

Prospects and Dilemmas for Public Service Broadcasting: A Comparative Study of Japanese and Australian Public Broadcast Television

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Abstract

This paper argues in support of the continuing role of public broadcast television in Australia and Japan. This is a significant topic to argue because the pressures resulting from the increasing globalisation and commercialisation of the media have placed public television in jeopardy in many parts of the world. The focus of the paper is the complex relationship between policy, programming and the notion of the public interest. The main question addressed in this paper is: what is the best method to protect, and ensure the future prospects of public service broadcast television in an age that is dominated by an increasingly globalising commercialised media? It may be that a return to the original values of Public Service Broadcasting as a convener of a public forum for re-staging national aspirations, synergised with the latest technological delivery methods will help provide us with an answer. During this era of tumultuous change in the Asia-Pacific region a comparison between Nippon Hoso Kyokai (Japanese Broadcasting Corporation) and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the respective public broadcasting organisations of Japan and Australia is instructive in providing ways to maintain and protect the public interest elements of television because both organisations have had to respond to these challenges in a number of strategic ways.

Introduction

This paper argues in support of the continuing role of public broadcast television in Australia and Japan. This is a significant topic to argue because the pressures resulting from the increasing globalisation and commercialisation of the media have placed public television in jeopardy in many parts of the world. The focus of the paper is the complex relationship between policy, programming and the notion of the public interest. The main question addressed in this paper is: what is the best method to protect, and ensure the future prospects of public service broadcast television in an age that is dominated by an increasingly globalising commercialised media? It may be that a return to the original values of Public Service Broadcasting as a convener of a public forum for re-staging national aspirations, synergised with the latest technological delivery methods will help provide us with an answer. During this era of tumultuous change in the Asia-Pacific region a comparison between Nippon Hoso Kyokai (Japanese Broadcasting Corporation) and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the respective public broadcasting organisations of Japan and Australia is instructive in providing ways to maintain and protect the public interest elements of television because both organisations have had to respond to these challenges in a number of strategic ways.

Practically all the published material on Australian media and the ABC's role in Australian politics and public life focuses on its relationship with the USA and UK, little if any of this material makes the comparison with Japan. This approach tends to ignore the specific regional requirements of PSB in the Asia-Pacific and the relations that have emerged out of them. Now that Australia is seeking closer strategic ties with Japan this is particularly the case. For example both Australia and Japan as members of the Asia Broadcasting Union have developed mechanisms of cultural exchange and the relations these mechanisms engender have been inadequately explored in previous studies of their respective broadcasting systems. As Barbara Gatzert (2003) has argued, Japanese broadcasting has not received the same kind of attention from scholars as other core areas of Japanese studies. This is evidenced by the relative scarcity of publications by non-Japanese researchers on Japanese media. In Australia, therefore, we are more familiar with the conditions of public service broadcasting existing here and in Britain, but much less informed with what is happening in countries like Japan. A reorientation of the study of PSB in Australia that focuses on its regional relationships with countries like Japan can help in charting its future prospects and maintaining the relevance of this still culturally significant media.

Broadcasting and the Public Sphere: What is Public Service Broadcast Television?

There are different types of public service broadcasting in the world today. In general terms they can be divided into 'systemic' and 'institutional' modes. For example, a mixed broadcasting system in which one finds both public service and private commercial broadcasters is a type of systemic model. This model is to be found in countries like Japan, Australia, Canada, and Great Britain. A national public service broadcaster in countries like China, Cuba and the former USSR, a private enterprise broadcaster, or a community broadcaster are all examples of an institutional model (Raboy, 1999). The world's broadcasting services can also be divided into three 'core' systems. They are: the 'public service broadcasting core system', the 'private enterprise core system' and the 'state core system'. Australia and Japan belong to the same group of mixed (systemic) broadcasting that

blends and balances the needs of both the public service broadcasting core system and the private enterprise core system. Australia and Japan both possess a long tradition and history of PSB and commercial television interacting and existing side by side. The significance of public service broadcast (PSB) television in modern democracies like Australia and Japan is that it performs a duty that informs, educates and entertains its audience without undue commercial influence; regarding the audience in the process as 'constituting citizens, members of communities and individuals rather than merely as consumers' (Watson & Hill 2000: 255).

There are several models that can be used to further our understanding of the history of public service broadcasting and its cultural relations. This history consists of a complex intermingling of political, economic, technological, ideological and developmental constraints that have become involved in realising an idealised if not ideal public broadcasting structure. For example, a study by the World Radio and Television Council sponsored by UNESCO determined four main responsibilities of public broadcasting – the service must be universally available to all members of a nation, it must present a diverse range of programming and interests, it must be independent from government interference or control, and it must represent the distinctiveness of the nation (Price & Raboy 2003). Raboy (1999: 17) argued that in furthering these principles, 'public broadcasting was introduced for the purposes of cultural development and democratisation', and the continuation of these principles is necessary to maintain the autonomy of these important themes. These principles despite some differences in the way PSB has been implemented in some countries generally include universality, innovation, diversity, independence and distinctiveness.

The development of policy for television as a public utility in terms first specified by John Reith the founder of the BBC always intended it to serve both the national and public interest. The way the national and public interest was initially served in countries such as Great Britain, Australia and Japan was as a means of overcoming 'wavelength scarcity'. Secondly it became a way to guarantee funding for implementing public television services. Therefore early public broadcasting policy was interested more in questions of access to, and availability of service than in issues of universality, diversity and independence. These crucial responsibilities were then 'delegated to broadcasting authorities by the state' and funded under government charter (Scannell 2000: 45).

During the second half of the twentieth century public broadcast television came to fulfil the function that Benedict Anderson (1983) ascribed to the print media as the principal means of 'imagining' and representing the aspirations of modern industrialized nation states. In a similar sense Habermas (1989) discussed the significance of public broadcast television according to its realisation of the idea of the public and of a public space for communicative interchange. Habermas originally conceived of the public sphere as being 'free of restrictions' not just from government intervention, but also from the intrusive forces of the capitalist economy. This idea first hypothesised in the enlightenment era, Habermas argued, was essential to the democratic development of social and political life. This connexion would, according to Habermas ensure that the exploration of key social issues, and the development of unbiased points of view, have a certain autonomy as well as authenticity. The key opinions of the public could then be decided free from influence or interference in the public sphere (1989: 24). In this way Habermas's notion of a public sphere can be seen as a 'technique for evaluating speech practices and media structures to measure progress towards a democratic society' (1989: 24).

Likewise, proponents of public broadcast television such as Peter Dalghren have argued that the 'public sphere is the fulfilment of the communicational requirements of a viable democracy (1995: 9), that is it has come to fulfil this function in modern democratic nations. The public interest as it relates to public broadcasting has been described by Georgina Born (2004: 28) as a 'radical tradition encompassing the fight for freedom of speech and assembly, for spaces of public debate and deliberation in which the actions of church and state could be scrutinised and held to account. This radical movement for instituting the concept of public interest played a leading part both in the victory of representative democracy and culturally in the establishment' of organizations like the BBC, NHK and ABC.

As Akiyoshi Kobayashi, the president of NHK, International Incorporated has reasoned, 'with its unique ability to reach all members of society, television is an essential tool of communication in the world's democracies and can be of invaluable support to developing countries. I am convinced that the public sector, with its responsibility to promote and improve education and cultural awareness through broadcasting, has a major role in this electronic environment. Television is too important a medium to have its future left in the hands of those interested only in making money' (Kobayashi in AMIC, 1999:30). Dahlgren (1995), approaching the issue of PSB through its political economy, its institutional organizations and public charters, argues that the democratic nature of the public sphere can no longer simply be taken for granted but is something that must be vigilantly maintained and striven for. One of the ways this can happen Dahlgren suggests is through understanding the public sphere, in much the same way as Anderson, as a set of historical narratives that cohere to inform our understandings of our culture.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation

While we are all familiar with the ABC and its position in the Australian media it is worthwhile revisiting its history and the environment it currently exists in order to determine the exact nature of the dilemmas it faces in the new millennium. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) began as the Australian Broadcasting Commission in 1932. It operated 12 radio stations across the six states. Initial broadcasts were state based and relays between the states did not commence until 1936. Since its inception, the ABC has had a reputation as a news and information provider. This became particularly important during the war years and later with the inauguration of an independent national news service in 1947.

In Australia, the regulation of television has been influenced by the divergent views of different governments and this continues to affect the ABC today. When the implementation of television in Australia was first being discussed a Labor government was in power. This government viewed the correct format for television services in Australia to be a publicly owned medium modelled on the system the British implemented with the BBC. A Royal Commission of Inquiry, however, decided that the Australian broadcasting system should be a system of dual broadcasting consisting of both a commercial and a public sector. The rules regulating television broadcasting were organised by the conservative Menzies government in 1953. In accordance with the recommendations of the Commission and the Broadcasting Act of 1953 the ABC was appointed the national television authority. In 1956, the ABC made its first television broadcast in Sydney and was broadcasting to all states by July 1960. During the 1980s, the ABC began satellite transmission, became incorporated, and restructured its radio and television services into separate divisions. Up until recently the ABC network

consists of four national radio services, one national television service, nine metropolitan and 39 regional radio stations.

Broadcasting as it was initially implemented in Australia was designed to 'take the best elements' from television systems in the United States and Great Britain (Cunningham, 2000:16). At this time, the United States television system was commercially oriented, although a small public sector existed during the 1960s, while the British system was mainly public until the 1950s (Cunningham, 2000:16). However, in practice the Australian broadcasting system was structured to be more lenient, or skewed towards the commercial sector by initially establishing 'two commercial stations in each metropolitan market, alongside the one public (or 'national') sector station' (Cunningham, 2000:16). According to Cunningham 'This system was enshrined in the *Broadcasting Act and Television Act of 1956*' (2000:16).

When the ABC commenced broadcasting in 1956 there were already two commercial stations in the major metropolitan cities of Sydney and Melbourne. The commercial television networks then spread to the other major metropolitan centres of Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Darwin and Hobart. These stations have since developed into the Australia wide 7 Network, and Network 9 that we are familiar with today. There is also a third commercial broadcaster TEN, and a multi-cultural television network Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) along with various pay, cable and satellite services. The ABC as the major public broadcaster exists in a competitive market with these other services.

The role of the national broadcaster differs significantly from other broadcast service providers. Right from its beginnings as a television broadcaster the ABC distinguished itself from the commercial broadcasters:

The ABC has a different role from the commercial sector, and helps ensure programming diversity is available to all Australians. While operating in the same market as the commercial industry it is motivated by different objectives, and its success is measured differently. The ABC is driven by a Charter, the commercial sector by the need to maximize audiences, revenue and return to shareholders (Citation).

The ABC, as with any publicly funded service, must be seen to fulfil identifiable community needs, and in this sense it is indeed a 'public service' broadcaster. The ABC, is driven by the principles of national public broadcasting that seek to ensure universality of access and appeal, and one of the ways it does this is by producing programs that cater for minority interests that 'contribute to a sense of national identity and community' (sub.78,p.6).

The regulatory system of contemporary Australian Broadcasting has its origins in the *Broadcasting Act 1942*, which was revised in 1953 to enable the introduction of television services. The *Act* set out the rules governing the number of licences, for commercial and community television stations and codifies 'the statutory powers and functions of the ABC' (The ABC in Review, 1981:vi). The Australian Government holds the general powers to issue orders concerning broadcast programs according to the conditions of the ABC's broadcasting Licence and Agreement. The ABC is financed through Government revenue levied in taxation directly from the Australian public whether they use the service or not. While this system may be considered to be in some way unfair it enables the ABC to overcome some of the limitations in furthering the public good that plague free to air broadcasting.

The *Act* was again revised in 1983 and the ABC became incorporated. The charter of the ABC as it is incorporated into the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983*, 'outlines specific public interest objectives designed to meet the programming needs of Australians' (Broadcasting, 2000: 270). In addition, it sets out the function of the ABC to 'include the broadcasting of programs that inform, educate, entertain and reflect the cultural diversity of the Australian community' (2000: 270). To fulfil these obligations, s. 6(2)(iii) outlines the responsibility of the ABC to 'provide a balance between broadcasting programs of wide appeal and specialised broadcasting programs'. The ABC noted it:

... has made and continues to make a major contribution to an effective, responsive and appropriate broadcasting system in this country. [Our] national reach and comprehensiveness, programming diversity and innovation, and non-commercial character, enhance the range and nature of media services and the public sphere in Australia (sub.78, p.4). (Broadcasting, Inquiry Report 11, 2000: 268-272).

The ABC along with SBS is also chartered to account for the multicultural character of the Australian community and the services provided by other broadcasters.

Australian Television began broadcasting in 1956 when a highly conservative society was in the process of disintegrating (Stone 2000: 9). However, the liberalisation of the telecommunication market in Australia has been rather 'slow' in comparison to other parts of the world (Barr 2002). The pace of reform can be partially blamed on the Labor government, which was in office from 1983-96. In Australia, *the Broadcasting Servicing Act* provides a series of restrictions in regard to limitation of ownership and number of controlled commercial stations in any one area. The legislation covering media ownership stipulates a 'one-to-a-market limit for commercial television services and cross-media rules which prevent the same person controlling a commercial television license and a commercial radio licence or a major daily newspaper in the same area' (Given 2000: 46). It can be said, that 'Australia has one of the most concentrated patterns of media ownership in the democratic world' (Barr 2002: 245). However, the provision to fulfil universal service requirements only applies to the ABC and digital broadcasting.

These rules were introduced by the Hawke government in 1987 to prevent the concentration of media ownership in Australia and to limit foreign ownership. The legislation governing the act was again revised in 2006 by the Minister for Communications Information Technology and the Arts, Helen Coonan. It is too soon to be able to chart the affects of these changes. The Australian media market, however, at that time already exhibited the characteristics of an oligopoly, and these restrictions led to a reluctance to invest in new infrastructure and expansion. By the late 1980s, cross-media ownership in Australia had been concentrated across four media conglomerates, Murdoch, Packer, Fairfax and the Herald and Weekly Times Group. These media moguls have maintained their position by owning newspapers in all major cities of Australia. With the introduction of radio licences (Barr 2002) they increased their media power and later on owned television station channels in all major cities of Australia: TCN 9 controlled by the Packer family, ATN 7 in Sydney by John Fairfax newspaper group and the Herald and Weekly Times newspapers controlling Melbourne's GTV and HSV 7. The ownership of ATN has changed several times in the intervening years. Kerry Packer's recent death has resulted in a challenge to the primacy of NINE among the commercial networks and a reorientation of its programming.

It has been argued that the concentration of media coupled with the refusal to privatise the national telecommunications body Telstra, and to further deregulate the market checked the liberalisation of the media (Barr 2002). In the 1990s Australia's largest pay TV service Foxtel commenced operations. This is relatively late in comparison to other markets in the developed world. Foxtel's ownership structure is divided between Telstra (the giant telecommunication company), Murdoch's News Corporation and Packer's (Publishing and Broadcasting Ltd.) once again demonstrating the concentration of media ownership in Australia into the 21st century. The privatisation of Telstra and further deregulation of the media market did not happen until the late 1990s after the Howard government came to power. However, as Barr writes in relation to the potential problems faced by governments in this respect 'it was always going to be politically difficult for any of the Australian Labor governments, in office from 1983-96, to move towards the privatisation of Telstra' (2002: 126).

Yet despite these limitations Australia was one of the first countries in Asia to begin terrestrial digital broadcasting in January of 2001. However, its implementation was not as smooth as the Australian national broadcaster would have liked. Because of the conditions outlined above and arguments over the format it should take, the original roll out of digital television had to be postponed and after six months HDTV was only required broadcast a minimum of twenty hours of digital programming per week from July 2003. While experiencing a decline in selling set top boxes for digital broadcast, the ABC's funding has been cut and it has been forced to withdraw the special digital channels *ABC Kids* and *Fly*, limit its online services and make changes to its mainstream programming (NHK BCRI 2004). It has, however, been able to implement the digital service ABC2 and some online services since then.

Nippon Hoso Kyokai: The Japanese Broadcasting Corporation (NHK)

After the BBC, NHK is the second oldest of the world's public broadcasters. As a public broadcasting organisation, NHK was formed from three radio stations in Osaka, Nagoya and Tokyo in 1925. It held a monopoly in Japanese broadcasting until the end of World War II. The post-war regulations of the Japanese *Broadcast Law* and *Radio Law* that authorised the formation of NHK as a public corporation were formulated during the Allied occupation and instituted on 1st June 1950. In accordance with these laws Japan established a 'dual' system of broadcasting, which consisted of both commercial and public sectors. According to Shimizu 'the dual system aims at providing high-quality programming through fair competition between public and private broadcasters, each excelling in its own field' (1993:6).

NHK began television broadcasting in 1953 three years earlier than in Australia alongside four commercial partners: the Nippon Television network Corporation (NTV-Channel 4) covers the NNN news network, the Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS-Channel 6) is linked to the JNN network, Fuji telecasting Company (Fuji TV-Channel 8), forms the FNN network and Asahi National Broadcasting Company (TV Asahi- Channel 10) forms ANN network. There are now five commercial television networks and the complete liberalisation of the telecommunication market in Japan occurred quite quickly in 1985 after deregulation. However, as Agata argued in relation to deregulation 'private broadcasters in Japan have to fulfil universal service provisions, especially in network stability' (2001: 136).

NHK was established under the regulations of the *Broadcast Law* of 1950. The main organising principle of the *Broadcast Act*, is that ‘freedom of expression in broadcasting must be secured by guaranteeing impartiality, truth and autonomy of broadcasting’. Shimizu explains, this law ‘can be described as the sole law relating to freedom of speech in post-war Japan’ (1993: 14). NHK’s mission stipulated in Broadcasting Law (article 7) ‘is to conduct its broadcasting for the public welfare in such a manner that its broadcasting may be received all over Japan (NHK BCRI 2004). The way to ensure this is to prohibit interference with the compilation of broadcast programs. In furthering these aims *Art. 3 of the Broadcast Act* states that: ‘Broadcast programs shall never be interfered with or regulated by any person, excepting in the case where he does so upon the powers provided for by law’ (Eguchi and Ichinohe 1971). Within this administrative framework NHK’s main revenues come from licence fees of TV viewers and subscription fees from BS1 and BS2 satellite broadcasting channels.

NHK is controlled by a Board of Governors consisting of twelve members. NHK Board members are appointed by the Prime Minister with the consent of both Houses of the Parliament. The Board members must possess expertise and broad knowledge in their respective professions, which can be drawn from such diverse fields as journalism, academic research or business (Shimizu 1991: 300). The Board is responsible for management operations of NHK, which includes operational planning, annual budget, and programming policy (Shimizu 1991: 300). The Board members are also responsible for appointing the President of NHK and the Chief Executive Officer.

To guarantee the impartiality of domestic television programs NHK formed the Central Consultative Committee on Broadcast Programs, which consists of more than 15 members; and the Regional Consultative Committee on Broadcast Programs composed of more than seven members in each region. The overseas service has its own International Consultative Committee on Broadcast Programs, which shares the same objective as the other committees (*Clause 2 of Art. 44 of the Broadcast Act 1999 Amendment p. 35*). The government has no role in the nominations for the posts and does not interfere in the appointment process.

Several principles are provided in the Broadcast Act that relate directly to the compilation of programs, they: ‘1) Shall not disturb public security and good morals and manners, 2) Shall be politically impartial, 3) Shall broadcast news without distorting facts, 4) As regards controversial issues, shall clarify the point of issue from as many angles as possible’ (*paragraph 1 of Art. 3-2 of the Broadcast Act*). The compilation of broadcast programs shall abide by the following guidelines: ‘1) Shall exert by all efforts to satisfy the wishes of the people as well as to contribute to the elevation of the level of civilisation by broadcasting or by entrusting for broadcasting abundant broadcast programs 2) Shall keep local programs in addition to national programs, 3) Shall strive to be conducive to the upbringing and popularisation of a new civilisation as well as to the preservation of past excellent civilisation of our country’ (*paragraph 1 of Art. 44 of the Broadcast Act*). Furthermore, ‘in compiling the broadcast programs for television broadcasting’, NHK is remitted to ‘maintain harmony among the broadcast programs, except those provided in accordance with a special business project, by providing a general cultural or educational program, as well as news and entertainment programs’ (*Clause 2 of Art. 3-2 of the Broadcast Act*).

In view of its independence from external interference NHK is responsible for observing these provisions of its own recognisance. There is no external organisation like the Australian Broadcasting Authority that checks whether or not individual programs are conforming to

those standards. Even if programs are against those stipulated, there is no penalty provision in the *Act*. Hence, legal control is maintained through respecting the autonomy of the broadcasting enterprise as it relates to Japanese culture in general.

Ebisawa Katsuji, the former president of Japanese Broadcasting Corporation sees NHK's role in the following terms, 'its mission in society: to help ensure the security and welfare of the people, to support the growth of a healthy democracy, and to promote the advancement of culture' (2002:x). In his article *Broadcasting Research for the New Age*, Ninomiya Fumihiko (2002: ix), Director-General of NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, defines broadcasting in terms of the relations between technology and culture: 'Technology is the enabler, but the sustaining core of broadcasting is a culture all its own, built up through imagination and intellect over nearly a century'.

Television was introduced into Japan under the influence of the American occupation in the immediate post war years. Despite this direct external influence Japanese television did not merely adopt the American model of television broadcasting, but worked television into its earlier cultural traditions and administrative and bureaucratic structures which we can see incorporated directly into the Broadcasting Law. Central to the Japanese model of public broadcasting is the unique relationship of the Japanese public to the implementation of subscription fees as part of their cultural duty to the Japanese nation (Yano 2000). These relations are now beginning to erode in the increasingly globalised deregulated television market place.

Under the provisions of the Broadcast Law of 1950, which was revised in 1989, NHK was given special responsibility for researching, developing and implementing new broadcasting technologies. Two of these are of specific interest to this thesis – the development of High Definition Television in the 1980s and Terrestrial and Digital Satellite Broadcasting (DSB) in the 1990s. The former is the subject of an excellent case study by Brian Winston (1996) that demonstrates the complexities of introducing new media technologies in rapidly evolving media environments. Because NHK is responsible for developing its own technologies it has a strategic advantage in integrating technology to its cultural and programming needs effectively and efficiently. Although as Winston's study makes apparent this does not occur exactly as planned every time. The organisational emphasis on developing technology has according to some critics been at the expense of innovative programming (Nakamura & Agata 2001). This is the converse of the Australian model, the ABC while also contending with similar criticisms regarding programming separates the functions of technological development from its core services allowing it to concentrate on issues of programming quality.

The Dilemmas Facing Public Service Broadcast Television.

In the last decade of the twentieth century four cultural phenomena converged that placed public television under pressure and disrupted the long held traditions of PSB. These phenomena where:

- 1) globalisation
- 2) commercialisation
- 3) commodification of information
- 4) digital technologies

These phenomena while not necessarily as distinct as this breakdown suggests acted in concert to place the concept of public service television and its continuing relevance under intense scrutiny.

The operations of globalisation, for example, have caused the concept of nation states as separate and distinct entities to come into question. The increasing commercialisation of the now global television market also places the idea of public service broadcasting and its funding by national governments under interrogation. PSB will have to become more market oriented in the future if it wants to survive hard competition against commercial television stations on the market. The increasing commodification of information within this context shifts the function of television from one of reproducing cultural and national identities to one of producing new consumers as capitalism extends its reach across the globe. New digital technologies have removed issues such as ‘wavelength scarcity’ from the discourse of television regulation. The ability of these new technologies to transgress national borders at will furthers and accelerates the impact of globalisation. However, it is not only the external pressures brought about by these phenomena that challenge the model of public service broadcasting today, but also the internal pressures brought about by the fragmentation of traditional notions of nationhood that they engender (Pietersee, quoted in Raboy 1994: 6).

As early as 1994 Achille, for example, claimed that PSB was facing a ‘crisis of identity’ due to significant issues of ‘financing and functioning’. The question of financing which should be dealt with in negotiation with government is linked by Achille to the functioning of the broadcasting system ‘with a hope of building public and political support for its new role’ (Raboy 1995:9; see also Atkinson 1993; Paracuellos 1993; Achille and Miede 1994). Ninomiya Fumihiko from NHK’s Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, also noted a linkage between finance, function and functionality. Fumihiko argued as ‘the emergence of new technologies that allow increasingly faster and more abundant information and ever-developing information systems’ create new possibilities they are also ‘affecting the ways and purposes for which broadcasting is used’ (2002: x). Achille stresses that the successful tackling of these factors might provide a trigger to the success of new public service broadcasting in the future (Raboy 1995: 9). Nevertheless, Achille (1994) sees resolving the ‘identity crisis’, as a challenge to public broadcasting, which should also readdress some of the fundamental questions of its continued existence.

The dilemmas facing public broadcasting in Australia and Japan in many ways stem from the fact that they belong to systemic media sectors. That is PSB must fight for a decreasing share of resources within the increasingly commercialised and deregulated media environment. These dilemmas all relate to the four cultural phenomena mentioned earlier, and can be itemised as follows:

- changing environment of mass communication,
- the concept of a universal public,
- blurring boundaries between broadcasting and narrowcasting,
- blurring boundaries between broadcasting and telecommunication sectors
- blurring boundaries between public and private broadcasting sectors
- shift towards the consumer model in broadcasting, which expresses lack of promotion in policy measures and
- institutional mechanisms towards rethinking of P.S.B.
- new definition for a public broadcaster (broadcasting) suitable to a new public culture, global in scope and experienced locally.
- Difficulties in collecting voluntary subscription fees from receivers.

These points all relate to the idea of a changing media environment in which the boundaries between various technological and cultural sectors are being increasingly transgressed due to the complex processes of convergence. These are factors, which must lead commentators of the media to ask what are the most appropriate strategies for maintaining PSB and reaffirming the fundamental principles on which it is based in the rapidly transforming media environment?

One of the major organisational differences between NHK and ABC is that the ABC is funded directly from government tax revenues rather than following the subscription fee model favoured in Japan. As the Japanese media becomes increasingly commercialised it is becoming harder to justify and to collect receivers (subscription) fees. This is due to the fact that fees are voluntary and not subjected to the law like in a case of BBC. Many Japanese resent having to pay subscription fees for a service they increasingly see as irrelevant and that they consider fails to meet their needs. This situation leads to revenue shortfalls that translate into proposed staff cuts and a reduction in programming diversity.

While NHK is beholden directly to the Japanese people for its funding, the ABC is dependent upon the Australian Parliament. In response to a perception of left wing political bias in the ranks of the ABC the Howard government with the majority of both Houses has placed increasingly stringent financial and administrative constraints on the operations of the ABC. These constraints raise questions about the ABC's continued ability to provide a universal, independent and impartial service. Following the recent trends of corporatisation that have been forced onto the public service institutions of most industrialised democracies the public broadcasters of Japan and Australia countries will be required in the future to find funding from other sources than government or public subscription that may be prejudicial to their status as public service broadcasters. Raboy (1999) writes that for all broadcasting to be successful it must be program driven, while public broadcasting is at the moment policy driven. These kinds of contradictions need to be resolved to maintain the continuing prospects of PSB. Governments need to maintain the independence of public broadcasting organisations while the broadcasters need to remain accountable to the public. One of the ways to ensure this is to maximise the way that the limited resources 'flow through the system', this can be achieved through efficiently reorganising and restructuring what Raboy (1999) refers to as the broadcasting environment. One of the ways of doing this would be for a continuing dialogue between NHK and ABC, were for example NHK could share its technological and administrative expertise in return for ABC knowledge in producing high quality programming within severe budgetary constraints. To do this effectively, however, government funding of PSB needs to be maintained at realistic levels now and in to the future. A comparative study of NHK and the ABC sheds light on how best to maintain and protect the public interest aspect of television in today's complex media environment. Previous studies have made inferences using models that do not necessarily apply to the Japanese situation hence their conclusions are often inadequate, while contemporary studies of the Australian media have tended to focus on its relationship with the west. A comparative analysis like this reveals significant implications for the issues of financing, programming, and structure of public service broadcasting for both countries.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that public broadcast television has an essential and continuing role to play in producing and expressing cultural identities and in this endeavour it deserves the

protection of both the governments that fund it and the societies it is chartered to serve. Commercial television networks while promising to fulfil this role are more interested in targeting ‘niches for their own sake’ irrespective of issues of access and quality, and ‘in providing shareholder value’ were the two concepts are seemingly linked (Docherty 2004:79). PSB’s on the other hand are by their charters committed to the principles of universal service, innovation and high standards, and in fulfilling these criteria are in fact more likely to provide their audiences with innovative and diverse programming.

This paper has examined the main principles of public broadcast television and examined them as they encounter and respond to the increasing proliferation of new, mainly digital media technologies. To be effective in this transitory environment PSBs must reaffirm their commitment to the core principles of access, universality, sensitivity to minorities and the issues of multiculturalism, contribution to a sense of community and national identity, competition in quality programming rather than for audience share and above all continued and sustainable access to funding. These principles were formed in an age when the broadcasting spectrum was held to be a public resource, seen as an asset to its country in terms of distribution of wavelengths and its protection was therefore appropriately legislated by the respective constitutions according to international standards. These systems were recognised as national ones and consisted of other constituent broadcasting elements. However, this understanding of public broadcasting is hard to sustain in an era where digital technologies and the processes of globalisation no longer respect or observe national boundaries.

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