**M. Burns and N. Brügger (eds.),** *Histories of Public Service Broadcasters on the Web.* **New York: Peter Lang, 2012.**

As the name suggests, this book illustrates through case studies that specific time in the recent past, when public service broadcasting organizations all around the world took their first steps in Internet-based network communication as broadcasters and started processes, which by now have lead not only to organizational restructuring and new kinds of digital content and services, but increasingly to also new self-understanding. The transition from the broadcast world to the Web has been described in a neat way as a shift from PSB to PSM, but this strategically very useful expression might also have lead us to ignore the underlying dynamics and to underestimate the complexity of the processes. This diverse landscape behind the scenes is what the whole book is actually about. It does not just describe how different national public service broadcasters have moved into a new realm of global interactive communication in a digital network, but also how they have met the different challenges and how the new platform has given space for new interpretations and alternative forms of public service content and services. Some of these services are very obviously firmly rooted in the earlier ideas and ideals of public service broadcasting, while some newcomers are intentionally challenging at least part of the traditions of public service (Al-Jazeera English) or broadcasting (Vocalo).

What is common to almost all cases is that the very first steps in the Internet were usually not taken in a highly concerted or even too conscious way, but by some computer-skilled individuals and production groups looking for a new way to communicate with their listeners and viewers. It is not too surprising that quite many radio people had an early interest in the Internet: it gave an opportunity to complement audio broadcasting with text and pictures – and also because audio was rather easy to deliver over the Web already even in a pre-broadband network environment. Strategic planning, conscious choices and at least some amount of resources allocated especially on the Internet operations came into picture usually only after the potentials of the new platform had been identified on some managerial level. But what could have been the most important new opportunity the Web could offer for a public service broadcaster? Quite often it was seen as a new way to make money – not just for covering the expenses of the new services, but also to complement other forms of funding.  Some of the articles do not provide too much reference to the national political and economic contexts, but at least in Europe the tendency to see the Internet as a potential source of new income for public service broadcasting was partly related to the simultaneous processes for digitalization of broadcasting and increasingly neoliberal media policies.

For the public service broadcasters the Internet was conceptually much more difficult new frontier to conquer than television – first seen as radio with pictures – which was eventually just another form of (public) broadcasting.  But now it was questionable whether the operations on the Internet could be considered as public service at all (e.g. in Norway and Denmark) as well as whether these services should be considered literally as broadcasting (in the UK) – or at least treated similarly from cultural perspective (in Canada) – although from technological and economic perspectives, content delivery over the Internet is actually never broadcasting. However, many practices of broadcast media could be used also on the new platform. The BBC in the UK was one of the few which made an early and conscious decision not to commercialize its content on the Web, but instead to expand its brand on the new platform and to make it "the third broadcast service alongside radio and TV". The NRK in Norway started by emphasizing the public service value of its online services, but it ended up running commercial advertising on its web pages for seven years (2000-2007) after it had been able to convince the Parliament that its operations on the Internet (and teletext) were actually not part of its public service mission at all. However, perhaps the weirdest case of commercialization – or sheer commercial exploitation of public service content on the Web which the book describes – comes from Israel, where a private partner of the IBA created an online pay service based on the IBA radio and TV content without even asking any permission.

The book is divided in to five chapters according to different themes, which serves well the purpose of showcasing the variety of the content, but it means also that if you are especially interested in certain national cases, the structure does not help you much.  In addition, it is hard to understand why the editors have at the same time decided to limit the number of articles to only 15 and devoted about 20 percent of the book to Australian case studies, although these three articles are all very interesting, very different and well written.  I enjoyed especially Anne Dunn's article, which describes how and why the new cross-platform working methods were first introduced in the ABC regional radio: in Finland YLE made exactly similar strategic choice, when it started to implement its new multi-platform production model few years earlier. In conclusion, this compilation would have been even better and more comprehensive with a couple of more articles, perhaps written using a comparative approach. As two such articles in the book prove out, it is easy to identify and illustrate the national perspectives and peculiarities when you have a point of comparison.

It would probably be far too early to start writing any inclusive and complete history of how the public service broadcasters made the transition from broadcasting to network communication – the processes are still going on and their final outcomes are not certain. But as this collection has been able to demonstrate in detail, even the first move to the Web was not at all that simple, easy or

straightforward and that is why it is recommended reading to everybody interested in the future of public service broadcasting. It seems also that there is a clear need for further research in this area, because the things are just getting more complex. While some public service broadcasters are now getting ready for a true post- broadcast future, where online could be "the only medium", there is no guarantee that the Internet will remain as one, open global network or that the Internet service providers will always respect network neutrality and let the users to freely access public service contents without any restrictions. Unfortunately, it seems that also the public service broadcasters have become an endangered species. At the time of writing these lines, the Greek government has just closed down the ERT (Hellenic Radio and Television) in order to save money and to replace it later with a significantly smaller new company called NERIT (New Hellenic Radio, Internet and Television).  In a bizarre way, this move is not only an outrageous assault on democracy, but also a sign of times: NERIT might become the first national public service broadcaster ever with the Internet included already in its name.

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