the case of the former). The electronic media are studied in particular with a view to the public sphere. Broadcasting (including both radio and television) has been the subject of detailed analysis examining its role in the public sphere – which is not surprising when, like Smith, one observes the following:

In a modern society broadcasting carries with it most of the strands of the society's culture, artistic and political; it provides the most widely used (and most believed) flows of news and journalism; above all it provides the main stream of entertainment, of fiction, the materials of the symbolic life.[50]

And Garnham agrees entirely:

Not only does broadcasting, and especially TV, dominate our cultural landscape in its own right – it consumes an astonishing two-thirds of our leisure time. It also serves as the access point to other cultural realms – drama, literature, the visual arts and above all music – while at the same time providing the major and preferred source of the information and debate upon which our citizenship depends.[51]

Not only is television time consuming, and not only does it open the door to other fields of culture, but some do not hesitate to make it the democratic medium par excellence. Scannell has interesting comments to make on this point:

(. . .) because (. . .) broadcasting is accessible to all, it is there to be talked about by all. Everyone is entitled to have views and opinions about what they hear and see. This is not the case with most other cultural resources. Bourdieu has shown how culture is a kind of

capital which serves to maintain social difference, and his empirical researches cover many aspects of contemporary (French) cultural tastes: painting, photography, cinema, theater, music, newspapers, food and furnishing. But radio and television are significantly absent, precisely because the social distinctions maintained by the cultural distinctions of particular taste publics collapse in the common cultural domain of broadcasting.[52]

Mulgan also raises the following point:

Perhaps the most important quality that television has in this view is its democratic, levelling character. When it is universally and freely available, it embodies communitarian, egalitarian values not present in other areas. Whatever is on the screen is visible to all, regardless of wealth or class.[53]

But no researcher to our knowledge will have depicted the democratic nature of television and its capacity to strengthen the social bond and to establish itself as the preferred instrument of the public sphere as sharply and as subtly as the French researcher Wolton has done.[54] Wolton has observed television closely, and we would draw attention to what he has to say:

Its democratic nature comes from the fact that we all know that the programmes are there, they are visible, and he can watch them if we want to, and we know at the same time that others are also watching them, which is a form of communication which constitutes a social bond.[55]

And Wolton comments very aptly on this social link:

In what respect does television constitute a social bond? In that by watching television I the viewer, incorporate myself into the potentially huge and anonymous public which is watching it at the same time and I hold a sort of invisible bond with that public. It is a sort of common knowledge, a double link and cross-anticipation. I am watching a programme and I know that others are also watching it and that they know that I am watching it. It is thus a sort of mirroring, and silent bond.

But there is a second meaning. Television, as it is often said, is the mirror of society. If it is its mirror, this means that society sees itself through television, that television presents it with a representation of itself. And by making society reflect upon itself, television not only creates an image and a reflection of that society, but also provides a link for all of those who are watching at the same time. It is, moreover, one of the only instances where society actually thinks about itself while at the same time giving everyone access to that reflection.[56]

For Wolton – and we shall come back to this in the last section of the present essay – this mirror television is general and cannot correspond to fragmented television, to the special-interest channels, which, as he puts it, amount to a sort of broken mirror of society.

It is indeed a fact that television can be important with regard to the public sphere, but that is a role which depends to a large extent on how it is organized. If television is not accessible to everyone, if it neglects certain genres or certain publics, if it is not clearly identified as having to serve the public sphere by forming a real public forum, if it does not seek to get through to the public at large, if it is subordinated to private economic interests or to the political interests of the government, it cannot properly serve the public interest or observe its potential role which is precisely that of providing citizens with the public sphere. And this is where one must see the deeper meaning of the public service concept in television. In the very nature of the public sphere the reader will have intuitively sensed the shadow of the public service as expressed ideally in television. The connection between the public sphere and the idea of public service in television becomes even more evident when one considers what Garnham has to say about the latter:

The essence of public service broadcasting is the provision, to all citizens on equal terms, and as an enabling condition of such citizenship, of a site for the cultural expression and exchange through which social identities are formed and of access to the information and debate upon which democratic politics must be founded. In order to fulfill this role the site should be as free from distorting effects of the exercise of economic or state power as possible.[57]

Consequently, when applied to television, the idea of public service thus justified within a philosophy of culture as outlined, imposes an antinomical conception which radically contradicts that deriving from the predominant economic philosophy. Here again Garnham demonstrates this inextricable opposition:

Public service broadcasting thus presents a challenge to consumerism because it is built upon a model of the viewer and listener as citizen rather than consumer. The consumer model conceives of the satisfaction of needs through discrete individual purchasing decisions within a market. The consumer exercises her or his sovereignty over the producer and ensures the optimum range of efficient provision by choosing between competitive suppliers on the basis of both price and quality. The citizenship model, on the other hand,

sees broadcasting as closer to education than to a product or service market, as a public social process rather than a private good. It conceives of viewers and listeners as members of a shared polity exchanging information and engaging in common debate in a democratic public sphere and as members of a social community defined and given value through a range of common cultural experiences. Thus public broadcasting is based upon the idea that broadcasting is *not* merely a series of individual consumption choices.[58]

For Salaün the idea of public service in television is such that its abandonment or obsolescence would amount to dispensing with the concept of public sphere. We ourselves take the argument farther and point out that, given the importance of television for the public sphere, rejecting the idea of public service in television would be symptomatic of a more general movement in which the very recognition of the 'public' is liable to be denied, citizens would be mere consumers, and the state itself would be called increasingly in question since it draws its legitimacy from the acknowledgement of the existence of a 'public'. And yet the idea of public service in television, which acknowledges the existence of a democratic public sphere where the market and political power must be kept at a distance, needs a recognized and specific medium. The predominant economic philosophy and the market school which proclaims that philosophy, have been sufficiently contrasted with the democratic philosophy of culture which can be inferred from the work carried out by the researchers of the critical school to maintain that the present confusion which tends to make public television channels commercial actors and to make private television the party to a public service which has been watered down to the point of becoming positively insipid is a tragic mistake whose consequences have been misjudged. The solution to this confusion is to restore the role of public television, that is to say, to ensure that the public service television is provided, or, if it is preferred, to restore the natural medium of the public service idea: public television.

PUBLIC TELEVISION IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS

To assert that a society – every society – requires a special space for a broadcasting system which is not being run for the maximization of profit (that is, which is not being run like other industrial enterprises) is to make a statement about the requirements of modern citizenship.[59]

For Smith there is a clear distinction to be made between market television and public television. Two models of television which are as contradictory as the philosophies on which they are based should be organized differently. In the final analysis, Smith seems to consider that the antinomy between these two visions of television, and indeed of society, should give rise to different types of television:

As consumers a society can justify one mode for radio and television; as a citizenry the same society finds itself considering another mode.[60]

Mulgan arrives at approximately the same conclusion from a different approach. Studying the delicate questions of quality in television, Mulgan lists a number of definitions according to the common conceptions which television commentators formulate. One of the conclusions which Mulgan reaches is this:

Whether broadcasting is for entertainment, for enlightenment, for the creation of citizens or whole persons, for making profits, for sustaining the cultural capital of dominant classes, for uncovering the true natures of society of everyday life, or for preserving the morality and cohesion of the community, makes all the difference. Each view of broadcasting's purpose brings with it a clear different conception of quality. Each requires a different structure, a different set of relationships between programme-makers, administrator and audiences.[61]

Contrary to Mulgan, what is contrasted here is what must be termed the two main philosophies of television and of all things social and cultural which have marked the development of television and of democratic societies since their origin. However, as Mulgan has done, it can be argued that these conceptions require different structures, separate modes of operation, and clearly differentiated objectives. The public service idea, which is itself legitimated by the need to preserve a public sphere where citizens can have free access to the information they need and can participate in public life, and, more generally in culture, implies that in television (the democratic medium par excellence for several commentators) lies the need for society to vest itself with a public television which clearly identifies with that purpose. That television, kept apart from private economic interests and from government, must on no account be organized in such a way as to depart from its mandate, which is to provide the public service television. Public service can only be given concrete form

through public television, just as public television is only meaningful when conditional upon public service. Of course the idea that public service can be provided by private commercial television channels whose objectives fundamentally contradict this idea of public service must be completely rejected.

This public television is all the more important today since in the field of the television market, in the field of commercial television, television consumption is becoming individualized (contrary to the social bond which general-interest television generates), and television supply is increasingly requiring consumer solvency (contrary to the equality of citizens and their right to have free access to the public sphere). Referring to these trends in television, Scannell issues the following warning:

It destroys the principle of equality of access for all to entertainment and informational and cultural resources in a common public domain. That hard-won 'public sphere' created over the last thirty years on national television may shatter into splinters under the impact of deregulated multichannel video services.[62]

Scannell is in fact right if public television disappears for the benefit of this new environment. If one succeeds in maintaining a strong public television which is devoted to public service – a television of the public sphere – deregulation in the private and commercial sector will not affect that sphere. Even the distinction between public television and private television can only become more clear-cut for individuals who know which of them is addressing them as citizens by reminding them that they are part of the public, and which of them is addressing them as consumers.

But the basic principles have still to be laid down which must be taken into account in order to ensure the access of a public television in an extremely commercial environment. These principles must at all times provide a means of distinguishing this television from its commercial counterpart. Its mandate, its funding, its programme, the evaluation of its performance and its imputability must be designed so as to distinguish it from other televisions and to prevent it from departing from the role it must fulfill. Many proposals have been made in the literature on these issues. In the following pages these proposals will be taken as a basis for building up a sort of public television ideal. Before we do so we shall leave this section on another warning from Elihu Katz, a researcher who is respected for his work in television, and who gives his view of the future of television judging by its present fragmented form:

As a result, what Habermas and others call the public sphere will be reduced, and the space and time normally reserved for allowing citizens to participate in the affairs of the nation will be curtailed. To begin with it was the meeting places – the public square and the café – which were deserted, and then there was the retirement to the living room; now friends and family are deserting the living room itself, and the person most conversant with the history of the world will communicate electronically only with those who share his or her interests. The evening news bulletin will become simply a broadcast like all the others, and the new scene of social interaction, if there is any at all, will be the network of shared interests, which will be made up of what I call the world union of stamp collectors. The shared experience deriving from joint activity, common interest in certain questions, the empathy necessary for getting to know new groups in society – all of that will disappear. The right and duty to participate in the life of this society will atrophy.[63]

Notes

1. T. Syvertsen, 'Public Television in Crisis: Critiques Compared in Norway and Britain', in *European Journal of Communication*, No. 1, March 1991, p. 97.

2. M. Raboy, I. Bernier, F. Sauvageau and D. Atkinson, *Développement culturel et mondialisation de l'économie, un enjeu démocratique* [Cultural Development and the Globalization of the Economy; a Challenge to Democracy], Institut Québecois de Recherche sur la Culture, Quebec, 1994.

3. D. Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1990, p. 21.

4. See, *inter alia*: E. Skogerbo, 'The Concept of the Public Sphere in a Historical Perspective: An Anachronism or a Relevant Political Concept?', in *Nordicom Review*, No. 2, 1990, p. 44; N. Garnham, 'Public Service Broadcasting and the Consumer' (unpublished).

5. R. M. Entman and S. S. Wildman, 'Reconciling Economic and Non-Economic Perspectives on Media Policy: Transcending the "Marketplace of Ideas"', in *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Winter 1992, pp. 5–19.

6. E.g., N. Garnham, 'Media Theory and the Political Future of Mass Communication', in F. Inglis (ed.), *Capitalism and Communication, Global Culture and the Economics of Information*, Sage Publications, London, 1990, p. 1; A. Rotstein, 'The Use and Misuse of Economics in Cultural Policy', in R. M. Lorimer and D. C. Wilson (eds.), op. cit., pp. 140–56; D. Atkinson, 'Des Discours limités pour une télévision complexe' [Limited Words for a Complex Television], in D. Atkinson, I. Bernier

and F. Sauvageau (eds.), *Souveraineté et protectionisme en matière culturelle* [Sovereignty and Protectionism in Cultural Affairs], Presses de l'Université de Québec, Centre Québecois de Relations Internationales, Quebec, 1991, pp. 265–78.

7. M. Tracey, *Our Better Angels: An Essay on the Condition of Public Service Broadcasting*, Boulder, Colorado, August 1992, p. 10 (unpublished).

8. R. Entman and S. S. Wildman, op. cit., p. 6.

9. A. Rotstein, op. cit., p. 141.

10. R. B. Gallagher, 'American Television: Fact and Fantasy', in C. Veljanowski (ed.), *Freedom in Broadcasting*, The Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1989, p. 190.

11. R. B. Gallagher, ibid., p. 193.

12. T. Syvertsen, 'Public Television in Crisis: Critiques Compared in Norway and Britain', op. cit., p. 101.

13. For an interesting summary of this commission's report see S. Brittan, 'Towards a Broadcasting Market: Recommendations of the British Peacock Committee', in J. G. Blumler and T. J. Nossiter (eds.), op. cit., pp. 335–58.

14. Quoted in S. Brittan, ibid., p. 342.

15. Quoted in S. Brittan, ibid., p. 342.

16. D. Atkinson, 'Des Discours limités pour une télévision complexe' [Limited Words for a Complex Television], op. cit., pp. 265–78.

17. A. Smith, 'Public Broadcasting in a Multi-Channel Europe', in A. Silj (ed.), op. cit., p. 60.

18. Examples can be found in the work of C. Hoskins and S. McFayden, 'The Mandate, Structure and Financing of the CBC', in *Canadian Public Policy – Policy Analysis*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1992, pp. 275–89, and 'Television in the New Broadcasting Environment: Public Policy Lessons from the Canadian Experience', in *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 4, No. 2, June 1989, pp. 173–89.

19. A. Rotstein, op. cit., p. 151. It must also be considered that these 'criticisms' have to assume the 'onus of proof'; that is to say, they have to outline and quantify these 'externalities'. This is a complex task, since the feature peculiar to all of these concepts is that of expressing the inexpressible, the unquantifiable, the vague.

20. In previous research which we have conducted, Riccardo Petrella, who heads the Forecasting and Assessment in Science and Technology (FAST) programme of the Commission of the European Communities in Brussels, told us that he refused to adopt market language since it constantly weakened his position *vis-à-vis* the adherents of the market school.

21. Otherwise, market theorists have to depart from their theory and find the 'parasite concept' which allows them to return to their general theory.

22. In another work the example was cited of the Canadian economist Michael Walker, for whom culture amounted to the

following: 'What we refer to as culture is simply the society-wide summation of the individual choices people make.' Quoted in M. Raboy, I. Bernier, F. Sauvageau and D. Atkinson, op. cit., p. 44.

23. C. Veljanowski, 'Market-Driven Broadcasting: Not Myth but Reality', in *Intermedia*, Vol. 18, No. 6, November–December 1990, p. 17.

24. To quote an anecdote: some of these theorist-ideologists occasionally admit, in the final analysis, that the ideal market cannot correspond to reality. When 'cornered' in a discussion in which the benefits of the market he had presented were severely questioned by critics who pointed out how far his theoretical market was removed from the vicissitudes of the real market which were presented to him, one of these theorists defended his arguments by stating that an imperfect market could not be compared with ideal regulation. Yet that theorist had not realized that until then he himself had talked of nothing but an ideal market and imperfect regulation . . . For the details of this discussion see D. Atkinson, I. Bernier and F. Sauvageau, op. cit., pp. 425–45.

25. E.g., A. Silj, op. cit., pp. 22–39; K. Siune and W. Truetzschler (eds.), op. cit.; G. Murdock, 'Redrawing the Map of the Communications Industries: Concentration and Ownership in the Era of Privatization', in M. Ferguson, *Public Communication. The New Imperatives*, Sage Publications, London, 1990, pp. 1–15.

26. J.-M. Salaün, *A qui appartient la télévision?* [Who Owns Television?], Aubier, Paris, 1989, p. 92.

27. See M. Raboy et al., op. cit., where attention is drawn to a tendency on the part of states to dispense with certain anti-concentration measures so as to allow 'national champions' to be formed which can confront foreign competition.

28. See F. Young, 'Les fonds de soutien à la création audiovisuelle' [Funds in Aid of Audio-visual Creations], in F. Young (ed.), *Médias et service public* [Media and Public Service], Centre d'Études Constitutionnelles et Administratives, Bruylant, Brussels, 1992, pp. 83–113.

29. N. Garnham, 'Public Policy and the Cultural Industries', in F. Inglis (ed.), op. cit., pp. 161–2.

30. J.-M. Salaün, op. cit., p. 82.

31. Here again see J.-M. Salaün, ibid., pp. 145–80; or J. G. Blumler, 'Television in the United States: Funding Sources and Programming Consequences', in J. G. Blumler and T. J. Nossiter (eds.), op. cit., pp. 41–94.

32. J. G. Blumler and T. J. Nossiter, 'Broadcasting Finance in Transition: An International Comparison', in J. G. Blumler and T. J. Nossiter (eds.), op. cit., pp. 420–1.

33. A. Budd, 'The Peacock Report – Some Unanswered Questions', in C. Veljanowski (ed.), op. cit., p. 75.

34. A. Smith, op. cit., p. 60.

35. To see various positions adopted by the adherents of the critical school or the many and varied points of view they express on questions such as 'quality' in television or what public television should be, see G. Mulgan, 'Television's Holy Grail: Seven Types of Quality', in G. Mulgan (ed.), *The Question of Quality, The Broadcasting Debate 6*, BF1 Publishing, London, 1990, pp. 4–32.

36. D. Kellner, op. cit., p. 15.

37. For cultural development see M. Raboy et al., op. cit., pp. 43–51.

38. Here again, emphasis must be laid on the distinction to be made between the citizen and the consumer. For Skogerbo, 'These two conceptions of the individual are not compatible and relate to different concepts of human freedom. The role as consumer implies freedom to act on the market, whereas the role as citizen relates to political rights.' E. Skogerbo, op. cit., p. 44.

39. P. Scannell, 'Public Service Broadcasting and Modern Public Life', in *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 11, 1989, p. 139.

40. P. Scannell, 'Public Service Broadcasting: The History of a Concept', in A. Goodwin and G. Whannel, *Understanding Television*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 26.

41. G. Mulgan, op. cit., p. 22.

42. 'The Future of the CBC. An Interview with Patrick Watson', in *Policy Options/Options politiques*, Vol. 15, No. 1, January–February 1994, p. 32. With his vision of democracy, Watson agrees with the participatory democracy theorists as opposed to the élitist democracy theorists; the latter limit democracy to the electoral process, whereas the former have a much broader vision of democracy. For these 'schools, see D. Rucinsky, 'The Centrality of Reciprocity to Communication and Democracy', in *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Vol. 8, No. 2, June 1992, pp. 184–94.

43. P. Aufderheide, 'Public Television and the Public Sphere', in *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1991, pp. 168–9.

44. For the concept of public sphere, see J. Habermas, *L'espace public: archéologie de la publicité bourgeoise* [The Public Sphere: Archeology of Bourgeois Advertising], Payot, Paris, 1978.

45. T. Syvertsen, 'Serving the Public: Public Television in Norway in a New Media Age', op. cit., p. 232.

46. E. Skogerbo, op. cit., p. 45.

47. M. Raboy et al., op. cit., p. 64.

48. J.-M. Salaün, op. cit., p. 68.

49. M. Raboy et al., op. cit., p. 65.

50. A. Smith, op. cit., pp. 61–2.

51. N. Garnham, *The BBC Charter Renewal Debate*, p. 1 (unpublished).

52. P. Scannell, 'Public Service Broadcasting and Modern Public Life', op. cit., p. 155.

53. G. Mulgan, op. cit., p. 20.

54. Some of Wolton's best-known works: J.-L. Missika and D. Wolton, *La folle du logis: la télévision dans les sociétes démocratiques* [The Domestic Clown: Television in Democratic Societies], Gallimard, Paris, 1983; D. Wolton, *Éloge du grand public: une théorie critique de la télévision* [Praise of the General Public: A Critical Theory of Television], Flammarion, Paris, 1990.

55. D. Wolton, *Éloge du grand public ...*, op. cit., p. 114.

56. D. Wolton, ibid., p. 126.

57. N. Garnham, *The BBC Charter Renewal Debate*, pp. 2–3.

58. N. Garnham, *Public Service Broadcasting and the Consumer*, p. 2 (unpublished).

59. A. Smith, op. cit., p. 60.

60. Ibid.

61. G. Mulgan, op. cit., p. 28.

62. P. Scannell, 'Public Service Broadcasting: The History of a Concept', op. cit., p. 26.

63. E. Katz, 'Individualisation, segmentation, mondialisation: la technologie de la télévision et l'État-nation' [Individualization, Segmentation, Globalization: Television Technology and the Nation-state], in A. H. Caron and P. Juneau (eds.), *Le défi des télévisions nationales à l'ère de la mondialisation* [The Challenge of National Television in the Age of Globalization], Montreal University Press, Montreal, 1992, p. 138.

Chapter 3

The public
television ideal

The mandate and missions
of public television

If public television still has a role to play in a multi-channel universe where competition can only intensify, its mandate and missions must be defined. If public television is to be justified in that environment, it must be demonstrated from the outset, perhaps in the law which governs it, how it is to be differentiated. For that environment is composed first and foremost of private channels seeking to make profits and operating normally and legitimately in a logic of market competition. Public television must be defined differently, since it endeavours to fulfill its own specific and exclusive mandate, and it must be structured in such a way that its mode of operation does not allow that mandate to become commercialized.

THE MANDATE

In the first part of this essay it was stressed that public television is now trapped. On the one hand, it is subjected to intensifying competition which is bound to induce it to commercialize its service. On the other hand, the idea has developed in several countries that private television channels could participate in the public service ideal. Faced with the recent development of the various public television channels throughout the world and taking account of the con-

stantly growing competition in television, which can only induce private channels to disregard their public service responsibilities, the idea should be accepted that public service can only be provided effectively by public television itself. Otherwise one is bound to foster the confusion causing the crisis which public television is now going through.

The literature on the subject contains many exhortations for a public television which is different from private commercial television. It is advocated that it should offer a different programme – but what is that? It is recognized that it cannot merely broadcast what the private channels do not offer because its marginalization is liable, sooner or later, to cause it to go bankrupt. Some argue that public television must offer more or less the same programme as private channels, but differently. Souchon gives a good example of this objective for the public sector in television:

> But in producing the same type of broadcasts as others, it will have to try to produce them better: with stricter standards and more precision, and with more marked concern for professional ethics. Public television must broadcast the genres that the public at large expects of television (information, fiction, entertainment), but the quality must be higher than that of commercial television channels. [1]

Souchon stresses again that public television must be innovative and creative. All of this is very well, but can it be realized if public television is allowed to manoeuvre like a commercial

actor in a logic where private channels are asked to operate as public services? Souchon in fact anticipates this problem:

It is understandable that it is difficult in any country to make the difference understood when public service missions are being fulfilled outside public television channels: Do not all television channels fulfill to some extent the major functions which legislation on the audio-visual sector assigns to the television public service – that of educating, informing, entertaining and cultivating?[2]

What is desired is a public television which differs in its results (in the programme that it offers, for example, and in the audience it reaches), but is similar in its operating methods to the commercial channels (in its ability to find income, in its management, in its ability to assume certain public service responsibilities). The drama of public television today is the fact that is has lost the exclusive public service function, the widespread refusal to imagine that there are two separate and incompatible sectors in television, one being a public service sector which must provide non-commercial television, a television for citizens, as opposed to a different commercial sector where the actors seek their own advantage by trying to appeal to consumers. Over and above the official statements claiming how important it is to safeguard a separate public television, the tendency has been to approximate these two sectors rather than to make a distinction between them. The idea has been entertained that the commercialization of television as a whole does not contradict the public service ideal and that private television channels could be oriented towards achieving that ideal. Several researchers and intellectuals have embraced this belief. Barnett and Docherty, for example, illustrate this in the following extract:

We must establish from the outset our own emphasis on the public service system of broadcasting rather than the public hard-casters. Public service broadcasting must be defined in terms of a commitment to a set of principles rather than in terms of the ownership or financing of broadcasting bodies; it is therefore not a philosophy which can be confined to national broadcasters or state corporations, but through various legislative and regulatory frameworks must imbue privately owned stations and channels. This integration of the private sector is vital to a philosophy of the public service ethos.[3]

This extract reveals the very relative importance attributed to public television in a context where it is blindly believed that commercial channels can be made to submit to public service responsibilities. It must be mentioned in the defence of the authors of this extract that they based their argument to a large extent on the old British model, where in a context of BBC and ITV duopoly the latter private network agreed to comply with certain public service responsibilities, being assured of the monopoly of income from advertising on the British market. In fact everywhere that private channels have been accepted it has been believed that through appropriate regulation they could be induced to fulfilling public service responsibilities in return for which they were promised either implicitly or explicitly that competition would be restricted so as to ensure that they would be profitable. But as competition increases and as states find that they can no longer control it because of transmission technologies, several researchers believe that it will become more and more difficult to impose such responsibilities on private channels. What is more, it is fairly widely stressed that the basic incompatibility between profit-seeking and the performance of public service responsibilities has given rise to all sorts of subterfuges for minimizing the costs entailed in those responsibilities. For example, private channels have become masters in the art of circumventing their responsibilities by broadcasting cultural programmes at times when nobody is listening or watching, programmes for young people which parents criticize, such as cartoons which are considered to be too violent, or by producing broadcasts which are copied from American programmes as is the case with certain games.[4] There is nothing Machiavellian in such machinations; they are easily explained. These responsibilities place constraints on the profitability of these enterprises – if they didn't, the private channels would be delighted to fulfill them and would not need to be asked to do so. As Babe already stated some years ago:

It is already extremely difficult to induce an individual who carries full responsibilities for his or her decisions to act consciously and voluntarily against his or her own financial interests. It thus is not reasonable to expect this of the big public broadcasting corporations when the objectives of those corporations greatly limit the freedom which their members can have.[5]

And it must also be stressed that the private channels can use the responsibilities which have been imposed on them to develop strategies for negotiating with the political authorities or the statutory bodies which monitor them: We can only fulfill these responsibilities if we are profitable and, in these difficult times when competition is fierce, we can only be profitable if we are relieved of the less important responsibilities.

It is time to revise the way in which television is apprehended as a whole and the position held by public television. Ideally, public television only has a *raison d'être* in the realization of public service. In a competitive context, commercial television cannot be naïvely subjected to realizing such a service. As Sauvageau stresses:

While restricting the regulation of the private sector to a minimum, the state should thus recognize that certain functions (in particular information and culture) will not be fulfilled by the commercial media, and should entrust the realization of those functions more than ever to the public sector. And since public funds are not inexhaustible the private sector, thus freed from some of the constraints of regulation, could be invited to participate in the financing of the public media – in our particular case, public TV.[6]

The question of the financing of public television will be discussed later, but the main idea to be borne in mind here is that as a basic service drawing its legitimacy from the right of the public to have access to a television which places emphasis on information, education, and culture in the broad sense, as a service which enables all citizens to be informed of the social and political debates in progress within the state, as a service through which a real public forum independent of commercial interests can exist, the public service can only be provided by a public television. That television must be seen as that of the public, belonging to that public, and understood to pursue the objective of encouraging citizens' access to and participation in public life.

Several authors have recently referred implicitly to this need to distinguish the public sector of television more from the commercial sector, to make a distinction between the two by referring not only to their programmes but also to their very nature, to their objectives which are not all the same. Several commentators are of the opinion that this fundamental distinction has not been given adequate attention. According to Wolton:

The issue at stake is much more than simply the question of whether we need a competitive system, which is obviously the case; it concerns more the proportion to be established between the two sectors, the mission to be assigned to public service TV, the minimum guidelines to be imposed on private TV. . . . There is the same silence with regard to both of these fundamental problems: what proportion is to be established between the two television sectors and what general guidelines are to be set for mixed audio-visual systems.[7]

And Wolton adds that in the past few years there has been no reflection on the respective roles of private and public television in a competitive context.[8] But this is precisely what must be done if the public service ideal is to be maintained, and in our opinion that ideal cannot be left to market forces. And Wolton takes this point further:

It is like abandoning health education and environment policy to the laws of the market. These policies are certainly subjected to those laws, but at the same time everyone admits the need for a minimum, not of regulation but also of orientation.[9]

It is in this line of thought that one should consider the possibility of establishing in the legislation governing broadcasting in general or television in particular that there are two separate sectors, one public and non-commercial, the other private and commercial.

Public television should have the general mandate of supplying public service television, that mandate being its exclusive province. The pre-eminence of public television, its importance for maintaining a public forum which is accessible to all citizens should also be stressed, the presence of the commercial sector thereby being taken into account. The commercial sector composed of all private television channels should be subjected to general standards and rules which are laid down for the sole purpose of protecting the public interest (such as certain rules concerning obscenity or others concerning a ban on broadcasting advertising for certain products considered to be harmful to health, for example). Having regard to public television and public service, barring exceptions, the only obligation involved for these private actors in obtaining broadcasting licences should be, where necessary, that they 'participate' in the financing of public sector television. For commercial television can be induced to participate in public service – not by fulfilling programming responsibilities, but in purely financial terms. It can furthermore be established more broadly that any private commercial enterprise which gains profits from television – broadcasters, producers, cable distributors, satellite operators or advertising firms – can be required to make a reciprocal financial contribution. In the ultimate analysis, it is the consumer who is called upon to contribute to the upkeep of public television, the television of the citizen. We shall come back to this in the section focusing on this aspect.

Of course, in a context of this nature, how are the respective places of the public and the commercial sector to

be established? By maintaining the pre-eminence of the public over the private, by making the latter participate financially in the former, is one not liable indirectly to promote growth in the public sector which would stifle the commercial sector? We have entered the era of consumer television with a vengeance, and it would be unrealistic to believe it possible to return to a public monopoly. Moreover, it would be desirable for the expansion of the services offered by public television to be limited. Since it is the television of the public, with the mission of providing a general interest service which can rally that public, it would be contradictory to accept that that television should produce an ever-increasing number of programmes and thus contribute to the fragmentation of that public.

For the moment, emphasis must be laid on this fundamental distinction which should be established in legislation, that is, that public television and public service are synonymous and, on the other hand, that commercial television must not assume public service programming responsibilities. If commercial television wants to supply information, let it do so. But let it be clearly established that that offer is its own free choice, that in so doing it hopes to obtain an advantage for itself, and that it is not an act of charity or an act prompted by objective civic awareness. It is possible that by freeing the private channels of the constraints which are imposed on them today and which several of them try to circumvent, the programme offered by public television will be more distinct as a result and that it will be easier for the public itself to understand its importance and its impact.

To reintegrate the public service idea as the exclusive mandate of public television is to ensure that that idea will not be subordinated to other objectives and that it is the only *raison d'être* of a body which otherwise should not benefit from public financial support. This approach, this vision of public television is consistent with the logic by which several researchers envisage the role of public television and foresee that it will be impossible to subject commercial television to the public service idea. Blumler and Hoffmann-Riem express this ideal as follows:

External regulators' abilities to influence programming, however, are normally indirect, limited and modest (. . .). In great part it is because no amount or form of regulation can transform the economic driving forces that will predominantly spur the behaviour of an audience – and revenue-seeking competitors in a multi-channel system. This does not mean that private providers should be relieved

of obligations and expectations to serve the public interest. But since there can be no guarantee that the offerings of commercial programmes will be primarily shaped by such considerations, there must be well-organized alternatives to a broadcasting market.[10]

Consequently, these researchers consider that this idea of a television different from that of the market devolves upon public television.

Only strong public television organizations can be expected to serve the public interest from the inside : giving priority to the vulnerable values at stake in how broadcasting performs; and treating them, not just as imposed requirements for obligatory or taken conformity, nor just instrumentally as means to audience maximization, but as ends in themselves.[11]

We add a dimension to these considerations, however, by pointing out that it is no longer enough to equivocate about the inability of commercial television to provide public service or about the superiority of public television in this field; that distinction must be more clearly established in the laws applying to television.

Some will be reluctant to acquiesce to such a measure, for the idea dies hard that the private sector can be used to advantage if only to serve certain industrial objectives such as maintaining a broadcast producing industry which might possibly be used to advantage on the international market. It is also perfectly plausible to believe that the state could continue to define industrial policies and strategies in collaboration with the television industry, but these policies and strategies negotiated between the state and the enterprises concerned must be seen for what they are, that is to say, measures that are taken to promote one or other sector of industry which have little to do with public service.

THE MISSIONS

Clearer differentiation between public service which public television is responsible for providing and the laws of the market which govern commercial television is essential to the future of public television. The missions of public television have traditionally, and virtually automatically, been identified according to the major objectives of providing information, education, entertainment and culture. It must be admitted that these missions have lost a great deal of their meaning over the past few years, partly because they have often been assigned to private channels as well. The latter will obviously

continue to fulfill some of these missions indirectly in the years that lie ahead, even if they are exempted from doing so.

These missions have in fact become mere specifications, which have been translated into types of programming, broader types of mission than are expected of the public service. For most people, including researchers, these missions merely represent types of programme, types of broadcast. Providing information means presenting news bulletins and reports on public affairs; providing education means providing broadcasts for young people and documentaries; providing entertainment means providing films and quizzes; and 'providing culture' means occasionally presenting an opera or other high-level artistic broadcasts. It is not a bad thing, to be sure, to imagine that public television can provide all of this, but in concrete terms we are only speaking here of one aspect of that television, which is that of providing programming which is diversified according to type. In fact this is a public service objective which has been established for several years, *inter alia* by the Broadcasting Research Unit (BRU) in a document entitled *The Public Service Idea in British Broadcasting*.[12] This document is representative of the literature on the principles on which the actual concept of public service should be based – literature produced by researchers who wish to rehabilitate an idea which is being lost in the commercial context. In fact that literature represents a sophistication of the ideals which previously formed the basis for elaborating the public service model in television. The BRU document sets out the values, objectives, principles and duties which must be fulfilled if the idea of this service is to be accomplished, as do other articles and works discussing the public service. It also discusses the preconditions for the fulfilment of this service.

The mission of public television should be to accomplish the principles attaching to the public service idea and to ensure that the preconditions for its realization are complied with. What are these principles and preconditions?[13]

The universality of public service accessible to all on the national territory is a well-known principle. On the other hand, universality also presupposes that the public service should seek to reach as wide a public as possible. Since it is provided for all, this service must also seek to be used by as many people as possible. As we shall see later, this idea of the largest number must not be confused with simply evaluating this service on the basis of viewer ratings. Universality is understood to mean the capacity to reach all citizens by means of appropriate programming. To do so, the public service must ensure pluralism, which is complementary to the principle of universality.

Pluralism, as a principle of public service, means that this service must be diversified in at least three ways. Diversity as regards types of broadcast, the audiences addressed and the subjects dealt with. The public service must seek to reflect the diversity of the public's tastes through programming which provides different types of broadcasts (ranging from news bulletins to fiction). Seeking to reach as many people as possible, it must aim to satisfy an aggregate of audiences with different interests – young people, the elderly, various minorities, and so on. Addressing certain audiences means ensuring that everyone will find something that suits them in a service which aims to get through to all of the public. Diversifying the subjects dealt with means seeking to respond to the various interests of the public and also reflecting topical social debates.

Universality and pluralism are the principles most frequently quoted with regard to the public service, but there is a third principle which is in fact a precondition for realizing that service, and that is independence.

Independence is the freedom of the public service with regard to private interests and political authorities. Ample emphasis has been laid on the first aspect by underlining that the commercialization affecting all of television is undermining both the public service idea and the actual action of public television. Precisely because this commercialization runs counter to the very concept of public service and because private enterprises cannot fulfil the principles of universality and diversity on which it is based, emphasis has been laid on the importance of having only public television provide this service. It is agreed, however, that the public service can only be provided if the political authorities are kept at arm's length. Where it is true that the current public television crisis in Western democracies is due to the confusion caused by the commercialization of public television channels which cannot be reconciled with the principles of public service, one must not disregard the role played by the political authorities with regard to that confusion or their responsibilities with regard to the current difficulties encountered in the countries of the former Eastern bloc in understanding what a public television channel is, as opposed to a state television channel. Because the public service is a site where current ideas in society must be expressed absolutely freely, because it must be a forum where information, opinions and criticism circulate,[14] the realization of such a site can only be safeguarded by requiring

public television to defend its autonomy by alerting the public to any political measure or decision which is liable to threaten its independence with regard to commercial pressure and political authorities. Since public service is neither the instrument of private interests nor machinery serving the interests of the government of the day, public television, as a tributary of that service, should take on a mission of independence of its service. We would hasten to add that it is not a question of transforming public television into a political authority, a body which would be responsible for promoting a particular political vision, but of guaranteeing that television has the right to intervene whenever its status and independence are in danger.

As a tributary of public service, of a universal, diversified and independent service, public television should have the mission of fulfilling and defending these principles, which are the specific features of public service.

To sum up, a strict distinction must be made between commercial television which operates on the market and public television, the other television, which is the only body assigned the task of providing a public service defined explicitly on the principles of universality, diversity (pluralism) and independence, that must govern that public television.

The financing of public television

What type of financing should be preferred for public television? This is a crucial question and few could argue that the capacity of public television to fulfill its mandate and its missions is not influenced by the amount of money it has at its disposal and by the sources of funding. And yet there are many contradictions here at the present time. Although it is not possible in this paper to establish the quantity of income necessary for ensuring that public television operates smoothly, we can nevertheless devote some thought to the sources of funding for that television.

THE COMMERCIAL FUNDING SOURCES

In the past few years, partly in order to offset a slowdown or cutbacks in the public funds granted to public television, several public television channels have opened up to advertising or have been resorting to advertising to a greater extent, have developed new channels supplied on a subscription basis or have set up new, specifically commercial activities in order to finance their main service.

Is it desirable for a public television channel, which ideally one would like to see relieved of commercial pressure, to resort to these sources of funding? If one wants public television to be separate from all the other market-driven channels, is it appropriate and logical that it should continue to be financed in part through means usually and normally reserved for private commercial television channels? Although many commentators of the television scene advocate the principle of 'to each his own' – public funds for public television and private funds for private television[15] – there are also several who argue that public television can and must have access to commercial funding, and in particular to advertising.

Gheude considers that in a consumer society where everyone is defined more and more by their life-style, public service radio and television broadcasting can no longer be characterized by the absence of advertising slots.[16] For this author advertising is not a mode of funding, but the expression of the consumer society, and it would be an anachronism and a mistake for public television not to use it. In addition to this highly philosophical argument, many more widespread reasons advocate funding through advertising for public television. Cache considers that using advertising obliges public television to take account of its viewer ratings and that these ratings are an important indicator of performance for that television:

If one actually does away with advertising and its constraints, the public service is not only liable to lose its audience, but what it will lose first and foremost and without a doubt is its production indicator: That is to say, the maximization of its audience. (...) Simply removing the advertising audience constraint from the public service thus does not pose a problem of funding (...), but rather a fundamental organizational problem, when one bears in mind that that service would then no longer have to produce anything.[17]

Cache, who is also of the opinion that no missions whatever should be imposed on public television, considers that maximizing the audience becomes practically the *raison d'être* of that television. Whereas Cache, who is nevertheless an advocate of public television, could thus lead us to believe that the most efficient form of public television is private television freed of all constraints, Gheude tolls the bell for the citizen to the benefit of the consumer. These two commentators are perfect examples of the confusion which reigns today regarding the actual purpose of the public service in a highly

commercialized environment. And yet that confusion has arisen within certain public television channels themselves which believe blindly in the benefits of advertising for the public television programme. Whereas a researcher such as Souchon seems to believe that withdrawing advertising from public television could eliminate its need to draw an audience,[18] a former president of the French public television corporation has already argued that doing so would be a mistake on two scores – budgetary and editorial:

One must make allowances here: having no choice but to realize an important publicity objective is not to be criticized in itself. In fact it is the only means (. . .) of guaranteeing television a certain amount of independence: the flow of advertising makes broadcasters more receptive to viewer demand – which is obviously very sound in the context of a public television channel – and although the law of the audience does not always make it possible to programme broadcasts for too restricted a public at desirable times, on the other hand, it frees broadcasters from certain politico-administrative desires and pressure from lobbies.[19]

Advertising would thus enable public television to stay in touch with viewer demand and would give it a form of independence with regard to the political authorities, which could no longer take advantage of their right to lay down the sum of public funds granted to television in order to manipulate it. And most public television channels today subscribe to this type of version and to the importance of advertising for their future. In the declaration ensuing from the conference of the EBU (European Broadcasting Union) held in Brussels in 1993, it is stated that in order to achieve their objectives public television channels must have a combination of adequate and evaluative funding at their disposal which can call on both public and commercial resources while taking account of national traditions.[20] In the summary of the discussions held at the same conference, emphasis was laid on the conflicting position of the Director General of the BBC, who considered that the public service should resort only to public funding.[21] In actual fact, given the advertising craze of several public television channels, the BBC is today something of an embarrassment because it annuls the idea that a public television channel which has no revenue from advertising can remain indifferent to reaching a large audience. As to the independence from political authorities which would be ensured by resorting to income from advertising in addition to public funding, the BBC does not seem to be any more or any less

independent than its counterparts which are financed through advertising, since independence from the political authorities can be achieved by other means. In fact one might wonder whether for several public television channels which still enjoy a considerable budget and are still able to draw a large audience the use of advertising is not quite simply a short-term means of contending with competition from private channels at a time when governments are reluctant to grant them adequate public resources to ensure the dominant position they formally held. Faced with competition from private television channels, public television channels, which share the public service idea and are responsible for fulfulling the obligations it implies, think perhaps that they can position themselves strategically by competing for the audience and for resources from advertising while enjoying public funds at the same time. In this context it is not surprising that commercial competitors are crying unfair competition when faced with these television channels, which benefit from public funds and only have to fulfill a few additional public service responsibilities, which are not widely known and, above all, are misunderstood by the public itself.

When all is said and done, the attitude of the public television channels which want to have wider access to income from advertising or which do not want to lose that source of income is ambiguous. It is fairly widely recognized that this type of funding is delicate and is likely to commercialize the programme provided. Yet the arguments continue in support of a fair balance between income from advertising and the public funds granted to public television in order to justify maintaining a situation which would seem to run counter to that television in the medium and long term.[22] For it must be pointed out that advertising is not necessarily dangerous with regard to the commercialization of the programme of public television. When programme supply was restricted or when the public monopoly was in effect in the television sector, or when there were very few private television channels on the national territory, using advertising as a form of funding which complemented public funds did not necessarily mean that public television was dependent on advertisers to the point where its programme was affected. Since advertising slots were in high demand and since public television was in a strong position to negotiate the price and was faced with queues of buyers, the influence of advertising on the programme of public television was, in the last analysis, minimal. But the situation is clearly completely different in a highly competitive environment where public television competes

directly with private television channels for this type of income. And since advertisers are now no longer queuing up at the door of public television to buy advertising slots, and since the advertising market itself is reaching saturation and channels must now 'attract' advertisers, the influence of advertising on a programme can no longer be naïvely denied. Many public broadcasters will freely admit that certain broadcasts which are criticized for being too 'commercial' have been included in their programme because from advertising they tap the revenue which enables them to present other broadcasts more representative of the 'public' service. The idea that the funding source is an important, if not decisive, factor in the elaboration of a programme both for public and for private television is discussed at length in the literature. Whereas it is a well-known fact that advertising makes advertisers the real television clients and transforms the audience into a commodity which is sold by that television, on the other hand, the role of advertising in the gradual harmonization of public and private television channels has not been underlined enough. Both already being considered to be components of the public service, the instigation or intensification of recourse to advertising has been a contributing factor in public television's loss of identity in the current television environment. Only public funds and the presence of several broadcasts designed in the public service perspective enable the public to distinguish this television from its private counterpart.

In as much as the importance of distinguishing public television from market television by assigning the role of providing the television public service to public television alone has been demonstrated, it is argued that it is just as necessary to distinguish its type of funding. Ideally, it is not the objective of public television to sell a product but to provide a public service requiring public financing. Public television should not sell advertising slots except in those countries where investments in advertising in television do not allow the presence of private channels.

The same logic applies to selling programmes or broadcasts individually. This means that since public television has to provide a public service enabling all to have access to a universal programme, it is out of place in the sector of television by subscription or pay-per-view television. It is known that several public television channels have embarked on these forms of television in the past few years. In as much as public television is financed in part or in full by the population as a whole, it is contradictory that it should offer services which only benefit those who can afford them financially. Of course the idea behind such undertakings is to create services which are sufficiently profitable to finance the general-interest service, which is the basic service of public television. [23] As regards equity, these special-interest services could not be considered per se to be programmes which guarantee the public service ideal. The subscription system and the use of advertising are today means of compensating for the refusal to grant the public funds that are necessary for public television to operate properly.

As a television channel which has to fulfill the mandate of providing a public service, as a non-commercial television which operates in isolation from the market, public television simply should not be allowed to sell advertisers or viewers any goods whatsoever, whether audiences, programmes or individual broadcasts. The sale of these products should be left to the commercial television sector. Sponsorship,[24] another form of advertising, and commercial subsidiaries of public television channels should also be prohibited.

It will of course be feared by some that the abolition of these sources of income, if they are not compensated, might meant the end for several public television channels. Two sources of funding remain necessary and sufficient both in principle and in practice: public funds (the direct contribution by citizens towards the financing of their television) and transfers of money which should be laid down by the state so that the commercial sector supports the public sector in television.

PUBLIC FUNDS

According to Smith:

Public service always requires a unique type of funding. The institution, loaded with its special responsibilities, has to enjoy a form of financial support for which no other body is competing. That may be – and ideally is, the licence fee – but it may well be advertising in blocks, or direct grant or a mixture of advertising and something else. However, if it finds itself competing minute by minute for the same audiences, while attempting to draw upon the same sources of funding as another directly competing channel-operator, then its special purposes have to be abandoned and the whole point of its existence is lost.[25]

Smith aptly expresses one of the elements in favour of withdrawing public television from the advertising sector and compensating for this through full or partial financing with

public funds. In a context of competition for funding through advertising, public television has no choice but to develop into a commercial actor in order to attract that type of revenue.

It is surprising to observe that in the present competitive context in television, a context where the number of private channels is increasing and where income from advertising is becoming more and more a rare resource and a challenge, in several countries the fact that it has thus become all the more important for public television to resort to public funds both in order to ensure that it can continue to exist and to fulfill its mandate of public service has not been understood. It is surprising, of course, when one considers the logic which should prevail in the elaboration of this public service and the organization which should be preferred in order to ensure that the institution whose responsibility it is to provide this service – public television – is respected. It is less surprising if one merely sees this service and this television in terms of state budget items at a time when the state is having to settle its deficits and its debts. But there it is – since public television and the public service it provides must not be regarded as simple components of public administration, unless it is merely a state television, the use of public funds and the fixing of those funds should not be subject to the arbitrary decisions of the political authorities. There are two elements which must be considered in detail here: the need to use public funds and the criteria according to which the volume of those funds is determined.

Using public funds naturally has the advantage of keeping public television away from private interests and commercial pressures. It allows it to keep out of the competition for the commercial income which would induce it to imitate the programming practices of private channels. But above all financing public television through public funds creates a contractual relationship between that television and the public. The public is no longer a means but an end. Since it is financed by the public as a whole, public broadcasters must aim to meet the various needs which arise in that public. In a highly competitive world where the number of private channels is multiplying, the fact that public television is financially dependent on its audience must lead it to provide a service whose quality, originality and interest are such that that public constantly feels the need to continue to finance it despite the quantity of private services which are offered elsewhere.

Whereas funding through advertising leads broadcasters to seek profitable audiences, that is to say those categories of consumers which are potential buyers of the products advertised on television (which means that certain social strata will of course be ignored in the designing of the programmes to be broadcast), the universality of the financing of public television through public funds should ensure that all audiences are given the same consideration when their programmes are being elaborated. Television financed by advertising or subscription seeks to get through to consumers; television financed by the public seeks to get through to citizens. Public funding should enable it to concentrate on fulfilling its mandate of public service and not to get sidetracked under the pretext of generating commercial income.

But the use of public funds clearly also has drawbacks, and the literature contains many criticisms of the system: Although subsidies or licence fees keep public television away from commercial pressures, they can cause political dependence with regard to the authorities which determine the amounts;[26] the appropriation of public funds to public television can be carried out on the same basis as publicity funding is produced by advertisers, that is to say, viewer ratings are the only criterion applied, with the result that public television bases its programming on that criterion alone;[27] public funds are not guaranteed, particularly at a time when governments are making cutbacks in expenditure, and they do not allow public television to plan and develop medium-term and long-term programming strategies; universal payment of public television is unfair for those who do not watch it.

Do these criticisms concern the use of public funds or the criteria on the basis of which those funds are fixed and decided and the method for evaluating the role and the performance of public television? We suggest that these criticisms are of the order of the second hypothesis. The injustice caused by universal payment can be annulled at least in part by the fact that financing a service which is not used in the short term or in the immediate future does not deny its usefulness. Brittan recognizes this phenomenon in the following terms:

A democratic justification is that viewers and listeners may themselves be willing to support activities in their capacity as voting taxpayers which they are not prepared to pay for directly as consumers in large enough numbers.[28]

But it must be added that this criticism is important in terms of the system proposed here and poses the problem of the capacity of public television whose mission is universal and diversified, to reach as many citizens as possible. As we shall

see in the last section of this chapter which deals with evaluating the performance of public television and its accountability, it would be necessary to impose on it the objective of reaching as wide an audience as possible (of interesting as many citizens as possible in its broadcasts so that the majority tune in to its programme for a given period of time). And the question is justified whether this criticism at the present time is not connected with the commercialization which is affecting public television. Imitating private channels and producing 'popular' programmes at all times, public television financed by advertising probably seeks to reach profitable audiences to the detriment of those other audiences which nevertheless still share in its financing.

The other three criticisms levelled at public financing – dependence on the political authorities, maximization of viewer ratings and lack of planning owing to this type of funding – are all connected not with the fact that public funds are used but with the way in which those funds are allocated. We find ourselves here in the field of arbitrary political decisions whose danger we have already underlined.

Let us clarify one question immediately. There is a curious debate on which system – direct subsidy or licence fees – gives the political authorities more ascendancy over public television.[29] Although licence fees enable the taxpayer to be more aware of what public television is costing him and direct subsidy produces the illusion that these funds come from the government, which is free to distribute them as it sees fit, this, to our mind, is not the point. Inasmuch as no system has been set up to guarantee public television, a say in the sums it needs in order to fulfill its mandate and its missions and to provide a programme accordingly, the fixing of the subsidies or of the price of the licence fee by the political authorities remains a problem as regards the relative autonomy which public television should enjoy. Unless that autonomy is guaranteed, public television will remain open to the criticisms of those who associate it with state television. Brittan aptly illustrates this weakness by taking the example of licence fees in the United Kingdom, which serve to finance the BBC:

The licence fee has been considered superior to advertising as a source of funds because it ensured freedom from commercial influence, in exchange for which the broadcasters were prepared to accept dependence on the government.[30]

As was mentioned at the beginning of this section, certain public broadcasters now argue that one of the advantages of financing through advertising lies in greater independence in relation to public funds and consequently to the public authorities which fix their amount. This reveals less the independence which advertising allows than the lack of autonomy which these bodies seem to rely on when faced with the arbitrary decisions of the public authorities through which these public funds are allocated.

Commenting on a decision delivered on 22 February 1994 by the Federal German Constitutional Court, which had declared unconstitutional the procedure applied until then for fixing the amount of the radio and television licence fee, Rüggeberg stresses that that court ruled that broadcasting organizations are the only bodies which can decide on the composition of programmes on the basis of their professional criteria. Since those programmes are conditioned by the financial means of the organizations, financing must be proportionate to the function of public service broadcasting and must guarantee its programming autonomy.[31]

It is not a question of allowing the public broadcasting corporations to decide themselves on the amount of public funds they need for accomplishing their missions, but one of involving them more in the process by which those funds are fixed. Rüggeberg states the following in his commentary on the court decision:

Since it enjoys programming freedom, public service broadcasting should not be confined to a passive role. It is in the final analysis up to those broadcasters to determine their financial needs and to make them known by taking the programmes they planned to provide as a basis. (. . .) Those needs can be subject to investigation, but only in order to determine whether they are in keeping with the missions which laid down by law and whether they comply with the principles of economy and good management. It is a question of exercising technical rather than political competence. The latter must be entrusted by law to a commission of independent experts, who are expected to be competent, neutral and objective.[32]

Thus, ideally, public television should enjoy more power in the determination of the amounts which it should be guaranteed. On the other hand, that power should be accompanied by greater accountability for public television with regard to the programme it provides in connection with its mandate and missions, and with regard to its management.

There is one further question to be raised here – that of the contribution of the private sector to the funding of public television.

THE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE PRIVATE
COMMERCIAL SECTOR

By freeing the private commercial channels of the public
service responsibilities which are imposed on them at the
present time, by withdrawing from public television the right
to finance its activities through advertising or various com-
mercial activities, the private commercial sector could be led
to participate in the financing of public television seen as the
television public service and the basic service of the national
television system. What proportion of that financing should
be provided by the private commercial sector of television in
addition to the share paid directly by citizens in the form of
taxes or through the licence fee? It is difficult to generalize
here, since the potential of the commercial television market
varies from one country to another.

Certain methods are put forward in the literature. Beale
considers that private channels should contribute to the fi-
nancing of public television at a rate equivalent to the amount
of costs which they claim to incur as the result of the public
service responsibilities imposed on them at the present
time.[33] Kellner suggests that private channels could pay a
licence for the wave bands they use and that that money could
be paid to public television.[34] Casta, on the other hand,
considers that if public television dispensed with advertising
this would require the participation of the private sector in
that television:

The first emergency measure for saving public television should
thus consist of dispensing with advertising and freeing it from a form
of financing which is obviously one of the primary causes of its
alienation. (. . .) It would thus seem justified to offset this by creating
a culture and communication tax deducted at source, and modulated
according to sector; this tax would be levied on the entire media and
non-media advertising market which shares the fruit of that growth.
This additional levy (. . .) would have the tremendous advantage that
the resources of public television would progress in tandem with the
development of the advertising market.[35]

Some authors also point to the importance of making the
enterprises involved in teledistribution (by cable or satellite)
participate in this financing, the possibility of auctioning the
frequencies available for television and of forwarding the
sums thus received to public television. Others stress that the
private channels must be made to participate according to
their capacity to pay, but in a highly competitive context this
latter idea poses a problem since public television will be

penalized if profitability is not considered sufficient or is nil.

Precedence could be given to a tax on transactions
which would be levied on all of the firms involved in the
television sector. This tax would have the advantage of being
applied to all enterprises so that no one would be placed at a
disadvantage in a competitive context. Both teledistribution
firms and private production firms, both advertisers and view-
ers who subscribe to special channels would be affected. This
tax would be regarded as a minimum rule which would have
to be accepted in order for an enterprise to enter the market
and it could not be cited as the cause of the shutdown or
bankruptcy of a private firm on that market because all of the
other successful enterprises on that market would also be
affected.

This tax would obviously affect all of the national
television market at the level of the rate identified. But, as
regards the expenses connected with the public service obli-
gations which private enterprises are expected to meet at the
present time, this tax in fact merely replaces those expenses
with a more direct and quantifiable contribution to the public
service.

It should also be pointed out in this context that com-
mercial television would benefit from the ban on the develop-
ment of commercial activities by public television and the
possibility could be considered of restricting its expansion (for
example, restricting the number of channels it can provide or
laying down the number of hours of broadcasting which it
must produce).[36]

What programme?

There have been intensive debates in the past few years on
the question of the programmes which public television
channels should provide in this era of competition. Given the
proliferation of private channels, the question has been raised
whether public television should not confine itself to provid-
ing viewers with the broadcasts which the private channels
refuse to provide. On a more general basis, questions have
been raised on the differentiation necessary in public and
private television programmes. Clarification of these ques-
tions is essential to the future of public television.

GENERAL INTEREST OR SPECIAL INTEREST

In the discussion of the mandate of public television, it has
been stressed that that television should be universal and

pluralist. Embodying the idea of public service, public television has to address everyone by dealing with a variety of subjects, by raising questions which may concern certain audiences more than others, and by providing television genres which can be of interest to the public as a whole. The challenge of public television is thus to provide a range of television genres and to take account of subjects which can be of interest to the various audiences while producing these genres and addressing these audiences in a form which is accessible to the general public.

From this point of view, it thus follows that the ideal type of public television presupposes a general-interest programme. It has also already been stressed that since public television is a television of citizens which is financed to a large extent – or entirely – by those citizens, it is answerable to the public as a whole. Not everyone sees it like this, however. Fichera states the following:

> As public services we need to give priority to technologies which produce services for a wide public. However, a wide public can no longer mean the whole public. New means of distribution and the growth of thematic channels are inevitably creating an increasingly fragmented public. (. . .) We must develop a conception of public service relevant to the new reality of narrowcasting, considering every option.[37]

This position of the director of Euronews in 1993 is representative of a vision of public service which is adapted to technological development and to the competition which is fragmenting the audience on the television market. It is symptomatic of a way of thinking which characterizes every enterprise which seeks to position itself on a market, to find its niche there and to find a target public. It is the image of television which no longer tries to bring all audiences together in the same place, the same forum, but which tries to define itself in relation to a select public by providing a clear-cut television genre. It is the example of television which deliberately takes the risk of alienating the audience which does not feel concerned either as a target audience or by the television genre offered. Much thought has been devoted to the consequences of the specialization of the public television programme and to those of the specialization of the programmes provided on the television market as a whole. These deliberations merit our attention, for they are complex and varied.

In the case of public television, the specialization of the programme has often gone hand in hand with its confinement

to a sort of cultural ghetto. The fragmentation and differentiation of private television have in fact led to the image of a public television which is defined narrowly in terms of a limited number of television genres, specific audiences and the impossibility of providing anything which might be considered profitable from the point of view of the private channels. Silj describes the situation as follows:

> In certain areas of commercial television there is support for separating its role from that of public television. The former should devote itself to entertainment and popular culture and the latter to culture and minority and special interest programmes, or, more generally, to a complementary form of programming, i.e. all that private television cannot or will not do because there is no profit in it, such as theatre, ballet, educational programmes, avant-garde films, serious documentaries and so on. But it would be suicidal for public television to allow itself to be relegated to this kind of 'cultural ghetto'.[38]

This idea of a cultural ghetto is generally strongly criticized in the literature.[39] On the one hand, an adventure of this nature could be the terminal phase through which public television must go before it dies, losing all legitimacy *vis-à-vis* the public which is financing it; on the other hand it reveals that the choice which has now been provided by the proliferation of private channels has not been widened to the extent that is claimed, since certain television genres are appearing less and less on the screen. As Wolton points out:

> Private television already reduces the range of programming to profitable programmes alone, whereas public television – if it wishes – can elaborate programming which is independent of the audience. So the same word can cover very different practices, and there is a sort of debasement of the concept when one goes from public television to private television and then to thematic television.[40]

The concept to which Wolton is referring is that of the general-interest nature of television. By refraining from basing its operation on the criterion of profitability alone, public television, more than private television, can put together broadcasts in a programming logic which can satisfy a wide range of audiences which, as Wolton underlines, can succeed one another and overlap.

With regard to public television, to opt for a general-interest television to the detriment of a thematic or fractioned television is to opt for a certain vision of society. Wolton, who is probably the researcher who has worked most on this question, states the following:

At the social level, general interest television – in its private dimension but a fortiori in its public dimension – corresponds to a perspective of social equality both as regards the designing of production and as regards reception, whereas fragmented television takes existing inequalities as a basis and builds up a supply which is adapted to the various audiences. Fragmented television corresponds to a public sphere which is segmented and where social inequalities are a fact; general interest television, although it does not claim to eliminate those inequalities, attempts to provide programming with common characteristics.[41]

The importance of the programming activity in television often tends to be forgotten. More in the case of general-interest television than in that of fragmented television, this activity is the art of bringing audiences together and causing them to meet one another and to get to know one another, which in turn allows that television to promote the maintaining of a public sphere which is as open as possible. For by attracting an audience at a given time, the programmer's activity consists of trying to hold the attention of the latter so that it stays tuned in to the following broadcast, which is likely to draw another public. Thus the challenge for general-interest television consists of holding the interest of audiences by providing a wide range of television genres and of subjects discussed. To do so – and here there is a paradox – its programme must be designed according to what Wolton refers to as the common characteristics of those audiences, according to the general public. Special broadcasts must therefore be designed for audiences, but they must also be accessible to the general public. For example, a so called high-level cultural broadcast must be designed not only so as to satisfy a select élite, but also in a way which makes it accessible to everyone. In the case of general-interest television and even more so in the case of general-interest public television, programming is the art of putting together genres and audiences in an overall and egalitarian vision of the expectations and needs of the public as a whole. For public television programming is designing a 'menu' which seeks from the outset to satisfy all audiences by mixing the dishes, and which will have the result that certain audiences will discover tastes which they otherwise would not have been aware of.

The importance of programming for general-interest television is in jeopardy when one tries to confine public television to a specific genre or a particular audience. It is totally ignored when one proposes to see it as a sort of electronic editor whose sole function would be to participate in the financing of certain productions which are considered to be public service productions and are broadcast here and there on various private channels. This is to a certain extent the case with the video publishing model, which for a time interested the Peacock Committee which was investigating the financing of the BBC in Great Britain. This model, various versions of which subsequently interested the authorities in other countries, would have transformed public television into a sort of public broadcasting council responsible for granting subsidies to private producers in order to finance productions which held no financial interest for private investors. According to Blumler and Hoffmann-Riem:

Such an approach, however, would surrender the opportunities that channels controlled by public corporations afford for public service scheduling – that is, presenting a diversity of experiences across a night's offerings and encouraging viewers to sample a program on a subject they might enjoy simply because it follows one they were already watching. It also overlooks the need to assemble, on some programming areas at least (e.g. public affairs) a critical mass of talent under one organizational roof if high standards of quality are to be achieved.[42]

In actual fact, a model of this nature presupposes that public service productions are those, and only those, which are economically unprofitable and that they can be designed independently of programming which sees them as components of a whole. This would amount to financing productions where one does not even know if the select audiences which they address will be reached because their presentation would no longer be controlled. But if public television is to be a general-interest television, if it is to design a programme covering several genres and dealing with various subjects and audiences while at the same time always bearing in mind the need to present all of these elements in a form which reaches the general public, in short, if it is acknowledged that it can only fulfill its role if it has full control of its programming activity, must one consider that as far as a substantial part of its programme is concerned public television will not differ from what the private channels are doing?

THE PROBLEM OF DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN
PROGRAMMES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE TELEVISION

It must be pointed out first of all that the changes which have already been proposed regarding the exclusive responsibility of the public service mandate for public television and as regards foregoing commercial income for its financing will already have the effect of accentuating the differentiation of public and private programmes. One might believe that once freed of the responsibilities imposed on them today, private channels will tend to resort more to broadcast formats and production modes whose homogeneous nature is already underlined in the literature. The range of broadcasts and the audiences addressed by the private channels are highly likely to be further contracted, being limited to broadcasts whose financial success is guaranteed and where income has been proven.

In the case of countries where heavy responsibilities and obligations are placed on private television, deregulation could have the effect of prompting their private channels to adopt practices which have already been observed in American television. Blumler has described these practices vividly, and in particular the tremendous pressure exerted by competition, which induces the private networks to set up schedules which aim to maximize the audience for all types of broadcast at all times. He has stressed the conservatism of programming which avoids dealing with sensitive subjects which might offend the audience or give rise to controversy, as well as the reluctance to innovate in genres, since past successes are guarantees of 'future successes'. The game trend is typical of this programming, where entertainment invades all forms of broadcast including news bulletins. Sensationalism takes precedence over analysis and stardom prevails over authority. Advertising permeates broadcasts, several of the latter being elaborated more and more according to potential advertisers. And again, 'the system favours immediate appeal as opposed to the exploration of meaning and a build-up of involvement, especially if the involvement could be unduly troubling'. [43] And one could continue with similar citations, since several authors have stressed the practices of the American commercial networks in the programming field. Freed of the majority of the constraints imposed on them, it would be easy for the private channels to promote entertainment which cajoles, which appeals to desire and to passion, which arouses drives and, as psychoanalysts would say, is addressed to the 'ego'. Whereas in the same line of thought public television is a television of the 'super ego', a television of reason and inspirations, expectations and the normative, a television of analysis and of a sense of morals. An exaggeration? Not at all. One need merely point for example to the ambivalence around a problem which has been widely discussed in several countries in the past few years: that of violence on television. On the one hand, violence seems to be profitable in that it finds enough consumers to make channels include broadcasts or films containing scenes of violence in their programming. [44] On the other hand, violence is denounced by citizens and various social groups which dread the influence it might have on real violence within the community. In actual fact, this debate reflects two types of relationship to television, the first being that of the individual and his or her needs, and the second that of society as a whole and its expectations. As an individual consumer one can desire such and such a product and the competitive market can satisfy that desire. As a citizen and a member of a community, it is quite possible to have more general expectations stemming from values other than those which concern us individually, and, as an ideal and as the embodiment of public service, public television has always been that different organization which is not the concern of the market and of its spontaneous needs. [45]

All of this confirms that in the typical ideal proposed here the difference between public and private programmes will become more marked not only according to their capacity for providing a general-interest television which is diversified and pluralist, but according to the way their programme is actually produced, according to the logic which pervades the programme first of all and then each particular broadcast. Thus, imposing fewer constraints on private channels, confirming that public television is the sole agent of public service, and stopping commercial activities and the race for revenue from advertising will already have a major impact on the programming practices of these two sectors and on the public's ability to appreciate the difference.

But this is not all. We must go further in enumerating the principles which must guide the elaboration of the programme provided by public television. It has already been underlined in the section on the mandate and the missions of public television that historically the missions of informing, educating and providing culture and entertainment have been associated with that television. To this have been added missions such as promoting more specifically the broadcasting of national culture, or the civic awareness of citizens, etc. These missions, which, it must be underlined, are a matter of

the community's expectations of television, have wrongly been perceived as types of broadcast, where informing means news bulletins and public affairs, educating means school broadcast, providing culture means focusing on the arts, and entertaining means more or less all the rest. This tendency to confine these missions to particular genres has had the effect of promoting criticism to the effect that public television should stay aloof from certain genres, particularly entertainment, and thus of weakening part of its legitimacy with regard to the market channels.

In fact these missions express the most general expectations one can have regarding the programming offered by public television. It is less a matter of a judgement of the content of each broadcast taken individually than of a judgement of the result expected of the overall programming activity of public television. Just as the economist states that the competitive market increases well-being without tracing that well-being to a particular product, public television is expected to enable citizens through its programme to be better informed of the social, political and cultural issues which concern them with regard to the social fabric of which they are part. To say that the programme of public television must promote the maintaining of a public sphere, must form a public forum, and must be the place where public communication is most accessible for the population is to make a general judgement on the social and cultural scope expected of that institution. These major missions or expectations must thus be regarded as overall objectives resulting from the programming offered by public television as a whole over a long period and not as highly specific judgements on particular broadcasts or on types of broadcast.

In the case of this public television, the missions of informing, educating, cultivating and entertaining must not be seen as a conglomerate of specific broadcasts which are superimposed and necessarily well-defined according to narrow grids, but as colours which are necessarily present in an overall picture. For example, everyone knows perfectly well that a television quiz can be educational or that a television serial can be an important source of information when the subjects it deals with are topical and closely concern the real-life experience of the audience. This is how this first level of expectations regarding the programme offered by public television must be understood. And in this sense all of these missions are still absolutely relevant to public television and its programme today.

There is a second level of expectation with regard to the programme offered by this television. This level concerns more the structure and actual composition of the public television schedule. It is the level where one can begin to catalogue genres and audiences. It is at this level that public television can be expected to provide a programme where there is a balance in the genres presented (news bulletins, documentaries, public affairs, quizzes, fiction, films, sports events, etc.). It is also expected to provide diversity in the subjects dealt with and the audiences targeted. This diversity must clearly be more noticeable in the public programme than in the programmes supplied by private channels, which are exposed to the vicissitudes of competition and the market.

Thus, where public and private television should differ in the expectations and motivations behind their programming activity – informing, educating, cultivating and entertaining for the one, and profitability of activities for the other – these television sectors should also differ in the range of genres and subjects offered and audiences reached. We must insist on this point for the sake of clarity: from the point of view of public television all television genres must be permeated by the major missions identified above and, consequently, these missions cannot be synthesized by a sort of compatibility of the genres in question. Public television must thus seek to inform, for example, by means of news bulletins, public affairs broadcasts, documentaries, to be sure, but also by means of quizzes, television serials, sports events, etc. Information thus cannot be reduced to one television genre alone from the point of view of public television. Private television, on the other hand, not only tends to reduce the number of genres offered, by avoiding unprofitable genres, for example, but also tends to permeate all of the other genres with entertainment – hence the well-known expression of 'infotainment' in the case of news bulletins or public affairs broadcasts.

And finally there is one last level of expectation with regard to the programme offered by public television which is widely stressed in the literature. These expectations relate more to the broadcasts which make up the programme. They are expected to be original and of good quality, they must allow for creation and innovation, they must be marked by a social concern based on ethics which differ from those of a private enterprise, and they must be objective particularly where information is concerned, or impartial, but critical as regards public affairs. In short, these are the standards expected of every broadcast provided by public television.

Tracey underlines this pursuit of quality and the application of high standards by public television:

From this perspective the nature of public broadcasting would be that any program offered, whatever the genres, should be the best of its kind, the best it can be. The argument against game shows would thus have to be that they inherently cannot be worthwhile, which is not an especially easy case to make. And in fact, we saw examples of game and quiz shows which defy the commercial, down-market stereotype.[46]

However, the moral judgements which are implied when the concept of quality is involved obviously are not easy to define, and this is openly acknowledged in the literature.[47] Yet the quality of the broadcasts provided by public television is never merely a question of their profitability, their viewer ratings, or their production costs. Whereas, as Keane argues,[48] quality in the case of the private media is measured in terms of consumption by individuals who are free to choose the media 'products' they want, the quality of the 'products' offered by the public sector should not be limited to the sole criterion of consumption, but should also be measured in terms of their usefulness and their capacity to meet the expectations of citizens. As we shall see in the following section, the public should be consulted regularly, using various survey methods, to establish how satisfied it is and what its expectations are with regard to the programme and broadcasts of public television, and as to how it perceives the style of that television compared to that of the private channels. Whatever the outcome, it is necessary and indeed desirable for the purchases and in-house productions of public television to be subjected to a code of ethics which sets out the principles regarding the quality expected of each broadcast genre, and more specifically of the news or public affairs broadcasts. These codes should be publicized so that the public is informed; and the extent to which they are applied as well as their effectiveness should be evalued periodically.

There is another question to which attention should be devoted, and that is the actual production of the broadcasts presented by public television.

PROGRAMMES: TO PRODUCE IN-HOUSE OR BUY EXTERNALLY?

The increase in the production costs of television products and in the purchase price of those products on the market has been widely reported in the past few years. In view of this trend, coproductions have been encouraged for certain types of products, particularly fiction. In several countries the trend has also been to use the private sector since it was believed that the production costs of in-house productions, which are always difficult to work out, could thus be further rationalized. In short, efforts have been made to externalize the production of public channels, since it was suspected that resources were being wasted.[49] At the same time several states provided themselves with funds for supporting television production, and those funds can be regarded more and more as support for the production industry, which is having to contend with international competition, particularly from America.[50] This movement, which aims to disinvest in public production and to encourage a strong national industry which is private, is not without consequences. On the one hand, it entails convergence of public and private production styles, the former being pushed towards modes of production and management specific to the latter[51] and on the other hand, it completely overlooks the difficulties which private productions can create from the public service point of view. For it has been stressed that the programming activity of public television should go from the general to the particular, from the general missions expected of public television to the particular broadcasts which are significant and marked by the requirements of information, education, culture, entertainment, etc., diversity and quality, that have just been mentioned. Public service cannot be conceived on an individual basis as is the case in the publishing video model, which presupposes that television products are evaluated individually according to their public service nature and independently of the programme into which they are to be inserted. Taken to an extreme, the current externalization trend in public television production would amount to making public television a buyer or a sponsor of products over which it has less and less control. This trend does not take account either of public television's need to leave its mark, its personality or its identity on each of its broadcasts or of the logic underlying the production industry in a highly competitive context.

Since there is a high risk attaching to investments in audio-visual production, producers tend to seek security by diversifying their production. Concentration, vertical and horizontal integration, and the need to take advantage of economies of scale are well-known factors. It may become a problem for public television to do business with private producers whose sole objective once again is the profitability

of their activities, and this is particularly the case with enterprises which aim to develop products whose costs they hope to amortize on external markets. The interests of private producers may, we repeat, differ totally from those of the public service.[52] It is thus necessary to promote in-house production within public television. That production will not only be consistent with its programming strategy, but will also enable public television to provide a training place in-house as well as a pool of craftworkers who are able to conceive a form of production which is in line with the objectives of public service.

The policies concerning measures to encourage a private audio-visual production industry, whose objectives are centred on the market logic, must be separated from the need to maintain a public production sector whose logic is different and is centred on the public service concept.[53] Thus in the case of public television, making is given precedence over having made. Of course the use of actors external to public television, particularly in the technical field, obviously cannot be precluded.

And finally it is clear that as a public forum public television should only resort to purchasing foreign broadcasts if their relevance for the public is clearly established. National production, which is a matter of public service logic and is not designed for penetrating the international market or as a strictly profitable commodity at the economic level, should make up the major part of the public television programme.

Accountability and evaluation of public television

Profitability is the indicator on which the performance of private television enterprises is rated. When the directors of these enterprises report to their employers, the shareholders, it is the only indicator which counts and which can enable them to hold onto their jobs. Congratulations or reprimands from any regulatory body for the efficiency with which they carry out the responsibilities which have been imposed on them are taken into consideration from this point of view but, ultimately, they remain secondary. What about public television? To whom is it accountable and on what basis? To the public, or to the political authorities which legitimately represent that public? How can the performance of public television be evaluated since the profitability criterion does not apply here?

ACCOUNTABILITY

This is a particularly difficult question to deal with and one to which less attention seems to have been devoted in the recent literature on public television, which has focused more on financing and programming. But it is a question which clearly becomes crucial in the public television model proposed here.

Accountability is said to be a difficult question for three reasons. First, the current trend is towards an increase in the number of regulatory bodies and a transformation of the bodies responsible for decreeing the standards and rules for the entire television sector, and this is the case in several countries. As the result of the expansion of the commercial television sector bodies have been set up and have been assigned the task of realizing the impossible according to the theory which has been supported until now, that is to say, the task of ensuring that a general public service ideal is maintained while at the same time administering the expansion of a sector whose principal determining factor is the pursuit of profits and which is influenced by industrial policies that have little to do with the actual idea of public service. Then we must emphasize the change in the situation where several public television channels which were their own regulators, particularly in the monopoly era, have gradually been placed under new bodies whose creation is closely related to the appearance and expansion of private channels, i.e. of a vast number of private actors operating in various capacities in the television sector (from cable distributors to satellite operators and now even telephone companies) and operating on a market-driven logic. Whereas in some cases this trend entails some overlap of roles and powers between public television and regulatory bodies,[54] it is generally denounced in the literature owing to the pernicious effects it is having on public television. Salter states the following:

Regulatory agencies draw upon a legacy of assumptions and methods of regulation that shape how they relate to the regulated industries. Thus, there is little scope for the regulator to treat some of those industries – including public broadcasting – on a fundamentally different basis from others, or to apply very different standards. As a result, the regulatory system itself raises questions about the legitimacy of the public sector subsidies or its general-interest service, and deflects attention away from its distinct objectives.[55]

Having studied the behaviour of various regulatory bodies in charge mainly of managing the television market, the tele-

vision industry, Hoffmann-Riem draws the following conclusion: 'Reference has already been made to the tendency, as time passes, for supervising bodies to find their interests in the success of the enterprise coinciding with those whom they are supervising.'[56] In fact it is the theory of the regulated regulator which is put forward against this tendency. Faced with a complex industry which is bristling with commercial actors who operate in a market-driven logic, the regulatory body would begin to regard the public actor as an one of many actors whose logic is incompatable and incomprehensible given the rest of the industry. A former director of Canadian public television who previously headed the regulatory body in charge of regulating the entire television sector, has already pointed out that the private lobby in the body and in the government, if only in terms of the number of lobbyists in action, was such that the situation could only be to the disadvantage of public television.[57] The situation could of course be different if the supervisory body could change its logic unilaterally depending on whether it is addressing public television or the rest of the industry, but this eventuality does not seem to have been considered realistic in any of the literature.[58]

All in all, the accountability of public television must be thought of in a context outside the present movement which is leading to the regulation of the entire television sector on the basis of principles which are focusing more and more on the market and on industrial expansion. According to our position, which consists of differentiating more precisely and more clearly between the private and the public sector in television, the body in charge of regulating the private sector should not have any authority whatever over the public sector.

A second difficulty which arises in the reflection on the accountability of public television is related to the political practices in effect in the various democratic societies. It is a question of political culture which explains the differences between various political systems or various electoral systems found in regimes which, despite their differences, are considered to be democratic. This, to be sure, is not an insurmountable obstacle to reflecting on accountability, but it complicates the process in that several methods for improving the mechanisms aiming to place responsibility on public television are to be found in the literature, but these methods are often very closely connected with the political culture of the states under examination.[59] The question must thus be considered in general terms and it must be underlined that the

principles put forward can be actualized through various mechanisms.

And finally, the last problem which arises concerning the accountability of public television is one which cannot be ignored. Garnham identifies this difficulty as follows:

The problem of accountability is central to any public service broadcasting system because the concept of service implies a master/servant relationship of some sort between the provider of the service and the person or group to whom it is provided. It implies the right of those being served to ensure that the service they are being offered meets their needs and is being delivered in a manner they consider appropriate.[60]

The crux of the matter, according to Garnham, is this:

The search for an answer to the paradox of how to combine freedom for broadcasters from undesirable state control, while at the same time ensuring the necessary level of desirable political accountability. (. . .) In practice, of course, this circle cannot be squared, so that any structure and practice of accountability has to be a balance between the two.[61]

This inextricable problem is expressed in even more forceful terms by Etzioni-Halevy from a democratic point of view:

The dilemma which pervades the general relationship between bureaucracy and democracy reappears in the case of the relationship between broadcasting corporation and democracy: the political independence of a national broadcasting corporation is both a necessity for and a threat to democracy. Hence, I argue, a national broadcasting corporation will be expected to be both politically independent and politically accountable, simultaneously controlled and uncontrolled by the government.[62]

According to Etzioni-Halevy, who has studied this problem with respect to several countries, the problem can be resolved in part by ensuring that the mechanisms which allow the public institution in charge of broadcasting to be independent and those which allow the political authorities to intervene in the sector are clearly identified. The author states:

Some legal frameworks were designed so as to distance broadcasting from direct government control, while maintaining ultimate government control over it, but without clear indication of where direct control ends and ultimate control begins. And precisely where the legal framework made the clearest provisions for broadcasting inde-

pendence, it also made the clearest provision for political intervention in broadcasting.[63]

Bearing this in mind, how are the relative autonomy or the independence of public television and its essential accountability to be reconciled? It must first be pointed out that in the mass of writing in which the problems of public television have been discussed in the past few years the question of the influence exerted by the public authorities on public television and, consequently the lack of independence of that television is dealt with much more frequently than the question of any lack of power allowing the political sphere to intervene in the public television sector in order to ensure its accountability. As has been the case here, particular emphasis is laid in that writing on the capacity which the political authorities reserve for intervening on the fixing of the sums to be allocated to public television as one of the main methods used for influencing the 'conduct' of the latter. This method can also enable the public authorities, and more specifically the government, to make public television more docile and conciliatory towards them, just as it can orient that television towards a type of management which is closer to that of commercial enterprises with all the consequences which this entails regarding its programme, which is supposed to be a public service.[64] This means of influencing public television is less evident for the commentators of the political scene than is direct intervention in decisions concerning programming or, even more so, in the journalistic activities of that television. In general, although there are several exceptions to this rule, the political leaders in democratic societies are, in the final analysis, hesitant when it comes to direct intervention with a view to orienting the information task which public television has to accomplish. However, the budgetary weapon remains an effective means of letting the directors of public television know that one is keeping an eye on them.[65]

In the section on the financing of public television the example was quoted of a decision delivered by the German Constitutional Court on the need to entrust the task of evaluating the sum of public funds to be allocated to public television to a neutral body composed of experts, which should take account of the needs expressed by public television. One might believe that a public body (which can be called a commission or a council) which is separate from the institution in charge of operating public television would to a large extent fulfill the need to ensure both the independence of public television and the control of that television. In fact

a body should be assigned the exclusive task of supervising public television, as is currently being done in certain countries for the entire television sector, both private and public. This supervision would concern both the observance of the mandate and missions of public television and the administration of that television. For these two tasks, this body should be able to rely on budgets and research which enable it to elaborate methods for evaluating the performance of public television which are appropriate to the nature and the mandate of that television (but what is important here is the need to find evaluation methods which must not correspond with those of private television). This body should also be able to act as a complaints office, to which citizens could address any complaints concerning public television. Since it would not have the authority to impose sanctions on public television, this body should be able to make recommendations to that television on how it should accomplish its task (always in accordance with the mandate and mission as well as the administration of public television). It would not be a question of this body intervening in the day-to-day management of public television, but a matter of making general recommendations on the way in which the latter should fulfill its obligations. In the event of conflict between the body and public television, the former could ask the political authorities to ratify its recommendations so as to give them force of regulation. This should only be done after the conflict has been studied, after the versions of both parties have been heard, and that study should be as transparent as possible and open to any public interested in stating its opinion. Should such a case arise, the political authorities could thus play a role of arbitrator and, as a last resort, of judge, after hearing the parties concerned. In a system of this nature, it is highly probable that it would be in the interests of both the supervisory body and public television to reach compromises where the recommendations of the former would have force of regulation or at least agreement value.

And would the political authorities merely play the role of arbitrator and judge, as in the cases of conflict between the supervisory body and public television? Ultimately, the legitimately elected public authorities (the government with the consent of Parliament) should conserve a right to intervene both in public television and in the supervisory body, but this right to intervene should be such that, in the case of direct intervention, it is only used in exceptional circumstances provided by law. Otherwise, the political authorities, which of course conserve their legislative power, can always upset a

process of revision of the law on public television (the need for such a specific law on public television has already been underlined), although, ideally, that process should only be launched at predetermined times (laying down the number of years' interval between these periods would pose a problem in view of the differences in political terms of office in the various countries). Here again the need for such a process to be transparent must be stressed as must that of holding public hearings for such an exercise. And finally, the political authorities could obviously propose certain guidelines for public television. These guidelines should be made public and submitted for examination by the supervisory body. Once that body has examined the guidelines proposed and has taken account of the reactions of the public concerned and of the directors of public television, an opinion should be issued on the appropriateness of those guidelines, again in the form of a recommendation addressed to public television. And the process would then continue as set out above.

It is in fact a question of elaborating mechanisms which induce the main actors – public television, the supervisory body, and the political authorities – to reflect on the political cost[66] of their action and proposals so as to minimize the risks of direct intervention whether spontaneous or depending on the mood of the various actors. These mechanisms, it must be repeated, must be transparent and must allow the public to voice its opinion.

It must also be stressed that with a system like this, public television would enjoy considerable latitude in the management of its daily affairs, but that its overall action, its programme and its administration, would be subject to annual examination by the supervisory body, which itself would report its assessment to the political authorities. As to the fixing of its budget, public television would propose the sums it considered it needed, and this budget would be submitted for examination by the supervisory body whose task would be either to confirm these requests or to recommend that they be modified. According to the literature on the subject, it must be pointed out that this budget should be drawn up on a plan extending over several years in order to allow public television sufficient scope to plan its medium-term action. Furthermore, a budget which is based on a well-made plan should not show a deficit or require rectification.[67] The political authorities should accept this budget, perhaps proposing a modification, while at the same time agreeing to cover the political cost described above according to the terms of the process and

mechanisms to be gone through in order to achieve the objective.[68]

There is still one crucial question to be settled. How are the directors of public television and of the supervisory body to be appointed? Of course, if it is the political authorities who unilaterally appoint the directors of either of these bodies, it is highly likely that the mechanisms described above will serve no purpose. Here again, it is difficult to imagine an ideal system which can be applied everywhere, owing to the different political cultures in the various democratic countries.[69] But one point on which the literature seems to agree unanimously is the need to have leaders who have sufficiently long terms of office and who cannot be fired for trivial reasons.

In short, the directors must be firmly in the saddle and must enjoy wide legitimacy with the public. Ideally, experience and expertise in the television world plus the ability to act in the public interest beyond political allegiances are obviously desirable for holding such posts.

Whether the electoral process followed is extensive or restricted,[70] or whether a system of appointment by designation is used, it should be ensured that the mechanisms used allow the public to voice its opinion at least in part and that they are designed in such a way that the public interest is placed above private interests. If the decision is taken to opt for a three-actor model of the type described above, it would be desirable for the processes for appointing the directors of public television and of the supervisory body to be different so that each can draw legitimacy from different sources and they can be counterbalanced.[71]

The accountability of public television thus requires that its programme and management be subjected to supervision by other bodies or institutions which are responsible for assessing its performance, although they do not represent the political authorities since independence must also be ensured.

ASSESSMENT

To return to our example of a supervisory body which is separate from the public institution in charge of running the television public service, such a body should be able to carry out research through which appropriate modes of assessment can be found and proposed concerning the particular type of management required by public television as compared to the commercial television channels. In our opinion little research has been carried out in this field. It is sometimes mentioned

that managing the arts or managing creativity requires a form of management which is different from that applied in other economic sectors. Training talents, research and development, the need to act as a public forum and to be constantly in touch with the public in order to know and understand that public are factors which require a vision of management which is just as much a matter of social approach as it is one of economic efficiency. The basis on which the management of public television should be assessed should thus be researched.

Furthermore, efficient methods should also be developed for assessing how public television fulfills its mandate and its missions and also how satisfied the public is with the result. As Etchegoyen underlines, the mission and satisfaction of its client (the public) should be the two factors which determine all public television activity.[72]

With regard to mandate and missions, steps should be taken to ascertain whether the public is aware of the distinct mandate assigned to public television as opposed to the rest of the commercial television sector and whether that mandate is appropriate. Is the public satisfied with the service provided? Does the public find this television sufficiently diversified? What are its expectations? Does it trust the way this television provides information? Does it perceive that this television is making a special effort to promote cultural development, original creation, genre innovation, and the presentation of relevant broadcasts as a backing for the major debates of the day? Does the public consider that it is right to have such a television channel?[73] Efforts should be made to find out what the public thinks of the ability of public television to fulfill its general programming missions: information, education, culture, entertainment, and so forth. All of these questions can of course easily be refined in order to find out citizens' reactions to their public television channels. Comparison with the private channels should also be promoted in order to measure the public's satisfaction with two television sectors, the private and the public.

But is it not rather pointless or utopian to attach so much importance to the public's satisfaction with the general missions assigned to public television as a whole, to ask the public to state its opinion on the programme of that television as a whole rather than merely quantifying the real audience of that programme, or of each of the broadcasts presented there? Firstly, one does not preclude the other. And secondly, certain members of the public may well agree on the need to maintain such a television channel, they may say that they are satisfied

with the objectives it pursues, and they may agree to pay for it without actually using it to any great extent. It is not only the users of public health services who can express their opinion on those services. And by the same token, the public health service as a whole cannot be assessed by merely taking account of certain particular elements of health care. One cannot make a sweeping condemnation of all the principles and activities involved in a service based merely on the criticism of one component of that service. As Garnham states, a television public service 'is more than the sum of its constituent programme parts. The quality of a broadcasting service cannot be judged or indeed planned as a mere string of individual programmes but necessarily involves schedules to be judged against criteria of range, balance, sustained creative originality and value for money.'[74] Without going as far as shielding individual broadcasts from an examination of their individual content, the nature of public television, which presupposes from the outset that broadcasts may not attract everyone at all times, requires an overall assessment of the public over and above those particular broadcasts alone. Evaluation methods must be found which go beyond, well beyond, viewer ratings alone.

It is for these reasons that it is generally agreed in the literature on the subject that public television cannot be assessed only on the basis of viewer ratings for its various broadcasts or, more generally, on the basis of its market shares for its programme. Viewer ratings, important and understandable as they may be from the point of view of private channels which are financed by advertising, are unsuitable for assessing public television. Commenting on the situation in the United Kingdom, Nossiter aptly depicts the inadequacy of using viewer ratings alone:

To program on ratings maximization alone is a communications equivalent of the British electoral system: whoever receives most votes in a constituency, wins all the time. In broadcasting, conceived as public service, proportional representation is a more appropriate model.[75]

In the same way, it is less in terms of market share that the performance of public television must be judged than in terms of reach, as Garnham again stresses: It is audience reach rather than share that is crucial to the concept of public service.[76] One can also talk of audience plurality, of the number of viewers reached by public television during a given period. If, by virtue of the diversity of its programme, public

television succeeds in reaching a very large share of the audience, this could be seen as an important achievement.

To sum up, the public should be consulted on public television from various points of view. The public's opinion of that television and the use of its programme should be subjected to sophisticated examination. Surveys of this nature should be recurrent so that it can be understood how the public's expectations are developing, what its opinions are and how it uses public television, and, consequently, the extent to which public television can respond to those expectations.

Whereas public television should itself equip itself with the tools for maintaining the necessary contact with its own *raison d'être*, the public (and several public television channels are already doing so), an independent body such as the supervisory body suggested above should be assigned a statutory mandate of that nature for assessing and researching methods for evaluating the performance of public television on the basis of public opinion.

Notes

1. M. Souchon, 'Un avenir pour la télévision publique' [A Future for Public Television], in *Études*, Vol. 373, No. 4, October 1990, pp. 349–50.
2. M. Souchon, ibid., p. 351.
3. S. Barnett and D. Docherty, 'Purity or Pragmatism: A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Public-Service Broadcasting', in J. G. Blumler and T. J. Nossiter, op. cit., p. 24.
4. Two examples of this ploy with which private channels 'fulfill' their responsibilities. Referring to French television, Jongen puts forward the following argument: 'Is it known, for example, that TF1 and the now defunct Fifth Channel are required to broadcast at least ten hours of concerts performed by French orchestras and twelve dramas, operas or choreographies? Since no broadcast scheduling is prescribed, the channels generally perform this duty between 1.00 and 4.00 a.m. Blessed are those insomniacs who love music.' F. Jongen, 'Contrats de gestion et cahiers de charge' [Management Contracts and Specifications], in F. Jongen (ed.), op. cit., p. 336. Again, referring to the Canadian content quotas imposed on private television in Canada, Hoskins and McFayden stress the following: 'Conduct regulation, which attempts to cause private firms to act against the interest of their shareholders, invites token responses, and private stations have thwarted the intention of the prime-time quota by bunching Canadian program-

ming in the early or late evening (thus leaving the peak period for the profitable US programmes). Another ploy has been to concentrate Canadian programming in the summer off-season. A third has been to produce low-cost programming to minimize the possible loss from satisfying the Canadian content quota.' Hoskins, Colin, McFayden, Stuart, 'Television in the New Broadcasting Environment: Public Policy Lessons from the Canadian Experience', op. cit., pp. 176–7.

5. R. E. Babe, *Structure, réglementation et performance de la télédiffusion canadienne* [Structure, Regulation and Performance of Canadian Television Broadcasting], a survey conducted for the Canadian Economic Council, Ministry of Supplies and Services, Canada, Hull, 1979, p. 248.
6. F. Sauvageau, 'Le rôle de l'État ... dans un monde où la télévision se "canadianise"' [The Role of the State in a World where Television is Becoming Canadianized], in D. Atkinson, I. Bernier and F. Sauvageau (eds.), op. cit., p. 289.
7. D. Wolton, *Éloge du grand public. Une théorie critique de la télévision*, op. cit., p. 30.
8. D. Wolton, ibid., p. 31.
9. D. Wolton, ibid., p. 36.
10. J. G. Blumler and W. Hoffmann-Riem, 'New Roles for Public Service Television', in J. G. Blumler (ed.), *Television and the Public Interest*, op. cit., p. 202. The idea that the private sector can no longer fulfill the public service obligation and that only public television can fulfill that role is forcefully advocated in H. Geller, *1995–2005: Regulatory Reform for Principal Electronic Media, Position Paper*, The Annenberg Washington Program, Communications Policy Studies, Northwestern University, November 1994, 38 p.
11. J. G. Blumler and W. Hoffmann-Riem, ibid., p. 202.
12. Broadcasting Research Unit, *The Public Service Idea in British Broadcasting*, Main Principles, London 1985.
13. Since the purpose here is to give the general principles of public service, the more specific missions which may be put forward in various countries with regard to public television have not been included – such as those which aim to present or to encourage recognition of ethnic, linguistic or regional diversity within the state.
14. This idea of adding the expression of opinions and criticism to the information function has been inspired by E. J. Dommering, 'La représentation des tendances philosophiques ... la NOS et la crise du système néerlandais' [The Representation of Philosophical Tendencies in the NOS and the Crisis of the System in the Netherlands], in F. Jongen (ed.), op. cit., p. 172.
15. E.g., B. Miyet, 'Les politiques audiovisuelles européennes à l'ère de la mondialisation' [European Audio-visual Policies in the Globalization Era], A. H. Caron and P. Juneau (eds.), *Le défi des télévisions nationales à l'ère de la mondialisation* [The

Challenge of National Television in the Age of Globalization, Quebec University Press, Montreal, 1992, p. 41.

16. M. Gheude, 'Service public et publicité' [Public Service and Advertising], in *Le Débat*, No. 61, September–October 1990, p. 108.

17. B. Cache, *Du service public, supprimons toute mission* [Let us Dispense with any Mission in Public Service] (unpublished).

18. M. Souchon, 'Un avenir pour la télépublique' [A Future for Public Television], op. cit., p. 348. See also: M. Souchon, 'Qu'attend le public de la télévision du service public?' [What Does the Public Expect of Public Service Television?], in *Médiaspouvoirs*, No. 14, April–May–June 1989, pp. 96–101.

19. H. Bourges, *La télévision du public* [The Public's Television], Flammarion, Paris, 1993, p. 213.

20. European Broadcasting Union, *Pourquoi l'audiovisuel public?* [Why Public Audio-visual Broadcasting?], Brussels, 1993, EBU Conference, Papers, Synopsis, Declaration, published by the European Broadcasting Union, Geneva, p. 116.

21. European Broadcasting Union, ibid., p. 105.

22. The report of the committee chaired by Jacques Campet in France is a good example of such a position. It includes the letter from the Minister of Communications to Mr Campet defining the committee's mandate, in which it is stated that public television, which in addition was largely financed by resources from advertising, has lost the essence of its identity. Having studied this problem, the committee considered that the financing of public television should continue to be joined with wider use of licence fees. There is thus apparently an ideal threshold where financing through advertising and public funding are considered to be ideal and balanced. Where is that threshold? It is indeed difficult to say. See: *L'avenir de la télévision publique. Rapport au ministre de la Communication. Commission présidée par Jacques Campet* [The Future of Public Television. Report to the Minister of Communications. Committee chaired by Jacques Campet], La Documentation Française (Collection des Rapports Officiels), Paris, 1994.

23. 'Pay-per-view is in my opinion one of the means of financing certain channels and certain programmes which meet the public service missions,' says Stéphane, who thus recognizes that a service of that nature is not *per se* a component of public service. See: R. Stéphane, 'Small Countries and Regions', in European Broadcasting Union, op. cit., p. 33.

24. For several comments on the effects of sponsorship on programming, see: T. J. Nossiter, 'British Television: A Mixed Economy', and S. Barnett, 'Funding Down Under: The Australian Experience', in J. G. Blumler and T. J. Nossiter (eds.), op. cit., pp. 133–4 and p. 290. Also: British Broadcasting Corporation, *Extending Choice: The BBC's Role in the New Broadcasting Age*, London, 1992, pp. 63–4; Department of National Heritage, *The Future of the BBC. A Consultation Document*, HMSO, Cm 2098, London, November 1992, p. 33.

25. A. Smith, op. cit., p. 62.

26. See, *inter alia*, J. Lewis, *La Culture, l'État et le marché libre: pour une politique de la culture*, [Culture, the State and the Free Market: for a Policy of Culture] (unpublished); D. Sawers, 'Financing for Broadcasting', in C. Veljanowski (ed.), op. cit., pp. 79–98.

27. The ambivalence, and indeed illogical attitude, of the political authorities regarding public television should be underlined. They would like to have very cultural and serious, even élitist, public television with higher viewer ratings than the so-called 'popular' private commercial channels can achieve.

28. S. Brittan, 'The Case for the Consumer Market', in C. Veljanowski (ed.), op. cit., p. 31.

29. A good example of this bizarre debate is given in an article by Sergeant: 'Using the budget to finance the public audio-visual system would have the advantage of adjusting each taxpayer's contribution in proportion to his or her income, but it would have the drawback of increasing the capacity of the political authorities to influence the endowment of the institution and, consequently, its autonomy', in J.-C. Sergeant, 'La BBC sur la sellette' [The BBC in the Hot Seat], in *Médiapouvoirs*, No. 30, April–May–June 1993, p. 57. Sergeant suggests that licence fees are thus better than subsidies because they are less political, as if the fixing of the amount of the subsidy were more arbitrary than the fixing of the amount of the licence fee. The arbitrary factor is in the fixing procedure for fixing either amount.

30. D. Sawers, op. cit., p. 82.

31. J. Rüggeberg, 'Germany: Better Guarantee of Programme Freedom', in *The Letter of the World of Radio and Television Council*, No. 1, January 1995, p. 6.

32. J. Rüggeberg, op. cit., p. 82.

33. N. Beale, 'Canadian Broadcasting: New Policies for a New Environment', in *Policy Options/Options politiques*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January–February 1994, p. 9.

34. For this method of making the private sector participate in public sector financing and for other participation methods, see D. Kellner, op. cit., pp. 205–6. The private channels are already paying for their licence fees in several countries. It is stressed here that the money collected is given to public television.

35. A. Costa, in *Le Débat*, op. cit., pp. 67–8.

36. It is perfectly conceivable to maintain the presence of advertising slots in public television where this is already the practice, but these slots should be sold by an independent authority, and the revenue should be returned to the private actors in the form of a rebate in proportion to their financial

contribution to public television. A system like this could satisfy any advertisers who wish to reach the public television audience and would not affect that television's programming practices, since it would not itself benefit from the revenue thus generated.

37. M. Fichera, 'Satellite Channels/Les chaînes par satellite', in European Broadcasting Union, op. cit., p. 63.

38. A. Silj, op. cit., p. 42.

39. See, *inter alia*, M. Souchon, 'Un avenir pour la télévision publique', op. cit., pp. 345–55, and Part Four of the volume by D. Wolton, *Éloge du grand public*, op. cit., 1990, discussing the 'illusion' of cultural television.

40. D. Wolton, ibid., p. 101.

41. D. Wolton, ibid., p. 120.

42. J. G. Blumler and W. Hoffmann-Riem, 'New Roles for Public Television in Western Europe: Challenges and Prospects', op. cit., pp. 25–6; following the same line of thought, Garnham submits that this approach does not take account of the importance of programming, since only broadcasts taken individually are considered. 'Thus public service broadcasting is based on the idea that broadcasting is not merely a series of individual consumption choices. It also follows from this that nor can it be defined in terms of individual programmes. This is the problem with the idea [. . .] of a Public Service Programme Board which would hand out public subsidy to anyone making so-called public service programmes. But this [. . .] model fails to recognize that public service broadcasting is not about a definable type of programme but about the way in which whole channels are scheduled – ensuring that minority programmes are not shunted to the margins of the schedule – and about the non-exploitative attitude adopted by broadcasters to their audience across the whole range of programming – game shows and soap operas as well as one-off plays and documentaries.' From N. Garnham, *Public Service Broadcasting and the Consumer* (unpublished).

43. J. G. Blumler, 'Television in the United States: Funding Sources and Programming Consequences', op. cit., p. 73.

44. It is 'action' films where violence is omnipresent and erotic films which video clubs thrive on, much more than the major cinema classics – a fact which is often pointed out by those who consider that violence on television is a 'response' to 'public' demand.

45. It is interesting to note that in the debate on violence which has developed in Canada, for example, the criticism of the public was levelled first and foremost at the private channels; public television was hardly affected at all. It is equally interesting to note that the 'products' which were considered to be particularly violent were identified as being of American origin, Canadian broadcasts focusing less on this 'technique'.

46. W. D. Rowland Jr. and M. Tracey, *Lessons from Abroad: A Preliminary Report on the Condition of Public Broadcasting in the United States and Elsewhere*. Presented to a joint meeting of the International Communication Association and the American Forum of the American University, Washington D.C., 27 May 1993, p. 23.

47. Valiant efforts are, however, being made to define the various factors considered in quality assessment (technical factors, aesthetic factors, etc.), and attention should be drawn here to the work of G. Mulgan, op. cit., pp. 4–32.

48. J. Keane, op. cit.. p. 121.

49. See, *inter alia*, the British example in J.-C. Sergeant, op. cit., pp. 54–61.

50. F. Young, op. cit., pp. 83–113.

51. This is argued by Y. Achille and B. Miège, op. cit. The argument is expounded in greater detail in Y. Achille, op. cit.

52. In a short work in which we participated, an attempt was made to show to what extent the logic underlying the development of the cultural industries in a nationalist vision could conflict with a logic of cultural development in a democratic perspective, with a view to preserving a public sphere independent of private economic interests and the political orientation of the state. In this conflict, private producers can boast of being the bearers of national culture by claiming that the higher interest of the nation coincides with their own interests. This can contradict the public service ideal in cases where these interests are secondary in relation to the general interest of the public. See M. Raboy et al., op. cit.

53. Pinheiro holds that public television should be placed in the service of the audio-visual production industry, an independent industry external to public television itself. It is in his opinion a matter of a 'public service mission' for that television. We see this as another example of the present confusion, in which public television is expected to operate in the service of the actors of the market and of the industry, and these private actors and the industry are considered to be the principal elements of a 'public service', which no longer makes sense in the present context. See J. de Deus Pinheiro, 'Public Service Broadcasting and the Globalization of the Film and TV Industry/L'audiovisuel public face à la globalisation de la filière image', in European Broadcasting Union, *Pourquoi l'audiovisuel public?* [Why Public Service Broadcasting?], op. cit., pp. 11–15.

54. A former president of the board of the Canadian public broadcasting corporation Radio Canada cites an example of this overlap and the confusion it causes. According to Watson, that board is responsible for ensuring that the broadcasting company Radio Canada fulfils its mandate, which also seems to be one of the responsibilities of the CRTC, the regulatory

body in charge of monitoring and regulating the entire broad-
casting sector. See 'The Future of the CBC. An interview with
Patrick Watson', op. cit., pp. 31–4.

55. L. Salter, op. cit., pp. 237–8.

56. W. Hoffmann-Riem, 'Defending Vulnerable Values: Regula-
tory Measures and Enforcement Dilemmas', in J. G. Blumler
(ed.) op. cit., p. 195. The relationships which are formed
between the regulatory bodies and the organizations they
regulate, in which the former end up taking account of the
success of the latter as a matter of great concern, are such that
certain authors use particularly harsh terms to describe the
action of those bodies. 'This watchdog doesn't bite, or even
bark. It just wags its tail.' G. Cullingham, 'The Dismal Record
of the CRTC', in *Options politiques/Policy Options*, Vol. 11,
No. 8, October 1990, p. 7.

57. See P. Juneau, 'Redécouvrir le sens de la télévision publique'
[Rediscovering the Meaning of Public Television], in A. Caron
and P. Juneau (eds.), *Le défi des télévisions nationales à l'ère de la
mondialisation* [The Challenge of Public Television in the Age
of Globalization], Montreal University Press, Montreal, 1992,
pp. 85–98.

58. This possibility is dismissed by the BBC, *inter alia*, in a
document entitled *Extending Choice. The BBC's Role in the New
Broadcasting Age*, London, 1992.

59. To quote an example: there is a tendency in certain countries
to attach great importance to the need to 'place' representa-
tives of the various political parties or social groups in charge
of public television in order to maintain the representative-
ness of the various political and social trends within the state.
In other countries, the directors of that television are required
to be above those trends or 'biases' in order to represent the
public at large without discrimination.

60. N. Garnham, *Public Service Broadcasting and the Consumer*
(unpublished), p. 4.

61. Ibid., pp. 4–5.

62. E. Etzioni-Halévy, 'Inherent Contradictions of Democracy',
'Illustrations from National Broadcasting Corporations', in
Comparative Politics, Vol. 20, No. 3, April 1988, p. 332.

63. Ibid., p. 338.

64. Commenting on the situation in the United Kingdom and
underlining the government's authority to determine the
amount of the licence fee and consequently the sums paid to
the BBC, Justin Lewis sums up the result as follows: 'Under
the Thatcher administration, the BBC became timid, and
even subservient, towards very critical persons. This political
pressure is also forcing the BBC to gauge its viewer rating
compared to its commercial rivals; a high rating affords justi-
fication for the amount charged for broadcasting rights.'
J. Lewis, op. cit., p. 20.

65. Juneau holds that the tendency of politicians to try to inter-
vene or influence public television stems from a very strong
sense of ownership which they do not have in relation to the
private channels. P. Juneau, op. cit., p. 89. It could be said that
this sense of ownership comes precisely from the fact that they
can determine the public television budget.

66. With regard to political cost, it must be understood that in a
system of this nature, agreement between two actors would
place considerable weight on the one adopting a different
stand on any issue. Even if the political authorities retain the
power to lay down the law in the final analysis, opposition from
the two other actors involved could be sufficient to make those
authorities stand down or hesitate to go ahead with their plans.

67. It must be pointed out that, as was mentioned very briefly in
the chapter on financing, the preference is for public televi-
sion to be limited in the number of programmes it can provide.
It is hard to see how, as a general-interest television, public
television could afford to provide a wide range of different
programmes, which would be bound to contribute to audience
fragmentation. Although limiting the number of programmes
would not prevent a rise in production costs or in the cost of
purchasing broadcasts, it would have the advantage that there
would be no increase in the demand for pictures to flesh out
the schedules of those programmes.

68. The 'tripartite' system proposed here resembles, at least as far
as principles are concerned, what was proposed in the Caplan-
Sauvageau Report several years ago. See Canadian Ministry of
Supplies and Services, *Report of the Working Group on Broad-
casting Policy*, Ottawa, 1986, pp. 343–55.

69. If public television is very decentralized, for example, and
comprises local or regional stations, it could be preferred that
the directors come from the 'grassroots', i.e. a type of system
where the station managers elect their national directors. If
this television is centralized, the mode could be different. In
short, the best methods are those which are perceived as being
democratic according to the principles on which a consensus
has been reached with regard to the political culture con-
sidered.

70. Here again, the varying political cultures in the different
countries must be taken into account. When one considers
that police chiefs in the United States are elected locally, it is
only logical to think that in certain political systems even the
managers of local public television stations, for example, could
be elected directly by the local citizens.

71. Again as an example: if the directors of public television are
elected on a very broad basis where the public participates to
a large extent (electing the directors of local stations, who
themselves elect their national directors), the directors of the
regulatory body could be appointed by a national committee

composed of various actors from political circles and various groups or associations which, in their various capacities, represent the public.

72. A. Etchegoyen, *La valse des éthiques* [The Ethics Waltz], Éditions François Bourion, Paris, 1990, p. 178.

73. See B. Cache on this issue, 'Rawls regarde la télévision: un système d'évaluation pour le service public' [Rawls Watches Television: An Evaluation System for Public Service], in *Médiaspouvoirs*, No. 14, April–June 1989, pp. 102–8.

74. N. Garnham, *Public Service Broadcasting and the Consumer*, p. 4 (unpublished).

75. T. J. Nossiter, op. cit., p. 140.

76. N. Garnham, *The BBC Charter Renewal Debate*, p. 7 (unpublished).

Conclusion

In many countries throughout the world, too many surveys, fact-finding commissions and committees are endeavouring to reform the television public service with little regard for its real *raison d'être*. Various stopgaps are resorted to. The television public service is regarded as essential, but it must cost less. Public television is expected to be different from the private channels, yet it is being forced to be similar. Major changes are announced – redefinition of the programme, reorganization of production, or use of independent production and coproduction – but these are in fact merely short-term measures taken here and there to save money which is becoming more and more scarce. The aim is to have more efficient public television, but this efficiency is only evaluated in economic terms. The meaning of public service seems to have been lost.

Our aim has been to rediscover the meaning, the legitimacy of public service by focusing the analysis on the citizen and by revealing the democratic issues which are the crux of the public service problem. In this essay we have proposed a radical analysis, that is to say, an analysis which endeavours to go to the root, the essence of public service in television. We have tried to show the fundamental contradiction which exists between the citizen and the consumer, culture and the economy, the public sphere, the state and the market.

It has not been our intention to deny the existence or the legitimacy of the consumer, or that of the economy or the market, but to highlight the incompatibility between the objectives of a television channel which sees itself as a public service and those of another channel which falls within the province of the market. These two types of television can coexist if the logics on which they are based are well separated and if their modes of operation and their structures respect their specific goals. This coexistence, however, clearly cannot be interpreted as the possibility of merging them in one and the same logic. In a television world which is becoming increasingly competitive, unless the necessary measures are taken to shield it from the commercial logic on which all television is based, public television is doomed either to become privatized or simply to disappear completely.

No doubt some will say that public television channels are still very important in a number of countries. This is true, but such an opinion does not take account of the progressive marginalization of these television channels and of the tendency which several of them have to depart from their mission. Unless the legitimacy of public television is rethought and restored, the only factor ensuring their continuity is the force of inertia specific to received ideas: public television continues to exist because it is already there, because people are used to it, because it was predominant in the past, and because it is still an important symbol to which people are attached. Inertia has its limits, however, and does not constitute a very sound basis for ensuring the future of that television.

We have endeavoured to rediscover the legitimacy of

public television, but it would have been a futile exercise had we not taken care to draw from its *raison d'être*, its logic, the organizational basis which are necessary to the fulfillment of its role. The typical public television ideal which we have tried to define is a model which can be used as a basis for gauging how far each national public television channel is 'removed' from that ideal. There is no perfect public television, just as there is no perfect market. A public television channel which is exempt from revenue from advertising comes close to the ideal, but departs from it if it confines itself to providing a programme which does not aim to reach the widest possible audience through the diversity of its content. All of the factors analyzed in the ideal must be taken into consideration together in order to gauge how far a given public television is from achieving the ideal model.

Moreover, the idea which we have put forward of radically separating public television from market television, of allowing the latter to act as it wishes as long as it participates in the financing of public television, can be developed in more specific detail depending on the circumstances. If, for example, a market cannot allow the presence of several private television channels operating in competition, it would clearly be advisable to keep stricter regulation for controlling the commercial television channel or channels so that the latter fulfill at least a few public service obligations. This,

however, by no means affects the specific role of public television.

And finally, in this essay, we have not broached the measures to be taken or the strategies to be adopted in order for the various public television channels to be given their due place in the television environment in their respective countries. As in the 1980s with the collapse of the public television monopolies, when the opening of the sector to private channels seemed to snowball from one country to another, it is to be hoped that the return of a public television channel which is better defined and is protected from commercial logic, which has been rethought and is based on a new legitimacy, may progress with the same impetus from one country to another. This effect would be all the stronger if the international bodies concerned could be convinced of the importance of having a strong public television channel in each country whose *raison d'être* has nothing to do with commercial television. Efforts must be made in the various international forums to convince observers that public television is necessary to democratic life as a means of strengthening citizens' access to and participation in public affairs. They must be convinced that, in the final analysis, public television is an institution which fulfills the very principles of political liberalism which most countries now profess.

Part Two

Public service broadcasting for the twenty-first century

Edited by Marc Raboy

Introduction

Public service broadcasting in the context of globalization[1]

Marc Raboy

Despite the rapid movement toward globalization, broadcasting is still legally constituted within the confines of national borders. Despite the great variety in degree of attention by the world's 200-odd national states, every state must at some point make fundamental decisions about broadcasting, if only to consider the allocation of frequencies to which it is entitled by international convention. The immediate result of these decisions is a national broadcasting system in every country, made up of one or more component parts.

Within this basic structural framework, one finds a rather wide array of different systemic and institutional broadcast models. Some of these are well-known, well-established, and provide the basis for most conventional notions about public service broadcasting. Others are in more of a state of flux, or emergence, and are rapidly developing with a close eye on the changes taking place within the established systems. The material in this report consists of an equal number of contributions from each of these broad, general categories. Every one of them focuses on one or more specific aspects of what is becoming increasingly a world system. The introduction that follows attempts to elaborate on this by situating public service broadcasting in the global context.

Each of the individual contributions is an author's highly personal view of the problems of public broadcasting as seen from a particular geopolitical perspective. In this respect, the individual chapters should not be read as a collection of national reports. While clearly informative of the situations prevailing in each of the countries or regions the authors describe, these are largely critical perspectives, sometimes highly critical of the various institutional entanglements they scrutinize, while supportive of the ideals that the institutional arrangements are presumably designed to meet. The result is a series of ways of seeing the actual and potential role of public service broadcasting on the eve of the twenty-first century.

The changing environment of broadcasting is on various agendas, from the Council of Europe to the numerous national states grappling with the challenges to their national communications systems; and from the G7 and its grand design for a global information highway to the burgeoning number of non-governmental organizations active in the field of mass communication. At the heart of these debates is the question of the present and future status of public service broadcasting.

Meeting in Prague in December 1994, the Council of Europe's Fourth European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy identified the safeguarding of independent, appropriately funded public service broadcasting institutions as essential to the functioning of the media in a democratic society. The council's draft resolution on the future of public service broadcasting included a nine-point mission statement reiterating, from a particularly European perspective, the traditional objectives of public service broadcasting.[2]

Such statements, for all their worth, also point to the obstacles faced by conventional public service broadcasting in the current global context. In the contemporary debates on the changing environment of mass communication, there is no shortage of earnest outlines of goals and objectives for media with aims other than business or propaganda. There is no shortage of goodwill or good ideas, but the realization of the ideals of public service broadcasting is rendered problematic by a series of political, economic, technological, ideological and developmental constraints.

In many parts of the world, the problem is still one of totalitarianism and the equation of the public interest with the particular interests of the national state. Where totalitarianism has been overcome, the problems facing media in the transition to democracy are often the best example of the problems of democratization generally. In eastern Europe, in most of Africa, and in much of the rest of the 'transitional' world, public service broadcasting is a distant ideal, not a working reality. In those countries where the leadership has embraced that ideal, the lack of a receptive political and professional culture is often the next hurdle. Where neo-totalitarian or neo-colonial governments seek to retain power at all cost, the lack of autonomy of national media is also a problem of political will.

In the heartland of traditional public service broadcasting, Western Europe (and in countries with similar systems such as Australia, Canada and Japan) the trend toward liberalization and market reform mixed with a lack of official faith in the continued importance of public service broadcasting leads to a syndrome where precious experience is being washed away. Problems of financing, mandate and interpretations of purpose are all indications of a more fundamental problem of political will.

National peculiarities apart, questions concerning the structures of broadcasting are increasingly global ones. In the new broadcasting environment, the issue of public service broadcasting can be reduced to this: What social and cultural goals attributed to broadcasting require a specially mandated, non-commercially driven organization, publicly owned, publicly funded to the extent necessary, and publicly accountable?

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

Fifteen years ago, when the International Commission on the Study of Communication Problems chaired by the late Sean MacBride reported to UNESCO, the structure of the world's broadcasting systems was a relatively unproblematic affair. The subject occupied a mere two pages in the MacBride Report, where public service broadcasting did not even receive a separate index entry (UNESCO, 1980).

In 1980, national broadcasting systems could be typed according to the prevailing political systems in each of the countries concerned. Most European countries had a single monopoly broadcaster – although operating according to very different sets of principles in the west and in the east. In Africa, too, national broadcasting was strictly government-owned and -operated. At the other extreme, the American free enterprise model of broadcasting was operational in most of Asia and the Americas (with notable exceptions). The number of countries with 'mixed' systems was small (the MacBride report mentioned Australia, Canada, Finland, Japan and the United Kingdom). Where it existed, community broadcasting was a strictly local, marginalized phenomenon with few links to the mainstream. In 1980, the letters CNN did not have the evocative authority they do today.[3]

Since that time – need we say it? – the world has changed. The evolution of broadcasting has been marked by three sets of parallel developments: (1) the explosion in channel capacity and the disappearance of audio-visual borders made possible by new technology; (2) the disintegration of the state broadcasting model with the collapse of the socialist bloc and the move toward democratization in various parts of the world; and (3) the upsurge in market broadcasting and the introduction of mixed broadcasting systems in countries with former public service monopolies.

Far from being distinct from one another, these phenomena are in complex interrelationship with respect to the emergence of new forms of broadcasting, locally, nationally and internationally. The consolidation of a world broadcasting market has been abetted by the collapse of the Iron Curtain, just as that process was accelerated by the technological obsolescence of attempts to control access to information and the means of communication.

At the same time, the re-evaluation of welfare capitalism – spurred on by an uneasy marriage of ideological and economic considerations – coinciding with the arrival of the new generation of broadcasting technologies has further

strengthened the market model and undermined the view that broadcasting is a sphere of activity analogous to education or health care – that is to say, a primarily social and cultural rather than an economic or political activity (see Servaes, 1993, p. 327).[4]

Until the 1980s, television was widespread mainly in the OECD and Soviet bloc countries.[5] Since then, the number of sets has tripled, although it is still unevenly distributed, and the number of satellite stations has gone from zero to 300 (although there are still only two really global channels: Turner's CNN and Viacom's MTV).[6] In 1980, there were 40 channels in Europe; today there are 150.

In 1993, every American home paid $30 per month for its 'free' television, via the cost of advertising passed on to consumers; the new broadcasting industry economics will be a mixed bag of advertising, subscription and pay-per-view. However, people watch only about seven channels, so the more choice there is, the less likely it is that any particular one will be among them, which is not heartening news for broadcasters.

One of the characteristics of the current context which easily leads to confusion is the blurring of distinctions between formerly distinct activities: broadcasting and narrowcasting; broadcasting and telecommunication; and public and private broadcasting. The recent policy debates surrounding the information highway have seen a flurry of new alliances and repositioning of broadcasting industry players nationally and internationally, private and public. Broadcasting will henceforth be evolving in a more complex multimedia environment, and its previous subdivisions into distinct 'domains' such as terrestrial, cable and satellite broadcasting are quickly becoming obsolete. Questions concerning the future of public service broadcasting will be played out and resolved in a broader policy framework. This framework consists of both greater constraints and new possibilities, but the principal normative question will remain: What should the public function of broadcasting in a democracy be? (van Cuilenburg and Slaa, 1993).

The context of technological convergence and the accompanying policy debates can help to clarify the concept of public service with respect to media generally and, hence, to develop a more appropriate conception of public service broadcasting. In telecommunication, the concept of universal public service has been much more clear and straightforward than in broadcasting. The principle of universality has been tied to the operational provision of affordable access (not an

issue in broadcasting as long as the main means of transmission was over-the-air, but increasingly so with the addition of various tiers of chargeable services).

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

Broadcasting may be the quintessential cultural industry (Sinclair, 1994); it is increasingly the closest thing we have to a universal cultural form (Collins, 1990). Until recently, 'national' broadcasting systems were seen to be the main vehicles through which national culture was sure to be reflected and, with the obvious exception of the United States, success in this respect was tied to a national *public* broadcasting system. National broadcasting systems are now, for the most part, more broadly constituted and, at the same time, national broadcasters control a decreasing share of every country's audio-visual space (Caron and Juneau, 1992). But are their messages any less prominent in national consciousness? This question is an extremely difficult one to answer with any degree of certainty.

One important aspect of the question is to recognize the problematic nature of national identity itself. Identity today is increasingly multifaceted, and national identity is a particularly contested issue in many countries, even among some of the most politically stable. This poses another challenge to broadcasting, which has traditionally been organized at the national level. Where public broadcasting has been well-established, it has almost invariably been through the presence of a strong, often highly centralized national public broadcaster. It is not only the external pressures of globalization that challenge this model today, but also the internal pressures brought about by the fragmentation of traditional notions of nationhood (see Pietersee, 1994). If public service broadcasting is to speak to the real concerns of its public, it has to rethink its approach to one of its most cherished objectives: the cementing of national unity. This task may be especially difficult for politicians to accept.

Traditionally, public service broadcasting has been expected to represent the national as opposed to the foreign. It may be time to refocus these conceptual categories in terms of the local and the global. There is a certain universal appeal to the products of Hollywood-based mass culture – that is,

ultimately, the only possible explanation for their success. At the same time, specific publics will be interested in specific types of broadcasting programming. The global cultural industry recognizes this by developing products targeted to 'niche markets'. Public broadcasting has a different role, principally by conceiving its audience as a public rather than a market. Some programmes may speak to a particular national public, but on any given national territory there will be less-than-national broadcasting needs to be fulfilled. National networks, publicly or privately owned, can no longer be expected to be forces of cohesion; they can, however, be highly effective distribution systems for programmes of importance to the communities they serve. For this to occur, we need a new definition of public service broadcasting suitable to a new public culture, global in scope and experienced locally.

The idea of public service broadcasting is not intrinsically tied to that of nationhood over that of the public, nor is broadcasting, as a form of communication, tied necessarily to community (see Carey, 1989). Therefore, we need to take a fresh look at public service broadcasting in the context of a changing role for the still present, still formidable (for lack of a structure to replace it) nation state. As the alternative to the state becomes the market, the alternative to public service broadcasting is constructed as private sector broadcasting; this parallel is logically flawed as well as politically shortsighted. The globalization of markets is both global and local (global products are usually produced in a single place, distributed worldwide and consumed locally, everywhere). As the nation state is left marooned between the global and the particular (Ellis, 1994), so is public service broadcasting, which might explain the success of specialty services and the economies of scale justified by global products in search of small local markets. It is false to assume, however, that there is no longer a social need for public service broadcasting; it rather demands redefinition, for, as John Ellis (1994) has stated, only public service broadcasting 'puts a social agenda before a market agenda'.

What is public service broadcasting?

In this context, the *idea* of public service broadcasting stands out more boldly than any of the existing structures set up to manage broadcasting in its name. It is rooted in the enlightenment notion of the public and of a public space in which social and political life democratically unfolds (Habermas, 1989), as well as in the tradition of independent, publicly organized broadcasting organizations created to deliver radio programmes to audiences in the period between the two world wars.

In some cases, public service broadcasting refers to one or more institutions, while in others it is an ideal (Syvertsen, 1992). Thus, in some countries, public service broadcasting refers to a particular organization or sector of the broadcasting system, while in others the entire system may be viewed as a public service. In some cases, public service broadcasting is seen as a developmental goal to be achieved. While in many cases public service broadcasting may indeed be in 'crisis' (see Rowland and Tracey, 1990), the ideal that it represents is certainly very much alive.

It is unnecessary here to review the origins of public service broadcasting, except to recall that both the institution and the ideal (or a certain conception of it) originated in the experience of the BBC and its founder Sir John Reith (see McDonnell, 1991). The BBC still stands as the quintessential model of public service broadcasting worldwide, particularly in the view of national governments seeking to establish or revitalize their broadcasting systems. It is indeed often impossible to separate the idea from the practical example of the institution, but do that we must. While the BBC is probably still the most successful example of a national public service broadcaster, and the United Kingdom among the most successful at anticipating and adapting to the new context of broadcasting, it is not necessarily an appropriate or easily transportable model for many situations. The ideal, on the other hand, is a universal one – to the extent that democratic values can be said to be universal.

There is no easy answer to the question of what public service broadcasting is, but a reasonably thorough attempt was made by the United Kingdom's now defunct Broadcasting Research Unit (BRU) in a pamphlet first published in 1985 (BRU 1985/1988. See also Barnett and Docherty, 1991). The BRU document presented those elements of public service broadcasting which 'should be retained within whatever systems are devised to provide broadcasting as new communications technologies come into use. It is not therefore a defence of the existing public-service (broadcasting) institutions as they are today or as they may become; it is concerned with *the whole landscape*' (emphasis added).

The BRU approach supported the view that broadcasting should be seen as a comprehensive environment. Its main principles can be summarized as follows: (1) universal acces-

sibility (geographic); (2) universal appeal (general tastes and interests); (3) particular attention to minorities; (4) contribution to sense of national identity and community; (5) distance from vested interests; (6) direct funding and universality of payment; (7) competition in good programming rather than for numbers; and (8) guidelines that liberate rather than restrict programme makers.

As public service characteristics, this list also points to the inherent pitfalls of such an exercise. While some of the characteristics (e.g. accessibility) are straightforward enough, certain others (e.g. contribution to a sense of national identity) are highly problematic, in so far as in many states (including the British) the question of nationhood itself is not fully resolved. Distance from vested interests implies an ideal situation where the broadcasting institutions do not have their own vested interests. A notion such as good programming begs the question of taste: Good, according to whom?

The real problem, however, is not how to improve the list but rather how to apply any such set of principles. Indeed, the exercise points to a need to return to even more fundamental values regarding broadcasting and its role in society (see Blumler, 1992). It also points to the need to associate the public with the various aspects of broadcasting activity. Robin Foster, reporting to the David Hume Institute in 1992, suggested that viewers and listeners be consulted regarding the level of resources to be put into particular types of programmes – a proposal not likely to be endearing to broadcasters or policy makers, although logical and coherent with respect to both public policy objectives for broadcasting and the prevailing discourse of consumer sovereignty. 'As an input into determining the public broadcasting contract, ways should be found of establishing what the *public* wants public broadcasting to be; giving the public involvement in deciding what is provided' (Foster, 1992, p. 31). However, what do we mean by 'the public'?

Many authors have endeavoured to reproblematize and redefine our conception of the public in light of the changing nature of late twentieth century mass media (see e.g. Curran, 1991; Garnham, 1992; Dahlgren, 1994; Venturelli, 1994). If these changes are relatively straightforward for certain actors in the sphere of broadcasting – advertisers, for example, who conceive of their target as a market, or ratings-driven broadcasters who quantify it as an audience – it is not so evident for public service broadcasters and the makers of public policy. 'Broadcasting takes place in the public sphere and we come to it both as consumers and as citizens,' writes Anthony Smith

(1991): 'Where commercial broadcasting is linked to the social world by means of markets, public service derives its legitimacy from the role its viewers play as citizens.'

The notion of citizenship has important implications for broadcasting. Citizenship cannot be passive. Citizenship is political. Citizenship evokes the image of Tom Paine and the unfinished struggle for 'liberty, equality, fraternity' (Keane, 1991, 1994). When public service broadcasting is linked to the idea of citizenship, it must logically be decoupled from the authoritarian power of the state. At the same time, it cannot be reduced to the state of a mere commodity. It is not a question of principle but of purpose. The main point of distinction between public service and private sector broadcasting is that the latter is *only* commercially driven, while the former, despite the various shapes and forms it assumes from time to time and place to place, is necessarily propelled by a different logic.

It is critical to understand the subtleties inherent in this distinction. Within the realm of conventional public broadcasting there are two schools of thought regarding commercial activity. One has it that commercial and public service objectives are wholly incompatible and cannot be combined within a single service. The other view is that they can coexist, and public and private broadcasting can compete in the advertising marketplace to the mutual benefit of both. I would like to suggest that there is a third conceptual and structural approach to this question: Assuming that certain activities of broadcasting can be financed commercially and others can not, why not redistribute the benefits of the commercial sector to finance the non-commercial sector? This systemic approach is partially recognized in some countries which legally define their national broadcasting systems as public services, thus legitimating the regulatory intervention of the state; however, it is rarely operationalized through the appropriation of the fruit of lucrative activity to subsidize the rest. It is just assumed – with no basis in logic, only in ideology – that commercially viable broadcasting should be left in the private sector and unprofitable broadcasting activity should be subsidized some other way. On the other hand, one could just as logically argue that, in so far as the social basis of broadcasting is public service, the profits of the lucrative sector should be redistributed within the system. If this is an unlikely formula, it is not because of any conceptual flaw, but because of broadcasting's capture by private industry.

Indeed, the leaders of the global broadcasting industry have turned this idea on its head by claiming that the product

they are selling is a public service. As early as 1960, CBS executive Frank Stanton proclaimed that 'a program in which a large part of the audience is interested is by that very fact . . . in the public interest' (quoted in Friendly, 1967, p. 291). More recently, Rupert Murdoch has stated: 'Anybody who, within the law of the land, provides a service which the public wants at a price it can afford is providing a public service' (quoted in Ellis, 1994, p. 1). To the extent that 'the public' is just another way of describing the aggregate consumer market for broadcasting, they are of course correct, which is why, once again, it is important to get the terminology right. Meanwhile, the idea of public service broadcasting has been undermined by the erosion of the public commitment to the service that has been provided by existing public broadcasting institutions. In many cases, this erosion has been egged on by the abuse of the term by national governments seeking to use broadcasting for a higher national purpose, claiming that this is in the public interest.

On the contrary, the role of public service broadcasting, as Ellis points out, is to provide a space in which 'the emerging culture of multiple identities can negotiate its antagonisms' (Ellis, 1994, p. 14), not cater to accentuating difference, as commercial multichannel broadcasting has a tendency to do. Exploring new possibilities for consensus rather than imposing it is the opposite of the former role of public service broadcasting – which goes quite a way to explaining why the traditional strategies of the major national public service broadcasters no longer work and why they are in trouble as they seek to accommodate a new *raison d'être*. 'We have been so preoccupied by the challenges to Public Service Broadcasting from within broadcasting that we have failed to notice the profound changes that have taken place in the public whom broadcasting is supposed to serve' (Ellis, 1994, p. 16).

Public broadcasting is a public good,[7] but what makes it so is not immediately apparent, which is what Yves Achille (1994) means when he writes that public service broadcasting is suffering from a crisis of identity. Achille refers to a triple crisis of public service broadcasting: identity, financing and functioning. If the identity crisis could be resolved, the financial problem – essentially a question of political will – could then be addressed. As to the functional question, in countries with an established public service broadcasting tradition, nothing less than a zero-based review of existing institutional structures can bring public service broadcasting into the twenty-first century with a hope of building public and political support for its new role (see also Atkinson, 1993;

Paracuellos, 1993; Achille and Miège, 1994). On the other hand, to many analysts, a public broadcasting system with a mixed ownership structure is still a far preferable guarantee of broadcasting pluralism and diversity than the private enterprise model that is held up as its alternative (Syvertsen, 1994).

In a broadcasting environment that treats the public as a body of clients or consumers, the role of public broadcasting is to address people as citizens. Public broadcasting can do this only if it is seen as an instrument of social and cultural development rather than as a marginal alternative service on the periphery of a vast cultural industry (see Raboy, Bernier, Sauvageau and Atkinson, 1994).[8] This change implies a freshly conceived role for the state which should see itself more as architect than engineer; that is to say, the role of the state is to design and facilitate the functioning of a multifaceted national broadcasting system, rather than as the directive patron of a dedicated national broadcaster.

'The crucial choice', as Graham Murdock has written, 'is not, as many commentators suppose, between state licensing and control on the one side and minimally regulated market mechanisms on the other. It is between policies designed to reinvigorate public communications systems which are relatively independent of both the state and the market, and policies which aim to marginalise or eradicate them' (Murdock, 1992, p. 18). The object is to create 'a new kind of public communicative space, rooted in a constructive engagement with emerging patterns of political and cultural diversity' (Murdock, 1992, p. 40).[9]

One of the most difficult new conceptual fields to open is that which seeks to look beyond the exclusivity of traditional institutions to imagine new vehicles for meeting public service objectives. Here, a progressive approach to strategic intervention in public broadcasting could take a page from experiences with sustainable development. Development theory, once built around the idea that the introduction of full-blown communication systems to traditional societies would hasten 'modernization' and hence economic, social and political development, has gradually adjusted to the notion that small-scale horizontal communication operating at the grassroots level can be more beneficial in fostering autonomy and endogenous development (see O Siochru, 1992). At the same time, however, this does not mean abandoning the demand for communication equality between rich and poor (Raboy and Bruck, 1989).

In this context, small-scale media technologies, opportunities for indigenous cultural expression through such

means as theatre, puppetry and video, exchanges between communities via computer, telecommunication and broadcasting, can often be more appropriate for meeting the objectives of democratic communication than conventional broadcasting institutions centrally organized at the national level. In countries where these institutions do not even exist, it can be more politically fruitful to conceive of meeting public service broadcasting objectives at the community level, which does not obviate the need for national broadcasting, but, as with so many development issues, the choices to be made involve strategic priorities (see Thede and Ambrosi, 1991; Girard, 1992; Lewis, 1993). The social demand for local and regional broadcasting is pronounced even in the most developed countries (Garitaonandia, 1993; Jankowski, Prehn and Stappers, 1993; Rushton, 1993), and one of the most bitterly expressed criticisms of the dominant national public service broadcasters is their tendency to abandon local and regional needs as they retrench around high-profile prestigious national services.

Prospectives for public service broadcasting

By linking the idea of public broadcasting to the notion of citizenship, we saw that it was necessary to guarantee its delinking from both the political authority of the state and the economic arbitrage of the market. The key to this is not so much a particular structure or funding formula, but a set of objectives and practices based on democratic principles and the view that broadcasting can be a means of social and cultural development.

The history of broadcasting everywhere up to and including the present has shown that only through sustained public policy action can the medium begin to fulfil its potential. Historically, a combination of public pressure, enlightened self-interest, and a favourable socio-political moment led governments in a number of mainly European countries to create public broadcasting institutions, placing them at arm's length from politics and sheltering them from the effects of commerce. Wherever this model was followed, public broadcasting became the central institution of the democratic public sphere, taking on increasing importance as broadcasting came to occupy more and more public space and time, and playing an important role in the democratization of public life (Scannell, 1989).

Independence from politics and autonomy from the

market have become the leading criteria for the definition of public space, but these values have become relative as broadcasting has spread and developed worldwide. No broadcasting organization today can function obliviously to market pressure, and if politics is more acutely present in some situations than others, it is never far from the centre. More significantly, public broadcasting has had to face a rising tide of scepticism and political will, and its recent evolution has been characterized by a 'struggle over decline, change and renewal' (Tracey, 1994).

At the same time, however, the limitations of market broadcasting, wonderful as a delivery vehicle for popular mass entertainment, have become strikingly evident (Garnham, 1994). The multichannel environment provides a double-barrelled challenge for public broadcasting, obliging conventional broadcasters to adapt and open the way to new possibilities (Avery, 1993). In the emerging democracies, particularly, the balancing act is to juggle the structural difficulty of creating new public broadcasting institutions and the pressures for integration to the global broadcasting market (see e.g. Kleinwachter, 1995).[10]

Broadcasting was conceived for commercial purposes, but public broadcasting was introduced for purposes of cultural development and democratization. By creating appropriate institutions and developing public policy accordingly, various state authorities placed broadcasting in the public interest. There is no reason why this cannot continue to be done today.

For this to occur, every jurisdiction first of all needs to have clear public policy objectives for broadcasting. These can best be realized by placing responsibility for the regulation and supervision of broadcasting in the hands of an independent public agency (Raboy, 1994). Next, authorities need to recognize that independence is necessary for broadcasting organizations.[11] Broadcasters, in exchange, need to accept accountability mechanisms which ensure the responsible exercise of their mandates (Blumler and Hoffmann-Riem, 1992). Finally, the broadcasting environment needs to be organized and structured in such a way as to maximize the use that can be made of all the resources flowing through the system.

This reorganization would require something akin to the socialization of the broadcasting sector. There is no justification for the removal of surplus value from the lucrative branches of broadcasting activity as long as public interest broadcasting objectives cannot be met without public sub-

sidy. Private sector broadcasting should have statutory obligations to contribute to overall systemic objectives, and public broadcasters should be allowed to engage in commercially lucrative activities – without being obliged to compete with their own programmes in order to make ends meet.

Especially given the new technological context of the multichannel environment, it is possible to organize broadcasting to encompass both market activities and public service, to maximize both consumer choice and citizenship programming. People watch programmes, not channels, and consequently the appropriate point for competition in broadcasting is the point of programme supply, with independent production companies vying for programme contracts from public service broadcasters. Construction and maintenance of the technical infrastructure can remain in the market sector, but delivery service should be subject to regulated tariffs.

On the other hand, programming should be done by public corporations, in consultation with representative users councils. Supposing that in a given jurisdiction there were two public broadcasting corporations, Corporation A would have a mandate to provide generalist public interest programming, while Corporation B's mandate would be to seek large audiences. Corporation A's work could be subsidized by the profits generated by Corporation B. Thanks to the availability of multiple channels, video recording, and playback technology, the public interest objectives of both citizenship and consumer sovereignty could be met without the information and resource loss brought on by public-private competition. Yet there would be room in such a system for a private sector of regulated carriers and competitive content providers. There would also be room for a variety of public services from the national to the local levels.

Since the early 1980s, broadcasting has been a site of ideological conflict between opposing models of society and a clash of concepts of democracy as well as notions of culture and economics (Rowland and Tracey, 1990). According to one side in this conflict, the general interest demands that there be public institutions mandated to intervene strategically to guarantee quality, diversity and independence in broadcasting that other institutional arrangements cannot ensure; the other view holds that regulation and public policy regarding media are neither necessary nor legitimate.

Advocates of the public service approach to broadcasting must demonstrate concretely what institutional arrangements can be expected to meet their objectives and why these are possible only through regulation and public policy (see

Hoffmann-Riem, 1992). First of all they must demonstrate what public service broadcasting should do in the new broadcasting environment and, especially, what distinguishes public from private sector broadcasting (see e.g. Wolton, 1992; Chaniac and Jézéquel, 1993).

Private broadcasting, it may be argued, can also fulfil public service goals. However, it is unlikely that it would bother to try if not pushed in that direction by the competition and example of public broadcasters. This likelihood points to one of the most subtle arguments in favour of public broadcasting: public broadcasting sets the overall tone of the market, acts as a catalyst and serves as an example to all broadcasting services (Hultén, 1995). It also points to the need to conceptualize broadcasting as an ecological environment, requiring a healthy diet of balanced offerings as well as nurturing and protection (Raboy, 1993). Balance has until recently been guaranteed by the distinction between public and private services, but it is now threatened by two phenomena: the systemic disequilibrium shifting strongly towards private commercial services, and the effects of commercialization on public services.

This shift can only be counterbalanced by an opposite one: creation of more public service mandated organizations and removal of the pressure to meet commercial criteria. Overriding this is the legitimation of legally framing broadcasting as a public service and, consequently, considering the overall broadcasting framework as a public service environment. It is at this level that one should look at political developments such as the Council of Europe resolution referred to at the start of this essay. One has to go further than foresee a specific role for public service institutions; however, it is private sector broadcasting that should be conceptualized as the complementary form, providing services that public institutions can afford to abandon, not vice versa as at present. We need a world declaration situating broadcasting as a public service comprised of different elements each with specific structural arrangements and purposes, but all dedicated to the improvement of humankind. On the basis of such a global position, individual political units could legitimately set public policy for broadcasting on their territory.

All broadcasting, to be successful, must be programme-driven. Public broadcasting, however, is policy-motivated, while private broadcasting is profit-motivated. Public broadcasting is broadcasting with a purpose: to enhance the quality of public life, empowering individuals and social groups to participate more fully and equitably. Profit-motivated broad-

casting is only interested in large audiences. Policy-motivated broadcasting is interested in reaching the largest possible audience the most effectively, in light of the specific objective of the programme concerned.

Broadcasters have their own technical language for measuring effectiveness: private broadcasters, they say, are concerned with audience share, the number of people watching or listening at any point in time, while public broadcasters are concerned with reach, the number of people who tune in over a period of time. There is another characteristic to consider, but it is difficult to measure: the intensity of the experience and its impact on one's life. Public broadcasting aims to touch people, to move them, to change them. Private broadcasting, by nature, aims to put them in the mood to consume and, above all, to consume more of what private broadcasting has to offer.

This set of distinctions may appear to be crude, but more important to consider is the extent to which existing public broadcasting has integrated the objectives of private broadcasting. Indeed, a common lament in countries where broadcasting is the most developed is that it is increasingly difficult to distinguish the programmes of public from those of private broadcasting, especially where both sectors provide advertising. Legislators and policy makers are more to blame than broadcasters for this state of affairs. By obliging public broadcasters to compete with private broadcasters on their terrain – the quest for the mass audience – we have flattened the difference. To the contrary, where private broadcasting has been obliged to compete with public broadcasting on the terrain of quality programming, the overall quality of broadcasting service has been raised.

A fundamental aspect of broadcasting as public service is universality of access. This is increasingly problematic as broadcasting evolves toward a pick-and-choose model analogous to the newsstand, where a variety of services are offered and the consumer selects and pays for his or her choice. In this context, it is essential that public broadcasting provide, first of all, a generalist programme service available to all and, ideally, free of charge to the user. As we move towards newer and more elaborate signal delivery systems, public authorities will have to ensure that everyone has access to the systems where public service is provided. At the same time, systems will have to be organized so as to avoid creating situations where better, more interesting, more rewarding, and, ultimately, more empowering services are available on 'higher' broadcast tiers at prices which exclude users on the basis of ability to pay.

This is the basis of the arguments for a public lane on the information highway that public interest groups and non-government organizations are putting forth in national and international debates on the new information infrastructures. The issue is larger than broadcasting, but broadcasting is at the cutting edge. Technological convergence is going to require new conceptual and operational models for content-based electronic communication, but regardless of the future of conventional broadcasting in this context, the promotion of the public interest can only come through regulation guaranteeing system access for all those with something to communicate, as well as for receivers.

Where is the money to come from? First of all, to the extent that political authorities, with public support, are prepared to make broadcasting a priority, it can come from the collective resources of society itself. In Canada, one recent proposal estimated that the shortfall in projected budget cuts to public broadcasting could be met by reducing a projected increase in military spending by 1 per cent. As stated at the outset of this essay, it is a question of political will. There is no escaping the necessity of public subsidy for public service, but, even so, a major portion of the required funding can come from within the system itself. If broadcasting is recognized as a public service, the redistribution of benefits from commercial activity to subsidize the rest is a legitimate measure.

In the context of globalization and the development of a global infrastructure for information and communication, the question of public broadcasting takes on a new international dimension as well. According to the head of the International Telecommunications Union, in the area of information infrastructures, 'the gap between the information rich and the information poor is several orders of magnitude wider than in the area of basic service' (Tarjanne, 1995). In the context of the information highway, all the more reason to emphasize public services as an equalizer, a leveller of the playing field, and an essential component of communication policies for development (see e.g. *L'Afrique face aux autoroutes de l'information*, 1995). Alongside the calls for national and global infrastructures emanating from the centre of the world media and economic system, we are starting to hear calls for a 'public information infrastructure' geared to the democratic rights of citizens, as well as for a 'global sustainable development infrastructure' (Schreibman, Priest and Moore, 1995).

The question of public service broadcasting is at the heart of contemporary media politics (Siune and Truetzschler, 1992). It preoccupies those who would still ascribe a

social purpose to mass communication but fear that such a mission has been bypassed in the new world order dominated by unrelenting technological and market forces. But this is the short view. The question of public service broadcasting cries out for new approaches that look beyond the obvious and do not shrink from challenging received wisdom (Gustafsson, 1992). The challenge is not to defend any particular institutional territory, as it is often framed. It is rather how to invent something new, remembering that broadcasting service is first of all a public good.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this essay, including a detailed typology of the various existing models one encounters in the contemporary broadcasting environment, was presented to the UNESCO International Roundtable on the Cultural and Educational Functions of Public Service Broadcasting, Paris, 3–5 July 1995, in a paper entitled 'The World Situation of Public Service Broadcasting: Overview and Analysis'.

2. Summarized, the nine points state that public broadcasting should provide (1) a common reference point for all members of the public; (2) a forum for broad public discussion; (3) impartial news coverage; (4) pluralistic, innovative and varied programming; (5) programming which is both of wide public interest and attentive to the needs of minorities; (6) reflection of the different ideas and beliefs in pluriethnic and multicultural societies; (7) a diversity of national and European cultural heritage; (8) original productions by independent producers; and (9) extended viewer and listener choice by offering programs not provided by the commercial sector (Council of Europe, 1994).

3. The Cable News Network was founded in Atlanta, in 1980, and launched its international satellite channel five years later.

4. In Scandinavia particularly, the broadcasting debate has been tied to the general critique of the welfare state. See Hultén, 1992; Prehn and Jensen, 1993; Sepstrup, 1993.

5. Writing and critical concern about broadcasting tends to focus on television, and that is reflected here. When we speak about broadcasting in this book, however, we are referring to both radio and television.

6. The 1 billion television sets in the world in 1992 were distributed roughly as follows: 35 per cent Europe (including former USSR); 32 per cent Asia; 20 per cent North American (and Caribbean); 8 per cent Latin America; 4 per cent Middle East; 1 per cent Africa. Set ownership was rising at a rate of 5 per cent a year, and world spending on television programmes was US$80 billion (*The Economist*, 1994, based on UNESCO figures).

7. 'Public goods are goods which cannot be appropriated privately. If such a good is supplied, no member of the collectivity can be excluded from its consumption. Therefore public goods must be produced by institutions other than a market economy and distributed by a mechanism different from markets' (Berger, 1990, p. 128).

8. By cultural development, I mean 'the process by which human beings acquire the individual and collective resources necessary to participate in public life' (Raboy, Bernier, Sauvageau and Atkinson, 1994, p. 292).

9. Conceptualizing the public as citizen also requires a less paternalistic attitude toward the citizen as consumer. John Reith would no doubt recoil at the suggestion of his countryman Alan Peacock that public funding be used 'in ways which encourage consumers to widen their experience of cultural activities and which promote freedom of entry into the "culture market" so that cultural innovators can challenge well-established institutions' (Peacock, 1991, p. 11). In other words, invest public money at the point of consumption as well as production, in the hope of stimulating demand and letting the market mechanism replace bureaucratic choice. This is not likely to enamour the public broadcasters, but it could have a salutary effect on public broadcasting.

10. According to Kleinwachter, the evolution of broadcasting in central and eastern Europe since 1989 can be broken into four stages: (1) awakening to the new media freedoms; (2) disillusionment over the failure to implement an ideal model; (3) political struggles over control of media, especially national television; and, finally, (4) the building of new institutions, public and private, based on law, independent of government control, competing under market conditions, and seeking to integrate into transnational broadcasting frameworks and structures. Varying from one country to the next, the basic thrust is toward the replacement of monopolistic state-owned, party-controlled systems with independent pluralistic ones but, in general, 'the new broadcasting systems in the former East bloc, confronted with the realities of daily life, now have the choice between domestic governmental control and foreign commercial control' (Kleinwachter, 1995, p. 44).

11. See, for example, the German Constitutional Court decision of February 1994, ruling that the funding of public broadcasting should be constitutionally guaranteed and insulated from the variable humour of political decision making (Eberle, 1994).

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Part Two – Section One

**Shifting paradigms
in the heartlands
of public
broadcasting**

Great Britain

Public service broadcasting, from national culture to multiculturalism

Paddy Scannell

Public service broadcasting in Britain has developed in three broad periods, each of which can be shown to have a core characteristic: first as national, then as popular, and finally as pluralistic. All three characteristics are present in the make-up of the mix of services currently available to British listeners and viewers. Each has modified and been modified by the others. They stand out as distinctive strands woven into the fabric of broadcasting today. They colour attitudes within the industry, in politics, and among the public.

Public service broadcasting in Britain is often thought of as peculiar to the BBC, but it is not. The BBC laid the foundations of broadcasting in the United Kingdom and still remains its cornerstone. However, commercial television (ITV) in Britain operated for many years with a tight public service remit and still does today, albeit in a weaker form. Channel 4 is remarkable proof of the continuing adaptability and relevance of public service values in contemporary society. It is both fully commercial and fully committed to public service goals. The future of commercial radio is planned by the Radio Authority with an eye both to commercial and public interest requirements. Only cable and satellite services have no statutory public service requirement.

In Britain, public service broadcasting has not simply held its ground through the flurry of parliamentary enquiries, reports, green and white papers, and Broadcasting Acts of the last ten years, it has emerged from this process stronger and more secure, in some respects, than it was before the process began.

Popularity

Popular television continues to be at the heart of debates about broadcasting and, in particular, the strategies of the BBC and ITV towards the national television audiences. The question of 'quality', and what it means in respect to broadcasting, has been periodically debated since the introduction of commercial broadcasting, but it recurred with a new vigour in the early 1990s.

The BBC, unsure how to play its cards in the period of debate and discussion about its own future in the run-up to the renewal of its charter and licence in 1996, appeared at first to contemplate a strategy of vacating the centre and withdrawing to the cultural high ground, leaving popular programming to the commercial sector (BBC, 1992). This would have been a folly indeed, and it was soon modified. Even so, in its most recent mission statement, the BBC acknowledges the difficulties in the 'quality versus popularity' debate (BBC, 1995, p. 25).

The BBC publication, *People and Programmes*, affirms the BBC's core purpose as making 'programmes of quality' for British audiences (BBC, 1995, p. 172). High-quality, original entertainment has always been at the heart of its schedules, and a current priority is to 're-establish' BBC Television as a major force in the area of mainstream, highly accessible, people, family, and variety shows appealing to a wide range of audiences (BBC, 1995, pp. 62–3). At the same time, however, the BBC declares that it will not organize its programme mix

and schedules in such ways as to compete head-on with a more aggressively profit-driven ITV, intent on winning the mainstream, primetime television audiences by scheduling non-stop entertainment.

The struggle for the centre ground – an inevitable consequence of any competitive system – will continue. It is right and proper that nationally networked television services should have, as a core concern, the production of popular, entertaining programmes. Equally, it is proper for a public service broadcaster to have to balance this commitment against other commitments to the national audience – especially the preservation of a genuinely diverse, wide-ranging mix of programme material in channel output.

The future of the BBC is secure, if not indefinitely, at least well into the next century. Its current position is neither static nor in decline. The BBC will continue to be 'the cornerstone of British broadcasting'. It has ambitions to be a key player in global television. On the home front, it will continue as the national broadcasting system on both radio and television.

Public service broadcasting and multiculturalism

Pluralism was the word used in the mid-1970s to catch and respond to the changing nature of the times. Today, it is more accurately caught by 'multiculturalism'. It is a new kind of 'identity' politics whose struggle is not so much against the market or the state as against prevailing social attitudes that marginalize particular groups by denying, refusing or failing to recognize their claims to identity as women, as non-white, as gay, etc. Charles Taylor has called it 'the politics of recognition' (Taylor, 1994).

Multiculturalism highlights some difficult problems in the politics of cultural representation today. National services must, if they are to be that, have programme values which in some ways speak to the whole society.

An intrinsic difficulty for mainstream broadcasting is that, however it might try to discharge its task of representing the whole society, it is hard to avoid the ghetto effect – of bracketing out the minorities in special 'minority' programmes that are ignored by the majority and do not always appeal to the minority.

An alternative might be for 'interest communities' to produce their own broadcasting services. This was part of the misunderstanding between some minority groups and Chan-

nel 4, when it was started in the early 1980s (Daniels, 1994).

Channel 4, very much a child of its time, was a recognition of and a response to the growing significance of identity politics. Its institutional form and its programme policy were both, in certain respects, well-adapted to responding to the demand for programmes which – in their form and content – spoke to tastes, interests and social groups outside the mainstream.

Channel 4 is both a fully commercial channel, funded by spot advertising in the same way as ITV (now called Channel 3), and a fully defined PSB channel. It was created in the early 1980s with a remit to commission a significant proportion of programmes from independent sources. It should be innovative and experimental, appealing to interests and tastes not catered for by ITV.

At first, the newly-formed independent production companies representing various minorities thought that the new channel was to be a forum in which they could 'do their own thing'. Of course it was not. As a national channel operating in competition with three other mainstream national services, Channel 4 had constantly to bear that in mind as it sought to let a hundred flowers bloom. Its greatest accomplishment has been to become a genuinely national television service that accesses minority interests in ways that appeal not only to those audiences but to mainstream audiences as well. What it cannot do, however, is provide direct access for minority groups to produce their own services.

Direct access has begun to be available on radio in Britain in the 1990s. The Broadcasting Act of 1990 put an end to the regulatory role of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), which was responsible, since the early 1970s, for commercial radio as well as television. It placed responsibility for television in the hands of a new Independent Television Commission (ITC) and created a new Radio Authority with a mandate to accelerate the development of commercial radio at every level (national, regional and local). The Radio Authority has been advancing cautiously in the direction of community radio stations.

Channel 4 has been a remarkable success. It has accomplished the difficult trick of having a distinctive identity without catering to the mainstream audience. It has a younger audience profile than the BBC's television channels. It does cater for tastes and interests that lie outside the mainstream; however, it has avoided the 'ghetto trap' of always reaching the same small number of people. Thus, its programming, though eclectic, has an interest and appeal that reaches well

beyond the target groups for particular programmes. It is a new model of PSB that has been taken up in other countries.

Thus, in various ways, the tastes of today's particular interest communities can be met outside the mainstream.

Multiculturalism poses the question as to whether the notion of a shared national culture is any longer meaningful. Can the BBC, for instance, continue to summon up notions of the British people and a British way of life in any meaningful way?

It is certain that the old idols of the tribe no longer have the resonance they once possessed for the majority. A society characterized by increasing cultural diversity, however, does not necessarily fragment into many different cultures. It remains a key function of modern media, and national public service broadcasters especially, to create and maintain new forms of common life.

The current state of play in Britain is finely balanced. Those who forecast the demise of PSB have proved to be false prophets. Both the BBC and Channel 4 are in good shape, but not quite the shape they were in a decade ago. At the same time, the market has become sharply competitive, and both ITV and Channel 4 are now more driven by commercial factors than they were before the 1990 Broadcasting Act. Cable and satellite services will continue to expand into more and more households, but not at the rate predicted in the late 1980s, when it was estimated that half of British households would be taking their services by the end of the millennium. Over the last ten years, continuing political interventions, or attempts to move broadcasting out of the public sector, from Conservative governments dedicated to non-intervention in British industry, show that deregulation has, in effect, meant re-regulation. In spite of Margaret Thatcher's famous remark that 'there is no such thing as society,' it has proved difficult to implement policies in relation to broadcasting based on such an assumption. PSB has proved durable, because it regards broadcasting as a public, social good. On the evidence to date, so too does the British public.

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Sweden

Broadcasting and the social project

Olof Hultén

The Swedish concept of *folkbildning* has been central to public service politics. The concept implies an underdog perspective of self-improvement and conquering of knowledge among ordinary people, as well as a paternalistic perspective – the trickling down of élite culture and raising the level of taste among the masses. The idea of *folkbildning* preceded radio by a hundred years. Labour unions, temperance groups and farmers' co-operatives used it in the late nineteenth century to further their interests. The same organizations (now serving as pillars of established society) were made, by Parliament, the majority (60 per cent) shareholders of the modernized Sveriges Radio in 1956. They remained as dominant shareholders until 1992 when the old monolith was broken up into three public broadcasters owned by a state foundation.

Broadcasting policy in Sweden still reflects a cultural perspective in the old tradition, subordinating market forces to a cultural political agenda (Hultén, 1984). The protection of such values is becoming more futile as broadcasting by satellite and cable gain ground.

As an important prelude to the changes to the Swedish broadcasting structure in the early 1990s, cable television was introduced in 1986. The building and operating of cable systems was left, unregulated, to the market. Domestic cable channels had to respect the restrictions against advertising on Swedish television. Cable could carry no advertising intended directly and exclusively for Swedish viewers. However, local

access television, foreign channels, as well as Pay-TV could be offered to cable subscribers.

On New Year's Eve 1987 a commercial channel intended for Swedish (and Scandinavian) viewers, TV3, was launched from London by a Swedish steel and forest company called Kinnevik. Cable operators finally had something unique to sell and interest in cable increased. In a few years most of the areas suitable for cable were connected. In February 1989 the first European satellite suitable for direct reception, Astra, was introduced and it became obvious that the Swedish defence against commercial broadcasting was obsolete. In 1992 the law was changed.

The Swedish Parliament was simultaneously forced to review its policy for terrestrial broadcasting. The majority in parliament realized that if nothing were done, advertising revenues would flow abroad and, thus, not necessarily benefit domestic programme production. In 1989 a study ordered by the Social Democratic Government presented three alternative options: accept advertising on public channels, reserve commercial revenues for a new private national broadcaster licensed by the government, or allow advertising on both private and public channels.

Although a substantial minority in parliament still did not want any change at all, the dominant attitude in the Social Democratic Party and its government was to open the public channels to advertising and, hopefully, reduce the licence fee. The political opposition, as well as a minority

among Social Democrats, wanted to break the monopoly.

After thirty years of discussion about commercial television, parliament finally resolved what had become an unavoidable dilemma (Sweden, 1991). Since satellite and cable distribution had already been liberalized – satellites by the EU's directives and the cable market by parliament's own cable legislation – the only arena where parliament still had exclusive power in relation to broadcasting was the control of terrestrial and DBS frequencies.

Parliament's decision to create a new, private national terrestrial channel in 1991 meant that the public television broadcaster was denied advertising. The board of governors of Sveriges Radio had, for the first time, determined it wanted advertising to increase its budget in the wake of increased competition, but the terms creating TV4 called for maximizing the new channel's available financial resources. In exchange for its advertising monopoly, TV4 accepted a number of public service obligations and began broadcasting in March 1992.

The licence agreement between TV4 and the state specifies, among other things, high quality news reflecting the whole country, domestic and Nordic drama, as well as a certain volume of children's programming. Policy regarding news and information is the same as for public television: It should be unbiased, diverse and show respect for the ideas of democratic government. Advertising is allowed for up to 10 per cent of total broadcast time (in an individual hour, 13 per cent), in principle inserted only between programmes and not directed toward children under 12 years of age. The Broadcasting Commission reviews the performance of the new broadcaster.

After the 1991 parliamentary decision on commercial terrestrial television, legislation on private radio followed in the spring of 1993. The government was now a conservative-led coalition, and the minister in charge of media policy was a convinced radio deregulator. As a result, the Swedish law on private radio is very liberal in comparison with other countries in Europe. The newly-created Radio and Television Authority (1994) is responsible for the allocation of licences.

The gap between the goals of the law and reality is a good lesson for students of media policy. Of the eighty-two stations licensed between October 1993 and November 1994, less than a handful are independent and local. Four national chains dominate, the biggest one being owned by France's NRJ, Europe's largest commercial radio company. Two networks are controlled by newspapers, and half of the stations in Stockholm are foreign-owned. Almost all programmes, including news, are centrally produced and networked.

Public broadcasting and the competition

Today, with comparatively liberal laws on commercial radio and cable television, Sweden can be characterized as a three-tiered broadcasting market: public channels financed by licence fees, privately-owned terrestrial channels and satellite channels competing for commercial revenues in increasingly aggressive rivalry.

The nature of the commercial rivalry influences the public channels in many ways. Some viewers and listeners think it unnecessary to finance public channels offering the same programmes as commercial stations. This is not yet a public issue in Sweden. Audience support, through licence fees and through watching and listening, is considerable. Criticism of bad programmes, of managerial mismanagement and disregard for audiences, has not been an issue in Sweden, as it has been for other European public broadcasters, since the 1970s (Nowak, 1991; Hultén and Ivre, 1978). Demands to privatize some of the public channels have been made, and they will no doubt become louder in the future. Continued support of a public service, attracting maybe as many as half of all viewers and listeners, reducing commercial revenues correspondingly, cannot be an attractive scenario for the private sector.

Studies in Sweden reveal a big difference in programme profiles between public broadcasters and the private sector (Hultén and Nilsson, 1994). Sveriges Television has significantly more drama, domestic productions and diverse children's programmes. TV4 is not meeting its formal programming obligations (for example, in 1992, the company closed its children's department). When it does, costs will go up. TV3 and TV5 show no Swedish drama or other high-cost productions. Less than 20 per cent of the broadcast time on TV3 is produced in Sweden, and TV5 also has a low percentage in this respect. Talk shows and reality shows are the only primetime fare of Swedish origin on TV3.

Terrestrial television, because of its enormous impact and influence, is still seen as the primary source of information, values and entertainment; therefore, a social and cultural dimension is still very strong, and TV4, for example, is obliged to meet a number of conditions. Private local radio, on the other hand, was introduced very much in the tradition of the print media. No content obligations are enforced, licences

(still necessary for frequency allocations) are considered private property, and there is no mechanism for challenging an established station.

The Swedish Parliament's policy-making clout on broadcasting hinges on the trade-off between the audience reach of conventional terrestrial channels and channels distributed by satellites or cable. When the latter are able to reach a greater percentage of the audience, it might be attractive for TV4 to leave the terrestrial network. Transmission costs would be significantly reduced, and the levy TV4 now pays to the Radio Fund (the account into which all licence fee revenues are deposited and through which public broadcasters are supported) could disappear, as well as the programme obligations in its agreement with the state.

Aside from the legislative role of parliament, the government has always played a significant role through licence agreements *vis-à-vis* public broadcasting and, now, TV4. The agreements contain a number of conditions, some of which have a long tradition and some of which are new. The review of these agreements (more frequent now than before the 1970s – every four years for Sveriges Radio and Television and seven years for TV4) is a political matter and the outcome of a negotiating struggle between political, corporate and market forces, where the latter have gained.

Public broadcasting as a social project of the future

Support for the idea of public service is still strong in Sweden. The audience seems to appreciate the quality, integrity and variety of what public broadcasting offers, although many in the audience, especially among the youngest generation, also enjoy (and prefer) what the expanding commercial sector brings. Public broadcasting is still financed by licence fees, and, today, almost 85 per cent of television-viewing households pay the fee without reminder; 92 per cent pay thereafter; and, according to recent polls, 60 per cent of the population think they get good value for their money.

This is not to say that there is one unambiguous vision of public service. Many still emphasize high culture and education, as in 1925. Others regard critical journalism as the hallmark of public broadcasting, as in the 1960s and 1970s. Still others give priority to local and regional interests in this age of globalization.

Public service broadcasting will continue to be a vital factor in this effort. If it did not exist, it would have to be invented, but not in the culturally paternalistic fashion of the past. In the future, it will not serve as a vehicle for social engineering, but as a source of independent journalism and diverse cultural expression.

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Germany

The regulation
of broadcasting

Wolfgang Hoffmann-Riem

Post-war German broadcasting was created as a public service institution obligated to provide programming that was independent and pluralistic (Bausch, 1980*a*, *b*). Broadcasting was modelled on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), especially in northern Germany, and broadcasters were obligated to the commitments inherent in that model. Since this did not correspond to the German broadcasting tradition, special guarantees for independence and pluralism had to be developed. The individual state legislatures sought to set down such guarantees in law. In the process, two types of norms were provided for (see Hoffmann-Riem, 1990).

First, there are commitments with respect to conduct: public broadcasters are obligated to observe the duties of care and truth in their reporting and to air balanced programming; they are prohibited from giving one-sided preference to individual interests. Second, the internal organization of broadcast stations is regulated in such a way that representatives of relevant societal interests – churches, sports associations, trade unions, employer groups, representatives of cultural organizations and political parties – form internal organs that influence budgeting, personnel and certain programming decisions. Balanced programming is thus assured, satisfying all interests.

In 1950, regional broadcast stations joined together to form a network – ARD – which provides regional programming distributed nationwide. The network's activities were initially limited to radio. Television broadcasting, which was launched in Germany in 1935 but banned by the allies immediately after the war, began again in 1952. The second nationwide TV broadcaster, the ZDF, was established via treaties between the states in 1963 in order to build up a centralized television broadcaster, and has a legal framework similar to that of the state public broadcasters grouped in the ARD.

Since 1984, public broadcasters have had to compete with commercial broadcasting companies who are mainly dependent on advertising revenues. Advertising and sponsorship is allowed on public television, but it is restricted to twenty minutes each weekday and is not permitted on holidays. Pay-TV is still in the process of development.

This situation has remained almost unchanged since the re-unification of Germany. The former German Democratic Republic (GDR) broadcasting authority, which was responsible for government-controlled broadcasting in the East (Riedel, 1977), was dissolved on 31 December 1991. All of the eastern states have created new broadcasting norms and thus adopted the system of dual broadcasting existing in the West. New public broadcasting authorities have been established, and the legal obligations of private broadcasters have often been formulated in a less binding manner than those in the western states.

Private broadcasters have consolidated to a large extent. RTL Plus, the German-based private television company with the largest transmission range, made a profit for the first time in 1990. Today, it attracts more viewers than either of the

two public networks. Competition between the broadcasters of the two systems, and within each system, has become the striking feature of the broadcasting order (see Kiefer, 1994). This places public television in the difficult position of having to compete for a viewing audience in order to politically justify its service and also because it is partly financed by advertising.

In February 1994, the Federal Constitutional Court declared the existing mixed financing of public broadcasting to be constitutional. However, the excessive influence of the state on the fee-setting procedure was criticized. The procedure must now be shaped in such a way that, on the one hand, an efficient financing system is guaranteed and, on the other, the programming autonomy of the broadcasters is respected.

Legal aspects of German broadcasting policy

Communications policy in Germany has generally been heavily influenced by the Federal Constitutional Court. The basic right of freedom of communication and media (Article 5 of the Basic Law) created a framework for formulating detailed requirements for the structure of the media system and the conduct of journalists and media companies. Competition among broadcasters cannot alone ensure that a significant number of social groups and intellectual movements truly have their say. This situation could result in the risk of concentration of power over opinion and abuse of such power for the purposes of one-sided influence over public opinion. Broadcasting – in contrast to print media – must not, therefore, be entrusted to the free play of the powers of the market.

The Federal Constitutional Court still tries to protect public broadcasting, as the previously mentioned decision on the constitutionality of licence fees demonstrates. It has clung to its concept of freedom of broadcasting and has rejected the deregulation philosophy, repeatedly emphasizing that market opportunities are an issue of economic freedom and not one of freedom of opinion. Private broadcasters must also be committed to public service ideas, though their commitments may be less stringent than those of public broadcasters, who must offer the entire spectrum of the population programming that provides comprehensive information to the full extent of the classic broadcasting mandate.

The new legal battlefront makes clear that the issues have changed. Previously, the main ones were political communication and the assurance of the basic right to freedom of opinion and communication in a democracy, followed by the guarantee of public service. Now the thrust is to ensure processes of economic exchange. Particularly important is the battle concerning whether public broadcasting is subject to the same competition rules in the dual broadcasting system as private broadcasting. Broadcasting has moved increasingly away from its cultural mandate and is on the way towards being treated as an economic commodity subject to market processes (Hoffmann-Riem, 1990, 1991, 1995).

German media laws provide for structural safeguards of diversity, and contain regulations related to programming conduct. The provision of structural safeguards is an attempt to combat concentration and to favour broadcasting companies in the licensing process that are composed of different enterprises. There are also attempts to give culturally oriented groups some access and to provide for regional or local programmes by way of so-called 'window programmes', which private broadcasters are impelled by law to insert into specified time-slots.

The supervision of broadcasting

For the purpose of monitoring the legal requirements of the public broadcasters, the broadcasting laws have provided for two special internal organs, the Broadcasting Council (Rundfunkrat) and the Administrative Council (Verwaltungsrat). The Broadcasting Council's main tasks are to ensure pluralism by monitoring independence and diversity in programming; the Administrative Council is to ensure that the administration and financial management comply with the regulations. Since supervision is thus accomplished 'internally' – by an organ of the broadcaster itself – there is no need for an additional 'external' supervisory body for public broadcasting.

In spite of political affinities, public broadcasting is, on the whole, marked by political balance and a relatively high degree of journalistic independence. Proponents of political interests have a relatively insignificant amount of influence on daily programming. Because the Broadcasting Council's control over programming is restricted to exceptional cases, journalists are left to orient their work according to their own professional and ethical values. At the same time, however, even control measures that are limited to exceptional cases have an effect on day-to-day work, since they help to define the zone of 'permissible' activities and thereby prompt or even provoke anticipatory compliance. The government's supervisory competence helps to promote informal respect

for government interests, and influence generally tends to be exercised in informal interactions.

As previously mentioned, commercial broadcasters are also bound to some public service obligations (Hesse, 1990). The regulations vary from one state to the next, though the Interstate Treaty on Broadcasting, as well as the decisions of the Constitutional Court, have provided for some harmonization. Broadcasters are allowed to screen one-sided programmes, provided that the total programme range of all broadcasting is varied and balanced. They are free to choose their formats, but the formats are restricted to those that have become conditions of licence. All licensed stations are required to conduct conscientious investigations, demonstrate fairness, and observe general laws. Family viewing policies provide for youth protection by banning pornographic shows or by restricting violent programmes to late-night viewing only. Several of these programme obligations are almost identical to those of the public broadcasters.

Broadcasters usually prefer modes of self-regulation to state interventions. Due to the difficulties of supervision, the supervisory authorities also often seek to leave much to the responsibility of broadcasters. But despite the tendency to rely to a greater extent on modes of self-regulation, the need for regulation has not led to mitigation of legal public service commitments. The broadcasting law and broadcasting supervision by state media authorities still provide a safety net. As far as public broadcasters are concerned, there have been no substantial changes in legal commitments.

The crucial question is whether public service commitments are heeded by commercial broadcasters, and this question leads to the issue of effective broadcasting supervision. The supervision of private broadcasting is strictly separated from that of public broadcasting. The supervisory bodies are autonomous juridical organizations endowed with independence *vis-à-vis* the government and financed by a portion of the fees collected from viewers and listeners to finance public broadcasting (see Hoffmann-Riem, 1993).

Though public broadcasters have had to make some concessions in order to acquire sufficiently high rating figures, their programming is still significantly different from that of their competitors (see Krüger and Zapf-Schramm, 1994). On the other hand, there are various criticisms of commercial broadcasting. If its regulation and supervision is measured against the traditional requirements of public service broadcasting, the overall assessment of broadcasting regulation is sceptical (see Hoffmann-Riem, 1995). Licensing and super-

vision of broadcasting have lacked the instruments to raise the standard of commercial broadcasting programming to that of public broadcasting, which is oriented toward embedding freedom of communication in the functioning of democracy and the self-realization of all citizens.

A systematic analysis of broadcasting regulation shows that the traditional objectives of public service broadcasting have been realized only to a limited extent by regulation and supervision, whether in the area of advertising restrictions, reducing violent programming, or promoting children's programming designed for the educational and informational needs of young people (see Hoffmann-Riem, 1995). Very often, existing regulations have been implemented only reluctantly; however, some supervisory activities have been maintained despite considerable resistance by the broadcasting industry.

The future

The economic pressure on broadcasters will tend to increase rather than decline in the future. The internationalization and globalization of broadcasting has substantially strengthened competition and turned economic calculation into a central determinant. Public broadcasters can hardly evade these realities, especially since, at least in the field of programme procurement and access to rights and talent, they must also act in the market. The multiplication of transmission capacities made possible by digitalization and data compression, as well as other technological innovations, will compound economic competition. The emergent corporate links and strategic alliances at the levels of programme production, the sale of rights, broadcasting, resale, programme promotion, the acquisition of advertising, and ownership in the transmission networks can lead to an accumulation of power.

The constraints of industrial production will tend to be reinforced by the new technologies – irrespective of an extension of the possibilities of limited interactivity. Above all, technological changes will not change economic dependencies. On the contrary, economic competition for advertising revenue, which cannot be increased at will, and for the payments of recipients will become stiffer, while programme strategies will be increasingly oriented towards revenue growth or even the mere survival of broadcasters.

The already discernible segmentation and fragmentation of the audience and, correspondingly, of the programmes will probably continue and be accompanied by a highly

differentiated special-interests orientation and new forms of narrow casting. This does not fundamentally contradict the public service idea. Up to now, however, this idea has been oriented mainly to full-format programmes and to the goal of societal integration, and must, therefore, initially be aligned to these new programme realities and the new reception habits of viewers. There is clearly still a conceptual dearth in this respect.

New technologies provide for new forms of interactivity and of transition between individual and mass communication. It can be expected that the majority of recipients will only make limited use of these, probably, for the most part, in the mode of access to mass-produced programmes. The decisive aspect for programme quality and, thus, for broadcasting's contributions to society's development will probably not be the technology of access to programmes but the quality ensured by programme production. The programme producers – not the broadcasters – are the main gatekeepers of public service orientations. They will have to increasingly orient their activities to market forces and, in doing so, incorporate the reactions of the recipients. It will be difficult, however, for recipients to give feedback in such a way that public service orientations can predominate wherever the market could allow it.

Even in an age of abundant frequencies, the constitutional and socio-political justification for the regulation of broadcasting will continue to exist (see Hoffmann-Riem, 1995). The currently hollow nature of many programme segments may indeed prompt a growing call for content-related orientations, for substantial information and, consequently, for a more strongly perceived societal responsibility on the part of media enterprises. It will only be possible to sustain the public service idea in the future if such possibilities are supported in a variety of ways. In this respect, legal regulation will also be able to make a major contribution. In isolation, however, especially without the support of society, it will be powerless.

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Belgium

The politics of public broadcasting

Jean-Claude Burgelman
and Peter Perceval[1]

The concept of public service broadcasting in Belgium has always been subjected to the shifting power relations of the day. Such a conclusion puts into context the current debate on public broadcasting in a commercial environment.

Competition from new Belgian commercial networks aside, the history of Belgian public service broadcasting can be split into three major periods. These have been delineated by the development of the cultural and linguistic (regional) division of the country as recorded in the statutory laws – 1930 to 1960, 1960 to 1979, and 1979 to 1991. To these three periods must be added the current state of affairs since the passing of a bill, in 1991, that created a completely new situation for Dutch- and French-language radio and television in Belgium.

The law of 18 June 1930 created the public broadcasting service NIR/INR and granted it a monopoly on national broadcasts. Since this monopoly was grafted on that of the Belgian telephone service, the two are similar in a number of respects, the most important of which is the close link between the institution and government. Public service radio broadcasting was directly and personally controlled by the minister of telecommunications and financed by an annual endowment from the government. Since the endowment was paid from the government budget, the yearly presentation of the budget led unfailingly to parliamentary debates on public service broadcasting. This mechanism of financing has remained a contentious issue throughout the various stages of reform.

Belgian public service broadcasting in the period before the war was characterized by a strong political will to dominate the medium. Embedded in the reasoning behind the law of 1930, this resulted in the manipulation of appointments and the dependence of public broadcasting on the state.

After the war, the major private radio stations – which had continued to exist in spite of the national monopoly – were integrated into the NIR/INR as regional broadcasting stations. Subsequent ministers of telecommunications continued to defend the monopoly by arguing that the citizen's personal liberty would best be guaranteed by a public service. Such a system would guarantee open-mindedness about all citizens' opinions, whatever ideology they adhered to.

This first major period in Belgian public broadcasting organization was characterized by political opportunism rather than systematic consideration of the idea of public service. In the absence of a sound definition of a public broadcasting service, the institution was quickly taken over by prevailing political strategies and run according to the needs of the day. In general, Belgium created a public broadcasting service with a national monopoly not in order to guarantee democratic functioning of the new and powerful media, nor to allow expression of the country's cultural and linguistic features, but mainly to develop a strategy of political hegemony that would allow for the control of political information. The political parties tried to maximize their influence by manipulating the institution's personnel.

A new law on public service broadcasting was published on 21 May 1960. The new statute brought a radical change in the public broadcasting service's position towards the government and the public, and the way in which the concept of public broadcasting had been defined altered significantly. Histories of Belgian public service broadcasting often emphasize that the new statute established the service's cultural autonomy and guaranteed a policy of free information through obligatory neutrality and less government interference. In general, and compared to the 1930 statute which it replaced, the new one was well-received.

The public service still held a monopoly of radio frequencies. This strategy was even reinforced by a Royal Decree in 1965, when the government put all radio frequencies under the disposition of the RTB/BRT (Radio et télévision belge/Belgische radio en televisie). Although the monopoly was maintained on the national level, the regional institutions were placed under the control of a regional minister, notably the minister for cultural affairs, who was no longer a member of the board of directors.

In order to understand the public service's federal division, it is important to look at the close links between the linguistic communities' cultural difficulties and the battle between the parties in power. Traditionally, the Catholic party's electorate was larger in Flanders, while Wallonia chose to support the Socialist party during the major post-war ideological conflicts. Hence, the federal division of the public service corresponded to an ideological division, that is, Catholics and Socialists hoped to obtain maximum influence in the Flemish and Walloon services, respectively.

This period in the history of Belgian public broadcasting was monopolistic de jure and can be summed up by saying that, from 1960 until 1979, the institution generally functioned according to the same mechanisms as before. The 1960 statute merely integrated these mechanisms into the new management structure, making the board of directors' control superfluous and, hence, considerably reducing its power.

The said statute represented the consolidation of thirty years of political power struggle. In 1960 this political struggle resulted in an ideologically balanced dual structure, based on the regional communities and linked to the national level. Between 1960 and 1979, this decentralizing movement was reinforced by the formalization of personnel policy and programme content.

The statutory reforms of 1977 and 1979 are often said to be the logical result of twenty years of experience with the statute of 1960. Among other things, they finally installed a federal structure. After the regionalization of cultural services, the law of 18 February 1977 regionalized the remaining technical and administrative services. It also added a third institution for the German-speaking community to the already existing Flemish and Walloon services. Following the reform of the 1970s, broadcasting was largely, for non-technical matters, under regional government jurisdiction, and became entirely a regional matter, including technical aspects, in 1991.

After 1979, scrutiny of public broadcasting focused on the question of funding. Political interest in public broadcasting disappeared, and new interest groups openly presented themselves. In Flanders, print media publishers tried to enter the market, while in the Walloon provinces and in Brussels, the Belgian financial holding, Bruxelles-Lambert, extended its interest in Luxemburgian commercial television by participating in inter-regional cable distributors. Together with and for these interest groups, the government developed a new media regulation. In 1987, a private television monopoly was established for the Flemish region, and, in 1991, the Flemish government reformed the public service's statute twice. Central to these reforms were the regulations concerning advertising. The public broadcasting company was allowed to receive an income by advertising, and it accordingly earned over 500 million Belgian francs.

The public service's budget in this period suffered from the private sector's influence. The Flemish private television station was a financial success and made a considerable profit for its shareholders, the Flemish newspaper publishers. In 1992, the public broadcasting service ran its two television stations and five radio stations with a budget of BEF 8 billion, partly from advertising (10 per cent), but mainly from the annual endowment discussed above. At the same time, commercial television earned BEF 5.5 billion in advertising. Therefore, public television stations were marginalized, even though public radio broadcasts still held 80 per cent of the market.

The current situation also seems to be the result of political and economic convergence. It would be absurd to seek a resolution to the problem in a discussion of the funding of public service broadcasting – as if the cause of the crisis were to be found in the authorities' lack of funds. It is certainly not because of inadequate funding that the elaborately organized public service has consistently been short of money.

In this context it seems paradoxical to judge the public

service's legitimacy based on its commercial profitability or viewing figures, while its main objectives are of a socio-cultural nature. In a small country the public endowment is insufficient to guarantee a smooth-running public broadcasting service. Therefore, mixed funding – that is, the use of public and private revenues – has to be considered an alternative. A potential synergy between private and public broadcasting stations is also to be considered. Unfortunately for Belgian public broadcasting, these solutions have no political value.

In the absence of a humanist vision of society and a project for cultural emancipation, Belgian public broadcasting has few guarantees for its future. Sadly enough, all elements for a thorough privatization and general marginalization of the public service are present. After all, according to advocates of liberalization, the viewer/consumer is entitled to freedom of choice.

Note

1. This report is based on research produced for the Centre National d'Études en Télécommunications (CNET), under the supervision of J. P. Simon and P. Flichy. (See Burgelman, Verhoest, Perceval and Van der Herten, 1994). While the focus of this discussion is on the Flemish service of Belgian broadcasting, it should be noted that the same mechanisms have influenced the Walloon institution, which has a lot in common with its Flemish counterpart.

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Canada

The hybridization of public broadcasting

Marc Raboy

All broadcasting in Canada, according to the Canadian Broadcasting Act, is declared to be 'a public service essential to the maintenance and enhancement of national identity and cultural sovereignty' (Canada, 1991, art. 3). By virtue of this legislation, Canadian broadcasting is deemed to be a single system comprising public, private and community elements. It is to be effectively owned and controlled by Canadians (foreign ownership is restricted to 20 per cent in any single broadcasting undertaking), is to make maximum use of Canadian creative and other resources, and is to serve the needs and interests and reflect the circumstances and aspirations of Canadian men, women and children. These circumstances include equal rights, linguistic duality, the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society, as well as the special place of aboriginal peoples within that society. In the event of conflicting interest between public and private sector elements of the system, the objectives of the public sector are supposed to prevail. Overseeing and implementing all of this is an independent public authority for the regulation and supervision of the Canadian broadcasting system, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

But the gap between policy and practice is such that the promise of public broadcasting in Canada has more often than not been a pious wish. The history of Canadian broadcasting is intimately tied to the political sociology of twentieth-century Canada, and its present circumstances provide a suitable snapshot of the cultural politics of a middle-sized liberal democracy with a relatively developed economy as it faces the challenges of globalization in the third millennium.

Antecedents

Canadian broadcasting legislation dates from the early 1930s, when the Canadian State first decided to intervene in the sphere of radio. In 1929 a Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting concluded that radio had a cultural and educational function and proposed to the government that a national, publicly owned corporation be created to operate and oversee all radio broadcasting in Canada (Canada, 1929). Its approach was motivated partly by nationalism ('The State or the United States' was one of the popular slogans of the Canadian Radio League), partly by the influence of the British model (BBC), and to a great extent by the interventionist climate of the times.

Although many sectors of Canadian business supported the proposal, it was strongly opposed by those groups with direct interests in radio, and their opposition made the government of the day hesitate. But in 1932, a new government adopted the first Canadian broadcasting legislation, creating a public broadcaster (which, in 1936, became the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, or CBC) and envisaging the eventual phasing-out of private commercial broadcasting.

The full plan of the 1929 Royal Commission was never

realized, however. Canadian broadcasting, from the 1930s through the 1950s, developed as a 'hybrid' of the commercial and public-service-monopoly systems, as private commercial radio and national public radio evolved side by side. Television was introduced first as a public monopoly and then, after 1960, according to a similar 'mixed' (public-private) model.

As the broadcasting system became more complex, and as it became clear that different types of broadcasting enterprises had to co-exist within this single system, a major change came with the introduction of an independent agency for the regulation of all broadcasting activity. First introduced in 1958, the role of the regulator became extremely important in the 1970s and 1980s, as the system had to deal with new technologies as well as a range of economic and political challenges. Today the CRTC is responsible, as the name implies, for all telecommunication as well as broadcasting activity in Canada. In 1995 its main concern was charting the new regulatory requirements indicated by the convergence of broadcasting and telecommunication technologies in the emergence of the new communication environment popularly known as the information highway (CRTC, 1995).

As a hybrid system, there are two ways to look at developments in Canadian broadcasting over the past fifteen years. On the one hand, there has been a definite shift towards privatization of conventional public broadcasting, as commercial and budgetary pressures on the CBC force it to adopt a posture increasingly resembling that of the private sector, as its production activities are farmed out to privately owned independent companies, and as public funding which used to go to the CBC is diverted to subsidizing private broadcasters via a broadcast programme development fund (Telefilm Canada). On the other hand, these developments can be seen as a 'public-ization' of the private sector, in so far as that sector has become increasingly reliant on public funding and public policy measures, not only through such mechanisms as the Telefilm fund, but also various CRTC regulations and the protection afforded to Canadian cultural industries under the Canada-United States Free Trade Accord, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

So, as the multichannel environment continues to expand, as the relationship between audio-visual product and distribution system takes on a new shape and form, and as the policy apparatus redefines its role under the guise of adapting to the so-called information highway, the question of the future of public broadcasting has to be properly repositioned.

The Broadcasting Act is not naïve when it describes all of Canadian broadcasting as a public service, but the system governed by the act has been inconsistent and, at times, incoherent in operationalizing that description. The most striking example of this inconsistency is still the chasm between Parliament's mandate to the CBC and the government's refusal to provide the resources the CBC needs in order to do its job. But there are others. Community broadcasting (in television) has as its only institutional base the obligation of cable companies to provide a community access channel. Educational broadcasting has become a viable complement to public and private broadcasting in some parts of the country, in spite of the fact that its structure has more to do with the bizarre peculiarities of the Canadian political system than the public service requirements of broadcasting. The policy discourse continues to emphasize access – the core element of any public service – but concrete developments and innovations are increasingly tied to some variant of the consumer model, where the quality of service is invariably tied to the ability to pay.

Current broadcasting politics

Beginning in the mid-1980s, cumulative cuts have reduced the CBC's base funding by $276 million (CBC, 1993). The February 1995 federal budget added further cuts which, by 1997, will have increased the reduction to $350 million. Rather than manage the further cuts, CBC President Anthony Manera resigned.

Just how serious was the CBC's financial situation? Reduction in service has been apparent at many levels. The shutdown of local stations, trimming of staff, cancelled programmes, increased reliance on advertising, and farming out of production, have all translated into a less distinctive, less popular personality, particularly in English-language television.

The CBC is still, however, a considerable enterprise. It still received close to $1.1 billion from Parliament in 1994–95 (about $950 million for operations and $140 million for capital expenses), and anticipated another $300 million in television advertising revenue. This represented one-third of all federal spending on heritage and cultural programmes and made the CBC the largest single player in the Canadian broadcasting system. Eighty-nine per cent of Canadians claimed to tune into CBC television at least once a week.

As the CBC's ship rocked unsteadily in increasingly

stormy seas, the overall environment of Canadian broadcasting was shifting as well. As elsewhere, the conventional television market continued to fragment, begging the question of whether public broadcasting should provide a distinctive, streamlined service on the margin of an increasingly commercial television market, or rather expand the public service horizons of broadcasting.

Maintaining the traditional policy objective of a strong Canadian screen presence meant finding more money, not less, for public television. Access for and to Canadian content in the overall new environment would also require public subsidy. Even assuming government funding and advertising revenue remained at existing levels, more money needed to be found simply to maintain the existing level of Canadian content. This could only come from the private sector.

The Canadian cable industry, for example, with 38 per cent of total broadcasting revenue, accounted for only 6.4 per cent of the amount spent on Canadian programming in 1994 (essentially through its regulatory obligation to support local community television). The CBC, in comparison, with 20 per cent of total revenue, accounted for 42 per cent of spending (Communications Management Inc., 1994, based on Statistics Canada data). With cable penetration in Canada approaching 80 per cent and steadily climbing, cable revenues appeared to be an attractive source of funding for public broadcasting. Recent policy documents have emphaisezd that new distribution mechanisms, such as direct broadcast satellites or video dial-tone systems, will be expected to make substantial contributions to Canadian programming as well (see Canada, 1995; CRTC, 1995).

Indeed, by mid-1995, it was clear that the only 'solution' to the financing of public broadcasting lay in taking the Broadcasting Act at its word and adopting a holistic approach to the economics and policy expectations of the system as a whole: to stop treating a distribution franchise as a license to print money, to stop agonizing over the fiscal belly-aching of both private broadcasters and the CBC and insist they meet their respective mandate requirements, and to open up new windows of public service in the expanding media environment.

Behind the rhetoric heralding the information highway and its cornucopia of audio-visual goodies, the key to repositioning public broadcasting in Canada, therefore, lay in the following:

1. a redefined mandate, structurally recombining national, regional, local, generalist and specialized services, including those offered via the CBC and other institutions;

2. funding based on a more appropriate distribution of the wealth and resources generated by the broadcasting system, supplemented by public subsidy and strategically targeted advertising;

3. programming that met definable audience needs and interests, as opposed to mere addition of more and more entertainment; and

4. public accountability, through mechanisms that established a two-way flow of information and communication between broadcast professionals and their audiences.

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Australia

Broadcasting, policy and information technology

Marcus Breen[1]

New technology and the information society have led to the unravelling of the core components of the mixed broadcasting system in Australia. This does not mean the end of public service broadcasting. It does, however, mean that a new set of priorities must be established that meet the public interest in the global information system.

The Reithian model of broadcasting operating in the United Kingdom was introduced into Australia with the launch in 1928 of the Australian Broadcasting Company (ABC). The founder of the BBC, Sir John Reith, insisted on middle-class standards of public proficiency, deeply embedded in the quest for a respectable use of the media, in order to produce national benefits such as coherence and quality. The Reithian model's application in Australia was a manifestation of a colonial attachment to all things British. The ABC's arrival as a national public broadcasting institution followed already inflated expectations for the new wireless technology and close government management of the media.

Public debate about radio oscillated between the view that it provided either a form of liberating new insights or a public and moral nuisance. These views circulated from within the ABC and challenged the commercial sector. The issues were fully debated during the Second World War, and, in 1942, a parliamentary committee proposed and introduced the Broadcasting Act (1942), which lasted, with numerous alterations, until 1992. The act set the tone for commercial broadcasting regulation, providing an apparatus for the main-tenance of publicly agreed objectives. Some were part of the process of identifying nation-building functions in the mass media, but were inadequately articulated in the early years of reproducing the Reithian model. In particular, local program-ming content and its relation to locally constructed audiences became a key issue in the discussion.

In many respects, the triumvirate of issues identified in 1942 – the youth of nationhood, a relatively small population, and monopoly corporate behaviour – are issues that local content regulation still seeks to address.

Significant claims have been made for maintaining the ABC according to the established models that predominated until the mid-1980s. Generally, it was a fully state-subsidized vehicle that would serve non-commercial interests with uni-versal service guarantees. As the Australian policy environ-ment meshes with global interests, such a model can only be sustained by policy blinkers. This is not to say, however, that a traditionally constructed organization should cease to exist. Rather, a reconstructed model that provides publicly benefi-cial, fair and equitable services to all sectors of society needs to be built.

Since 1987, a public debate over cross-ownership laws has generated considerable interest in calculations of market share and audience reach (Chadwick, 1989). In particular, a new set of economic determinants have been introduced that, in turn, offered a new set of conceptual considerations to the regulatory regime that managed the commercial sector.

New communications producing technological diffusion from the 1980s onwards forced a recognition that it was no longer possible to maintain a tight network of influence over morality, class and values. Subsequently, blatant manipulation by public figures of broadcasters for political purposes began to dissipate.

The policy environment adopted an otherwise unknown cultural quest, where 'entrepreneurial' initiatives were assumed to generate a system of socially beneficial self-regulation. Acceptance of the market as the ultimate regulator did not overwhelm the policy environment, which has recently reasserted itself as it has become more attuned to public issues and market failure.

Symbolic collisions

The debate about the ABC has changed in the 1990s towards issues of competition and efficiency, linked to funding and new technologies such as satellites and Pay-TV. This has meant that although non-commercial or public broadcasting does not explicitly compete with commercial broadcasting for advertising revenue, it is operating in the same domain. Since 1992, however, the government-funded Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) provides 'block advertising' at the beginning and end of its programmes as a means of self-funding. More significantly, most broadcasters compete for audiences, even those audiences that could be considered 'special interest', such as users of the ABC, who expect a comprehensive news service but often receive a mirror image of commercial ones. These audiences have to be drawn and kept away from the mass market programming of commercial broadcasters and newer satellite and subscription services. Further complications follow because both commercial and non-commercial broadcasting exist in the same programme supply and labour market, and the prices paid for inputs to their services operate in the same market (Jacka, 1993, p. 4). Commercial imperatives are, therefore, necessarily part of the total broadcasting economy and challenge a less defined feature of public service broadcasting: that the provision of services to special interests with little or no consideration for quantifiable assessments of programme delivery (audience reach) has been another part of the public service tradition.

The 'material collision' between the marginal or special interest concerns of the ABC and SBS and commercial constraints are real. Perhaps the greater collision is between the symbolic changes that have taken place in the past ten to fifteen years, over the nature of publicly-funded national broadcasters. A set of economic and organizational frameworks, developed in association with technological changes and constructed in a normative theoretical context, would be useful (Bauer, 1994, pp. 29–30). These frameworks should include the fundamental public interest issues that are frequently shut out of the economic, organizational and technological framework where they should at least be accorded a place as equal 'agents' in policy discourse (Melody, 1990). The original frameworks that were well-established in the secure post-Second World War years, have not held up in terms of their symbolic impact. Terms such as 'public service', 'universal service', 'national', 'non-commercial' and 'public' all refer to publicly-funded broadcasting, but do not encompass emerging broadcasting forms such as those provided by new technology in narrowcast forms, or community broadcasters (Melody, 1994). Moreover, they are linked to a concept of 'the public', which, in the context of broadcasting, has been 'remarkably unexamined' (Scannell, 1989, p. 135).

Convergence and public interest broadcasting

Telecommunications is a feature of contemporary society that sits like a cloud over the broadcasting sector, gradually and with greater and more determined energy, drawing public broadcasting into a technology vortex with no end in sight. The changes brought about by this shift make technological convergence the most conspicuous challenge facing public interest broadcasting in virtually all societies.

The convergence of computing and telecommunication functions providing an integrated information network has been under way for two decades. Both the direction and pace of these developments have been influenced by government policies in the telecommunications sector which have sought to keep pace with technological developments in the computing industries (Melody, 1990). Previously discrete spheres of policy activity in broadcasting and telecommunications have collided, to then diffuse in a confusing array of issues. Consequently, the 'leakage' of policy issues from the telecommunications sector across the previously distinct public broadcasting sector is palpable. A multichannel society, offering through a myriad of services a gross form of comprehensiveness, now exists. This 'information society' is rich in options and poor in its public responsibility. It is driven by commercial operators' objectives to commodify social activi-

ties for which audiences and advertisers can be matched.

While it is appropriate to assert the importance of a publicly-constructed process of vigilance over the changes taking place, it is more necessary to have a clear view of intended outcomes. These outcomes must include universal service obligations, which function as part of what has been termed 'fair information practice rules' (Reidenberg, 1993, p. 288). In this case, an optimistic social democratic model must be operationalized as a feature of government objectives, where access and equity issues are given adequate space in which to circulate. That is, the universal service obligations will function on the basis of access and equity to information that are deemed to be publicly necessary for the health and well-being of society, where the process of arriving at the agreed objectives is fully participatory, consultative and transparent. It must also be open to constant review.

In this respect, the objectives of policy should be of a general nature, rather than restricted to one sector of broadcasting law and policy. This has been recognized in the Australian context, in the lead-up to the introduction of a 'competitive and liberal' telecommunications regime in 1997 when a new set of policies that consider the primacy of 'convergence' in the communications area will be established (Australia, 1994, p. iii). A 'competition policy' is now a feature of a limited, yet important, debate about the future of telecommunications, altering the previous policy obsession with privatization. Consequently, explicit social policy objectives have been identified as part of the body of telecommunications policy.

The question that remains is, as the government has noted, is this: 'What is the appropriate definition of universal service in an open market environment, and the extent to which legislative arrangements should allow the . . . definitions to be altered over time?' (Australia, 1994, p. 54). Inevitably, the power relations between industry participants in a competitive, relatively deregulated environment will determine the policy outcome. The question for the government is whether it is capable of maintaining the public interest as an adjunct to the objectives of universal service obligations.

Commitments by governments to the detailed, transparent monitoring of services being provided must be a policy priority. Where regulatory authorities exist, a co-ordinated response to convergence issues needs to be established, which will reinforce a commitment to public service issues. In situations in which the fragmentation of communication services continues, difficult decisions will need to be made about what resources governments can commit to public service broadcasting. In particular, advocates of the mixed system will recognize that the complementary functions of the ABC, SBS and community broadcasting should be regarded as key components in a responsible, democratic broadcasting policy. In the longer term, a new set of issues may arise which will provide a strong case for an entirely different set of propositions about the funding and formulation of public service broadcasting.

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Japan

Public broadcasting as a national project

Shinichi Shimizu

Japan provides one of the most successful examples of a mixed broadcasting system built around the cornerstone of a public service broadcaster, and the privileged position of public broadcasting as the policy locomotive of the overall system.

The Japanese broadcasting system is a combination of British-style public service broadcasting, financially supported by licence fees, and American-style commercial broadcasting, dependent on advertising revenues. It includes a nationwide public service and five commercial terrestrial television networks, as well as three public and one private direct broadcast satellite (DBS) stations and eleven private communication satellite Pay-TV channels. It also has three nationwide public radio (AM and FM) services and numerous commercial AM and FM radio stations broadcasting locally.

The number of households with televisions in Japan is estimated at 38.7 million, and the number of television sets at over 77 million, i.e. two sets per household. Eighty per cent of households are equipped with VCRs. However, dissemination of multichannel cable television is limited, with only about 5 per cent of television households subscribing.

The public broadcaster, Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK), or Japan Broadcasting Corporation, is supported almost entirely by licence fees. Commercial broadcasters are supported by advertising, with the exception of one private DBS and the 11 satellite pay channels, which are subscription services. As a result of growth in the advertising market, Japanese com-

mercial broadcasting has grown, and the number of commercial broadcasters has reached 174, of which 36 broadcast both radio and television; 80 broadcast television only; and 58 broadcast radio only. Their annual income has risen to more than four times the revenue obtained by NHK from licence fees.

In the early 1980s, while European public broadcasters stood idle and watched the potential satellite broadcasting services being taken up by private operators, NHK started an experimental DBS service. In June 1989, after five years of experimental operation, NHK started full-fledged two-channel round-the-clock DBS broadcasts, charging extra DBS fees on top of regular terrestrial licence fees from 1 August the same year. After five years, the income from the DBS subscribers contributed to an increase in NHK's revenue from licence fees. with an estimated 13 million DBS households in 1998 and with contracted fee-paying households nearing the 9.5 million mark.

NHK's current state of affairs

Today, NHK is one of the biggest public broadcasting organizations in the world, with over 13,000 staff in 54 domestic broadcasting stations with production facilities, and 25 overseas offices. NHK has 30 affiliate companies and organizations with some 4,400 employees. The affiliates support NHK through their business activities and enable it to carry

out its duties as a public service broadcaster (see Shimizu, 1988, 1991).

NHK operates two nationwide terrestrial television networks; two DBS satellite television channels, each with independent programming; three national radio services (two medium-wave and one FM); a nationwide teletext service; and an overseas shortwave radio service in twenty-two languages, Radio Japan. It is also a major programme supplier for an experimental high-definition television (HDTV) channel and TV Japan satellite services in the United States and Europe. On its two terrestrial television channels, NHK broadcasts 13,120 hours of programmes yearly, or 253.5 hours weekly, while on its two DBS satellite channels, it broadcasts 17,264 hours yearly, or 332 hours a week.

Despite supervision by parliament and government, NHK maintains an independent course. It accepts no investment, advertising or financial assistance from the government or any commercial or other organization. With the voluntary licence fee system to guarantee its financial independence, NHK is able to fully serve the public without being subject to undue influence by the government or any other group. It is also free to operate without sacrificing the programming needs of any minority audience group.

NHK collects licence fees directly from contracted TV households – Y1,370 a month per terrestrial TV household and Y2,300 per DBS satellite household since the current fee rate was set in April 1990. The number of households that had licence fee contracts with NHK was 34.6 million in early 1994, nearly 90 per cent of all television-owning households in Japan. The number of households with DBS satellite contracts was 5.7 million, an increase of more than 860,000 over the previous year.

In its 1995–96 budget, NHK estimated total revenues of more than Y570 billion (about US$5.7 billion), an increase of Y4.1 billion (0.7 per cent) over the previous year. Ninety-seven per cent of NHK revenue was from licence fees. Total business and capital expenditure were estimated at Y573.4 billion, an increase of Y21.2 billion (3.9 per cent).

The total operational revenues of NHK's twenty-eight affiliate companies in fiscal 1993 were about Y205 billion, comparable to those of a Tokyo network company. Their total operating profit was Y2.54 billion, an increase of 29 per cent compared to fiscal 1992. With total operational revenues in 1993 of Y551.3 billion, the total revenues of the NHK 'conglomerate' reached more than Y756 billion, and is expected to reach Y1,000 billion by the year 2000.

NHK's advantages over private broadcasters

Broadcasting has developed in Japan under the bureaucratic guidance of the government. This tradition exists even today, as the ministry of posts and telecommunications (MPT) still holds the national policy planning and regulatory authority over matters related to broadcasting and telecommunications. A special role is reserved for NHK.

Whenever a new venture in the field of broadcasting is planned – be it DBS, HDTV, or a transborder television service – NHK is called upon by the MPT to spearhead development and to popularize it. This is seen in the successive revision of Articles related to NHK in the Broadcast Law.

The latest version of the law (1994), states that NHK's purpose is to conduct its domestic broadcasting with good quality programmes for public welfare and in such a manner that its broadcasting may be received all over Japan. It must also conduct business necessary for the development of broadcasting and reception and, at the same time, conduct international radio and television broadcasting. Thus, the Broadcast Law has given NHK a broad mandate and guarantees NHK's position as one of the largest multiservice public broadcasters in the world.

In contrast to NHK, the management of privately-owned commercial broadcasters is left more or less to the market economy. Neither the Radio Law nor the Broadcast Law stipulates the form of management, organization or financing of private broadcasters. Being private business entities, their form of management and financial sources are principally at the owners' discretion. The Broadcast Law provides regulations only on programmes and permission of contract provisions of Pay-TV channels.

Private broadcasters are not allowed to operate as a single business organization with a nationwide service area (except in shortwave radio), and multiple ownership of television or radio stations is prohibited, so as to discourage concentration. The single ownership of different forms of media (television, radio and newspapers) is also banned (see Shimizu, 1993).

On the other hand, commercial broadcasters are protected from excessive free competition among themselves and the intrusion into the market by big business through regulations stipulated in the Radio and Broadcast Laws and the MPT ordinances.

Although independently run, private broadcasters form

de facto networks centred around five television stations in Tokyo, competing fiercely with NHK, as well as with each other. In the heavily populated metropolitan areas around Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya, five or more commercial television channels are available, in addition to the NHK's two terrestrial and two DBS channels. More than 85 per cent of total TV households have access to at least four commercial television channels.

Established under the 1950 Broadcast Law, with the aim of promoting public welfare through nationwide broadcasting, NHK has been competing with aggressive commercial networks for more than forty years. The competition has helped NHK to produce and broadcast many popular programmes with elegance, style and depth, such as its high-rated serial dramas and quality investigative documentaries. Thus it helped NHK to advance its position as one of the most competitive public service broadcasters in the world.

NHK's current and future problems

In July 1994, the NHK announced that it would strengthen its news and information programmes and extend terrestrial channels' broadcasting schedule further to meet the needs of its viewers and to compete with rival commercial networks.

NHK's future depends on the growth in fee-paying DBS-receiving households and the penetration of HDTV receivers, which will eventually be an important revenue resource. In 1995 NHK expected the number of DBS-receiving households to reach 10 million, with fee-paying contracted households reaching 9 million. Meanwhile, NHK President Mikio Kawaguchi declared that he would seek an increase in the licence fee to cover the extra expenditures anticipated for the international television service starting in April 1995, the full-fledged Hi-Vision broadcast starting in 1997, and the coverage of the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics as the host broadcaster.

In January 1995, NHK announced a new mid- and long-term management guideline entitled Towards Culturally Richer Broadcasting, in anticipation of the multimedia, multichannel era in the twenty-first century. The long-term directive was drafted in connection with the next five-year management plan beginning from fiscal 1995.

In the long-term management guideline, NHK said it would: (1) bolster Hi-Vision satellite broadcasts and make its

two DBS channels broadcast Hi-Vision services in the early years of the twenty-first century; (2) reinforce and improve its terrestrial television channels (general and educational services) to suit the diverse needs of its viewers; (3) strengthen international satellite television broadcasts (TV Japan); and (4) intensify research and development for early realization of a new multichannel, multimedia broadcast Integrated Services Digital Broadcasting (ISDB) system (see NHK, 1994; Ohsaki et al., 1994).

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United States

PBS and the limitations of a mainstream alternative

Michael Tracey

American public television approached the end of the century with the knowledge that the Republican Party now controlled Congress and, in the shape of Representative Newt Gingrich, would be asking some difficult questions about federal support for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and, thus, for the whole system. It approached the coming storm in a particularly ill-prepared way. Much of its difficulties were obviously not of its own making, since the decline of the public sector was by this time a universal phenomenon. However, elsewhere the defenses were stronger, more articulated, and supported by the continuing place of the public broadcaster at the centre of the journalistic and imaginative life of society as a whole. In the United States, almost uniquely, there was no profound guiding philosophy. There were no figures who represented an ethos of public broadcasting's importance to society or a discourse that melded theory and practice. The chant in the United States was muted, heard in the distance from remote corners of the Commonwealth. More curious, however, was that the existing body of belief was guilty of a remarkable false consciousness that did not see its marginalized condition, its continuing lack of substantive relevance to the larger society, and its exile; instead, it saw power, influence and captivation of the public as 'audience'.

Localism was built into the structure of American public broadcasting from its inception. It was a structural condition that was encouraged, even mandated, because the federal government in the 1960s and 1970s was determined to ensure that a government-sponsored system would not adversely affect the networks. Public television in the United States was never meant to have the significance and centrality of public broadcasting in other countries. The debate that was never undertaken was whether or not such a structure could possibly serve the larger public interest, or even that of the local community.

It is not especially fanciful to see a certain symmetry between the larger sensibility and an intellectual and organizational architecture for public broadcasting – a hankering after the local in an irresistibly global age. Here was a profound difference to other systems which sought to speak to, represent and bind together collectively the nation, the society rather than its particularities and constituent pieces alone. As a result, however, the institution could never seem to recognize that the only public institutions that could survive, let alone thrive, were those that welcomed, not shirked, intelligent populism, and which sought to build a truly national mandate.

Certainly, there is an atmosphere of siege once more surrounding public television. Robert Dole, Newt Gingrich and their congressional colleagues, along with the Heritage Foundation, Laurence Jarvik, the Centre for the Study of Popular Culture, the columnist and television personality George Will, and numerous editorialists in conservative newspapers and magazines, are all saying that public tele-

vision is biased, or unnecessary, or should be laid to rest.

The attacks deflect from the discussion that should be taking place about the service being offered to this society by public broadcasting. Springing from such overtly partisan and, often, crudely simplistic viewpoints, the criticisms have served the institutional status quo by offering the establishment of public broadcasting the comforts provided by the quality of their enemies. The net effect has been to inhibit the discussion which should be taking place about the fundamental problems of the organization, funding and purpose of public television in the United States, a debate which is taking place within every other public broadcasting system in the world.

Conceptual and structural confusion

The rise of the multichannel society in the United States, ahead of anywhere else on earth, has brought into sharp focus aspects of public television and its place within American society which are inherent, but which had, until the new television, remained largely invisible. The problems confronted by public television, fashioned by the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, are conceptual and structural. At the conceptual level, the act maintained public television's educational role but added a more general role, such that it now matched the definitional trinity of most public broadcasting organizations – informing, educating and entertaining. Structurally, the two axes which constituted 'the system' were local and national. This duality in both concept and structure was, and remains, an inevitable source of tension.

Whatever is meant by the 'educational' remit of public broadcasting, its case is not served by the fact that the nation overwhelmingly plays hooky. There simply is not much of an audience for American public broadcasting, whether as compared to its foreign counterparts or, more pertinently, to its commercial competition in the United States. Public television is available in more American homes than any other single network – more than NBC, CBS, or ABC, and more, by far, than any cable service – yet its audience share is only about 2 per cent. At 2 per cent of the audience share, one has to question public television's claim to be a national broadcaster.

Les Brown, a well-respected observer of television, former editor of Channels and former senior fellow at the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, has noted that 'There is very little produced domestically (by public television) that is distinguished. The really big stuff that everyone

writes or talks about is imported from England' (Knoffo, 1989). The reason, Brown suggests, is that the system is not a network but a distribution mechanism 'for a set of local and jealously independent public television stations'.

One could argue that the idea of 'quality' and how to achieve it has proved elusive in even the most successful public broadcasting communities. One would, for example, search long and hard within historical discourse and documentation surrounding the BBC to find such a meaningful definition. The philosophy, there as elsewhere, has essentially been one of 'we all generally know quality when we see it'. One could also argue, in sympathy with the American system, that even if there is a cultural ghettoish tone to its output, in serving such tastes public television is contributing to the general diversity of American television culture. The difficulty with this argument is that it seeks to universalize narrow, somewhat class-based taste, to a population which, not unreasonably, is less than welcoming, and, at the same time, it leaves the provision of popular culture to providers who could care less about concepts of quality. A consequence of the implicit Reithian patricianism of American public television is the brute reality that, for most Americans, there is no felt need for public television and many other distractions.

The myth of the local community

While it is true that the number of public stations continues to proliferate – due in large part to the continued stimulus of a federal funding programme for new facilities – it is unclear what they add to each community. Public broadcasters justify the need for all these stations on the grounds of increasing coverage and the ability to give voice to the different licensee organizations. For some time now, however, public broadcasting coverage has been nearly universal, and the amount of local programming, especially in public television, is almost negligible.

The United States is defined by a vast array of different taste cultures. Since those taste cultures dot the whole nation, clearly only pan-national services are likely to be relevant. With its relentless local ideology, however, public broadcasting has set its face against such a manifestly nationally organized service. It thus ends up expressing a commitment to ways of life which were always more mythologized than real. The funding of public broadcasting, particularly television, is too often spent to nurture nostalgia.

In light of this analysis, it is only fair to conclude that the structure of localism has failed and that it is culturally irrelevant and a major financial drain on the system. This situation is the single most important reason why in an institution whose total revenue for 1994 was $1.89 billion, only 10 per cent was spent directly on programming.

The impact of competition

In spite of all these problems, the most profound reality that public broadcasting must face is presented not by the interior structural, definitional and demographic problems of public broadcasting, but by the rise of the 'third age' of television and radio. The broadcast situation has changed dramatically in recent years. Over 60 per cent of American homes now subscribe to cable, even more have VCRs, and the large majority have more than one television set. The launch of the direct broadcast satellite services offering more than 100 channels will almost certainly have a heavy impact, especially in those homes which cable cannot economically reach. Those developments will be enhanced, in the short term, by the introduction of digital compression technology, which before the end of the decade may well make 500-channel cable homes the norm. In the medium term, new fibre optic cables, high-definition television, and increasingly interactive cable-data systems will only further decimate the already small public broadcasting audience, offering the educational, cultural and informational programming which public broadcasting used to claim as its own.

Thus, the claims to fame of public broadcasting, for example that it offers programming that the commercial system does not, are losing plausibility and rhetorical force. The range of genres available from the new media equal – indeed probably surpass – those of public television.

With a deliberate argumentativeness, one might conclude that no strategic interest of the United States is served by public broadcasting in the economic, cultural or social fields, and, thus, there can be little justification for the continued spending of federal, or any other, dollars on it. Public television is not 'local', but merely balkanized, and therefore cannot provide a counterpoint to the centripetal forces that threaten American society. While it has little or no imaginative programming vision and, thus, no developed sense of excellence, it also has little or no capacity or courage to look at itself with a cold unblinking eye.

As a result, others have begun to do that for it. There is, of course, a high rhetorical element to these concluding observations, although they are closely tied to the kinds of questions that are being asked elsewhere. The layers of structure, institutions within institutions; the bureaucracies piled on bureaucracy; the tribalism of the local structure; the extraordinary siphoning-off of funds into things other than programmes; and the apparent absence of energy and excitement and innovation – those tones of a culture in exile – all lead one to conclude that there is a powerful need for a searching public inquiry into the state and future of American public television.

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Part Two – Section Two

**Emerging models
for development
and democracy**

Poland

Prospects for public and civic broadcasting

Karol Jakubowicz

Legally speaking, public service broadcasting appeared in Poland on 1 January 1994 – almost five years after the fall of Communism. It was then that Polish Radio and Television was liquidated as a 'state organizational unit' and was transformed into nineteen wholly state-owned companies: Polish Television Ltd., with its 11 subsidiaries; Polish Radio Ltd., as the company responsible for national public service channels; and seventeen regional public service radio companies.

The first year of Polish public service broadcasting was not very successful in fully defining its underlying philosophy and obligations, implementing them in practice and winning general understanding and acceptance for them. Among all the post-Communist countries, the new Polish broadcasting system comes closest in terms of legal and institutional arrangements to what is traditionally understood as public service broadcasting, and goes furthest in protecting the National Broadcasting Council and public service broadcasters against direct government or political interference.

However, public service broadcasting is more than a sum of legal provisions and institutional structures. Certain prerequisites for its emergence and survival must exist before it can be created. These include a mature and stable democracy; the existence of a civil society and an independent public sphere; an accepted notion of the public interest; trust in, and acceptance of, public regulation of broadcasting to serve the public interest; and the emergence of journalistic professionalism based on a notion of public service.

Not one of these conditions has been met in Poland, or, indeed, in other post-Communist countries, and it will take a very long time before they are (Jakubowicz, forthcoming). An autonomous, impartial broadcasting system dedicated to public service is hardly conceivable in such circumstances. In a demoralized, deeply suspicious and sceptical society, where there is no accepted definition of the public interest, no ideal of public service, no trust in public regulation of social life and in the institutions called upon to develop and enforce such regulation, and where there is ample evidence that fine-sounding ideas and ideals serve primarily as a smokescreen for political or business interests, the conditions for the emergence of public service broadcasting can hardly be said to exist.

Background

Among the many drafts of the new Polish Broadcasting Act, the status of Polish Radio and Television was variously defined as 'social', as 'a state institution performing public functions', and as 'national'. This choice of words is significant, because each indicates a somewhat different definition of the former government broadcaster's proposed new position in the social sphere and *vis-à-vis* the authorities of the state. In a nation where the meaning of all concepts used in public discourse was distorted, sometimes beyond recognition, by newspeak and official propaganda, the use of these

concepts must also be seen as an attempt to restore or redis-cover their true meaning.

But what of 'public'? The concept was not really used in the thinking on broadcasting reform in the first Solidarity period of 1980–81, except that reformers seeking a redefini-tion of the status of Polish Radio and Television sought ways of giving it the same status as was enjoyed by 'public utilities' or 'associations of higher public utility'; that is, separate from the state and devoted to serving some form of public service goals. What made such efforts difficult was that the concept of the public had been appropriated and distorted by the Com-munist system.

Dissidents and, later, Solidarity naturally regarded mass communication as belonging primarily to the realm of the 'social'. 'Socialization' of the media (described as a situation in which the media belong to, and serve, the whole society) became the officially proclaimed goal of Solidarity at its 1981 Congress. 'Socialization' was seen as involving the creation of mechanisms and structures of feedback, access, participation, and direct social management of the media by means of 'socially representative' bodies overseeing the work of broad-casting organizations at all levels, or, for example, dividing up Polish Radio and Television so as to leave some channels in the hands of the state and turn over others to social forces; and ensuring that all groups of society would enjoy equal opportunities to join the public discourse, prefer-ably by means of their own media. These measures were part of a much larger project: that of developing civil society.

In broadcasting, adoption of such policies in Poland was expected to lead to the emergence of three different sectors: (1) a financially secure system of public service broadcasting with a remit of supporting democratic communication, going beyond the traditional concept of public service; (2) commer-cial media; and (3) a civic sector, comprising non-profit-oriented, socially-motivated media, either privately- or collectively-owned and speaking on behalf of or to various groups, parties, organizations, movements, minorities, territo-rial groups and communities. The emergence and existence of this sector was to be supported by public policies designed specifically for this purpose (*Główne założenia . . .*, 1991; Jakubowicz, 1991).

By contrast with the 1980–81 period, the concept of public service broadcasting was already in use in 1989. It had been borrowed from Western European practice and was seen as a way of defusing the battle for control of the state broad-casting system already raging between the various authorities of the new state.

The Solidarity-led government which took over power in 1989, was the first non-Communist government in Central and Eastern Europe; it was surrounded by the entire Commu-nist bloc, which looked as if it would continue to exist for quite a long time. It inherited from former times a civil service, army and police which, while they could be vetted so as to weed out people on whose loyalty the new government could not rely, had to remain largely unchanged. Finally, it was preparing to administer shock therapy in the economy, which had to be very painful and provoke popular dissatisfaction.

The same dissident and opposition leaders who had insisted that Communist regimes accept or reconcile them-selves to the development of civil society now argued that the development of a full-fledged party system would be prema-ture and that society should remain as united in facing the new challenges as it was in resisting the Communist system. They therefore hoped to maintain Solidarity as a mass social move-ment, providing a focus for popular backing for the process of transformation and delaying, as much as possible, the emer-gence of political parties, with all the political differentiation and power struggles that it would bring in its wake.

It is in this general context that the media policy of the post-Communist governments has to be examined. As in other Central and Eastern European countries (Hankiss, 1993), they liberalized the print media immediately, but sought to hold on to state radio and television in order to control a powerful medium of communicating their ideas to an increasingly disgruntled and disenchanted society. The need to re-regulate broadcasting was widely recognized, particu-larly in terms of creating procedures for granting licences to new private/commercial broadcasters, but the process of de-veloping new law was politically contentious and, therefore, protracted.

Designing the system of public service broadcasting in Poland

In the social and political circumstances of Poland described above, only one element of the proposed new tripartite sys-tem of broadcasting was not subject to dispute: that of the need to demonopolize broadcasting and create a commercial sector. Ironically, the need for both the public and civic sectors was open to question, and the effort to create them ran into serious difficulties.

From both a conceptual and political point of view, it is hard to postulate the creation of a public service sector of broadcasting in a highly politicized society with a fundamentally unstable political and party system, where politics and a power struggle invade and subordinate, to their ends, practically every aspect of public life. As for the civic sector, designed to empower various groups and segments of society through information and communication, its creation through the agency of public policy and public institutions would be even less likely, because any government would see its creation as giving a voice to real or potential political opponents.

Another problem legislators had to contend with was typical of post-Communist countries, where one of the thorniest questions was that of property, namely to whom ownership of previously state-owned institutions and organizations should be ascribed. The decision was therefore made to create a wholly state-owned company, operating under both the Broadcasting Act and company law, but with several important modifications.

As for the general system of broadcasting regulation, a National Broadcasting Council was created under the provisions of the Broadcasting Act. After the collapse of Communism, the big question concerning Polish Radio and Television was whether it should continue to be subordinated to the government or be supervised directly by parliament. The establishment of a broadcasting regulatory body was meant to address that question and to create a structure of broadcasting regulation and supervision similar to that of many Western countries.

As in all post-Communist countries, the council came under strong political pressure regarding its licensing policy. Because of spectrum scarcity, it was able, initially, to award only one national commercial television licence, which in the highly charged political situation naturally became a decision of considerable interest to various political authorities hoping for the licence to go to the company of their choice. It also received political pressure regarding its overseeing of public broadcasters, especially Polish Television, which in 1994 became the object of criticism from the ruling left-wing coalition. The president, displeased by the council's 'excessive' independence and unwillingness to comply with his wishes, acted a number of times to recall the chairman of the council and his other appointees and replace them with other people.

Enter public service broadcasters

In this context, public service broadcasting began operation in 1994.

Polish Radio broadcasts four national or sub-national services: a generalist channel, a cultural and classical music channel, a news and talk channel, and an educational channel. In addition, it operates Radio Polonia, the external service of Polish Radio. The regional public radio companies each broadcast a full-day regional service.

Polish Television broadcasts two national channels, TV Polonia (a satellite channel for viewers abroad), and eleven local services. These local services, which have only low-power transmitting capacity and restricted territorial coverage, are devoted to retransmitting TV Polonia programming for several hours a day. In addition, the regional stations opt out of the second national channel every day to broadcast on its frequency regional services of extensive territorial coverage. Its total air time thus amounts to over 80,000 hours a year, perhaps more than any other public television in Europe.

The private sector was already thriving, even before the passing of the Broadcasting Act, due to the emergence of a considerable number of pirate stations. According to available data, in June 1993 there were fifty-five pirate radio stations and nineteen pirate television stations in the country, of which twelve formed a network of local stations, owned by Italian media entrepreneur Nicola Grauso.

In March 1994, 'Polsat', a Polish company which already offered a popular satellite-to-cable channel uplinked from Holland, received the first terrestrial national commercial television licence. By the end of 1994, licences had been awarded to some 100 radio and fourteen television stations. The great majority of these new stations were scheduled to start broadcasting in 1995.

As for the civic sector, the appearance of a considerable number of Catholic Church-sponsored radio stations has achieved limited progress in creating conditions for the sector's emergence. In one way or another, the sector will make its appearance, but most probably in the familiar form of alternative, community radio and television (Jankowski, Prehn and Stappers, 1992) existing on the fringes of the big media system.

Rychard (1993) argues that the paradigm of 'transition to market and democracy', often applied to the process of transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, can at best be regarded as its ideological rationalization rather than an accu-

rate description of the direction the process is taking. Transformation, he says, is determined by the way society reacts to changing circumstances rather than conforming to any predetermined pattern. Accordingly, its actual orientation is often far removed from that normative state of 'transition to market and democracy'. The same is true of the transition toward public service broadcasting in Central and Eastern Europe, with broadcasting systems changing by fits and starts in sometimes unpredictable directions.

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Ukraine

Public broadcasting between state and market

Olga V. Zernetskaya

National broadcasting in Ukraine began with the proclamation of independence from the Soviet Union on 1 December 1991. Not only did the former 'republican' broadcasting turn national and break free from the dictates of Moscow, but for the first time in its history, Ukraine had to work out its own communications policy.

Over-centralization was clearly manifest in every aspect of the former Ukrainian Republic's broadcasting. Legal and regulatory bases were derived from the ideology represented in the resolutions of the congresses and plenums of the former Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Moscow decided which programmes from Central Television had to be shown on Ukrainian Television, and centralization was strengthened by party and government control, as well as censorship at the republic level. Financing of Central Television and broadcasting from the republics, as well as distribution of that financial support, was wholly determined from Moscow. In addition, Central Television was much better equipped and financed than any republican station, causing a constant flow of the most talented and creative personalities away from the republics to Central Television, resulting in a considerably weakened republican broadcasting.

With the arrival of Perestroika and Glasnost in the former USSR, it became possible to speak about such notions as freedom of speech; the right to seek, obtain and impart information; the right to communicate; and the related role of the media. Public debate about these issues was lively throughout the former Soviet Union. One of the fresh ideas of that time was the establishing of new forms of 'alternative television'. Many publications in the central and regional press discussed the meaning of such important concepts as 'independent', 'public', 'people's', 'non-state', 'second', 'other', as well as 'parallel television' (Kachkaeva and Richter, 1992, p. 512).

The first official response came from President Gorbachev, who signed a decree, *On democratization and the development of television and radio broadcasting in the USSR*, on 15 July 1990. This decree, emphasizing the important role of Soviet broadcasting in objective and complete coverage of social processes for the first time in its history, allowed public organizations, parties and local Soviet Councils of Peoples' Deputies to found television centres and studios, using their own financing.

Soon after that, the council of ministers of the former USSR issued a decree establishing a regulatory basis for television centres and studios of non-state origin, requiring them to obtain licences in order to begin broadcasting. By that time a number of non-state television stations, centres and studios had already started to broadcast.

The TONIS conglomerate was among the first of these. It was organized in 1989 in Mikolajiv (Ukraine), and very soon had stations in Moscow, Novosibirsk and Kiev (Bakhareva, 1994). In 1989, there were about thirty-two TONIS stations in different regions of the former USSR. TONIS's experience is

of special interest, because it shows that the ideas around the emergence of non-state broadcasting were not only debated but successfully put into practice in Ukraine.

A national broadcasting policy

Ukraine was the first of the former Soviet republics to adopt an Information Law, presupposing the formation of a common legal basis to safeguard freedom of expression and the public's right to access of information about all spheres of Ukrainian social and state life. At the end of 1992, the Parliament of Ukraine accepted a second law in the field of communication, i.e. On Print Media (On Press).

It took much more time to pass the Law on Television and Radio: more than two years elapsed between the proposal of the law by parliament in May 1991 and its proclamation on 21 December 1993. It was adopted only after two readings in parliament and many battles in the 'corridors of power' (Zernetskaya, 1994*b*, p. 5).

In general, members of parliament, as well as the public at that time, were unaware of the significance of the Law on Television and Radio. There was almost no discussion in the Ukrainian mass media. The Ukrainian public was not prepared to acknowledge the fact that the issue of national broadcasting was a vital one, being closely connected to their right to be informed, acquire information and communicate. For the Ukrainian people, these issues were traditionally more connected to the press, because, even before Glasnost, there had been such a semblance of free press in Samizdat. In the Perestroika period, the fresh winds of freedom were first of all associated with an abundance of critical materials in newspapers and magazines and the unprecedented emergence of new editions. Broadcasting, on the other hand, was always regarded as strictly an instrument of the state, through which party and governmental policy was promulgated and partly implemented.

In the parliamentary debate, it was generally agreed that 'the structure of television and radio broadcasting in Ukraine would consist of state television and radio broadcasting and non-state television and radio broadcasting' (Kabinet Ministriv Ukrainy, 1993, p. 27). That decision consolidated the existing situation of national broadcasting of Ukraine.

The structure of broadcasting in Ukraine

According to the Law on Television and Radio, broadcasting in Ukraine consists of state television and radio, and non-state companies. The basis of national television and radio broadcasting is the state broadcaster Derzhavna Teleradiomovna Kompania Ukrainy (Derzhteleradio). In 1991, it was financed mainly by the state budget. In 1994, however, it received only 41 per cent of its budget from the state.

Derzhteleradio is a national company involved in the production of television and radio programmes, which are broadcast for the whole territory of Ukraine and for a foreign audience. It has branches in different regions, *oblasts* (provinces), and cities of Ukraine and the republic of Crimea. Derzhteleradio has the priority right to use state television and radio networks of the ministry of communication, and as it rents two channels from this ministry, broadcasting may still be regarded as being almost entirely under strong government control.

One Derzhteleradio channel is occupied by UT-1 (Ukrainian Television 1); the other is occupied by UT-2 and UT-3, together with Television Rossia, a Russian Federation company. Ostankino, a third channel, is the unified channel of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). All these channels are Ukrainian and Russian state television channels.

There is strong external competition in the television sector, and the majority of the population of Ukraine still watch Russian channels. The most popular of these is Ostankino. Its ratings may have fallen, but it still maintains an impressive market share.

Derzhteleradio programmes are considered inferior to those of Ostankino and Rossia, because of the lack of high professional and cultural standards. Viewers are not satisfied with the work of some reporters, political journalists and commentators. Very often, programmes of Ukrainian state television look like unsuccessful remakes of Russian state channel programmes, even though the standards of Russian state channels have noticeably lowered.

The economic problems of Derzhteleradio are those of the Ukrainian economy as a whole. Because of the deepening crisis of the economy in Ukraine, broadcasters have been allowed to undertake commercial activities or to have sponsors for certain programmes. It is believed that such actions will make up the deficiencies of state funding.

Meanwhile, regulatory and legislative changes have opened the way for establishing non-state radio and television

companies, stations and studios. They are created, for the most part, on a commercial basis as private enterprises, joint ventures with Ukrainian and foreign capital, or in co-operation with Derzhteleradio or regional state administrations.

Ukraine surpasses Russia in the number and quantity of non-state television stations in the major cities. For example, it is somewhat of a surprise for Muscovites when they visit Kiev to discover that there are more television channels in the capital of Ukraine than in Moscow. There are currently ten television channels in Kiev, and seven of them are non-state. These compete successfully with the Ukrainian and Russian state channels mentioned above. Besides broadcasting companies that have separate channels, several television companies and studios rent air time or produce programmes and sell them to other broadcasting companies, both state and non-state.

The situation in Kiev concerning the number of non-state television stations and studios is not unique. There are six television stations and studios in Kharkiv (some of them are private, others are joint ventures), five in Mikolajiv, and three each in Lugansk, Zhitomir, Simpheropol, Poltava and Ternopil.

All the commercial channels are predominantly entertainment-oriented. When they began broadcasting in 1991–92, their programmes consisted of a parade of video clips, animated cartoons, and feature films (usually from the United States). Not all of them were of high aesthetic quality, and many were pirated copies.

Broadcasting and the democratic process

The developments mentioned above reflect a general tendency in Ukrainian broadcasting: liberalization and democratization. These processes are developing rather slowly, alongside political and economic reforms. For the first time in the history of Ukrainian broadcasting, citizens of Ukraine have the possibility to acquire information about Ukraine and the world from different sources and thus to make their own choices among different points of view.

The first point of view is the official one (the carriers of it are UT-1, UT-2 and UT-3). The second point of view is presented by Moscow (Ostankino, TV Rossia) and, more often than not, gives counter-information about Ukraine. The third one may be called international (translated into Ukrainian or original versions of the information programmes of

CNN, BBC, ITN, etc.). The fourth is that of independent commercial companies (Zernetskaya, 1994*a*, pp. 33–4).

The idea of public service broadcasting cannot be regarded as a wholly imported one. There is a growing understanding among broadcasting professionals and academics in Ukraine of the necessity of public service broadcasting.

A new situation has arisen with President Kuchma's decree, *On improvement of the system of management of the state television and radio of Ukraine*, issued on 3 January 1995. According to the decree, a new State Committee on Television and Radio Broadcasting, Derzhteleradio Ukrainy, is to be organized in replacement of Derzheteleradio. Its main tasks are these: to ensure realization of state information policy by television and radio broadcasting; to organize enforcement of broadcasting legislation and decisions of the National Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting; to ensure access to national television and radio; and to organize television and radio broadcasts to foreign audiences. These changes are intended to strengthen the role of the state in Ukrainian national broadcasting.

The future of Ukrainian national broadcasting is interrelated and closely connected with the pace of economic reforms and with the process of further political and social structuring of Ukrainian society. In the framework of these processes, television is, and will be for a long time, in the hands of the state structures of power. The study of transformations and reforms of national broadcasting leaves open the question of how soon public service broadcasting will emerge in Ukraine.

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India

Broadcasting and national politics

Nikhil Sinha

On 9 February 1995, the Indian Supreme Court delivered a decision that, in effect, set aside the legal basis for the government's monopoly over radio and television broadcasting. By ordering the government to establish an independent broadcasting authority to regulate television in the public interest, the Court has held out the promise of allowing Indian television to escape both the stifling political control of the state and the commercial pressures of the market.

The decision capped three years of revolutionary change in India's television environment, a period that saw one of the most closed and controlled television industries in the world transformed into an open, multichannel competitive television market. The advent of international satellite television services, the beginning of Indian satellite-based services, and the response of the government-owned and -controlled television network, Doordarshan, to these developments have dramatically changed the country's television environment.

The history of the early development of radio broadcasting in independent India is important, because that period set the parameters for the subsequent role of television in the country. At independence, the Congress Government under Jawaharlal Nehru had three major goals: political integration, economic development, and social modernization. Broadcasting was expected to play an important role in all three areas.

Broadcasting for integration, development and modernization

The most important challenge the government faced at independence was that of forging a nation out of the diverse political, religious, geographic and linguistic entities that composed independent India. It seemed only natural, therefore, that broadcasting be harnessed for the task of political nation-building.

Broadcasting was expected to help overcome the immediate crisis of political instability that followed independence and to foster the long-term process of political modernization and nation-building that was the dominant ideology of the newly-formed state. Neither a commercial nor a private system of broadcasting could be relied upon to take on this role, and, therefore, radio was organized as a government-owned and -controlled monopoly.

Along with political development, broadcasting was charged with aiding in the process of economic development. There was also a growing belief that the problems of underdevelopment in India, and elsewhere in the developing world, required an activist state and could not be left to markets to solve.

The use of broadcasting to further the development process was a natural corollary of this state-led development philosophy. Broadcasting, especially, was expected to contribute to the process of social modernization, which was con-

sidered an important prerequisite of economic development.

The early history of television in India reflected the emphasis on economic development and social modernization that underpinned the role of broadcasting in the country. Television was considered a facilitator of the development process, and its introduction in 1959 was justified by the role it was asked to play in social and economic development. It also reflected the confidence of Indian planners in a state-led development process. Since the primary role of television was to aid in economic and social development, and since the primary task of development was being carried out by the government, it was natural that television be institutionalized as an arm of the government.

By 1976, the government found itself running a television network of eight stations, covering a population of 45 million over 75,000 square kilometres. Administratively, it was no longer possible to manage television as part of All India Radio (AIR), and the government constituted Doordarshan, the national television network, as a separate department under the ministry of information and broadcasting. Though the administrative structure changed, broadcasting was still a government monopoly, and Doordarshan was tightly controlled by the ministry. The establishment of Doordarshan also marked the government's recognition of the political importance of television.

The year 1976 marked another significant event in the history of Indian television: the advent of advertising. Until that time, television had been funded through a combination of licence fees and allocations from the annual budget (licences were later abolished as advertising revenues began to increase substantially). The introduction of colour and the development of a national network changed the face of Indian television. To increase television's reach, the government launched a crash programme to set up low- and high-power transmitters that would pick-up the satellite-distributed signals and retransmit them to surrounding areas.

By 1991, Doordarshan's earlier mandate to aid in the process of social and economic development had clearly been diluted. Entertainment and commercial programmes had begun to take centre stage in the organization's programming strategies, and advertising had come to be Doordarshan's main source of funding. However, television was still a modest enterprise, with most parts of the country able to receive only one channel, except in the major cities, where two channels were received. However, in 1991, the government launched a major economic liberalization campaign, and in-

ternational satellite broadcasting began in India. These events combined to change the country's television environment dramatically.

International satellite television was introduced in India by CNN through its coverage of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. The nearly 60,000 small cable operators now providing cable services in India are largely responsible for the rapid spread of satellite television.

The advent of satellite-based television shook Doordarshan out of its complacency. It responded to competition on two fronts: by increasing the number of channels and by changing the nature of its programming. In 1993, Doordarshan merged the four second channels that were being programmed by the Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras regional stations and networked them into a single national channel, dubbed the Metro Channel or DD2. Programming for the new channel was taken over by Doordarshan's national programming staff. Later that year, the reach of the Metro channel was further extended to cover eighteen cities, and Doordarshan revealed a plan to offer four additional satellite channels, DD3 through DD6. Early in 1995, Doordarshan launched a satellite-based Development Channel and, in March of that year, an International Channel to beam programmes to West and South Asia.

Television and democratic politics: organizational structure and the politics of government control

The relationship between politics and television in India has been dominated by two major issues. The first is the question of what the nature of government control over the medium should be, and the second is what the role of television should be in the political process. The two questions are, of course, closely related, with the nature of government control over television and the rationale that governments have given to maintain that control often being justified on the basis of television's expected role in the political process.

Doordarshan is a corporate entity attached to the ministry of information and broadcasting; it is essentially half-way between a public corporation and a government department. It is not directly a part of the ministry's administrative structure, as a department would be, nor does it enjoy the financial and administrative independence of a public corporation. In practice, however, Doordarshan operates much like a government department, at least as far as critical issues of

policy planning and financial decision-making are concerned.

In principle, Doordarshan is answerable to parliament. Parliament lays down the guidelines that Doordarshan is expected to adhere to in its programming, and its budget is debated and approved by parliament. However, the nature of parliamentary democracy ensures that, ultimately, parliament can do nothing more than rubber-stamp the decisions made by the executive.

The tight control over Doordarshan's finances has been one of the instruments through which the government has controlled the growth and development of television in India. However, with Doordarshan's commercial revenues growing, with increased competition from satellite services, and with the government in the midst of a major economic restructuring programme, the issue of Doordarshan's control over its finances has become increasingly important. In 1994, the government ordered Doordarshan to raise its own revenues for future expansion. This new commercial mandate has gradually begun to change the broadcaster's perception of its primary constituents – from politicians to advertisers.

Underlying the problem of government control over television in India has been the larger issue of the role that television has been expected to play in the country's political processes. Three sets of relationships have defined the role of television in Indian politics: television and the dissemination of government information; television and party politics; and television and centre-state relations.

The leading role of the Indian state in the development process has been the leverage of successive governments to force the dissemination and support of government policies by AIR and Doordarshan. The increasing politicization of Doordarshan has meant, however, that, in practice, the dissemination of news and information has been conditioned more by the political exigencies of the party in power than any policy or development objective.

From its formative years, the role of television in India's democratic process has been conditioned and constrained by the overwhelming role of the state in the country's economic, social and political development. Nandy has argued that the most prominent feature of modern India has been the emergence of the state as the principle 'hegemonic actor in the public realm' (Nandy, 1987, p. 1). The Indian State has taken upon itself the task of setting the ideological agenda of the nation, rather than implementing the will of its citizens. As long as the state was identified as the only viable mechanism for ensuring political stability, economic growth and social

modernization, it was relatively easy to identify the development of the state with development in general. The emergence of state-led development within a socialist agenda provided the early rationale for the control over television and the development of television to serve the state's social and economic agenda. However, as the dividing line between state and government and between government and party progressively blurred, television, or, more specifically, the Doordarshan organization, was increasingly subverted to fulfilling the political agenda of the party in power.

Though the state has not easily relinquished control over television, it has, for all purposes, relinquished almost all of television's early commitment to the development process. Sponsorship of private programmes through Doordarshan has become the mechanism through which the state has attempted to retain control over the viewer-citizen. The result is that from a 'completely state-dominated medium . . . television became a carrier of commercially sponsored, privately produced programmes' (Rajagopal, 1993, p. 93).

Over time, the state's control over television will continue to diminish. There is talk of, if not privatizing it, constituting Doordarshan's commercial channels as a separate network run by a public sector corporation. As its revenue structure begins to change and Doordarshan begins to respond to increasing commercial pressures, the character of its programming will increasingly reflect the demands and pressures of the market place. Caught between the state and the market, the public interest has found itself increasingly squeezed out of the country's television agenda. Hopefully, the 1995 Supreme Court decision will help re-establish broadcasting in the public interest.

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Namibia

Broadcasting and democratization

Nahum Gorelick[1]

With the arrival of independence in 1990, the new Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) was thrust into the role of being the first major broadcaster in southern Africa to undergo fundamental restructuring in order to become a democratic, efficient public service organization. It was challenged, first, by the transformation from the South West Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SWABC) and everything it stood for, and, second, by being the first public, rather than state, broadcaster in the region.

Dismantling the SWABC was not a simple task, since, for one, it had been part of a media system that had enhanced South African propaganda and, at the same time, tried to block information critical of the ruling government. Draconian laws and regulations relating to the dissemination of information were only one component of the apartheid system under which it functioned.

The NBC's unique task in trying to combine ideals and realities in order to create a completely democratic broadcaster is mainly hampered by two things: a small population spread over a vast area, making a technical infrastructure for broadcasting expensive, and the cultural, ideological and language diversities prevalent in Namibia. These are especially difficult, given that democratization in Namibia is still very much a learning process.

While the NBC is meant to be the forerunner in democratizing the Namibian population, it stands very much on its own in that regard. Nonetheless, the NBC has accepted its

role in advancing unity in diversity, which is a powerful catalyst for development of national culture and which is one of the key areas that is being developed over the NBC airwaves. Furthermore, NBC programmes attempt to reflect a 'transformation process and development taking place presently within Namibia, [which] support the creation of its civil society and aim at strengthening the democratic culture and principles, structures and procedures' (Gorelick, 1993). The notion of development, as interpreted by the NBC, is to enable and enhance all Namibians to overcome the serious gap created through the historical apartheid regime which resulted in a very small group of the population controlling all formal sectors of activity in the country, including development in areas of economic, social, political, cultural and educational activities.

The Broadcast Act of 1991 contains four key objectives that the NBC, as public broadcaster, must fulfil. The corporation must carry on a broadcasting service in order, '(a) [to] inform and entertain the public of Namibia; (b) to contribute to the education and unity of the nation and to peace in Namibia; (c) to provide and disseminate information relevant to the socio-economic development of Namibia; and (d) to promote the use and understanding of the English language'. In light of these objectives, the following programme priorities have been listed as part of the NBC programme policy.

First and foremost, programmes broadcast on the NBC

must be relevant within the Namibian multicultural societal context.

Second, programmes must be relevant within the wider African setting. Namibia must be reflected in the roots of the African culture and advance its culture from within this continental environment.

Third, Namibia's link to and membership in the international community at large should be established and maintained through foreign programmes. The programmes should encourage and foster understanding, respect and learning from the diversity and achievements of other nations as expressed in a variety of economic, social, cultural and spiritual activities.

Finally, the content of information broadcast is subject to the Constitution and the laws of Namibia. This content should, at all times, remain sensitive to the values of the people and uphold the principle of the Bill of Fundamental Human Rights enshrined in the Namibian Constitution.

The main issues concerning the NBC since independence revolve around the organization's autonomy. With regard to financial dependency on and regulation by the government, the debate centres on how the NBC can maintain its editorial freedom.

The Namibian Broadcasting Act was to set the rules for this in 1991. The new act did not merely modify the SWABC Act, but repealed it entirely. Constitutional guidelines relating to freedom of speech and other fundamental rights are obvious in the act. With regard to regulation and political control, the Broadcasting Act of 1991 is explicit as to the lines of communication: the board reports to the minister through the annual report.

Political versus social issues play a constant role in the determination of the NBC's responsibilities. While the Namibian Constitution contains some of the most democratic clauses relating to the freedom of speech, both the legislation and the Constitution are currently being tested in court, laying ground rules vital to the success or failure of a democratic Namibia.

The NBC is still hampered by bureaucratic and political thinking and acting, inherited from five decades of South African control. This tendency is evident throughout the country. In comparison to its neighbour, South Africa, although the ruling parties in both countries have fought for freedom in the region side by side, Namibia possesses a much more party-conscious population, with the result that ideologically motivated leaders are generally not aware of the

wants, needs, and demands of the people. Amongst staff that came over from the SWABC, a tendency to resist change has been noted, while some new staff members are often criticized for serving their political party rather than their people.

However, the bureaucratic and political issues must be seen in the broader socio-historical context of the SWABC's role in the Government of South Africa's dissemination of propaganda. Many of those entering the NBC after independence came from the black majority of Namibians and were sympathetic toward the new government. Used to a censored media, both sides practised self-censorship – some for idealistic reasons, others for fear of criticism from superiors or government officials. A lack of training and inability by staff and managers to successfully implement guidelines concerning a democratic approach to programming and news further aggravated the situation. A loss of technical quality in the more innovative production techniques, again due to a lack of trained personnel, could also be noted soon after independence, and both aspects still need attention today. However, despite problems experienced in programme content, the new, more global and national approach sought by the NBC is clearly evident. Training has been extensive during the last five years, and the quality of both radio and television has improved considerably. Previously ethnic-based structures have been removed, and the emphasis on nationally relevant and unitary information is evident in the broadcasts.

The NBC must still, however, address the issues of the diversity of Namibia's relatively small population. The national service, which is broadcast in English, is transmitted nationwide, but only 4 per cent of its listeners define English as their mother tongue, while 73 per cent describe themselves as being able to speak and understand the language, and 16 per cent understand basic English but cannot speak it. Furthermore, 7 per cent of the listeners neither understand nor speak English (NBC, 1994, p. 60). The nine language services in radio broadcasting are each currently limited to geographic areas in which the language is spoken, that is, catering to the traditional language listeners in each area. This situation still, however, enforces ethnicity and reaffirms ethnic thinking rather than national unity. Despite the NBC's efforts to introduce cross-information from all other Namibian language and cultural groups, language service presenters still give greater importance to events in their own cultural communities.

The dilemma of combining a Third World infrastructure with First World media systems is further enhanced

when it comes to television. While radio can be made accessible through a relatively affordable structure, television, in an African state, is still a luxury, for both the broadcaster and the audience. It requires a costly infrastructure, qualified professionals in both the technical and programming fields, and, for the audience, a substantial initial outlay for the receiver.

NBC television broadcasting is thus, at this stage, a service involuntarily catering to a more urban, affluent and educated audience, creating a dilemma with respect to programme content. The costs involved in television production force public broadcasters, such as the NBC, to incorporate principles of, on the one hand, using television to accelerate the basic education process for illiterate youth and adults, and, on the other, to import programmes with different value structures and social behaviour. This predicament is experienced throughout Africa, where most countries import between 50 and 80 per cent of their programmes. While the NBC imports 80 per cent of its programmes, the programme policy has set a target of reducing this to 50 per cent by the end of 1995. In effect, Namibian audiences, like most African audiences, are subjected to values and lifestyles alien and often in conflict with their own sets of values and circumstances. However, good African products are expensive, erratic and difficult to find, and large local productions lack funding and expertise.

The challenge that the NBC faced after independence, of being the first public as opposed to state broadcaster in the region, was significant, since government-controlled broadcasters are the norm in Africa, and the SWABC was no exception. While the NBC has the legislation and even a certain degree of government goodwill behind it, its audience lags behind in the process of change, since democracy in Namibia is still a developing concept. Not perceived as a priority by the government, the NBC has mostly been left alone, perhaps to its advantage.

Namibia is a highly politicized country. This state of politicization emerged at the start of the struggle for independence and continues to operate on a high level, reflected in the public's contributions to political issues. The type of programming that is being developed and broadcast must attempt to maintain this framework and add to it by making Namibian people more aware of the socio-economic and cultural issues that are essential for nation-building. This can only be achieved through participation by all agencies in Namibia, not only the government (Gorelick, 1993).

Introduction of commercial broadcasting

During 1993 and 1994, the first two commercial radio stations were awarded licences under the Namibia Communications Act of 1992. They fulfil the role of much necessary entertainment stations and, thus, provide healthy and needed competition. Both have limited reception areas and aim at a specific audience that can be described as mainly white, middle-class and interested in entertainment rather than educational and informative broadcasting. However, a 1995 NBC survey has shown that more than 90 per cent of the audiences of both commercial stations also listen to the NBC, while 21 per cent of their listeners believe the stations are part of the NBC.

These commercial broadcasters fulfil a role within Namibian society that the NBC, as a public broadcaster, is forced to neglect: that of providing pure entertainment. In that sense, the competition is healthy, bridging a gap in broadcasting in Namibia.

After the need for democracy, economies of scale are the second largest problem in African countries. Broadcasting is the most expensive form of media, and local productions on a large scale are virtually impossible on an ongoing basis in most countries. It is with this background that the Southern African Broadcasting Association (SABA) was formed in order to establish an exchange system of African-produced programmes. During its second general assembly, in December 1994, the members of SABA adopted a resolution which states that the strength of public broadcasting lies in truly reflecting the interests and concerns of the citizens to whom it needs to be accessible and accountable (SABA, 1994). This sense of place and identity with its audience gives public broadcasting the edge over any existing or upcoming competitors, be they locally-owned commercial enterprises or foreign/international satellite services. In the final analysis the most forceful supporter of public broadcasting will always be the public itself.

Notes

1. The author would like to acknowledge, with thanks and appreciation, the kind assistance given by Katjia Berker, whose dedication, time and help made this chapter possible.

2. The restructuring was carried out with the assistance of the Thomson Foundation.

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Towards an alternative broadcasting system

Florangel Rosario-Braid
(with Ramon R. Tuazon)

Just as they are searching for an Asian model of democracy, political leaders in the region are now in search of an Asian model for the media. In the Philippine context, the challenge is how to develop an alternative to the existing independent and free enterprise media system. A public broadcasting system (PBS) is one such alternative, but as the Philippine case may prove, a PBS may find it hard to compete and survive in a 'market' where commercial broadcasting has become entrenched.

Community-based broadcasting (CBS) is another option. CBS empowers local communities to plan and produce their own programmes using available channels, sometimes co-operatively owned or managed by members of the community. This model blends well with the 'communitarian' values of most Asian societies.

In this context, an alternative broadcasting system (ABS) is envisioned as a socio-cultural safety net for sectors of society likely to be adversely affected by the enforcement of GATT and other international agreements that promote open and free trade. An alternative broadcasting system may yet emerge, not merely as a complement to existing commercial or government-owned stations but as a natural consequence of these global trends.

The concept of a public broadcasting system is now being redefined. From the traditional BBC-type structure, it may also include demassified or community-based media systems which empower local people to plan, manage and produce their own programmes that reflect their needs and visions. A favourable trend is the growth of the non-governmental organization (NGO) sector which hopefully will contribute to a strong civil society. With the modest contribution offered by community broadcasting as a catalyst for development initiatives, there may still come a time when a national PBS will be perceived as feasible.

An alternative broadcasting system?

Immediately after the 1986 People Power Revolution, one of the intended areas for structural change in the government was the freeing of the television network, Maharlika Broadcasting System, from what was at that time complete government control by converting it into a public broadcasting system.

In spite of the expansion of media freedom as an aftermath of the People Power Revolution, media still continue to reflect the views of the élite and vested interest groups. The maintenance of the status quo can be attributed to the fact that the revolution resulted merely in cosmetic political change and did not bring a more radical structural reform. The capital-intensive nature of media is another reason for the continuing control of media by the business élite. The dominant business ideology has been reflected in conservative programme philosophy and content.

On the other hand, the NGO agendas have continually

expressed key concerns: the need for an impartial channel for information on development issues, which supports the public's right to pluralistic information; and the need for a regular outlet for development programmes to educate people in livelihood, health and nutrition, science and technology, and culture and responsible citizenship.

A PBS could be a channel for the production and dissemination of creative and high quality programmes, which existing broadcast networks have failed to produce due to the ratings game. This programming thrust would complement the traditional programme orientation of commercial stations. A PBS is perceived by many as the necessary structure to rectify the one-way flow of programming. It could also provide the mechanism that would encourage provincial stations to produce programmes relevant to the cultural and economic realities of their communities, as well as provide NGOs with technical assistance for production of their specific advocacy programmes.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution provided for a policy environment conducive to setting up a PBS. The constitution provides that the state 'recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation building' (Article II, Sec. 24), and the 'emergence of communication structures suitable to the needs and aspirations of the nation and the balanced flow of information into, out of and across the country' (Article XVI, Sec. 10). These provisions were integrated into the fundamental law of the land to correct the urban bias of media, concentration of media resources in the centre, and the one-way flow of information from the urban to the rural areas.

Despite initial legislative support for a PBS, the bills seeking its creation did not get congressional approval. Instead, a full government corporation, now known as People's Television Network, Inc. (PTNI), was created.

The People's Television Network, Inc.

The charter creating PTNI was signed by then President Corazon C. Aquino on 26 March 1992. PTNI has the following functions:

1. to serve as an effective medium for national unity and political stability by reaching as much of the Filipino population as possible through the effective use of modern broadcasting technology;
2. to serve as a vehicle for bringing the government closer to the people in order to enhance their awareness of the

programmes, policies, thrusts and directions of the government;

3. to ensure that the programmes broadcast by the network maintain a high general standard in all respects and, particularly, in respect of their content, quality and proper balance of educational, news, public affairs, entertainment and sports programmes; and
4. to serve as an effective outlet for alternative programming.

In accordance with its role as an 'alternative' to commercial stations, PTNI puts emphasis on education, cultural, news/public affairs and sports programmes. In 1993 these programmes took up two-thirds of total broadcast hours per week, while news and public affairs took up one-fourth of total broadcast time. To generate advertising revenue, entertainment programmes occupy the primetime evening slots.

As a future direction for news and public affairs, PTNI is considering a 24-hour news operation, the establishment of specialized news desks, augmented assignments to major beats, and the inclusion of an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) news segment in the regular newscast. Linkages with major regional and international news agencies and foreign television organizations will be strengthened.

As for educational broadcasts, a pre-school children's programme and youth programme are on the drawing board. In addition, a distance education project for elementary and high-school teachers will be launched.

Since PTNI is a government corporation, the public, especially the marginalized sectors, are not ensured of sustained access and participation in programme planning and production as envisioned in the PBS concept. In addition, autonomy from political and other pressure groups has not been ensured. The television network is, of course, expected to present government viewpoints on global, national and local issues. A question often asked is: Can NGOs and other sectors of society also use the channel to air views divergent from those of the government? While the Board of Directors has been 'broadened', it has not been diversified enough to include multisectoral representation, especially from the non-élite sectors -- cultural communities, grassroots organizations, consumers, labour and peasantry.

One of the greatest stumbling blocks in the creation and operation of a PBS is the establishment of regular funding sources. Dependence on one source makes the network vulnerable to infringement of its editorial independence. PTNI is a unique case, because while its charter recognizes it

as part of the government information system, it merely provides for equity funding and stipulates that no funds from the annual national budget will be provided for its operations. Government appropriations are only for building infrastructures. PTNI has to raise its own resources through advertisements, blocktimers, and other sources. In this sense, PTNI is still 'commercial'. The lack of financial resources has affected PTNI's effort to provide real alternative programming.

According to its mission statement, PTNI shall embark on niche programming. It will define its target audiences more pointedly and programme for them accordingly. There will be 'more attention given to the viewing needs of the public as well as greater sensitivity and responsiveness to issues and concerns that affect them' (PTNI, 1993, p. 4).

The concept behind PTNI, which is really a quasi-public service station, is to provide support to development programmes and projects. Despite government control, PTNI could still provide these public service functions. Its limitation, however, would be felt by active NGOs committed to priority development concerns such as overseas workers, street children, women, environment, foreign debt and sovereignty issues. Often, NGO perspectives on these issues differ from the official position. Their search for a voice in policy decisions and the government's support for pluralism and cultural diversity may be factors that could lead to stronger support for alternative media, whether community-based or a national PBS.

Options for alternative public broadcasting

An alternative public broadcasting system (ABS) can be seen as a socio-cultural safety net for the threats of cultural domination due to the unrestricted flow of images from the technological superpowers. An ABS could provide a mechanism to balance global and local programming. While a global perspective is now necessary with the emerging global economy, community interests should also be projected.

Both the opportunities and challenges brought about by the technological revolution and the global economy force us to re-examine our broadcast policies and priorities. Should we pursue our goal of setting up a PBS? If yes, what role should such a system play, given the impact of ongoing technological revolution? What structure should it adopt?

Given that the state chose to establish a government channel as an alternative to commercial broadcasting, com-

munity-based broadcasting (CBS) seems to be the viable alternative. Its major limitation is its inadequate reach and, consequently, its limited impact at the national level. Creative energies may be channelled toward the strengthening of existing community broadcast stations, many of which support grassroots development initiatives, as well as educational broadcast stations which cater to the requirements of distance education. Community-based programming can also be organized around communities of interest groups. NGOs and people's organizations must be provided with access to technical assistance which would enhance their media production capabilities.

Community broadcasting is able to combine the salient features of a PBS plus more. The big city mentality of centralized media has contributed to 'Manila-centric' programming, which focuses on viewpoints of urbanized and élite groups. A decentralized, more autonomous broadcasting system can tackle alternative issues such as education, health care, social justice and the peace process.

Community-based stations need not operate from a parochial point of view. New technologies now allow 'small' media to be linked with each other and to national media. The flow of images and messages should be two-way and should facilitate the integration of local issues with those on the national and global agenda.

Alternative broadcasting need not be limited to a PBS. Political developments (such as deregulation) and the technology revolution (particularly the channel explosion and satellite television) have made an alternative possible. Alternative media, being more independent and non-partisan, are more effective channels for articulating people's views. In line with the global trend of decentralization, community-based broadcasting appears to be the most viable and attractive option in the Philippines.

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Equatorial Africa

Broadcasting and development

Charles Okigbo

The expectation that broadcasting should play a key role in promoting responsible and sustainable development in Africa pervades all the current issues surrounding contemporary broadcasting.

In equatorial Africa, it is clear that politics have a strong influence on broadcasting and the purposes to which it is put. The limited availability of channels and the potential for mass information through broadcasting have encouraged governments to carefully monitor what broadcasters are doing. Thus, not surprisingly, many of the countries in the region have regulatory statutes, agencies and codes to ensure that the tremendous power of broadcasting is not abused.

Until the recent liberalization of both politics and the economy in many African countries, the state was the sole regulator of broadcasting. In some countries now, journalists and other communication professionals are getting the opportunity to have more say in how stations are to be run. The National Broadcasting Commission of Nigeria not only licenses broadcast stations, but also controls the quality of programming. Kenya's Media Commission is currently designing a blueprint for regulating all significant media activities, including approvals for new broadcasting licences.

Most countries in equatorial Africa have completed studies and public hearings on electronic media privatization, while many of them have already licensed private stations. But in each country, the legislation that allows private broadcasting seems to favour the ruling party or central govern-

ment. The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) was told at its Sixth World Conference in Dakar (February 1995) that one of the biggest handicaps to private broadcasting is the fact that the state broadcasting authority in some countries is also responsible for licensing private stations. Some countries have entrusted this responsibility to independent commissions. In practice, however, these commissions are less independent than they appear, as they are still subject to subtle political control.

The political control of broadcasting has both local and international flavours. Whereas, locally, individual countries try to control the establishment and operations of individual stations, internationally, France, Britain, the United States and Germany exercise political influence over broadcasting facilities in respective African countries that are of interest to them. Such influence is often disguised under cultural agreements, aid for media development, international programme sales, and foreign station or cable operations.

The debate about new communication technology touches one of the most important issues of contemporary broadcasting. In much of Africa, which is yet to be technologized, it is hoped that the new technologies will make more and more people active participants in the information age, rather than have them be further displaced or alienated by it.

The new information super-highway has serious implications for broadcasting in Africa. African stations – whether

public or private – appear to capitalize on their entertainment functions, while the super-stations emanating from Britain, France, Germany or the United States (such as the BBC, Radio France International, Radio Deutsche Welle and VOA) are mostly propaganda outfits. This development has not yet attracted the attention of African policy makers.

Key actors

Broadcasting in equatorial Africa today addresses a range of 'publics', but the three key actors are governments, private broadcasters, and community operators.

Public broadcasting in Africa generally means state-owned and -controlled broadcasting, with stations being wholly-owned by the governments, which exercise varying levels of control. Because broadcasting is such a sensitive medium, it has usually attracted the attention of national governments, many of which are unwilling to relinquish the ownership of stations they inherited from pre-independence regimes.

Even today, radio and television stations are perceived as high-priority institutions by African governments. Nigeria presents an interesting case: In 1967, there were three political regions, each of which had individual radio and television stations. Subsequent creation of additional states by successive governments led to the establishment of new radio and television stations by each of the new states. Today, each of the thirty states in Nigeria has at least one radio and/or one television station, some of which are owned by the state governments, while others are owned by the federal government. In addition, there are twenty-seven television stations and eight radio stations which are owned and controlled by the federal government. This situation of plural outlets does not necessarily imply diversity.

Independent African states continued the colonial tradition of government ownership and control of broadcasting. Even two decades after the independence era in Africa, the World Radio/TV Handbook (1982) reported that there were only three privately-owned commercial radio stations on the entire continent – with three other stations operated by church organizations, and four relay stations used by United States and European external services stations.

The situation has just started to change with the current wave of privatization and/or commercialization of public companies in many African countries. Private and independent African entrepreneurs who are now venturing into broadcast-

ing will have a significant impact on the uses of radio and television in Africa. The deregulation of broadcasting is one of the most significant media developments in Africa; however, in some African countries, it cannot be expected to be the panacea for its extremely limited contribution, so far, to development in the continent.

A third group of actors is the growing number of community activists who are now beginning to establish radio stations that are neither government-owned and -controlled, nor driven by the commercial interests of private entrepreneurs. The establishment of community radio stations in Africa has benefited from the interests of many Western donors and international development agencies, who are eager to use these unique stations to achieve their objectives of participatory communication development. For now, these community stations appear to be more popular in southern than in equatorial Africa, with the most successful examples being those of Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Community radio operators in Africa hold great promise for the full utilization of radio in development programming. The usually decentralized structure of programme planning and production makes the operations amenable to greater participation by the local public. Whereas public broadcasting and private-enterprise broadcasting are usually plagued by problems associated with government propaganda and the profit motive, community broadcasting is often characterized by a high sense of social responsibility, with appropriate attention directed to the elevation of the social conditions of the community.

Problems

Broadcasting in Africa is plagued by a myriad of serious problems, many of which have been redressed, but some of which have proved intractable.

Ethnicity is an inescapable fact of life in Africa, and it underscores the political and economic reality that allegiance and patronage are often defined primarily in terms of ethnic groups. The fear that broadcasting can serve dangerous political purposes is located in the suspicion of opposition ethnic groups or political parties, which, it is suspected, would use radio and television to appeal to the primordial ethnic instincts and feelings of their people.

Existing public broadcasting stations in Africa have, so far, managed not to lead to a feared ethnic debacle. Rather, they have succeeded, to a large extent, in maintaining a strong

audience following, irrespective of their ethnic affiliations. This has been achieved through employment and programming arrangements that portray a national, rather than sectional, character. Because public broadcasting stations usually provide wide geographical coverage, they have tended to produce programmes for all sections of the populace. As for the emerging private stations, we have to contend with the fact that they have limited geographical coverage (sometimes only five miles radius) and may need more specific targeting and segmenting of their markets. Especially in the urban areas, they may exacerbate feelings of ethnic loyalty if they are perceived as promoting or catering to identifiable ethnic interests.

The problem of balancing local and foreign input is a perennial concern among policy makers, broadcasters and media critics. In many African countries, the percentage of local input is so low that some television stations are basically diffusing or distributing foreign programmes to local audiences. The Kenya Television Network (KTN), which prides itself in being the only alternative to the public television services provided by the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), relays CNN all day until 4 p.m., when it starts to screen old American movies, discontinued British comedies and the Australian soap opera, 'Neighbours'. This programming decision is based on cost factors. An episode of 'Neighbours' costs about $100, while a locally produced documentary of the same length might cost more than $10,000. Most of the local input in African television relates to sports coverage, discussion programmes and quiz shows which are easy and cheap to produce.

Strategic alternatives

Recent economic and political changes in Africa have set the stage for subsequent developments in broadcasting on the continent. World Bank structural adjustment policies have brought about greater liberalization in the economic sphere, while the demise of the cold war, along with international expectations of more open political structures, have resulted in a new African politics of multiparty democracy. There are only a few remaining pockets of autocratic military rule, and even fewer cases of sit-tight political despots. These changes have proved very difficult for public broadcasting to manage.

Being creations of the various governments, African public broadcasting stations have had to dance to the tune of their masters' music – sometimes more vigorously than ex-

pected. Even where multipartyism has been achieved, some state broadcasting stations still see themselves as mouthpieces of the government, contrary to the expectation that they serve public interest. The media in Africa are usually closely identified with demands for political freedom and responsible governance. The tendency for some public broadcast media to identify more with the government of the day and the ruling party may prove detrimental to the interests of the general public. Such unwholesome tendencies have led to retributive maltreatment of some media and journalists when a ruling party loses an election.

The emerging private stations in Africa are set up with the blessings of the governments, and, thus, are not strongly in opposition. Because governments still reserve the right to grant broadcasting licences to private operators, these operators have tended to be neutral or pro-government.

This is not to say that there is no room for objective and critical political coverage. The further advancement of the unfolding political democracy in Africa will benefit immensely from the objective and critical coverage of political affairs from the perspective of public education and mobilization. The indication so far, however, is that the private operators care more about profit than public service.

On the other hand, there are many instances of broadcasting creativity, for example in Cameroon, where radio is used for sending personal messages to relatives in the hinterland; and in Nigeria where television is used extensively to announce deaths and funerals. For symbolic and functional reasons, radio and television stations are also the theatre for military coups, and, not surprisingly, some of them have more military hardware than some military barracks. For broadcasting to be a more useful tool of social development in Africa, African broadcasting operators must create more unique applications of the technology and create authentic African broadcasting. The seeming failure of broadcasting in African development is attributable to the low incidence of authentic African forms in contemporary African broadcasting.

The sustenance of open and democratic politics in Africa will benefit from a continued practice of open broadcasting that provides variety not only in station establishments, but also in programme content – with the important task of supporting democracy through greater access and participation always kept in view. African broadcasting stations of the future will have to demonstrate their commitment to the ideas, goals and objectives of their societies with respect to social development. They should be more than marketing

tools for consumer goods if they are to be alive to their responsibilities.

African broadcasting today does not have much to say or show on the controversial issue of development. The little it presents often seems to suggest that development must be conceived in terms of European and American standards – tarred roads, piped water and classroom education, among others. The rich cultural heritage, the creative management of the traditional environment, and other indicators of achievement have not attracted adequate attention from African broadcasters. African media will have to champion the cause for a redefinition of development to direct the focal attention on relevant African values. Some community broadcasters are already doing this through the structure and content of their operations.

A philosophy of Afro-development in broadcasting will obviate the compulsive adoption of the dominant Western paradigms of development. African community media operators are more suited to the necessary utilization of the broadcast media (especially radio) to champion the African definition of development and exemplify the same in their daily operations. In the spirit of the 1993 Bamako (Mali) Declaration on Radio Pluralism in Africa, broadcasting should provide the public with a tool that facilitates greater freedom of expression in the context of responsible development. Such development must be in terms that are reflective of and consistent with traditional African values.

The broadcast media in Africa have a bright future that rests on their becoming more relevant in the lives of African peoples and, thereby, contributing to the responsible and sustainable development of the continent. Despite competition from private and community stations, public broadcasting will always be part of the electronic media landscape in equatorial Africa.

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Cambodia

Broadcasting and the hurdle of poverty

Gareth Price

In February 1994, the Cambodian Government asked UNESCO for consultancy advice on 'a broadcasting model based on the BBC'. It would be difficult to adapt the model of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) model to any emerging democracy with a fragile economy, let alone one that is still suffering from the effects of some tenty years of continuous war. Cambodia today is a society that is still in the slow process of rebuilding itself, both in terms of the lives of the people and the face of the countryside.

A 1991 UNESCO mission report stated that only four radio broadcasting engineers and a few print journalists or newspaper technical personnel were believed to have survived the conflict of the 1975–79 period. The outmoded studio equipment at the national radio station was in pristine condition, albeit lacking spare parts, despite much of it being more than thirty years old. Radio and television broadcasters faced both a lack of equipment and an unreliable electricity supply, thereby curbing their plans for expansion. Everywhere there was a shortage of writers, journalists, broadcast and print technicians, programme production personnel and experienced senior management (UNESCO, 1991).

The Cambodian infrastructure is still not conducive to good communications. The telephone network is so bad that the few who can afford it rely instead on expensive mobile telephone systems. The land lines are silent. The road between the two most populous conurbations is in an appalling condition, but it is the only method of sending tapes between the relevant broadcast stations. The basic problem facing the Government of Cambodia is an obvious lack of finances in an economy still staggering under the strain of civil war.

In a country that still suffers from civil war, news programming obviously has a top priority, despite the security clamp-downs on many activities relating to the Khmer Rouge. Broadcast news in Cambodia is characterized by too many newsrooms offering too little news. Commercial television has two active companies, the most important of which is unquestionably the Thai-owned IBC, which started in May 1993. The other commercial operator, CTV9, was started by FUNCINPEC and claims to have changed from a political party channel to a straight commercial channel. The state radio and television stations in Phnom Penh – National Radio of Cambodia (NRC) and Television Kampuchea (TVK) – each have their own newsroom, relying heavily on the National News Agency (AKP). Only AKP has a regional presence, although reporters from all organizations follow government ministers on regional visits.

Radio is by far the most effective means of communication in Cambodia, since the circulation of newspapers is relatively small, rural literacy rates are low, and distribution is difficult, while reception of television from Phnom Penh and the two provincial stations is limited by low transmission power. Approximately 550 staff are employed at one national radio channel, NRC, although such a large workforce is not always apparent. On the other hand, FM 90 is a tiny commer-

cial radio station that transmits 17.5 hours a day with a staff of only 20 people – a startling contrast to NRC.

During the build-up to the 1993 elections, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) installed a completely new radio station as an additional channel to the state radio system, to impart advice and encouragement to a young democracy's forthcoming election.

Cambodian television is a story of extremes – an extremely poverty-stricken state television service competing with two commercial television stations that are much better-endowed in equipment and have a much better-paid staff. The contrast is at its greatest when comparing the state channel, TVK, with its biggest challenger, IBC.

Regional radio and television in Cambodia are in their infancy, whether in supplying the networks in Phnom Penh or in offering broadcasting services on a regional or local level. There is a critical need for more regional and local broadcasting. It is interesting to note that the important military and tourist area of Siem Reap, which has no local radio or television, no Cambodian television, and often suffers from bad reception of Phnom Penh's national radio service, can, nevertheless, receive very clearly the services of Star-TV from Hong Kong.

The problems of Battambang's radio station are an indication of why regional broadcasting is limited in scope. A staff of thirty-one people broadcast three hours a day from one studio on a 20 kilowatt medium-wave transmitter, which, in 1994, was operating on reduced power of 14 kilowatts and was in bad condition. The biggest problem for the station is the cost of fuel. Some 3 million Riel, out of the total expenditure of approximately 5 million Riel per month, is spent on fuel and this in itself limits the number of hours it is possible to broadcast. During the mid-1993 pre-election period, the station was transmitting programmes during the early morning, lunch time and evening for up to seven hours a day, but this effort exhausted available provincial budgets.

Radio and television in the provinces are in the process of being placed under the control of Phnom Penh. The advantage of this change is that the ministry is able, for the first time, to take a strategic view of Cambodian broadcasting as a whole, and it must take into account the fact that, currently, broadcasting outside the capital is severely limited in range. That strategic view must encompass local and regional radio and television. Phnom Penh should provide for the whole nation, and Cambodia's other leading cities should attempt to cater to the people living in its diverse regions, particularly through the less expensive medium of radio.

Towards a public broadcasting ethos

It is easy to bemoan the broadcasting situation in Cambodia in the current climate, but one has to plan for a hopefully peaceful future and the renewed probability of prosperity in a region of increased economic activity. If democracy and the rule of law strengthen their hold, it is possible to build a broadcasting structure in Cambodia that gradually distances itself from government and develops an ethos with important public broadcasting elements within it.

That ethos will have to be based on the need for national reconciliation and development programming. The requirement of national unity is obvious, following an era of national tragedy unsurpassed anywhere in the world since the Second World War. Working toward quality programming is going to be more difficult, because of the lack of production expertise. Yet that oldest form of communication, storytelling, is all the more potent when the stories make compelling listening and viewing. There is no shortage of stories to tell in Cambodia, whether transmitted in the form of news, drama or documentary.

Public broadcasting in a democracy should address the needs of the audience. The first priority is an information programming policy that the audience can trust. Failure to provide such a service, in an age of satellites when comparisons can be made and information stifled only with great difficulty, leads to the lack of the one thing essential to public broadcasting: credibility.

The second priority is the education of a whole nation, and its importance to Cambodia is obvious. Development programming usually takes the form of advice on basic requirements in health, hygiene and agriculture. In Cambodia there is the overriding need to continue the campaign of mine-awareness. It is the only way to rescue its rich agricultural potential and limit the loss of human limbs. In addition, educational and women's programming is a high priority, given that so many intellectuals were killed under Pol Pot and that the population's majority is female.

Finally, the total programme schedule should embrace information, education and entertainment programmes in order to provide a balanced diet, with programmes being as visual and professional as possible.

A public broadcasting ethos embracing these principles

can only be established in Cambodia by constructing a broadcasting structure that takes maximum advantage of limited resources – financial, human and technical. The economy is weak, human skills are at a premium, and the capital investment for modern technology is heavily dependent on donor aid. As always, the key is financing, and the broadcasting structure will eventually have to deal with this particular problem if there are to be real improvements in viewers' choice from the broadcasters of Phnom Penh.

In a report to UNESCO in February 1994, recommendations were made to create an authority in Phnom Penh which would be of particular relevance to the future of Cambodia. The recommendations entail the creation of an independent broadcasting commission, a board with the power to redistribute a proportion of private sector profits to the national broadcaster in order to develop competition and, therefore, the potential for increasing viewers' choice in a properly regulated environment (Price, 1994).

It follows that the commission would regulate that environment by being held responsible for the future of the whole radio and television industry in Cambodia, allowing the current state broadcasting organizations to be separated from the ministry. It would also regulate the number of private stations in relation to what the market will bear. Conceivably,

it could provide, in one stroke, both a political and an economic solution to the structural problems facing the media. While it would be naive to expect any independent broadcasting commission to change the attitudes of politicians or broadcasters overnight, it could well represent a first stage in the creation of an independent and pluralistic media in Cambodia.

Ultimately, however, true public broadcasting will emerge only if the political will exists to make it work. In Cambodia, it will have to wait for civil peace.

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Latin America

Community broadcasting as public broadcasting

Rafael Roncagliolo

Latin America, unlike Europe, Africa and Asia, is unfamiliar with the idea of public service broadcasting. The countries in this region adopted radio and television only a century after independence and release from colonial domination. For that reason they did not imitate European models but looked to the commercial system of broadcasting in the United States. In spite of this lack of a public tradition, a series of community radio and television stations have generated a different but genuine type of public broadcasting. Therein lies the region's unique communication feature and its contribution to a re-thinking of public broadcasting.

Latin America is a non-typical, perhaps exotic, region in terms of its radio and television systems, for three reasons. First, because of the way its broadcasting services were organized, non-commercial channels account for less than 10 per cent of the transmissions and audiences. All of the region's countries have public radio stations, but some – like Ecuador and Paraguay – have no public television, even though in most of them radio and television broadcasting were introduced by the ministries of education.

Second, the transmission infrastructure and levels of consumption of radio and television messages are such that there is a wealth, rather than a paucity, of programmes. For example, Latin American countries averaged 500,000 hours of television transmission in 1988, i.e. 444 per cent more than European countries in the same year (Roncagliolo, 1989). In addition, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama have a higher ratio of VCRs to television sets than either Belgium or Italy. Bolivia has one of the world's highest ratios in television stations (75) to television sets (10,000) – a clear indication that the number of transmissions is not tied to the degree of economic development. In Argentina, two out of every three families have cable television link-ups, and there are more than 2,000 companies offering this service in the country.

Finally, the rapid growth of social movements and networks that utilize broadcasting media distinguish the region.

Community radio and television

Community radio broadcasting in Latin America dates back to the 1940s when Radio Sutatenza was created in Colombia, laying the groundwork for Accion Cultural Popular, the first systematic effort to use radio for education. This movement spread and was later consolidated through the Latin American Educational Radio-broadcasting Association (ALER). This interlinkage of radio and education is central to the idea of public service, and ALER marked the birth of community media in Latin America.

During the same period, Bolivia's 1952 revolution spawned the birth of stations operated by miners, farmers and the Catholic Church, inaugurating Latin America's tradition of community radio stations (Beltran, 1994). It is important to recall that these pioneering radio stations emerged in asso-

ciation with social organizations and movements, thus making them an early and genuine expression of civil society.

During the 1960s, and above all in the 1970s and 1980s, the community radio and television movement spread, spearheaded by community and university stations. The formal emergence of non-governmental organizations made it possible to set up radio broadcasting stations that compete heavily for audience preference, as is currently the case with the Peruvian stations Radio Cutivalu in Piura, Onda Azul in Puno, and Yaravi in Arequipa.

Community radio stations can be small and informal, consisting of networks of loudspeakers, or they can be fairly large, with even an urban or metropolitan coverage. Their distinguishing feature in all cases is their attitude towards, and aptitude for, furthering education and development.

These communication instruments were first organized into national and regional networks like ALER and, more recently, have been linked up in the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), which has members in all countries of the region.

Community groups quickly took advantage of video's appearance on the scene. So-called people's video groups successively undertook: (1) video listing; (2) group videos; (3) video shows; (4) counter-information videos in countries under dictatorship; and (5) mass broadcasting videos (Roncagliolo, 1991), thus ushering in community television stations that are taking hold throughout the entire region.

The notion of public service

In Europe there has always been a clear-cut distinction between the economic profitability governing commercial ventures and the socio-cultural profitability motive behind public service undertakings. This dichotomy has never existed in Latin America where state-owned radio and television have, above all, been political instruments rather than oriented towards public service, and have failed to have any effective socio-cultural impact.

Community radio and television, on the other hand, are defined by the socio-cultural motive, which corresponds to the idea of service, and by the aims of strengthening democracy and achieving self-sustained development. This definition makes it possible to clarify the nature of this type of broadcasting. Community radio and television are not defined by legal status but by an operational motive. They can be registered as either public or private (university, regional

and municipal) enterprises. What is important is that they be non-profit enterprises without partisan aims.

Their size or coverage are not important. Their community nature does not mean necessarily that they are small or informal. In fact the existing stations are striving to upgrade their technical standards, and those that are being set up, such as Radio Trinidad FM in Paraguay, seek to do so with proper equipment. Community ownership should not be equated with aesthetic poverty, bad quality or boring programming. The discourse and denunciations that undoubtedly characterize these stations in their early stages of development rapidly give way to entertaining and playful communication that touches upon all aspects of human life.

The achievement of legal status

Since 1993 the existence of these community media has begun to engender a series of legislative measures aimed at their legalization. Chile already has a law for radio stations with a minimum coverage, which authorizes a maximum FM wattage of one; it does, however, forbid the sale of advertising, which still constitutes a discriminatory measure. In Colombia, on the other hand, where a highly advanced democracy is upheld by the nation's constitution, up to 500 watts are authorized, and advertising is permitted, although not for political propaganda. In Ecuador, community radio stations have legal status with a maximum permitted wattage of 150 for FM and 250 for AM broadcasting. Paraguay also safeguards the rights of community radio stations, while in Brazil and Bolivia the União de Redes Radiofonicas and Educación Radiofonica, respectively, have reached advanced stages of negotiation for this purpose. In Mexico a proposal has been put forward to create 'citizen radio and television' stations.

In this way, the coexistence of private, public and community stations, corresponding to each of the three sectors into which contemporary democracy is organized, is advancing on the radio and television broadcasting front in the region.

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