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Chapter 1

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'ISES' AND 'OUGHTS'

Public service broadcasting in Europe

Preface

THE ORIGINAL TEXT FROM WHICH THIS CHAPTER IS DRAWN, was first published in 1998 (Collins 1998) and is based on research undertaken in the early 1990s. What has changed in public service broadcasting (PSB) since then?

First, it's important to note that although PSB has extended beyond its origins in Western Europe (notably to what Louis Hartz called the new societies created by Europe in its own image in North and South America, Australasia and Africa) its heartland remains in Western Europe. It's particularly striking that, in spite of strenuous efforts, public service broadcasting has not yet been implanted successfully in Central and Eastern Europe. Karel Jakubowicz, of Telewizja Polska, observed (2002: pp. 6–7) that 'In Central and Eastern Europe . . . many state and public service broadcasters have already been marginalized and are limping along.' East European PSB is weak despite Western European states' (and public service broadcasters') efforts to assist countries that were formerly on the east side of the Iron Curtain in developing a robust civil society with a strong PSB pillar. Central to these efforts has been the merger of the European Broadcasting Union and its eastern equivalent, the OIRT (Organisation Internationale de Radio et Télévision), in 1993. However, PSB has not, it seems, been able to do much more than figure as an ideal to those working to (re)establish democratic and pluralistic societies east of the Elbe. And in more than one of the 'new societies' considered by Hartz (e.g., in Canada and New Zealand) PSB has lost ground.

In its West European heartlands, PSB has enjoyed mixed fortunes. In some countries (e.g., Germany and the UK) PSB has maintained a dominant position in the radio and television markets and has successfully extended its presence onto the world wide web. Some, however, argue that PSB has secured such successes at the price of a fatal compromise of its programming ideals. Aidan White the General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, for example, has argued that 'Over the last 20 years many of Europe's public broadcasters have moved in a decidedly commercial direction. Companies like ARD, ZDF, RAI, TVE, RTP and the BBC' have been seeking to maximise market share and increase their commercial revenues' (White 2002: p. 12).

Nonetheless, PSB retains its place in the hearts and minds of many European politicians and viewers and listeners. Its special status has been sanctified by a special public service broadcasting amendment (the 'Amsterdam Protocol') to the European Treaty and a Resolution and a separate Recommendation each supporting public service broadcasting by the Council of Europe.² However, the special status for public service broadcasting, established in national laws and regulatory

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regimes and in pan-European provisions such as these, has not prevented national and European competition authorities from persistently raising concerns about the privileged status of public service broadcasters and their, possibly, anti-competitive behaviour. For example, the UK's main competition regulator, the Director General of Fair Trading John Vickers, referred specifically to the BBC in his speech 'Competition Policy and Broadcasting' of 24 June 2002 and observed, 'Should some broadcaster(s) have special immunity from competition law, perhaps on grounds of having a "public service" remit? Not in my view. It is clear that some socially desirable services need subsidy to be provided. However, the provision of such services should not result in undue distortion of competition on the wider market place' (Vickers 2002: p. 3).

All of these live issues centring on PSB raise questions of definition – what is public service broadcasting? The same question is addressed in the text that follows.

Introduction

'Does public service broadcasting cut such a poor figure? The end of its monopoly and the advent of television from space, enabling satellites to relay a vast quantity of programmes from elsewhere, in multilingual versions, on channels that digital compression has made less scarce—do, in fact suggest that the vocation of national stations must evolve in both public and private sectors' (Bourges 1993: p. 2). Between 1982 and 1992, European public service broadcasting experienced an unprecedentedly comprehensive and intense two-fold regime of change: technological change, in the form of communication satellites, and regulatory change, in the form of the integration of the European Community's (later European Union) television market under the jurisdiction of the European Commission's Competition Directorate. These interdependent forces shifted the European broadcasting paradigm and transformed a long established European regime, based on national broadcasting markets dominated, if not monopolised, by a single national public service broadcaster, into a new, pluralised (and in some areas genuinely competitive) transnational system.

Satellites made it possible for new services to be established and for new services to cross national frontiers. Creation of a single European market in television among the Member States of the European Community (EC) meant that television, hitherto regulated under national (and largely non-commercial) regimes, was henceforth conceived as a service traded within and between EC Member States and subject to EC competition regulation. These changes revealed fissures in, and between, the institutional and ideological definitions of European public service broadcasting and showed that European public service broadcasters did not always agree on what public service broadcasting was.

The introduction of a new information and communication technology, satellite television, in Europe in the early eighties transformed the conditions under which television broadcasting had hitherto been arranged. It provoked widespread debate about the ends and means of broadcasting policy and a recognition that broadcasting policy could no longer be made in the old, largely national, terms. Abolition of spectrum scarcity seemed to delegitimise political intervention in broadcasting markets; no matter that there were, and are, other grounds for intervention in broadcasting markets.³ And new services were slowly established which eroded the privileged positions enjoyed by national public service broadcasters. Accordingly, the case for the organisation of broadcasting on market lines grew in force and salience – not least because the formidable 'Television without Frontiers' Green Paper (Commission of the European Communities 1984) provided solid arguments for considering television a traded service.

Such arguments were strengthened by the perceived failure of public service broadcasting. New services and new possibilities focused attention on public service broadcasters' performance which was trenchantly criticised for wasteful use of resources, poor matching of programme

supply to audiences (Peacock 1991; Stewart 1986). The force of such criticism in the industry. ITV (I were characterised over-staffing and

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Definitions

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supply to audience demand, and susceptibility to capture by political and cultural elites, (see, *inter alia*, Peacock 1986, Keane 1991: pp. 54–7 and Kimmel 1982 *passim* and Kumar (in MacCabe and Stewart 1986). Indeed, the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) itself has acknowledged the force of such criticisms stating: 'For much of its history, the BBC has been part of a high cost industry. ITV (Independent Television) and ILR (Independent Local Radio)⁴ as well as the BBC were characterised by entrenched working practices, cumbersome organisation structures, over-staffing and poor industrial relations' (BBC 1992: p. 52).

In contrast, advocates of market principles of organisation claimed that provision of broadcasting services via markets, (even if imperfect markets),⁵ better matches offer to demand, (thanks to a signalling system via price which registers the preferences and intensity of preferences of consumers), uses resources more efficiently and is less subject to capture by cultural and political elites than is and was public service broadcasting (see, *inter alia*, Peacock 1986). Their theoretical case seemed to be empirically vindicated by a substantial shift in viewing in favour of the new commercial services. The combination of technological and regulatory change thus altered the landscape of European broadcasting both empirically, through the establishment of new services, and theoretically, by posing a powerful intellectual and ideological challenge to established public service rationales.

Definitions of public service broadcasting

What then is the 'public service broadcasting' that was threatened? Perhaps we all know what we mean by the term. But what is customarily taken for granted customarily proves troublesome. What one believes a term to mean may not correspond to what others understand by it. Induction and deduction offer possible routes to a definition of public service broadcasting: induction via codification of what public service broadcasting 'is'; deduction via theoretical systematisation of what public service broadcasting 'ought' to be. Characteristically, inductivists have been concerned with the actual historical practice of public service broadcasters whereas deductivists have focused on a theoretical ideal of public service broadcasting. Blumler (1992) provides an inductive, empirical, approach to the question, as do the Broadcasting Research Unit (BRU) and some of the cogitations of public service broadcasters themselves (e.g., Perez 1983 and 1983a). Garnham (1990 and 1992), Keane (1991), and other neo-Habermasians⁶ offer a deductive, theoretical, approach.

These approaches can be characterised respectively as studies (and defences) of public service broadcasters and of public service broadcasting. The first type of approach has an admirable concreteness but, for good or ill, weds its exponents indissolubly to the practice of actual and existing public service broadcasters the second, for good or ill, emancipates its exponents from the challenging task of defending the historical practice of public service broadcasters but risking idealist invocation of 'oughts' with a tenuous connection to real historical 'ises'.

The 'ises' of public service broadcasting

The modern era has seen the emergence of three distinct forms of state. Monolithic, often absolutist, states, (such as the former Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China), in which the boundaries between a centralised state apparatus, political party and control of economic activity are absent or indistinct. States where government and its apparatus perform a 'night-watchman' function in respect of the economy and in which political parties and the apparatus of the state, (often a plural apparatus), are clearly differentiated, where economic activity takes place within a framework of law established and guaranteed by political authority, but where political

authority (in theory at least) has no direct part in economic activity, (such as the United States of America). And a third, intermediate, form of state, (such as the states of Western Europe), where economic activity is characteristically but not exclusively conducted by the private sector, where political authorities intervene more actively in the economy than is characteristic in the second kind of state but less comprehensively than is characteristic of the first, and where the state apparatus is customarily distinct from political parties. This third, intermediate, type of state customarily has a pluralistic and decentred structure to the state and its apparatus. States such as these often have a rich, and sometimes confusing, plurality of state and para-statal structures.

These three types of state have distinctive and characteristic forms of organisation of broadcasting. In the first kind of state, broadcasting is customarily organised as an arm of government, in the second it is customarily located in the private sector (and therefore absent from government and any state sector), and in the third it is part of the state, but part of a decentred and pluralistic structure of political power and authority. European public service broadcasting organisations have been the locus of state institutional power in broadcasting and characteristically separate from government but part of a loose and pluralistic state structure.

European states characteristically established their broadcasting services as national public sector monopolies. Although broadcasting in several European countries (including the UK) was begun by commercial interests, (seeking to create a market for radio receivers), for the most part private interests soon lost their hold on broadcasting. True, in some countries such as Germany (where the Reichs Rundfunk Gesellschaft had significant participation from the private sector) and France (which had a number of commercial stations in the interwar years, including some for foreign listeners transmitted in languages other than French) the private sector retained a presence. But after the Second World War, French broadcasting came to be dominated by a public sector national broadcaster, the ORTF (Office de la Radiodiffusion et Télévision Française), and German broadcasting was reconstructed by the Allied Control Commissions on exclusively public service lines. However, exceptionally, Luxembourg, perennially the black sheep of European broadcasting, maintained a profit making public company delivering advertising financed services (and services which, moreover, were directed to listeners outside Luxembourg). It was subsequently joined by other European states, first the UK and Finland in the 1950s, in permitting commercial services. But, in spite of these exceptions, European television was dominated by national public service monopolies until the 1980s.

The European experience contrasted with that of other developed countries. In the USA broadcasting was commercial. In Australia and Canada and South Africa, for example, public service broadcasting was belatedly established to complement and compete with established commercial services. Europe was thus the heartland of what came to be known as 'public service broadcasting', a distinctive institutional form which characteristically combined three elements: publicly owned not for profit organisation, a monopoly of service provision and a strongly normative programming policy emphasising national and high cultural themes. It is perhaps only from a contemporary perspective – which has a strong anti-statist flavour (it is not only east of the Elbe that the doctrine of 'Perestroika' has come to dominate) – that the organisational form which so many states chose for broadcasting requires to be explained and justified.

Yet justification is required in the context of a dominant official European Community ethos hostile to public enterprise. This hostility derives from the mismatch between a fundamental assumption of Community policy, that competitive markets are normal and normative, and the wealth of long established institutions, including public service broadcasters, which simply do not fit that paradigm. Public sector enterprise is a problem because its methods and institutions do not conform to the norms of competitive markets. Not only do public sector enterprises represent unfair competition but they threaten the normative status of competitive markets and the institu-

the United States of America (in Europe), where the private sector, where the state is not dominant, is characteristic in the second type of state structure, type of state structure. States such as Germany and France have centralised structures.

The organisation of broadcasting in Germany is of government type, in contrast to the free market and pluralistic broadcasting organisations in the United States, which are organisationally separate.

In the United Kingdom, as national public broadcasting (the UK) was, for the most part, financed from the state (such as Germany in the private sector) and including some for-profit broadcasting (retained by a public company, the BBC), and exclusively public broadcasting (the BBC). The BBC is a part of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and is financed by the state (the UK). It was established in the 1950s, in permitting broadcasting to be dominated by the state.

In the USA, for example, public broadcasting is established as 'public service broadcasting' and has three elements: a public service, a commercial service and a strongly commercial service. It is perhaps only in the USA that the public service broadcasting form which

Community ethos is seen as a fundamental normative, and the public service broadcasting institutions do not represent the interests and the institu-

tions specific to them. Indeed, a European public service broadcaster in Portugal, RTP (Radiotelevisao Portuguesa) stood accused, under the provisions of the European Treaty, of improper receipt of state aid in the form of public finance for broadcasting. True, it was exonerated but the judgement defined the legitimate boundaries of public finance for broadcasting very narrowly – essentially as permitting only activities that a profit seeking firm would not undertake.⁷

In Europe, as elsewhere, understandings of the term public service broadcasting have been shaped by the memory and past experience of the services that have gone under that name. In Western Europe quite different institutional forms, where broadcasting is closely associated with the state, (and used as an instrument of central state power), to highly regionalised and pluralistic systems, are all known as public service broadcasting. Even in the United Kingdom, where thanks to the international prestige and longevity of the BBC, what comes closest to an internationally accepted normative institutional definition of public service broadcasting is to be found, there is scant consensus on the meaning of 'public service broadcasting'. The most recent official enquiry into broadcasting in the UK, the Committee on Financing the BBC (the Peacock Committee⁸), stated (Peacock 1986: p. 6) that there is no 'simple dictionary definition' of public service broadcasting. Indeed all established terrestrial television channels in the UK, the advertising free BBC, the for profit advertising financed Channel 3 (ITV) and Channel 5, and the not for profit advertising financed Channel 4/S4C,⁹ have the status of public service broadcaster.

The Peacock Committee (Peacock 1986: p. 7) cited eight characteristics of public service broadcasting borrowed from a Broadcasting Research Unit (BRU) study (BRU nd). BRU had identified these characteristics in a classically inductive fashion by polling established British broadcasters and commentators. From its respondents' comments it derived eight characteristics of public service broadcasting (see also Keane 1991: p. 117). These are:

- geographic universality – everyone should have access to the same services
- catering for all interests and tastes
- catering for minorities
- catering for national identity and community
- detachment from vested interests and government
- one broadcasting system to be funded directly from the corpus of users
- competition in good programming rather than for numbers
- guidelines to liberate programme makers and not to restrict them.

Other contemporary European notions of public service broadcasting are broadly similar. Two sources, (one academic one professional), provide convenient conspectuses of European views; they are Jay Blumler's 'Television and the Public Interest. Vulnerable Values in West European Broadcasting' (Blumler 1992), and the report of the EBU's Perez Group (Perez 1983) on the nature and role of public service broadcasting.

Blumler defined the most salient characteristics of public service broadcasting as: comprehensive remit, generalised mandates, diversity, pluralism and range, cultural roles, place in politics and non-commercialism (Blumler 1992: pp. 7–14). His formulations are particularly noteworthy for they derive from discussions at a pan-European conference, (of a predominantly academic character), held in Liège in 1990 where the problems of, and policies for, public service broadcasting in eleven European states were discussed.¹⁰ The aim of the conference, titled 'Vulnerable Values in Multichannel Television Systems: What European Policy Makers seek to Protect', was 'to identify the principal values and related programming forms that European policy makers are striving to protect from marketplace pressures' (Blumler 1992: p. 4). As the conference title

suggests, public service broadcasting, (and the values it embodied), were perceived to be threatened by recent changes to European broadcasting.

Because of their provenance, Blumler's findings have a general European representativeness and correspond closely to BRU's definitions of public service broadcasting. For example, the 'comprehensive remit', (which Blumler cited as a defining characteristic of public service broadcasting), chiefly refers to range in programming, rather than to the geographical universality of service to which BRU drew attention. Yet, overall, Blumler's formulation is compatible with the principle of universal service as defined by BRU.¹¹

Blumler's term, 'generalised mandate', refers to the characteristic delegation of authority to public service broadcasters by political authorities which corresponds to what BRU defined as 'detachment from vested interests and government' which, Blumler argues, has given rise to a distinctive high minded professional broadcasting culture. Blumler's terms 'diversity, pluralism and range' closely correspond to BRU's 'catering for all interests and tastes' and to BRU's 'catering for minorities'. All of these prescriptions are based on a notion of broadcasting as an emancipator of its audience through the provision of diversity, and thus of choice. Blumler contrasted the minoritarian, choice enhancing, ethos of public service broadcasting with what he identified as a majoritarian, choice restricting, ethos of commercial television.¹²

But the other characteristics of public service broadcasting which Blumler identified are less certain vehicles for the emancipation of the audience. His fourth category 'cultural roles' charges broadcasting with responsibility for providing a national cultural cement by disseminating culturally valuable programming. By discharging its cultural role public service broadcasting will, Blumler argues, act as a 'centripetal, societally integrative force' (Blumler 1992: p. 11). Blumler explicitly couples this characteristic of public service broadcasting with the related characteristic of providing programme quality (captured in BRU's list of characteristics as 'good programming') and thereby transposes views Arnold advanced in the latter half of the nineteenth century to a contemporary context. Arnold saw dissemination of the 'best that had been thought and said' (Arnold 1963: p. 6) as a social glue for 'culture is the most resolute enemy of anarchy because of the great hopes and designs for the State which culture teaches us to nourish' (Arnold 1963: p. 204).

Blumler is not, of course, so explicitly authoritarian as Arnold. But, unlike Arnold, he did not recognise the significance of cultural stratification (notably on class and ethnic lines) and that, consequently, there may be scant social consensus on questions of cultural quality. Whereas Arnold explicitly proposed a resolution of the problem of cultural stratification through cultural homogenisation from above, ('sweetness and light' was recommended as a prophylactic against the anarchy Arnold feared and which, in default of effective cultural prophylaxis, he recommended 'the old Roman way . . . flog the rank and file and fling the ring-leaders from the Tarpeian Rock' (Arnold 1963: p. 203), Blumler does not recognise the problem for public service broadcasting posed by cultural difference. For public service broadcasting's cultural mission may divide, rather than integrate, the target community to which its programmes are transmitted.¹³

Public service broadcasting and cultural identity

Public broadcasters had, and have, an intractable problem in that their mandates provide that they should lead, rather than follow, public and popular taste and yet their social productivity (and institutional legitimacy) depends on the degree to which their programmes and services are used and valued by viewers and listeners. In conditions of monopoly this contradiction could not prove troublesome – audiences took what they were given and, in the absence of alternatives, for the most part liked what they were given. But once alternatives were available, the contradiction at

the heart of European public service broadcasting became palpably evident as viewers (and listeners) migrated to new commercial alternatives and public broadcasters found themselves skewered on the contradiction of satisfying what Tracey has called the 'public as audience' (Tracey 1992: p. 21) and fulfilling their public and, broadly defined, educational mandate.

The constitutions of many European public service broadcasters explicitly charged broadcasters with a cultural mission, and those public service broadcasters which were not explicitly so charged customarily have long traditions of discharging high cultural responsibilities. The importance of tradition, rather than law, in determining broadcasters' cultural conduct is probably best exemplified in the case of the BBC, but the BBC is far from the only case. In theory, as Shaughnessy and Fuente Cobo state, the BBC enjoys 'complete freedom' (Shaughnessy and Fuente Cobo 1990: p. 88) in programming, and now of the British Terrestrial Broadcasters (BBC, Independent Television or Channel 4) was specifically charged with cultural responsibilities. The BBC and Channel 4 (and, to a somewhat lesser extent, ITV) have also vigorously maintained an extensive commitment to programmes about culture and of high cultural quality.

In Germany too the cultural responsibilities with which public broadcasters have been formally charged are not onerous. For example Bayerischer Rundfunk is enjoined to exercise 'a sense of cultural responsibility' and West Deutscher Rundfunk¹⁴ to take into account 'artistic factors' in the discharge of its responsibilities (Shaughnessy and Fuente Cobo 1990: p. 44). But German public service broadcasters have characteristically given cultural programmes important places in their television schedules and cultural programmes departments have enjoyed prestige and high levels of resources. More important, the production and construction of entertainment dramas (such as feature films, single and series dramas) have been strongly marked by 'high cultural' values—notably by a preeminence of the authorial voice. To be sure there are counter indications; of which 'Schwarzwaldklinik' (Black Forest Clinic) is only the best known. Nor too are 'high culture' values and popularity necessarily antipathetic; witness Edgar Reitz's 'Heimat' (Hometown) (1980–84).

The Austrian public service broadcaster, ORF, (Österreichischer Rundfunk), is charged with the promotion of arts and sciences, to offer a service of high quality and to provide comprehensive information about culture (Shaughnessy and Fuente Cobo 1990: p. 32). And the RAI, (Radiotelevisione Italiana), in Italy, is specifically charged with fostering cultural pluralism and regional and national culture. Moreover the RAI has a general obligation to promote the diffusion of the Italian language and culture abroad (Shaughnessy and Fuente Cobo 1990: pp. 102–3).

Ireland's RTE, (Radio Telefís Éireann), is charged with promoting Irish culture (to 'ensure that programmes reflect the varied elements which make up the culture of the people of the whole island of Ireland, and have special regard for the elements which distinguish that culture') and with 'developing public awareness of the values of other countries, especially those which are members of the European Economic Community' (Shaughnessy and Fuente Cobo 1990: pp. 107).

Dutch public broadcasters are subject to extensive cultural mandates (including an obligation to allocate 20 per cent of broadcasting time to cultural items. See discussion in NOS 1990: pp. 4–5 and NOS 1991: pp. 4–5). But the requirements¹⁵ to which broadcasters became subject following promulgation of the 1987 Media Act did not apply before 1987, prior to that date broadcasters were responsible to the Minister of Culture and, moreover, Shaughnessy and Fuente Cobo (1990: p. 123) state that the 1987 Media Law was promulgated to 'reflect the importance the Government attaches to the cultural obligations of public broadcasters'. Like their colleagues elsewhere in Europe, Dutch public service broadcasters have interpreted their formal and informal mandates as both requiring and permitting their discharge of extensive cultural responsibilities.

The Portuguese Broadcasting Act of 1979 mandates RTP to promote and defend the national culture and language, to promote Portuguese culture internationally and to strengthen relations

with other nations. Moreover RTP is obliged to 'reflect in its programme schedule the diversity and pluralism of classical works, modern cultural and artistic expression' and to 'offer events and programmes of high quality and diverse content' (Shaughnessy and Fuente Cobo 1990: p. 130).

These broadcasters, (the ARD, IBA, NOS, ORF, RAI, RTE, RTP),¹⁶ have thus all been mandated, either by tradition or by law or both, to discharge a cultural role. Three have also been explicitly charged with promoting their respective national cultures. However, it's important to recognise that components of public service broadcasting's mandate may sometimes be contradictory. Implementation of any particular broadcasting policy may therefore involve choices about the relative priorities to be attached to any individual goal. For example, catering for minorities may be at the expense of catering for national identity and community; efficient use of resources may be hostile to provision of an extensive range of services under diverse ownership and control. Competition provoked reflection, within and outside the ranks of public service broadcasters, on these contradictions and how they should be managed.

The Wangermée and Perez Groups

The Wangermée and Perez Groups, established within the EBU in the early 1980s, to consider the nature and future of European public service broadcasting, produced definitions which chimed closely with those of Blumler and BRU. The Perez Group,¹⁷ which reported in 1983, characterised public service broadcasting as the:

- provision, at a moderate cost, of a service accessible to all
- varied and balanced programming designed to meet the needs of all sections of the public and all age groups
- impartiality in the presentation of news
- good balance between informative and artistic programmes
- predominance of original productions
- entrepreneurial character of public service organisations – employing highly qualified technical staff, more often than not also training them, frequently constituting the country's major employer of performers, and collaborating with national electronic industries in research and development.

(Perez 1983: p. 4)

Perez identified universality and diversity, impartiality and (smacking rather of special pleading) the role of public service broadcasting as a patron and author of original productions and a trainer and educator of professional broadcasters as the defining characteristics of public service broadcasting.¹⁸

The Wangermée Group, (the parent EBU committee to which the Perez Group reported),¹⁸ also defined public service broadcasting and stated that public service broadcasting should:

- provide in a national community for the intention (sic) of the general public, diversified and balanced programming for all categories of the population, including minorities;
- ensure in particular that the various currents of opinion and thought are present in their programmes;
- ensure an important part of the original production which they broadcast, and in any case be fully in control of it;
- serve the public by the most appropriate technical means;
- to reinvest the main part of the results of their operations in the development of broadcasting.

(AG 551 SPG 2642 June 1984: p. 6)

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The two EBU groups emphasised rather different elements in the portfolio of public service broadcasting's attributes. Wangermée's list lacks Perez's insistence on impartiality (and therefore on broadcasters' independence from government). However Wangermée, like Perez, strongly emphasised universality and diversity. There is then, if not complete consensus, a high degree of communality in the content of the lists of attributes of public service broadcasting generated inductively by academics and broadcasters. The core attributes of public service broadcasting identified by BRU, Blumler, Wangermée and Perez were *diversity, universality and impartiality*.

The 'oughts' of public service broadcasting

A second, deductive, approach to defining public service broadcasting has foregrounded, not the historical practices of public service broadcasting (the post hoc 'ises'), but the role which broadcasting should perform; the 'oughts' of public service broadcasting. From definition of broadcasting's role comes a specification which will, *propter hoc*, tell us how broadcasting 'ought' to be. There are clear merits to such an approach which is more open to innovation and reassessment of the structure and practices of public service broadcasting than is an inductive approach. Moreover, a deductive approach does not readily lend itself (in contrast to an inductive approach) to the fetishisation of the historical practice of particular institutions. Further, a deductive approach has the signal merit of forcing into explicit definition the underlying social visions implicit in different models of how non-market public service broadcasting ought to be. There are at least two such visions, each of which has been ably put forward in the UK. The first, authoritarian, vision may be found in the UK Pilkington Committee's report of 1962 (Pilkington 1962) and the second, libertarian, vision in the writings of British neo-Habermasians, such as Garnham (1990 and 1992), Keane (1991) and Murdock (1990).

The Pilkington Committee put forward a clear vision of public service broadcasting representative both of the established ethos of British public service broadcasting, (rooted in Reith's¹⁹ BBC), and of the broadcasting order which prevailed from its publication in 1962 to 1986 and the next major landmark in British official thinking about broadcasting policy: the Report of the Committee on Financing the BBC: the Peacock Report (Peacock 1986). Pilkington believed that the audience for broadcasting was vulnerable and should be protected. Radio and, in particular, television, (which the Committee judged to be 'the main factor in influencing the values and moral standards of our society' (Pilkington 1962: Para 42), had to be organised so that viewers (and listeners) were protected, not only from the baleful influence of a powerful medium, but also from themselves and their own tastes and desires. 'To give the public what it wants', Pilkington stated, 'seems at first sight unexceptionable' (Pilkington 1962: Para 44). But it is 'patronising and arrogant' (Pilkington 1962: para 48) for giving the audience what it wants is justifiable only if it is assumed that viewers and listeners not only know what they want but also what is good for them. Such a view, Pilkington argued, mistakes 'what the public wants . . . for the public interest' (Pilkington 1962: Para 408).²⁰ It is hard to resist the view that Pilkington's notion of public service was one of Platonic Guardianship. Servants of the public broadcasters, (and regulators), they might be but they were servants who were certainly not expected to take directions from those whom they were appointed to serve. For the masters were considered less competent to govern than were their servants.

The neo-Habermasian defence of public service broadcasting

Neo-Habermasian proponents of public service broadcasting²¹ adopt an approach different to Blumler's. They provide not an apologia for the past achievements and established institutions of European public service broadcasting, ('ises'), but in a priori arguments, ('oughts'), for public service broadcasting as its chief institutional guarantor and bearer of a modern public sphere. Their arguments offer potential for institutional innovation, because grounded in 'oughts', and recognise that authoritarian rationales for public service broadcasting, like Pilkington's, are insufficient to stand against the resurgent libertarianism of free market doctrines (see, *inter alia*, Brittan 1987).

Habermas' ideas were introduced to the English language debate on broadcasting by Nicholas Garnham in 1986 (Garnham 1986 and reprinted in Garnham 1990: pp. 104–14) and were developed by him and others (see, *inter alia*, Garnham 1990 and 1992, Keane 1991). Although Garnham's 'The Media and the Public Sphere'²² first appeared in 1986 the term 'public sphere', the core Habermasian concept borrowed by British neo-Habermasians was first used by Garnham in an earlier, very influential, article first published in 1983 (Garnham 1983, reprinted in Garnham 1990: pp. 115–35) titled 'Public Service versus the Market'.²³

In 'Public Service versus the Market' (Garnham 1990) Garnham argued that market rather than public service mechanisms are inimical to the public interest. For, he claimed, public service principles of organisation are superior 'to the market as a means of providing all citizens, whatever their wealth or geographical location, equal access to a wide range of high-quality entertainment, information and education, and as a means of ensuring that the aim of the programme producer is the satisfaction of a range of audience tastes rather than only those tastes that show the largest profit' (Garnham 1990: p. 120).

The market has, Garnham argues, led to diminished diversity in a reduction in the number of enterprises which control (or at least very strongly influence) the production and circulation of information and culture, and to inequitable relationships between dominant, and metropolitan, enterprises at the expense of subordinate, and peripheral, entities. These market driven inequities and inequalities in turn have sustained pervasive and deep-rooted social inequality and inequity. Moreover, technological change promises, contrary to the libertarian and libtatory rhetoric of its advocates, to accelerate these processes of actual and relative deprivation.

Whilst challenging the claims made for the market, Garnham argued that discussion of broadcasting policy had been stultified by a pervasive dualism which opposed the concepts of 'State' and 'Market' (Garnham 1990: p. 106 and Garnham 1984: p. 6). He argued for a third term, the Habermasian notion of a 'public sphere', which offered an escape from dualism and a 'space for a rational and universalistic politics distinct from both the economy and the State' (Garnham 1990: p. 107). But, of course, Garnham's argument was not simply for an abstract third category, distinct from the terms 'state' and 'market', but in favour of what he, and others, (see *inter alia* Keane 1991), designated the institutional embodiment and guarantor of the modern public sphere – public service broadcasting.

However, whilst Garnham's triad escapes from dualism it is not problem free. For, whilst a third term conceptually mediating between state and market, may be intellectually productive and signify a distinctive ethos in (at least some) broadcasting institutions at (some) moments in history, the notion of the public sphere helps only to a limited extent when concrete questions of broadcasting policy and organisation arise. For how is broadcasting to be funded if not by either the state²⁴ or the market? Moreover, others have shown that public service broadcasters' actual practice is far from that which would characterise a well functioning public sphere (see *inter alia* Docker 1991, GUMG 1976, Hjarvard 1991). Indeed, the discontinuity between Habermas' own

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arguments about broadcasting and the concrete broadcasting context in which he wrote makes the appropriation of Habermas' term, public sphere, for defence of public service broadcasting rather curious.

Habermas' 'Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit' (Habermas 1989 [1962]), was written in a society where broadcasting services were provided by perhaps the most perfect form of public service broadcasting yet institutionalised (see, *inter alia*, Collins and Porter 1981 and Falkenberg 1983). Yet, Habermas asserts quite unequivocally the *necessary* inferiority of audio-visual media to print media for rational understanding and democratic exchange.²⁵ He stated, (with characteristic opacity):

Radio, film and television by degrees reduce to a minimum the distance that a reader is forced to maintain toward the printed letter – a distance that required the privacy of the appropriation as much as it made possible the publicity of a rational-critical-exchange about what had been read. With the arrival of the new media the form of communication as such has changed; they have had an impact, therefore, more penetrating (in the strict sense of the word) than was ever possible for the press. Under the pressure of the 'Don't talk back!' the conduct of the public assumes a different form. In comparison with printed communications the programs sent by the new media curtail the reactions of their recipients in a peculiar way. They draw the eyes and ears of the public under their spell but at the same time, by taking away its distance, place it under 'tutelage', which is to say they deprive it of the opportunity to say something and to disagree

(Habermas 1989: pp. 170–1)

Habermas developed his notion, the public sphere, in the course of a general critique of contemporary mass society and mass communications and not to defend public service broadcasting (to which he gave scant attention). Like most members of the Frankfurt School, Habermas disdains demotic culture and the mass media's reduction of human experience to, what Marcuse trenchantly described as, 'one dimensionality' and its reification of culture as a commodity (see, *inter alia*, Marcuse 1972: p. 24). Thus appropriation of the term, public sphere, for a defence of public service broadcasting may appear to have been rather arbitrarily chosen.²⁶ Not least because, as several commentators have observed, Habermas' category – the public sphere is open to objection and qualification.

Keane (1991: p. 35–6), for example, has argued that Habermas sentimentalised the heroic bourgeois era,²⁷ an argument which Schudson (1992) has explored in an excellent concrete historical analysis of a US case. And Bauman has cruelly compared Habermas' conception of the public sphere to 'society shaped after the pattern of a sociology seminar, that is, that there are only participants and the one thing that matters is the power of argument' (Bauman 1992: p. 217). Perhaps Nancy Fraser's definition of the category 'public sphere' as a 'conceptual resource' (Fraser 1992: p. 110) rather than a term signifying a strong identity between Habermas' own intellectual system and that of the user best captures the nature of neo-Habermasian proponents of public service broadcasting's debt to Habermas.

So too is the reality of European public service broadcasters' commitment to a public sphere somewhat equivocal. Broadcasters' commitment to informing and educating their public too often led them to serve an audience of their imagination rather than the real audience. Rather than a democratic public sphere, in which the actual experience and interest of a real empirical public was represented, monopolistic European public service broadcasters too often addressed the public experience and interests, the public sphere, of elites. 'Bottom up' public services, which gave voice to a real public, (or, to use Reith's term, publics), and represented a demotic and

genuinely democratic public sphere were conspicuous by their absence until competition with commercial services compelled public broadcasters to address the real public rather than that of broadcasters' imagination. Claims for public service broadcasting's success in satisfying audiences' tastes can be reconciled only with difficulty with the dramatic loss of audience share experienced by European public service broadcasters when their monopolies were first challenged by commercial competitors. Recognition of 'the public as audience' (Tracey 1992: p. 21) did not come about spontaneously but as a consequence of competition with commercial broadcasting: that is, through public service broadcasters' presence in the market.

Culture and the public sphere

Habermas' etymological discussions in the *Strukturwandel* provide some useful clues to the Arnoldian character of his conception of culture and to the consequences of advocacy of public service broadcasting based on Habermasian foundations. Habermas' conception of culture is unfortunately reminiscent of the outlook which identified 'Culture [as] the product of the old leisured classes who seek to defend it against new and destructive forces' (Williams 1963: p. 306). Habermas points out that just as 'public' and 'lordly', the public sphere and the state, were irrevocably intertwined, so too were the roots of the cultural elements of a public sphere, a growing 'representative publicness', to be found in the culture of both the nobility and the bourgeoisie (Habermas 1989: p. 9). The culture of Habermas' emergent public sphere was an elite culture (albeit rooted in the tastes and experience of the new as well as the old upper classes); if the 'humanistically cultivated courtier replaced the Christian knight' (Habermas 1989: p. 9) little change is likely to have been apparent to those enjoying membership of neither courtly nor merchant classes. The common man was not the same as the educated man and the culture of the 'public' was not that of the 'mass' and the only way of making it so was (as Matthew Arnold enjoined) by educating common men and women. Habermas follows Kant in proposing that humans are limited by their own incapacities (from which they could be emancipated by others) as well as by duress imposed by others.

But, as Kant stated, in a section of 'What is Enlightenment?' (Kant 1959 [1784]) tellingly cited by Habermas (Habermas 1989: p. 104), 'Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. Sapere aude! "Have courage to use your own reason!" – that is the motto of enlightenment' (Kant 1959 [1784] p. 85). Emancipation from 'tutelage' is both a social activity in which individuals may learn from others, and thus be freed by them, but also an individual activity in which the individual must release her or himself from a tutelage imposed by others.

Habermas recognised the necessity of a social and collaborative dimension to emancipation and enlightenment. 'Liberation from self-incurred tutelage meant enlightenment. With regard to the individual, this denoted a subjective maxim, namely; to think for oneself . . . enlightenment had to be mediated by the public sphere' (Habermas 1989: p. 104). Here Habermas clearly offers a foothold for proponents of public service broadcasting, (a foothold initially provided by Kant). Citing further from 'What is Enlightenment?' he (and Kant) state 'For any single individual to work himself out of the life under tutelage which has become almost his nature is very difficult' (Habermas 1989: p. 104, Kant 1959 [1784] p. 86). Clearly proponents of public service broadcasting (from Reith, through Pilkington to the neo-Habermasians) have seen public service broadcasting as a mediating institution in the public sphere which assists individuals to work themselves out of what Kant called 'tutelage'.

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A statement by Reith captures this Janus faced inheritance very well and aptly characterises the potential of public service broadcasting to be both an instrument of tutelage and a means of emancipation from it. Reith testified to the democratic effect of broadcasting, but defined this democratic effect in terms of an improvement in information flow from above to below. Reith wrote (in a statement where he explicitly compared broadcasting to the Athenian agora) that broadcasting brought 'the personalities of the leading figures to the fireside' (Reith 1949: p. 135) of (those whom elsewhere he called ordinary people) 'mini-men' whom he regretted 'have all got votes' (cited in Boyle 1972: p. 18).²⁸

However, in his discussion of tutelage, Habermas did not cite other sections of 'What is Enlightenment?' which are relevant to consideration of the role and purpose of public service broadcasting. Kant also stated, that:

Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why so great a portion of mankind, after nature has long since discharged them from external direction [. . .], nevertheless remains under lifelong tutelage, and why it is so easy for others to set themselves up as their guardians. It is so easy not to be of age. If I have a book which understands for me, a pastor who has a conscience for me, a physician who decides my diet, and so forth, I need not trouble myself. I need not think, if I can only pay – others will readily undertake the irksome work for me.

(Kant 1959 [1784] p. 85)]

This passage has the authentic, noble, smack of Kant's earnest Prussian pietism about it. It affords little space for fun, diversion or the seductions of being not of age. However it stands as a powerful rationale for benevolent social action to emancipate man from tutelage, (to use Kant's category) and one chosen by European public service broadcasting which, when free of competition, chose to prioritise information and education over entertainment.

The intellectual matrices in which different European public service broadcasting systems were formed have their own national specificities and the influence of their Kantian inheritance is more directly apparent in some than in others. One looks, for example, in vain for a mention of Kant in Reith's writings. Yet in his and his successors' definitions of public service broadcasting there is, surely, an unmistakably Kantian strain. Reith wrote thus of the BBC:

The BBC had founded a tradition of public service and of devotion to the highest interest of community and nation. There was to hand a mighty instrument to instruct and fashion public opinion; to banish ignorance and misery; to contribute richly and in many ways to the sum total of human wellbeing

(Reith 1949: p. 103)²⁹

Reith's successors', (as Directors General of the BBC), statements resonated with similarly Kantian strains (see Curran 1971 cited in Smith 1974: p. 190–1; Haley 1948 cited in Smith 1974: p. 83; Milne cited in Peacock 1986: p. 130). Like Reith's simultaneous endorsement and negation of Kant's emancipatory vision they testify to the contradiction at the centre of public service broadcasting's project. Which emancipates on the terms set by the broadcasting elites and who, like Habermas, have seen popular taste as a problem to be rectified rather than a centre of value. Habermas stated:

mass culture has earned its rather dubious name precisely by achieving increased sales by adopting to the need for relaxation and entertainment on the part of consumer strata

with relatively little education, rather than through the guidance of an enlarged public toward the appreciation of a culture undamaged in its substance.

(Habermas 1989: p. 165)

It is easy to see popular taste, and the commercial broadcasting which has served it, as embodying Kant's vision of being not of age, of immersion in a 'book which understands for me' and Habermas' attribution of a 'dubious name' to mass culture clearly refers directly to contemporary, for profit, mass media. But we may also see public service broadcasting as embodying Kant's vision of an agency of tutelage. What more clearly than Pilkington's definition of the role of the governors of broadcasting exemplifies Kant's notion of 'a pastor who has a conscience for me, a physician who decides my diet'. Pilkington referred to 'the Governors' and Members³⁰ concern to represent and secure the public interest in broadcasting. It is for them to judge what the public interest is, and it is for this that they are answerable. They must not do so by assessing the balance of opinion on this or that element of programme content, and then adopting the majority view as their own; for as we have already noted, this would be to mistake 'what the public wants' in the misleading sense implied when the phrase is used as a slogan – for the public interest' (Pilkington 1962: Para 408).

Habermas' formulation 'through the guidance of an enlarged public toward the appreciation of a culture undamaged in its substance', clearly does not refer to a relationship of equals but to a Pilkingtonian guidance of consumers by guardians away from what he calls 'consumption ready' cultural goods to 'serious involvement with culture' (Habermas 1989: p. 166). As Peacock (1986), Kimmel (1982), Bourges (1993) and others have recognised public service broadcasting has paid too little regard to the needs and desires of those whom it has undertaken to enlighten.

Not only were public service broadcasters too little prepared to recognise the importance of demotic entertainment in their programme schedules, (and paid a high price in loss of audience share and legitimacy when confronted with commercial competition which supplied viewers' and listeners' taste for cakes and ale), but so too are proponents of public service broadcasting characteristically slow to recognise that broadcasting is more than a political medium – it is an aesthetic medium too. As Kant stated 'If we attend to the course of conversation in mixed companies consisting not merely of scholars and subtle reasoners but also of business people and women, we notice that besides storytelling and jesting they have another entertainment, namely, arguing' (Kant 1949: p. 250–1 cited in Habermas 1989: p. 106). Curiously, Habermas cites Kant's recognition that human conversation and social experience is animated by storytelling and jesting as well as by argument to appropriate Kant's invocation of argument but Habermas neglects Kant's acknowledgement of storytelling and jesting. European public service broadcasting has similarly given greater salience to argument than to jesting, and consequently has been vulnerable to the influx of competing commercial channels that followed technological and regulatory change in Europe during the 1980s.

Common to the inductivist and deductivist proponents of public service broadcasting is a categorical opposition between public service broadcasting and the market. This opposition is clearly signalled in the title of Garnham's seminal article 'Public Service versus the Market' (Garnham 1983) but Blumler is scarcely less explicit. He proposed a categorical difference between market and public service broadcasting systems. One, he contends, is rooted in a 'standpoint of social ethics' and the other animated solely by the 'capture of audience as market as the prime, normative and pragmatic goal of the broadcasting business' (Blumler 1992: p. 2). It is undoubtedly true that the formula 'capture of audience as market as the prime, normative and pragmatic goal of the broadcasting business' (Blumler 1992: p. 2) justly characterises some contemporary European broadcasters. But it does not accurately represent the outlook of all

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theorists of (or apologists for) the adoption of market principles as a basis for the organisation of broadcasting. Indeed part of the power of market ideas has been the ethical component which they contain (see, *inter alia*, Friedman and Friedman 1981). And it is difficult to reconcile many public service broadcasters' intransigent defence of their historical monopolies, their subordination to party political agendas or their own commercial practices with a 'standpoint of ethics'. As 'modernising' public service broadcasters have recognised.

Notes

- 1 ARD Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Germany. ZDF Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen. Germany. RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana. Italy. TVE Television Espanola. Spain. RTP Radiotelevisao Portuguesa. Portugal. BBC British Broadcasting Corporation. UK.
- 2 See Collins 1998a for discussion of the EU Protocol. The Council of Europe's fourth Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy (Prague 7–8 December 1994) promulgated Resolution No. 1 on the Future of Public Service Broadcasting and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation R (96) 10 guaranteeing the independence of public service broadcasting. See Jakubowicz 2002.
- 3 Not least the peculiar economic characteristics of broadcasting, (which mean that the theoretical criteria of well functioning markets can only be satisfied at the expense of significant welfare loss), and which therefore provide solid grounds for intervention in broadcasting markets. Cave (1985) and Garnham (1990: p. 120) have pointed out that spectrum scarcity is not the only rationale for the regulation of broadcasting. Garnham has argued that a range of social, political and cultural public policy goals legitimise intervention and that market arrangements will entrench information poverty and disempower the poor. Both contend that welfare is likely to be maximised through forms of public provision of services.
Cave, (following Coase), has argued that the public good, non-excludable, character of market failure in broadcasting provides powerful reasons for intervention which are independent of spectrum scarcity and that, moreover, establishment of excludable services will not satisfactorily rectify market failure. Because one person's consumption of a broadcast signal deprives no other person of the opportunity to consume it broadcasting is considered to be a 'non-rival' good. Moreover, because viewers and listeners cannot be excluded from consuming broadcast signals broadcasting is, unlike most other goods and services, 'non-excludable'. The 'non rival' and 'non excludable' characteristics of broadcasting have meant that, (until recent developments in communication technologies, notably the development of robust and inexpensive systems for encrypting broadcast signals), broadcasting markets were 'failed markets' and that, therefore, political intervention is both necessary and legitimate.
Cave argued (Cave 1985: p. 26) that excludable services (such as subscription television) will tend to undersupply broadcasts and that even a broadcasting market offering a range of satellite supplied encrypted services will be a failed market in which intervention is required to maximise welfare.
- 4 For more than eighty years, the BBC has been the UK's flagship public service broadcaster providing radio and television services. ITV was established in 1955 as a commercial, advertising financed, highly regulated television network. ILR, commercial advertising financed, local radio began in 1973.
- 5 Since all markets are to some degree failed markets, market theorists can argue that even market which is acknowledged to be imperfect may be the 'least worst', even if not the 'first best', basis for the organisation of broadcasting services.
- 6 Neo-Habermasian refers to the development of ideas advanced by the contemporary German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, by British commentators on public service broadcasting, of whom Garnham has been most influential.
- 7 The Peacock Report, properly known as the Report of the Committee on Financing the BBC, was commissioned by the UK government and published in 1986. It is known as the Peacock Report (and the committee which wrote it is known as the Peacock Committee) after Alan (now Sir Alan) Peacock who was the committee chairman.
- 8 Channel 4 and S4C (the Welsh language television channel serving Wales) were established in 1982 as public service television channels.
- 9 Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom.

- 10 One of the most interesting features of the proposal to establish a fifth terrestrial television service in the UK is that this service will not be universal. Large areas of the UK, including the southern littoral, will not be served. This decision represents an important shift in UK policy priorities, universal service has been subordinated to the goal of making the fullest possible use of the radio spectrum resource.
- 11 It is worth noting here that the BBC's comedy series *Fawlty Towers*, one of the most vaunted glories of public service broadcasting in the UK of recent years, was brought to German viewers by the commercial channel RTL Plus.
- 12 Blumler's attribution of a majoritarian ethos and vocation to commercial television and investiture of public service broadcasting with a necessarily minoritarian role overstates an important distinction. For public service broadcasting has often assumed the majoritarian role of nation building, (the Australian Broadcasting Corporation is known not as a public service broadcaster but as a *national* broadcaster), and, per contra, commercial television has offered minoritarian, e.g., speciality, services. But Blumler was right to recognise, (as BRU did not), the incompatibility of a minoritarian, public service, and a majoritarian, nationalist, vocation for broadcasting. These two vocations can be reconciled only in circumstances of monopoly. One reason why European Public Service Broadcasters found the ending of their monopoly so difficult was that they have been compelled to face this fundamental contradiction.
- 13 Bayerischer Rundfunk and West Deutscher Rundfunk were, and are, major German public service broadcasters.
- 14 The 1987 Media Act provides that the Minister of Culture sets the levels of programming required of Dutch public broadcasters in each of four categories; education (5%), culture (20%), information (25%) and entertainment (25%).
- 15 ARD Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Germany; IBA Independent Broadcasting Authority. UK; NOS Nederlandse Omroepprogramma Stichting. Netherlands; ORF Österreichischer Rundfunk. Austria; RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana. Italy; RTE Radio Telefís Éireann. Ireland; RTP Radiotevisao Portuguesa. Portugal.
- 16 Then of Antenne 2 (a French public service television channel) and later an EBU official heading the Television Programmes Department. The members of the Perez Group were Henri Perez (Antenne 2), Carel Enkelaar (NOS), Michael Johnson (BBC), Hans Kimmel (ZDF), and Muiris MacConghail (RTE).
- 17 The Perez Group was one of four EBU groups to report to the Wangermée Group: the others were a radio group, (chaired by Manfred Jenke), a legal group and a technical group.
- 18 John Reith, later Lord Reith, was the first Director General of the BBC and is regarded as the founding father of public service broadcasting in the UK.
- 19 The Pilkington Committee's arguments deserve to be read in full but a fuller version of the extract cited in the text reads: 'the Governors' and Members' concern is to represent and secure the public interest in broadcasting. It is for them to judge what the public interest is, and it is for this that they are answerable. They must not do so by assessing the balance of opinion on this or that element of programme content, and then adopting the majority view as their own; for as we have already noted, this would be to mistake "what the public wants" in the misleading sense implied when the phrase is used as a slogan – for the public interest. Their task is, as we have said, to be thoroughly aware of public opinion in all its variety, to care about it and to take proper and full account of it. Having done so, they must then identify the public interest in broadcasting, and secure it through control of the executive arm (Pilkington 1962 para. 408).
- 20 So far as I have been able to discover Habermas' ideas about the public sphere were first introduced to English language readers in 1974 when *New German Critique* published a translation of a brief essay, (an encyclopedia article), by Habermas titled *The Public Sphere*. Habermas' book *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* was published in German in 1962. An English translation was published in the UK in 1989. However for our purposes Habermas' impact on broadcasting studies dates from Garnham's essay of 1986 *The Media and the Public Sphere* which quotes from the seven-page essay first published by *New German Critique*. The customary English language translation, 'public sphere', of one of Habermas' central ideas (*Öffentlichkeit*) has now become so widely used as to be unchallengeable. However, I prefer 'public forum' as a better translation of Habermas' term. Whatever the English term used, Habermas' influential notion refers to a space (whether physical, conceptual or symbolic) where citizens can gather and exchange ideas and information in an unprejudiced way and through collective deliberation and dialogue reach well founded views on matters of public concern.
- 21 Garnham has published two different essays under the title 'The Media and the Public Sphere' (Garnham 1986 and Garnham 1992). Both have substantial sections in common but each essay contains much material which is absent from the other. This infuriating and confusing choice of title is unlikely to serve the author well. However the intrinsic interest of the arguments posed in the second essay (published in

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- 1992) titled *The Media and the Public Sphere* is such that those who do not read it, believing that it is simply a reprinted version of the first essay (published in 1986 and reprinted in 1990), will be denied valuable insights and much material for productive reflection.
- 22 And also in Garnham's editorial (Garnham 1983a) to an issue of the journal *Media Culture and Society* about Critical Theory 'After the Frankfurt School'. Here Garnham stated that 'Central to this whole debate is the concept of the public sphere, which takes the place within the tradition of ideology and hegemony' (Garnham 1983a, p. 3).
 - 23 An answer often given in the UK and other Western European countries is 'Via the licence fee', however licence fees are simply a tax (and a particularly regressive form of taxation) under another name.
 - 24 Habermas qualified his anathematisation of broadcasting by contrasting its development in Western Europe with the mode of development it assumed in the United States. However, to state that 'In Great Britain, France, and Germany these new media were organized into public or semipublic corporations, because otherwise their publicist function could not have been sufficiently protected from the encroachment of their capitalistic ones' (Habermas 1989: p. 188) hardly constitutes a rousing defence of public service broadcasting. Habermas' own work offers a meagre foundation for the neo-Habermasian's use of Habermas in their advocacy of public service broadcasting.
 - 25 However, Habermas does state explicitly that 'Today newspapers and magazines, radio and television are the media of the public sphere' (Habermas 1974: p. 49).
 - 26 As Habermas himself stated, his work 'leaves aside the plebian public sphere' (Habermas 1989: p. xviii).
 - 27 Reith's reflections on broadcasting and democracy read 'Democracy had for years past been a ruling formula in this country and elsewhere. A philosopher's word, its actual as distinct from its theoretical content varied greatly. Further analysis of the theory was not of much avail; what was required was some mode of linking it to real life around; to the world as known to men and women as they were. Now broadcasting had emerged; was it the tempering factor that would give democracy for the first time under modern conditions a real chance of operating as a living force throughout the extended community as long ago it operated in the city state? It must cover more and more of the field of social and cultural life; become more and more valuable as an index to the community's outlook and personality which the statesman was supposed to read. The microphone could achieve where print and the philosophic formulation of doctrine had failed; could familiarise the public with the central organisation that conducted its business and regulated its inner and outer relations. Not the printable scheme of government but its living and doing, the bringing of the personalities of the leading figures to the fireside, which could unite governments and governed in democracy as in dictatorship (Reith 1949: p. 135).
 - 28 It would misrepresent Reith if the pawky selfdeprecation with which he closed his statement were exercised, he ended his statement 'Marvellous. That was the way one had to talk in those days' (Reith 1949: p. 103).
 - 29 That is, those who formed the governing bodies of the BBC (its Board of Governors) and the IBA (Members of its Board).

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