
THE RISE AND FALL OF PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING IN SOUTH AFRICA: A MOTIVATION FOR A NEW BROADCASTING MODEL (TELEVISION)

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ABSTRACT

In the article it is argued that South Africa needs a new broadcasting model. Such a model should go beyond the present three-tier system and the Reithian model. A single level with distributed or wider-dissemination public service broadcasting is suggested. The motivation is set against the background of the present (July 2013) (systemic) governance and managerial problems of the South African public service broadcaster (the SABC), the changed nature of public service broadcasting in the new media environment and a discussion of the changed thinking underlying broadcasting policy and public service broadcasting research related to, inter alia, the changed and changing nature of “public service”, “social responsibility” and the changed political economy of public service broadcasting.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the article is to motivate why South Africa needs a new broadcasting model. This is done by briefly (1) discussing the present state of the South African public broadcaster related to governance and management as the cornerstone of independent public service broadcasting (PSB); (2) by considering the impact of the new media environment on broadcasting and the impact thereof on the future of PSB in South Africa; and (3) referring to the impact of the changed phenomenology of public service broadcasting on PSB's future. The focus is on television and does not concern radio and new online or internet-based media.

On 10 March 2013 the Chairperson of the Board of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and his Deputy resigned. This came after months of political and managerial turmoil in the Board and in the Executive Management of the SABC. This turmoil was preceded by various efforts of the government to interfere with the Board and executive appointments and efforts towards legislation affecting the political independence of the public broadcaster. Besides government interference with and control over the public broadcaster under apartheid (cf. e.g. Louw 1993), recent interference can be traced back to the early 1990s. It started shortly after the demise of apartheid and the adoption of new broadcasting legislation (cf. South Africa 1999). Various South African scholars have dealt with aspects of this history of South African broadcasting including the apartheid government's authoritarian hold over broadcasting and particularly the SABC (as a state broadcaster). See in this regard, for example Duncan and Glenn (2010), Louw (1993), Louw and Milton (2012) and Teer-Tomaselli (2005; 2011).

The new legislation was the result of participatory consultation between key role players in the broadcasting sector, government, and civic society groups, formal inquiries and legislative processes including Green and White Papers, draft bills, etc. (cf. e.g. Fourie 2003; Duncan & Glenn 2010). A key rationale for the new legislation was to turn apartheid's state broadcaster into a democratic public broadcaster and to provide for the liberalisation and pluralisation of broadcasting in South Africa (cf. e.g. Teer-Tomaselli 1993; 2005; 2011).

The mandate of the SABC is firmly based on classic Reithian PSB principles. The principles can be summarised as a broadcasting service(s) which (from a normative perspective) provides a space for free expression and open debate, provides objective and impartial information and news, addresses a variety of social and cultural interests and tastes (plurality and diversity), provides services in as many of a country's (official) languages as possible, gives a voice to minorities in a society, provides educational programming, contributes towards nation-building and a national identity, sets high production and programming standards, and is accessible to as many citizens as possible (universal service).

The degree to which the SABC has succeeded in fulfilling such a mandate is often questioned and critiqued by scholars, NGOs and the media. However, it should be acknowledged that PSB is universally battling to fulfil a mandate such as described above, leading to its future often being questioned. See in this regard, for example, the research and publications of the research group RIPE (2013). Nevertheless, it can be argued that the SABC is an organisation beleaguered by governance and managerial problems, financial problems, and problems related to production and programming (cf. e.g. Blignaut 2013; Duncan 2008; 2013; Lloyd, Duncan, Minnie & Bussiek 2010; Mbanjwa & Ndlangisa 2013; Media Monitoring Africa 2012; Styran 2013a; S.O.S. 2013¹).

In the following paragraphs only the most recent governance and managerial problems of the SABC are discussed. This is done to add to the existing work dealing with aspects of the SABC's governance, management and future by scholars such as Duncan (2006; 2008), Duncan and Glenn (2010), Louw and Milton (2012) and Teer-Tomaselli (1998; 2005; 2011).

THE LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Early in the history of the new (post-apartheid) SABC it was necessary for the then Chair of the Board and later Minister of Communications, the late Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, to give the assurance that the Board would not allow government to interfere with its independence, neither would the Board and the executive interfere with or influence management and editorial decision-making (cf. Monare 2013:16). The opposite has happened. In 2013, Monare (*ibid.*), for example, writes: "... the broadcaster has known no peace, with the Board trying to appease politicians – or factions within the same party (the ANC). For instance, the Board is supposed to report to Parliament, but the executive tend to interfere, while some MPs are embedded in factional battles, instead of serving the public's interest."

Suffice to say that since 1994 there were various examples of governmental interference with the appointment of members of the SABC's Board and executive officers (cf. Louw & Milton's 2012 analysis of how politics impacted on the governance and management of the SABC).

The most recent case is illustrated by the resignation in March 2013 of the Chairperson of the Board, Ben Ngubane, and the remaining members of the Board. The resignations coincided with accusations of corruption against the Minister of Communications, Dina Pule.

Soon after the appointment of the Board in 2009, problems such as the following resurfaced:

- ♦ key corporate governance policies remained unformulated or inadequate;
- ♦ a lack of clarity about various policies continued across the entire SABC;
- ♦ a coherent turnaround strategy remained to be overseen; and
- ♦ irregularities in the application of the SABC's own editorial policies continued (cf. S.O.S. 2013.)

These and related problems led to the appointment of three corporate executive officers in the space of two years. In 2010, eight months after the “new” Board was appointed, five senior members of the Board resigned. They gave the following as reasons for their resignation: internal strife in the Board, poor governance and undue interference from the Communications Ministry, a lack of support or political will from oversight structures (e.g. Icasa) to champion the Board's efforts in turning the SABC around, and ministerial interference (cf. S.O.S. 2013).

Ngubane gave ministerial interference with the appointment of the SABC's chief financial officer as his main reason for resignation (Bailey & Nkomo 2013: 1). His, and the resignation of the majority of the remaining members of the Board, left Parliament's Communication Portfolio Committee with no choice but to dissolve the Board and to appoint a new five-member interim Board. The political opposition immediately claimed these appointments had been bulldozed by the African National Congress (ANC), were non-transparent and inadequate, and did not contribute to the embattled SABC and the solving of the broadcaster's problems.

Early in March 2013, the Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela, announced that her Office is stepping up its investigation into “systemic governance failure at the level of the Board and various allegations regarding certain appointments, dismissals and salaries at the public broadcaster” (Blignaut 2013: 1). According to Blignaut, the Public Protector's office has, in the course of two years, received a vast number of complaints about the SABC, outlining improper appointments, unfair dismissals and ethical lapses in governance.

In the months prior to the Board's resignation and shortly after it, the Minister of Communications, Dina Pule, was increasingly exposed by the media for poor management and corruption. She has been accused of mismanagement, including extravagant spending of public money on personal luxuries, favouritism, and the lack of managing the process of digitisation, causing backlogs and placing South Africa on a slide in terms of ICT development and expansion. Pule was also exposed in *The Sunday Times* on 24 March 2013 for allegedly allowing her boyfriend to appoint friends and relatives to the boards of the Post Office, Sentech, the Universal Service and Access Agency (USAASA) and the SABC.

At the time of writing (July/August 2013), the Minister was under investigation by Parliament's Ethics Committee. On 9 July 2013, President Jacob Zuma reshuffled

his cabinet (for the fourth time in his first five-year term). In the process he got rid of Pule and appointed a new Minister of Communications, Yunus Carrim. In August 2013, Parliament's Joint Committee on Ethics found Pule guilty of breaching the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament and recommended that the police and the National Prosecuting Authority investigate her case in terms of the Powers and Privileges Act of Parliament. Carrim undertook to pay urgent attention to South Africa's backlog in the fields of digitisation and broadband development (including Internet costs) and to the functioning and effectiveness of the SABC Board and the broadcaster's relation with and to government. In August 2013 new reports about the SABC's financial and human resource mismanagement featured in the media and in Parliament (cf. Styan 2013b: 2; Van Wyk 2013: 1).

Duncan (2013: 4) attributes the problems of the SABC to four strategies which have created a structural weakness in the SABC:

- ♦ A strategy to corporatise the organisation with the purpose to free the state from having to fund it. This has made the SABC even more reliant on advertising, which in turn confused the public broadcaster's mandate and caused institutional instability.
- ♦ An increase of government control (through legislation), giving the Minister of Communications "extensive" powers over the SABC.
- ♦ The SABC centralising its operations in an effort to save costs. This led to, inter alia, the closing of regional offices, less local content, and making the broadcaster less accessible to audiences.
- ♦ A strategy to reduce public accountability.

Elsewhere Duncan and Glenn (2010) ascribe many of the problems experienced, especially with public television in South Africa, to managerial decisions which placed the public broadcaster on a road of marketisation which, according to Fourie (2004), has led to the loss of a public service ethos.

In addition to governance and managerial problems, questions are asked regularly about the SABC's editorial independence, the SABC's financial management, and about programming and production problems.

As far as editorial independence is concerned, many examples can be cited of political favouritism leading to meddling with programme content and the shelving and rescheduling of programmes, leaving opposition parties in Parliament to call for an investigation into political interference in the SABC (Mouton 2012; Strydom 2012).

In terms of financing, the need for a new model is increasingly raised. The SABC's reliance on advertising as its main source of income places the SABC on

a high level of (unfair) competition with the private sector and it can be argued undermines the broadcaster's remit to address audiences first of all as citizens and not as consumers. In 2013 almost 87% of its income came from advertisements, 11% from licence fees, and the remainder from government which was earmarked for educational programmes (Green 2013: 3). This makes the SABC one of the only public broadcasters in the world that has to rely almost exclusively on commercial revenue to fund its operations.

In 2010, Lloyd *et al.* (2010: 146-173) gave a comprehensive analysis² of the SABC's financial position. They concluded with arguments in favour of a new funding model, taking into account, inter alia, performance indicators and transparency. According to the authors, such a model will be the only solution to the Corporation's financial woes.

In relation to programming, production and technological development, several issues exist. Whereas the SABC as the public broadcaster is especially expected to contribute to education, nation-building and national identity (see earlier reference to the principles of public broadcasting), the topic of local content³ as one of the main programming and production vehicles for such a contribution is particularly relevant.

In this regard, Media Monitoring Africa found that in terms of local content, 28% of the SABC's broadcasting time was repeats. The report also found that despite a commitment to language diversity, English dominated, and was used in 76% of the SABC's programming. The most broadcast genre was soap operas⁴ (cf. Media Monitoring Africa 2012: 9-29).

In regards to technological development, the SABC is negatively affected by especially the government's floundering with decisions about digitisation. This has been the case since 2001, and has caused the deferment of the implementation date a number of times. The original switchover date of 2008 has been moved to 2015, leaving South Africa to lag behind neighbouring countries such as Botswana, Lesotho and Tanzania and negatively impacting on the SABC's capacity to expand (cf. Hoffstatter 2013).

In addition to government interference causing the SABC to lose credibility, the problems briefly referred to above add up to a public questioning of the value of a public broadcaster. Such questioning was most recently expressed in the media by Thlabi (2013: 2) when she wrote:

I can confidently say that the commercial media in South Africa have taken up the roles of whistle-blower, social worker, legal adviser, trauma councillor, fundraiser, and so forth. I know for a fact that employees in commercial media are doing more for the community than all the channels of the public broadcaster together. Community radio and TV channels are also doing amazing

work not only in broadcasting content, but in highlighting the problems of the communities they serve. So do we need the SABC? No, we do not. It may not be dead yet, but it is definitely on the verge of becoming obsolete.

In the same vein, and in favour of private broadcasters, *Business Day* (2013) wrote in an editorial on 12 March 2013:

South Africa is [as a result of the crises at the SABC- PJF] consequently getting very little TV and radio, while commercial broadcasters have to compete against the enormous, publicly funded behemoth. The deep irony is that they [commercial broadcasters] are managing to do so successfully. Even without the subsidies and tax infusions and the huge infrastructure advantage enjoyed by the SABC, e.tv, for example, is doing quite well, as are some of the private radio stations, an extraordinary indication of the impotence at the SABC.

To conclude: Of all the problems the SABC may experience, and despite the inherent attributes and possibilities of PSB in terms of access, addressing a diversity of public needs, etc., it is government interference and assaults on the political independence of the SABC that threatens the future existence of the SABC most. It should, however, be acknowledged that such interference is not only a South African problem but a structural and endemic problem of public service broadcasting as such. It is one of the main reasons for the questioning of PSB's future and an almost universal search for a new broadcasting model (at least as far as public service television is concerned). In the new media environment, which is far more democratised than has been the case in the era of scarce frequencies and top-down approaches to audiences, government interference in the governance and management of a broadcaster has become indefensible and poses a far greater threat to a broadcaster's existence than has been the case in the past.

A fundamental reason for South African PSB being prone to government interference may be found in the initial British PSB model, or the so-called "Reithian" model (cf. Hallin & Mancini 2004). This model was (is) deeply informed by principles of social engineering in a uniformed society. With hindsight, it can be argued that this model was never appropriate for the South African society with its diverse cultures, languages and economies. It is a model exposed to political misuse as has happened under British colonialism, thereafter by the National Party for the propaganda of apartheid ideology, and lately by the ANC government for its own political agenda (cf. Duncan 2006; 2008; Fourie 2009; Teer-Tomaselli 2011). Replacing the model is becoming increasingly unavoidable.

THE NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AND PSB

Moving away from the SABC, a second main reason for a new model is the changed media environment brought about by developments in communication and

information technology (ICT). Amongst many consequences, ICT has eliminated one of the main reasons for PSB coming into existence in the 1930s, namely the scarcity of broadcasting frequencies. New broadcasting technology has expanded frequencies and their scope and therefore the availability and potential availability of stations and channels.

The new media environment is characterised by new distribution platforms giving rise to multi-media approaches, a bigger diversity of media, a high level of interactivity between communicators and users (audiences), the convergence of public and private media, a blurring of media genres, niche markets and changed audiences with new viewing habits (from linear to non-linear viewing), uses and needs. As Bardoel and d'Haenens (2008: 341-342) write, the new media have created a fuller broadcasting environment with new media taking over the binding role of the traditional mass media.

Most of all, the new media environment is characterised by digitisation. Digitisation makes the achievement of access goals (one of PSB's main principles) easier. By providing possibilities and opportunities for more voices, digitisation requires new ways of thinking about the democratic role of broadcasting, what constitutes democracy, different kinds of democracy, and different relations between the media and democracy. The multi-platforms created by and through digitisation also make it easier to address minority audiences, a diversity of interests, and provide more opportunities for the production of quality programming. In short, digitisation weakens public broadcasters' justification that (only) they can play a role in the provision of universal access and in producing quality programming for various and diverse audiences (cf. Debrett 2009: 809-810).

In so far as the financing of PSB is concerned, "... the traditional threefold task [of PSB-PJF] as formulated by Reith (information, education, entertainment) is no longer an adequate basis for the operation and financing of PSB" (Coppens & Saeys 2006: 263). In the new media environment, broadcasting has (or can) become multi-functional in a networked, interactive mass communication environment. This, as well as the possibilities of an increase of hybrid-funded broadcasters, broadband piloting of programme and programme concepts, the targeting of particular audiences, on-demand media, and increased competition, should form the guiding principles for funding.

South Africa and PSB in South Africa have not escaped any of the above characteristics and consequences of the new media environment. To the contrary, the new media and media environment have also made the justification of PSB as a separate kind of broadcasting (within the present three-tier model) with an exclusive mandate, regulatory protection and financial advantages in South Africa fragile and insecure. It is this uncertain future of PSB that has been dealt with in

depth by the international research group RIPE (2013) and in South Africa by, for example, Teer-Tomaselli (1998; 2011).

In the European context the uncertainty and fragility of PSB has also necessitated recent research by the European Broadcasting Union under the combined title of *Vision 2020: Future Strategies for PSM*. A preliminary indication is that in a new European broadcasting model PSB will have to exist only as a “unit” amongst various broadcasting platforms (cf. Bierman, Leurdijk & Suárez-Candel 2013).

NEW THINKING ABOUT BROADCASTING

Besides the new media environment, a fundamental reason for a new broadcasting model is the new “phenomenology” of broadcasting dictated by, inter alia, the changed nature of social responsibility, public interest, public opinion and the new public sphere, the changed nature of broadcasting as mass communication and the changed political economy of public service broadcasting.

Over a period, many academics have become uncomfortable with PSB as a concept and as a model. In many conferences, seminars and publications the problems besetting PSB have been and are analysed and solutions to the problems are suggested. The topic has been dealt with from the perspectives of different mass communication theories emanating from different policy paradigms (cf. e.g. RIPE 2013).

A recent conference at MIT on the topic of *Media in Transition 8: Public media, private media* (May 2013) pinpointed the following as key theoretical issues in PSB (and new media) research: The thin line between public and private media and how that affects or may affect broadcasting models and regulation; the shifting nature of the public and private at a moment of unparalleled connectivity; new notions of the socially mediated public; unequalled levels of data (information and content) via new media; the ways in which specific media challenge and reinforce certain notions of the public or the private; and the ways in which specific texts (content) dramatise or imagine the public, the private and the boundary between them.

The changed nature of social responsibility and public interest

Social responsibility is no longer the exclusive domain of state departments, public organisations, and public broadcasters (cf. Bardoel & Brants 2003: 181-182). New economic (liberalisation, privatisation and internationalisation), market, social and political contexts (deregulation and self-regulation) have transformed the ways of thinking about who is responsible for social responsibility, what is social responsibility, what is needed in terms of social responsibility and what is in the public interest. For example, many South African private corporations, industrial companies, the banking sector, etc. are involved with social projects of various

kinds, including corporate social responsibility programmes. Apart from media companies themselves being involved with social projects, all the projects involve the use of the media (including public and private broadcasters) in campaigns related to building public awareness, expressing public needs and achievements and the need in South Africa for nation-building.

In terms of the regulation of social responsibility, Bardoel and d'Haenens (2008: 348-349) argue that there has not been an end to state responsibility, but that it "... is important to find the right mix between the 'co-regulation' and regulated 'self-regulation'" of social responsibility. To this can be added that the state still plays an important, albeit shared, role but is no longer the only designated role-player for the provision of public service (including broadcasting as a public service).

In addition to the changed nature of social responsibility, it is increasingly difficult to define concepts such as "public service", "public good" and "public sphere". From this stems the growing impossibility to motivate the continued existence of institutionalised PSB based on a mandate defined in terms of old definitions and understandings of "social responsibility", "public service" and "public good". At the same time it is increasingly difficult for private broadcasters to claim that they do not have a "public service" or that what they are doing are not in the "public's interest".

The changed nature of social responsibility, and with that of what constitutes public service, leads to the following question: Is the term "public service broadcasting" still appropriate? In South Africa, in terms of the variety of content and genres offered by various broadcasters, it can be argued that the term "public service broadcasting" or "public broadcasting" is confusing, if not misleading. It is increasingly difficult to distinguish between the programming of the public service broadcaster and that of private broadcasters. They all offer (in the same ways) news, sport, games, soap operas, music, art, travel, food, local music, pop, jazz, etc. In terms of licensing, they all have to comply with the same content and quality regulations monitored by Icasa and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA). Given the changed nature of social responsibility and the growing uncertainty of the term "public service broadcasting", the term is increasingly replaced with simply "public media" (cf. e.g. Bierman *et al.* 2013).

New characteristics of broadcasting as mass communication

The changed nature of the phenomenology of broadcasting as mass communication also underlies the need for a new broadcasting model. The new nature is underlined by two prominent characteristics of "new" broadcasting, namely interactivity and intertextuality.

Broadcasting can no longer be described in terms of a simple linear model from sender to receiver or in terms of top-down relationships. Dialogue, interaction and feedback constituting interactivity have become the essence of broadcasting. Interactivity between programme producers, presenters, journalists, etc., defines present sender-audience relationships. This new relationship defies the paternalistic and authoritarian attitude underlying traditional PSB-audience relationships (i.e. we (the broadcaster) know better and for your (the audience's) good we are the best to inform, teach, entertain, persuade and influence you). In the new social media environment it is often also difficult to clearly distinguish between a sender(s) and a receiver(s).

Likewise intertextuality, and through it narrative accrual, is an outstanding characteristic of "new" broadcasting. "Narrative accrual" refers to the accumulation of the meaning of media content on a specific topic through different media and genres, for example, the accumulation of meaning through the programming (content) of both public and private broadcasters (and all print and online media) on a specific topic. The new media environment implores the need to broaden the definition of intertextuality far beyond media genres and media content on a single channel or on the different channels of a particular broadcaster. Intertextuality (and narrative accrual) should be understood in terms of intra and inter media content and eventually the intra and inter media production of meaning, creating a semiosphere of mediated meaning. What this boils down to is that a public broadcaster is but one medium out of many (broadcasting, print and online) contributing to the circulation of messages, meanings and opinions in a society.

The changed political economy of public service broadcasting

From research about the political economy of broadcasting (cf. Jakubowicz 2011; Duncan 2006) it is clear that broadcasting, including PSB, has moved from a service to a market economy. It is therefore almost obvious that the "classic" market failure argument is again prominent in discussions (including discussions of access and universal service) on the future of PSB. The market failure argument has, however, lost its validity in the new media environment. The old argument is that being market and profit driven, private broadcasters will and cannot have as a primary goal the production of quality programmes and will and cannot meet universal access targets usually expected from a public broadcaster as part of its mandate.

However, as seen above, the nature and understanding of social responsibility and public service as well as the phenomenology of broadcasting has changed. With the increased acceptance and acknowledgement of its social responsibility, the private sector plays an increased role in the delivery of public services, including the broadcasting of programming and social marketing usually associated with

public service broadcasters. In terms of access, new media have created increased and widespread access to broadcasting of all sorts.

In terms of programming, the SABC (as most public broadcasters) and private broadcasters have moved away from what Jakubowicz (2002) (also see Bardoel & d’Haenens 2008: 344) calls a “monastery model” to a “full portfolio model”, that is a model of programming encompassing all broadcasting genres. In terms of increased access to programming, there is also no rationale (or policy) prohibiting South African private broadcasters from offering a full portfolio, including so-called “PSB programming”, unless a broadcaster chooses a niche market which would, in any case, be in line with a pluralistic model. With digitisation the possibilities of offering a full portfolio will increase as the number of channels and platforms, together with competition, increase.

The ‘undefinability’ of public service broadcasting

From the above it is clear that it is becoming increasingly difficult to define PSB. Although policy is usually explicit in describing the mandate of public broadcasters, descriptions of what public service content and form are, are in essence non-existent. At best, there are vague guidelines. Defining PSB as a phenomenon or as a genre or as a unique kind of broadcasting being different from other forms of broadcasting is near to impossible. From a phenomenological point of view, all forms, genres and/or kinds of broadcasting are intrinsically public and all forms of broadcasting provide a service, whether it is to inform, to entertain, to educate, to influence and manipulate, to provide a platform for dialogue and debate, or to play a surveillance role.

To conclude with Jakubowicz’s (2011: 212) argument: If the role [functions] of the broadcaster is taken as the determinant in the naming of the kind of broadcasting to be expected from a broadcaster, and if the broadcaster in a young and developing country is expected to play a national and educational development role [as public broadcasting has always been expected to do or has as its main function], then national broadcasting instead of public service broadcasting may be a more appropriate name in the sense of expecting the programme content to play a role in nation-building, in creating and sustaining a national and social identity, and in educating audiences about health, agriculture, the economy, religion, morality, culture, etc. However, it can be argued that this can be done through numerous genres by both public and private broadcasters. The term “national broadcasting” also carries a negative connotation and can easily be understood to mean state broadcaster or a broadcaster being misused to be a state broadcaster.

The “undefinability” of PSB also makes the distinction in South Africa’s present three-tier model between public, private and community broadcasting increasingly superficial, especially as far as television is concerned.

TOWARDS PRINCIPLES FOR A NEW BROADCASTING MODEL FOR SOUTH AFRICA

Taking into consideration the state of PSB in South Africa (and in the rest of the world), the implications of the new media environment for PSB, and changed thinking about the nature and future of PSB it is clear that South African broadcasting policy will need to adapt to what Mansell and Raboy (2011: 1-21) describe as a new policy paradigm. This paradigm is guided by finding an appropriate role for the state in communications policy in the new communications environment and adapting policy to confront issues of content, audiences, access, social justice, different understandings of democracy and democracy in a global context, the changed relations between state, the market and civil society, and broadcasting communication as a social priority on the same level as, for example, education and health policy.

In an effort to move towards a new paradigm for new PSB television broadcasting policy in South Africa, this author has argued in previous work on PSB policy (cf. Fourie 2005; 2010) for distributed PSB. This was done on the basis of a distinction and description of PSB as a specific genre. The genre was (broadly) described as content related to the development of audiences in matters of national development, national history, politics, culture and identity, and adhering to the principles of distinctiveness and creativity.

As such this work can be described as being in the domain of moving away from institutionalised PSB. Jakubowicz (2011: 211-212) also refers to proponents “who advocate moving away from thinking of PSB solely in terms of particular institutions and dissociating ‘public interest content’ from institutional frameworks (such as PSB organisations) specifically created to provide it”. He shows how proponents argue that commercial broadcasters can also provide PSB or may be required to provide it, and refers to the New Zealand⁵ example and how such a scheme has also been proposed in the UK by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DCMS 2009).

In agreement with this view, this author has maintained that the SABC should be replaced with an agency responsible for the distribution of public service programming. Such programming was defined as a “PSB genre” (see above) encompassing the principles of “traditional” PSB. It was argued that all the broadcasters in the country should be expected to broadcast programmes that comply with the principles of a “PSB genre” and that broadcasting public service programming should be a prerequisite for a broadcasting licence. In terms of funding, it was argued that all broadcasters should receive an incentive for the production of quotas of PSB programming. In terms of regulation (monitoring the broadcasting of PSB quotas), South African local content policy and the South

African Media Development and Diversity Agency⁶ were suggested as a model. A key argument was that distributed PSB would stimulate the South African production industry and that it would expose (give access to) more people to more “public service content”.

However, given the reality of new media and the new media environment, PSB has become almost impossible to define. Therefore, to distinguish, describe and regulate PSB on the basis of a “PSB genre” is problematic, if not impossible, even if it is on the basis of distributed instead of institutionalised PSB. This, together with the need to acknowledge the new economy of broadcasting and the “new” phenomenology of broadcasting, requires a more open model geared towards the development and expansion of broadcasting. With this in mind a new South African broadcasting model will have to do, amongst others, the following:

- ♦ move from a three-tier system (the distinction between public, private, community) to a single broadcasting system;
- ♦ make a clear differentiation between radio, television and online media within a single broadcasting policy wherein, for television, as an example, the following would apply:
 - a *wider-dissemination model*⁷, in which all the broadcasters are expected to comply with a prescribed quota of *original local content* (assuming that *local content* inherently encompass the characteristics of PSB related to content);
 - a broader definition and prescription of “local content” to include quotas per genre distributed over different genres and including documentary and investigative journalism besides magazine, drama, news, sports, music and games;
 - the exclusion of repetitions counting towards local content quotas; and
- ♦ institute a broadcasting agency as a monitoring body.

Finally, a new model will need to:

- ♦ achieve a balance between economic and non-economic goals;
- ♦ acknowledge the diversity of broadcasting forms and platforms;
- ♦ support the production of a diversity of language and cultural services;
- ♦ depart from a broader understanding of social responsibility and public service;

- ◆ achieve “institution-neutrality” (Jakubowicz 2011: 212); and
- ◆ strive towards universal access.

By moving in this direction, in other words by getting rid of the old category, concept and idea of PSB and by replacing it with an appropriate emphasis on broadcasting as the omnipresent and dominant main mass communication medium in a society, the (inherent) problems specific to PSB and PSB institutions can begin to be addressed, such as political interference, financing the broadcaster, unfair competition and the loss of distinguishable content and form.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The “S.O.S.: Support Public Broadcasting” Coalition is a membership-based coalition representing unions, NGOs, CBOs, community media, the independent film and TV production sector, academics, freedom of expression activists and concerned individuals. The vision of the S.O.S. Coalition is to create a public broadcasting system dedicated to the broadcasting of quality, diverse, citizen-orientated public programming committed to deepening South Africa’s Constitution. See <http://www.supportpublicbroadcasting.co.za/>
- ² See *Public Broadcasting in Africa. A survey. South African Country Report* (Lloyd et al. 2010). This is a comprehensive review of PSB in South Africa within an African context done under the auspices of the Africa Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project (now Media Monitoring Africa), the Open Society Foundation for South Africa and the Open Society Institute Media Program.
- ³ As an indication of local content quotas, see Icasa’s *Discussion Paper on the Review of Local Content Quotas* (December 2000). In this document “local content” is defined in detail and the following are listed as quotas: Public television: at least 50% of its programming during the South African television performance period and during prime time consists of local television content; i) 20% of its drama programming consists of South African drama; ii) 80% of its current affairs programming consists of South African current affairs; iii) 50% of its documentary programming consists of South African documentary programming; iv) 50% of its informal knowledge-building programming consists of South African informal knowledge-building programming; v) 60% of its educational programming consists of South African educational programming; vi) 50% of its children’s programming consists of South African children’s programming. Private television: A weekly average of 20% - i) 10% of its drama programming consists of South African drama; ii) 50% of its current affairs programming consists of South African current affairs; iii) 25% of its documentary programming consists of South African documentary programming; iv) 25% of its informal knowledge-building programming consists of South African informal knowledge-building programming; v) 20% of its children’s programming consists of South African children’s programming. Private subscription television: a weekly average of 5% of its programming (cf. <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=70333>. Accessed on 26 May 2013. Also see: Independent

Broadcasting Authority Act, 1993 (Act 153 of 1993).

- ⁴ Media Monitoring Africa (2012) assesses the quality and diversity of all SABC programming and news content across different mediums and against the background of the SABC's claim (and mandate) that it represents South Africa's national identity, diverse languages, cultures and people. In general, and over various areas of production (genres), Media Monitoring Africa recommends change and improvement (cf. e.g. 2012: 31).
- ⁵ The main problems with distributed PSB experienced at that stage in New Zealand was finding a suitable definition for what constitutes PSB programming, the management of an incentive fund and monitoring the broadcasters.
- ⁶ The South African Media Development and Diversity Agency was set up by an Act of Parliament (Act 14 of 2002) to enable "historically disadvantaged communities and persons not adequately served by the media" to gain access to the media.
- ⁷ DigitalGovernance.org (Building and Sustaining Democratic and Accountable Governance Institutions using ICT). cf. <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/digitalgov/gov-broadcast-models.html> Accessed on 25 April 2013.

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