PSB: THE BEGINNING OF THE END, OR A NEW BEGINNING IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

Introduction

According to some views, any consideration of “future scenarios” in relation to public service broadcasting is almost a contradiction in terms. As we will see below, some people want PSB to have no future. Others have already concluded that it will not have one: „Neither domestic democracy groups nor foreign donors have prioritized PSB as an option for Africa. PSB has not been assessed as a challenge, but rather as an institution belonging to the past” (Kivikuru, 2006: 7). There are also those who are prepared to consider only past scenarios. Still others want PSB to have a future, but are not sure that it can be guaranteed.

One thing is certain: if PSB is to have a future, it must both retain its basic characteristics and change very significantly (see Jakubowicz, 2006a). This change is absolutely necessary to allow PSB to catch up with contemporary reality in many of its aspects. This is the only way to ensure the viability and relevance of PSB and the genuine support of the public for its continued existence. Supporters of the ”attrition model” of PSB (see below) are now on the offensive and may be very persuasive in convincing governments and policy-makers that PSB is no longer needed are should at least be significantly reduced in its scale of operation and impact on the market. According to Siune and Hulten (1998: 36) (“Public service broadcasting will continue as long as there is a dual system at the national or European level with enough support from the political system as well as the audience for its services”. One of the pillars on which PSB rests, i.e. support from the political system, is beginning to waver. Therefore, there is need to strengthen the other one: support from the public. Strong support from this quarter may prompt a reconsideration of official policy in this area.

Change must encompass practically every area of PSB activity. This obviously applies both to technology and programming. A solution will one day have to be found as concerns financing, since licence fees cannot go on forever. However, the key – and, in my view, decisive – change must concern the public service broadcaster’s relationship with the audience. Without fundamental change in this area, PSB can hardly look forward to a long future.
What is legitimate for PSB today?

There is not one, but at least three answers to this question. The first is that nothing is legitimate. This is the answer given by supporters of the neo-liberal approach to PSB. According to them, the proper mechanism for the satisfaction of individual and social needs is the market where required goods or services can be purchased. The law of supply and demand, together with the profit motive, will ensure provision of these goods and services. State or public sector involvement in meeting these needs is unnecessary and unwelcome. Therefore, nothing is legitimate for PSB, as it should simply be dismantled.

The second answer is that only a narrow range of selected services and platforms traditionally associated with PSB is legitimate for it. According to this view, the market should indeed predominate, but since it does not meet every need, there is room for the public sector to supplement what the market has to offer. Nonetheless, public institutions should under no circumstances compete with private enterprise, nor engage in any kind of activity that private entrepreneurs might wish to pursue. So, according to this market-failure rationale for PSB, what is needed is ‘pure PSB’ as a niche broadcaster, offering only broadcast content and services which private broadcasters find commercially unrewarding.

This approach is reflected in the long-standing campaign of commercial broadcasters vis-à-vis national and EU policy-makers (ACT, EPC, AER, 2004; VPRT, 2003). This campaign, which could be described as seeking to implement the “attrition model” of PSB, seeks to pursue three main strategies:

1. An “arrested PSB evolution” strategy (ultimately leading to the marginalization and obsolescence of PSB, culminating in its disappearance), comprising:
   a. A “semantic’ strategy, arguing that public service broadcasting should remain precisely that, broadcasting, and PSB organizations should not be allowed to move into the new technologies (seen by commercial broadcasters as their next frontier and growth area, where they would like to see as little competition as possible);
   b. A “clear and precise definition of the remit’ strategy, designed to obtain a detailed legal definition of PSB in its traditional form (generalist, universally accessible broadcast channels) which could then be used to block any change of the remit and means of delivering it (e.g. move into thematic channels, use of new technologies which may not be immediately accessible to all, and would in any case be used only by a part of the audience);
2. A “harmless PSB” strategy, comprising:
   a. Demands that PSB be reduced to redressing market failure by providing programming commercial broadcasters find unattractive, and thus turn into a niche broadcaster;
   b. Demands that PSB be prevented from running advertising;
   c. Demands that production of “PSB content” be financed by a special fund and commissioned from all comers, so PSB organizations do not monopolize funds or production capacity;
3. And a “PSB no longer needed” strategy, following on from the previous one, based on the argument that so much “PSB content” can be found in the programming of commercial broadcasters, or is/can be produced by others, that PSB organizations as such are no longer necessary for the audience to have access to it.

The clearest manifestation of this approach is the approximately 30 complaints lodged with the European Commission by the private sector (Mortensen, 2005, 2006; Ward, 2002,
2003), questioning any new development in PSB, whether in terms of programme profiles of particular services or of technology, going beyond the 1960s model of “one-size-fits-all” traditional generalist channels addressed to the entire population of a country.

In short, this approach – which may be called “liberalism with a human face” – would result in a process of marginalization and slow death of PSB.

And then there is the third answer: that **everything is legitimate if it serves the execution of the remit in ways that are effective and relevant to the public.** This approach proceeds from the view that whatever the market may offer, the community still has a duty to guarantee both provision of electronic media services free from the effect of the profit motive, offering the individual both a “basic supply” of what he/she needs as a member of a particular society and culture, and of a particular polity and democratic system, and provision of content adjusted to special needs and interests. Proponents of this approach cherish more values than just those related to the market and motivations than just the profit motive. From this point of view, the market-failure argument in favour of PSB is insufficient, precisely because that argument should turn on the vision of society we want to live in and the kind of service PSB provides to that society.

Supporters of this approach also emphasise the need to modernise PSB and adjust it to new technological realities. Hence the proposed change of name: no longer public service broadcasting, but public service (electronic) media (PSM), encompassing a much wider range of platforms than just plain old radiodiffusion. They also point to changing social realities and the need to extend the range of content provided by PSB.

The present paper will explore this third approach.

**Where are (electronic) media headed?**

Though a great deal has to change also in the area of PSB content, let us begin with technology as here the need for change is overpowering. On the assumption that PSB should at least keep pace with changes in patterns of social communication, we need briefly to trace these processes of change.

Galperin and Bar (2002) offer this view of the general pattern of electronic media development (see also Noam, 1995).
Table 1. Evolution of Distribution Platforms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution Platform</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Business Model</th>
<th>Competitive and Policy Issues</th>
<th>Regulatory Model</th>
<th>Consumer Choice/Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrestrial Broadcast</td>
<td>One-way broadcast channels</td>
<td>Advertising/license fees</td>
<td>Access to and property rights over spectrum, negative and positive externalities, and economies of scale</td>
<td>Public trustee. Ex ante structural and behavioural regulation to influence content</td>
<td>Very limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable/Satellite</td>
<td>Mostly one-way multiple video channels, and limited interactivity including video on demand, pay-per-view</td>
<td>Some targeted advertising, license fees and subscriptions</td>
<td>Vertically integrated distribution and content production, negative externalities, control access to consumer, and economies of size and scope</td>
<td>Mixed public trustee and limited utility regulation. Content regulation using ex ante structural and behavioural regulations</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP based (Video over DSL/Broadband)</td>
<td>Two-way interactive multiple video channels</td>
<td>Targeted advertising, subscription and transaction fees</td>
<td>Access control</td>
<td>Yet to be determined</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Galperin and Ba (2002).

What the “digital revolution” means for the overall electronic media landscape is shown in Figure 1. It is clear that it is multiplying platforms of content delivery and by the same token intensifying competition on the market.

Figure 1. The new system of content- and service delivery

Source: Nissen, 2006 (after Andreas Weis, ARD).
However, that is by no means the end of the story. Digitization promotes convergence, i.e. the take-over of all forms of media by one technology: digital computers, capable of handling multimedia content. This changes or eliminates constraints which until now have limited communication, leading to the ability of different network platforms to carry essentially similar kinds of services, as telecommunication networks provide distant people with connectibility and access to content anywhere.

The main features of fully developed convergent digital communication which most likely will be the prevalent (though not the only) mode of communication in the Information Society include:

- Multimedia communication;
- Interactivity: interchangeable sender/receive roles;
- Pull technology (non-linear, on-demand communication and access to content, i.e. “take what you want, when you want it”) gradually replaces push technology (linear communication: “take what you are given, when it is available”);
- Asynchronous communication: content can be stored and await the user’s decision to access it, ultimately doing away with traditional linear-time delivery of content in electronic media (unless it is wanted or needed);
- Individualization/personalization (customisation): both the sender and the user are able to guide communication flows in such a way that the sender can address individual users with content selected according to different criteria, or users can select content from what is on offer;
- Portability of terminals and mobility: the ability to receive content while on the move, as well as the ability to receive specific, time-sensitive and often location-sensitive information);
- Disintermediation (elimination of intermediaries, e.g. media organizations, as anyone can offer information and other content to be directly accessed by users and receivers) and ‘neo-intermediation’ (emergence of new intermediaries, especially on the Internet, capable of offering new services or packaging content in new ways);
- ‘Anyone, Anything, Anytime, Anywhere’ – the ultimate goal of access to anyone from any place and at any time, and to all existing content stored in electronic memory.

These features of convergent digital communication are profoundly changing patterns of societal communication, especially mediated communication, as shown in Figure 2.
Traditional mass media (including PSB) naturally fell squarely within the “allocution” model. Now, “allocution” is, to some degree, being complemented (or replaced?) by “consultation” and “conversation”. This is aided by a new stage in the development of the Internet, known as Web 2.0, based on an implicit “architecture of participation”, a built-in ethic of cooperation, in which the service acts primarily as an intelligent broker, connecting the edges to each other and harnessing the power of the users themselves (O’Reilly, 2005; see also Sifry, 2006). All this, says Stark (2006), amounts to a revolution based on a simple concept: semiotic democracy, or the ability of users to produce and disseminate new creations and to take part in public cultural discourse. Users are by and large developing and posting their own original creations. Anyone can now become a creator, a publisher, an author via this new form of cultural discourse, a platform to publish to the world at large that grants near instant publication and access. The publisher-centric business models of the 20th century will not last, says Stark. We will see massive disintermediation in the next decade or so. More artists, creators, citizen journalists (see Kim, Hamilton, 2006, on „OhmyNews”) and others will self-publish, and they will find ways to do so in a sustainable way, perhaps by selling mp3s on their website, opportunities for production work, or touring to a greater number of fans.

What is emerging is “a digital commons”, also known under other names, e.g. ”information commons “(Kranich, 2004). This is also confirmed by the use of social networking websites in the United Kingdom:

The high growth in social networking sites - and in other areas of user-generated internet content - does not seem to be merely an ephemeral phenomenon. Many industry observers believe that this could signal the next stage in the “democratization” of the internet - meaning that consumers are no longer merely “end users” of information and services provided by a smaller number of hosts/content generators, but instead are increasingly becoming both consumers and generators themselves (OFCOM, 2006: 110).

The emergence of „conversation” in mediated electronic communication marks a new stage of social communication. The nature of this new stage is summed up by Kün’s (2002)
comments on “old” versus “new” assumptions about the nature and strategic significance of content. According to old assumptions, content is the product of scarce creative skills and trained discriminating minds. Now, anything can be content and content does not have to be produced by experts. In fact, many users are happiest producing their own content. Again, according to old assumptions, “content is king”. According to new ones, “content may be king, but the new media space is ruled by an entire royal family”. Access to customers (conduit) and brands are just as important as content.

Küng’s (2002) comparison of old and new media content takes the form of Table 2.

Table 2. “Old” and “new” assumptions about the nature and strategic significance of content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>“Old” Media Content</th>
<th>“New” Media Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core customer proposition</td>
<td>Information, education, entertainment</td>
<td>Synthesis of information, communication and service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic communication paradigm</td>
<td>One-to-many, mass</td>
<td>Two-way, personalized, interactive, on-demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between content and technology</td>
<td>Message not medium</td>
<td>Message and medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is quality</td>
<td>“Quality” content fulfils exalted goals and has intellectual and artistic merits</td>
<td>Quality content keeps users on the site and is constantly refreshed and updated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who produces content?</td>
<td>Experts dictate</td>
<td>Customer in the driving seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Content-generation relies on artistic expertise and discriminating minds</td>
<td>• Decides what, when, and in which form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The end of “journalist knows best”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Successful content often generated by users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with commercial elements</td>
<td>Content and commerce strictly separated and clearly labeled</td>
<td>Content and commerce inextricably linked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Linear, narrative, on or off, pre-selected or packaged, fixed schedule</td>
<td>Molecular orientated around 3-D hierarchical matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of creativity</td>
<td>Intellectual and artistic elements</td>
<td>Information engineering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Küng, 2002.

Of course, we should not get carried away. Historically, media development has been cumulative, rather than substitutive, so allocation (broadcasting) is unlikely to disappear in the Information Society: “Internet TV will not substitute for traditional TV for a considerable period of time. The different forms and transmission and media will complement each other” (Henten, Tadayoni, 2002: 19). As The Economist has put it, “Certainly, digital media will create new stars and new businesses, but making high-quality video content will always be a daunting and expensive task. Music or a blog can be composed from a bedroom, but not an
An episode of ‘Friends’” (“Don't write off Hollywood and the big media groups just yet”, The Economist, Jan. 19th 2006). In another article The Economist drives the point home. Commenting on News Corporation’s move into the internet and other new media, it concludes: “Nevertheless, it is News Corporation's big legacy businesses [i.e. old media – K.J.] that will mostly determine whether the company can adapt to a new era for the media industry. That is why Mr. Murdoch will need to keep focusing on making money from television, films and newspapers as well as his trendy new web communities” (“Old mogul, new media: Can Rupert Murdoch adapt News Corporation to the digital age?” The Economist, Jan. 19th 2006).

Nevertheless, the digital revolution will mean significant changes in the media. One view of the process is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Three Phases of the Digital Revolution (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase One</th>
<th>Phase Two</th>
<th>Phase Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-channel</td>
<td>Pay TV dominant</td>
<td>Broadband dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay TV &amp; broadband on the rise</td>
<td>Broadband gaining</td>
<td>Free to air ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free-to-air remains dominant</td>
<td>Free-to-air in decline</td>
<td>Local content ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


However, while this analysis points to important future trends (e.g. uncertainty concerning the ability of free-to-air channels to survive, or the ability of electronic media to provide much local content), it pays too little attention to what has been called “the mediatization of the Internet and internetization of the mass media” (Fortunati, 2005; see also Henten, Tadayoni, 2002), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Three Phases of the Digital Revolution (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Set-top boxes with over 200 digital channels.</td>
<td>• Second generation set-top boxes, offering storage and a return path.</td>
<td>• Fully converged digital TV and web devices, with integrated media navigators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Widescreen TV increasingly available.</td>
<td>• Improved interactive services and improved access to archives.</td>
<td>• Full portability and mobility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some near-video-on-demand (NVOD) and other limited interactive services.</td>
<td>• Reasonable quality downloadable video.</td>
<td>• Full interactivity and archive access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Downloadable low quality video.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4 concerns the technological convergence of the Internet and broadcast media, but Internetization of the mass media will, of course, also have a profound on the content, user experience (e.g. interactivity) and on the production process:

Starting to work on the Internet to produce television programmes and being able to include users as agents in the project right from the start is a way of creating a useful synergy, by making use of the interactivity offered by the internet in an original way.
that is not a posteriori on an already made product, but a priori, in planning the product itself (Fortunati, 2005: 41-42).

**Where is PSB headed?**

Suter (2005) depicts the evolution of British PSB in the following way:

**Figure 3. Stages of PSB Evolution in the UK**

Monopoly Managed economy Multichannel Multimedia Fully Digital

However, in view of the “attrition model of PSB” described above, the exact consequences of reaching the “multimedia” and “fully digital” stages of development are in dispute. Can PSB use “multimedia” in order to treat the Internet as another, stand-alone platform for delivery of PSB content and for the performance of the remit, or should the Internet be used only in an auxiliary capacity, to support on-air programming? And what does “fully digital” mean? Can PSB fully use the opportunities offered by digital ICTs, or should it confine itself to migrating its unchanged generalist channels to DTT? (see Aslama, Syvertsen, forthcoming).

These are no idle questions. In fact, the future of PSB hangs in the balance. Wiio (2004) has identified a wide range of service packages which digital television can provide. If “fully digital” means no more than PSB migration to DTT, then PSB will be incapable of providing the great majority of those service packages, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Digital television service packages offered by PSB and commercial operators according to the “attrition model” of PSB**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service packages</th>
<th>Who will be able to offer them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic programmes (channels) that are more diverse than the current analogue television world</td>
<td>Both PSB and commercial broadcasters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compilation programmes (channels) targeted at a special audience that is more diverse than the current analogue television world</td>
<td>Commercial broadcasters alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual programme services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interactive programme services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Online programme services of standard programmes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Online services of archives etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A pay-tv environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More advanced device management (including time transfer capability)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Wiio, 2004.
If that were to be the case, then PSB would certainly have no future. This view of PSB in the 21st century is obviously rejected by the public service broadcasters themselves (see Digital Strategy Group, 2002). When the BBC recently announced its “Creative Future” programme, Director-General Mark Thompson said among other things:

The BBC should no longer think of itself as a broadcaster of TV and radio and some new media on the side. We should aim to deliver public service content to our audiences in whatever media and on whatever device makes sense for them, whether they are at home or on the move.

We can deliver much more public value when we think across all platforms and consider how audiences can find our best content, content that’s more relevant, more useful and more valuable to them.

I see a unique creative opportunity. This new digital world is a better world for public service content than the old one (“Creative Future - BBC addresses creative challenges of on-demand”. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2006/04_april/25/creative.shtml] (emphasis added - K.J.).

As is clear from this quotation, the use of new technologies is primarily driven by the programming opportunities they offer in creating additional ways of more effectively delivering the public service remit.

This is also underlined by Nissen (2006), as he identifies new challenges facing PSB and ways of responding to them.

Figure 4. PSM obligations – their background and consequences

Nissen thus clearly agrees with Wiio (2004) who noted that PSB needs to operate three types and levels of services:

- **Traditional linear programme services for the general public.** In all probability, these services will remain the core of public service television services in the foreseeable future. The services for large audiences can include programme-specific interactivity or items whose reception calls for active involvement by the recipient. However, the nature of basic services for large audiences ought to also include the fact that they can be received as intact entities also without value added services.

- **Linear services targeted at special audiences.** The core of these consists of special channels without generalist audience objectives but which seek to reach certain target groups. Typical channels of this kind include channels specialising in news and current affairs production, cultural channels and language-based channels. The level of interactivity of services for special audiences ought to be higher than it is in the case of services targeted at the general public. As their name would suggest, the audiences gained by these channels are smaller than the audiences for the traditional basic channels.

- **Personal services,** performing what is known as “personalized public service”. These services include all those services which each recipient can as an individual choose to use. Central to these services is strong interactivity; they can be “ordered” either from the public service operator's own service garden or through digital television from the network. The public service operator can be responsible for the contents of these services only in so far as they are included in that public service operator's own range of products. The level of interactivity is higher the closer one moves towards personal services.

These personalized public services can be programme-linked, or programme-independent, providing value-added services. Some examples of programme-linked services are provided in Figure 5.
There are, however, also other examples of the creating use of new technologies by public service broadcasters. The BBC will allow audiences to create personal radio stations from its content. The planned service - provisionally called MyBBCRadio – will use a BBC iPlayer that will combine existing online radio services, along with TV on demand, to allow the audience greater flexibility and choice over when it can view or listen to shows. MyBBCRadio would use peer-to-peer technology to provide thousands or millions of individual radio services created by audiences themselves.

Another example is provided by podcasting, offered by both public and commercial broadcasters, especially in the area of news and interview shows. In Australia it has been announced that once digital radio is launched, listeners may be able to download music tracks from radio stations, buying tracks in real time over special mobile phone handsets.

All this raises important issues concerning the fundamental features of PSB as traditionally understood. The use of thematic services, and even more so of personalized ones, can be seen as undercutting what has always been regarded as a distinguishing element of PSB, i.e. universality of content and access.

Universality in this sense was a requirement of the early phase of PSB development, a time of “an economy of scarcity” in broadcasting, when universal service provision via the PSB was the only appropriate solution at the time. Today, audiences are signalling by their user behaviour that in addition to generalist services, they also want more and more thematic and personalized/individualized content. This is why, in its 2002 report “Media with a purpose. Public Service Broadcasting in the digital era”, the EBU’s Digital Strategy Group called for a redefinition of basic concepts relating to public service broadcasting, including universality of access and universality of content.
• Universality of content can no longer be understood as one-size-fits-all programming on one or more broadcast channels, but as both universality of basic supply on generalist channels (including mass-appeal, entertainment programming), which will be central to what public service broadcasters offer to the public, and universality across the full portfolio of services, some of them specialized or tailored for specific audiences, adding up to a more extended and comprehensive range of services;

• Universality of access can no longer be understood as a couple of terrestrial channels available to the entire population, but as presence on all relevant media and platforms with significant penetration, but also the ability to deliver a ‘personalized public service’ in the ‘pull’, online and on-demand environment (see EBU, 2002).

The question, of course, is what is meant by “relevant media platforms”? “Relevance” should no longer be tied to the ability to perform a universal service or to the size of the audience. Rather to the ability to perform the service needed by the audience, in ways it expects to be served.

All this, of course, richly justifies the proposed change of name for PSB (see Nissen, 2006): if broadcasting is to be only one of many means of delivery for public service content, then we should drop the “B” from the name and speak about public service (electronic) media, or PSM.

What are the likely scenarios for the future of PSB/PSM programming?

Hujanen (2002) believes that in order to survive in the digital media ecology, PSB must retain – and indeed concentrate on – its role as a content producer and provider. That is certainly true, especially given doubts as to the future of local content on television, but the moot question concerns the nature of that content.

The model of PSB/PSM for the future can most appropriately be called one of „full portfolio distinctiveness”. This is needed also in order for PSB/PSM to retain its role as an effective tool of structural regulation of the electronic media market in general.

“Full portfolio” refers both to the full range of platforms and forms of delivery that PSM institutions should be able to use, and to the full range of content that they should offer. As noted by Collins (2003), ‘the public service character and obligations are of the essence and must inform the very fabric and texture of the broadcaster. […] It also follows that the public character is reflected in the overall schedule and is not something which inhere in individual programmes which are then distributed across a schedule, somewhat like sultanas in a fruitcake.’ Also the BBC (2004) notes that “today the public, both in the BBC’s research and in a recent large-scale survey conducted by Ofcom, continue to define public service broadcasting (PSB) not as a narrow set of particular programme categories which the market may fail to provide, but as a broad and integrated system of programmes and services. To them, PSB includes soaps, drama, sport, comedy and natural history just as much as (and in some cases, even more than) the traditional ‘public service’ categories of current affairs, arts and religion”. Let us also note, that speaking during the European Audiovisual Conference in 2005, Mark Thompson, BBC Director General, noted “Guaranteed, large-scale European investment in many categories of content will continue to require active public intervention. There’s a big difference between simple variety and genuine choice. Many genres will be under-represented – not just current affairs, the arts and religion, but also the rather less obviously public service genre of comedy. The digital space is a public space, an increasingly
important part of the wider public realm. It will need active civic intervention and significant public investment if it is deliver its full potential to the people of Europe”.

Distinctiveness, on the other hand, refers primarily to content. The rationale for PSM existence is that it offers content different from that of commercial broadcasters (see Bardoel, d’Haenens, Peeters, 2004). This is why, for example, Mark Thompson said in his already quoted speech that it will be hard for PSB to continue to justify their historic levels of acquisition of US imports when this is available elsewhere.

It is customary to say that the traditional public service remit fully retains its relevance and importance in the 21st century. This is no doubt true. Yet, at the same time, nothing is the same as it was 80 years ago when that remit was first formulated. Social, cultural, technological and economic change have been so profound that the traditional remit can by no means respond to the needs of the public today. Changing circumstances require its thorough redefinition and extension, by adding new elements to those from the past.

Below, we will present ways of extending the PSB remit in response to new circumstances. For reasons of space, it will not be possible to argue the case for these extensions, but the reasons for them should be clear from the nature of the new tasks which should be assigned to PSM organizations.

Table 6. New PSB/PSM tasks in relation to political citizenship and democracy

Traditional tasks of PSB

- Serve democracy at local, regional and national levels  
- Represent civil society vis-à-vis the authorities  
- Provide a forum of public debate  
- Serve as a watchdog of the government

Additional tasks of PSM

- Inform citizens of the work of international organizations  
- Contribute to creating a public sphere and elements of a civil society at the regional, continental and global levels  
- Serve as a watchdog of international and global organizations  
- Develop social capital and a sense of community and co-responsibility for the nation-state at a time when cyberspace allows individuals to participate in virtual communities and become detached from their own societies and nations
Table 7. New PSB/PSM tasks in relation to culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional tasks of PSB</th>
<th>Additional Tasks of PSM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Development and protection of national culture and identity (as well as of those of</td>
<td>1. Serving minorities and immigrant communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minorities), including: providing universal access to culture, raising the cultural</td>
<td>in a way which satisfies their cultural and linguistic needs, but does not prevent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competence of the audience, creating new audiovisual works, supporting and</td>
<td>their integration with the rest of the population;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>promoting creative talent, investment into domestic audiovisual production,</td>
<td>2. Creating a sense of affinity and understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facilitating cultural events, promoting the national culture(s) abroad</td>
<td>with the people of other countries in the region, especially if the country in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>question is involved in some international integration scheme;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Promoting intercultural and inter-religious dialogue at home and internationally;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Promoting acceptance of, and respect for,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cultural diversity, while at the same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>introducing the audience to the cultures of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other peoples around the world;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Striving to prevent, or reduce, the digital divide, so that no-one is prevented from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>access to culture via the new technologies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. New PSB/PSM tasks in relation to education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional tasks of PSB</th>
<th>Additional tasks of PSM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Broadcast school and</td>
<td>1. Contribute to life-long learning systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational programming</td>
<td>2. Contribute to e-learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Launch projects like the</td>
<td>3. Adjust educational content to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open University</td>
<td>requirements of the 21st century (see e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Varis, n.d.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 For more on this, see Jakubowicz, 2006b,
Table 9. Tasks of PSM as a cultural industry

1. Promote domestic audiovisual production by maintaining a high share of original domestic works in air time;

2. Make optimal use of audiovisual archives by launching new channels (alone or in collaboration with Rother partners, as well as other programme and content services, e.g. VOD (see Tambini, 2006);

3. Promote the growth of the programme industry by:
   a. Commissioning production of radio, television and Internet content from independent producers;
   b. Establish terms of trade with independent producers so that they can retain some rights and exploit them to gain an additional revenue stream, enabling them to develop their production facilities and finance new production;

4. Promote the development of audiovisual culture and production in the country as a whole by:
   a. Maintaining local or regional stations or production centres;
   b. Commissioning production from independent producers throughout the country;

5. Continuous training of staff;

6. Financing research and development to promote technological progress in broadcasting and multimedia;

7. Active involvement in all elements of the digital switch-over;

8. Development of revenue streams from market activities (other than selling advertising time) in order to reduce dependence on licence fee revenue and to avoid or minimize the need for raising the level of the fee;

9. Cooperation with private companies, but without putting non-commercial programme goals at risk;

10. Respect for the rules of competition and fair trading, as well as State aid regulations;

11. Providing value for money, high economic effectiveness and careful use of public funds.
Table 10. Tasks of PSB in terms of social cohesion

Traditional tasks of PSB

- Create a reference point in programming for society as a whole as a way of promoting social cohesion and integrating all members of the audience
- Reject any discrimination in programming (or employment)

Additional tasks of PSM

- Public service media should contribute to removing the digital divide and exclusion by:
  1. Developing strong and recognizable programme and institutional brands, serving as a beacon for people among the multitude of new content providers
  2. Being available on all digital platforms, and thus attracting people to gain access to them
  3. Supporting traditional broadcasting content with Internet and interactive resources
  4. Providing multimedia interactive services, independent and complimentary web services
  5. Serving as a trusted third party, a reliable and trustworthy guide to content in the online world
  6. Actively promoting digital media literacy and awareness of the tools of the information society, in particular the use of the Internet
  7. Providing content to local and minority languages in order to encourage minorities to use the tools of the information society, as well as for groups neglected by commercial content providers
  8. Promoting open standards in API, CA/CI, etc

PSB and the Public: a New Partnership

Public service broadcasting has come a long way since its paternalistic beginnings. One thing, however, has remained basically unchanged, and that is the asymmetrical relationship between PSB organizations and their audience.

Scannell (1989: 163-164) noted that PSB – despite its “fundamentally democratic thrust” (in that it made available to all virtually the whole spectrum of public life and extended the universe of discourse), and the original purpose for its introduction was to introduce social equality in access to information and all other content) – has been a system based on unequal and asymmetrical relations between broadcasters and the audience. In this system of representative communicative democracy, power accrued “to the representatives, not those whom they represent”. According to Ytreberg (2002), there are four ideal types of self-presentation of PSB: paternalists, bureaucrats, charismatics and avant-gardists. Not one of these ideal types assumes anything else than an institution apart, aloof from the audience to which it speaks and seeking legitimation in terms of the content it delivers to the audience. Not one of these ideal types assumes the renunciation of PSB power.

No only that. Scannell’s (n.d.: 27) comment – “The sense that the BBC is part of the world of ‘them’ rather than ‘us’ – a world that is somewhere else than where listeners and
viewers are – has persisted until this day” (Scannell, n.d.: 27) – can apply to many other PSB organizations, as well.

This, quite clearly, cannot continue. The original model of PSB was based, as noted above, on an unequal, asymmetrical relations between the audience on the one hand, and broadcasters, cultural elite and the state on the other. That was legitimated by social divisions and stratification. Since then, the levelling of living and educational standards as well as democratization have led to the rejection of such asymmetrical relations. Now, the process has gone further: as King (2002) puts it, we are at the end of the era when “experts dictate” and the “journalist is always right”. More than that, at the time of “semiotic democracy” “Many […] barriers are already breaking down – the lines between "amateur" and "professional," and "user" and "creator" are becoming increasingly blurred” (Stark, 2006).

Of course, we must not fall prey to the naïve belief, prevalent at one time in the democratization of communication discourse (see Jakubowicz, 1993), that people badly served by existing radio systems (including women, trade unionists, the minorities, the blind, the housebound) "given half a chance, might also become broadcasters in their own right" (Partridge, 1982: 2). Not by any means will everyone become a professional. Yet, as Stark (2006) points out, “the age of the superstar is set to decline”. As more people have more access to culture that interests them, coupled with the proper tools to get them there, it is highly likely – she continues – that they will not all gravitate toward the same megastars. Throughout the last fifty years, culture in the western world has primarily been filtered by a few major corporate entities, sometimes looking for the next best thing, and increasingly trying just to recreate it. “The digital cultural revolution, if it materialises, will enable us to forgo those filters and seek out more of what we like, or perhaps enable us to discover something we love, but would have never known it otherwise”.

Unless PSB organizations grasp this and reorient their approach to the public accordingly, they will indeed be doomed, Collins, Finn, McFadyen and Hopkins (2001: 11) similarly point to the important role of the PSB broadcasters themselves in safeguarding their own future: “People should be able to feel that public service broadcasting is theirs […] New media, as several public service broadcasters have recognized, provide striking opportunities to break out of [the] “take what you are given” mode. But organizational changes also offer public service broadcasters to build new relationships of partnership, identification, and sense of shared ownership which involve viewers, listeners and Web surfers – indeed, which make receivers into senders” (see also Kearns, 2003).

This issue, however, has wider ramifications. John Keane (1991, 1993) has called for a fundamental revision of the public service model, so that it would “aim to facilitate a genuine commonwealth of forms of life, tastes and opinions, to empower a plurality of citizens who are governed neither by despotic states nor by market forces. It would circulate to them a wide variety of opinions” (Keane, 1993: 6). This would serve the purpose of decommodifying and maximizing freedom and equality of communication, and would require – in Keane’s view – massive public intervention into the media system in order to develop a plurality of non-state media and, among other things, to guarantee rights of access to air time for individuals, groups and independent programme makers.

In short, Keane’s legal, institutional and financial proposals concerning practical ways and means of implementing this concept harked back to the ideas of the 1960s and 1970s. If, however, one fast-forwards to the 21st century, it becomes obvious that all this is in the process of emergence thanks to the ICTs. Thus, Keane’s vision – which has a great deal to commend it – can largely be achieved simply by opening up PSM media to the world of semiotic democracy and encouraging them to keep abreast of trends in societal communication.
One modest example of his is a weblog written by editors from across BBC News outlets on television, radio and online. It aims to make the corporation’s editorial decision-making process more transparent. The idea is to institute direct dialogue between the editors and the audience, as that the editors may obtain immediate feedback regarding their programmes and engage in discussion with interested viewers and listeners. However, the main avenue to explore is how to introduce user-generated content into the PSM programme offer – naturally without compromising its quality.

This would serve a number of purposes: it would allow PSM to acknowledge the role of the public as an active partner, and no longer just passive receiver; to reconnect with the public in ways suited to the 21st century and to make public media truly public. While practical ways of achieving this goal would require thorough consideration, this would fundamentally democratize PSM and bring it into line with trends in society and social communication.

European Organizations

The EU and the Council of Europe differ significantly in their approach to public service media. It is clear that while for the EU, PSB/PSM is part of many problems, primarily to do with protection of competition, and is usually considered only from this point of view, for the Council of Europe PSB/PSM is part of the solution to many problems.

For the EU, PSB has always been “a square peg in a round hole” of its audiovisual policy (see Jakubowicz, 2004), though it has to be stated that the European Commission has – in considering complaints against PSB organizations – often rejected attempts to constrain PSB to the antiquated 1960s model. In one area, which is crucial from our point of view, it has so far failed to take a clear stand. That concerns the ability of PSB organizations to move into new technologies (see Mortensen, 2006).

Speaking at a Presidency Seminar in Amsterdam in 2004, a representative of DG Competition had this to say on PSB and new services:

We need to avoid what we call ‘mission creep’. You start doing one thing and in the end you find yourself doing other things as well. In the sphere of media convergence that leads to a blurring of sectors. There is a question of what information services should be provided as public services. How far should public service broadcasters develop individualised services? What are the special characteristics of public service news sites compared to online newspapers? […] Take, for example, an investor who has a brilliant idea, invests in all kinds of facilities and develops a new service and then discovers the public service broadcaster is providing a similar service that alters the market and opportunities for private investors. Another challenge for the future is digitalisation. At present most households have a variety of generalist channels. That is fine, as you can provide entertainment, sports, and then you attract a viewer to a channel. […] With the growth of niche channels questions are raised such as, is there a need for public service sport channels or will there be a need for a public service football channel? (Depypere, 2004).

Thus, the Commission are a bit like King Canute, sitting on the beach and hoping that in this particular instance they can stop the process of convergence and the “blurring of sectors” – though they do not seem to mind when the same is happening in the private sector.
This is important because there is a clear link between EU policy and national media policy in Member States:

Given the ambiguous stand of the EU policy makers in different countries have responded differently to the challenges posed to public broadcasters [by the new technologies]. While some have encouraged, obliged or supported endeavours to develop new services and enter new platforms, others have reacted more hesitantly or passively, or have introduced restrictions on what public broadcasters are allowed to do with new media. … Generally, encouragement or support have not been forthcoming regarding the involvement of public broadcasters in the internet and mobile media. As a consequence, the less affluent public broadcasters have had fewer opportunities to develop new services (Aslama, Syvertsen, forthcoming; see also Betzel, 2003; Betzel, forthcoming).

Thus, if the Commission continues to apply State Aid rules in the way it does, it may be closing the door to PSB’s modernization and adaptation to the realities of the Information Society, and thus to its future existence.

The Council of Europe approaches this issue in an entirely different way. It consistently promotes public service broadcasting and its independence and special remit, considering it as an indispensable part of the media system and of crucial importance to the exercise of many human rights. The remit is defined as offering news, educational, cultural and entertainment programmes aimed at different categories of the public and supporting the values underlying the political, legal and social structures of democratic societies, in particular respect for human rights, culture and political pluralism. A 2003 CM Recommendation on Measures to Promote the Democratic and Social Contribution of Digital Broadcasting calls on members to create the conditions required to enable public service broadcasters to fulfil their remit in the best manner while adapting to the new digital environment. This may include the provision of new digital and on-line services. Public service broadcasters should play a central role in the transition process to digital terrestrial broadcasting.

In November 2006, the CDMC will consider a draft recommendation on the remit of the public service media in the information society. If adopted, the recommendation will then be passed on to the Committee of Ministers for approval.

The draft instrument calls on CoE Member States to:

1. guarantee the fundamental role of the public service media in the new digital environment, setting a clear remit for public service media, and enabling them to use new technical means to better fulfil this remit and adapt to rapid changes in the current media and technological landscape, and to changes in the viewing and listening patterns and expectations of the audience;

2. include, where they have not already done so, provisions in their legislation/regulations specific to the remit of public service media, covering in particular the new communication services, thereby enabling public service media to make full use of their potential and especially to promote broader democratic, social and cultural participation, inter alia with the help of new interactive technologies;

3. guarantee, via a secure and appropriate financing and organisational framework, public service media the conditions required to carry out the function entrusted to
them by Member States in the new digital environment, in a transparent and accountable manner;

4. enable public service media to respond fully and effectively to the challenges of the information society, respecting the public/private dual structure of the European electronic media landscape and paying attention to market and competition questions;

5. offer universal access to public service media for all individuals and social groups, including minority and disadvantaged groups, through a range of technological means;

Attached to the draft recommendation are “Guiding principles concerning the remit of public service media in the information society”, outlining in more detail how PSM organizations can perform their tasks with the use of a full array of new technologies and what conditions are required for them to fulfil the public service remit in the information society. PSM tasks are defined as being:

- a reference point for all members of the public, with universal access offered;
- a factor for social cohesion and integration of all individuals, groups and communities;
- a source of impartial and independent information and comment, and of innovatory and varied content which complies with high ethical and quality standards;
- a forum for public discussion and a means of promoting broader democratic participation of individuals;
- an active contributor to audiovisual creation and production and to a greater appreciation and dissemination of the diversity of national and European cultural heritage.

In short, the draft recommendation applies the “full portfolio distinctiveness” model of PSM and, if approved, will be the first European standard-setting document clearly pointing to ways of securing the future of PSM in the Information Society.

Thus, the CoE, at any rate, wants to see a new beginning for PSM in the 21st century.

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