ARTS COUNCIL OF THE AIR: SWITCHING ATTENTION FROM THE SERVICE TO THE PROGRAMME

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One of the indices of the health or otherwise of Public Service Broadcasting is the varying need to define what it is: for several decades, due to its strength and importance in public life, there was little demand for precise elaboration of the meaning of the set of values and assumptions on which it was built. Today, in many countries there is a clamour, often aggressively articulated, for definitions that can be operationalised in actual programme-making routines, and then, in some cases, co-opted by private broadcasters into rationales for widening the patronage spread of the public purse.

Traditionally, Public Service Broadcasting existed within a set of organisational conditions that developed between the two world wars, shaping first radio then television. Of fundamental importance was a trust in and certainty about the source and level of funding, which privileged the notion that money was there to make programmes, thus elevating the role of the producer-as-creator, rather than the notion centred in commercial broadcasting, that programmes should exist to make money, thus elevating the role of the producer as inspired forecaster of what programming the market would pay for. Public Service Broadcasting was about citizens in the nation, not consumers in the marketplace. The undergirding political philosophy focused on the importance of public culture as the condition in which informed and involved citizenship would flourish, and the role of public communication systems, untrammelled by commercial or political interference, in ensuring the health of the cultural life of a society. Actual histories of specific Public Service Broadcasting systems reveal, of course, that day-to-day reality did not always synchronise with the ideal: funding was limited by politicians' long-stand-

ing reluctance to raise the licence fee, Governments had an endemic urge to regard broadcasting as an arm of State policy implementation, and the desire to make society a "better" place often rested on a paternalistic attitude to audience wants and needs. But, whatever about failures in practice, Public Service Broadcasting was firmly rooted, as a belief system and a set of institutional practices, in the optimistic, humanistic Enlightenment idea that the world can be made a humane place for all, and that the collective (the nation, the region) is important in order to allow the individual to flourish. Public good and public service converged in broadcasting.

At its best, Public Service Broadcasting offers geographically universal access to a wide range of programmes that meets general taste and interest as well as minority interests, whether those are regional, linguistic, generational or confessional. It contributes to a sense of national and regional identity, reflecting and sustaining a shared culture within a national territory and stresses competition for good programming rather than for audience numbers. As a common reference point for all members of the public, it sustains a forum for democratic debate and gives public access to events of national significance, as when broadcasting creates the cultural space in real time for national celebration or national mourning. The ethos of Public Service Broadcasting emphasises making a space for innovation and extensive original production, which is of wide public interest as well as attentive to the need of minorities.

The Public Sphere

Over the last decade, as the idea of Public Service Broadcasting has come under attack from a corporatist ethic of consumer sovereignty, its roots have remained firmly embedded in the Enlightenment ideal of the body politic, fulfilling its duty to make strategic interventions in order to sustain the general well-being of society. This linkage was given a more explicit theoretical sustenance through the academic discourse that increasingly centred on the Habermasian notion of the "public sphere" (Habermas 1989), which situates modes of public communication at the heart of the democratic process. Habermas argued that a democratic public sphere came into being in Western Europe during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a free space of public discussion among citizens. Through horizontal communication patterns fostered in literary and political clubs, tea and coffee houses and readers' clubs for the discussion of newspapers, journals and books, more and more citizens were drawn into participation in public affairs. Public opinion began to emerge in this discursive space, situated between the private sphere of everyday life and the public power of the State. The burgeoning output of the printing presses intensified public discussion, on which a new phenomenon, public opinion, began to thrive.

Habermas's view of the evolution of the "public sphere" has been subjected to vigorous criticism for under-emphasising the relationship between the class structure and the public sphere and for ignoring the exclusion of women from the expanding public sphere in the nineteenth century (Reading 1995; Fraser 1993). Others have criticised Habermas for undervaluing the development of a plebeian public sphere, built upon different institutional forms, in opposition to the bourgeois public sphere, for idealising the bourgeois public sphere as always sustained by freely discoursing intellectuals in search of public enlightenment, rather than by booty capitalists in search of a quick profit, and for exaggerating the manipulative powers of the controllers of the cultural industries and neglecting the possibilities of public service models of State

intervention within the public sphere (Garnham 1992).

Despite these criticisms, which are, in any event, aimed at a book written more than three decades ago, the notion of a public sphere and its relationship with the provision of information has had an important influence upon debates on the structure of mass media and democratic politics, debates that escape from the sometimes hermetically sealed world of academic discourse and enter the worlds of popular culture and even parliamentary discussion.

Insofar as there is a "crisis" in Public Service Broadcasting, it can be discerned immediately at the level of language, where competing discourses, fashioned by particular ideologies, struggle to establish their "common sense" in the policy arena. It is true now that the very idea of a "public good," of a publicly funded and organised intervention to sustain a "public sphere" in the face of what Habermas called "refeudalisation" tendencies, no longer commands a consensus in public debate, though an alternative is rarely laid out in rationalistic discourse. The recent publication in Ireland of a Green Paper on Broadcasting (1995) is a case in point. The philosophical envelope of the document was formed within the sociological and cultural terms of a broadly Habermasian approach to the public sphere, and it called for strong support for a revitalised Public Service Broadcasting system. Negative reaction, however, took the form of **ad hominem** attacks on the ministerial author for being "pretentious" or dismissal of the language of the Paper for being obscurantist, rather than engagement with the rationale it constructed. If academic discourse is to be effective outside the walls of academe (a point I return to below), the problem of gulfs between discursive formations must be recognised. It is not a question of building one's case more carefully, of choosing language more judiciously, but of recognising the ideological foundations of an alternative discourse which is struggling to appear rational, natural, unproblematic.

The alternative model of social order, which came to the fore with the growth of the multi-channel television environment, focused on the argument that "public" intervention in broadcasting is inappropriate and unnecessary. The liberal theory of the free press, long in gestation, argues that the market will provide appropriate processes of public communication to support democracy and guarantee freedom from State abuse of power. This argument has been helped, as Garnham (1992, 363-364) points out, by the inability of the Left to escape from the model and argue convincingly that market forces can produce oligopoly control and a narrowing of programme choice and diversity. Left critics of Public Service Broadcasting have concentrated their critiques on the hegemonic nature of State power exercised through the Public Service form, for example, criticising the inadequacy of the rules of balance within which Public Service Broadcasters must operate, falling back on idealist notions of free communications with no organisational substance or material support, or promoting a kind of technical Utopianism that sees a way out towards "free communication" in the expansion of channels.

Much of the discussion of Public Service Broadcasting to date has centred on the structural conditions for communication within the public sphere, focusing on the problems of media organisations, questions of ownership and control, rules for access, forms of funding and the political and legal ecology in which media organisations must operate (see, for instance, Blumler and Nossiter 1991, OECD 1993; Veljanovski 1989; Aldridge and Hewitt 1994; Miller and Allen 1994; Siune and Truetzschler 1992;

Blumler 1992). But, increasingly, it is at the level of representation, where debate focuses on media output, that one finds the liveliest comparison of the merits of public service and private broadcasting systems. The dimension of representation in the public sphere, as Dahlgren (1995, 15) points out, focuses attention on such basic questions as what should be selected for portrayal and how it should be represented, but Dahlgren's emphasis on news reporting and other journalistic genres must be expanded to include all other broadcasting genres and important constituents of public culture in their own right and not just as the "semiotic environment" of journalistic material.

How should we analyse the role of Public Service Broadcasting in stimulating national audio-visual production, through film and television, especially in the vitally important area of fiction? In dual funded Public Service Broadcasting systems, how do particular genres of programming fare as the balance between advertising-based and licence fee funding shifts radically in favour of the former? In Portugal, for instance, the licence fee represented 20 per cent of the income of RTP by 1990. The fee was abolished the following year, in a discursive environment in which private operators won the argument about "unfair competition." Data gathered subsequently (Traquina 1995) suggest an advanced degree of convergence between the programming output of public and private broadcasters, eliciting serious concerns about the raison d'être of Public Service Broadcasting (which still receives substantial State subsidies for "public services" rendered to the Portuguese Government).

For dual-funded Public Service Broadcasters in particular, the pattern has a "no win" look to it: with increasing reluctance on the part of governments to raise the licence fee, and the consequent reliance on advertising income, not only is output increasingly influenced by commercial rather than public service imperatives, but the very basis for arguing the need for public funding, is eroded. The discourse of competition regulation, amplified at the populist level with sporting metaphors of "fair play" (the "level playing field" etc.) and at the administrative level through the ideology of GATT and trans-national agencies like the World Trade Organisation, can quickly swamp arguments based on the need for public intervention, to ensure a public culture in which universal access to a broad range of information and entertainment is guaranteed. In this issue, Michael Tracey paints an ever bleaker picture with his argument that the erosion of the traditional base of support for public service broadcasting has tenacious roots in the nature of the present moment in history and the "deep rhythms" of the socio-cultural tensions that underpin it.

The British Experience

In the Anglophone world, programme output has been to the fore in debates on the future of broadcasting. At its core is the problematising of the notion of "Public Service Broadcasting" and the attempt to redefine it, not as a type of media organisation, offering a particular service or schedule that differs from that offered by solely market-driven organisations existing to generate profits for shareholders, but as a quality inherent in individual programmes. As Raymond Williams (1975) insisted many years ago, the defining characteristic of broadcasting, as a technology and as a cultural form, is the mobile concept of planned sequence or "flow," as a major element in programming policy as it also is in viewer experience. Seen in this way, Public Service Broadcasting is a particular organising principle which sets up this flow and addresses the viewer in a particular way, funded in a particular way and answerable to the demo-

cratic process in a particular way. But a newer, market-based discourse, making no reference to Williams, presses the more static concept of the "distribution" of discrete programme "units." "Public Service" programmes can therefore be isolated from the flow and examined to see if they have "Public Service" qualities. In effect, this means programmes that are expensive to produce and likely to attract few viewers or listeners, those that would not survive in a purely commercial system. For private broadcasters required by legislation to accept some guidelines on programming from Government (for example, a significant presence of News and Current Affairs programmes in their schedules, rules about the prime time scheduling of major evening television newscasts etc.), it is tempting to argue that some of their programmes are "public service" and therefore deserve public funding. If this argument is accepted, then the logical conclusion is the need for an agency to oversee the disbursement of licence fee funding to any broadcaster, public, private or community, who can demonstrate that particular programmes meet the criteria of "public service."

In Britain, in the 1980s, debate on programming converged on the notion of an "Arts Council of the Air," that is a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation (or quango) which would collect the licence fee from viewers and disburse it to any broadcaster able to demonstrate that it needed the money to make particular "public service" programmes. The "Arts Council of the Air" concept had its origin in the free market think tanks that underpinned government policy formulation for broadcasting in the Thatcher era and had a strong influence on the Peacock Commission (1986), which recommended the establishment of a Public Service Broadcasting Council with the remit to give grants for "public service" programming. The Peacock Commission had been established by the Thatcher Government to see if the BBC could in future be supported by advertising and many expected its report to go well down the road towards recommending privatisation of the BBC. Its radical right thinking was spurred on by The Times newspaper, which argued in a series of editorials in 1985 that the BBC should be broken up into a series of franchises that could be bought by commercial companies. These new channels would be financed by advertising, possibly augmented by a portion of the licence fee if they would abide by public service conditions.

When The Peacock Report was published in July 1986, it steered well away from recommending advertising for the BBC (thus incurring the displeasure of Mrs. Thatcher), because it concluded that the total television advertising market was not capable of funding the BBC as well as independent television. It did recommend, however, that both ITV and the BBC should be required to take 40% of their programmes from the independent sector (the Government finally settled for 25%, to be phased in over five years). What was particularly good news for Murdoch's fledgling Sky Channel, already sensing new markets in Eastern Europe, was Peacock's recommendation, (eventually installed in legislation in 1990) that ITV franchises in future would be auctioned, rather than awarded on merit, thus making it more difficult for the ITV system to buy the expensive mix of British drama, American blockbuster films and live sport that had previously provided stiff competition to Sky. Murdoch continued to press the argument for a move from a system in which, as he put it, market considerations were marginal, to a market system in which public broadcasting would be part of the market mix but no longer dominating the output. The ideal scenario was a BBC slimmed down to its "public service" core showing unpopular material that didn't interest satellite channels anyway. If Sky News found itself in commercial difficulties, there should

be no reason why it could not reorganise itself as an independent, non-profit company and make a plea for finance.

Despite these arguments, the notion of an Arts Council of the Air did not survive the drafting of the 1990 Broadcasting Act. But the idea did not go away. In 1991, Andrew Neil, the editor of the Sunday Times, breathed new life into it through a strong campaign in Murdoch's other broadsheet newspaper. The Arts Council idea caught the attention of some Tory Ministers in charge of broadcasting, including Kenneth Baker and Peter Brooke, although it was rejected as "potty" by David Mellor. The argument for an Arts Council of the Air died a slow death in the Major administration, the coup de grace, probably delivered in a discussion of the future of the BBC on The Late Show in which David Attenborough pressed Peter Brooke for the Government's definition of "public service programming:" how could anyone decide which programmes contained a public service element and which did not? Surely public service broadcasting was a system of channels, Attenborough argued, and not a reference to particular programmes which might need financial support. The Minister replied that nobody really knew what it was, but everyone could recognise it when they saw it: "like an elephant" (Horrie and Clarke 1994, 232).

When the Green Paper on "The Future of the BBC" was published in 1992, it asked the same question as the Irish 1995 Green Paper: should there be a Public Service Broadcasting Council (in the Irish paper, a Super Authority) to regulate and finance public service broadcasting? Among all the responses to the British Green Paper there was an overwhelming consensus against the introduction of a Public Service Broadcasting Council as a dispenser of public funds. The Cable Television Association was alone in arguing for a national Arts Council of the Air to ensure secure funding "for programmes of merit which would be unlikely to be broadcast" in a competitive environment (Goodwin and Stevenson 1995, 16). ITV, which might in theory be a beneficiary of the proposed council, rejected the idea, as did Channel 4. Channel 4 recognised that it too might be one of the main beneficiaries but argued that committees do not as a rule make good decisions about highly subjective matters like programmes and that such a funding system "would inevitably bring politicians and bureaucrats closer to decisions about individual programmes than is healthy in a democracy" (Goodwin and Stevenson 1995, 17). Channel 4 did not believe it would encourage ITV either to carry "public service" programmes, because the subsidy for low audience programmes would not make up for the lost revenues needed by mass appeal channels. Channel 4 concluded "we can find no argument that a public service broadcasting council would improve the quality of programmes on offer to the viewer; quite the reverse, it also risks impoverishing the BBC: it is simply a rotten idea." The Arts Council of Great Britain (the real one) likewise rejected the idea of an Arts Council of the Air, because of the danger of conferring significant financial power on one organisation and the danger that it could lead to "a narrowing of the range of programmes, removing arts programmes from the broad programming mix in which they flourish"(Goodwin and Stevenson 1995, 18).

New Zealand

While the Arts Council of the Air concept has made little progress in Britain, it has been imported and established as a functioning part of the new broadcasting order in the former colony of New Zealand. In the 1980s, the ideological commitment of the

New Zealand Government, in the direction of neo-liberal privatisation of State companies, has had a major impact on the structure of broadcasting. Despite strong arguments within both State and business sectors for complete privatisation, the Government opted to restructure the two Public Service television channels as one "State owned Enterprise" (SOE), with the remit to operate entirely as private businesses, without the expectation of public subsidies, aiming primarily to generate profit and return a dividend to the State. TVNZ Limited has no obligation to support public service objectives and has no local content quota or requirement to broadcast news or other informative or educative programmes. Many considered the SOE model a first step to privatisation.

The 1989 Broadcasting Act which set these changes in motion established a broadcasting commission, commonly known as New Zealand on Air (NZOA), with a mandate to collect the licence fee and use it to reflect and develop New Zealand (including Maori) identity and culture by distributing it to any broadcaster or production company that would successfully bid for funding. The Act, which avoided the terms "public service" or "non commercial" in favour of "New Zealand content" stipulates that television drama and documentary must be promoted and encourages part-funding of projects to ensure that NZOA's funds are effectively used. It also requires NZOA to take into account in its funding decisions the likelihood of programmes being broadcast without public funding and the potential size of the audience attracted to any programme funded by it (Bell 1995, 187-188).

Thus, the licence fee no longer supports anything like a Public Service Broadcasting system in the Reithian tradition, nor does it support the production of non commercial programmes of limited audience appeal within a broadly commercial system. Rather, it ensures that a range of local programming continues to be made in a deregulated broadcasting market dominated by foreign content. The emphasis is on supporting programmes aimed at a mass audience — soap operas, comedies, game shows, magazine and lifestyle programmes — more than half of which are produced by independents on a contract basis. The "downsizing" of TVNZ (shedding hundreds of staff, reducing overheads, selling or leasing production facilities) has traded economic efficiency for media workers' employment security, and the rising cost of foreign programme acquisition, driven up by competition between broadcasters, has been partly offset by increased production of cheap local programming adhering to successful overseas formats (Bell 1995, 191-192). Public funding has thus worked as an industrial subsidy to support locally produced programmes according to largely commercial imperatives, within a market framework. Some of these projects, supported by NZOA, have involved overseas companies in the production of programmes in New Zealand (considered increasingly as a cheap and efficient production site by international film and television companies), but intended for overseas audiences, as a broadcast commodity and as a promotion for the tourist industry.

The establishment of NZOA has been based on Peacock's (1986) Arts Council of the Air but its effects on programming have been quite divergent from what has been postulated by supporters of the idea in Britain. Since all broadcasters in New Zealand are now driven solely by commercial imperatives and since they make the decision on what gets broadcast and in what position in the broadcasting schedules, they control how the licence fee gets spent. Competition for ratings and advertisers leads to an inevitable reluctance to screen "risky" programmes during prime time. This direction

in general converges with NZOA's interpretation of its mandate as a publicly-funded body (and perhaps also its awareness of its vulnerability to the increasing influence of powerful lobbies pushing for total privatisation that exist within both Government and business sectors) to maximise the cultural "value" of the licence fee through prime time programming accessible to the majority of the audience. NZOA concentrates on extracting as much volume as possible from the licence fee to ensure that "New Zealand content" occupies a prominent place in the schedules.

The result is a television system driven by the need to provide entertainment to as large an audience as possible. Although NZOA has substantially supported Maori programming and local programming aimed at "minority" audiences (for example, pre-school children) the need to maintain ratings dominates most programming decisions, so that "the proliferation of programmes and channels does not equate with the proliferation of choice" (Bell 1995, 197). In the absence of any Public Service alternatives, the "national" on NZTV is equated more and more with consumerism and less with citizenship. A former Director-General of NZTV, who worked through the changes introduced by the Broadcasting Act of 1989, now considers that the New Zealand experiment with the centralised distribution of licence fee funds, although an elegant concept, "was and is a failure" (Mounter 1986) for a number of reasons. The NZOA, from the start, exercised a strong measure of editorial control under a wide brief and immediately set out to influence productions aimed at large audiences (soap operas, comedy programmes and "soft" current affairs programmes) which would probably have grown to their current levels without an injection of public funds. NZTV found itself without funds to support what would traditionally have been regarded as Public Service Broadcasting, because on the one hand NZOA would not give it funds for low audience programming, and the other, it felt constrained, as an SOE expected to yield a dividend to its single shareholder, by the difficulties of using commercial monies to fund programmes which would depress its ratings, lose it commercial income and detract from its profitability.

How did New Zealand arrive at a situation where it is increasingly difficult to identify on television anything that might clearly be identified as "public service" programming? As the quantity of commercial income overtook the licence fee income, and as the threat of increased penetration of satellite television grew more real, debate intensified over what "public service" programming should be and whether public funding should go into an organisation in which it was difficult to discern what public service programmes were being financed with the licence fee. It quickly emerged that, contrary to Channel 4's argument (already quoted) that commercial television companies would not be enticed to bid for "public service" programming funds "because the subsidy for low audience programmes would not make up for the lost revenues needed by mass appeal programmes" (Goodwin and Stevenson 1995, 18), in New Zealand, TV3 and the subscription service Sky did express a wish to produce "public service" programming. The result is a loss of programme diversity that raises concerns similar to those raised in this issue by Sakae Ishikawa, which focus on the contemporary commonplace assertion that competition in itself produces diversity as its natural by-product, ignoring the fact that "diversity" in this context has been stripped of the important cultural assets it once had.

Ireland

New Zealand is not the only country to entertain the argument that Public Service Broadcasters can survive only if they are freed to compete fully in a commercial framework and to find commercial broadcasters eyeing the licence fee as an attractive additional source of income as more competitors vie for advertisers' limited funds. Rupert Murdoch had argued in the mid-1980s that BBC 1 should become a privatised commercial operation, funded by advertising and sponsorship, and BBC 2 should preserve something called "Public Service Broadcasting," transformed into a charitable trust and financed by private donations on the American model. He did not point out that the public broadcasting service in the U.S. has never escaped from the "cultural ghetto" in which Government policy placed it and reaches only a tiny proportion of the potential audience (see Chown in this issue).

The idea of an "Arts Council of the Air" has surfaced once again in the Anglophone world, in the Green Paper on Broadcasting (1995), which opens up some questions about the future of Irish broadcasting. The Public Service Broadcaster, RTÉ is currently funded to about 40 per cent of its income by licence fee and the mixed funding structure produces many of the difficulties found in similar broadcasting systems elsewhere. Working to both a public service and a commercial remit simultaneously causes internal management difficulties (for example, how to handle the ethical issues arising out of advertising aimed at children: what level of support can continue to be given to service minority theatrical or musical tastes etc.) which are frequently mirrored in public perception difficulties. Competitive neutrality difficulties arise when commercial competitors argue that licence fees give an advantage to one broadcaster over another. Politicians become sensitive, to questions about how public monies are spent in programming and to continual pressure from private broadcasters to maintain the "level playing pitch" of competition (see Corcoran 1991).

The Green Paper suggests there "maybe an argument" for merging the policy and regulatory functions of the RTÉ Authority and the Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC) which regulates commercial broadcasting, into one "Super Authority" (1995, 166) and very tentatively suggests that this body could be charged with "the responsibility for disbursement to all broadcasters in accordance with clear criteria that would be set out in legislation" (IRTC 1995, 185). The IRTC response to the Green Paper adopts this suggestion with enthusiasm: "based on the belief that Public Service Broadcasting is no longer the sole preserve of RTÉ, the licence fee revenue [...] should be channelled through the new Authority for appropriate disbursement" (IRTC 1995, 6). RTÉ opposes this idea. A Government decision is expected before the end of 1996, by which time the expanding broadcasting environment in Ireland will have been put on a new legislative footing.

The ultimate argument for the future of Public Service Broadcasting is that it is offering programming which the commercial sector does not offer. But is this argument losing rhetorical force? As most parts of the world move from a single channel regime to a multi-channel one, Public Service Broadcasters will be judged on their programmes, by audiences that have alternatives available. The fractured public discourse about the general condition of broadcasting questions not only the authority of public service organisations to speak to and on behalf of the whole society, but even the role of governance in human affairs within the parameters of a coherent socio-

political entity imbued with a civic ethic. The argument can be maintained most effectively and concretely by Public Service Broadcasters, increasingly working to both a public service and a commercial remit, being able to offer something unique within the alleged cornucopia of choice opened up by cable and satellite, and soon, by digital terrestrial television. If the strategic goal is to rebuild the concepts of public sphere and national community, it is best done not just at a theoretical level, but at the concrete level of demonstrating in actual programming practice the need for a national broadcasting service which works against the centrifugal tendencies in contemporary social experience, against division, degradation and domination. Programme makers must build audiences which realise with appreciation that this is the national public service broadcaster, and to do this, they need structures of accountability which go far beyond sensitivity to market demand on the one hand or government pleasure on the other. In this issue, Karol Jacubowicz analyses the structures emerging in the post-Communist environment of East and Central European broadcasting, while Richard Collins and James Purnell set out an alternative vision of the selection and role of the Governors of the BBC.

Policy Formulation

Public Service Broadcasters are ultimately judged by their performance, that is by the programmes they transmit and when they do so. For all academics interested in the well-being of broadcasting, or in a position to influence the direction broadcasting takes, the challenge is to close the gap between normative social theory and actual programming policy operationalised within particular organisational settings. If this gap is not closed, there is a danger that a notion of "public interest" will be used (or at least be seen to be used) as "an ideological device designed to cloak unjustified regulatory ambitions on the part of Governments, or even as a weapon in the assault on more fundamental liberties of expression and of business enterprise (McQuail 1992, 3).

Questions of representation, of programme form and content, must ultimately be linked back to questions of structure — finance, regulation and accountability. For dual-funded Public Service Broadcasters, who must be commercially successful, continual tensions have to be resolved at the level of resource allocation between the demands of maintaining public service principles and the need to produce programmes that will reach large audiences. To maintain this balance, structures of accountability, in particular, will have to be perfected, so that Public Service Broadcasters can declare, with some empirical credibility, that they are indeed broadcasting "in the public interest." Recent research on the responsiveness of European broadcasters suggests that ways of supplementing political accountability with other lines of responsiveness (for example, administrative accountability vis-à-vis viewers' complaints, interests and needs; consultative and advisory structures; quality and use of audience research in programme planning and scheduling; direct audience feedback in "talkback" programmes or town hall meetings with broadcasters etc.) "range from the non-existent to the haphazard to the more elaborately self-serving" (Mitchell and Blumler 1994, 229). Political accountability also needs careful examination in each specific political environment, to see if present institutions can pass what Collins and Purnell in this issue call "the Berlusconi Test:" would they survive the equivalent of the Italian Prime Minister in his re-stocking of the directorate and top management of RAI?

The goal of this issue of ***Javnost—The Public*** is to focus academic thinking on the

challenges presented to Public Service Broadcasting in a fast changing world where traditional support can no longer be assumed to hold. It is worth noting in this context a doubt-laden, self-reflexivity that has been expressed in recent journal issues (for example, the ***Journal of Communication*** 43(3), 1993) recognising that despite the increasing centrality of communication and information generally in the political and economic life of countries, existing links between communications scholarship and public policy are weak and unsatisfactory. Given the revolutionary changes under way in the economic and technological structure of information industries, it is probably true to say that "research has not played a prominent role in defining the way these changes in institutions and macro-social processes are understood" (Mueller 1995, 458) nor has communications scholarship had a noticeable impact upon the response of public policy to these developments and to social discourse about them.

Why is this? One answer must lie in the structure of the profession, as Mueller (1995) points out: the relative weakness within media studies of a political economy of communication and information, which would provide the ground for a theoretical analysis and critique of public policy. But the jarring disjunction that exists between academic practice and policy making must also be explained in terms of the more general process of what Garnham (1995, 373) calls the "defenestration" of intellectuals from contemporary public life, which robs them of any grounds for policy intervention in the processes and institutions of cultural production. Cultural and Media Studies are particularly vulnerable to forms of post-Modernist scepticism that question the very role of values in the work of intellectuals and in cultural processes in general, and sometimes produce a wary ambivalence about the very value of Public Service Broadcasting. In a world of inherently relativistic cultural difference, the intellectual has tended to become the interpreter of the passing scene, the "boulevardiers" of contemporary culture, oiling the wheels of inter-cultural understanding. As Richard Roarty (quoted in Garnham 1995, 378) points out, there is a tendency in cultural studies "to academicise politics, abandon a public language, fettishise difference and treat 'issues of race, class and gender' as a universal mantra."

But the wound is not all self-inflicted. Larger formations, political rather than academic in nature, also played a role. In the 1980s in Britain, for example, the political project of the Thatcherite right was based on a narrative of national decline, in which intellectuals were cast in a key role. The culture of scapegoating and blame which provided an ideological alliance with supporters of the privatisation of Public Service Broadcasting was directed at rooting out the intellectual ethos embedded in humanistic education because it was perceived to be associated with an anti-entrepreneurial ethos and the propagation of socialism. Sociology was not a science but ill-disguised left-wing propaganda. Critical intellectuals became "the chattering classes," "whingers," "hand-wringers," and at the more robust end of the market, "wankers," who, when not actively subversive, were out of touch with economic and social realities" (Garnham 1995, 375). In this issue, Michael Tracey notes how the post-war social and economic consensual order was deconstructed and replaced by a rightist ideological order in which "the individual" and "the market" would play a new role, and Peter Dahlgren traces a similar onslaught on the Swedish corporatist consensual order in the 1980s.

It is interesting to note that three of the writers in this issue are academics who are, or have been, actively involved in broadcasting policy making in their own countries. In situations like these, the interface between the dominant discourse of broadcasters

(who increasingly interpret their relations with their audiences not in terms of maintaining a common culture but in terms of advertising demographics) with the discourse of such academics (increasingly imbued with the narrative of the public sphere) is the site where the very pragmatic work of public service broadcasting policy-making takes place. It remains to be seen whether the idea of the public sphere, which has been supplanting the notion of dominant ideology as a key point of orientation within academic discourse, can nudge broadcasters themselves, as well as policy makers, to bestow a key role in their on the concept of a social totality governed by reason in which the exercise of critical discourse, through fiction and non-fiction broadcasting genres alike, will have a central place. From two very different continents and political systems, we see in this issue examples of different alternatives to public service broadcasting that can emerge. Nikhil Sinha analyses the emerging broadcasting order in India, as the public interest, caught between State and market forces, finds itself increasingly squeezed out in a new television agenda that relinquishes almost all its previous commitment to the development process. And in Italy, Cinzia Padovani and Andrew Calabrese subject the current broadcasting order to historical scrutiny to see how the process of the decay in the importance and justification of public broadcasting takes place and how public space is increasingly steered by profit-based considerations.

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