Making public service under social media logics

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Abstract

The scale and form of social media services provided by public service companies have been under heated discussion for the last decade. In this article I approach this issue from the perspective of creative labour. How do workers perceive public service values and their applicability to social media? How are workers adapting their practices from broadcasting to narrowcasting? The article builds on José van Dijk's and Thomas Poell's idea of social media logics. This analytical prism is used to analyse a specific case study, a Finnish multiplatform serial *Uusi Päivä* (2010-). The analysis shows that social media logic modifies the conditions of public service media. Reaching the users as well as producing spreadable content is a significant challenge for public service companies, as their main operating principles still mostly date back to the time of mass media logics. Yet, the workers also see great possibilities in creating new kinds of public service through social media.

Keywords

public service media

multiplatform serial

social media

media workers

production studies

television

Introduction

Several recent studies have analysed the transformation of public service broadcasting, highlighting the impact of shifting political climate, media convergence including technological development and audience behaviour, as well as the changes in EU legislation (Bardoel and d'Haenens 2008a; Born and Prosser 2001; Brevini 2013; Harrison and Wessels 2005; Johnson 2013; Moe 2010; Smith 2013; Syvertsen 2003). Further, the strategies of media convergence in public service companies have been examined (Bardoel and d'Haenens 2008b; Enli 2008; Sundet and Ytreberg 2009). What is still missing is the discussion on the transitions in practical media work in this new landscape. In this article, I scrutinize Finnish media workers' experiences and thoughts on how to serve the public in the digital media environment. The Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE is a topical case study as its extensive online services regularly reach almost half of the Finnish population (Moisala and Hyvärilä 2015).

The article builds on van Dijk's and Poell's idea of social media logics (2013). According to them, social media has a strong impact on mass media, which has previously operated through its own kind of logic. What van Dijk and Poell suggest is that current social media works on the basis of four leading principles: programmability, connectivity, popularity and datafication. According to them, these four principles are central to social media logics, though traces of them can also be found in mass media logics. However, these principles have materialized in a different way in mass media and social media.

van Dijk and Poell's theoretical contribution makes no difference between commercial and public service broadcasting. Yet, it has to be underlined that the four principles lead to a fully commercialized media environment. Because of this, public service company workers face

challenging situations when trying to integrate public service duties of providing education, information and 'inspiring entertainment' (see Act on Yleisradio 1993) into social media logics. These challenges are highly topical for people working with cultural programmes and entertainment since the ethical guide of YLE mainly concerns journalistic work. Furthermore, in cultural programme production, the question of 'popularity' and how far to pursue it has been an issue in the age of broadcasting. Nowadays the means to approach audiences have only widened, from making the programme to marketing it in social media. Accordingly, this article provides a critical reading of social media logics in the current public service landscape.

The primary empirical data set consists of twelve thematic interviews. The interviews were conducted between March 2015 and March 2016. All interviewees were in some way entangled with the multiplatform serial *Uusi Päivä* (2010-)/ *New Day* (in the following *UP*), which has been the flagship of YLE's fictional multiplatform production since 2010. The selection of informants was based on close observation of the production process during the spring of 2015. The interviewees consisted of the *UP* production team members whose tasks actively involved social media. The informants included the *UP* web team members (web producer, two consecutive media editors, and editor), producer of the *UP* serial, the senior scriptwriter, and three permanent members of the story team, including head writer. Further, I interviewed other workers at the Creative Contents Unit who had a professional link to the serial but were not directly working for production. These people included Head of Drama Production, Customer Relations Manager, Web Producer and Head of Development and Skills Training at Creative Contents. The Customer Relations Manager had conducted audience studies on the serial; the Head of Development and Skills Training led the workshop in which the multiplatform elements of the serial were to be developed; and the Web Producer was involved in this workshop. The other three workers were

interviewed because each of them had been dealing with a multitude of multiplatform productions at YLE, and so they were able to articulate the particular characteristics of this production.

The results of the content analysis are divided into four thematic parts following the aforementioned social media logics. Although *UP* is a unique case the lessons from the production have wider applicability. Furthermore, the case study can be used to test and reframe the discussed theoretical proposition.

Background

van Dijk's and Poell's main assertion is that social media logics have a significant impact on mass media and, at the same time, also on other sectors of society, just like mass media did before. The idea of media logics is originally presented by Altheide and Snow (1979: 10): 'media logic consist of a form of communication: the process in which media present and transmit information'. Yet, they also put much focus on entertainment and say that it has become extremely important in all areas of society because of television. What is essential for them is that when media logic is used to present and interpret an institutional phenomenon its form and content is altered.

Altheide's and Snow's empirical examples are taken from American commercial television. Therefore, they focus on flow, media's self-legitimation through audience demand, and on the fuzzy line between content and commerce. Yet, traditionally these televisual elements have been strongly regulated and/or totally forbidden in PSM. According to Altheide and Snow (1979: 73) television programmers wanted to reach mass audience in order to get the highest possible advertising revenue, and because of this they also included women in their vast target audience. In public service television, the target audience has, at least in principle, been the nation and all its citizens (Collins 1998: 57).

At the European level, there is no single definition for public service values. The European Protocol on PSB from 1997 says that public broadcasting is related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of each society. Later, the Resolution of the Council from 1999 stated that PSB has 'cultural, social and democratic functions which it discharges for the common good', and have 'vital significance for ensuring democracy, pluralism, social cohesion, cultural and linguistic diversity'. However, Brevini (2013: 4) has emphasized that each public service system is developed according to the nation's particular set of historical, cultural and political traditions.

In Finland, public service broadcasting has followed a peculiar form, as the commercial broadcasting company Mainos-TV operated inside YLE's channels for many decades. Mainos-TV (later MTV3) could sell and broadcast advertisements on its own broadcasting slots, which covered approximately 20–30 per cent of the total programming time. MTV3 annually delivered a part of its revenues to YLE, which helped fund YLE's operations in addition to the licence fee. This agreement also affected the competition over audiences, positioning YLE somewhat uniquely when compared to other Nordic public service broadcasting companies. In 1993, MTV3 got its own channel, and a year later another terrestrial channel, Nelonen (Channel 4), was launched. The shared revenue system finally ended in 2007 (Hujanen 2009). The licence fee was replaced by a special YLE tax in 2013. At the moment, YLE provides four (HD) television channels, six radio channels, and vast online services. Through these services it reaches approximately 70 per cent of Finns daily (Moisala and Hyvärilä 2015). Thus, the current structure is very similar to that of other Nordic public service broadcasting companies and audience reach is among the highest.

The operation of YLE is determined by the Act on Yleisradio OY (Finnish Broadcasting Company) (1993). The seventh section imposes that 'The company shall be responsible for the provision of

versatile and comprehensive television and radio programming with the related additional and extra services for all citizens under equal conditions'. Furthermore, it imposes duties to support democracy, promote Finnish art and culture, take care of educational aspects, produce services for minorities, support tolerance and multiculturalism, as well as promote cultural interaction. These are the conditions for the Finnish public service broadcasting. Thus, the Finnish Act on PSM includes the ideas of universalism, citizenship and trust (see Brevini 2013; Born and Prosser 2001).

However, it is not always certain that the media workers will interpret their duties in complete congruence with the duties in the Act. When I asked my informants about the most important values of YLE, the answers altered. Multiculturalism, plurality and multi-voicedness were most often mentioned. Promoting progress and all-round education were also seen as important tasks. Several informants saw democracy, equality and fairness, as well as societal point of view or emancipative interest in society, as aspects to be ensured when working at YLE. Reliability, integrity, authenticity and encompassing all citizens were also mentioned. Even the two informants who did not name any value that they would try to inculcate daily in their work explained that they had absorbed the public service values 'to their veins'. Thus, the interviewees emphasized different values, but all of those fitted into the public service duties of YLE.

Programmability: Seeking out and serving the audience, which has turned into users
In mass media logic, programmability refers to scheduling. It was an editorial strategy to plan and define an audience's watching experience (van Dijk and Poell 2013: 5.). Especially in commercial television, the aim of programming has been to create an unbroken flow of content so that the audience will follow programmes as long as possible (Williams [1974] 2003: 86–97). van Dijk and Poell (2013: 5) apply the concept of flow to all mass media, suggesting that it is an essential part of mass media logic.

Yet, in public service broadcasting a comprehensive schedule has been an essential tool for implementing public service values. Universalism has been one of the founding principles behind the design of the schedule, and companies have aimed at providing a broad range of programmes. At the same time, scheduling has also served educational purposes by trying to get people to confront tastes and points of views that they are not familiar with. Typically, the schedule of a public service company has offered a variety of genres and topics in prime time, creating both a mass audience and a public sphere.

However, from the 1980s and 1990s onwards public service companies have oriented more towards serving the audience through programming (Debrett 2009: 820). The streamlined slots have been used to help audiences find their favourite programmes when the content output has increased. Also in public service broadcasting companies, the audience is divided into segments according to their age, gender and interests. Still, the idea of a 'general audience' and universalism has not totally vanished from programming either in the 2000s (Hujanen 2002: 118–27).

According to van Dijk and Poell (2013: 5), flow and programming have now acquired different meanings, shifting their focus from content to code, and from audiences to users. In social media logic, one-way traffic has turned into two-way traffic between users and programmers. They define programmability of social media as an 'ability of a social media platform to trigger and steer users' creative and communicative contributions', while users, through their interaction with these coded environments, may in turn influence the flow of communication and information activated by such a platform.

I do not disagree with the definition. However, I want to point out that from the public service production perspective, the jump from scheduling to steering users' creative contribution is gradual. The first phase is the transfer from designing schedule slots to *finding* the users of social media who have a variety of content to choose from. Though this changing relation to audiences has been evident since the 1980s when cable and satellite channels emerged, this development has now accelerated. Consequently, the workers now face the challenge of finding users in a more profound way:

> [t]raditionally in a broadcasting company people have thought that channels find the people. So that we only make the programmes and people will find them through the channels. And the idea of creating audiences has been that we draw a diagram and move something in there, and then the people will come with the flow. But this is not the case anymore. On social media things don't work this way. On social media, you have to find and create an audience for every article, at worst. You have to know how to spread it in social media in a right way. It is significant in finding the audience. (Customer Relations Manager)

As the quote from above shows, and as the following quote re-asserts, finding and reaching the audience has become much more difficult for broadcasting companies. This is not only due to increased quantity of available content, but it is also connected to the shaken public position of public service broadcasting.

> We have turned from broadcasting to narrowcasting. And I am trying to figure out, how we shall learn to do it. It is not easy, and there is no one single solution. Earlier, the role of public service was to bring issues to public discussion, to make sure that

we all know certain things. How is this combined with the narrowcasting world? I still believe there is a need for independent content production that really is at risk because of these new revenue logics. I see it even on the global level; it is the content that matters, not the channel. (Customer Relations Manager)

The adoption of the idea of 'narrowcasting' by public service broadcasting companies is not only due to the impact of social media. Already the emergence of cable and satellite channels, whose operating logic is based on narrowcasting, created pressure for the public service companies. Though narrowcasting was introduced as a way to increase customers' freedom of choice, several researchers have highlighted how its counter-impact is the strengthening of hegemonic structures in media consumption. Dominant sociocultural ideologies remain unchallenged, if the viewers only select content that is compatible with their world-view and taste. This effect is even stronger in social media: not only customer's choice but also system-initiated personalization may, in fact, reduce the possibilities to see and use content that the platform does not presume to be in the user's interests (Kant 2014: 384–90; Smith-Shomade 2004).

van Dijk and Poell (2013: 6) mention only briefly the mass media's capability of agenda setting. This is when they discuss popularity, and refer to the earlier hopes that social media platforms would provide more egalitarian media. Yet, when we are talking about public service broadcasting, it is important to notice that the dominant position of mass media companies has been the prerequisite for carrying out certain public service values such as universalism or pluralism. In Reithian spirit (see Mäntymäki 2007: 83), only by reaching a majority of the people is it possible to bring 'best human knowledge to greatest possible number of homes'. Of course, it has always been somewhat idealistic to think that there is a 'general audience' that follows everything that the public service broadcasters offer (Leurdijk and Leendertse 2009: 156). Yet, the power to set agenda

necessitates a certain kind of authoritarian position that is alien to the user-emphasizing logic of social media. This is not to say that implementing public service values through narrowcasting and in social media would be impossible, but it definitely requires different kinds of means and thinking. This, once again, creates a real challenge for workers in public service companies.

> In the future, web publishing serves ever more fragmented audiences. Yes, at some point we have to think that we also have projects that reach wide audiences. But we have collected data concerning the rising use of iPad and mobile phones and I wonder if they will still sell TV sets after five years. Young people are not interested in TV at all. Television viewing habits can change so much that we will mainly have to think about the hard-core web users when making web content. And then the people over 45 are just happy watching their favourite serial from TV. (Head of Drama Production)

Multiplatform digital distribution is not limited to new means of offering content; new platforms can also provide changes for better use of resources. As prior studies have highlighted, public service companies can now offer new services and content for the audience (see Doyle 2010: 434). The idea of programmability on social media is to steer user experiences, content and user relations via platforms. Programmability is argued to entail strengthened human agency since the users are able to make their own contributions (van Dijk and Poell 2013: 6). Social media and multiplatform productions extend the scope and means of production. They open up possibilities to approach marginal audiences cost-effectively, and provide means of building new kinds of interactive viewer/user relationships (Debrett 2009: 807, 816–20).

I came here six years ago. I hadn't realized the extent of great content that YLE

makes. But the programmes only came from radio, they only came from TV. And then

they disappeared somewhere and were never heard again. For this reason we now

have web journalism, and programme making linked with special events. (Web

Producer)

By distributing the same or re-versioned content on digital platforms, these services extend the time

of usage for the public service productions and thereby help to maximize the value of public

investment (Debrett 2009: 810). YLE launched its Elävä arkisto (Living Archive) platform in 2006,

where users can browse a significant number of clips, programmes and even complete serials from

both radio and TV (see Pajala 2010). Historical content is often linked to current programmes and

fresh web content so that they together form a meaningful (and educational) whole. In this thinking,

the content provided by public service companies needs to be published on the full range of media

platforms so that, put together, they reach the 'general public' again (Debrett 2009: 810).

Connectivity: Getting in touch with the audience

According to van Dijk and Poell (2013: 8), connectivity refers to 'socio-technical affordance of

networked platforms to connect content to user activities and advertisers'. They criticize that the

often-used concept of spreadibility (Jenkins et al. 2013) stresses the power of users' agency but

does not acknowledge enough the power of platform agency as a steering force. Instead, van Dijk

and Poell develop the concept further by adding that connectivity is 'an advanced strategy of

algorithmically connecting users to content, users to users, platforms to users, users to advertisers,

and platforms to platforms' (2013: 9).

Related to this, one of the informants described his approach in giving feedback as follows:

[w]e ask, whom is it made for, what is the point, what do you ask the user to do. How does she participate, in what way and what is the outcome or reward. for her? […] The final resolution should be something that the user can be proud of: something that she has done, not the professionals. (Head of Development and Skills Training)

In other words, social media platforms operate as services that make these connections possible. According to Rifkin (2005), cultural industries – Hollywood as prime example – have been the fastest to adopt the principles of the service economy. He describes how in the 1950s Hollywood studio leaders realized that producing similar formulaic cultural products was not profitable anymore. As a consequence, they began making fewer but more entertaining films that would grab the viewers' attention. One could say that the film industry moved from mass production to customized production at this point. As a part of this development, film studios had to invest more in advertising and promotion to gain the viewers' attention (Rifkin 2005: 362–63). In the television industry, satellite television transferred television channels into services that could be bought and used across national borders in a new way (Johnson 2013: 315; Collins 1998: 51).

In the next phase, which is the current one, the nature of services started to change again. Earlier, services were negotiated as discrete market transactions, each one separated in time and space (like selling and buying movie tickets one could say). Now, with electronic commerce and sophisticated data feedback mechanisms, services are being re-invented as long-term multifaceted relationships between servers and clients (Rifkin 2005: 368). Active use of social media and multiplatform productions illustrate this transformation within the television industry.

In YLE, the multiplatform serial *UP* targets especially teenagers by providing a variety of related content online. All of the online content is produced by a dedicated web team. In the interviews the web team members explained that their main goal is to create and maintain a loyal audience that has an affective relation to the serial and its characters:

> [w]e try to maintain the policy that our fans can regularly expect something from us. For example, our online magazine programme is out every week. We provide certain pieces of the whole concept on a regular basis. The fans don't have to wonder whether we offer this stuff this year or not but they can rely that there is always something special available. And the fans can really ask for it. So that if we don't publish certain things on time, we will definitely hear from them! (*UP* Web Producer)

What the *UP* web team is trying to do is to create a sense of closeness between the audience and the characters and actors. This is done by revealing to the users all sorts of trivia that is not possible to know only by watching the TV serial itself. Through the *UP* web pages, one can every now and then also send a request to become an extra and take part in the actual shooting of the serial. The web team wants to continue the storyworld online and bring new dimensions to the story. From a practical point of view, they want to provide content that is available on those days when the serial is not broadcasted.

In previous studies, better interaction with viewers and users has been understood to be a good vehicle for public service companies to serve such goals as education, highlighting social issues, and promoting democracy. In such projects, as *Lost generation* (*The Somme*) (2008, Channel Four, see Debrett 2009: 812), *Up for Hire* (2011, BBC) or even *Upload TV* (2013, VRPO) (see van Dijk and Poell 2015), social media has been used to highlight social and educational issues. In these

cases, the interaction strategy on using social media has been information-based. However, the interaction strategy of a fictional multiplatform serial such as *UP* is usually based on fandom. The aim is to create and facilitate fans for the serial, and to spur fans to create fan communities (on different strategy types, see Ha and Chan-Olmested 2004: 622–23). In the case of the commercial media industry, an active fan community can significantly help in merchandising fan products and in selling advertisements (Ha and Chan-Olmested 2004).

Partly because of this, public service companies seem to step on the commercial companies' toes with their multiplatform productions. Like in many other countries in Western Europe, commercial media companies have insisted that YLE should focus on high-quality cultural programmes as well as on programmes for minorities. The current government is following these discussions closely, and in August 2015 the Ministry of Transport and Communication set up a working group to reconsider the Finnish media market. In their report released in December 2015, the working group prioritized consumers' choices and concluded that the task of media policy is to ensure a fair and competitive media environment. As for YLE, the group suggested that its own production be diminished: in the future YLE should mainly buy and distribute programmes made by independent production companies. Furthermore, its tasks should be determined more precisely (Ministry of Transport and Communication 2015.) Although the report did not state explicitly, the 'distinctiveness' of public service programming that is mentioned in the 2016 Charter Renewal of BBC surely lurks behind the suggestion of determining the tasks of YLE more accurately.

When it comes to the online services of YLE, the report proposes that both the technical solutions and the content of the online services, such as gathered data, should be freely available so that commercial companies can develop it further. This suggestion again seems more relevant in the context of journalism, whereas in the field of fiction and cultural programmes this idea seems

somewhat far-fetched. When thinking of *UP* or serials in general, the contents on different platforms are highly intertwined with each other. But of course, according to these kinds of views, serials like *UP* should not be produced by YLE at all.

The classic role of public service is to 'inform, educate and entertain', though the last one has often been dismissed from conceptual analyses. Yet, there are signs that cultural justifications for public service have recently become more important than before. Social integration and cohesion, as well as cultural bonding and bridging, have become increasingly significant when talking about the tasks of public service. Furthermore, public service companies have been started to be seen as a resource and a breeding ground for innovation and talent (Bardoel and d'Haenens 2008b: 343; Bardoel and Brant 2003: 172–74). Encouraging cultural bonding of fan communities and steering fan activities, such as writing fan fiction, can be understood as ways of fulfilling these sociocultural purposes of public service.

Prior research has put a lot of weight on information and education functions of public service broadcasting. Accordingly, there has been a lot of discussion on the 'public' of public service (van Dijk and Poell 2015; Thomass 2003; see also Brevini 2013: 30–54). As we are now more or less living in a 'service economy' (Rifkin 2005), there is a reason to focus more on the 'service' aspect of public service. What should or should not be the service of public service?

In *UP* production, the primary goal appears to be providing a rich, rewarding and continuing experience for the fans:

> … our primary task is to bring a fan something that she wouldn't get out of the serial..
> […] We somehow try to deepen, give something more, to be in interaction with them.

So that we are close to the fan. So that, in a way, the threshold to true interaction between the fans and us wouldn't be so difficult to cross. We try to bring actors close to them either virtually or in real life, through music, bands and everything. So that, in a way, the world of the serial and the real life would be united or even merged. (*UP* Web Producer)

Our primary goal from the beginning has been to serve our fans. We do n't have any statistical goals but the aim has been to produce an experience for the fans. There is never too much content from the fans' perspective. Nobody complains that I don't feel like following UP as they have so much stuff, but just the opposite. (Main Producer)

Contemporary media companies commodify, packet and market experiences, as opposed to physical products or services. What they provide is an access to simulated worlds and altered states of consciousness (Rifkin 2005: 365). The informants above emphasize the importance of producing an experience of a coherent and constantly living virtual world. The viewers/users are able to consider the serial and its characters as a stable and meaningful part of their lives. Is offering a rich experience an adequate purpose for the service of public service media? Probably the most famous multiplatform TV serial that a public service broadcasting company has produced is *Doctor Who* (BBC). In analysing its transmedia storytelling, Perryman (2008) makes a distinction between 'merely' branding and merchandising against more entertaining experience. Thus, he judges the serial based on the richness of ideas and the practices of storytelling as well as audience engagement. When thinking of earlier definitions of the role of culture and entertainment in public service broadcasting, these requirements might be very relevant to the evaluation of public service, though they are not easily measured.

Popularity, and the problem of marketing within public service regulations

Popularity has always been an essential feature of mass media logic. It has provided mass media an ability to set the agenda and shape public opinion, or create TV personalities from politicians to news anchors and reality stars. Social media has enhanced this trend and added extra dimensions to it. Nowadays, corporations such as Facebook or Twitter actively try to promote their popularity and ranking mechanisms to enhance the value of their platform and their users. Furthermore, the practices of social media and mass media link with each other and can reinforce their impact, as rankings of social media are renewed in mass media – which again often boosts their attention in social media. Thus, as van Dijk and Poell state: 'Popularity becomes enmeshed in a feedback loop between mass and social media' (2013: 6–8).

Social media platforms, such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, have had a significant impact on the professional practices of public service companies. Like many public service companies, YLE also has guidelines on how their workers should use social media. Similarly to the BBC, the basic principle is that the workers use the company's own platform whenever they can (*c*. van Dijk and Poell 2015: 153). All content should primarily be published on YLE's official site, and only additionally offered on commercial platforms. The Scandinavian public service companies' guidelines also echo this regulation (Moe 2013).

As van Dijk and Poell argue (2015: 154) 'the struggle between "social" and "public" did not only take place at the institutional and professional level but also played out at the level of content'. Van Dijk and Poell apparently refer to the challenge of combining social media elements with public service television content in the programmes. But there are other, more micro-level challenges for the workers when using social media to promote public service content. The public service

companies' urge to reassure their significance in the eyes of the public forces them to maintain good ratings. At the same time, the programme-makers are keen on having an audience for their content. Interestingly, all this is in conflict with the regulations that guide public service companies' actions within commercial platforms. The workers face this ambivalence in the smallest of details.

> But then we have challenges. For example, we may have an article that contains an embedded video – or just a video in YLE Areena [the official platform] and we share it in social media. In this case, Facebook has a link that you have to click. It gets only a fraction of clicks compared to a video that is uploaded to Facebook and is played automatically on your wall. We would get a way much better ratings if we loaded videos directly into Facebook. But, then again, in this case, we would give up to Facebook. (Web Producer)

The social media guidelines used in public service companies are partly formulated because of the criticism from commercial companies regarding unfair competition (Debrett 2009: 821–22).
If public service companies substantially compete with commercial companies on social media, they constantly expose themselves to the criticism that they are not providing an alternative to market-led content production (Syvertsen 2003: 170). Limiting the tools of marketing is, of course, not only related to the principles and laws guiding public service but also to the commercial companies' resentment of the situation that they consider unfair competition.

> When thinking of marketing, or findability, there is no question whether people would expect us to devote to it. I have never had a focus group where young women wouldn't start complaining how "you have this programme at YLE and I have never heard of it. [..] Marketing has been replaced by hype but it's the same phrase. People

think that it is our duty to do something so that they will find the programmes. And I feel that it is part of the public service mission, that we let them know that we have now made something just for you. (Customer Relations Manager)

Yet, it's a terrible contradiction. YLE spends tax money for marketing. But we have to do some marketing so that the audiences know that we have all this wonderful content. Otherwise there will be a horrible outcry that 'I didn't know that this was going on!' (Web Producer)

For younger generations, who have grown up in a thoroughly commercialized media environment, it may be difficult to understand why public service companies do not use all the means of social media to promote their content. This, of course, is a double-edged sword: if the users do not differentiate between public service and commercial media when talking about the use of social media for marketing, they may also find it difficult to understand why there should be a state-funded media after all. Neo-liberalist statements that question the need for public service do not only stem from business interests, but the dissolution of public service companies can also be seen as liberalization from a paternalistic media system (Syvertsen 2003: 163–64).

Yet, in the quotes above, public service workers offer an alternative grounding for the use of social media that reflects the discussion on the limits of operating in social media. As we have seen, they argue that it is reasonable to inform people in the most effective way (i.e. through commercial social media platforms) of the content they provide because this content is funded by tax money. In addition, one must not forget that nowadays younger workers of public service companies may have difficulty in accepting the different rules for public service companies and for commercial companies in using social media.

YLE is not very good at puffing or tooting one's own horn. It all stems from, 'we may

not market, we may not advertise, we may not do anything'. That we only make really

good programmes but we may not tell anyone about it. It's a very old-fashioned way

of thinking. And it results to a terrible bureaucracy in these matters. (*UP* Web

Producer)

The informants were very frustrated with the regulations concerning, for example, the use of

Facebook. In the production of *UP*, they had even managed to bend the company rules that say that

all content that is published in social media platforms must also be published in YLE's official

platform. The main producer had explained that it is not technically possible to publish all of the

content on the official platform. For example, tweets and Facebook profiles are content that are

technically built into the platforms. According to him, they had negotiated a permission to publish

whole episodes in YouTube, apparently at the same time as in the official platform, YLE Areena:

Areena has caused the biggest controversies, as we have not limited ourselves to only

that instead of using YouTube. We have only wanted people to see our content, no

matter what the platform they use. And there is still tension because YouTube doesn't

follow the ratings properly. In order to succeed in the ratings competition and in order

to get neat statistics it would be better to instruct our viewers to use Areena. (Main

Producer)

Thus, although the guidelines in YLE seem to be more flexible than those in Scandinavian countries

(Moe 2013), there still appears to be tension between the workers' ambitions. According to Van

Dijk and Poell (2015: 154) there is a growing consensus among European public service

broadcasters that they will have to tighten up the guidelines and, for example, restrict the streaming content in YouTube or Facebook to only five minutes. If this kind of restriction takes place, it will be frustrating for the workers whose main ambition is to make the viewers/users find the content.

Datafication: Fitting into the interests of the users – and platforms

A big part of television's allure has been its ability to reach mass audiences: to gather a large number of people to watch the same programme at the same time and in this way create a sense of belonging to a community. From very early on, different kinds of audience polls and surveys have been used to predict audience behaviour. Yet, in mass media, these audience measurements were mainly separate from the content (though one must not forget polls used – e.g. in many kinds of competitions in television). In social media the capacity of polling is built into the architecture of platforms. One could even claim that trending topics, keywords, sentiments or frequently shared and liked items form an essential part of social media content (see van Dijk and Poell 2013: 9).

> We have to make contents that spread out. We really have to take it to account that when we have 500,000 users on our official platform every week, only half of them use it via computer, 30 % are mobile users, and the rest use it via tablet. And the number of mobile users grows all the time. Overall, our service has two front pages and they are Google and Facebook [laughing]. And it is important that we know how to optimise our content to these two services that are not ours but are important distribution channels for us. (Customer Relations Manager)

This brings us back to the idea of 'spreadibility'. Jenkins et al. (2013: 2) claim that spreading and recommending have been a part of human culture for ages. Yet, in social media, spreadibility is strongly linked to technical and economic resources. According to Jenkins et al.,

Spreadibility refers to technical resources that make it easier to circulate some kinds of content than others, the economic structure that support or restrict circulation, the attributes of a media text that might appeal to community's motivation for sharing material, and the social networks that link people through the exchange of meaningful bytes. (2013: 3)

From the perspective of a public service company, the required technical resources are there, but as the earlier quote on Facebook use highlighted, not all the technical means can be used because of the company's guidelines. At YLE, the workers are not guided to publish their content directly on the platform, but only as links. Further, promoting content through Facebook is strictly limited. These guidelines diminish the possible spreadibility of public service content. The only means to make content spreadable are the attributes of the media text and the social networks. Probably because of this, the workers emphasized how the distinction between content and promotion gets blurred. Both the Customer Relations Manager and the Web Producer at the Creative Contents underlined that the content must be so interesting that it gets attention in social media.

What kind of results will this have on the content? What happens when the content is designed to fit the practices of social media platforms? The results can be positive in the sense that public service companies need to think of the audiences and their interests even more than earlier. The other side of the coin is of course the risk of populism, producing more and more the kind of content that is easily accepted. Related to this, many informants accentuated how using cheap means to appeal audiences would be in contradiction with their own moral values as well as the company's values.

> We carry our responsibility by telling stories that have a social edge. It effects our writing so that we can't be based on triviality. There has to be something meaningful. Even though we were talking about a comedy, it must deal with significant themes and issues. […] I know how we would get high ratings if we had wanted to court the audience. But we don't do that. (Storyliner)

> Of course, we don't make headlines such as 'Look, tits!'. It is evident. But I don't know if it comes from public service values or from the values of the serial. Or is it just so, that I wouldn't want to achieve attention with those kinds of headlines. Then again, I have been at YLE for such a long time that I may have built-in YLE values in my head [laughing]. (Editor)

Both Facebook and YouTube have declared in their marketing materials and financial statements that data mining, personalized advertising, tailored marketing, and behavioural profiling are the most efficient and effective ways for businesses to reach highly specific target audiences. It can be argued that the basic operating logic of Facebook and YouTube (and a number of other social media platforms) is to monetize on users' personal data (Kant 2014: 383, 386). What is new in social media platforms compared to ratings and polls is that they make it much easier and effective to gather information of the users. Moe (2013: 121) has rightly posed the question: what happens to archiving and documentation when our mediated communication moves increasingly to social media platforms? Further, one should ask what the public service companies will do with all the user data that they collect. Should it only be used to better know the audiences or could we think of some possible use that would have 'public value'?

So far, public service companies have primarily used their data for providing better service to their customers. And of course, this as such may be enough. Still, there might be new potentials to fulfil the public service values:

> You have to know the audience to whom you make the content. Their discussions are important to know. If I don't know the folks to whom I cut the video or design the content… The public service of this age can't be such that I will tell you what you need. No, you have to listen to the voice from the field. (Media Editor 1)

Conclusion

Social media logic substantially modifies the conditions of public service. van Dijk and Poell emphasize the significance of datafication as the most foundational of the four grounding principles. Yet, from the perspective of the workers who try to reach the users, popularity seems to be the principle that effects all of their work. Since the public position of public service has been in transition in the last decades, there is a need for companies to secure their position with good ratings. But finding viewers and users is getting increasingly difficult. Social media's emphasis on the power of users – and platforms – to recommend and share content sets new kinds of requirements for content and producers. At the same time, multiplatform productions also provide new possibilities to implement public service values in practice, as well as cost-effective means to provide content for marginal tastes and audiences.

Social media logic, and especially the requirements of popularity that it entails, has particular effect on cultural and entertainment content that public service companies such as YLE produce. Already slightly in the margins of public service duties in the broadcasting era, this part of public service operation and the workers that are involved with it now face the conflicts of this situation in the

smallest of details. The workers of fictional multiplatform serials like *UP* have to work under the logic of a fully commercialized social media environment, yet trying to maintain public service values. The workers have to determine at a very practical level how to promote public service content in social media, or how to create a multiplatform service that follows the ideas of public service. In drama production, the primary goal appears to be the provision of a rich, rewarding and continuous experience for fans, and give them opportunities to be creative and interactive.

For workers, public service values such as multiculturalism and multivoicedness, education, equality and societal points of views are core values that they try to promote in their work, regardless of the platform. My analysis reveals that social media does alter the logics of their operation towards more audience/user-oriented approach. This effect does include a potential threat for public service principles as it may result in applying a more mainstream approach than before. Yet, at the moment most of the workers are very concerned about fulfilling these principles in their everyday practices. For them, the public service values concerning the content they produce have not changed.

However, the guidelines that limit the use of social media may be very frustrating for the workers. Younger workers especially have difficulty in accepting the fact that not all the means that the platforms offer are available to them. Most informants felt that it was their duty to promote the content that the company had produced because it was funded by tax income. Thus, for them, using commercial social platforms was an obligation as it was the most effective way to reach audiences and users. From the perspective of public service media workers, serving the public without using social media does not seem to be possible anymore. Instead, PSM should remodel itself in accordance with the logics of social media, since social media is where the public is.

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