public service media as hybrid arrangements

a symposium

Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies
University of Queensland

September 16, 2011
Schedule

8:30am Welcome
   Tom O’Regan

8:45am Introduction to Hybrid Arrangements
   Maureen Burns

9:00am - 11.00am

   Hybrid Economic Arrangements
   Chair: Anna Perttierra

   James Bennett
   Graeme Turner
   Hallvard Moe
   Jason Jacobs

11:00am Morning Tea

11:30am - 1.30pm

   Hybrid Political Arrangements
   Chair: Liz Ferrier

   Gay Hawkins
   Anne Dunn
   Ben Goldsmith
   Maureen Burns
1:30pm        Lunch

2:30pm - 4:30pm

Hybrid Audience Arrangements
Chair: Sean Rintel

Fiona Martin
Zala Volcic and Mark Andrejevic
Morgan Richards
Hybrid forms of PSM: Multiplatform productions and the business of public service

Based on research from a 2 year AHRC-funded research project on the UK’s specialist factual independent television and digital media sector, this paper examines hybrid forms of public service media in relationship to three inter-related concerns:

1. Multiplatform production cultures;
2. Multiplatform business models; and
3. Multiplatform texts.

Across all three concerns, I engage with questions of how the conditions of the independent market might impact the production of multiplatform public service content. In so doing, I consider whether Indies can make multiplatform content pay, and fulfil public service remits at the same time. Drawing on interviews with over 50 workers in this production ecology, I highlight what issues commercial/digital hybrid multiplatform PSM forms create before focusing on one particular case study: Keo Digital and its BAFTA-award winning multiplatform production Fish Fight (Channel 4, 2010-11).

My contribution emerges from a five year project on international television which interested itself especially in the construction of national communities, and in the changes being generated by the rise of digital media, the expansion of the online environment, and the growing commercialization of the media worldwide. The changing character and function of PSM is a key component in the stories which emerge from this project: the political role for so long assumed as fundamental to psm is just one of the significant aspects which have changed over the last decade or so. I want to talk about some of these stories with a view to asking how we now go about defining what continues to be distinctive about psm in the current context.
Hallvard Moe (University of Bergen)

Hybrid economic arrangements: the Nordic perspective

In this talk, I will offer a perspective from the Nordic region – on the surface representing one of the least hybrid economic arrangements among public service broadcasting systems internationally. The idea of hybrid arrangements allows for a closer look at important, but often overlooked aspects of the economy of public service broadcasting, such as the national differences within the Nordic region. Moreover, I will argue that the idea of hybrid arrangements is also helpful if we want to discuss how the Nordic institutions balance their statuses as publicly funded, largely advertisement free, and bound to openness, with the use of the global commercial online services such as Facebook.

Jason Jacobs (University of Queensland)

Nationalisation and Integrity: BBC Worldwide and the identity of public service media

In August 2011 BBC Director General Mark Thompson, writing in the Guardian, took the opportunity to revisit James Murdoch’s 2009 MacTaggart lecture. As Thompson pointed out, in the light of the phone hacking scandal, Murdoch’s assertion that ‘the only reliable, durable and perpetual guarantor of independence is profit’ seems ‘almost’ tragic in its irony. In contrast to the practices of News International Thompson constructs the BBC as trusted, honest, sincere, ethical and decent. This suggests the BBC has come to understand itself as a psychologised identity rather than an entity that has economic consequences. In this paper I argue that the history of BBC Worldwide shows us that its public service and commercial parts were always delineated in ways that attempted to contain hybridity, whereas today it is the celebration of this very hybridity that constitutes its identity.
Enacting Public Value

Using recent debates in political theory (specifically the work of Latour, Connolly and Warner), and using the ABC’s late night and high rating current affairs discussion show Q & A as an example, I consider publicness, not as a pre-given or static value, but as something that has to be continually enacted or performed. In what ways are the notion of public address and assembly mobilized? How does the experience of a public as a form of what Warner calls ‘stranger sociability’ extend from the live audience to the household viewer? In what ways are the notions of public reason and rational discussion enacted and disrupted? And how does this enactment of publicness generate a sometimes poetic, anarchic or ribald shadow reality tweeted in from anonymous participants competing for public attention? Finally, how to assess the value of this enactment of publicness, how does it both reproduce and reinvent existing institutional regimes of value within the ABC?

My recent research has involved workplace observation and interviews with cross media producers and cross media reporters working in ABC Local Radio stations. The hybrid role of cross-media producer reflects hybrid technological arrangements and hybrid texts – such as Web sites within ABC Online that feature not only written and spoken words, still and moving images, but also links to social media Facebook and Twitter. I interpret my findings through a framework that embraces Deuze and Marjoribanks’ post-Fordist analysis of media work (2009), draws on insights from Richard Sennett’s 2006 work The Culture of the New Capitalism, and – most directly relevant to this symposium – adapts Kraidy’s use of hybridity as a cultural concept (Kraidy 2005).
Ben Goldsmith (Swinburne University)

Reviewing public service media

In this presentation I will briefly examine three current or recently completed policy reviews - the Australia Network tender, the Convergence Review, and the Review of Australian Government Investment in the Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Sector (the Stevens review) - and related public debates in order to illuminate some of the hybrid political arrangements and varied policy settings that govern the operations of Australia’s public service media.

Maureen Burns (University of Queensland)

In this paper I use my experience of co-editing Histories of Public Service Broadcasters on the Web to discuss two aspects of hybrid political arrangements: firstly, the various political/economic hybridities of public service media organisations internationally, and how these were affected by the intersections between broadcasting and online services; and secondly the difficulties of constructing research objects as hybrid within pre-existing policy/academic/journalistic discourses of public service media.
PANEL THREE: **Hybrid Audience Arrangements**  
*Chair:* Sean Rintel

**Fiona Martin** (University of Sydney)

*Hybridity and the dialogic ethics of public service online, or, how to have a conversation in third space*

In the past five years public service media have begun to move program promotions and audience interaction to Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Vimeo and other ‘third’ or middle spaces. Here participants defy and subvert binary categorisations – consumer/citizen, public/private – paying for their access, owning and deleting their comments, friending institutions and flaming strangers. In the presentation Fiona Martin discusses how a study of hybrid discursive arrangements online can help us better understanding the troublesome ethics of dialogic interaction in these new informational spaces.

**Zala Volcic** and **Mark Andrejevic** (Univ. of Queensland)

*Public broadcasting: From National Community towards Commercial Nationalism*

We trace the transformation of classic public broadcasters in era of digital delivery and audience fragmentation. On the one hand, public service broadcasters have embraced and capitalized on new forms of digital distribution and, on the other, commercial media like Google and Facebook have increasingly taken on the function of public service utilities (thanks in large part to what Vaidhyanathan has called "public failure"). We will consider the way in which the public funding model works better in many ways in the digital era than does the commercial broadcasting model. On the basis of different European examples, we will show how public service media are embracing particular types of commercial nationalisms while addressing their audiences.
Morgan Richards  (University of Queensland)

Global Nature, Global Brand: Raiding the Archive for BBC Earth

Following Celia Lury’s notion of “brand as assemblage, this paper traces the emergence of BBC wildlife programming as a brand. It explores how BBC Earth, the global brand used to represent the BBC Natural History Unit’s programming since 2009, reconfigures and assembles new relations between BBC wildlife content and its audiences.