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Ellen Hazelkorn

Technological University Dublin, ellen.hazelkorn@tudublin.ie

Nora French

Technological University Dublin

Wolfgang Truetzschler

Technological University Dublin

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Audience identification and Raidió na Gaeltachta

Niamh Hourigan

Niamh Hourigan is an MA student in the Department of Sociology and Political Science, University College Galway. She is a Roinn Oideachas Scholar and Fellow of the College.

Introduction

Issues of audience identification¹ have always been crucial for radio and television stations broadcasting in lesser used languages. The imminent arrival of Teilifis na Gaeilge and increased interest in the radio station itself have re-opened the debate concerning Raidió na Gaeltachta and its target audience. This paper argues that approaches to audience identification for Raidió na Gaeltachta have been characterized by a lack of clarity and a failure to recognize the diversity within the Irish-speaking community. The expansive and ill-defined nature of their target audience has not been addressed in a structured manner. Consequently the station's position is becoming increasingly incongruous with the developing radio environment.

This question will be discussed at a number of levels. Firstly, the campaign for the establishment of Raidió na Gaeltachta (hereafter RNG) will be outlined in terms of envisaged target audiences. Secondly, the increasing diversity and change within RNG's target audience will be examined in terms of developments within the station. Finally, sustained criticisms of Raidió na Gaeltachta and possible responses to these criticisms will be discussed.

Campaign and establishment

The ambiguity concerning RNG's target audience, the lack of clarity concerning its national vs local framework, and the issue of overall audience identification can be traced back to the campaign for Raidió na Gaeltachta itself. Organized in 1969, calls for the station were initially part of a broader list of demands made by the Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement. Along with requests for the return of fishing rights, comprehensive education, etc. campaigners sought 'a radio station for all Irish speakers located in the Gaeltacht' (Ó Glaisne, 1982, 10). While this statement is unclear as to whether a national or a local station was demanded, some activists were in no doubt that 'it was local radio we wanted. It was local before it was in Irish' (Ó Tuairisc, 1995). Tactics employed during the campaign, particularly the establishment of a pirate local radio service, Saor Raidió Connemara, re-affirmed the expectation of a local radio for the Gaeltacht.

RTÉ's obligation under Article 17 of the 1960 Broadcasting Authority Act referred simply to the national aims of restoring and reviving the language. However, statements from RTÉ management at the time clearly indicate that they also envisaged the station in terms of local radio. Pdraig Ó Raghallaigh, who was subsequently appointed head of RNG, stated in *The Connaught Tribune*:

Local radio stations are becoming more popular all over the world and in Ireland where there are two languages a local radio service for the Gaeltacht should be the first step (3 September 1971).

Conradh na Gaeilge, the most powerful language organization, had always been critical of the media's treatment of the Irish language. However, while most language groups supported the idea of a station located in the Gaeltacht, they maintained that local radio for the area was not sufficient. They made it clear that Irish speakers outside

1. This paper was researched as part of a broader project on the campaigns for Raidió na Gaeltachta and Teilifis na Gaeilge. In the course of this work, I conducted over thirty interviews with members of each campaign. RTE management, relevant politicians and Irish language activists both in the Republic and Northern Ireland. All interviewees were questioned on their views concerning Raidió na Gaeltachta. I also made substantial use of *Innítú*, *Amarach*, *The Connaught Tribune*, *The Irish Times*, *Anois* and *Lá*, and relevant Irish language and communications journals.

the Gaeltacht also had needs and expected national radio services geared to their requirements (Ó Gadhra, 1969, 11).

Politicians attempted to respond to both groups. The *White Paper on the Restoration of the Irish Language* (Government Publications, 1969) stated that the committee requested RTÉ to prepare a report on establishing a station in the west, to serve primarily the Gaeltacht but also Irish speakers in general. In his statement to the Dáil, George Colley TD, Minister for Finance, asserted:

As well as catering for the Gaeltacht areas, the new service is expected to attract a substantial audience among Irish speakers generally (Ó Glaisne, 1982, 57).

In addition, he stated that it would not be a station for one Gaeltacht but would embrace all Gaeltacht areas and give them a sense of cohesion. Gerry Collins TD (1970), Minister for Post and Telegraphs, re-iterated this view at the first formal meeting in the Gaeltacht to plan the new station. However, none of the statements indicated the structural manner in which this task was to be achieved.

This definition of RNG's role without reference to age, environment, class or sex and impervious to the contradictions and difficulties of attempting to provide both a national and local service at the same time has remained in place. In Raidió na Gaeltachta's press package, it states:

The main purpose of Raidió na Gaeltachta is to provide the Gaeltacht areas and indeed the Irish public with a full broadcasting service through the medium of the Irish language (RNG, 1992, 3).

Browne has commented on the problems posed by these contradictions arguing that the station's dual objectives have created substantial tensions for the staff of Raidió na Gaeltachta (1992, 89)².

Audience and Raidió na Gaeltachta, 1972-1995

Within this context, attempts by RNG to function as both a local and national service, to both country and city dwellers of all ages, seems highly ambitious. To fully understand the difficulty of their task, it is necessary to understand the diversity within their target audience. In 1972, despite increasing educational opportunities in the Gaeltacht, this audience continued to be characterized by an aging rural population. Unemployment was high and basic services such as running water, roads and transport were poor (Akutagawa, 1991, 40). The population of the Connemara Gaeltacht declined by 18.7 per cent between 1946 and 1966 (Ó Brúdaire, 1971, 6). What remained after emigration, was an aging disadvantaged community reliant on farming, fishing and craft industries to supplement their social welfare payments and emigrant remittances³. The provision of free education and Gaeltacht scholarships was already having an effect, the most obvious being the establishment of the Gaeltacht Civil Rights movement itself (Mac an Iomaire, 1995). However, the social effects of decline were still in evidence (Ó Tuathail, 1969: 9-10).

The other half of Raidió na Gaeltachta's intended audience were Irish language speakers (Gaeilgóiri) outside the Gaeltacht. Statistically this group has been middle-class, urban and frequently in state employment. Their interest in the Irish language was often manifested in a more intellectual manner and was frequently part of a larger view of Irish culture (Hindley, 1990: 137-160). These differences have created divisions between Gaeltacht people and Irish language speakers or 'Gaeltacht chauvinism' as Hindley refers to it (1990: 207-216). It would also seem to be rooted in a history of class tension which can be traced throughout the Gaeltacht/Gaeilgóir relationship. Gaeilgóiri in Northern Ireland also constitute a young vibrant community and a substantial potential audience for RNG.

2. Clause 1 of the station's aims highlights 'providing a service to the Gaelic speaking public but especially to the Gaeltacht'. However Clause 2 asserts the need 'to introduce the Gaeltacht to itself, to make it's people more aware of their surrounding' (RNG, 1992).

3. Ó Brúdaire estimates that between 1960-1965, 13-15 per cent of overall income in co. Galway was provided by emigrant remittances and current government transfers (1971, 4:5-73).

In the intervening period, largely as a result of the operations of *Údáras na Gaeltachta*, the tide of emigration from the Gaeltacht has reversed. A large number of the Gaeltacht workforce are now employed in industrial, traditionally urban jobs. In addition, the number of young people living, working and remaining in the Gaeltacht has increased substantially (Bórd na Gaeilge, 1983: 46-47). Irish language speakers outside the Gaeltacht have also changed as a group. There has been an increase in the number of families attempting to raise their children in Irish-speaking households (Matsouka, 1982, 5; Betts, 1976: 226). As a result, the numbers of all-Irish kindergartens, primary and secondary schools have grown (Bórd na Gaeilge, 1994: 27). Despite these changes, the social and cultural differences between the Gaeltacht community and *Gaeilgóirí* remain pronounced. This is significant given the important role which the rural/urban divide already plays in audience identification.⁴

While the differences between Gaeltacht communities and language groups were pronounced in 1972, the intervening period has seen increasing diversity develop. While the Gaeltacht has become more urban in outlook, both groups now contain significant numbers of young people with their own demands and needs. Moreover, a substantial Irish language presence now exists in Northern Ireland which has to be catered for. *Raidió na Gaeltachta's* objective task of serving the Gaeltacht and language speakers of all ages has become even more difficult.

The development of *Raidió na Gaeltachta* during the last twenty-four years needs to be examined within this context. It has grown from initial broadcast of two-and-a-half hours per day to a day-long service broadcasting from 8.00am to 7.30pm. It has established three main stations in Donegal, Kerry and Connemara, and substations in Dublin and Castlebar. The station's most significant achievement has been the creation of a link between the three major and linguistically diverse Gaeltachtaí who hitherto had problems understanding each other's dialects (Mac an Iomaire 1995; Ó Tuathaigh, 1995). In 1979, a delegation from the Council of Europe stated:

Raidió na Gaeltachta serves a community that is not geographically local. It rather links together the Irish-speaking community of the country. That is those Irish-speaking communities of the country, communities where Irish is the first vernacular which are collectively known as the Gaeltacht (RNG, 1992).

Browne has commended *Raidió na Gaeltachta* on its contribution to the development of Irish vocabulary which has occurred largely as a result of the demands of its daily news service (1992: 424).

With a large station in Donegal and a considerable available audience in Northern Ireland, *Raidió na Gaeltachta* has developed distinct coverage of Northern Ireland. While its achievements have been substantial, it has failed to address the specific needs of its target audience in many areas. Radio One and 2FM have segmented and specifically targeted key groups among the available audience while RNG has remained tied to a catchall approach. The audience is, however, faced with increasing choice on the airwaves.

Criticisms

Literature from *Raidió na Gaeltachta* would seem to indicate that staff and management are aware of the diversity in their identified audience. Nevertheless two substantial and sustainable criticisms of their service have emerged in the last twenty-four years. Firstly, both media and language critics have argued that RNG does not adequately address the needs of young people (Ó Murchú, 1978: 15; Rosenstock, 1984: 17; *Anois*, 24 May 1985: 3 and 19 July 1987: 1; Mac Dubhghail, 1995: 13; O'Neil, 1995: 11). Research within RTE also indicates that over seventy-five per cent of the station's listenership remains in the 35plus category⁵. Browne states

4. IRTC audience research indicates that the most salient division is the rural/urban divide. They found that country dwellers wanted speech-oriented radio and preferred country and western or traditional music. In contrast, city dwellers, even substantial segments of the adult audience, preferred continuous pop or rock music with less talk (Barbrook, 1992, 217).

5. Tony Fahy, Head of Audience Research, RTE. Interview, 11 January 1996.

Some staff are concerned about the 'no English lyrics' policy feeling that it has cost the station their best opportunity to reach the teenage audience. The disc jockeys could speak in Irish and thus preserve the essence of the policy (1992: 42).

A number of Gaeltacht activists who originally campaigned for the station state that their children rarely if ever listen to it (Ui Conghaile, 1995; Ó Raine, 1995).

The needs of younger Irish language speakers outside the Gaeltacht are served to some extent by small community stations such as Raidió na Life (Dublin) and Raidió Failte (Belfast) which are lighter in content. Young people in the Gaeltacht areas have no similar service and therefore have to avail of the local English language commercial station or 2FM. However, the young, particularly in the Connemara Gaeltacht have manifested a demand for a Gaeltacht based station oriented towards their needs. Twice during the 1980s, pirate pop stations were established in Connemara. Radio Happy, the first in 1984, contained speech links in English, while the second, in 1987, contained links in Irish and prompted considerable worry among staff in RNG (*Inniu* 20 July 1984: 11; *Anois*, 19 July 1987: 1). People within RTE and Irish language organizations argue, with some justice, that the 'no English lyrics' policy has contributed significantly to the renewal of interest in traditional music, giving it a guaranteed place in the radio diet of the country (Collins, 1995; Ó Tuathaigh, 1995).

Secondly, sustained criticism has developed around the geographical focus of RNG. Audiences have become accustomed to a clear division between national and local stations. Raidió na Gaeltachta's attempt to accommodate both elements has come under fire from both Gaeltacht people and language speakers outside the Gaeltacht (*Inniu*, 26 January 1973: 1; *Inniu*, 26 March 1976: 10; Ó Murchú, 1978: 15; *Anois*, 29 September 1985: 1; Rosenstock, 1988: 10; Delap, 1995: 22; O'Neil, 1995: 12). Gaeltacht people feel that RNG is not local enough and seem to have little interest in local news from other Gaeltachtaí. Hindley claims

my own enquiries showed that it was widely listened to for local news – it broadcast births, marriages and deaths and reports of all local events – but not for much else – and even teachers confessed to switching off when programmes were in other than their dialect (1990: 173).

In contrast, many Irish-speakers outside the Gaeltacht find elements of the broadcasts too parochial and local to be of interest. They feel that this type of material is unsuited to a national service.

This is a crucial issue as many of the most successful local radio stations such as Highland Radio, Northwest Radio and Radio Kerry cover RNG's catchment area (JNLR, 1995). Some of these stations, particularly those which have some Irish language programmes in their schedules report an enthusiastic response from Gaeltacht areas⁶.

Responses and solutions

Raidió na Gaeltachta now faces a substantial challenge. Obviously it would be wasteful to destroy what has already been achieved in terms of linkages between the Gaeltachtaí, traditional music and coverage of Northern Ireland. Additionally, education, public administration, television and information technology are all experiencing a significant upsurge in interest in the Irish language at the moment. Nevertheless, Raidió na Gaeltachta's audience has remained stable at one per cent of the total national listenership since the 1970s (Ó Drisceoil, 1993, 1985; Fahy, 1996). The station's attempt to function both as a national and as a local station, to serve both young and old, country and city dweller are meeting with a lukewarm response even in the current buoyant environment.

6. Charlie Collins (station manager for Highland Radio) estimates that 30-40 per cent of their listenership comes from the Donegal Gaeltacht (measured through responses to phone-ins and write-in competitions). They feature one all-Irish programme a week and up to four others which can and often do contain significant Irish language content (Personal communication 8 January 1996).

One method of dealing with these criticisms would be to define the target audience in more precise and narrow terms. Traditionally staff and management at the station have resisted attempts to limit or restrict their focus. Browne says that

Brendan Feiritear, one of the original RNG staff members, felt strongly that the service had to move beyond the Gaeltacht because to do otherwise would have confined RNG to the role of perpetuating a sort of pastoral dream, irrelevant to the late 20th century (1992: 419).

Conversely proposals by the then Minister for Communications, Jim Mitchell, in the mid-1980s, to re-structure RNG as Raidió na Gaeilge met with firm opposition from staff and language groups (*Anois*, 7 April 1985:2 and 29 September 1985:1).

The problems involved in servicing both listenerships have been addressed by Raidió nan Gaidhael in Scotland. They have adopted a three-tier opt-out system which has national, regional and local segments (Cormack, 1993: 108). Bristow and Bovill state

What is likely to satisfy Raidió nan Gaidhael's core audience of elderly islanders may be of little interest to the more outward looking young or to those Gaels on the mainland who, as a linguistic minority – are not likely to use Gaelic in most of their social contacts. This is a challenge which Raidió nan Gaedhael has begun to address (1982: 128).

This system would seem to have much to offer Raidió na Gaeltachta. It would allow it to offer a national service, to retain linkages between the three Gaeltachtaí and to offer a local service to each specific Gaeltacht.

Suggestions for targeting a younger audience have come from within the ranks of young language activists themselves. Their favoured solution is the establishment of a new service using RNG facilities, broadcasting at night outside RNG hours, under a different name. The service would play a relatively low amount (five to ten per cent) of Irish language music, however all speech links would be in Irish (Ó Drisceoil, 1993: 85). This suggestion has the advantage of allowing RNG to retain its lyrics policy and emphasis on traditional music. Given RNG's current staff and facilities it would be feasible. Finally even if the service were only available in Gaeltacht areas, it would represent a substantial concession to a younger audience.

Finance for these initiatives is of course the key factor. It is unlikely that RNG will receive any substantial increase in their budget in the near future (Ó Duibhir, 1996). The question of advertising also needs to be re-examined. RNG already offers a type of advertising through their community announcements; reaction in the Gaeltacht to local commercial radio stations would seem to indicate that the community does not find advertising intrusive or offensive⁷. Teilifís na Gaeilge management have stated that they are very open to advertising (Ó Ciardha 1995). Finally through their news coverage RNG has shown that the language can cope with modern terms, modern markets and a modern world-view. Revenue accrued from accepting advertising would substantially improve the station's ability to address problems and criticisms.

7. Research by RNG management into the question of advertising, conducted in the early 1980s, indicated that it was 'out of keeping' with the image of the station (Duibhir, 1996).

Conclusion

Since its inception, audience identification has caused problems for Raidió na Gaeltachta. In 1972, its target audience was very broad and ambitious. However, RTÉ Radio One, then the only other legal radio station had a similar view of its audience. In the intervening period, the advent of pirate radio has radically changed radio broadcasting. It has created new distinctions between local and national services, targeted at specific age-groups. As a result both new commercial radio stations and RTÉ have had to adopt a more focused and targeted approach to identifying and segmenting

their audience. Raidió na Gaeltachta's target audience has developed and diversified also during this period. While the achievements of the station are substantial, it has failed to address these changes in a focused manner. Critics have argued that it does not address the needs of young people who speak Irish. They have also complained that it has failed to reconcile the difficulties in providing both a national and local service simultaneously. In 1997, Raidió na Gaeltachta will celebrate its 25th anniversary. In examining its future prospects, it faces a number of options. It could narrow its target audience or undertake a programme of re-structuring. Whichever option is chosen, it would seem that change is crucial, not only in ensuring the future of Raidió na Gaeltachta but in aiding the survival of the language itself.

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Fianna Fáil and the Origins of *The Irish Press*

Catherine Curran is a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of Communication, Dublin Institute of Technology.

Catherine Curran

Introduction

In order to win political support for its programme of economic self-sufficiency in the 1930s, Fianna Fáil appealed to a number of constituencies: Irish manufacturers, the smaller farmers, and the urban working class. The success of this appeal depended on a number of factors, one of the principal being that an effective means of communication should be established. *The Irish Press* was founded in response to an immediate and pressing need for a mass circulation daily to assist in Fianna Fáil's struggle for hegemony against the ideas of the ruling party, Cumann na nGaedheal. Manning (1972:42) remarks that the significance of *The Irish Press* could hardly be overestimated in view of the hostility of the existing daily papers towards Fianna Fáil.

The role of the newspaper in organizing the party and winning new supporters for Fianna Fáil is emphasized by Carty (1981) in his study of clientelist politics in Ireland. In his view, the constant anti-Fianna Fáil propaganda of both the Catholic clergy and the existing national press had to be countered for two reasons. Firstly, Fianna Fáil supporters had no organizational linkages other than those of the electorally oriented party machine. A continuing stream of information and propaganda was therefore necessary to reinforce their political convictions in the face of determined attempts to discredit Fianna Fáil (Carty, 1981:103). Secondly, new supporters could only be attracted by a consistent ideological campaign. *The Irish Press* was therefore central to Fianna Fáil's struggle for hegemony in the early 1930s.

This discussion gives an account of the campaign to establish *The Irish Press* in the aftermath of the Civil War. Attention is focused on the various strategies employed by de Valera in order to finance the newspaper: the bid to gain control of the Republican Bonds in America, the appeal for commercial backing, and finally, the appeal to ordinary people who sympathized with the republican cause in Ireland and abroad. Next, the ownership and control structures which vested full control of the paper in the hands of de Valera are investigated. The article concludes with a review of the ideology of the early Irish Press and examines the role of the newspaper within Fianna Fáil's struggle for hegemony.

The Nation

In March 1927, Fianna Fáil launched a weekly paper, *The Nation*. This paper was established by Sean T. O'Ceallaigh, a close associate of de Valera. *The Nation* served as a precursor to *The Irish Press* wherein Fianna Fáil developed its populist programme. The paper provided a space for the editor, Frank Gallagher to develop the populist style which would later set the tone of the Press. From the outset, *The Nation* made a strong bid to win the support of the lower classes and rural poor. In the first issue, the paper asserted that the Irish people were suffering from the worst economic depression since the famine. The paper branded the Free State government as allies of Britain, asking whether it was 'not more than a coincidence that this deplorable depression and misery and emigration occurs during the present day government of the imperialists' (March 1927).

Although central to Fianna Fáil's propaganda of populist anti-imperialism, *The Nation* was, in itself, insufficient for the party's needs. Its circulation peaked at 6,000

copies weekly. Popular support for the more radical republican papers was declining rapidly. In 1930, Frank Ryan, editor of *An Phoblacht*, indicated that circulation had fallen from 18,000 to a mere 4,000 in the space of four years (Cronin, (1972:150). Although *The Nation* was the direct predecessor of *The Irish Press*, it did not achieve a sufficiently wide readership to suit the needs of Fianna Fáil. It seemed clear that the days of the small-scale republican press were over. For Fianna Fáil, *The Nation* was merely a stop-gap measure. Nevertheless, the paper played an important role in establishing the local party cumainn which were to prove effective in raising funds for the Press in rural Ireland.

In June 1927, de Valera wrote to Joseph McGarrity about the problems facing the new party and the urgent need for a national paper:

The newspapers here make it almost impossible to make any progress. We must get an Irish national newspaper before we can hope to win (NLI¹, Ms. No. 17441).

1. NLI, National Library of
Ireland Manuscript
Collection.

The established daily newspapers were indeed hostile to Fianna Fáil. In this they reflected the concern of both the establishment and the Catholic church to maintain political stability and the existing economic relations with Britain. One aspect of church thinking, however, was favourable to the aims of Fianna Fáil. It also was concerned about the extensive circulation of British popular dailies, with their low moral standards, in the Free State. Hence, Fianna Fáil sought to use the church campaign against imported popular newspapers in order to promote the cause of a national daily newspaper.

In 1926, the Free State Minister for Justice established a Committee of Enquiry on Evil Literature to prepare for the Censorship of Publications Act which would be passed in 1929. The public debate on the issue was led by a number of Catholic organizations, notably the Catholic Truth Society and various Irish vigilance societies (Brown, 1981:69). The campaign was directed primarily against the imported popular newspapers and magazines. These popular publications were considered a threat to moral standards, not least because they might carry information on topics such as birth control.

Fianna Fáil took up such arguments with enthusiasm. If the project of a national daily newspaper could be linked to the church campaign against sordid British publications, so much the better. The campaign against the British press dovetailed neatly with Fianna Fáil's populist campaign against dumping and monopoly domination on the Irish market. The church campaign also presented an opportunity for Fianna Fáil to present itself as the most genuinely Catholic of the political parties. Cumann na nGaedheal's reluctance to impose tariffs on British newspapers could be used to win the support of the Catholic intelligentsia. The opinion of Professor Thomas O'Rahilly, that 'in matters of the spirit we are becoming more and more England's slaves' (1927:561), seemed more in keeping with Fianna Fáil rhetoric than that of Cumann na nGaedheal.

Financing *The Irish Press*

Financing the new paper was to prove a major obstacle for de Valera. The original intention had been to gain control of what remained of the first Dáil loan, the infamous 'Republican Bonds', and to use these funds to establish a Fianna Fáil paper. On failing to achieve this, de Valera began to seek support from businesses and commercial interests in the United States. Again, this attempt was not a success. Finally, the committee in charge of fundraising realised that it would be necessary to rely on support among the lower classes, both at home and abroad. Paradoxically, the predominance of small shareholders made it easier for de Valera to gain control of the paper than would have been the case had it been financed in the main by commercial interests.

In 1919, de Valera and two other members of the first Sinn Féin party had been made trustees of a loan raised in the United States to finance the struggle for independence. De Valera intended to secure what remained of this loan for the purpose of founding the newspaper. The original fund amounted to \$5,800,000. Over half of this sum had already been remitted to Ireland. By the time of the treaty split, the unspent remainder amounted to \$2,500,000, held on deposit in New York banks. Collins and de Valera as leaders of the opposing factions had agreed not to use the funds for party purposes. Towards the end of the civil war, however, de Valera made clear his intention to seek control of the bonds. This move was immediately contested by the Free State government.

In August 1922, the Cosgrave government applied to the American courts seeking an injunction to restrain the banks from handing over the funds to de Valera or to Stephen O' Mara, the original trustees, or any of their agents. The application was supported by Dr. Fogarty, the third trustee named. The matter was raised in the Dáil (*Dáil Debates*, 13 Sept 1922) where the government announced that new trustees would be appointed. The new trustees were Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, Dr. Richard Hayes, T.D., and General Richard Mulcahy, T.D. and Minister for Defence. Gavan Duffy gave the opinion that O'Mara was not a suitable person to act as trustee as he had 'made very considerable difficulty in America for our delegates there'.

In May 1927, the New York Supreme Court declared that neither side was entitled to the funds and ordered that the monies be returned to the original bondholders (Cronin, 1972:146). The outcome was clearly a triumph for Cosgrave and Cumann na nGaedheal. De Valera, as trustee, had no title as owner of the funds, and had been denied his demand to be left in possession. The Fianna Fáil leader, however, was not easily deterred. Having failed to secure control of the funds, he urged subscribers to invest their bonds to in another great national project: the establishment of a daily paper whose principles were those of Irish Ireland. Republican sympathisers began a sustained campaign to convince bondholders to transfer their holdings to de Valera. This campaign became the subject of acrimonious debate in the Dáil after Fianna Fáil came to power (IP, 28 June 1933:1, 7 July 1933:1).

From the opposition benches, Cumann na nGaedheal TDs were to allege that unscrupulous methods had been used to convince would be investors. It was alleged in the Dáil that republican fund-raisers were assuring the Irish-American community that President Cosgrave was fully behind the new venture. Whether the charges had any substance or not, de Valera was faced with the problem that most of the Irish-Americans who had given support to the original republican loan had subsequently supported Cosgrave and the Free State government during the civil war. Support for de Valera was on the wane in the aftermath of the civil war (Sarbaugh, 1985:18). The difficulty of raising funds from republican supporters was compounded by the onset of the Great Depression. Perhaps for this reason, de Valera declared that the paper was to be politically independent. When the new paper was announced in the *Wicklow People* on 31 December 1927, it was publicly stated that the paper would not have any party allegiance. The Board of Directors would contain one Cumann na nGaedheal member, two Fianna Fáil members, and four members 'of no party' (Moss, 1933:69)².

2. This promise was not borne out: the directors were unanimously in favour of protectionism and supported Fianna Fáil. Some, such as Dowdall and Connolly, were Fianna Fáil Senators and prominent Irish businessmen. Others, such as Pierce and Gallagher, were public supporters of Fianna Fáil policy.

Appeal to business and to the people

In December 1927, de Valera travelled to the United States in an attempt to raise funds for the paper. The main priority was to establish support among business circles. On 28 December 1927, de Valera wrote to Joseph McGarrity stating that the total capital required would be £250,000, of which £100,000 was expected to be raised in Ireland. In the United States, subscriptions would be for blocks of value \$500 and over (NLI, Ms. No. 17441). De Valera wished to contact at least one thousand people in the United States who would invest at least \$500 in the enterprise. He expressed optimism at the prospect of raising the money, commenting

that 'as the proposition is purely a business one, I expect that it should not be difficult to get them' (NLI, Ms. No. 17441).

McGarrity replied to de Valera in January 1928, giving his opinion that substantial business support would be required and that it might be worthwhile to seek the backing of an entrepreneur such as Hearst.

My own thought is that under present conditions you must get men of means to subscribe for large blocks of stock. I think this method essential even if all organizations here were working together (McGarrity to de Valera, 10 January 1928, NLI, Ms. No. 17441).

It seemed clear that the financial and distributional problems which had afflicted the republican press could only be overcome by a fully-fledged commercial venture. Yet, raising the required amount was no easy matter. Even with extensive organization, the fundraising drive would not be easy. De Valera was fortunate that some of the organizations which he had established during his 1919 fund-raising tour were still in operation. It was to organizations such as these that he turned for support. Hence, the newspaper was to be named *The Irish Press* after Joseph McGarrity's *Irish Press* which was founded in Philadelphia in 1918.

De Valera proposed to use organizational methods to raise the money similar to those employed on his earlier fund-raising trip. Once in America, he set up an umbrella organization called the American Promotion Committee. Members of this organization were responsible for drawing up lists of people whom the group might approach for subscriptions. The committee members were instructed on how to conduct business and to find the people who had at least \$500 to invest in shares. Members were to work closely with the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic (AARIR). All funds collected were lodged with the Harriman Bank of New York City.

The problem of finding subscribers was greater than de Valera had anticipated. Even in California, one of the few remaining strongholds of de Valera support, the response was weak. The first meeting organized by the AARIR in San Francisco was poorly attended; only thirty people showed up. This was partly due to the short notice at which the meeting was organized but it also reflected the underlying weakness of de Valera's position. It was quickly recognized that the response in business circles was poor. The onset of the Depression severely restricted the availability of capital for investment in a venture such as *The Irish Press*.

Within a few months, the Promotions Committee announced that the \$500 minimum investment had been reduced to \$50 (*The San Francisco Leader*, 12 May 1928:6, 14 August 1928:4). In September 1928, when the prospectus of *The Irish Press* was published in the AARIR papers, McGarrity wrote to de Valera, expressing his pessimism about business support.

Things in a business way are bad in the country at present. Many of those who would give are not making and avoid gatherings where subscriptions are likely to be asked (25 September 1928, NLI, Ms. No. 17441).

Efforts were redoubled to raise the money in the United States. In October 1928, Frank Aiken arrived to promote fund-raising. In California, he established Irish Press Committees in San Francisco, Sacramento, Stockton and Los Angeles. Since business support was weak, the organizers began to organize door-to-door collections in an attempt to meet the quota. The organizing committee began to stress the need for a paper of the people, one that would provide them with the truth about affairs in Ireland. The newspaper would be committed to providing the necessary leadership for social and political development in Ireland. In an article published in *The San Francisco Leader*, entitled 'Our Central Purpose', de Valera wrote:

The only reason in fact why I am engaged in this enterprise is to provide the Irish with a paper which will give them the truth in news, without attempting to colour it for party purposes also to supply the leadership for the necessary economic, political and social reconstruction in Ireland today (SFL, 19 April 1930:1).

Conscious of the strategic interests of the United States, de Valera implied that an independent Ireland would give allegiance to the United States rather than to Britain.

We want Ireland to look west to America, rather than look to the east to England. We want an Irish paper that will be as Irish as the London *Daily Mail* is English (SFL, 28 January 1928:1)

De Valera appears to have wanted greater autonomy from British capital, but was not necessarily averse to encouraging the support of American capital. It seemed that he was prepared to modify the rhetoric of populism depending on the constituency whose support he sought.

Fianna Fáil Support

The campaign in Ireland provided an early example of the organizational proficiency of the local Fianna Fáil party Cumainn. Fianna Fáil Árd Fheiseanna were used to publicize *The Irish Press* among party supporters. At the third Árd Fheis in 1928, a resolution was passed which called on all local party branches to become involved in the project. Each branch was assigned to canvass its local area for subscriptions, while a key party member was put in charge of fund-raising in each constituency or district. While canvassers sought out individuals who could subscribe for blocks of at least one hundred shares, it seems that the majority of £1 shares were sold on an instalment basis. This indicates that in Ireland, as in the United States, the majority of shares were sold to the poorer sectors of society.

On his return from America in February 1928, de Valera toured Ireland to rally support for *The Irish Press*. Robert Brennan was put in charge of the fund-raising campaign, a position which called upon all his previous experience as Director of Publicity for Sinn Féin. De Valera was evidently in great haste to incorporate the company, in spite of the shortage of funds.

In September 1928, the company was incorporated and a prospectus was published in *The Nation*, setting out the share capital as £200,000 in £1 shares. What seems clear is that even with business support and popular share-ownership, the company was extremely short of capital. De Valera was in the difficult position of having to maintain to a business constituency that the paper would be purely a commercial concern, while simultaneously being forced to look to popular support and promise a radical nationalist paper. The publicity material produced by Frank Gallagher shows this contradiction quite clearly.

On the one hand, Gallagher wrote material which was clearly destined for circulation among business sectors. Subscribers were assured that 'guarantees of considerable financial support in Irish business circles' were already forthcoming. Publicity material also stressed that the company wished for subscriptions of at least one hundred shares. On the other hand, the promotional literature stressed that the paper would represent the genuine interests of the people of Ireland. Gallagher wrote that the people longed for a national paper that would express their own sentiments and feelings. For too long, the republican electorate had been compelled to subscribe to newspapers whose outlook was pro-imperialist. This electorate would turn immediately to a paper expressing the true national point of view (NLI, Ms. No. 18361).

The common theme which could unite business classes and the popular masses, whose support was necessary to Fianna Fáil and *The Irish Press*, was that of anti-

imperialism. Gallagher pointed to Father Devane's article in *Studies* and the figures presented by the Catholic Truth Society in relation to British newspaper circulation in Ireland. In his publicity material, he announced the project to establish in Ireland a daily newspaper that would be truly Irish in purpose and in character. 'We are', he wrote 'in the strangle hold of an alien press'. The Irish people were in a condition of mental bondage, purchasing from their British former masters practically all the material which sustained their minds. The number of national dailies had fallen from seven to three, while the English dailies were increasing their circulation with 'astonishing rapidity'. Gallagher reiterated the arguments put forward in *Studies*, echoing the opinion that national culture and language could not be revived without the existence of a 'cheap, healthy and independent native press'.

The new daily will not be a propagandist sheet or a mere party organ. It will be an Irish national newspaper in the broadest sense, championing the full rights of all the people of Ireland. The policy of the paper will be under the control of Mr de Valera (NLI, Ms. No. 18361).

Ownership and Control

While de Valera's control of the paper seemed to be taken for granted by the majority of Fianna Fáil supporters, the party leader nevertheless took steps to ensure that this control was legally enshrined in the Articles of Association of the paper. Hence his control was not contingent upon continued success as leader of the party but was permanently established in legal terms. While de Valera's populist rhetoric created an impression of other-worldly asceticism, the means by which he gained control of *The Irish Press* provides ample evidence of his shrewd business sense.

From the outset, it was made clear that de Valera intended to maintain a firm hold on the new venture. At the Fianna Fáil Árd Fheis in 1927 when the new paper was first announced, the party leader stated that the paper was not going to be the property of any party, even the Fianna Fáil party. The paper had a mission to the Nation, and this would be jeopardized by party control.

It was going to preserve such independence as would enable it to do its national work, and that was to criticise impartially certain actions and even certain policies of the Fianna Fáil party, and to make suggestions from time to time as to what should be done (IT, 27 October 1927:7).

On the contrary, Mr de Valera was to be the controlling director, and stated that he would 'not be bound in his control of the paper by the decisions of anybody'. To underline his absolute authority, de Valera's asserted that

if there was a question in which a decision would be given, and it was on an important matter, he would give that decision and take public responsibility for it (IT, 27 October 1927:7).

The Articles of Association listed the Board of Directors as follows: Article 70: The number of directors shall not be less than three or more than twelve, and Article 71: The following persons shall be the first Directors of the Company:

EAMON DE VALERA, Controlling Director, 84, Serpentine Avenue, Sandymount, Co. Dublin, Teacher, Chancellor, National University of Ireland.

JAMES CHARLES DOWDALL, Villa Nova, College Road, Cork, Merchant, Director, Dowdall, O'Mahony and Co., Limited, Cork.

HENRY THOMAS GALLAGHER, Tallaght, Co. Dublin, Merchant, Chairman and Managing Director, Urney Chocolates, Limited.

JOHN HUGHES, Laragh, Killiney, Co.Dublin, Merchant, of John Hughes and Co., Dublin.

STEPHEN O'MARA, Strand House, Limerick, Merchant, Chairman and Managing Director, O'Mara, Limited, Limerick.

PHILIP BUSTEED PIERCE, Park House, Wexford, Merchant, Managing Director, Philip Pierce & Co., Limited, Mill Road Iron Works, Wexford.

JAMES LYLE STIRLING, Granite Lodge, Dunlaoghaire, Merchant, Managing Director, Stirling, Cockle & Ashley, Limited, Dublin.

EDMUND WILLIAMS, Correen, Ailesbury Road, co. Dublin, Maltster, of D.E. Williams, Limited, Tullamore.

The Board of Directors, therefore, consisted of prominent Irish industrialists and businessmen who had an interest in the cause of promoting native Irish industry. Most were members of NAIDA, the organization for the development of Irish industry and agriculture. This organization was to develop close links with *The Irish Press* in the 1930s. Each member of the Board of Directors was required to invest at least £500 in shares.

The Articles of Association enshrined de Valera's position as Controlling Director with absolute powers over the running of the newspaper:

Article 75: The first Controlling Director shall be Eamon de Valera who is hereby appointed such Controlling Director and who shall hold in his own name Shares of the Company of the nominal value of Five Hundred Pounds. He shall continue to hold the said office of Controlling Director so long as he shall hold the said sum of Five Hundred Pounds nominal value of the Shares or Stock of the Company. The remuneration of the said Eamon de Valera shall be determined from time to time by the Shareholders in General Meeting.

In Article 75, the right of de Valera to an effective lifelong tenure of the position of Controlling Director was established. Articles 76 and 77, under the subheading 'Powers of Directors', granted him what amounted to sole control over the running of the paper and over the policy, management and staff above the heads of the general shareholders. Article 77 also represented a total safeguard against any attempt to wrest control from his hands. In later controversies which would emerge in the Dáil and elsewhere, de Valera justified his position by asserting that he acted as trustee for the ordinary Irish people who had invested in the project of a national daily newspaper.

Ethos of *The Irish Press*

The Irish Press was clearly intended as a mass circulation daily newspaper. Nevertheless, it was also aimed at a particular readership, i.e. those sectors of the population which Fianna Fáil hoped to rally against the dominant political party, Cumann na nGaedheal. Therefore, the paper was not simply 'popular' in the sense of appealing to the mass of the people. If it had been merely popular, the paper would have been identical to the majority of the British papers circulating in the Free State, and would probably not have been very different from the *Irish Independent*. *The Irish Press*, however, established a distinct identity on the basis of its populist politics. Populism entailed a discourse which represented 'the people' as a political category with interests separate and distinct from the pro-metropolitan interests of the 'elite' in power. The construction of a populist discourse required that at least some of the

journalistic staff should be sympathetic to the aims of Fianna Fáil and its particular variety of republicanism.

Many of the key editorial and managerial staff of the paper had gained their formative newspaper experience in the underground republican journals during the independence struggle and in the course of the Civil War. These individuals were drawn together by a political commitment to the cause of the Irish nation. Some, including the editor, Frank Gallagher, were fiercely loyal to de Valera. Gallagher had contributed significantly to the propaganda activities of Sinn Féin. He had previously worked on the *Cork Daily Free Press*, *New Ireland*, *the Irish Bulletin*, *Poblacht na hÉireann*, *Éire*, *Sinn Féin* and *The Nation* (NLI, Ms. No. 18361). In terms of ideological commitment to republicanism, he appears to have been more radical than the party leader. For instance, he opposed de Valera on the question of taking the oath of allegiance and entering the Dáil in 1926, although he ultimately submitted to de Valera's arguments. Gallagher's ideological commitment to the tradition of radical republicanism was later to bring him into conflict with the Board of Directors of the Press. It seems that while Gallagher was prepared to canvass the support of business leaders in order to finance the paper, he believed that the cause of Irish republicanism took priority over financial or commercial success.

Many of the journalistic and technical staff were recruited on the basis of connections with the republican movement. Certainly the goodwill and assistance of republican sympathisers was important in the weeks prior to publication. Although some staff appointees had backgrounds on Belfast Unionist papers, the majority were journalists, teachers and writers, the lower-middle class intellectuals who had provided the cadres of de Valera's republican movement since the Civil War (IP, 5 September 1981:V). Robert Brennan, the General Secretary, had worked in the past on the *Enniscorthy Echo*, which had published the *Irish Volunteer* between 1914 and 1916. Brennan had taken part in the 1916 Rising in Wexford. Later, during the War of Independence, he was Director of Publicity for Sinn Féin, turning the *Irish Bulletin* into a daily organ of Dáil Éireann when most of its representatives were underground. Paddy Clare, who worked as a night reporter for the paper, had been an unemployed ex-IRA comrade who had previously written for *An Phoblacht* and *The Nation*. Patrick Kirwan, appointed as an assistant editor in 1934, had previously worked on *An Phoblacht*. Paddy Devlin, in charge of reporting on Gaelic games, had written for *Sinn Féin*. Another Gaelic games reporter, Mitchel Cogley, had previously been a contributor to *An Phoblacht*. The appointment of Gaelic games correspondents reflected a determination to emphasise Irish culture even in the realm of sports coverage.

Content

Anti-imperialism was combined with an emphasis on rural culture as the authentic culture of the people. It was proposed, for example to mount a campaign against foreign street names, to include articles on the Gaeltacht, on the old industries of Ireland, and to include features on the Irish cities of England. Gallagher was particularly conscious of the national interest in his instructions to sub-editors, which included the following directives (NLI, Ms. No. 18361:3):

Always give the Irish angle in the headlines.

Do not use agency headlines; the other papers will have those.

Be on your guard against the habits of British and other foreign newsagencies who look on the world mainly through imperialist eyes.

Do not pass the word 'bandits' as a description of South American revolutionaries.

Pirates and robbers in China are not necessarily communist and therefore should not be described as such.

Propagandist attacks on Russia and other countries should not be served up as news.

Gallagher's perception of the international news agencies pre-empted the vast body of literature on media and dependency which would emerge in the post-war era. Hence, great emphasis was laid on the need to stress what was distinctively Irish in the news. The guidelines for sub-editors reflected a conscious determination to align the Press with anti-imperialist and revolutionary movements elsewhere in the world, even to the extent of giving limited sympathy to the Soviet Union.

Gallagher also reminded his sub-editors not to make *The Irish Press* a Dublin paper. There were, he observed, O'Connell Streets in other cities. Clearly, the paper was to make a determined appeal to the rural population which provided the mainstay of Fianna Fáil support. The appeal to the rural population reflected an ideological tendency which was ambivalent towards the question of urbanization and large-scale industrialization. Gallagher's instructions also revealed a profound ambivalence towards the institutions of the state, particularly the police and judiciary. The staff were reminded not to quote jokes made by judges 'unless they were real jokes', while it was advised that there was no necessity to report every word of praise spoken to policemen. This reflected a radical populist hostility to the apparatus of the state which was undoubtedly sharpened by Gallagher's personal experience of the legal system. While the paper clearly aimed to win the lower classes in both urban and rural areas, Gallagher was also aware of the need to win specific audiences among this group. In particular, he stressed the need to include items of interest to women readers.

In conclusion, *The Irish Press* was founded as a newspaper that would assist Fianna Fáil in its struggle for political hegemony. In order to establish the paper in the face of extensive hostility from the existing press and the political establishment, the organisers looked to support from a number of quarters: Irish-American businesses, Irish commercial interests, and the ordinary Irish and Irish-American people who were sympathetic to de Valera's aims. The paper was thus presented as the genuine voice of the people of Ireland. It could not have been established without the support of the urban and rural working classes and marginal sectors who contributed to de Valera's fundraising drive. Hence the ethos of the paper was populist and anti-imperialist. The control of the paper, however, rested in the hands of Eamonn de Valera, leader of Fianna Fáil. In organizational terms, the Board of Directors consisted of prominent Irish businessmen who had an interest in the protection of industry and in seeing a financial return on their investment in the paper. Within this hierarchy of control, it can be seen that de Valera was a mediating force between the interests of the mass of the people and the business interests who supported the paper. In practice, however, the potential existed for the interests of the people to be subordinated to the interests of de Valera and the Board of Directors. In this sense, *The Irish Press* was a microcosm of the populist alliance in general.

Critique of monopoly capitalism and communism

The Irish Press did not simply focus on the needs of Irish industry. It consistently sought to present the project of industrialization in terms of the needs of the ordinary people. This was done in a number of ways. First, it was argued that industrial society was facing a crisis and that the only alternative was a programme of ruralization, i.e. the development of small-scale industries throughout the country. Second, while maintaining the ideal of rural society, the paper advocated a programme of state intervention to resolve pressing problems such as housing and welfare. By highlighting the problems of the working classes, and by appearing sympathetic to the trade unions, the Press sought to win the support of the working class and at the same time to present Fianna Fáil as the real party of the working classes. In presenting the alternative of a 'third way' between monopoly capitalism and communism, *The Irish Press* sought to channel working class radicalism towards support for Fianna Fáil.

From the outset the Press discussed at length the idea of small-scale production. For example, the ruralization of industry was frequently advocated by members of the lower clergy, whom Gallagher cited at length. Citing the Rev. J.M. Hayes, whose address to a meeting of An Rioghacht raised the question of the real national economy, Gallagher pointed to the need to restore rural life. Industrialization as it existed had 'come to a dead end' (*IP*, 10 December 1931:8). Gallagher added that the alternative to the present system was the ruralization of industry described by Father Hayes. The state, he argued, should promote the establishment of small industries and help them in their struggle for existence.

The Press reflected populist concern for the perceived evils of mass society and large-scale industrialization. It also reflected the belief that late developing countries could turn to their advantage the lack of capitalist development and promote a more egalitarian social order where the ravages of competition could be regulated by some measures of state control. For example, a weekly column devoted to social issues, written under the pseudonym 'Catholicus', pointed to the possibility of a 'third way' between capitalism and communism. While critical of monopoly capitalism, the author suggested that the present crisis could only be resolved by the co-operation of capital and labour. It was asserted that large-scale industry huddled men in undesirable numbers. Livelihoods became precarious. Man became dehumanised through specialization and rationalization. The sole *raison d'être* of monopoly capitalism was efficiency, with the result that 'the vast armies of the property-less earners lived no full human life. The solution was 'not the large port mill', but 'the village mill in the midst of its wheat fields', not 'one central furniture depot' but 'groups of woodworkers in every town'. We want, asserted 'Catholicus', 'the local lime kiln, not Imperial Chemicals' (*IP*, 19 December 1931:6). The estate of the capitalist had been placed in jeopardy by the unleashing of rampant commercialism. Only by welcoming his workers as real co-partners could the capitalist hope to save any part for himself. The alternative was the ruralization programme advocated by Fianna Fáil.

While opposed to communism and the idea of class conflict in society, the populist ideology of the Press in its radical phase could incorporate a number of grievances of the workers. For example, the paper reported on low wages in the catering trade. An official of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union interviewed by the paper was critical of proprietors whose low wages forced girls to survive on tips. The opinion was given that the majority of waiters and waitresses would prefer to see tipping abolished and wages increased. In some cases, the question of wages and conditions was given front-page coverage, particularly where Fianna Fáil and Labour seemed in agreement on an issue:

DAIL DISCLOSURES ON BUS WORKING CONDITIONS

Sixteen Hours A Day.

Ten Shillings A Week For Employees.

(*IP*, 13 November 1931:1).

This article related to a Dáil debate in which Sean Lemass, in alliance with Labour deputies, denounced the 'scandalously low' wages in some of the bus companies. It was the duty of parliament, Lemass declared, to see that appalling conditions of work should be altered. By drawing public attention to the difficult conditions of the working classes, the Press sought to create a cross-class alliance of all those affected by Irish economic dependency. It seemed that the only solution to the economic and social problems of the day was the election of a Fianna Fáil government which stood for the workers and small farmers against the corruption of the old order.

Conclusion

In its first months of publication, *The Irish Press* made a radical populist appeal to the working class, the rural poor and the smaller manufacturers. It actively publicized

the policies of Fianna Fáil and mounted a strong challenge to the legitimacy of the government. The mass circulation newspaper offered advantages other than the size of audience which could be reached. Clearly, a mass circulation press would prove more difficult for the government to suppress using traditional means. That is, the government would find it more difficult to stifle a modern daily newspaper than to ban the traditionally small-scale republican publications. The Press' claim to represent all the people of Ireland was a safeguard against the kind of suppression that had hindered republican papers in the past. It seems that Cumann na nGaedheal hoped that the new paper would fail to establish a commercial basis and would disappear of its own accord. When asked in the Dáil whether he would suppress *The Irish Press*, Cosgrave replied that 'by the looks of the first issues it will suppress itself' (IP, 5 September 1931:III).

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Amanda Dunne is a MA student in the Department of Communications, Dublin Institute of Technology.

Problems of broadcast funding: *Crimeline* and sponsorship

Amanda Dunne

Problems of broadcast funding

In recent years, the dominant trend in broadcast regulation in Europe has been to place the consumer not the citizen at the centre of policy. While technological change has also provoked phenomenal changes in broadcasting and its marketplace, the irrefutable tension between the interests of the citizen and those of the consumer, between 'quality' programming and 'mass' audiences, and between the 'public service' ethos and the interests of commercial broadcasting is more directly a function of policy (Dahlgren, 1995). Thus, the dogma of 'consumer sovereignty', best epitomized by Margaret Thatcher's efforts to deregulate broadcasting in the United Kingdom during the late 1980s and early 1990s, has deliberately generated a 'laissez-faire' approach to television, creating a situation wherein the capacity of the state to regulate broadcasting has deteriorated. Deregulation has meant that programming content and financing of broadcasting has been left increasingly to the mercies of the market, leading to a new tension between 'privately generated' advertising money and 'publicly generated' media revenues; in turn, it has been argued that the amount and nature of the finance available for production has a direct impact on the quantity and quality of programming, and on the 'ethos' of the broadcaster (Garnham, 1994). The pressure to be competitive and to maintain a commitment to public service broadcasting has forced many broadcasters to radically reassess their activities to maximize audience share. The former Director-General of RTÉ, T.V. Finn¹, foresaw such a tension when, in 1984, he advocated the notion of 'semi-controlled competition', a set of rules that would allow for some protection of the public service element of broadcasting while acknowledging the inevitability of competition (Finn, 1984).

Globally the premier source of broadcast funding has been advertising, which fulfils a dual role. On the one hand, it has freed television from direct government control and encouraged broadcasters to meet viewer needs, e.g. information and entertainment, and to ensure a continued demand for its services. Contrarily, it has left television subject to market forces and vacillating economic trends, fostering a criticism that it too often panders to 'lowest common denominator' programming, e.g. low-risk, populist programmes designed to appeal to a mass audience. It is often argued that this relentless pursuit of large market share has contributed to a trivialization of cultural products (Stevenson, 1995)². However, as the market for information has become global, broadcasters have responded by seeking out new opportunities; the fragmentation of the market has ironically offered a 'salvation' to commercial and national broadcasters as they realize they can sell more to valuable niche audiences. Specialist broadcasters, such as MTV, have sought to cater for age- and interest-selective niche audiences (Price, 1995), while national broadcasters have divested themselves of a narrowly targeted version of national identity, a process termed 'de-pillarization'.

This proliferation in the number of broadcasters has inevitably increased competition for advertising revenue. The amount of revenue generated from the sale of advertising has not, however, grown in line with the amount of broadcast hours or in line with production costs (Seaton, 1994)³. Global and uneven economic pressures have meant that there is intense competition for smaller amounts of money. Public service broadcasters, many of whom are partially funded by advertising like their commercial brethren, have found themselves in a weakening position; advertisers no longer need them to reach a national audience with so many commercial alternatives available

1. In the same essay, Finn accurately predicted the difficulties facing the funding of RTÉ: the stagnation of advertising revenue and the lack of political support for an increase in the license fee.

2. Some commentators argue that competition reduces quality in commercial as well as public service television. For example, game shows represent better value for money as they cost less than dramas and documentaries. As good performers in the ratings, they attract more advertising revenue. The trend towards developing mass-appeal programmes such as soaps and game shows is increasing as evidenced by programmes such as *Lucky Numbers* (Sky), and *Talking Telephone Numbers* (ITV), etc. See Sepstrup, 1991.

3. Many advertisers are choosing direct sales and marketing techniques such as direct mail or point of sale promotions over conventional media advertising. Sponsorship is one such method.

(Sepstrup, 1990). Hence, the revenue available to public service broadcasters is now more thinly spread.

In turn, advertisers also face threats from the fragmented market. They must now spend more to reach an audience which may be smaller than that previously enjoyed. Increased choice through the growth in the number of cable and satellite stations, contrary to expectations, has not resulted in lower advertising costs; indeed, the splintered audience is now more difficult to reach (Clarke and Bradford, 1992). In addition, the avoidance of advertisements is a significant audience trend – viewers leave the room during ad breaks, zap or watch subscription channels⁴. Broadcasters are reluctant to provide audience reach figures for advertising breaks to advertisers increasingly concerned about reaching consumers. This has resulted in the phenomenon of 'clutter' as advertisers combat audience fatigue and disenchantment with many, shorter and attention-grabbing advertisements to a increasingly sophisticated market (Carter, 1993).

Advertisers are also being legislated out of several lucrative markets, such as toy, alcohol and tobacco markets, further diminishing their domain (Summer, 1993). Advertisers are particularly fearful of regulation; Mars, Kelloggs and Heinz commissioned a study on advertising in the late 1980s which advocated the lobbying of governments and the formation of pressure groups to stem the tide of re-regulation of television advertising⁵. It contended that less advertising would result in lower quality, and less cultural and political programming due to lack of adequate finance (Mattelart, 1991). RTÉ, for example, has recently banned all advertising around children's television⁶. The Authority decided to replace the advertising breaks with 'informercials', public service adverts that would educate and inform the young audience. This move is significant in light of the increasing interpenetration of advertising and programmes in children's television (Mattelart, 1991).

Thus, it appears that the benefits of advertising expenditure may have reached a plateau, through a combination of economic variables, questionable efficacy, legislative restrictions and public distrust. If this is true, there is a clear and ominous link between decreasing advertising and broadcast revenue. In Ireland, RTÉ has been increasingly dependent on advertising for revenue; in 1994, 51 percent of its budget came from this source, while only 36 per cent came from the license fee, and 13 per cent from other commercial sources. Against this grain, the recent government Green Paper on broadcasting, *Active or Passive. Broadcasting in the Future Tense* (1995), noted the danger of such reliance and advertiser influence:

While there is no evidence to suggest that it is the case, does the reliance by RTÉ for so much of its revenue from commercial sources including sponsorship run the risk of compromising its editorial integrity?

Michael D. Higgins, Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, affirmed in the Green paper, a commitment to reducing the national station's dependence on advertising by increasing the license fee, possibly by indexation. The possibility of increasing the license fee by approximately £30 to cover the cost of Teilifis na Gaeilge and RTÉ's sports coverage has been mooted; however, it is unlikely that such a move would either be popular or feasible given the size and income of the population in the country. It is equally unlikely that the government would be able to fund the increase required from its own sources. It has now been announced that the license fee is to be raised by £8, considerably lower than the figure initially suggested.

While consumer expenditure on media remains quite constant as a percentage of GDP, consumer expenditure to support a proliferation of channels without a reduction in production costs does not exist (Garnham, 1994). While the cost of television production and the number of channels is growing, the revenue to support these developments does not exist. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that channels will

4. This phenomenon is known as 'grazing' in the industry.

5. The central hypothesis of this 1988 study was that new European legislation on television advertising would have a negative impact for advertisers, television stations, consumers and 'culture and politics'.

6. At the end of 1995, the RTÉ Authority decided that they should be no advertising transmitted around children's programmes on either of their two stations: no sponsorship would be permitted either. An insider estimated that £100,000 in revenue would be lost by this decision.

either close down or alternatively production standards will fall dramatically. It is within this context that the need to discover new sources of broadcast funding has become very urgent. That this search is linked to the necessity of (re)structuring market mechanisms in order to encourage and ensure diversity rather than hinder it has equally become pressing (Dahlgren, 1995).

Rise of sponsorship

Given the economics of the marketplace and increased doubts as to whether traditional brand advertising does increase sales significantly, if at all, advertisers have begun to spend an increasing proportion of their marketing budget on non-traditional forms of advertising. Major advertisers have begun to turn increasingly to direct sales and marketing techniques, including sponsorship, barter and product placement. While product placement is illegal in many countries, and barter has been slow to take hold in Europe, sponsorship has become the newest potential source of broadcast funding. Together these three 'new' forms of advertising grew at a faster rate than media advertising during the 1980s, and now exceed advertising expenditures in mass media.

Corporate spending on sponsorship accounted for £287m in the UK in 1990, and \$3b in the US in 1992. Spending by the 'below-the-line' sector (which includes sponsorship) has steadily out-paced 'above-the-line' expenditures, e.g. conventional advertising (Mattelart, 1991). It is estimated that up to three times this amount is spent 'exploiting associations' (Thwaites, 1995). This method is considered to be most effective when combined with other forms of advertising (e.g. spot advertising around sponsored programmes), and when there is a clear visual link between the sponsor and the programme (e.g. where the logo or company name is placed beside or over the programme name in the opening titles and end credits).

Advertising trades on an assumption that there is a direct correlation between sales, and audience size and composition. The growth of sponsorship is proof of advertisers' desire to expand their role from that of merely producing an advertising spot to 'co-producing' programming. With it, a company or product can benefit from an association with a programme and increase the prospect of 'narrowcasting' to a more valuable and significant audience. In the United States, Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) reaches three per cent of the national audience, and has proved very attractive to corporate sponsors (this audience tends to be more upwardly-mobile and more educated), thus being of great benefit to their image (Ford and Ford, 1993). As early as 1987, Saatchi and Saatchi set up a production unit for sponsored television programmes, describing them as 'free, ready-made programming' (Mattelart, 1991). The advantage of such programmes is that they essentially provide free programming to the broadcaster, which is an attractive proposition. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is an increasing presence of advertiser-produced programming, e.g. game shows like *Wheel of Fortune* made by Unilever, on European television.⁷

7. Proctor and Gamble were involved in the co-production of the mini-series, *Marco Polo*, with RAI and Dentsu in the early 1980s.

As broadcast production funds shrink, the relationship between sponsorship finance and programme costs will undoubtedly strengthen (Tobin, 1990). This form of funding offers specific audiences and associations to advertisers while providing much needed revenues to producers. RTÉ television's stable of sponsored programmes now includes *Crimeline* sponsored by Hibernian Insurance, *The Tuesday Movie* sponsored by Satzenbrau, *2TV* sponsored by Coca-Cola, *Beyond the Hall Door* sponsored by Irish Permanent, *Challenging Times* sponsored by *The Irish Times*, and *Across the Line* sponsored by Mars. Previously, sport had been the only sponsored element of RTÉ television's (although radio had had some notable 'sponsored' programmes) output since the very early years of the station. In fact, coverage of major events such as the World Cup (soccer and rugby) and the Olympics would not have been possible without sponsorship.

Given the dramatic changes in broadcasting and its marketplace, it would be naive to ignore sponsorship's potential as a vital source of funding: it is unlikely to go away and it provides a very real opportunity to supplement or indeed replace revenues gained from advertising. The patronage embodied by such sponsorship can, however, often be seen to be of a very commercial and penetrating kind. The tendency to try to hide the commercial intention of the communicator is somewhat problematic, from an ethical and awareness point of view: the audience often knows of the fiscal relationship between the producer and the sponsor. Some research has shown that audiences are highly conscious of sponsors associated with the programmes that they watch; quantitative and qualitative research conducted by MTV, the music channel, affirms this awareness (Dell, 1996). This may be due to MTV's highly media-literate audience and the particular symbiosis between the sponsor and the programme, which on MTV closely matches that of the sponsors in most cases⁸. Drama and light entertainment are therefore often considered better programmes for sponsorship as there is less likelihood of conflict of interest arising between the sponsor and the programme.

On the other hand, the more stimulating a programme and the greater its impact on the viewer, the more likely a programme is to attract support from a sponsor. Here, control is the key issue; a sponsorship agency whose function is merely the pairing of a programme with a sponsor would ensure that there is no direct link between the producer and the sponsor, and no risk of untoward influence or control (Ford and Ford, 1993). In this instance, the subversion of a programme's editorial line is the greatest concern arising from sponsorship⁹. These and other issues will be examined in the remainder of this article, which looks in detail at the relationship between RTÉ, broadcast funding and sponsorship in terms of a case study of a singular 'success' story, *Crimeline*.

Crimeline: a case study

In 1992, a new genus of crime programme appeared on RTÉ. Replacing *Garda Patrol*, *Crimeline* began broadcasting once a month in a prime-time Monday night slot. The programme was a radical departure from *Garda Patrol* which was a low-budget programme presented by the Gardai with no use of live-action or security footage and predominantly concentrating on lost property. It would be fair to describe the programme as functional in a limited way though unsophisticated and uninteresting.

There was a general feeling that *Garda Patrol* had outlived its usefulness, certainly on the part of the Gardai and, independently RTÉ saw merit in moving in the direction of the type of crime prevention programme exemplified by *Crimewatch UK*. RTÉ made a number of approaches to the Gardai with this in mind but failed to attain the level of co-operation necessary to produce such a programme. From a broadcasting perspective it was imperative that the production team would be given access to the level of detail required to reconstruct serious crimes, e.g. access to witnesses, scenes of crimes, etc. Furthermore, the programme would require access to security videos inside banks and building societies, etc. Thus, while the desire to produce a programme of this nature was there, RTÉ did not possess the wherewithal in terms of Garda assistance to realize the concept.

David Harvey, an independent producer, brought together the disparate elements to make such a programme by enlisting the co-operation of the Gardai and the financial backing of Hibernian Insurance. As in the case of *Crimewatch UK*, the programme's model, the structure presents an unchanging opening sequence which clearly identifies the programme as *Crimeline* and unambiguously represents its status as a 'law and order'/crime programme. The shot sequence that begins each programme represents the process of justice from crime to sentencing in powerful visual motifs, accompanied by dramatic and stirring music. It also visually represents the link between the Gardai and *Crimeline* and, later, *Crimeline* and the Gardai. The association of the Gardai and Hibernian is broken by the shot sequence. The piece is dominated by a sense of tension

8. *MTV's Most Wanted*, a requests programme, is sponsored by Durex. The image of the company fits that of MTV: risqué, adventurous, daring and young.

9. There was an incidence on ABC, an Australian public service channel, where a cookery programme was found to have nineteen different, unacknowledged sponsors. It is this kind of situation that leads to suspicion of sponsorship.

and urgency and the pace blurs the boundaries between the differing elements of the piece created by fast-paced editing and fast-paced shots. The sequence is in 'postbox' format with a telephone cord on the top and bottom of the frame and the colour changes from black to blue during the sequence. (See Table 1)

Table 1

| OPENING SEQUENCE | |
|------------------|---|
| 00.00 | Garda Logo. |
| 00.04 | Sequence of one long shot from each of the three reconstructions. Edited on a crescendo with a 'tearing' effect on each edit. Accompanied by a voice-over by David Harvey beginning 'On <i>Crimeline</i> tonight.....'. |
| 00.28 | Montage of shots - Phone being dialled 1850 40 50 60 appears beneath the picture. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person talking on phone. • Garda on radio with flashing blue lights behind. • People running down shadowy alley. • Dusting for fingerprints. • Squad car travelling at speed. • Fingerprinting. • Person being put into a squad car. • Person being handcuffed. • Judges' gavel striking. |
| 00.52 | Fades into the <i>Crimeline</i> logo. |
| 00.58 | The logo flips over turning into <i>Hibernian</i> logo. The titles 'in association with' and 'Insurance' fade up above and below. |
| 01.03 | Opening sequence ends. |

The reconstructions aim to jog memories; in addition, they make good television. *Crimeline* tends to reconstruct particular types of crime, usually violent ones, such as murder, rape, robbery with assault, and missing people. Interestingly enough, missing people cases tend to have the best response rate from the public (Harvey, 1995), with rape cases also receiving a high level of response (Murray, 1995). Appeals for people to phone in permeate each segment of the programme; the phone number constantly appears in 'straps' as do the programme and Garda logos during the reconstructions. This connection is religiously reinforced. The 'update' lasts no more than four to five minutes, but rarely reveals any further information. It appears to renew the sense of crisis, and further exhorts the viewing public to telephone before midnight. The structure of *Crimeline* serves the dramatic urgency of the hunt for the criminal with regular promises of more crime and drama to come; it uses 'teasers' before the advertising breaks and during the programme, combined with a constant fast-pace, moving the audience from one type of crime to the next.

Crimeline is sponsored by Hibernian Insurance, one of the largest insurers in Ireland. The company covers the cost of all elements of the programme with the exception of the studio time and facilities supplied on the night of transmission by RTÉ. The estimated cost of one programme is approximately £18,000, a considerable investment on the part of Hibernian as the format had been untried in Ireland and could have failed miserably.¹⁰ However, as the programme currently achieves ratings in excess of 900,000 viewers each month, and has topped the TAM ratings in 1994-1995, the investment represents good value for money.

10. As noted by David Harvey when interviewed in November 1995.

Crimeline has also provided an opportunity to develop a very positive association for Hibernian with the Gardaí and crime prevention. This is the strength of sponsorship over conventional advertising; it creates an environment where the sponsor can bask in the reflected glow of a programme's success and absorb some of the attributes of the show. Within the business community, there appears to be a belief that Hibernian's sponsorship of *Crimeline* is an excellent and enviable deal, and may pave the way for further programme sponsorships in the future (MacCann, 1995). In concrete terms, research has shown that the awareness level of Hibernian as the sponsor is fairly high and is increasing with each series. A study in February 1995, showed that 95 per cent of the population were aware of *Crimeline* while just over twenty per cent of adults were spontaneously aware of Hibernian as the sponsor. This is slightly more than double the linkage level recorded two years earlier (Hibernian Insurance, 1995). For people aware of the sponsor, it appears to induce a positive feeling among them towards Hibernian. In addition, people already insured by the company are more conscious of the sponsorship, and see it as an endorsement of the company.

As the national broadcaster, RTÉ is understandably conscious of the ethical concerns surrounding the show's integrity; the programme falls broadly into the area of current affairs, an area not usually deemed ideal for sponsorship by the UK's Independent Television Commission (ITC), Ireland's Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC) or the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Consequently, RTÉ has had to put certain regulations in place to ensure the editorial integrity of the programme. These are:

- People are not allowed to use the programme to promote their products.
- There will be no presence on the programme of employees of the sponsor.
- No items will appear on the programme that relate to the sponsor's business.

The difficulty, however, is that it is impossible to preclude items that relate, even if indirectly, to the sponsor's business, because many items on the programme, by virtue of the fact that the 'items' are crimes and that the sponsor is involved in the insurance of property against crime.

Despite the best intentions of all concerned to prevent *Crimeline* becoming a tool of the crime industry, the nature of the *Crimeline*-Garda-Hibernian association is ephemeral and therefore impossible to regulate. This is not to say that this linkage exists in the minds of any of the viewers despite Bryan O'Higgins', Garda Press Office, belief that it does, and Norman MacCanns', Hibernian Insurance, belief that the programme is viewed as a Garda endorsement of Hibernian. As Hibernian are not selling a direct security product, it was deemed that such a relationship would 'not to be too much in conflict with the programme'. This can be a matter of interpretation: how indirect a security product is insurance? how much in conflict is too much? These questions form the basis of the problematic nature of *Crimeline*, a programme that is part crime prevention, current affairs, community affairs and drama, that is not made by RTÉ or commissioned by it, and that embodies the uneasy marriage of public service broadcasting, commerce and the state police force. It is this unease that prompted RTÉ to appoint its own editor, John Caden, to the programme in order to ensure the editorial independence of *Crimeline*.

Crimeline's unique position in the television schedule, a top-rated programme not made by RTÉ itself, poses many problems. RTÉ, while maintaining editorial control, actually has no control over the exploitation of the programme nor do they own the concept. A distinction can also be drawn between editorial control and control of the production process, which in reality rests with Midas, the programme's producer. RTÉ is also open to criticism that behind the worthy exterior of the programme, it is simply a vehicle for audience-maximizing violence, as has been said of *Crimewatch UK* (Dunkley, 1988).

The programme structure, however, implies a link between *Crimeline* and the Gardai, and *Crimeline* and Hibernian which raises the thorny issue of whether it is ethical to allow one insurance company an association with the Gardai, however indirect. For Hibernian, the association is a positive one, reflecting well on the company but viewer awareness of them as the sponsor is lower than they would like. There also seems to be some ambiguity among the audience as to whether this link takes the form of advertising or of sponsorship. For the Gardai, the programme provides a useful public relations vehicle, portraying them in a positive and sympathetic manner. It also gives a sense that something is being done (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994).

The interaction of these three different parties in the production process, each with their own agendas and motivations, is highly problematic. The programme is, however, a significant prime-time draw, having out-stripped RTÉ's in-house productions in the ratings, and RTÉ would be loath to lose it. Indeed, programmes of this nature appear to be here to stay: in the UK, there is *Crimestoppers*, *Crime Monthly* and the spin-off of *Crimewatch UK* called *File* (Minogue, 1990). In Ireland, *Thou Shalt not Kill*, a kind of retro-reconstruction programme using old murder cases, was broadcast recently. These programmes' success suggest that there are audiences to be won with crime. Moreover, in an era of increasing commercialization, with RTÉ pressurized to deliver audiences and TV3 waiting in the wings, the temptation to sensationalize is great.

Funding and public service broadcasting

The problems arising out of the interdependence of sponsors and broadcasters are not the fault of any one party; rather, they derive from the funding system and the pressures of the market. These difficulties are exemplified by *Crimeline* and are particularly acute for RTÉ which endeavours to serve two masters: the public purse and the competitive market. RTÉ, in its response to the government green paper, states its belief that adequate funds from the license fee must be the cornerstone of the service (RTÉ, 1995). This is a view echoed throughout Europe (Groombridge and Hay eds., 1995). To this end, RTÉ recommends indexation. While RTÉ's dual funding has encouraged the company to appeal to large audiences in order to attract advertising and to make a significant contribution to the cultural and political life of Irish society, its position increasingly needs clarification. It may be that like the BBC, RTÉ needs a charter which specifically details its role in Irish society and guarantees the amount and nature of its funding¹¹.

Ireland, with a tiny independent sector, is sorely in need of additional sources of funding. Independently produced programmes are made for approximately half what they would cost if RTÉ were to make them and in many instances, commissions are insufficient to meet production costs in a very expensive industry. In the case of *Crimeline*, that the programme had to be financed from the private sector was a direct result of RTÉ's financial difficulties. Independent production companies are run by a skeletal staff of full-time employees and freelancers hired on a project-by-project basis. Staff are frequently paid at lower rates for what is very skilled and intensive work schedules due primarily to the low cost structure of the industry.

At present, RTÉ's stringent watchdog policy on sponsorship has forced it to adopt a more subtle role in commissioned programmes. It is understandably determined not to allow free advertising to escape onto the screen. This serves to re-emphasize the need for regulation of this areas rather than ignoring it. In most countries the regulation of the media has been altered in favour of the owners and advertisers¹², raising questions about the balance between 'private ownership' and the 'public good', as it can be argued that the market has no intrinsic loyalties, except to itself (Price, 1995). Some systems of regulation serve the cause of democratic deliberation better than others, and account needs to be taken of whether there should be a distinction between regulation of political discourse (news, current affairs etc.) and of popular culture (entertainment,

11. RTÉ policy which is determined largely by the RTÉ Authority is subject to the Authority's composition, thus the agenda of the Authority becomes that of the broadcaster to some extent. The decisions of the present Authority would not necessarily be in tandem with those of previous Authorities. A more coherent and consistent policy mechanism is needed.

12. This is evidenced in Ireland by the case of TV3 - when a suitable bid for the franchise was not found in the early 1990s, the franchise lapsed. It was resurrected in the last year due to regenerated commercial interest in the venture. In fact, the competition for advertising revenue in this country has increased as UTV and Channel 4 are now selling airtime in the Republic.

advertising, etc.). These issues directly affect the regulation of *Crimeline* because it crosses the boundaries of current affairs and drama.

The conundrum of commercial finance for public service television is not, however, merely fiscal. Historically, public service broadcasting has been independent of industry and the state, providing an arena for diverse social groups to communicate with one another and viewing the public as citizens not consumers. This ethos is threatened by commercial pressures unless carefully regulated. *Crimeline* embodies one prospective future of the relationship between public broadcasting and private commerce. In many countries, there has been a total abdication of policy in favour of the market place (Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, 1995). Cultural and political intervention needs, however, to take account of social differences; the EU has sought to create a common cultural space through subsidies and co-productions, where the disparate elements of European culture can gain expression. It is a truism that since the market for information and entertainment is now global, regulation must also take place at an international level; the EU has a greater role to play. The French have led the initiative to promote European culture, but more support is necessary. This should be forthcoming from smaller nations, like Ireland, which are more culturally vulnerable than larger nations.

There are considerable implications for RTÉ as an agent acting in the 'public sphere', to frame this debate in Habermasian terms. The whole purpose of the public sphere is to enable people to reflect critically on themselves and on the practices of the state (Stevenson, 1995). Legal and financial support from public authorities to ensure the pluralism of information must therefore be forthcoming (Groombridge and Hay, 1995). The citizen has the right of access to information and ideas from a plurality of sources. Information is not a commodity, it is a public good. A two-tiered system (subscription and PSB) of access to information and entertainment increases the gap between those who have and those who have not, thus diminishing the common ground necessary in any society for its members to communicate with each other. It cannot be denied that people depend greatly on the media for the ideological framework with which they orientate themselves in their society. As the media are both the agents of the dominant ideology and its subjects, the push towards privatization and the decline of publicly-funded cultural organizations has serious implications for the range and diversity of public expression and the availability of television as a forum for all social groups. The public sphere consists of an intricate set of social spaces and practices; its democratic nature cannot be assumed but it must be constantly attained (Dahlgren, 1995).

The economics of commercial television, and to a growing extent, public service television, centre on the exchange of audiences for advertising revenue. This affords a large degree of control over the direction of cultural activity to business in its capacity as advertiser and sponsor, and in many instances has resulted in the reduction of diversity. The narrowing of the field of public discourse is therefore one of primary concern. Culture plays a vital role in shaping 'imagined communities', shared values, life styles and political goals – these form the basis of a society (Dahlgren, 1995). Public service broadcasting embodies a public cultural space that is invaluable in a society's on-going interaction with itself. The nature and the quality of its funding is vitally influential to the way that it performs this function.

Sponsorship is yet another manifestation of the increasing presence of commercial interests in broadcasting. Whether this influence is beneficial or detrimental in an Irish context has to be assessed. *Crimeline* provides a useful testing-ground because of the issues that it raises. These issues are of broader concern to RTÉ as they illustrate the potential conflicts and contradictions of market pressures facing the public broadcaster as it seeks to straddle the public and commercial spheres.

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Ellen Hazelkorn is
Director of the Faculty
of Applied Arts, Dublin
Institute of Technology.

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2. RTÉ Advertisement in Irish Independent, 25 January 1992.

3. These questions have been adapted from similar ones asked by Sparks, 1982.

New technologies and changing work practices in the media industry: the case of Ireland¹

Ellen Hazelkorn

Context

The broadcasting environment in Ireland is the most competitive in Europe. RTÉ's revenue is strictly limited. The licence fee has not increased since 1986. Advertising revenue is controlled by law. The preservation of a comprehensive and effective radio and television service can only be sustained by the most efficient and cost effective approach to the production of programmes of quality.²

In Ireland as elsewhere, the convergence of economic, political and technological developments is forcing through a redefinition of public broadcasting and a restructuring of its work practices. Former all-encompassing broadcasting corporations are being divested of their production capacity, and transformed into publisher-contractors. Effectively, production is being separated from broadcasting. For those working in what had previously been regarded as secure employment, new technology has instigated phenomenal changes. The past several years have witnessed two major industrial conflicts at RTÉ: new technology, de- and re-skilling, and compensation lie at the heart of these disputes. The response from the trade unions has often been aggressive but also defensive. Where change has occurred, it has been quite complex; deskilling and reskilling occurring in tandem. The introduction of new media technologies is seen as a means of reducing costs and bringing out greater efficiencies. The effect of this compendium of change extends, however, far beyond the particulars of public broadcasting to map out a new frontier for broadcasting and media production generally.

This paper is an initial exploratory investigation of the impact of technological and political change on the broadcasting labour force and environment by focusing on Ireland's public broadcaster. Three interrelated issues will be examined:

- 1) what are the causes of these changes, both immediately and in the future?
- 2) what are the implications for the labour force in Irish broadcasting?
- 3) what are the broader implications of these changes?³

Politico-economic causes

Irish broadcasting began in 1926 with radio. Modelled on Reith's formula for public service broadcasting as represented by the BBC, 2RN was erected under the watchful eye of the civil service, as a vehicle for promoting national sovereignty and cultural/religious identity; most programmes were home-produced and any material which affronted Catholic principles were self-censored. In contrast, the arrival of Radio Telefis Eireann in 1960 coincided with a phenomenal rate of economic change, transforming Ireland within a decade from an agricultural to an industrial society. Over the decades it has powerfully challenged traditional cultural forms and vented the aspirations of an emergent urban middle class, whose allegiances are increasingly attuned to continental Europe, undermining the primacy of the countryside in national life.

From the start, commercial interests were absent from broadcasting. This view was inspired by a conservative interpretation of 'public service' overdetermined by economic realities, most notably the absence of a middle class. Over time, a small population (3.5m) and public commitment to an extensive welfare state with accompanying high tax burdens atop a relatively underdeveloped economy have forced Irish broadcasting to rely on a combination of licence fees and advertising revenues for funding. These tight financial margins have necessitated RTÉ television's heavy reliance on American and British programmes, and prohibited any private commercial radio or television service operating, the former until recently. Effectively, broadcasting policy has mimicked economic policy generally; the state filling the vacuum, promoting, regulating and deregulating sections of the economy for pragmatic never ideological reasons and in ways always beneficial to private interests.

While RTÉ has always faced competition from British broadcasters (BBC and ITV), it has never faced a direct or real threat to its principle sources of revenue, the licence fee. Furthermore, it has been protected by a popularly endorsed strong public service remit. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, fundamental changes in the broadcasting market including the mogulization of media ownership and the multiplicity of (public and commercial, terrestrial and satellite) broadcasting channels and new media technologies coincided with growing ideological acceptance of private ownership and competition (Ostergaard, 1992).

Domestically, a deepening fiscal crisis of the state undermined hitherto unquestioned loyalty and subsidization of a range of public services; while Irish broadcasting has been financially autonomous (with access to the exchequer funding never being mooted), its right to levy increases in its licence fee is subject to government approval. Since 1986, high levels of unemployment perched upon a dependent economy, and popular discontent with high personal taxation have prevented such approval⁴. Additionally, criticisms were levelled against RTÉ's news and current affairs coverage of Fianna Fáil, which some alleged led to the demise of its 1987-led government.

In response, the Irish government introduced a series of legislative and policy changes which have deregulated the broadcasting and telecommunications environment, restricted the public broadcaster's (RTÉ) participation into satellite broadcasting (DBS), and increased the opportunities for private ownership and independent production. The Radio and Television Act, 1988, established the Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC) with authority to licence national, local and community radio stations, and one national television station⁵. These domestic initiatives were matched by similar initiatives in the UK, USA and throughout the EU. A 1989 EU directive, *Television Without Frontiers*, recognized the right to the free flow of televisual materials and prohibited the erection of national barriers to transborder data flows; in order to become competitive, European media products must find secondary markets and be cost-effective. Despite confirming its commitment to public service broadcasting and adopting the language of 'cultural autonomy', the most recent pronouncement of government policy, as evidenced in its green paper, *Active or Passive? Broadcasting in the Future Tense*, continues to favour a policy of managed privatization.⁶

In many respects these political initiatives have been a reaction to, not an attempt to construct, the broadcasting environment. A growing number of technological innovations have fundamentally altered broadcasting; satellite, cabling and MMDS ensure that increasing numbers of the Irish population can view British television for little or no extra charge.⁷ Despite heightened production standards and costs, the increasing user-friendliness of media technology alongside its relative cheapness has meant that broadcasting need no longer be the preserve of large media organizations. This 'democratization' of media production has further stimulated the dismantling of the public broadcaster's 'monopoly' and favoured local commercial and community radio which is a relatively inexpensive and accessible medium.

4. Approval for a licence fee increase of £8 was finally granted in July 1996.

5. Political considerations are alleged to have influenced several of these decisions: the licence to transmit the first commercial national radio station was granted to alleged sympathisers of Fianna Fáil, while the minister intervened in pressing RTÉ to concede a more economical charge for Century Radio's use of the national transmission network and in seeking to create an alternative news service (McCann, 1990).

6. Approximately two thirds of the population live in 'multichannel' areas, and a third of the television households have cable television. The latter are able to receive the Irish and British national television programmes as well as between six and ten (mainly) English language satellite stations. For a fuller discussion of broadcasting in Ireland, see Hazelkorn, 1995a.

7. Ironically, UTV's assault on the Republic's audience was assisted by a government 'capping' of advertising revenue earned by RTÉ which effectively forced advertisers to seek alternative platforms. It was introduced in 1988 ostensibly to shift advertising revenue away from RTÉ and towards the fledgling national commercial radio station, Century Radio, which collapsed shortly thereafter.

One effect of these pressures is evident in the high proportion of inexpensive, studio-based discussion, 'talk-based' and imported programming. The former provide crucial anchor points in the RTÉ schedule while continuing to reduce reliance on acquired programming from 65 per cent in 1984 to 50 per cent in 1995. While this programming is favoured by Irish audiences, much is described as lacklustre, dull and timid, continuously drawing upon a small pool of 'experts'. Today, RTÉ enjoys a 48-50 per cent share of all peak time home viewing in multi-channel areas. The multiplicity of viewing choices available to the Irish public, the more aggressive approach taken by UTV,⁷ likely competition for the licence fee from commercial and community radio (and possibly TV3), the establishment of an Irish language television station (Teilifís na Gaeilge), and proposals to curtail advertising revenue pose serious threats to its status. Set against a background of an ideological undermining (or at best questioning) of public confidence and support for state institutions in general, it seems likely that RTÉ will be operating in a less favourable political and public atmosphere in the future.

Technology and the labour force

The conjuncture of these developments (economic, political and technological) have forced RTÉ to adopt the methods (and to a large extent the aims) of commercial broadcasting. A 1985 government-commissioned study (SKC, 1985) assessed the challenges to broadcasting 'in the era of competition', and recommended changes in restrictive work practices and conditions of employment, and a shift towards commissioning and purchasing of independent productions. It was also strongly critical of RTÉ for failing to take advantage of new technologies, where such technologies would reduce manning levels and costs. As a result, a new management strategy was adopted. It accepted the need for technological innovation and deployment of new media technologies, although promised there would be no compulsory redundancies; job reductions would be achieved by 'natural wastage' and early retirement. By the end of the decade, these changes were seen as insufficient to meet the challenges posed by other television broadcasters who had embraced new technology with low manning and cost structures.

From inception, technology and technological change have been central to radio and television. The introduction of FM radio broadcasts, the invention of transistor radio, and the move to colour television increased the consumption of media products in the 1970s. More recently, computerization and digitalization have swelled the possibility of media platforms, often enabling new audiences to be captured by simply reformulating existing media products onto new technologies.⁸ New technologies have also led to significant changes in media production techniques and practices, most notably smaller crews and simplified post-production.⁹ These developments have generated economies¹⁰ while substantially raising production standards.¹¹ Digital technologies have also altered or eliminated many traditional skills required in the media production process by rendering them obsolete or less efficient. They have shifted the balance between large media institutions and small independent production facilities in favour of the latter.

RTÉ has not been a market leader in the early adoption of new technology, partly due to the financial constraints under which it operates. Its decision to implement changes in working modes and practices was demanded by the new broadcasting environment and the problems it posed particularly for broadcasting in and by a small peripheral society. All these developments have serious implications for those working in the sector, most particularly those employed by state broadcasters.

Engineering¹²

Major changes have occurred in transmitter technology through microelectronics, and specifically modular circuits. Previously requiring a team of round-the-clock engineers, these transmitters are now unmanned. The modular design means that if a transmitter develops a fault, the circuitry can be removed and replaced in minutes, and

8. For example, music previously recorded on records now on CDs; films previously for cinemas now on video or CD - thus enabling super-profits to be made.

9. For example, CCD (charged coupling device), a light sensitive microchip, has enabled video-tape based, portable cameras to replace 16mm film cameras, and compact cassette tape has superseded quarter inch tape recorders as a portable sound recorder.

10. Video tape is cheaper than film and can be reused. This equipment is technically more sophisticated - cameras now include both lighting and sound - and lightweight so they can be operated by one person with less training.

11. EFP and ENG have allowed pictures to be immediate and transmittable.

12. The following account comes directly Kilfeather (1994).

repaired off-site. They are also controlled directly from the studios, an innovation important with respect to increasing managerial control of production. The decline in the demand for engineers to man the transmitters has, however, been partially offset by newly created demand for engineers to service the growth of IT systems.¹³ The fact that engineering skills are 'portable' means that they can be applied to new technologies with little difficulty, a situation that is not repeatable in other areas.

Radio

The introduction of digital technology has led to substantial changes in work practices and to the virtual disappearance of traditional skills. The latter procedure, especially operative within the news division, involved a journalist's taped interview being edited by a sound operator under the former's supervision. Self-editing, based upon the digital encoding of sound which can then be viewed as a waveform and spliced 'virtually' on a computer screen, is suitable for those with little or no sound operating background. Because it involves less hand-to-eye co-ordination, it eliminates more traditional and skilled methods of editing as practised by sound operators. While journalists welcomed greater control over their work, the introduction of self-editing marked a new expectation by management for staff who had previously not been required to do any technical work.

Digital Switching

The move from analogue to digital equipment in broadcasting has had major implications for processing information. Traditionally, the central apparatus room (CAR) or switching centre was responsible for routing outside channels and internal audio and video sources¹⁴ to and from the various production and post-production areas. It involved a process similar to an old-fashioned telephone exchange, patching a wire from one socket to another. The entire process has now been replaced by integrated circuits and touch screen VDUs, controllable from anywhere in the studio. This technology has also transformed that part of television studio operations which mixes sound and vision for live broadcasting, provided cues and announces programmes, and sends out the broadcast signal. Both tasks have been automated and staff redeployed.¹⁵

Coupled with self-editing, digital switching enabled the capability to 'go directly to the transmitter network', thereby making it possible for a single presenter to control programme output on radio, without necessitating a sound operator to be present. These self-operated studios are especially cost-effective for RTÉ's all-music second channel, which has a minimum of 'talk radio content'. It does, however, again raise expectations about the skills required by previously technically unskilled presenters.

Graphic design

Traditionally, artistic skills were important for the production of titles and graphics for television. The practice was to produce artwork on paper and then film it with a camera. New technology has revolutionized this process, replacing some of the skills with conceptual dexterity. The creative tasks and editorial decisions have been merged with consequences for both technical and creative workers. Contrary to expectations, increased quality of work and speed of delivery has increased the demand by producers and consumers for graphics, with the result that staff have increased in this section. In turn, this has accelerated the introduction of digital technology, forcing graphic designers to integrate their skills with other technical aspects of production, transmitting their work from computer to video tape directly without involving a video tape operator. New technology of video-compositing will have an equally great impact on design by integrating it directly with digital video. Together with digital non-linear video editing, the process of video post-production will be further revolutionized, combining the skills of video editor, graphic designer and sound mixer. This will again raise expectations about the skills required in video post-production.

13. For example, RTÉ is installing a network based payroll system which will enable producers to input data on appearance fees and salaries without the necessity of submitting paper documents.

14. For example: VTRs (video tape recorders), studio camera, OB (outside broadcast) sound and vision, etc.

15. This is a rare case in RTÉ of automation replacing skills and jobs directly. Unlike manufacturing industry, these technicians have become involved in more creative aspects of media production through redeployment. However, it does place greater control of the production process in the hands of management.

16. This gives a permanently rigged set of diffuse, high output, lights which provides broad, even illumination of a studio requiring only key lights and backdrops to be lit. This has been made possible by halogen lighting technology which allows for higher lighting output than obtainable from standard incandescent lights of a similar power rating.

17. Modern CCD, charge coupling device, cameras allows their use in much lower lighting conditions than was possible with film cameras. It also allows material shot remotely to be sent by microwave link from regional studios, where previously an outside broadcast (OB) unit would have been required.

18. During the 1980s, Sky and NBC had sent out one-person camera crews. Interviewees suggested that RTÉ is not intending to introduce one-person crews at this point as this reduction is not always matched by efficiencies.

19. A similar trade-off for mobility and flexibility has been accepted by the use of cellular telephones to replace skilled OB technicians.

Lighting

The introduction of new saturated lighting rigs¹⁶, which are quickly rigged and derigged, has altered the skills required for lighting technician and lighting electrician. While there has been an increase in the number of studios under use at any one time, saturated lighting has contributed to deskilling of lighting in broadcasting. The operation can now be substantially carried out at the flick of a switch. Consequently, the numbers of studio electricians has fallen.

However, a new post of sound and lighting operator (SAL), incorporating lighting electricians together with sound recordists, has been created. It could be argued that this has resulted in deskilling both tasks as the final operation is not as skilled as that of the previous three-person crews. In so far as these two-person crews are used primarily for news and current affairs, which does not require as high sound and lighting quality as drama or music productions, the argument could be made that only the low skill element has been displaced. The new multi-skilled SAL is a more rewarding job.

ENG/EFP equipment

The introduction of electronic news gathering (ENG) and electronic film production (EFP) equipment has revolutionised media production. The technical user-friendliness, lightweight and technical capability¹⁷ of video over film processing has virtually led to the replacement of the latter by the former. The fact that video cameras also include the sound and lighting capability means that work practices appropriate for cinefilm crews are no longer required. The 1992 dispute in RTÉ began when management sought to introduce two-person crewing for news and current affairs programmes, thus displacing the need for both a lighting electrician and a sound operator. In this regard, RTÉ was heavily overmanned compared to the norm.¹⁸ While there is some disagreement over whether sound quality has suffered, video's efficiency is seen as a welcome trade-off.¹⁹

The move to ENG and video has also led to a change in maintenance skills; while the equipment is more reliable than cinecameras, the increased number of VTRs and cameras, and RTÉ's commitment to 'in-house' repairs where possible, has led to increased numbers employed. In contrast, the skills required for transferring film to videotape for broadcast has been overtaken by ENG and EFP technology, thus eliminating the need for telecine transfer.

Labour restructuring

The changes experienced by RTÉ are not unique. Similar changes had already been recorded in the USA, UK and throughout western Europe. Indeed, in comparison with other experiences, RTÉ had shown itself to be a reluctant user of new technology. However, by 1988, technological developments could no longer be ignored. *Competing in the New Environment - Our Strategy for Survival* (RTÉ 1988, 2.6) was a detailed account of RTÉ's response to the changed media environment:

We must produce and transmit more and better programmes at lower cost and with fewer staff. This is the essence of the challenge which we face and must overcome. If we fail to do so now we risk getting into a spiral of decline which will become impossible to halt and which would undoubtedly have disastrous consequences for RTÉ and RTÉ staff...

Multiskilling must become the norm, and while preserving... essential production and operational core skills and maintaining programme quality and output standards, staff in general will need to cover a range of duties for which they are competent or for which they can, with limited effort, be trained and scheduled to work as a team... reasonable flexibility within a team concept has to be the norm.

Remarkably similar in tone to the UK *Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality - The Government's Plans for Broadcasting* (HMSO, 1988, 10.2-10.4, p41), it emphasized flexibility, efficiency and lower costs. It illustrates that for RTÉ, the restriction of work roles was not permissible within the new competitive and 'technologically determined' work environment.

Labour flexibility is the key advantage of new media technologies. Single-operator crews, not part of RTÉ's agenda at the moment, are fast becoming the industry norm, particularly for news and current affairs. With the introduction of self-editing, there is greater convergence between the technical and the production sides of broadcasting, eliminating traditional boundaries; for example, technicians are retrained as journalists and journalists reskilled to edit their own interviews.

Camera crews are expected to be news editors as well at no extra charge. We could be out all day and then be asked to cut for three or four hours. In the end, they're asking one operator to do everything including the line feed (Croft, 1995).

Unlike its counterparts in the UK and the USA, however, the prevailing political and public climate in Ireland has proven itself intolerant of large-scale redundancies especially by state institutions. Thus, RTÉ has used a combination of early retirement, redeployment, retraining and alterations in staffing structures to effect the necessary cost efficiencies required by increased demands of competition and commercialization. RTÉ's social responsibility masks the full extent of the impact of new technology on labour structures through the vagaries of internal staff mobility options. Thus far, the pace of change has been able to absorb the level of redeployment and retraining, albeit the unions have expressed concern that the speed of change might begin to outpace the organizational ability of the corporation to absorb displaced labour. In such circumstances, the major union has set itself against the

allocation of members to a 'Redeployment Pool' where it is made clear to them that they are not seen as making a valuable contribution to the organisation (SIPTU, 1992).

The two recent industrial disputes, 1991 and 1992, began when RTÉ sought to introduce two person camera crews without trade union approval for the level of compensation to be awarded to members displaced by technology.²⁰ The unions claim that they did not seek to overturn the decision to use new technology but rather only compensation for those members affected by its introduction. In this regard, the dispute illustrates the inability of the unions to influence the 'product strategy' of RTÉ as regards the quality and nature of programmes produced (Kilfeather, 1994). Previous efforts to influence the nature and extent of technological change had also been thwarted²¹. Explanations for this failure rest to some extent on union unwillingness to become involved in retraining, preferring instead to negotiate increased wages. Worrying from labour's point of view, must be the fact that RTÉ views technology as a means to reduce labour costs and achieve greater efficiencies.

Another aspect of labour restructuring has been changes in employment categories. The government had introduced an embargo on full-time employment in the public sector in the early 1980s in a drastic effort to reduce the huge deficit on current expenditure. Despite RTÉ's relative financial autonomy, it was still overdetermined by these fiscal pressures and by labour force changes within its competitors. In this context, the 1985 consultancy study of RTÉ had also firmly recommended retrenchment in staff numbers. RTÉ has a stated policy of making new appointments and promotions by contract only.²² This trend towards casualization of the labour force is illustrated by the figures: in 1988, 2146 people were employed, 99 of whom were in non-permanent employment; in contrast, by 1994, only 1973 were employed of whom 330 were in non-permanent employment. This represents a increase of the total employed in non-permanent positions from 4.6 per cent to 16.7 per cent. Over the same period, 212

20. RTÉ, who had sought the opinion of the Labour Court, believed that the introduction of new technology was covered by the Broadcasting in the 1980s agreement with the major trade union, the ITGWU, in 1982. It had allowed for the introduction of new technology in return for pay increases of approximately 25 per cent for many members.

21. The trade unions had attempted to influence the manner and pace in which two person crews using high power lights would be introduced. While they viewed this change as 'inevitable', they sought to subject the use of such lights to electrical and operational safety checks by the state's scientific and technical institution, EOLAS. A dispute ultimately arose over financial compensation.

22. RTÉ employs people in a number of 'categories': Permanent and Pensionable: this is the most secure of the contracts and those employed these terms have been assured that they will not be subject to involuntary redundancy; Continuous Employment: this refers to fixed term contracts which carry the same pension and other rights as permanent and pensionable contracts; they are usually given to people who are promoted from a permanent and pensionable post; Employment Contract: these are fixed term contracts with portable pension rights and have been favoured by RTÉ for recent appointments; Temporary Contract: these are contracts for three months to 3 years; they are frequently given for the duration of a programme series and then allowed to lapse. NB. A change to a continuous employment contract can not be regarded as a real change in employment status as the person involved retains their permanent and pensionable rights while being promoted to a higher salary in their contact position.

people took early retirement. (See Table 1) The figures show that while permanent and pensionable jobs have been lost, RTE has, to some degree, been replacing them with contract staff.

Table 1
RTE CASUALIZATION, 1988 AND 1994

| Year | employed | non-permanent | % non-permanent |
|------|----------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1988 | 2146 | 99 | 4.6 |
| 1994 | 1973 | 330 | 16.7 |

Source: RTE

A closer examination illustrates that the pattern of casualization of employment is not universal. There is a marked contrast between employment patterns in the technical and production divisions albeit all areas showed a fall in the numbers employed. Technical areas, such as radio and television facilities, show a steady contraction in permanent and pensionable employment, with no comparable increase in non-permanent employment. For example, total engineering staff fell from 379 in 1988 to 199 employed in 1994; of which non-permanent contract staff constituted 26.1 per cent in 1988 but only three per cent employed 1994.²³ Thus, no new employment has been generated in this area. In contrast, permanent and pensionable staff in production areas, most notably in television programming, radio and news, are being re- or displaced by non-permanent contract staff; the latter has increased from 10% to 19.9%, from 3.8% to 15.8%, and from 2% to 28.2%, respectively (see Table 2).

23. This figure includes both employment contracts and temporary contracts.

The relationship between technology and labour restructuring within RTE is complex and often contradictory. While competitive and political factors have stressed technological innovation, other factors have slowed its implementation and effects. Both deskilling and reskilling are occurring, sometimes in tandem. Their impact has been felt unevenly by the labour force; for example, while all areas have experienced a decline in employment, new employment is less likely in technical areas most affected directly by new technology. This suggests that when the embargo on permanent and pensionable employment is lifted, new recruitments would only be likely in non-technological areas. This represents a real and potential shift in the balance of skill/power relations between technology ('blue collar') and production ('white collar') jobs. This rebalancing carries significant implications for 'productivity' as new media technology opens up the possibility for a shift from 'variable' (wages) to 'fixed' (plant) capital by reducing the production process and the cost of production. Effectively, technological developments have enabled many more people to make programmes more easily. People with little or no technical skill can with little or no additional training undertake traditionally quite skillful operations, a factor illustrated by the experience of self-editing (Croft, 1990). Additionally, the latter workers carry none of the benefits of premium (e.g. unsocial or overtime hours) payments associated with the formally well-organised technical staff.

Table 2**EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES IN SELECTED DIVISIONS IN RTÉ,**

1988 AND 1994

| | | Total staff | Permanent Pensionable | Continuous Employment | Employment Contract | Temporary Contract | Non- Permanent Contract% |
|---------------------|------|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Radio Facilities | 1994 | 58 | 57 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1988 | 91 | 89 | 1 | | 1 | 1.1 |
| Engineering | 1994 | 199 | 190 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 3 |
| | 1988 | 379 | 359 | 11 | | 99 | 26.1 |
| TV Programmes | 1994 | 351 | 239 | 42 | 60 | 10 | 19.9 |
| | 1988 | 399 | 302 | 57 | | 40 | 10 |
| Radio 1 | 1994 | 177 | 127 | 22 | 27 | 1 | 15.8 |
| | 1988 | 212 | 177 | 27 | | 8 | 3.8 |
| News | 1994 | 142 | 102 | 0 | 39 | 1 | 28.2 |
| | 1988 | 137 | 118 | 16 | | 3 | 2.2 |
| RTÉ Total | 1994 | 1973 | 1508 | 135 | 292 | 38 | 16.7 |
| | 1988 | 2146 | 1867 | 180 | | 99 | 4.6 |

Source: RTÉ

Note: Non-permanent contracts includes those employed on both employment or temporary contracts.

Another factor is gender. Women constitute only 31.8 per cent of full time but 60 per cent of part-time staff (see RTÉ, 1991; Gallagher, 1990; Gleeson, 1995). The technical areas of media production (lighting, camera, sound, etc.) have traditionally been male bastions but these areas are most vulnerable to incursions of new technology. In contrast, women are likely to be employed on contract as production support staff (e.g. administration, researcher, production assistants, secretarial, receptionist, programme director, etc.)²⁴. Employment patterns within RTÉ, like its international counterparts, continue to show a strongly segregated skill and grading structure: men dominate the technical areas while women are over-represented in administrative activities. While RTÉ is an 'equal opportunity employer', distinctions in recruitment and promotion continue to be highlighted. Although skill sounds like something that can be measured objectively, skills have increasingly become a 'masculine prerogative' (Arnold and Faulkner, 1985, 46). Indeed, the demarcation between 'women's jobs' and 'men's jobs' is as strongly marked as ever throughout the industry²⁵ (see Table 3). One explanation for the significant recruitment of women into some production grades, categorized as 'pink collar' or 'velvet' ghetto, is the declining status of the specific medium (e.g. radio vis-à-vis television, broadcasting vis-à-vis film) (Zoonan, 1994: p50; Grunig, 1993: 278; Viswanath et al, 1993: 217; Hazelkorn, 1995b).

For obvious reasons, journalists and producer/directors have more readily embraced multi-skilling than their technical counter-parts; the former see it as a means of enhancing their control while the latter as one of losing control over the finished product. The evidence further suggests that women are more likely to be the benefactors or victims (depending on one's analysis) of casualized employment in the sector. Given the media's predilection to image, gender factors such as 'technological know-how' and 'personality-looks' may play a key role in explaining new forms of sex-segregation, e.g. behind vs in front of camera, directing vs producing²⁶. Technology may be capable of bridging the gap between conception and execution in the 'artistic' production process but the rewards are not necessarily evenly distributed (Kilfeather, 1994).

24. An exception is vision-mixing.

25. For example, the ability to hold a camera is often used against women on the basis of the person's height or camera's weight. The following table gives comparable data on employment by gender within the independent film and television sector in Ireland:

26. Women usually appear in front of and men behind the camera. Is this relationship derivative of gendered technology? Martin (1995) argues that 'women [are] generally found...before the camera...because, in bourgeois society, women are often identified as objects and men as subjects with technical skills'.

Table 3

DISTRIBUTION OF MALE AND FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN INDEPENDENT FILM & TELEVISION PRODUCTION COMPANIES AND FACILITIES HOUSES, 1995

| Group | PERMANENT | | | | | CONTRACT | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|----|-----------|----|-------|----------|-----------|-------|
| | Male No | % | Female No | % | Total | Male No | Female No | Total |
| Production Management | 82 | 77 | 24 | 23 | 106 | 9 | 5 | 14 |
| Production Support | 18 | 16 | 97 | 84 | 115 | 7 | 9 | 16 |
| Operational | 122 | 83 | 25 | 17 | 147 | 26 | 4 | 30 |
| TOTAL | 222 | 60 | 146 | 40 | 368 | 42 | 18 | 60 |

Source: Statcom Report/FÁS, *Training Needs to 2000*, p16.

Implications for broadcasting (in Ireland)

A revolution hit broadcasting during the 1980s; terms such as 'commercialisation', 'casualization' and 'deregulation' have been used to describe some of the changes. The most radical of these was the establishment in 1982 of Channel 4 in the UK which proffered a new model of broadcasting. It 'created a new industrial model', formally separating production from broadcasting, thereby transforming the 'integrated factory production into the publisher model' (Tunstall, 1993, 10). This process was seen as a means of stimulating the development of an independent production sector, from which both the BBC and ITV were to commission 25 per cent of programming. In Ireland, compared to other European countries, the changes are quite modest, especially in light of the recent government pronouncements in support of the preservation and strengthening of public service broadcasting (Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, 1995). Nevertheless, the success of the Channel 4 model corresponded with the demands of the domestic economy, politics and technology.

The 1985 report commissioned by the Irish government from SKC, followed the same free market strategy it had previously advocated for the BBC and Channel 4. It proposed a radical shift in the financing, labour structures and programming regime within the state broadcaster, and the creation of an independent commercial production sector. Essentially it proposed a form of 'managed privatization' of RTÉ, a strategy which involved a combination of fiscal and legislative restrictions on the state sector and incentives to the private sector. In so doing, it proffered the possibility of jump-starting an independent commercial broadcasting sector, a strategy that paralleled one which had engineered the Irish industrial revolution post-1960s with critical success (Hazelkorn, 1995c).

The historic conjuncture of these changes go much further than the proposition for a de- or re-regulated broadcasting policy. The revolution inspired by the advent of new media technologies has brought about fundamental changes in work practices and the structure of employment:

- 1) a continuing decline in full-time employment²⁷;
- 2) a move towards casualization of employment through a shift towards short term contracts, lasting either for several months or a series' duration;
- 3) an erosion of the demarcation between the technical and production areas both within broadcasting and between broadcasting and film, and a rebalancing in the power relationships between the two;
- 4) slimmed-down production teams (including camera crews, but also the elimination of sound and video operators, etc.);

27. RTÉ's Strategy for Survival sought to bring about a reduction of 10 per cent via voluntary redundancy, a figure that has been revised upwards. Employment in RTÉ reached a height in 1984, when 2376 people were employed.

- 5) the contracting-in of programming and/or skills from independent production and facilities houses;
- 6) the routinization (or redefinition) of many previously skilled tasks, including for example journalism.

Many of these changes correspond to the normal economic developments whereby technology is introduced in order to reduce labour costs and secure competitive advantage and audiences. The insatiable appetite of the latter, potentially larger than the nation state, has accelerated formulaic broadcast programming. Combined with the shift towards electronic and digital technology, media production is being transformed into an industrial form similar to other mass production industries. These changes pose a serious challenge not only to the state broadcaster but broadcasting in general.

Given the relatively small media production market in Ireland, these production and facilities houses are necessarily small: 84 per cent employ ten or less, and 69 per cent five or less people (Statcom/FAS, 1995, 16). Many were former RTÉ employees who opted for early retirement during the initial mid-1980s de-manning. While operating on a financial precipice, they survive through a combination of flexible work practices and multi-skilling²⁸, a low-cost base with few overheads, contracting in both labour skills and equipment as required. It is their ability to significantly undercut the cost of programme production by the state broadcaster,²⁹ because of the latter's rigid structure of secure employment contracts and conditions of employment, that signals the most revolutionary challenge to broadcasting and to its labour force while granting a greater influence over the labour force.³⁰

Essentially, the independent sector is a freelance sector – more aptly referred to as a 'system of sub-contracted labour' (Chanan, 1980, 127) – although the precarious nature of much of the employment precludes an accurate picture. Between 1991 and 1994, permanent employment increased by 18 per cent but freelance employment grew by 58 per cent. Of the 3,500 people employed in the entire audio-visual industry in Ireland, including those employed by RTÉ, almost half or 1500, are freelance (Coopers and Lybrand, 1994: 6, 10). While, the trade unions still control access to employment in the sector through a closed-shop policy, they are in no position to present any serious challenge. More flexible work practices, the often intimate employment relations, where recruitment and promotion is often on a basis of personal contact and the 'old-boys network', and the precarious and spasmodic nature of media production work militates against this. This is well illustrated by the 1992 strike in RTÉ: ostensibly over the size of camera-crew, some union organisers did proclaim it as a strike in defence of trade unions against a 'management offensive'. Despite the unions' 'success' in persuading the majority of their members to stay outside the gate, new technology had simplified broadcasting to the extent that a few managers³¹ could sustain the national radio and television station. New media technologies which have resulted in the reduction in size of camera crews have made it more difficult for unions to 'produce technical arguments to support their negotiating position' (Sparks, 1992:26). The open acknowledgement by union strategists that the strike was lost illustrates the depth of decline from its legendary bargaining strength of the 1970s.

The UK experience is timely. In 1988, all UK broadcasters and their regulators employed 50,000 people; today, it is less than 40,000³². Fewer jobs today are due almost entirely to casualization and subcontracting engendered by policy decisions deliberately aimed at bolstering an independent sector. 'Many elements of production and support services have disappeared into the murky world of the self-employed and the small company' (Phillips, 1995). The 1994 UK Skillset survey estimated that 54 per cent of the 28,000 production workforce were freelance or working on short-term contracts compared with 39 per cent in 1989 (Life, 1995). That over half of this workforce was employed in the independent sector illustrates its vulnerability. While the Irish situation is a long way off from the UK, where the independent sector is fast approaching being the largest production base in the country, the announcement that TV3 intends to

28. A survey of independent film and television production and facilities houses in Ireland found that 'some crossover/overlap in job functions is a feature in over two-thirds of companies surveyed (68%), and that three-quarters of these companies have a "considerable" degree of job crossover/overlap. Further analysis indicates that the crossover is most frequently within jobs in the television production area, and between production and production support jobs. For example, a producer may also be responsible for direction, or it can be the case that research, production co-ordination and floor management may be combined' (Statcom/FAS, 1995, 17).

29. In 1994, RTÉ paid the independent sector approximately £22,000 per hour programming; this figure is the total value of commissions £5,527,902 divided by 258 total hours commissioned. Economies of scale with a series affect these figures. These costs are also conditional on the type of programme produced; game and talk shows are cheaper to produce. Difficulties in comparisons with in-house costs are attributable to the fact that many of the cost factors involved can be treated as internal 'public goods' and their pricing is entirely arbitrary. In the private sector, market prices always operate so that a price will always be arrived at.

30. See, e.g. 'Independent sector is blamed for latest wave of BBC job cuts', *Broadcast*, 24 September, 1993.

31. Over 10 per cent of total staff are designated as management.

32. Only Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB has recruited; 637 more people but only 136 in programming. Most are in low-paid subscription sales and fulfilment personnel. Average pay was down by 9.4% to stg£16,149, TV's lowest (Goodwin, 1991).

33. New UK legislation is likely to permit more television stations being established on the Channel 4 model.

operate as a 'publisher', with an annual budget of £6m (£10-12m initial capital costs) and a staff of 100, suggests clear parallels.

The Channel 4 model³³, therefore, promotes not merely another way of organizing broadcasting: while the process encourages a certain semblance of aesthetic freedom – offering the potential for a greater variety of programming sources – it conforms to key political and economic strategies. By actively encouraging the transfer of media production from the secure employment environment of the state to the market-driven environment of the commercial sector, it is revolutionising media production processes and organisations.

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Hypertext theory and narrative

Eoin Kilfeather

Eoin Kilfeather is a MA student in the Department of Communications, Dublin Institute of Technology.

Introduction

The title of this essay may at first glance seem strange. The linkage of a computer based technology with a theory of narrative might seem incongruous; however, hypertext and what George Landow has called the 'convergence of critical theory and technology' has stimulated interest in new theories and problematics of the text and of narrative. Interest in studying the textual implications of hypertext systems has grown almost as rapidly as these systems themselves. It is not an overstatement to say that of all the technological developments of the twentieth century, the emergence of hypertext and the internet has been the most widely studied. The interdisciplinary nature of this work is perhaps its most notable feature and there is a need to see hypertext not merely as a technological phenomenon but as a system which has deep implications for many 'communications' disciplines. There have been a few pioneers whose interdisciplinary work on hypertext predates the emergence of the World Wide Web (the most famous of hypertext systems) and whose work I will outline below.

The question most often asked when starting a discussion on hypertext is the most obvious one, namely, 'What is hypertext?' I will therefore introduce a few definitions. Ted Nelson defines hypertext as:

Nonsequential writing – text that branches and allows choices to the reader, best read at an interactive screen...a series of text chunks connected by links which offer the reader different pathways. (Nelson,1981)

The key terms here is 'interactive', for it is in this sense that hypertext differs fundamentally from linear texts. The traditional text is written and read sequentially without interaction from the reader, the text is fixed and unchangeable. George Landow suggests the textual implications of this by borrowing from Barthes and giving the following definition:

Hypertext... denotes text composed of blocks of text [called] lexia and the electronic links which connect them. (Landow,1994)

Landow's brief definition however leaves out another essential element which distinguishes the hypertext from the text – the role of the reader. Nancy Kaplan provides a fuller definition:

Hypertexts: multiple structurations within a textual domain. Imagine a story... that changes each time one reads it. Such documents consist of chunks of textual material (words, video clips, sound segments or the like), and sets of connections leading from one chunk or node to other chunks. The resulting structures offer readers multiple trajectories through the textual domain... Each choice of direction a reader makes in her encounter with the emerging text, in effect, produces that text. The existing examples of this form, especially the fictions, are so densely linked, offer so many permutations of the text, that the 'authors' cannot know in advance or control with any degree of certainty what 'version' of the story a reader will construct as she proceeds. (Kaplan,1994)

The role of the reader is therefore to construct the text through the act of reading. Of course this is an activity which a reader must undertake when reading any (not just a hypertext) text, the distinction arises from the fact that the text which is finally arrived at is unknown in advance to either writer or reader. So fundamental is this transformation that many hypertext theorists have argued that hypertext marks the 'death of the author'. In this essay I will give a brief introduction to the origins and development of hypertext as a technology and the parallel and dependent expansion of hypertext theories.

Hypertext Origins

Historically hypertext (although not called that) was envisaged in 1945 by the then director of US war research, Vannavar Bush. In his essay, 'As we may think', which was written before the advent of digital computers, Bush called for information-retrieval machines (which he called the memex, after MEMory EXtension) to help scholars and engineers sort through the growing mountain of research papers and other printed materials. According to Bush, the main problem lay with what he called 'the matter of selection' or information retrieval. The volume of information being so great as to prevent its proper reception:

Our ineptitude in getting at the record is largely caused by the artificiality of systems of indexing. When data of any sort are placed in storage, they are filed alphabetically or numerically, and information is found (when it is) by tracing it down from subclass to subclass. It can be in only one place, unless duplicates are used; one has to have rules as to which path will locate it, and the rules are cumbersome. Having found one item, moreover, one has to emerge from the system and re-enter on a new path. (Bush, 1945)

Bush had realised that his memex would require not only changes in the way in which texts were written but also in how they were read. Bush's analysis of the implications of this new technology acknowledged that while the memex was essentially encyclopaedic the pattern of links followed by the reader, which he called a trail, would lead to something like a story. He used the example of how he would, hypothetically, follow a series of links to items concerning the history, physics and acculturation of bow technologies and thus build 'a trail of his interest'. This trail of interest could be recorded and replayed later either to himself or to others. The categorization inherent in encyclopaedic systems was easily overcome in the memex where it was possible to explore the full complexity of knowledge systems. Ted Nelson, who coined the term 'hypertext' in 1965, points out:

there is nothing wrong with categorization. It is, however, by its nature transient: category systems have a half-life, and categorizations begin to look fairly stupid after a few years. (Nelson, 1981)

Bush was to comment: 'The human mind does not work that way' but by association. With one fact or idea 'in its grasp,' the mind 'snaps instantly to the next that is suggested by the association of thoughts, in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain'.

By the time Nelson had coined this new term 'hypertext' the digital computer had evolved to a large extent into the machine which is still in use today. Information could be displayed on Visual Display Units (VDUs) and keyboards could be used to navigate a cursor on screen. The principle of random access to information databases had also evolved and so all the elements of Bush's memex had fallen into place. In 1967 a group of researchers in America led by Andries van Dam developed a system known as HES (Hypertext Editing System). This system had many of the features which are recognisable in hypertext systems of today. The system allowed users to jump from text

node to text node and even allowed for the inclusion of images. Furthermore the system allowed users to create their own links within the hypermedia database and so readers could, for the first time directly interact with the text and leave their mark on it. It was, however, the advent of the personal computer which gave hypertext a more widespread acceptance. The older hypertext systems were based on mainframe computers, access to which was limited and from which there was no facility to link with other hypertext databases. The personal computer allowed small hypertext databases to be distributed on floppy disk. By the mid 1980s there were a number of authoring tools available for personal computers – such as Intermedia, Storyspace and in 1987 Apple's HyperCard. The possibilities of hypertext fictions began to be explored by writers such as Michael Joyce (whose hypertext fiction *Afternoon* was published in 1987) and theorists such as Jay Bolter and Stuart Moulthrop. While this work was going on the internet was growing quietly. The development in the late 1960s of TCP/IP networks and their subsequent adoption as the de facto wide area network protocol allowed academics to exchange data using reliable though aesthetically unsophisticated methods such as e-mail and file transfer protocol (FTP). However researchers in the European Particle Physics laboratories (CERN) developed simple software to allow computers to exchange hypertext documents using TCP/IP networks. The result was Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and the associated network protocol Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP). HTTP allowed 'server' computers to store documents which had cross referencing instructions embedded which referenced other documents on the same or on other HTTP servers. The result was that 'client' computers which had suitable 'browser' software could access multiple documents anywhere on the internet and could follow (and create) links between these documents. This system (called the World Wide Web) was to radically change the way in which information was delivered. Rather than requiring that all the information required to explain a given text was self-contained in that one text the text could contain links to other texts (or *lexia*) which would contain the needed information.

The significance of the World Wide Web is that it has introduced a large audience to hypertext who would otherwise be quite unaware of its existence or potential. This audience seems to have accepted the peculiarities of non-sequential writing in a way which has puzzled many theorists. The new position of the reader seems natural to those who have been exposed to hypertext for even a short while. This affinity of the reader to the hypertext then begs the question of where the new text fits in theories of readership and narrative.

Hypertext Theories

George Landow makes no distinction between the terms 'hypertext' and 'hypermedia'. Hypermedia *lexia* or nodes may also incorporate visual and auditory elements such as graphics, pictures, video and sound – and may in fact contain no text at all. In fact Landow uses the terms hypertext and hypermedia interchangeably. While both these definitions acknowledge the role of electronics in the practice of hypertext there seems to be no intrinsically 'electronic' aspects to hypertext. Gunnar Liestøl has pointed to Wittgenstein's efforts to order his writings in non-linear and associatively linked webs using nothing more than a scrapbook. An encyclopaedia with cross references may be read as a non-electronic hypertext, however the effort to which the reader must go to read it would prove exhausting. Partly for this reason it has been seen as useful to apply older theories of the text to hypertexts and to treat hypermedia primarily as a text which, as with other texts, is read and interpreted on a level which is disengaged from its technology.

Efforts have been made recently to construct broad literary theories around hypertext. Espen Aarseth has argued for a general theory of the text which would encompass both sequential and non-sequential writing (Aarseth, 1994). However Landow is more specific about this and contends that hypertext is more usefully seen as a testbed for modern theories of the text. The problematics of the text are manifold in hypertext which by its nature fragments and distorts both the reading and the writing of

the text. Any traditional literary and narrative theories are going to be severely strained by the hypertext. Indeed Landow, Nancy Kaplan, and Espen Aarseth contend that the very practice of literary criticism is under attack from the phenomena of hypertext and Landow even argues for criticism to become hypertextual – a practice taken up by himself and others (notably Jay Bolter and Kaplan) whose presence is as much felt on the World Wide Web as in print media.

Taking up Roland Barthes' and Paul Ricoeur's broad assertions about the importance and central significance of narrative to the text and applying it to hypertext would at first glance seem to be a dangerous methodology. Certainly it must be argued that theorists such as Barthes and Ricoeur did not have hypertext in mind when discussing intertextuality or the historical narrative in their respective cases. Nevertheless they are acknowledging that there is more to narrative than that bounded by the linear text. Indeed the study of narratives has until recently been predominantly the study of texts, texts which are firstly conceived as artifacts – that is to say that narratives lie in the past and as such are static and immutable save in their interpretation. The historical assumptions about the text and its solidity has determined suitable methodologies for analyzing the text. Literary and film theorists have brought to bear the tools of analysis on texts which if problematic in their interpretation were at least reassuring in their repeatability and intransigent structure. In other words the textual structure was examinable directly (from an observable text) whereas hypertext structure is determined primarily by the reader. Hypertext has challenged theorists to not only engage in an examination of this new type of text but to re-examine traditional concepts of how the text is received in light of hypertext's phenomenology.

Given the origins of hypertext in the physical sciences and in scientific scholarship it is perhaps not surprising that the social sciences and specifically a discipline of hypertext theory has been slow to develop. However the field is rich with challenging areas which present challenges and problematics for many 'traditional' areas of study. Perhaps chief amongst these is the role of the reader in the hypertext and from this the role of narrative construction by the reader. Given that hypertext presents no definite form it is tempting to say that it has little narrative possibility. As Bolter writes:

The new medium [hypertext] reifies the metaphor of reader response, for the reader participates in the making of the text as a sequence of words. Even if the author has written all the words, the reader must call them up and determine the order of presentation by the choices made or the commands issued. There is no single univocal text apart from the reader; the author writes a set of potential texts, from which the reader chooses. (Bolter,1991)

Bolter is pointing to the fundamental shift away from the author as the primary generator of meaning towards a different (albeit unclear) relationship between author, reader and text.

If the hypertext requires that the text be written not as a singular linear and author ordered 'line of thought' but as a web of associatively linked nodes then the act of reading must necessarily be of a different order. It is not however only Bush who realized that the processes of human thought were not followed by traditional texts which are by their nature static, singular and physically isolated. Barthes (1990) also has commented on the utopian ideal of the 'writerly text'. Following from Barthes, James Tarling has outlined the strong association between Barthes' idealized text and the hypertext. For Barthes the meanings found in the text are not established solely by the author but by the text and its associated links – by what he called their 'systematic mark' (Barthes,1977:146), and so reading and writing are unified into the single 'practice of the symbol itself' (Barthes,1977:142).

Barthes' implication of the reader in the generation of meaning is not a radical one but his conception of the 'writerly text' as having amplified meaning is of course one

which appeals to hypertext theorists. In *S/Z*, Barthes describes the ideal text as 'a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds... we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one.' (Barthes, 1990:5). This of course closely corresponds to the idea of the node or *lexia* in hypertext. So then we are left with a new conception of the text in which a large measure of the authority and univocality of the text is removed from the author and to a greater or lesser extent given to the reader and readers. Thus the text ceases to be uni-vocal and becomes multi-vocal with each new reading. Barthes of course was primarily thinking of intertextuality as an interpretive force which would help achieve this writerly function but the technology of hypertext has gone a step further and has allowed the structural formation of the text by the reader. For Barthes and Derrida, intertextuality was a step towards the destruction of the 'author', and the transformation of the role of the reader from one of passive consumption to active interpretation, since the text is experienced only in an 'activity of production' (Barthes, 1977a: 157). The reader must confront the text, must negotiate her way around the web of potential readings, must in essence rewrite the text. The essence of the hypertext is similarly to confront the reader with multi-vocal readings and forces the reader to reappraise the text from multiple semantic and structural standpoints. Landow et al. have shown that hypertext demands new systems of both writing and reading. However given the centrality of the author in traditional concepts of narrativity where then is the narrative?

Narrative Confronted

As I mentioned earlier hypertext theory has forced a redefinition of the text, in terms of its status, its author and its reader. However, it could be, as Lyotard has argued, that the redefinition of the text in postmodern terms marks the death of narrative. He says 'lamenting the loss of meaning in postmodernity boils down to mourning the fact that knowledge is no longer principally narrative' (Lyotard, 1984:26). Such a view, which Landow and Robert Coover (quoted in Landow, 1994: 104) take issue with, is however decidedly one of technological determinism. For to argue, as Lyotard does, that technology 'has always been in conflict with narratives' is to ignore what in fact may be a broader set of narrative possibilities which technologies of hypertext present.

Landow points to the apparent contravention of emplotment central to Aristotle's notions of narrative which hypertext presents. Aristotle in the seventh chapter of *Poetics* stresses the importance of beginning and end in the 'well-formed plot'. He says 'a well-constructed Plot, therefore cannot either begin or end at any point one likes; beginning and end in it must be of the forms just described'. Taking on this point it is difficult enough to present a case that hypertext can embody Plot, at least in the sense which Aristotle meant, much less that it can be beautiful. However Gunnar Liestøl argues convincingly that such a rigid approach to narrative formation is itself a reflection of the primacy given to the writer in linear texts. Liestøl points to the operations of rhetorics in his re-examination of hypertext narratives. Ancient rhetoric sets out the steps which a speaker should make before making a speech. The first of these steps is *inventio*, this being the point at which the speaker will decide on what elements will be used to discuss his topic. Liestøl characterises this as 'discovery' not as 'invention'. In other words the act of gathering material is not in itself a narrative act. The narrative is potential in the positioning of the elements. It is this positioning of elements or *dispositio* which allows the speaker to generate meaning for his speech.

What Liestøl (1994), Michalak & Coney (1993) and Landow are arguing for is a conception of narrative as being potential within the text. In linear narrative the potential is discovered by the author who, in the act of *dispositio*, orders the *lexia* at his disposal to a meta-narrative of his own choosing. For Aristotle this was a prerequisite for the beautifully formed plot. However if we are to seriously challenge such a notion and to make room for the writerly text then room must also be made for the reader to discover narrative to carry out the act of *dispositio* and in this way to discover potential narratives within the body of what would otherwise be discrete *lexia*.

The notion of potential narratives is not new; Ricoeur has argued for a conception of life as emplotment, after the event, of potential narratives. Ricoeur makes this case:

We can now attack the paradox we are considering here: stories are recounted, life is lived. An unbridgeable gap seems to separate fiction and life. To cross this gap, the terms of the paradox must be thoroughly revised... My thesis is here that the process of composition, of configuration, is not completed in the text but in the reader and, under this condition, makes possible the reconfiguration of life by narrative... The act of reading thus becomes the critical moment of the entire analysis. On it rests the narrative's capacity to transfigure the experience of the reader. (Ricoeur,1988:48)

Ricoeur's drawing of parallels between the experience of life and the writing of personal narratives is a useful approach to take to the potentialities of hypertext narratives. The 'reconfiguration of life by narrative' is similar to the reconfiguration or more properly the emplotment of the hypertext in the act of reading. However this throws up yet another problematic for the text.

Fictional Narratives

Ricoeur's central thesis is one which places narrative at the heart of an understanding of life. He states:

It follows that narrative fiction, is an irreducible dimension of self understanding. If it is true that fiction is only completed in life and that life can be understood only through the stories that we tell about it, then an examined life, in the sense of the word as we have borrowed it from Socrates, is a life recounted. (Ricoeur,1988:57)

For Ricoeur, the fictional narrative provides abstracted or exemplary models of life, templates for navigation in potential real life narratives. For in fiction narrative can take on explicit moral and ethical positions. It would seem that it is this aspect of fictional narrative which cannot be embodied in hypertext, even in hypertext fiction. The narrative being devoid of moral guidance can only follow a morally meaningless sequence without beginning or end to frame itself and thus give it meaning. It quickly becomes clear that hypertext may have sequence and meaning but at some point the moral function of narrative is stripped away. It is true that on the local or micro level the linking of lexia throws authorial responsibility on the hypertext author – but thereafter the reader becomes the 'author of her own destiny'.

The situation becomes yet more problematic when we consider that hypertext systems allow individual readers to generate their own links between lexia. In a system like the WWW the cacophony of the authorial voices, of the 'docuverse' text, with what may be millions of authors throws the narrative function more and more onto the reader.

In conclusion I believe that it is useful to see hypertext as a new type of textuality, one which exists not in opposition to traditional narrative texts but rather one which can circumvent the limits which the technologies of print, video and film place on the text. As Barthes has pointed out, the writerly text is an opportunity to reapproach the text in ways which remove the artificial centrality which the individual text achieves in its reading. Hypertext de-centres, or more properly continuously re-centres, the text and in this way blurs the boundaries of the individual (printed) text and places it within the context of a wider intertextual discourse. This should not in fact strike us as being a very radical departure from traditional reading especially in scholarly texts. The scholarly texts, it could be argued, with their use of footnote and citation is a form of pseudo intertextuality or hypertextuality crying out for hypertext discourse. The scholarly text reaches out and alludes to the textual discourse in which it is located

while still bounded by the physical limits of print technology. Hypertext simply allows for the extension of citation and footnote into the body of the texts to which they refer. What is lost, rhetorically, is the continuity and closure of argument. What hypertext does offer us is new possibilities to explore potential narratives and to challenge the concepts of author and reader in ways which have not been possible with sequential writing.

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Maria Lohan is a post-graduate student in the Department of Sociology, Trinity College, Dublin 2.

All dressed up with nowhere to call: Fashion victims in the new look Telecom industry

E. Maria Lohan

Introduction

The Telecom industry in Ireland is currently in training to tone itself up in preparation for both convergence and competition in the new look telecommunications industry. Only those companies who have completed extensive tummy tucks on staffing and removed the weight of subsidized charging may enter this new telecommunications club. Not only this, but you must of course have the right personality to attract partners with dowries of infrastructure. An important characteristic is a willingness to invest in anything electronic – but property will do too. And what should the fashion conscious Telecom player be sporting this season? Well POTS or Plain Old Telephone Services are definitely passé whilst PANs or Picture and Network Services will take you anywhere you want to go.

The slow and incremental development of the Telecom industry in Ireland, as in other modern Western countries, stands in contrast to the current explosion of new communication technologies, expansions in broad band capabilities and the rush to overhaul the industry to find its feet in the technology. All of this accentuates the impression that the Telecom industry is currently fashion crazed. The recent and upcoming price-restructuring in Ireland, the search for a new business partner to expand the industry way beyond the basic telephone (interactive television, smart homes and video telephony), the push for new POTS plus services (such as voice mail and call waiting) into our homes and the heavy investment in ISDN and fibre optic cabling to facilitate increased volume of calls and particularly the growth of tele-call centres in Ireland, are all symptoms of the new fashioned Telecom industry in Ireland.

The intention in this paper¹ is to take a more long term view of change in the Telecom industry and to ask what has been the impact of these new changes on the domestic telephone users? What sort of resistance might it expect and how will this resistance be translated into a communications culture? In particular, my focus will be on women, both in terms of how the industry affects women's lives and how women effect the development of the industry.

The conclusion is open-ended. It is not necessarily women who are the fashion victims in this industry since more recent socio-historical accounts explore ways in which the diffusion of technology does not occur in a linear direction but rather involves more complex inter-relationships between the producers and the consumers of the technology (Maddox, 1977; Martin, 1991; Fischer, 1986).

It suggests that promoters of a technology do not necessarily know its final uses; that they seek problems or 'needs' for which their technology is the answer (cf. the home computer business), *but that consumers may ultimately determine those uses for the promoters.* And the story suggests that in promoting a technology, vendors are constrained not only by its technical and economic attributes but also by an interpretation of *its uses shaped by it and their own histories*, a cultural constraint that can be enduring and powerful (Fischer, 1988: 116).

1. I am grateful to the members of the Department of Communications, Dublin Institute of Technology, for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

The sources for this research will be: first, the Anglo-American social histories of the telephone which explore women's participation in and influence on the telephone system as we know it. Such studies outline the potential, at various stages, of alternative kinds of systems, removing on the one hand a sense of neutral or value-free technology and, on the other hand, the notion of technological determinism (Martin, 1991; Fischer, 1991; Maddox, 1977; Rakow 1988, 1992; Moyal 1989 and Flynn, 1994). The second source for this paper is drawn from my own empirical research on women and the domestic telephone in Ireland and offers a current view of change and resistance to the structuring of domestic telephony in Ireland². This research took place six months after the September 1993 price-restructuring³ when calling patterns had re-stabilized (TUAG, 1995).

Women's early involvement in and influence on the Telecom industry

The most notorious early involvement by women in the telephone industry was as operators. The Telecom industry sought employees at a time when women were moving into white collar employment and vacancies emerged both on the public switchboard and in private companies where no special pre-training was required (Maddox, 1977). The British Post Office, in common with other post office offices at the time, actively sought women as employees because according to them:

the work of successful telephone operating demanded just that particular dexterity, patience and forbearance possessed by the average woman in a degree superior to that of the opposite sex (Maddox, 1977:266).

Curiously omitted from the list of female qualities for the industry, however, was that female labour was cheap, working to a quarter of that which men were paid, and that women were indifferent to, or excluded from, trade unions. Their status was equivalent to that of child labour, and indeed their employment replaced the earlier but 'disruptive' employment of young boys (Maddox, 1977).

Furthermore, this industry was feminized to smoothen the introduction of technology into the community. According to Rakow, low wages did not explain the trans-cultural practice of employing young attractive and single women. Rather, it was to give a feminine face to this new technology: 'the voice with the smile' (Rakow, 1988). Women, regarded as the moral guardians of society, were entrusted with conveying this new technology within and to the community. The industry fostered the 'cultural myth of the operator embodying new and old values and mediating new social relations' (Rakow, 1988: 214).

Careful attention was also given to minimizing the disruption to conventional constructs of femininity in this new form of employment and potential power for women.

These young women were to be both innocent and efficient, desirable yet unattainable, business-like but adept at soothing the harried and demanding captains of industry of the public sphere as well as the stereotypically portrayed petty and demanding matron of the private sphere (Rakow, 1988: 214).

It was regarded as acceptable employment since women were protected from the public eye, yet the industry imposed strict public standards for women including conservative code of dress, and lessons in deportment and demeanour were constituents of the occupation. Evidently, a conservative yet stylish dress code continued as part of the job requirement into the 1960s American telephone company; it was essential to a woman's appearance on entering and leaving the telephone company, to protect the image of femininity and the company simultaneously.⁴

2. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all the women who participated by interview or questionnaire, and to the Western Women's Link, of which I am a member, for access to other groups within the organization. The research was carried out between April and June 1994: it involved a detailed questionnaire followed by interview. Some of the interviews were group interviews within the women's group meetings; others were individual interviews which took place primarily in the interviewee's home. Names of interviewees have been replaced with fictional names. It is my hope that future Telecom policies will more adequately reflect the needs of women.

3. Telecom Eireann restructured their telephone charges from un-metered to metered local calls on 15 January 1994. This was substantially revised on 1 September 1993. Local calls now cost 11.17p for 3 minutes daytime (8am-6pm) and 11.17p for 15 minutes evening time excluding VAT. VAT @21% was passed onto the consumer from 1 April 1994. At the same time, the local calling area was enlarged outside of Dublin and the cost of national and international calls were reduced. Weekend national calls were reduced to the local economy rate (11.17p for 15 minutes excluding VAT). It is perhaps the cheap weekend calls and expensive day-time calls which carry the largest changes.

4. I am grateful to Dolores Ahern for bringing to my attention the fact that the practice of 'feminine fashion' as a dress code for operators continued into the 1960s in American telephone companies.

Finally of course, women were attractive employees in this industry since they were easily disposed of as automated switching began to displace the need for the large number of operators. Based on life histories of operators, Martin reports that:

as operators became increasingly subjected to the technology, their relations with subscribers became increasingly impersonal so that their role shifted from one of 'community worker' who provided a range of emergency and other services to that of remote 'connecting voice' (Martin, 1991:12).

The continuous expansion of telephony within private industries, though, created a demand for telephonists and receptionists an occupation which was likewise quickly feminized. As telephone operators had proved, handling telephones was something women were good at and so in turn, the secretary's voice became established as a woman's voice. The telephone was somehow seen as the natural extension of women. According to the voices of industry, 'Few devices were so well matched to the needs and styles of women' (Rakow, 1988: 215). More importantly however, Rakow has pointed out that women's voices were (and arguably continue to be) commoditized to distinguish hierarchies amongst men, between men and women, and between spaces: board room and ante-room (Rakow, 1988: 215).

Outside employment in the telephone company itself, women were directed by the telephone industry through their husbands in the home. Men were encouraged to raise the efficiency of their homes by encouraging their wives to use the telephone. The telephone, introduced initially as an intercom system by which the middle classes could summons their servants, may ironically have contributed to the decline of such employment and consequently more work for women in their homes, though initially for the middle classes.

This work was anticipated and encouraged from the outset of the telephone. An 1878 advertising circular in New Haven Connecticut advised men, 'Your wife may order your dinner, your hack, your family physician etc. all by telephone without leaving the house or trusting servants or messengers to do it' (Fischer, 1991, 5-6).

Cowan (1983) has noted that the introduction of other technologies into the home, such as the vacuum cleaner and the washing machine, had a similar effect in that though they were introduced as 'labour-saving' devices; the consequent rise in standards of hygiene and spread of middle-class standards amounted to greater pressures on the standards of household maintenance. What was interesting about these prescriptions for women's usage of the telephone was that they were addressed to women through men. He became the 'conscience of the household' (Martin, 1991) but also he became the 'controller of this technology, the cultural legacy of which, I would argue has scarcely dissipated to this day' (Lohan, 1995). In other senses, the telephone did not radically alter women's lives but merely mapped itself onto their position within families. Yet, women's usage of the telephone did radically alter the development of the telephone system.

Women change the telephone industry

Technological processes developed by men for men are nearly always interpreted by women in ways other than those intended by men (Benston, 1988:2).

The telephone was introduced in the modernist rationale of increasing efficiency by saving on time and distance costs for business and errands. Yet, the telephone is perhaps a classic example of a technology which was defined as having certain functions but within which women created their own space albeit set within constraints. Women

began to use the telephone to chat and talk to their friends and relatives. It was not that the sociable potential of the phone was not discovered.

Bell himself forecast social chit-chats using his invention. He predicted that eventually Mrs Smith would spend an hour on the telephone with Mrs Brown "very enjoyably... cutting up Mrs Robinson" (Fischer, 1991:103).

However, both women and sociability being one and the same were actively *discouraged* on the telephone. This was mainly for two reasons: First, women's usage of the telephone as an instrument of sociability threatened the seriousness of the technology. It hijacked a technology whose natural roots were seen in telegraphy built upon the need for urgent and 'important' information only and economy of time and space. 'For men who wanted control of all communication conducted through the technology that belonged to them, women did not meet for important reasons but merely to gossip' (Martin, 1991:164). Second, sociability by women on the telephone needed to be controlled as it threatened not only the seriousness of the technology but the moral order of society.

Use of the telephone, like that of the bicycle was seen as a moral issue necessitating a specific set of rules (both technologies became popular with women in the 1890s). The bicycle was considered a curse because like the telephone it provided women with 'evil associations' and opportunities for contacts with strangers without the presence of a chaperone. The use of both technologies by Victorian women then had to be controlled by correct etiquette elaborated by men (Martin, 1991:151).

Codes of etiquette were voiced through the phone manuals, in etiquette books and newspapers of the day. They were most stern in relation to cross-sex telephony:

It is not good for a woman to call up a man either at home or in his office. It is sure to be an interruption; it is quite likely to be embarrassing and above all this is the fact that a tactful girl will avoid all appearance of pursuing a man of her acquaintance (Telephony, 1907 in Rakow, 1988: 221).

The problem was seen to lie in the medium itself – as a direct and intimate means of communication. Women's 'natural affinity' to the telephone was resulting, it was thought, in increased female aggressiveness and change in sex roles:

The telephone gives the flapper courage – and more it permits a girl to lie in her bed and to talk with a man lying in his bed; it permits her half-clothed, to talk a moment after its ring had made him hop nude out of his bath tub. Its delicate suggestiveness is not lost in these instances. The most modest girls in America, the girl who blushes even at a man's allusion to his chilblains, once she gets her nose in a telephone mouth piece acquires a sudden and surprising self-assurance and wheeze (Bell Canada Archives, 1922 in Martin, 1991:164).

Very slowly the telephone industry began to soften its resistance to sociability and women's usage of the telephone. It recognized that one of the key call stimulants to long-distance communication was not in fact business but rather dispersed family networks and thus began, 'the Reach out and Touch' campaign in 1920s America (Fischer, 1991). In Britain and Ireland the telephone was even more strictly preserved as a business tool only. Tariffs remained very high and unlike the American case, a lower rate was not offered to domestic subscribers. Initially, the telephone industry here was privately owned and regarded as unsuitable for state investment since the state was unsure of its potential. Even after nationalization in 1911, and transfer to the new Irish government

in 1922, there was a reluctance by the government to invest in what was seen as a commercial business available only to about two per cent of the population. Flynn (1994) has pointed out that the sparse population density of Ireland meant the party line system which had helped to popularize the telephone in other countries was impossible here; in addition, the political culture of the day was more immersed in questions of nationalism than economic development.

Probably the first real catalyst to the usage and development of the telephone system was due to emergency needs and fuel shortages during the second world war. This provoked a government acknowledgment of the social need for a telephone and that profitability by the telephone company alone would not ensure an even and dispersed system (Flynn, 1994). This acknowledgment was articulated through the instigation of the 'Rural Call Box Campaign', designed to bring a call box to every post office in the country and completed during the mid-1950s. Though investment continued after the 1950s in the Telecom industry, the emphasis was on developing a resource for industry and business so that even supply to residential subscribers up to the mid-1970s was secondary to the needs of business until new technology made it possible to meet demand.

Women, men and domestic telephony

5. Seventy-five per cent of Irish households are connected; this is low compared to the EU average of eighty-five per cent.

Today as penetration rates of domestic telephony have grown substantially⁵, both sociability and women's usage of the domestic telephone is very acceptable. Women, in fact, are the domestic telephone company's best customers, making more and longer calls than men (Claisse, 1989, Schabedoth et al, 1989; Dordick and La Rose, 1992; Adler, 1993, Perin, 1994).

Arguably, then, domestic telephony has been feminized. Yet, my more recent research into women's usage of the telephone suggests that there remains enduring cultural barriers to women's usage of the telephone as a legacy of the negation and disapproval of women and sociability on the telephone as part of the telephone's earlier history. This is particularly so in regard to cross-sex telephony. In addition, as the telephone industry is currently being vigorously injected with capital investment to meet the needs of global industry it has erected two new impediments to domestic telephony by underestimating the importance of (and by penalizing) the local area network to the day-time telephone user.

To turn first to the enduring cultural barriers to cross-sex telephony, a clear reluctance by women to phone men who were not relatives in a sociable context was apparent. This was particularly so for the married women in my sample:

Not unless it was someone on a committee, or about a car. I can't think of any other man that I would ring up (Margaret, age 38, married mother, part-time nurse).

Amongst the younger single women involved in this research, there was considerably less reluctance to ring male friends. Yet there were alleged differences in the content of the conversation with male friends than with female friends. The conversations in general were likely to be less personal since personal concerns were likely to be reserved for face-to-face communication.

In general, current telephone culture studies seem to show that men tend to disassociate themselves from sociable uses of the telephone, synonymous with female chat. Men use the telephone more as a 'messaging system': organizing tasks, quick information transfer rather than as a 'communications system' where it is the metonymic quality of the conversation which is important rather than its content. (Lohan, 1995; Claisse, 1989; Schabedoth et al, 1989).

This made the telephone as a medium of romance sometimes difficult. Rachel, a young doctor living in Dublin, whose fiancé was in Galway exemplified this when she explained that their telephone calls would be the main point of conflict in their relationship and that which would need to be patched up at the weekend. She explained that firstly she would seem to feel the need to ring more often than he, just to discuss the day gone by and to seek reassurance. He, on the other hand, would only ring if he had a message or to confirm the arrangements for the weekend. The calls themselves then frequently came to cross-purposes:

Let's just say he's not very verbose which I in turn would interpret as being hostile (Rachel, age 27, doctor, urban area)

Similar cross-lines of messages or communication were identified within father-daughter telephony. Fathers did indeed sometimes initiate calls to daughters or simply rang the number (a little like sanctioning the call) asked how their daughter was, commented perhaps on the weather, and then passed it on to the mother who might anxiously be waiting by to get on with the real communication.

Certainly, I found with him, he'd be inclined to just say one or two things and then pass the phone to someone else. I think that's mainly for reasons of economy. He's aware of the phone bill more than anything else (Rachel, age 27, doctor, urban area).

Alternatively, calls were made by fathers to place one singular piece of information and then some add-on chat might build up around that.

My dad will always ring if he has something specific to ask. My mother will maybe ring me for a chat but my father will always ring me with something specific in mind (Geraldine, 25, married, secretary).

Effects on women and domestic telephony

The current re-structuring of the telephone industry in Ireland is, I believe, negative to both women and domestic telephony. First, it underestimates the importance of the local area network. Though the technical capabilities of the telephone provide a means of overcoming distance, the telephone is most likely to be used in conjunction with other mediums of communication, most particularly face to face (Claisse, 1989; Rakow, 1992) and the predominant use of the domestic telephone in Ireland is in the local area network (TUAG, 1995). This was confirmed in interviews I conducted with women who outlined that those with whom they were in regular contact lived in the local area; long distance or international calls were restricted to close family only.

The advantage of long-distance calls is hideous. They are rare calls. You think a lot before making such calls but local calls are more necessary and normal. If you're alone in the house during the day the phone helps you from going crazy (Hilda, married mother, housewife and local community activist, rural area).

I liked making local calls because it was an ordinary thing to do. It was a relaxing thing to do. You said what you needed to say. The general thing with the phone was that it was a friendly thing. You could pick up the phone and have a chat with it. That's changed now. There's stress involved in all of it. Even though it's cheaper now to make long distance calls, there is still stress involved because it is long-distance. Before the phone was a friendly thing (Veronica, approx. 35 years, married, unemployed, rural area).

Younger women (under 30 years) and older women (over 60 years) were more appreciative of the cheaper long-distance calls and weekend discounts. Some of the

more elderly women regarded the primary purpose of the telephone as being for the occasional long distant (inland or international) call to a close relative rather than a normal routine part of everyday life. Younger women's more dispersed active friendship networks meant they also appreciated the reduction in long-distance calls and cheap weekend rate though many of these younger women also emphasized that if there was not regular face-to-face contact with these friends, telephone contact would also likely diminish over time.

But sometimes I think there is no point. I'm not going to see them for a long time. It's when the phone combines with meetings that it is most fun (Ursula, age 25, student, rural area).

The second way in which Telecom Eireann has erected a barrier to sociability is by effectively banning day-time 'chat calls'. Formerly un-metered, the day-time caller is now timed at three minutes per unit. Within my research, I have found this to be a considerable barrier to sociability for all sorts of reasons but mainly because chat calls require more time to develop. The boundaries around social/chat calls are less defined: what is spoken about, when both parties have said what they wanted to say, and the uncertainty of when exactly the call should come to a close. In task-oriented calls, this is much easier to pin down (usually when task is organized plus some add-on sociability). The ambiguity in this 'ending process' within social/chat calls is apparent from the rather elaborate stories women told me, such as getting someone to ring the door bell (the phone frequently placed in the front hall) or a staged interruption from a child (which indeed rarely has to be staged) all to present a legitimate excuse to end the call. There now exists a restraint on indulging in day-time chat calls since the required longevity of the conversation and difficulty to close will inevitably lead to very high bills.

It was one of the most scandalous and cruel things that a government could allow to happen. It was one of the most important things for some of the most deprived people in this country: for the old and isolated. I used to ring up lots of people during the day, people who are on their own, or often on their own; people who have problems and let's face it when you have MS, you have problems. I just don't do it anymore. I'm scared to do it now. I'm afraid to do it because I know that they will just go on talking and then I'll feel guilty and I never do say I've got to get off it. They forget you know and so you just don't ring unless it is an emergency (Paula, disabled woman, married, approx. 70 years, rural area).

Moreover, there is the strong feeling of loss of 'value for money' now in day-time calls, since economic rationality would dictate making calls at the cheaper times: evenings and weekends.

As far as the industry is concerned '*it's good to talk*' – but only when they say so. It is not necessary to promote sociability during the day since business is already using the network adequately. Yet this is the very time when sociability is most necessary for the well being of many (already under-privileged) groups of people in our society: day-time home occupants such as the long-term ill and disabled, also those confined to the home for the care of the very young or the elderly. The poor and the long-term unemployed are frequently doubly hampered by lack of access to private transport and by invariably living in areas which are poorly provided with essential services such as hospitals, shops and leisure facilities.

Yet the above groups are frequently also the least researched in consumer surveys of services such as the telephone and it is frequently wrongly assumed that they are a homogeneous group. In addition, the current tariff system is clearly geared towards standardized work hours but at a time of intense flexibilization of the work force: part-time work, shift work, etc. This flexibilization is particularly true for traditional female employment sectors, for example the retail and cleaning industries; industries in which

women are also unlikely to have access to personal usage of a telephone in the work place.

Finally the telephone company's re-structuring reflects the assumption of a strict division between the private and the public; between work and leisure time and assumes that the household is one cohesive space. This is a gendered time frame, arguably a male time-frame, which does not correspond to the lives of most women. The evening time is rarely a leisure time for women and, as a result, women are now sacrificing some of their 'optional friendship relations'.

... and it's ridiculous to say that you can do it (phone) after six o'clock. That's when their families are home and you're cooking the tea. I voted Labour last year but I will never forgive Labour for not objecting to these charges (Paula, 60s, disabled, living with partner, rural area).

I'd rarely see them because I have children and they have children and we just wouldn't have time at night-time so I would have sat down during the day and had marathon conversations. Now we have just lost contact (Rosin, late 30s, urban area, employed part-time).

There are really two issues going on here: first, the evening time is frequently a household work-time for women, regardless of day-time employment; second, there exists a need for personal space for those in the home to be able to connect to external friends. Frequently the private and the family are mistakenly dissolved into one. In a critique, for example, of Turner's (gender-blind) concept of citizenship, Walby (1994: 383) points out:

The 'family' is not an 'individual' – it is composed of several people, who are not 'private' from each other. Women are not free from interaction with and dominance by men. The 'family' is not 'private' for women.

The cultural dominance of the marriage/family relationship set against the cultural unimportance of women's friendships and women's talk, most frequently categorized as gossip, chit-chat or small talk, means that male presence and family responsibilities are tangible barriers to female telephony. This trend is not exclusive to domestic telephony but wider cultural communication norms affecting face-to face communication too.

I'd question visiting nowadays, I don't think people are welcomed into houses anymore. One time it was part of our culture; it was geared around visiting. There are an awful lot of things going on in houses now. There is a lot of pressure in houses with kids doing exams. You don't want to be intruding. If people are out all day, you don't want to be going around in the evening because the men are there and you can't have a chat. It isn't as clear cut as it used to be (Margaret, 50s, semi-urban, married, housewife).

Conclusion

Who then are the fashion victims in this new-look telephone industry? A discussion in terms of short-term and long-term victims might be more discerning here. The short-term fashion victims, I would argue, rest with day-time household occupants, a disproportionate amount of whom are women and the poor. The other group of the industry's fashion victims are those whose networks are primarily locally-based, a disproportionate number of whom live in areas of high unemployment (TUAG, 1995). A further group of victims are all those who have no access to a private phone at all and have little chance of procuring one since the likelihood of the subsidization of basic telephony services is steadily declining as the industry runs after the glitzy cat-walk

6. Any aspiration to universal service is being passed from the telephone company to the Department of Social Welfare. No help is provided to install a phone which currently costs £120, one of the highest rates in Europe. In Australia, by contrast, a telephone for incoming calls only may be provided where necessary by the Government. In Ireland, pensioners living on their own may have their rental paid plus ten free units.

technology.⁶ No regulatory body exists in Ireland yet to oversee a fair and balanced structuring of the Telecom system, whilst a concept of universal service obligation (USO) is as vague and as illusory as UFOs.

Yet, in this paper, using socio-historical accounts of the telephone, I have also traced some of the more long-term trends of the development of communication cultures. I believe that the current domestic telephony policies are unsustainable since they run against the grain of established communication patterns, especially those of women. Current domestic telephony policy attempts to revert the domestic telephone again into a business tool only by underestimating the importance of day-time sociable calling and the importance of the local area network. Removing the sense of 'value for money' here effectively penalizes two of the building blocks of the 'friendly phone'. I suspect that once the domestic market is 'liberalized' there will be once again intense flexibilization of the domestic telephone pricing structure to re-facilitate the large numbers of would-be day-time domestic telephone users.

Yet the powers of consumerism which is aimed essentially at dividing the population into viable market segments run counter to the values of citizenship which is aimed essentially at promoting basic human rights and needs. It is those who fall between the lines of market segments or who are not size 10, 12 and 14 who will be the real fashion victims in the 1990s Telecom look.

The long-term victims of the new-look telephone industry then are likely to be low-income and low users of the domestic telephone and a government who will be confronted with increasing disparity between the *information rich* and the *information poor*: those who can and those who can not afford and or be equipped with the technologies which are increasingly becoming essential for social participation (preventing isolation, developing and maintaining networks) and social rights (access to health-care services, welfare, banking and government agencies). The new-look privatized telephone companies no longer regard the telephone as an important national resource but rather as an important commercial resource. In Ireland, already, the big users of the telephone are being granted further accommodations while the basic service is becoming increasingly expensive.

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Hugh O'Donnell is a Lecturer in the Department of Language and Media, Glasgow Caledonian University.

People's Home to Home and Away: the growth and development of soap opera in Sweden

Hugh O'Donnell

Soaps in Western Europe

This paper is part of a larger study analyzing domestic soap operas and telenovelas in seventeen European countries, comparing their performance with that of imported products of the same kind, and examining their place not only within the televisual culture, but also within the broader social and political culture of their country. While the bulk of studies of European soaps to date have either been audience-oriented, often comparing reception of these products with that of the more glossy American imports, or have dealt with the soaps at the level of narrative, this study suggests that soap operas can be read as macro or even hyper-narratives with complex tales to tell of the society within which they are produced and (in most cases) primarily consumed. For example, while the hyper-narrative constituted by Irish soaps since the mid 1980s has seen the emergence of the urban-based *Fair City* running alongside, but not replacing, the rural-based *Glenroe*, the roughly contemporaneous itinerary in Sweden has involved a move away from city soaps to ones which are, in their different ways, decidedly non-urban: I shall argue in this paper that this particular trajectory is not in any sense arbitrary. Narratives as immense, unresolved and collectively produced as soaps cannot be planned to conclusion in the way that classical narratives can, and provide, as a result, complex recountings of large-scale social transformations which traditionally authored and structured products cannot achieve to anything like the same extent.

As part of the general study referred to above, a review of all television serials showing in the seventeen countries in question between January and September 1994 was carried out, and several smaller-scale reviews have taken place since then to check on more recent developments. The main concrete finding of these reviews has been the remarkable increase in domestic European production in the 1990s: home-produced soaps and telenovelas have now appeared in numerous countries which had no previous experience of this kind of output, and many new programmes have started in those countries where a tradition of soaps and telenovelas already existed (only France, Switzerland and Austria currently have no domestic soaps). This paper concentrates on the rise of the continuous television serial in Sweden, and links its development with important social and political changes taking place within that country during the period in question (1985-1996), as well as with the consequences of wide-reaching changes in global television-product supply. Though it will concentrate on Sweden, it will also make reference to domestic soaps elsewhere in Scandinavia (Denmark and Norway), and throughout Europe as a whole.

A brief history of Swedish television

Television arrived somewhat later in Sweden than in most other northern European countries. Its first channel, run by the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation (SVT), a joint stock company with a clear public service brief, was officially introduced in 1956 after test transmissions during the previous year. A second public service channel was introduced in 1969 (Gustafsson, 1992: 208). Neither advertising nor direct sponsorship was allowed on either of these channels. A decision was taken by the Swedish

parliament in 1991 to allow the introduction of a third advertising-financed terrestrial channel outside the structures of SVT. As a result of this the commercially run channel TV4, which prior to that had broadcast only by satellite, moved to terrestrial operations in March 1992, and is now the leading competitor to the two public service channels (Carlsson and Anshelm, 1995: 229).

Commercial television made its entry into the Swedish media market in 1987, with the arrival of the satellite channel TV3 and the subscription-based FilmNet, which now has two channels. Since then further channels have become available: the satellite-borne Nordic channel and the subscription channels TV1000 and SF Succé (which have now merged) in 1989, and TV4 in 1990, as well as a number of smaller channels since then. TV3, which is financed entirely by advertising and is in fact beamed from London (in slightly different versions) to Sweden, Norway and Denmark, was originally quite successful, its daily audience share in Sweden in 1992 being in the region of 25 per cent to 40 per cent (Petersen, 1992: 619), as opposed to only 7 per cent in Norway in 1993, for example (Lundby and Futsæter, 1993: 97-8), but its market-share has now dropped to below 10 per cent (Cronström and Højjer, 1996: 105). Its programming mix is similar to that of many other European commercial channels, featuring numerous American films and serials, a fair amount of sport, series of various kinds, and game shows. TV4 has remained closer in style to the public service channels, as indeed its license conditions require it to do, though its programmes in general are aimed at a somewhat younger audience. The Nordic channel, now known as Kanal 5, combines a large number of (mostly American) soaps and series with talk shows. Though SVT's commitment to its original public service brief remains strong, there is no doubt that it has been obliged to change both its style and content in response to the arrival of these new competitors (Hadenius, 1992).

Overview of television serials in Sweden

In his *Filmen i Sverige* (Film in Sweden), veteran Swedish film and TV critic Leif Furhammar suggests that the first televised soap-type serial in Sweden was *De lyckligt lottade* (The Fortunate Ones), produced in six episodes in 1976 by the Gothenburg section of SVT, a regional section which had a reputation for programmes taking a problem-oriented approach to the contemporary social scene (Furhammar, 1991: 325). These episodes were shown on a once-a-week basis, in what is now the standard pattern for Scandinavian soaps. The question of how many episodes a television serial needs to have before it can reasonably be described as a 'soap' has never (to my knowledge) been addressed, let alone satisfactorily theorised. In the (hopefully temporary) absence of a well-grounded theoretical framework, it is perhaps worth pointing out that while half a dozen episodes would not meet the genre-specific expectations of, say, British or American audiences, this has not been the case in Scandinavia, at least not in the nineties, where programmes such as the Danish *Landsbyen* (The Village) and the Norwegian *I de beste familier* (In the Best of Families) were unproblematically described as 'soaps' though their first seasons consisted of only six and twenty-one episodes respectively. As was the case in both these productions, the final episode of *De lyckligt lottade* was left narratively open, and the serial could well have continued at a later date if a decision had been taken to do so. My own view is that *De lyckligt lottade* can, despite its short life, reasonably be described as a soap, or at the very least as a proto-soap.

It was not until the mid-1980s, however, twenty-five years after the launch of *Coronation Street* in the UK, that the long-running serial became an established part of Swedish televisual output. The first of these was *Lösa förbindelser* (Loose Connections), broadcast in thirty episodes on a twice-a-week basis in 1985, and set in an artists' milieu in Stockholm. It attracted audiences of around three million – from a total population of around eight million, from all age ranges within Swedish society (*Röster i Radio TV*, No. 35, 1985).

Lösa förbindelser (was followed two years later by *Goda grannar* (Good Neighbours), a forty-eight episode production broadcast in 1987-1978. It used a setting which has featured, and indeed continues to feature, in many soaps throughout Europe: the apartment block (similar settings can be found in *Lindenstraße* and *Unter Uns* in Germany, and in the projected, but so far unscreened, AI/Grundy co-production *Un posto nel sole* in Italy). As in the case of *Unter Uns* and *Un posto nel sole*, the apartment block features on its ground floor a place for people to meet socially, in this case a cafe. The usefulness of this kind of setting for soaps is that it allows characters from a wide range of social backgrounds to be assembled in the same physical space (the owners of the building, the tenants, the owners of the cafe and so on), and indeed most soaps feature some pseudo-public space of this kind ('pseudo' because few real-life social spaces traverse social boundaries quite so easily). Though it had an obvious serial format, *Goda grannar* also had a clear sit-com element to it, even more marked at times than the sit-com elements which now arise frequently in *Coronation Street* and have long been present in the Australian production *Neighbours*: acting is at times on the limits of caricature. In fact, while all other Swedish soaps have been produced by SVT's Drama Department and have been shown on its first channel, *Goda grannar* was shown on the second channel under the heading 'Entertainment' ('Nöje'). In a review in the Swedish broadsheet *Dagens Nyheter* on 9 February 1987, Leif Furhammar attacked it for its lack of realism, contrasting it negatively with the English production *Emmerdale Farm* which was showing in Sweden at the time, and dismissed it as 'unambitious' and 'anaemic'. Despite this, it had a large audience, particularly among older viewers, and was repeated in 1993 (Ross, 1994: 243).

The third soap of the 1980s was *Varuhuset* (The Department Store), a sixty-episode serial broadcast in 1987-1988 which was set in a commercial/social structure with which British viewers are also familiar, that of the department store, made classic in the UK in the 70s by the long-running comedy series *Are You Being Served?* Though criticised by Leif Furhammar in *Dagens Nyheter* (28 September 1987) for a lack of 'plausibility' as regards some of its main characters (a recurring complaint in this critic's judgement of Swedish television drama), *Varuhuset* became something of a classic in Sweden, winning audience shares of over 60 per cent (Collin, 1994: 39). It has been reshowed in its entirety several times, and has also been exported to a number of other Scandinavian countries.

A Swedish production from the end of the eighties which came close to a soap format was *Svenska hjärtan* (Swedish Hearts), broadcast in two sets of eight and six episodes respectively in 1987 and 1989, and dealing with the lives of the inhabitants of a group of terraced houses just outside Gothenburg. Like *De lyckligt lottade*, *Svenska hjärtan* could well have continued, though it would have had to change in a number of ways, perhaps the most obvious being the use of techniques to lighten the tone, since it seems unlikely that any production could continue with its level of gravity for forty or sixty episodes. (Despite its heavy gloom, it was given a high 'believability' rating by Furhammar in *Dagens Nyheter* of 28 September 1987). However, the author of *Svenska hjärtan*, Carin Mannheimer, took the view that length was not compatible with quality and stated publicly that she did not want her production to continue (Kainz, 1989: 13). Despite this, a third set of six episodes was in fact broadcast six years later at the end of 1995.

The next soap to be produced in Sweden was the thirty-part *Destination Nordsjön* (Destination North Sea), screened in 1990 by the private station TV4 which was still restricted to satellite operations at the time and covered only part of the country. It was set on an oil-rig in the North Sea (also the scene of the UK series *Roughnecks*) and dealt with the lives of the helicopter crews in particular. Given TV4's relatively restricted reach at the time, *Destination Nordsjön* could not match the drawing power of SVT's soaps, though it was considered successful enough to be repeated by TV4 in early 1994.

After a three-year break from soap production, SVT returned to the genre in 1991 with *Storstad* (Big City), a fifty-eight episode production described by the monthly magazine *Månadsjournalen* (No. 4, 1994) as a 'yuppie soap'. It was, like all previous SVT

soaps, set in Stockholm, and dealt with the lives of different groups of people from varying social milieus, one of these being the immigrant Benucci family (who occasionally speak Italian subtitled in Swedish), following on from the Spanish immigrant Carlos in *Varuhuset*. *Storstad* was also the first Swedish soap to introduce a sizeable group of teenagers in truly important roles: in fact they dominated its long opening scene and its first episode as a whole. This was part of a broader European trend, where Australian-style soaps with a substantial teenage appeal have become quite common: *Gute Zeiten, Schlechte Zeiten* and *Unter Uns* in Germany, *Hollyoaks* in the UK and the as yet unscreened *Un posto nel sole* in Italy (some of these are in fact co-productions with the Australian Grundy company).

Storstad was followed in 1992 by *Rederiet* (literally The Shipping Line, though officially translated as High Seas), which has proved to be by far the most successful Swedish soap of all time, having now reached 114 episodes (its one hundredth episode could reasonably be described as something of a mini national event, with heavy coverage in all the national dailies and on television, and the production of a special commemorative brochure by SVT). It is vaguely reminiscent of the (in fact unsuccessful) British soap *Triangle* of the early 1980s, in that the bulk of the action takes place on a ferry, in this case sailing between Stockholm and Åland, a group of islands belonging to Sweden and lying just off the coast of Finland. However, it continues the tradition of *Varuhuset* by including characters from a wide range of social backgrounds, from the wealthy owners of the line (the Dahlén family) to the men and women working in the ship's engine room and canteen, in particular the working-class Sjögren family. *Rederiet* attracts 30 per cent of all female and 21 per cent of all male viewers (Gustafsson and Lovén, 1994: 20). A repeat of the episode shown at 20.00 on SVT1 is screened on SVT2 on Fridays at 23.25 and Mondays at 17.00, giving the programme a total weekly audience of some 2.2 million (figures from the evening tabloid *Aftonbladet*, 27 March 1994), a figure which compares with audiences of 150,000 for the American day-time serial *The Bold and the Beautiful*, shown on Kanal 5 (Jiretorn, 1994: 11).

The arrival of the new terrestrial channel TV4 in 1992 inevitably brought changes to the Swedish soap scene. TV4 managed something of a coup by tempting Peter Emmanuel Falck, who had been involved in one capacity or another in almost all previous Swedish soaps up to and including *Rederiet*, to join them in the production of their new soap *Tre Kronor* (Three Crowns), a title which in Sweden is closely linked with sport, and in particular ice hockey, this being the name of the national ice-hockey team. *Tre Kronor* in some ways breaks new ground for Swedish soaps, and in other ways continues some of the previously tried and tested formulae. It is the first soap to be set outside Stockholm, in the small town of Mällarviken, giving it a notably more 'rustic' feel than its predecessors, and it continues one of the lines of *Storstad* by having a large number of characters in their teens (these are almost entirely absent in *Rederiet*). Like *Storstad* it also features an immigrant family, in this case a black-African Sali family. *Tre Kronor* immediately became very successful, achieving audiences of around 1.8 million, a share of around 22 per cent.

Micro-, meta-, macro- and hyper-narrative

The relationship between any cultural product and the society within which it is produced is, of course, a very complex one. At times such products can lag behind social trends, at others they can be ahead of them, but the link is always highly mediated and subject to a range of pressures of varying force. A simple example of this complex relationship was the kiss between two homosexual males which was shown on screen in episode 107 of *Rederiet* towards the end of February 1996. This particular episode was preceded by heavy coverage in the press, particularly in the two tabloids *Expressen* and *Aftonbladet*, complete with interviews with the two actors involved, statements from official bodies and so on. This hype is all the more surprising since Sweden is a country where there is, and has been for a long time, a high level of social acceptance of homosexuality, and, despite the hype in the Swedish popular press, homosexual kisses

had featured in *EastEnders* in the UK and *Lindenstraße* in Germany towards the end of the 1980s (*TV Movie*, Issue 6, 1996). In a sense the Swedish tabloids were, as well as hyping the programme, celebrating the fact that Swedish soaps were finally getting up to date on this issue (public reaction to the kiss was minimal).

There is a general consensus among soap-opera researchers that soaps are in the main conservative. This is broadly speaking true on the level of individual story-lines, which I will call the micro-narrative level. However, this does not alter the fact that many soaps will, as soon as a particular issue becomes established as a topic for debate within the public domain, whether there is a consensus about the issue or not, incorporate it into one of their narrative lines: many soaps throughout Europe and beyond currently feature story-lines dealing with homosexuality, AIDS, HIV, drug abuse, rape, domestic violence and so on, however tentatively (see Fuqua 1995). It is almost certainly only a question of time before violence among children also features somewhere. If there is any validity at all in the distinction between *fabula* and *syuzhet* posited by contemporary narrative theory, a position I would not care to offer unqualified defence, then it may be that it allows us to account for the fact that narratives such as soaps appear to be simultaneously repetitive and new. What is being repeated is the *fabula*, the narrative reduced to its most skeletal form ('lost child returns from the dead', 'unwanted pregnancy ends in miscarriage' and so on), while the *syuzhet*, the actual fully fleshed-out story-line through which the *fabula* is realized, will draw heavily on the dominant mood and even controversies of the time. An abortion in 1985 is not the same as an abortion in 1990, a homosexual kiss in 1990 is not the same as a homosexual kiss in 1995.

This is partly a feature of the narrative requirements of soaps. The need for a constantly updated set of story-lines in even the slowest-moving soap is immense, much greater than in any other kind of fiction, televisual or otherwise, but it also relates closely to both the production and the reception conditions of soaps. Soaps, perhaps more than any other kind of television drama, are produced by large teams of people, and the Swedish soaps are no exception. Indeed, soaps are often described in many countries as being produced using 'industrial' or 'factory' methods. While the input of the various people involved in the production may vary a great deal in weight and influence, soaps are a collective product in a sense in which no other form of television drama can quite claim to be (Gustafsson and Lovén, 1993: 19). They are also invariably among the most popular programmes in their own country (Mohr and O'Donnell, 1996), and require to find a style and a thematic which are broadly in tune with the expectations of their mass audience (the presence of more than one soap allows greater variation: in the UK, for example, there is a perceptible connection between the 'minority' status of Channel 4's *Brookside* and its willingness to tackle truly controversial issues ahead of the field). Soaps do, therefore, through the issues which are imbricated in their constantly recurring plots, using either a 'social realism' convention, as in the case of the UK soaps and, with some qualifications, also in the case of the Swedish soaps, or in a more allegorical manner, for example through the 'emotional realism' found by Ang (1985) in *Dallas*, tell their own story about their society at a level which transcends the factual detail of individual story-lines: a meta-narrative which rolls forward as inexorably as the soap or soaps themselves. A similar point is also made by Michael Forsman in a long article on *Rederiet* in the Swedish broadsheet *Svenska Dagbladet* of 7 May 1996: 'In this way *Rederiet* operates as a kind of explanatory meta-narrative in relation to the moral, personal and existential questions which arise in our daily lives and in public debate'.

However, there is yet another level of narrative in a soap, and that is the story told by the entire production as it stretches out over time: this is what I will term the macro-narrative. While the micro-narrative and the meta-narrative are broadly speaking under the control of those involved in producing the soaps, the macro-narrative is not. No soap is planned even a year in advance, never mind four or five years in advance. Changes occurring at this level also tell their own story of the society in which the soap is being

produced, the relationship between the soap and its audience, and so on. This narrative can be carried by such apparently secondary elements as the opening credits, or the theme tune or song: there have been startling changes to a number of theme songs in European soaps, all of which have heralded important changes of direction in the macro-narrative.

Added to this, we must take into account the fact that many countries have more than one soap, either following on from each other in a temporal sequence (diachronically), or running simultaneously (synchronously). In the case of soaps such as the Swedish ones, which at least so far, although this pattern does seem to be changing, have tended to run for a limited period of time and then be replaced by entirely new productions, a feature they share with the Latin American telenovelas (O'Donnell, 1996), each individual soap can be seen to form a chapter in an even greater, over-arching narrative. The change of venue and characters, the change in the style and scope of the relationships and other factors allow the succession of different soaps to constitute a hyper-narrative in which a complex recounting of social transformations can be traced.

Swedish soaps and the Swedish model

The trajectory of the hyper-narrative of Swedish television serials since the mid 1970s has followed a clear downwards curve both as regards the social milieu in which the action is set and as regards the age of the characters featured (and, consequently, of the audience targeted by the producers). There has also been a slow but steady dispersal in terms of location. This trajectory has accompanied, and to some extent reflected, the erosion of old-style social democracy as a political ideology in Sweden, a country in which the Social Democrats, historic guardians of the so-called 'Swedish model', had been in power uninterruptedly for decades before a period in opposition lasting from 1976 to 1982.

As its title suggests, *De lyckligt lottade* (The Fortunate Ones) dealt with the more affluent section of Swedish society, represented by the upper-class Bark family. It was described by Leif Furhammar (1991: 325) as 'mondän' (roughly, set in 'fashionable' circles), and reworked the well-established dramatic convention of the trials and tribulations of the rich (generation conflicts, deceit, drug abuse), as well as the even more tired cliché (of the working-class girl (Lisbeth) marrying into the upper-class family). The origins and influences behind *De lyckligt lottade* are not difficult to find. The dominant influence in Swedish television was, and had been for some time, as elsewhere in Europe, British, in particular that of serials such as *The Forsyte Saga*, *The Brothers*, *Upstairs Downstairs* and so on, all of which, in their different ways, exploited the tensions within aristocratic or otherwise upper-class families as their source of drama. Although these programmes reproduced a particularly British problematic, the continuing existence of quasi-feudal social structures in a country claiming in other respects to be modern, their success abroad showed that they provided an appeal in countries where such structures appeared to be very much a thing of the past. *De lyckligt lottade* is best seen as a Swedified version of this appeal, placed on a more tightly concertina-ed social spectrum (i.e.: with both aristocrats and proletarians removed), but still somewhat rarefied as far as the majority of viewers were concerned: its script was in fact a re-write of an original English script entitled *Family Affair* by Norman Crisp, the main scriptwriter for *The Brothers* (*Röster i Radio TV*, No. 5, 1976). This type of programme responded to a certain definition of 'quality' and a certain view of the role of public service broadcasting which could be found in many European countries at the time (see Hofmann, 1992, for example, for a discussion of the philosophy of public service broadcasting in Germany at this time).

Though coming almost ten years later, *Lösa förbindelser* appeared to mine a rather similar dramatic vein, in this case concentrating on certain affluent circles in Stockholm rather than on a single family, but the dominant influence was no longer British. In fact,

it dealt with a very different group of people from those which featured in the British soaps of the time and in the only other European production, *Lindenstraße* in Germany, to be influenced by them. This becomes immediately apparent if we compare *Lösa förbindelser* with *EastEnders*, which began in the same year. While British soaps have overwhelmingly featured lower-middle class and to a lesser extent working class characters *Lösa förbindelser's* main characters were upper-middle class, arty and even vaguely effete by comparison. The lower orders tended not to be present at all, or to be represented by craftsmen rather than by manual workers. In fact, British soaps were virtually unknown in Sweden at the time: *Coronation Street* was shown for the first time there this year (1996) on TV4, and only the rural soap *Emmerdale Farm* was screened by SVT in the 1970s and 1980s.

However, if British soaps were little known, the same could not be said of American soaps. In 1981 and 1982 both *Dallas* and *Falcon Crest* went on the air in Sweden. *Dallas* had audience shares of over 50 per cent (Ross, 1995: 2): indeed, so great was its success that viewers in Norway, where *Dallas* was not shown, would tune into it on SVT (Gripsrud, 1995: 84). *Falcon Crest* had audience shares of around 40 per cent (Kainz: 1989: 12). The challenge posed by the American supersoaps to the European PSB channels' was the need to face up to the expectations of mass audiences, with all that meant for working, and workable, definitions of 'quality'. The response in a number of countries was to produce domesticated versions of the American supersoaps. The result was narratives based on wealthy families in the country in question, but with elements which could be recognised as 'closer to home' by the domestic viewer.

The best-known examples of this trend were, of course, *Châteauvallon* in France and *Schwarzwaldklinik* in Germany (see Silj, 1988), though products of this kind are still to be found today (for example, the 1994 German serial *Blankenese*). The European families featured, though wealthy, were never the fabulously rich of the American productions, while the social mix was somewhat greater. *Lösa förbindelser* can no doubt best be seen in this light. Despite strenuous denials from SVT that it was a 'Swedish *Dallas*' (*Röster i Radio TV*, No. 12, 1985), it was widely perceived to be so by both viewers and critics, and is perhaps best to be understood within that framework: an American formula transformed into a recognizably Swedish product, with a recognizably Swedish setting.

Despite its good viewing figures, however, *Lösa förbindelser* never achieved real critical acclaim. Furhammar described it as a 'cautious pilot' (1992: 98), while the TV magazine *Röster i Radio TV's* rather dismissive preview of the serial was as follows: 'Will the Swedish televiewing public swallow this Swedish form of escapism as eagerly as it swallows *Dallas*, and *Falcon Crest* and *Dynasty*? That remains to be seen.' (No. 12, 1985). Nonetheless, the growing influence of the American soaps was itself a sign of much more profound changes taking place within Swedish society. As Michael Forsman puts it (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 7 May 1996):

Soon almost half the population was watching *Dallas*, while the culture pages in the newspapers discussed the 'Dallasification of Sweden', which on a deeper level probably caught something of the onset of the erosion of the Swedish model, and I don't just mean within TV.

Goda grannar was described by Furhammar (*Dagens Nyheter*, 9 February 1987) as 'a little bit of common-or-garden Swedish idealizing of society, a little bit of dramatised neighbourly spirit in the face of evil property sharks and other annoyances'. In his 1992 piece building on the same article, he went on to say: 'It was fairly reminiscent of Swedish cinema in the 1930s when it was at its most *folkhem* -like and cosy'. And indeed *Goda grannar* can be seen as a symbolic representation of the *folkhem* (literally 'people's home', also known as the 'Swedish model'), a typically Scandinavian social-democratic political concept of a somewhat paternalist state which accepted private enterprise but provided a highly developed welfare state and ensured more of a balance

of power between employers and workers than is now fashionable, even in Sweden. As Swedish ethnologist Jonas Frykman puts it (1993: 163):

Throughout Europe in the inter-war period various states were faced with the move from old hierarchies, privileges and class societies to societies for all. The idea of the *Folkhem* was the Swedish variant of that transformation. Other countries would bring more restrictive models to bear. In a good home there were to be no more barriers, equality should reign, people's worth was to be judged by their inherent qualities, not their inherited advantages or social handicaps.

The concept of the *folkhem* is often used in Sweden in connection with soaps, even to this day, and *Goda grannar*, with its mini classless society and its emphasis on consideration and respect for others, can be seen as an expression of one of its main components: that of a utopian society which is almost village-like in nature, where everyone knows everyone else and good-neighbourliness is the order of the day.

Varuhuset is both a continuation of and a departure from *Goda grannar* in many different respects. The physical location of the store has obvious similarities with the block of flats, the patriarchal owner of the flats, Bror Öster, is mirrored by Gustaf Öhman, patriarchal owner of the department store of the title, and a clear precursor of Reidar Dahllén in *Rederiet*. However, *Varuhuset* is much more socially differentiated. Though it too was often referred to as a 'Swedish Dallas', its influences were again quite different, and at least partly British. According to its head scriptwriters Ola Olsson and Peter Falck, its models were 'partly the English soap *Eastenders*, partly the American *Hill Street Blues* and partly Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage*' (*Röster i Radio TV*, No. 10, 1987). *Varuhuset's* action develops not only along the different social levels represented within the store, but also across them, from the owners to the storeroom personnel. It is also taken outside the company by the on-going theme of its commercial rivalry with the competing store KF, a rivalry which also leads to the movement of staff, and the consequent complication of personal relationships, between the two companies. In its own way *Varuhuset* also functions as a representation of the *folkhem*, but in its other major manifestation.

In fact the concept of the *folkhem* signifies on at least two levels within Swedish society. One of these is the level of what might be called *Realpolitik*, where it represents a specific set of social, political and economic structures ensuring a greater balance of power within Swedish society, a greater level of welfare for all, and a reduction in social tensions and conflicts. This is the type of *folkhem* to be found in *Varuhuset*, with its different classes and its social hierarchies whose fates are all bound together in the same communal enterprise. The second level of signification of the *folkhem* is a more purely ideological level, the construction of a utopian village-like society co-extensive with Swedish society as a whole, a symbolic reworking of the mythical Swedish 'Medelby' ('Average Town') of the 1940s (Frykman: 1993: 120). This is the level of *folkhem* manifest in *Goda grannar*. What is most striking about both productions, however, is the extent to which the original meanings of the *folkhem* are clearly falling apart.

In *Goda grannar* the patriarchal Bror Öster is ill and unable to run his affairs in the old-style kindly-paternalistic manner. He hands over everyday administration of the building to the up-and-coming Pierre, who bullies the tenants financially and gets involved in property speculation with dealer Lars Westberg. These are clearly yuppies in the making, and are linked into the spirit of the times. As Ross points out (1994: 244) 'Pierre is an unattractive person who represents the wheeler-dealer economy of the 80s'. In *Goda grannar* the building of the *folkhem* may still be standing, but the patriarchal protection has gone, and a process of disintegration of the internal fabric appears to be already underway, under attack from hostile forces from outside. *Varuhuset* for its part featured a whole range of social and economic conflicts: power struggles among owners

and managers, career clashes among upwardly mobile members of staff, commercial espionage, and a growing amount of criminal activity.

In fact, these two productions must be seen against the background of political change within Swedish society at the time. After almost four decades of uninterrupted power, the Social Democrats lost the elections of 1976 and were replaced by a conservative (or to use Swedish terminology 'bourgeois') government from 1976 to 1982. During the long period of Social Democratic ascendancy, the two levels of signification of the *folkhem*, ideological and Realpolitik, held together, since it was believed that the social, economic and political structures set in place by the Social Democrats were in fact realising the ideological *folkhem* within Swedish society. As the Social Democratic era drew to a close, it was accompanied by a growing crisis of belief in that particular conjunction. In the political and social changes which followed, the two sides of the *folkhem* concept became unstuck and drifted apart, and each started to disintegrate in its own way. This is the process reflected in *Goda grannar* and *Varuhuset*.

Following a pattern which can be found in those few other European countries outside the UK and Ireland producing domestic soaps or telenovelas at the time, France, Germany and Portugal, the end of the 1980s was a period when national production of soap operas dwindled in Sweden. This was a period when certain political models appeared to be reaching exhaustion both in Western Europe and beyond, and Sweden was, of course, no exception. *Svenska hjärtan* was gloomy and introspective, and lacked both the energy of *Varuhuset* and the whimsy of *Goda grannar*. The terraced houses represent a physical and social dispersion in relation to the relatively closed environments of *Varuhuset* and *Goda grannar*, and there is a clear levelling-out in terms of the class origins of the characters when compared with the former. Kainz suggests that 'there is the feeling that an attempt is being made to describe the Swedish *folkhem*' (1989: 22), but this is the utopian *folkhem* of *Goda grannar* in a state of advanced decay. The population is being redefined as an undifferentiated middle-class, a traditional element of neo-liberal ideology. The physical and ideological dispersion is reflected at the narrative level by the dispersion of the social group: of the eight main characters, at the end of the serial Thorsten and Elisabeth leave the area, as do Marianne and Thomas, while Kristina and Hasse consider moving to Spain. The theme of illness already encountered in *Goda grannar* is repeated, with Thorsten's injury making it impossible for Elisabeth to begin a new relationship with Henrik. At the same time, the only child in the serial, Olle, is mentally handicapped. The disablement of the past makes renewal impossible, while the future seems impaired and insecure. No clearer statement of dissolution and exhaustion seems possible.

This sense of questioning may to some extent lie behind the most successful television serials/series of the period. *Det var då* (It was then), a twenty-four episode historical serial broadcast in 1989 and 1990 covering the twelve years between 1958 and 1970, and *Tre kärleker* (*Three Loves*), a highly regarded production broadcast in two sets of eight episodes each in 1989 and 1991, and dealing with the lives of the members of a farming family during the period of the Second World War, and in particular with their conflicts with both large corporate organisations and the state. There is a sense of a society searching its past for an identity of which it is no longer sure.

Within this emergent framework, the location of *Destination Nordsjön* on an oil rig in the North Sea makes a curious kind of sense. It places the narrative action of the serial in an entirely artificial community cut off from society as a whole. As the grand social democratic narrative crumbles into an increasingly atomised and rootless society, perhaps only such remote pseudo-societies can remain, cut off from the Swedish mainland, and cut off from mainstream television on what was then the minority-viewing TV4.

As regards mainstream television, *Storstad*, the last soap to be produced while the public service monopoly remained intact and the last to be broadcast before the second electoral defeat of the Social Democrats in 1991, continues the theme of dispersal, both

narrative and ideological, when compared with both *Varuhuset* and *Goda grannar*. It is *Svenska hjärtan* one step on, and writ large, with the original close-knit community scattered and out of touch. Though it became one of the longest-running Swedish soaps, *Storstad* went through a long process of decline, attracting both critical rejection and poor viewing figures (Gustafsson and Lovén, 1993: 8), before finally being taken off the air at the beginning of 1992. It was the story of isolated family groupings, unable to form an organic community despite their geographical proximity in the same district of Stockholm. Contact between the various groups who figured in the narrative was often minimal or non-existent: indeed, they were in a sense overwhelmed by the impersonality of the Big City of the title. Occasionally the characters would pass each other in the street with only the viewer able to make any kind of link between them, a very unusual narrative technique for a soap opera, since this genre seldom self-consciously signals its complicity with the viewer in this way. As opposed to the organic societies of *Varuhuset* or *Goda grannar*, we are presented here with individualized groups each pursuing their own limited goals. The term 'yuppie drama' applied to *Storstad* by the *Månadsjournal* may be a little unfair, since only one of the groups featured belonged clearly to that group, they would speak to each other on their mobile phones as they drove alongside each other in their expensive cars, but the description is not entirely without foundation. If in the new neo-liberal era there is, as a famous champion of this ideology put it, 'no such thing as society', *Storstad* gives this televisual form. In a remarkable change of style, the opening shots of each episode, which initially featured different groups of people going about their business in different parts of Stockholm, were eventually replaced towards the end of the serial with a computer graphic of a 'virtual city', consisting of featureless blocks of brown and green. The sense of alienation was complete.

There is an obvious thematic and narrative continuity between *Varuhuset* and *Rederiet*: indeed, this was deliberately sought by the head of Kanal 1 Drama when the serial was launched (Gustafsson and Lovén, 1993: 8). *Rederiet*, too, was seen as a kind of Swedish *Dallas*. In *Röster i Radio TV* of 21 August 1992, just before the production went on air, the actor who played Reidar Dahlén had to answer questions on whether his character was 'a Swedish *Dallas*-J.R.', while *Månadsjournal* No. 4 of 1994 simply described the programme as a 'Swedish-style *Dallas*', a view obviously shared by a number of its viewers (Ross: 1995: 21). But again the influence of a more 'European'-style social realism is apparent. As recently as January 1996 *Dagens Nyheter*, in a lengthy article on the one hundredth episode of *Rederiet*, described it as a 'mixture of Swedish day-to-day realism and over-the-top American-style scheming and plotting'. In narrative terms, *Rederiet* was, at least to some extent, *Varuhuset* transferred to a different setting with different characters fulfilling by and large the same narrative functions. The patriarchal Dahlén company seems to be a replacement for the equally patriarchal (hman company, Reidar Dahlén takes over the reins from Gustaf (hmann, the rival Mega Line fulfils the function previously fulfilled by KF, and so on. But this continuity is one of increasing disintegration, mirroring the continuity between *Goda grannar*, *Svenska hjärtan* and *Storstad*.

Following the renewed defeat of the Social Democrats in the 1991 elections and the formation of a 'bourgeois' government for the second time in fifteen years, a mock obituary in the tabloid *Aftonbladet* in June 1992 officially announced the death of the social-democratic *folkhem*. Tongue-in-cheek, perhaps, but this obituary reflected a clear feeling abroad in Swedish society at the time that the death sentence of the *folkhem* had already been written. These strains were clearly visible in *Rederiet* from the start: the opening scene of the first episode showed the company's offices being attacked by protesters opposing the building of a new ferry terminal in Stockholm. As the serial has proceeded now for over four years, the story lines have been notably characterised by criminality and corruption on a very large scale, much larger than in *Varuhuset*, and the patriarchal structures of the Dahlén company have begun to look increasingly out of date: this has taken the form, on a narrative level, of the fissuring and dispersal of the family itself, and of the return of Dahl(n)'s (glamorous) granddaughter (the glamour is

not incidental) from the Wharton Business School in America to introduce a new management style into the company. Reidar's loss of control of the board to the unethical Pehr Silver is symptomatic of the changes afoot.

The physical difference of the locations, a department store which endlessly recycles its own tensions but remains standing, versus a ferry line where characters are constantly on the move and move in and out of the narrative in a variety of ways (including falling/being pushed overboard), is not coincidental. *Rederiet* is at one and the same time more claustrophobic and, in all senses of the phrase, more 'at sea' than *Varuhuset*. Lars Collin may describe a scene in episode 59 as an 'everyday drama from the *folkhem*' (1994: 38), but after 114 episodes there is little of the *folkhem* left now: *Rederiet* represents both the implosion of the ideological *folkhem* and the abandonment of the socio-political one. It is adrift in a way in which more tightly location-bound serials (by far the majority group in Europe) are not: while there were many contacts between the ship and land in the early episodes, as Bergendahl et al point out in their study of the serial 'the links between what happens on board the Freja and what happens on land are by and large broken and towards the end the series contains two worlds which are separated from each other' (1992: 31).

While fixed-location soaps are characterized by narrative circularity, or perhaps better 'spirality', a three-dimensional coiling of thematic repetition and millimetric temporal advance, *Rederiet's* symbolic journey is linear, as linear as the ferry journey from Sweden to Finland. Its narrative is at best pendular, to and fro, but the return journey is never a simple retracing of steps. Time has moved on between casting off and docking again, producing an almost Einsteinian curvature of the narrative lines. It is the gravitational pull of social and ideological collapse. *Rederiet* traces a narrative descent from the *folkhem*, in both senses, of the inter-war period and after to the individualising liberalism of the eighties and nineties: the ship is a mini-society adrift and left to its own devices, powerless to influence the decisions governing its existence taken in a distant location from which it is entirely cut off, a situation which Michael Forsman sees as a curiously appropriate metaphor of contemporary Sweden (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 7 May 1996): 'Moreover one could take the view that a floating consumer complex, within yet quite cut off from the elements, where all are fighting for their own survival, is a quite telling picture of Sweden today'. The long and nightmarish period during which the psychopathic and murderous Viggo Strieber was the captain of the ship was the expression of a social dystopia which ended only with his death at the end of Spring 1995 season.

Tre Kronor to some extent represents, within the narrative-cum-ideological framework posited above, a certain regrouping of the Swedish soap. The edgy aimlessness of *Rederiet* with its frightening collection of amoral (Silver), psychotic (Désirée) and psychopathic characters (Viggo), to mention only the most recent, is replaced by the life of a relatively stable small community which lacks the compactness of *Varuhuset* and *Goda grannar* but is not dwarfed by a large, anonymous conurbation as in *Storstad*. It is outside Stockholm, is somewhat remote, but is not adrift as in *Destination Nordsjön* or *Rederiet*. While there are distinct family groups as in *Storstad*, they are all linked with each other, mostly, though not exclusively, through the activities of their younger members, and a sense of shared destinies is maintained. The middle-aged angst of *Svenska hjärtan* has been replaced by the energy and even to some extent the optimism of youth. As in *Svenska hjärtan*, however, the social flattening-out is re-established and strengthened in a largely undifferentiated middle class, and is accompanied by an almost total absence of serious economic issues. This is a new political utopia, full of personal problems, of course (such problems are part of the 'pleasure' of soaps), but a utopia all the same, since it occurs at a time when the internal divisions within Swedish society are becoming clearer, not less distinct. As Michael Forsman puts it (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 7 May 1996): 'economic and life-style stratification is making Swedish society more and more difficult to grasp as a whole'. This is the new neo-liberal, re-ideologized *folkhem*, compressed and flattened out, and

far from the political and economic realities of Swedish life. It is one of an increasing number of emphatically non-urban soaps which have appeared recently throughout Europe (*I de beste familier* in Norway, *Landsbyen* in Denmark, the relatively short-lived *Westerdeich* and *So ist das Leben: die Wagenfelds* in Germany, *Machair* in Scotland, *Roseira Brava* in Portugal and *Goenkale* in the Basque Country, not to mention the longer-running but restyled *Emmerdale* in England, *High Road* in Scotland, *Pobol y Cwm* in Wales and *Glenroe* in Ireland), which no doubt have their own tale to tell regarding the neo-romanticism embedded in the neo-liberal hegemony.

It goes without saying that personal relations within *Tre Kronor* are by no means harmonious: problematic relationships are the mainspring of all soap opera drama, and *Tre Kronor* can be no exception to that generic rule. Romances flourish and die among the youngsters, there are teenage pregnancies, parents divorce, sons steal their fathers' brides, apparently stable relationships come under threat when the mother wants to resume her career, and so on. Very traditional soap opera fare, and by all accounts very popular with Swedish viewers, but alas, all rather unchallenging. *Tre Kronor's* story lines bounce from one character to the next in much the same way as the ball bounces off the wall in the sports club referred to in the title, but never so much as break a window. A nasty character in this soap might sell you food which is past its sell-by date in the supermarket. In fact much of the oomph went out of the production when the most obvious candidate for the role of villain, the irascible and somewhat violence-prone Reine, saw the error of his ways (a similar change occurred to the potential 'bitch' of the Norwegian soap *I de beste familier*, Marie Wahring, with very similar results). In its more anodyne moments, *Tre Kronor* is a Swedish version of the Australian teen-soap *Home and Away* (currently showing in Sweden on Kanal 5) with Mällarviken instead of Summer Bay: mildly rustic, slightly remote, vaguely didactic, more or less right-on, by and large politically correct. Just snow in winter instead of endless sunshine.

The regrouping adumbrated by *Tre Kronor* is now reaching *Rederiet* as well. Towards the end of the Spring 1996 season three of its best-known middle-aged women characters were written out, causing a lively debate in the Swedish press and on Swedish television, including a phone-in to the head script-writer, and statements by the Ombudsman for Sexual Equality, leaving only one female character over 40 in the entire dramatis personae (a highly reduced age-range compared with *Tre Kronor* with its adolescents and sexagenarians). In their stead came 28-year-old model and television presenter Anna Järphammar, who featured among the list of 'Sweden's sexiest women' drawn up by a well-known men's clothing shop: together with Reidar's granddaughter Lina she will substantially increase the glamour factor in the soap (an, only apparently unrelated, head-line in *Expressen* of 19 April 1996 ran: 'Are there too many "bimbos" on TV?'). The writers argued that the narrative potential of the characters who had been written out had been exhausted, and that they were intending to introduce two new 'middle aged' women characters (aged 38 and 41 respectively) in the autumn season, but the process of rejuvenating and glamorising the cast of the programme seems clear. The pitch at the younger audience is apparent. It is unlikely that *Rederiet* will ever lose the edginess of its constant business plotting and scheming, but it remains to be seen whether it will become more superficial – more ludic, even? – and less challenging as the old guard are slowly removed, even Reidar Dahlén must eventually go – and a new and more glamorous generation with a different set of values comes on board.

Conclusion

It seems clear that the soap-opera landscape in Sweden is changing. *Rederiet* has now lasted almost twice as long as the previously longest running soap (*Varuhuset*), and *Tre Kronor* shows absolutely no signs of coming to an end in the foreseeable future. The catastrophe of the ferry *Estonia* in 1994 with the loss of over 900 lives was a critical moment for *Rederiet*; there was serious talk in the press of the serial being unable to continue after this disaster, but it survived and, despite intermittent criticism for lack of quality and realism, it seems set to continue indefinitely. The endless nature of the

classic soap structure brings its own advantages in terms of reliability and working with known quantities, but also brings in its own restrictions, particularly as regards the process of renewal. The fragmentation of the early Swedish soaps was to some extent part of a much larger process of dissolution within Swedish society as a whole. While some regrouping of the Swedish soaps is obvious, it is less clear that Swedish society has regrouped quite so convincingly. *Rederiet's* endlessly questing dystopia and *Tre Kronor's* endlessly circling utopia may be two poles of this larger social crisis, replaying the disintegration of the two poles of the *folkhem*. Seen from this point of view, the hyper-narrative which was initially diachronic has now become synchronic, a stereoscopic vision which has yet to come into focus. Whatever the case, all the narratives – of plot, issues, soap and genre, look set to run for some considerable time to come, and to tell their own tales of the disintegration and re-formation of the 'Swedish model'.

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Notes

Both *Rederiet* and *Tre Kronor* maintain sites on the World Wide Web. Their addresses are as follows:

Rederiet: <http://www.svt.se/drama/rederiet/index.html>

Tre Kronor: <http://www.tv4.se/pk/proginfo/trekronor.html>

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Josef Trappel, Dr.phil., is a media and communication researcher and journalist, specializing in the fields of European media policy, small states media systems and European institutions. He is a policy adviser at the Federal Chancellery in Vienna and currently is an expert with the European Commission in Brussels.

EU media policy: Recent features

Josef Trappel

Introduction

EU media policy has to be considered as an element of the overall economic goals of the EU; it pursues those goals rather than genuine media policy objectives such as freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity, democratic function of media, equal access to information or the notion of programme or content quality. Any meaningful evaluation of media policy of the European Union needs to distinguish between two different concepts: the economic objectives of the EU, the adherence of member state's legislation to EU standards, the completion of the single market, the degree of legislative alignment to harmonized media matters, the macro-economic achievements at the level of job-creation, foreign trade and growth of the sector on the one hand, and further reaching media policy aims as regards social, intellectual and cultural welfare of Europe's public on the other.

The following text will focus on the achievements of the EU media policy with regard to the former set of objectives, corresponding to a strict interpretation of EU law. This perspective dominates EU policy and restricts its development to a limited number of principles, laid down in the Treaty on European Union with little secondary legislation in place. This economic view has sometimes intentionally and in most cases unintentionally strong repercussions on the latter set of objectives, i.e. culture and democracy are strongly affected by Community media policy. Therefore, in this text the description of policy initiatives of the European Community is followed by an evaluation of their effects on media culture.

Media and in particular audio-visual media and their regulation is a fairly new policy field for the EU, with systematic activities starting only in the early 1980s. Despite its potential significance for democracy in member states and beyond, media and audio-visual policy is still treated as a peripheral sector with low political profile and insignificant budgetary provisions and personnel resources. However, its issues are highly controversial at all levels of the decision making process (Commission, Council, Parliament) and are prominently covered by the media. Also the dynamic development within the sector – multimedia, internationalization, concentration, technology and policy convergence – contrasts sharply against the background of hesitant decision making. What, at this stage, has been addressed and achieved and what is in the pipeline as regards those media currently regarded as having a 'Community dimension' (all electronic media but not the print press)?

Why not culture – rules of the game

There is no explicit point of departure for media policy in the Treaty on European Union, requiring any legislative harmonization or requesting the EU to intervene. But the treaty enshrines the four basic freedoms as 'acquis communautaire': free movement of goods, persons, services and capital (Title I and III of the treaty). The fundamental consideration establishing the responsibility of the EU for audio-visual policy was the definition of the pursuit of television broadcasting activities as a service in the meaning of the treaty. This concept derives from several judgements of the European Court of Justice (Sacchi 1974, Debaue and Coditel 1980) and subsequent considerations in the European Parliament in the early 1980s. The Commission's 1984 Green Paper 'Television without Frontiers' confirmed this view and envisaged harmonized rules for television in accordance with art. 57 para. 2 (coordination of activities of self-employed

persons) and art. 66 of the treaty. These articles are part of the chapter on the right of establishment and should facilitate self-employed persons setting up in any of the Community's member states. Television as a service is furthermore part of the single market, created by the Single European Act 1986, removing at the level of the legislation the remaining barriers to the free circulation of goods, persons, services and capital by 31 December 1992.

The obvious fact that television is not only a service in legal terms, but as much a forum for cultural expression and culture itself is strictly speaking irrelevant for EU legislation. Culture has only been included in EU policy since the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, in force since 1 November 1993. While the concept of the single market forces the Community to provide for harmonized legislation in the four domains affected, the new Title IX of the treaty explicitly excludes any harmonisation of laws and regulations on culture in the member states (art. 128). In applying the subsidiarity principle, the EU shall only intervene if the required policy objectives can only or best be pursued at EU level. Article 3b of the treaty reads:

The Community shall act within the limits of the powers conferred upon it by this treaty and of the objectives assigned to it therein. In areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Community shall take action, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community.

Any action by the Community shall not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of this Treaty.

Therefore, the treaty constrains the EU from contributing to the 'flowering of the cultures of the member states while respecting regional diversity' (Art. 128). The Commission of the European Community has no choice, the mandate from the treaty is clear. The Commission is formally obliged to provide for the free circulation of services within the territory of Member States by removing barriers to the free circulation of television services, but it must not harmonize the culture sector.

However, nothing prevents the Commission from taking cultural considerations into account when regulating the media.

The orthodoxy of audio-visual policy – objectives and results

Regulatory measures have so far been taken prudently and cautiously. The media in general and more so the audio-visual media are highly sensitive fields politically and any regulation needs careful balance. Since 1984, when the first Green Paper on audio-visual policy was adopted by the Commission, a catalogue of policy objectives has been developed, making clear that the aim is to create a common legal framework conducive to the development of a European market in broadcasting and related activities, such as television advertising and the production of audio-visual programmes, while respecting and encouraging the diversity and specificity of the audio-visual systems of the member states. This has been translated into a joint political determination to co-ordinate national legislation in order to:

- encourage the provision and movement of audio-visual services within the Union,
- develop a modern European communications infrastructure capable of strengthening the Union's economic position and hence ensuring its competitiveness in the world market,

- promote the development of the market for television advertising and for audio-visual programmes in an economic and geographic context that extends to the Community's borders,
- increase the production and distribution of European works in order to encourage national cultural industries and the expression of the cultural identity of each Member State,
- offer new outlets for the creativity of the professions and workers in the cultural field,
- encourage the development of broadcasting as a strategic sector of the Community telecommunications industry (Commission 1995:10)

These general objectives are subject to a number of policy initiatives. There are two pillars: the regulatory framework on the one hand and the financial support programmes on the other. As regards legislation, the Community's policy is still based on the Council Directive 89/552/EEC 'on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities' (hereafter: the 1989 Television Directive).

The regulatory framework

The 1989 Television Directive coordinates member states' legislation in those areas where differences between them form legal obstacles to the free movement of television broadcasts. It follows two guiding principles:

1. Each broadcaster needs to acquire authorization from only one member state, so that all activities fall under the control and jurisdiction of only one member state.
2. Member states receiving such authorised broadcasts from other member states have no right to prevent them from being received and retransmitted on their territory.

The 1989 Television Directive introduces common rules enabling any broadcasts to be received and retransmitted freely throughout the Union, as long as the broadcaster is established in a Member State and the programme complies with the law applicable in that state. The common rules affect programme promotion, jurisdiction, television advertising and sponsorship, the protection of minors and the right of reply. The 1989 Television Directive is (as all Council Directives) not directly applicable to broadcasters in member states, but has to be adopted into national legislation by the competent national authorities. This adoption had to be completed by 3 October 1991. Since then, all television broadcasts originating in one of the member states must respect the provisions of the directive. Prosecution for alleged violation, however, remains in the competence of the Member States.

The main areas of co-ordination mapped out in the 1989 Television Directive have been repeatedly discussed in literature (e.g. Hirsch and Petersen 1992, Commission, 1995). They are as follows:

- All television broadcasting services in the Union are included, covering television from point to multipoint, including Pay-TV, pay-per-view and near-video-on-demand.
- Each broadcaster shall be subject to the legislation of only one member state, which is responsible for ensuring the compliance with the provisions of the Directive.
- All Member States ensure freedom of reception and retransmission on their territory of broadcasts under the jurisdiction of another Member State (art.2 para.2 of the Directive 1989).
- In order to encourage the European programme industry, broadcasters are requested to reserve, where practicable, a majority proportion of their transmission time,

excluding time allocated to news, sports events, games, advertising and teletext services, for European works (art. 4).

- Advertising must be recognisable as such (art.10), and, as a general rule, advertising breaks are limited to one interruption for each 45-minute-period (art. 11).
- No advertising to be allowed for tobacco products (art. 13), and restrictions apply to advertising for medicinal products (art. 14) and alcohol (art. 15).
- Broadcasts involving pornography or gratuitous violence are to be banned and, as a general rule, programmes must not be seriously harmful to minors, unless the time of the broadcast or a technical measure is selected so that minors will not normally hear or see such broadcasts (art. 22).
- no television programme may contain incitement to hatred on grounds of race, sex, religion or nationality (art. 22).
- appropriate rules of civil, administrative or criminal law must ensure a right of reply as regards alleged damage to any personal right.

The Commission as guardian of Community legislation had to examine the implementation of the provisions of the 1989 Television Directive into national legislation. By the end of 1995, infringement procedures against two Member States were forwarded to the European Court of Justice because the national legislation failed to comply with the Directive (Commission 1995:13).

After being in force for five years, a number of shortfalls have shown up in the text of the directive. The Commission has observed its obligation to evaluate the application of the text not later than five years after its adoption (art. 26 thereof). Not only had the number of broadcasters affected by the directive grown; the competition between old and new broadcasters shed some light on what were presumed to be less important parts of the text. Therefore, definitions had to be revised and loopholes closed to ensure clear and equal rules for all competitors. Other issues which emerged during the first five years of the directive were questions such as how to deal with new communication services which are no longer pure mass communication (point-to-multipoint): should they be treated equally to classic broadcasters or should they be guided by different rules? The most important application problems brought to the attention of the Commission arose around three issues:

- The definition of which member state has jurisdiction over which broadcaster constantly led to dispute. There have been cases of no states accepting responsibility and of more than one state claiming jurisdiction. These cases were detrimental to the legal status of the affected broadcasters.
- Teleshopping developed into a valuable service in its own right. At the time of drafting the directive, teleshopping was seen as an additional way of financing existing broadcasters, but over the five years advertisers in some Member States sought licenses for pure teleshopping channels. As teleshopping is limited by the 1989 directive to one hour per day, such services are excluded.
- Most controversially, the debate about the means of obtaining the objective of a strong European audio-visual industry focused on the obligation to reserve a majority proportion of airtime for European works. The interpretation of the famous wording in art. 4 and 5 of the directive is asked again and again, i.e. 'where practicable and by appropriate means'. While one school of thought considers this in contradiction with the programming freedom of the broadcaster and above all simply useless, the other school of thought estimates it the cornerstone of any culture oriented media policy. The Commission finally suggested tightening the text by deleting the wording 'where practicable' in art. 4 and 5, but limiting its application time to ten years.

On 31 May 1995, the Commission presented its proposal for amendment of the television directive to the Council and Parliament (Commission, 1995). Since then, the French, the Spanish and the Italian presidencies in the Council of Ministers have tried to unite the governments of the member states in order to adopt the amendments according to the co-decision procedure (article 189b of the Treaty). However, it took the ministers until the Cultural/Audiovisual Council in Brussels on 20 November 1995 to present a political compromise which accepts the changes in definitions, the liberalized rules for teleshopping but they refused any tightening of the European content rules (*The Financial Times* 21 November 1995). The Parliament, in turn, suggested some 60 amendments after the first reading in February 1996. The next step in the procedure was the adoption by a qualified majority of the 'joint position' of the Culture/Audiovisual Council of Ministers on 11 June 1996, which differs considerably from what the European Parliament suggested. In particular, new point-to-point services are excluded from the definition of broadcasting and the ambiguous wording of articles 4 and 5 remained in the text (Agence Europe 13 June 1996). It must be stressed that the 1989 directive remains in force until any amendment is finally adopted.

Financial support programmes

In parallel and complementary to the regulatory framework, the Commission has initiated three financial instruments in support of the same policy objectives. Firstly, since 1991 (with a pilot phase before that) the Community has been making funds available for the audio-visual industry, focusing on the pre- and postproduction phase of all kinds of audio-visual works (MEDIA). In an attempt to involve professional circles as closely as possible in the process of awarding grants, thus making best use of professional know-how, some nineteen structures throughout the Community were entrusted with the management of different sections of the overall budget of 200 million ECUs over the period 1991 to 1995. Some of these structures did fairly well – such as EFDO and SCRIPT – others did not. All of them, however, employed staff, rented office space and undertook the utmost efforts to make themselves known as major players to professionals all over Europe. The Committee, representing member states' interests, was not always best informed about the structures' activities and it came as no surprise when the Commission announced on 8 February 1995 the plan for the follow-up programme MEDIA II (1996–2000) without these structures (Commission, 1995a). This proposal was formulated in the light of the extensive consultative process which followed from the publication in April 1994 of a Commission Green Paper on strengths and weaknesses of the audio-visual production industry (Commission, 1994a). The options in the Green Paper were discussed in detail during a conference convened by Commissioner Joao de Deus Pinheiro in June/July 1994 and the assembled celebrities underlined the importance of a large scale support programme, suggesting as a 'realistic solution' to allocate 'one per cent of the Community budget to this fund. Compared with expenditure on agriculture or structural activities, this figure is relatively modest' (Jack Lang 1995:106). Despite that modesty, the funds finally allocated to MEDIA II turned out to be less ambitious.

MEDIA II

Compared to the first MEDIA programme, the Commission managed to increase the MEDIA II budget by 50 per cent, up to 310 million ECUs for five years and to focus the programme on the three 'actions', development, distribution and training, instead of spreading the money over numerous projects. For legal reasons, two Council Decisions were adopted for the new programme:

- on 10 July 1995, decisions on development and distribution (Council Decision 95/563/EC) and

- on 22 December 1995 decisions on training (Council Decision 95/564/EC) (both published in the Official Journal of the European Communities on 30 December 1995, L 321/25 - 38).

The underlying objectives of the whole MEDIA II programme are to increase the competitiveness of the audio-visual industry by supporting the development of projects with real distribution potential while respecting European linguistic and cultural diversity, with particular focus on the development of the potential in countries or regions with a low capacity for audio-visual production and/or restricted geographical and linguistic area. Special attention is paid to the development and use of new communications technologies in the area of programme (content) production. The three action lines target different beneficiaries.

Producers of audio-visual works in the area of drama, documentaries and animation for cinema and television will profit from the development schemes by being granted assistance for scripting techniques and for the establishment of financial arrangements and business plans. Particular attention will be paid to companies developing project packages with European and world market potential and to encouraging their networking. The same applies to companies in the sectors of new technology and animation.

As regards distribution, beneficiaries will profit from repayable subsidies granted to cinema distributors and video publishers who contribute to establishing networks of distributors in Europe and who invest in the promotion and distribution of European films. Furthermore, distribution support is granted to distributors in proportion to the cinema attendance for European works shown outside their national territory. This support can only be used by distributors investing in the production of European films and in order to meet promotion and advertising costs. In addition, distribution support is granted to those cinema exhibitors who show European films in commercial first run cinemas for a specific minimum period of exhibition time.

Finally, initiatives will be supported by MEDIA II focusing on initial and continuing professional training in the fields of management and new technologies, enhancing the European film and audio-visual heritage. Training initiatives eligible for MEDIA II funds may concern the development, production or distribution and the broadcasting of audio-visual works and all steps necessary in the whole production - distribution chain. Particular emphasis is put on co-operation between different training institutions.

In all three actions, the Commission takes the final decisions on the projects to be supported. It will be assisted by four intermediary organizations, preparing the dossiers and formulating proposals for the Commission (one for each action and one for financial aspects). In the case of large scale projects, the Commission must consult the MEDIA Committee before deciding. With this new programme in place, the Commission has tighter control over the funds distributed throughout the Member States and can better monitor the effects of the funding.

Action plan on advanced television

The second financial support mechanism created by the Community is the Action Plan for the Introduction of Advanced Television Services in Europe, which started in 1993 with Council Decision 93/424/EEC (Official Journal L 196/48 of 5.8.1993). It was launched with the ambition of creating a critical mass of audio-visual content to boost the sale of wide-screen television sets (16:9 format compared with the traditional 4:3). With an overall budget of 228 million ECUs for four years (July 1993 - June 1997) the Action Plan covers a part of the additional cost deriving from the distribution of audio-visual works in the new format or, respectively, from shooting in or from transforming existing audio-visual works into the new format. In its first progress report the Commission underlines encouraging development signs and the interest of commercial operators in advanced services. It concludes:

The Commission considers the introduction of the 16:9 format to be a strategic element which the audio-visual and consumer electronics market actors can offer the public in the convergent future of the Information Society, rich in new services and products. Commission, 1995b:49

European guarantee fund

The third initiative, the European Guarantee Fund to promote cinema and television production, was presented by the Commission on 14 November 1995 with a view to offering some guarantees to the financial institutions in the Member States, which are remarkably slow as regards financing the audio-visual sector. The concept of the funds starts from the fact that small and medium sized firms are often confronted with insurmountable difficulties obtaining outside funding on the financial markets. But only a critical mass of productions would enable them to build up the necessary capital. The aim of the Guarantee Funds is to mobilize resources on a large scale by providing guarantees for short-term credit operations and individual long-term loans, covering no more than fifty per cent of credits and loans. The funds shall be financially managed by the European Investment Fund and should operate with a total of 200 million ECUs, of which 90 million ECUs should be contributed by the Community (Commission 1995c). However, this project of the Commission has yet to be examined and a final decision taken by the competent Community institutions.

Growth and no limits – competition and media concentration

But it is not alone orthodox audio-visual policy which creates a favourable or unfavourable business environment for the media; at least as important are the rules and regulations determining competition between companies and across borders. Concern in the media field with regard to competition policy derived from the mid 1980s when in most Member States the public broadcasting systems were transformed into dual public/private systems, thus creating competition. It was only a question of time before the first unfair competition complaints were launched on the ground of mixed financed television channels (license fee and advertising) against purely advertising financed television broadcasters. So far, three private stations from France, Spain and Portugal have complained against these practices, but the Commission has not yet ruled on them. In reacting to concern expressed by some of the German Länder, the (then) President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, emphasized that the Commission is not questioning the concept of public service and its important obligations (Dörr 1996:90). However, distortion of competition can happen only when the rival companies are active in the same market. In most member states the market for the public service programmes are quite distinct from private channels. There is hardly ever competition in the markets served by public service; it is only in the market for advertising that competition arises. The Commission has launched a study on the subject (European Voice 11 January 1996).

Little progress has been made on the subject of media concentration and its effect on pluralism and the functioning of the internal market, trans-frontier competition and on the development of the Information Society. It is recalled that the European Parliament on several occasions raised the issue in the late 1980s and helped to convince the Commission to present a Green Paper in December 1992 (Commission 1992). This Green Paper refers to the need to complete the internal market also in the area of the mass media and therefore, action might be necessary to fulfil the requirements laid down by the Single European Act, establishing the internal market. The Green Paper analyses the existing legislation in twelve Member States of the Community and points out elements which might disturb the functioning of the internal market. The Commission concludes by putting forward for comment three options:

1. taking no action
2. proposing a recommendation to enhance transparency
3. proposing the harmonisation of national restrictions on media ownership by (a) a Council Directive, (b) a Council Regulation, or (c) a directive or a regulation together with an independent committee (Commission 1992:9 and 112ff).

Consequently and unsurprisingly, the consultation process yielded controversial and voluminous results and a second communication from the Commission was adopted in October 1994, summing up the reactions in professional circles (Commission 1994b). This document adds another perspective to the problem of media concentration. Not only have the traditional media to be examined against the background of potentially harmful barriers to pluralism, but also the development of the European section of the global information highway has to be taken into consideration. It is the mixture of different layers of the problem that complicates decision-making. The internal market requires the abolition of all obstacles to free circulation of media companies. Equally, the protection of diversity as a cultural and democratic value needs to be taken into account. And thirdly, the promising concept of the Information Society must not be impeded by strict rules. All three layers contain contradictory arguments and a political solution has to be found.

Media concentration and its potentially harmful effects have also been dealt with from the competition policy point of view. Council Regulation No 4064/89 on the control of concentrations between companies of 21 December 1989 gives specific importance to media mergers. Article 21 of this regulation stipulates that the plurality of the media figures among those legitimate interests which justify appropriate measures at the level of the Member States, contrary to the general principle that the Commission has sole competence to take decisions in the area provided for by the Regulation.

Furthermore, the merger regulation requires the Commission to be notified of all intended mergers with a combined turnover above a certain level and with a Community dimension, in so far as the merger might create a player with a dominant market position. According to Commissioner Karel Van Miert, responsible for competition policy, the media sector requires particular attention. This increased alertness on the part of the Commission is reflected by the fact that out of the four mergers the Commission has blocked between 1990 and early 1996, three have been media joint ventures (Van Miert at the EBU-Conference on The Information Society For All, Brussels 7 March 1996).

Policy beyond frontiers – relations with third countries

Community policy is no longer confined to the limits of its territory. Multilateral contracts of varying scope extend parts of the *acquis communautaire* or elements of its policy across community borders. The audio-visual sector is one of those parts of the *acquis* which has found its way beyond member states. The first step was undertaken by the Community by accepting as European works from countries which had concluded agreements with the Community for the purpose of calculating the majority proportion of transmission time for broadcasters (art. 6 para. 3, 1989 Television Directive).

The first group of countries integrated into the Community audio-visual policy were the EFTA states (with the remarkable exception of Switzerland), which accepted the 1989 Television Directive and gained access to the MEDIA programme by virtue of the European Economic Area Agreement. This has been in force since 1 January 1994. Secondly, a series of European agreements has opened the audio-visual sector, among other policy fields, to Central and Eastern European Countries. By April 1996, European agreements had been concluded with Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Rumania and the Slovak Republic. In 1995 similar agreements with the three Baltic States and Slovenia were prepared. All these agreements contain specific

provisions for the participation of the respective country in the audio-visual policy. They require the parties to 'coordinate and where appropriate harmonize their policies concerning the regulation of cross-border broadcasting, technical norms in the audio-visual field, and the promotion of European audio-visual technology'. Furthermore, the European agreements are supplemented by additional protocols, stipulating that these countries may participate on equal footing with Member States in specific community programmes, as long as they pay for the cost of their participation.

Thirdly, the republics of Cyprus and Malta joined in as the pre-accession strategy allows them to establish close links with the community in various policy fields. The participation of all these countries is also addressed in the two Council decisions establishing MEDIA II, stipulating in article 6 that the programme is open to the participation of:

- the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe in accordance with the conditions laid down in the additional protocols to the association agreements on participation in Community programmes concluded or to be concluded with those countries,
- Cyprus, Malta and EFTA countries, members of the EEA Agreement, on the basis of additional contributions in accordance with the same rules as applied to EFTA States; procedures are to be agreed with these countries, and
- other non-member countries which have concluded agreements containing audio-visual clauses. The arrangement for this participation or co-operation is to be fixed at the appropriate time between the parties concerned.

Consequently, audio-visual policy is extending its scope beyond the Community member states, most significantly in those Central and Eastern European countries using the 1989 Television Directive as a model for drafting their own national broadcasting legislation. For example, the Hungarian broadcasting law finally adopted in December 1995 after several years of internal consultation refers closely to the wording of the directive as far as advertising, content rules and the protection of minors are concerned.

Telecommunication prevails – audio-visual's destiny

The Community's debate on future media policy is framed within the concept of the Information Society (hereafter IS). There has been US-European competition in coining the terms for the new opportunities which are being created by the rapid development of information and communications technologies. While the US Government invented the National Information Infrastructure (NII) in September 1993 by publishing its initial report, the European Union's Commission referred in its White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment* in December 1993 to the Information Society (Commission 1993). In this White Paper the IS was declared the centrepiece of the economic future in Europe by drawing up an action plan based on the following five priorities: (1) to promote the use of information technologies, (2) to provide basic trans-European services, (3) to create an appropriate regulatory framework, (4) to develop training on new technologies and (5) to improve industrial and technological performance.

The priority list was extended and complemented by the report on the IS by the High-Level Group, chaired by Commissioner Bangemann (High-Level Group 1994), which was requested by the European Council held in Brussels in December 1993 to study specific measures to be taken into consideration by the Community and the Member States for infrastructures in the sphere of information. This report became known as the Bangemann-Report; it puts emphasis on the role of the private sector in financing the expected and required investments and calls for extensive removal of legislative barriers in infrastructure sectors and services still operating under monopoly conditions. Mass

media do not figure as priority areas in the Bangemann Report, it is only media concentration which concerns the report's authors. Actually, the report suggests the establishment of rules at European level to avoid inconsistent national ownership control regulations, which might 'impede companies from taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the internal market, especially in multimedia, and could put them in jeopardy vis-a-vis non-European competitors' (High-Level Group 1994:19).

More detailed reference to mass media is made in the Commission's Action Plan 'Europe's way to the IS', adopted in July 1994 (Commission, 1994), which is presented as an response to the Bangemann Report. One of the areas covered by the Action Plan is the regulatory and legal framework for telecommunications infrastructure and services, as well as for media concentration and the free movement of television broadcasts in the Community (Commission, 1994:2). The Action Plan acknowledges the specific and important role traditional television will play in the environment of new services by extending the IS into the homes. However, the Action Plan has not much to offer on how to integrate television into the IS. The need for the revision of the 1989 Television Directive is underlined, but no proposals are made regarding the regulation of new services or content.

However, it is in the chapter on social, societal and cultural aspects that the Action Plan makes clear that 'cultural goods, especially cinema and television programmes, cannot be treated like other products: they are the privileged mediums of identity, pluralism and integration and retain their specificity within the framework of new multimedia products and services' (Commission, 1994:14). Audio-visual works, therefore, are granted a distinct role in the conception of the IS. They will function as well established applications of the IS, much requested by the general public, with the potential of activating people to make use of these technologies to get access to their favourite programmes or films. Preferential treatment will therefore be granted to audio-visual works and according to the Action Plan, they will have to 'play a crucial role in delivering the benefits of the IS' (Commission, 1994:14).

It is to be concluded from the Community documents framing the challenges and opportunities created by the concept of the IS that detailed analysis of sectorial consequences for the media is still missing. The list of uncertainties for media operators and the general public is long and of political relevance:

- What media fall under broadcasting legislation, which under telecommunication legislation?
- Is conventional national and international media law applicable to services on individual request?
- Which regulatory regime is to be imposed on hybrid media such as video-on-demand? Is self-regulation by operators feasible?
- Which law generally applies to any kind of information service available on publicly accessible networks?
- Who is to be held responsible for content on these networks infringing criminal law, breaking decency rules, launching totalitarian or racist campaigns, disseminating gratuitous violent content or advertising banned products and services?
- What are the competition prospects of existing media vis-à-vis more individualized media?
- How can equal access to information be guaranteed for the general public? How can equal access to the networks be provided for service providers?
- How can high quality information be made available to the general public at affordable prices?

- How can the benefits of public service broadcasting be preserved in deregulated broadcasting? Is it acceptable to society if the notion of universal service replaces public service?
- Is there demand for new media or information services? How can it be created in order to achieve the objectives of growth and employment?

One of the most important factors, distinguishing conventional media from new communications technologies, is the diminishing role of the editor. While all legally made available media have to contain information on the responsible editor, such information on networks are not necessarily earmarked. But not only transparency is eroding; the various functions of the editor are at stake as well. As every user of information networks becomes a potential sender, reliability cannot be assured by means of media legislation. Responsibility at the user's end of the information chain will further increase, when no editor guarantees if a piece of information is true or false, genuine or manipulated. Clearly, today's conventional media are also exposed to fake news and rely sometimes on dubious information sources, but in this case, professional journalists are selecting the news and it is the professional experience of the editor which makes the difference.

Some of these concerns are reflected in the release of a first report prepared by the High Level Group of Experts, which was established in May 1995 as part of the Commission's Action Plan on the social and societal aspects of the Information Society (High Level Group, 1996). The group examined the consequences of the IS for work organization, labour markets, social and regional cohesion, education, health, democracy, culture and the media. The latter section of the report is dominated by three main concerns: firstly, new technologies could strongly boost concentration of media ownership in a few large and very powerful hands, with the potential loss of diversity of opinion and pluralism (High Level Group, 1996:71); secondly, restrictions on access could divide society and deprive large sections from information which is necessary for the proper functioning of a democratic society; and thirdly, quality standards might undergo serious erosion.

Part of the policy package developed should be a guarantee of access to high-quality information for all. ICTs [Information and Communications Technologies, the author] will certainly result in the availability of high quality media for those who can afford it. But, in the mass market, economies of scale in the production and distribution may lead to lower quality, but globally available media programming. The social value of access to high quality programming and information at a low cost, in the public service tradition, should not be underestimated. A split between information rich and information poor, could undermine the cohesion and democratic base of the IS (High Level Group, 1996: 72).

Furthermore, the High Level Group criticises the absence of serious analysis of the implications of the introduction of the IS on the cultural sector and concludes that there are major challenges in the area of culture and the media, given its importance as an economic sector in its own right, its centrality in cultural and political life, the problems of control over quality and reliability of information, and the need to protect the producers of information (High Level Group, 1996: 19). However, the Group has not yet suggested specific guidelines to overcome the potential risks of the IS in this area, but perhaps this would go beyond their mandate.

Conclusions – tendencies and trends

- The complicated and heavy-handed decision-making process within the European Communities tends to impede the attempt to address and guide rapid development in the dynamic media sector. New technologies allow new ways of reaching mass

audiences beyond borders. The Community needs to become the main actor in this borderless media space, but lacks efficient structures to cope with this challenge.

- Consequently, media policy initiatives shift away from the constitutional decision-making bodies at European level (Council of Ministers in liaison with the Parliament), back to either the national level or, most significantly, to the courts or court-alike structures³. The importance of competition policy will further increase vis-à-vis media ownership concentration and the establishment of dominant positions.
- Media policy and in particular audio-visual policy has not achieved most of its ambitious objectives of growth and regain of market share in the European markets. On the contrary, compared with 1984 the audio-visual industry has further lost ground to non-European media conglomerates with little response.
- Community media policy is open to the participation of European third countries. Both the legislative framework and the financial support programmes are becoming applicable to a wide range of countries from central and eastern Europe, to Mediterranean and Nordic countries. A virtual European area for television is emerging.
- In its support policy, the European Community has learnt from previous experience and is concentrating the available funds on those elements in the audio-visual production-distribution chain which are identified as the weakest. However, the amount of available funds does not correspond to the ambitious economic objectives pursued.
- New communication technologies add additional channels to transport identical contents to a mass audience. These new channels of distribution have little bearing on quality or the professional principles of mass communication. Nevertheless, technology convergence will bring the question of the legitimacy of European audio-visual policy beyond mere frequency or capacity allocation back to the agenda on policy.

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Children and Television Advertising

Editorial Note

During the summer of 1995, the incoming RTÉ Authority decided to curtail the amount of television advertising broadcast during children's afternoon programming. That decision sparked a public debate on the issue. As part of its commitment to provide a public forum for discussion of broadcasting issues, a one-day seminar was organized by *Irish Communications Review* in association with the RTÉ Trade Union Group and the RTÉ Participation Forum on the issue of 'Children and Television Advertising'. It was held in the Dublin Institute of Technology at Aungier Street on 21 October, 1995; over one hundred broadcasters, advertising practitioners, educationalists, academics and others attended and contributed to a lively and stimulating exchange of views. Below are the edited transcripts of three of the major contributions to that seminar.

Media, children and RTÉ

Farrell Corcoran

Farrell Corcoran is Professor of Communications at Dublin City University, and Chairperson, RTÉ Authority.

Research on media and children

I am particularly frustrated by the lack of debate on issues concerning the media and children in this country. That may be a sweeping statement but we tend to react rather than take an active interest in trying to influence things. These reactions tend to be shaped by moral panics. There is nothing as depressing as a moral panic that arises, usually in the area of violence, every year or two, in response to something happening near us, for example in Manchester, Liverpool or perhaps closer to home. The same tired old arguments and positions are taken with little sign of real thinking or that, as an educated adult group, we are moving on and informing ourselves a little more about the issues. That is my way of saying that I think this conference is a great idea and the organizers are to be praised for getting it together.

Obviously, television is a huge presence in our lives and particularly in the lives of our children. This is a startling fact of life, and yet we seem to have very little knowledge as parents, as teachers and as other professionals of its effects or how it works. Neither have we mechanisms for gaining new knowledge or looking at the results of research and beginning to apply them.

To set today's issue – advertising, television advertising and children – in a broader context for a moment: there are many concerns dealing with children and television that are studied and converge on today's topic. Usually they come under different headings or are classified in different ways but they include such issues as the information processing skills of children and how they develop across age, gender and social classes. There is much interest in children's perception of reality: What is reality? How real is the world of television, often referred to as modality? What is the modality of a particular television programme or commercial for a particular kind of child or age? Much work has also been done on patterns of attention to the stimuli coming from the television screen, both audio and visual. Again this is relevant to any intelligent discussion of advertising as a particular branch of programming. How do schema or mental models of the world develop in children?

We do know that something begins to happen in children when they get a schema or model to interpret or to assign meaning to television programmes. We need to track how that grows, particularly in relationship to different categories. How does a child know, for instance, that a particular mental model can be applied to interpreting the information from a cartoon as distinct from an actuality programme or a commercial? There is an evolving body of knowledge that looks at how children think, what goes on in their cognitive activity and how they think through the television materials that surround them, in many cases virtually all day. All this is astounding when comparisons are conducted on how much time children in different countries, including Ireland, spend in front of a television set.

Many studies have been done on the impact of television on children's creativity and growth of imagination. Again, it behooves us to ask the question: to what extent do we want to cultivate creativity in the whole younger generation in any country? To what extent is the ability to think creatively a national asset for survival and development as a nation in the future? I think it is an interesting area to look at.

Other studies look at the impact of different quantities of television viewing on children's ability in school – their performance, their reading ability and the development of their world view and belief systems. Attitude change is another fascinating area: to what extent do television materials of whatever kind change attitudes and, in particular, affect stereotyping? Do gender, ageist, racist and class stereotypes affect the representation of poverty? To what extent do they affect children's evolving attitudes to so-called real life?

There are also studies on how children use television: what are the patterns of use? what are the gratifications that children seek when they turn to television at a particular time as distinct from going out to kick a football? Some of these studies examine the displacement effect: what does television displace? There are only twenty four hours on the clock, so how do the different leisure activities of children work into that? What is pushed aside? And of course, the old hardy chestnut comes back all the time: violence. What is the relationship between depictions of violence on television and real life aggression?

I would like to argue that television advertising should be seen in a holistic way, part of a much larger environment. Television is a huge symbolic environment for children today. It replaces older symbolic environments that used to be controlled by village elders, parents, churches and urban or rural cultures. Today, we are increasingly convinced, especially in Western countries, that television is a huge shaper of our whole symbolic environment, what we call culture – that which we carry around in our heads, our feelings, ideas, attitudes, etc. This refers not just to television advertising, but television across the full range of its output.

But it is not television all by itself. It includes other media which are available to children, including computer games. It also includes what media theorists call the intertextual area, where certain meanings, symbols and icons get chained out across a great number of areas. Typical examples might be where Hollywood uses *Jurassic Park* or *Batman*; as a result, we have dinosaurs and Batmen reproduced across a huge range of media, including lunchboxes, mugs, pyjamas, etc. In other words, we are no longer talking about the spot television advertisement but a complete symbolic environment.

Consequently, we should have a holistic approach to research to understand these areas. The thorny issues of policy and regulation, what we should do about our convictions and our findings, also need to consider the total environment of children. But you might ask: who cares? People are working in university departments and think-tanks producing certain types of knowledge. Knowledge is also generated by parents observing their children, by social activists, by teachers. But how does this information get focused towards any kind of action? This is something that concerns me.

'Civil Society'

The concept of 'civil society', which has caught on more in Eastern Europe than in the West, may be useful to this discussion. Civil society means simply the organization of human thinking and activity not associated with government or market forces. It is people's movements: social activists and all kinds of organizations involved in bettering human life socially. In some countries, civil society, particularly in relation to children and children's media, is quite advanced. In the US, for instance, there has been a very active group called Action for Children's Television. The American Academy of Pediatrics has been involved in an organized way. There is also a very interesting movement, in which I was involved some years ago, called Parent Participation in TV Workshops; it was funded by a foundation that was neutral in this matter but worked hard to get parents interested in children's television, in watching with them, and in studying scripts of programmes prior to broadcast. It developed an interest in not shunning the television and turning away from it but in rolling up the sleeves and getting in there with children and doing some co-viewing. Research has shown that co-viewing, parents or older siblings watching television with children, is extremely beneficial; it helps children to read the output of television in a more intelligent or real way.

In the UK, there are also a number of groups; the National Food Alliance is building an umbrella organization of groups worried about diet – the sugary and salty food problem in advertising aimed at children. In other European countries, consumer rights associations spend some of their energies thinking and talking about television. There are also viewers and listeners associations.

In contrast, Ireland is weak in this area of civil society. We have wonderful pub and one-to-one discussions but little by way of organized discussion focused on policy reform. One way forward is to build bridges between broadcasters, advertisers, educators, parents, and opportunities and issues like this one today, where we can listen to each other. We can argue and we can disagree but at least we can listen to each other. I know the National Parents Council does look at this issue from time to time and is beginning to raise awareness; I welcome this development.

Policy Reform

Is there a need for some kind of media policy reform when we think about children: Who they are? How children use television, etc.? I am convinced that there is such a need but it must be continual, not controversy-based. We need to be continually aware of children's rights, how to protect them and how to advance them. The media environment in which children live is changing rapidly, profoundly and continually; for that reason alone we cannot stand back and say that the feelings, results and attitudes of yesterday are current tomorrow. A society that gives up on thinking about its children and their rights is lazy.

The area of policy and regulation is what media people call a 'site of contestation'. It is a difficult area; we will disagree, we will argue. There are different interests involved because it is about finding a balanced point between the rights of children and the rights of other groups in society: for example, the 'right' of producers to produce material, to have it distributed around the world, and the 'right' to advertise products. All of these are sometimes in opposition to each other. It is something that needs to be talked through rationally; it is also a situation in which I would love to see children's rights kept on the agenda.

Policy in my view must be broadfronted rather than narrow cast; it must also be empowering. We should also examine where children are presently situated developmentally, and if it is possible to give them some power to deal with the huge symbolic environment in which they have to grow up. I am talking about media education. It is time that we say to the politicians and people who control resources that

they look at the real world of children and pay attention, in the school curriculum, to that which they spend many hours a day doing.

We have run away from the issue of media education; we have shunned it. This may be unfair but I think we are only nibbling at the issue by trying to influence the curriculum in very small ways. If you talk to teachers, there is a large problem with in-service teaching. Many people ask: What are media skills? What is televisual literacy? It is not enough to say go out there and teach it; we have got to actually put resources into empowering children to deal with the environment in which they find themselves. Part of that would include demystifying the media, teaching children the processes behind certain phenomena in the world, bringing forward their skills at an earlier age. For example, helping them to discriminate a little bit in advertising; to think, as older children can, about what are the advantages and disadvantages of a product or a service? How do television programmes get made in the first place? Where does advertising fit in? How do they get made? And so on.

The core of the problem seems to be the following: Firstly, children are economic actors. We do not like to face up to this but it is true, in the sense that children exercise quite considerable power on the purchasing decisions of adults. They have an influence on adults' purchasing decisions. This is a very bald statement that must be qualified with all the subtleties of demographics: it is not true of all families, it is not true of all kids, and there are variables that would make this a much more sensitive and refined description, but I am throwing out a generalization.

Secondly, just like adults, if we are talking about commercial television or even a system like RTE which is partially commercial in its funding, the attention of children is sold to advertisers. Just like adults, their attention has to be captured, maintained and sold on to advertisers. That is the basis of how television works. So this brings up the whole question of fairness. One of the oldest principles in selling is the notion of *caveat emptor*: 'let the buyer beware'. When we try to persuade someone to purchase a service or a product, the person must be smart enough to ask the questions, to be critical, to back away, and then say, 'Yes, that's just for me'. Young children, however, do not have the ability to decide the selling or persuasive intent behind the service or product because of their particular stage of cognitive and emotional development. The same questions of fairness can be asked about other classes of people in society, such as mentally disabled people, whose cognitive skills are not on a par with adults.

These are very bald statements; I will not waste time making all the reservations that should be made: it depends on social class, the sort of cultural capital that children are lucky enough to have available to them in some families or unlucky enough not to have in others. However, it is a question that can not be brushed aside; as adults, in a democracy, in charge of our own environment, we have to ask whether there are ethical questions about the persuasive activity aimed at children.

Television advertising is not the same as advertising in the classified pages of newspapers; there, information is laid out in a linear way. Great care and expense is exerted in making commercials and they use a variety of techniques that are attractive to children. Observation studies of children's interaction with television tell us much about their attention level, the speed, camera angles, colour, music, a narrative line, etc., all of the aspects of a short commercial, that have quite an allure. While teenagers are fascinated by it, they are not taken in as are young children and are motivated to see how they are constructed; in many cases, the ads are created in a much better way than much of the programming in which they are embedded.

There is also the question of 'pester power'; the fact that pressure is exerted within families from children. Again, this is a problem from which we cannot shy away, particularly where peer pressure puts children under unsustainable pressure to purchase even where the family income does not allow it. In addition, there is great disquiet not just in a small segment of society but in many segments of society about

this pester power. This is not a problem unique to Ireland; it arises in many countries and there is much written on the subject.

What should be done?

Firstly, television is part of a huge symbolic environment, very complex and interrelated, in which our children are brought up today. Other structures of meaning that used to exist have dissolved or are rapidly dissolving as we get ready to exit from this century. Therefore, we need to pay a great deal of attention to this symbolic environment.

Secondly, broadcasters have many different kinds of audiences. They can be looked at on an age, gender or class scale, etc. Children are a special minority; they are a special audience. They need a certain amount of protection, a certain amount of empowerment. How do we do this? How do we translate this into action? One way is to limit advertiser's access to young children. A study commissioned by RTÉ in August 1995 found that a majority of adults with young children responded 'Yes' to the statement that there is too much advertising during children's programmes. The same survey also found that over 60 per cent of parents responded positively to the statements: 'We do not want to have any ads aimed at children during children's programmes' and 'There should be more regulation of what is broadcast during children's programmes'.

It is true that we must be very circumspect about quick dipstick research using qualitative methods; moreover, we can argue continually about the methodology. I am, however, using these figures to point out that there is a feeling that something should be done to limit advertiser's access to young children. This is not just a perception in the minds of academics or in the RTÉ Authority. Rather, I would like to think that the RTÉ Authority is reflecting the feelings in the country.

Other things also need to be done. Media education can be used to provide children with the cognitive skills that they need, and to balance the pressures that they feel. We need to begin this at an earlier age.

Thirdly, I would like to see something done to boost parent's and teacher's interest in television and television-related issues.

Fourthly, I would like to see us work towards some kind of level playing field at an international level to protect children's rights because every national broadcaster is working in a competitive environment which is international. We are dealing with a large number of terrestrial, cable and satellite-direct-to-home channels. This is not going to stop; the number of channels is going to increase. It makes sense for at least one broadcaster to say 'if we're going to make some changes in what we do, wouldn't it be nice to see others do the same?' In addition, Ireland is a small country, non-aligned in terms of an imperial past. We can set an example; we can begin to argue in the right places that others should come on board and form a consensus around some of these issues. There will be a lot of argument, debate and disagreement but I am an optimist; I would love to see movement towards some kind of consensus at an international level.

RTÉ Authority Policy

I want to move on to the recent RTÉ action and what was decided regarding advertising and children's programming. I will refer to the general policy decision but to no detail that has revenue implications or how it is to be operationalized: which days of the week, hours, programmes or commercial breaks. This is because there is a danger of somebody like me in a forum like this giving information that is not fully thought through, that is not detailed enough and that clashes with the information which interested parties should get from RTÉ executives who implement policy.

What was the decision of the RTÉ Authority? Firstly, being conscious of the public service broadcasting tradition but also of the dual funding situation in which RTÉ has grown up, the Authority stressed that children are a very special audience. It was decided that there should be no commercial break immediately before, during, or after a programme directed at pre-school children.

Secondly, it decided that RTÉ should reduce commercial breaks to a maximum of two in any clock hour, with a minimum of twenty minutes between breaks. It was also decided to move in the other direction: to produce and broadcast 'infomercials', short commercial-like messages with the feel, production values and quality of commercials but aimed at boosting the power that children need to deal with the symbolic environment in which they live. This would mean supporting the relationship between parents and children, putting out messages such as 'children can not always have what they want', 'Santa Claus does not have a bottomless pocket', 'all that glitters is not gold', etc. The intention is to try and reduce unreal expectations that children may and do have, partly as a result of advertising and partly as a result of peer pressure. This is a kind of cultural penetration that exists even if you do not look at television; the desire for goods that floats in the culture and is picked up from other children and places in our society.

This policy has to be implemented. RTÉ is funded in a dual way; it is not purely public service broadcasting organization; it is quite different from the BBC. RTÉ is dual funded by money from the public and the market. This means that over the past three decades, RTÉ has built up a very long and good relationship with the advertising industry. There have been some wobbles recently, partly because of the way in which the decision was announced but co-operation with advertisers is an essential part of RTÉ. It is very important that RTÉ respect that trust and the contractual obligations, whether explicit or implicit, entered into and that the policy be worked out carefully to take all of these things into account.

Trading relationships are very important and they cannot be rudely disturbed, interrupted or whatever. This is a fact of life for RTÉ. Other commercial practicalities need to be borne in mind: that we live in a competitive environment, and that children watch television and are exposed to television advertising across a range of terrestrial and cable satellite-delivered channels. TV3 will probably be on air during 1997. It is also unlikely that RTÉ will become funded solely by public money. Therefore, it will continue to be part of a commercial, competitive environment. RTÉ needs to be funded adequately, and there are arguments about the license fee, how low it is, and how long it has been frozen. But these are day-today realities.

For me personally, it has been very interesting to come from an academic environment where one has reasonable freedom to talk about research and its discoveries, to sift through that critically, and to talk about policy. But it is also interesting to find myself part of the RTÉ Authority, having to look at the realities on the ground. Because of its dual funding structure, there will always be contradictions between the public broadcasting remit and commercial imperatives. That has been part of the history of RTÉ since its foundation; it can not be wiped out. Maybe there are ways in which this can be turned to creative good rather than being seen as negative. It is my hope that through patient talking and listening to each other, we should be able to protect the rights of children.

View of advertising practitioners

Peter O'Keeffe

Peter O'Keeffe is the Managing Director of CDP Associates, Ltd., Advertising and President, Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland.

Approach to advertising

I am concerned to make the case for the rights and liberties to communicate commercial advertising messages to children. Consequently, I am amused by the identification of advertising with witchcraft; witches ceased to be burned a long time ago. However, this comparison, illustrates the excessive concern shown about how strangely influential advertising is.

I will outline the views of advertising practitioners, on behalf of IAPI, the clients we represent, the people working in the industries who make and sell the ads, and the fathers and mothers of the children to whom we communicate. It is important to take on board, in the context of the generality of this discussion, that there is a consciousness throughout the industry of our ethical responsibility at every level. This is governed by the Code of Advertising Standards for Ireland, copies of which are readily available. It specifically deals with advertising to children and is highly conscious of the fact that a special situation exists with relation to children. I will return to the method, methodology and results of that voluntary regulation later in this paper.

Firstly, there has always been a two-minded approach to advertising, condemning its call to purchase products while at the same time appreciating its information and entertainment value. There is a stereotyped view that children's advertising is a bad thing because children are naive and, therefore, vulnerable to advertising. Advertising is said to create undesirable wants and result in parent-child conflict. Is that true? There is a constant argument about the supporting evidence. However, I would say that the evidence does not support the position that children are particularly vulnerable or that advertising is inordinately influencing. To quote a few examples: Cabbage Patch dolls, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Pogs all began without the influence of advertising. Youth fads begin, not with advertising, but through imitation of opinion leaders and spread through word of mouth. Many of you may not be familiar with Pogs, but they are currently the most popular toy for children under twelve years in this country and possibly in the world. They have never been advertised but six Pogs can be bought for £1.50; there is no parent and child conflict about the cost.

The stereotypical view of children and advertising is based on what I believe is faulty reasoning and questionable research. This may seem a sweeping statement, but the reliability of the research is open to question. Children are notoriously unreliable in research projects. They see the world in quite a different way to that to which the researchers would like them to respond. The process of actually interviewing and researching children is a difficult one. It ignores the powerful effects of peer and family influence, and fails to consider the complexity of media effects, such as selective attention to media and commercials. The influence of culture is also overlooked. Children are highly selective in their viewing; they are far more knowledgeable about advertising and the media process than most critics assume. The concept of advertising literacy is part of our terminology; it means that children see through these ads. They know that they are advertising and what they are for, although there would be a question of age profile to be considered.

I 'interviewed' my own ten year old last night about advertising; in relation to one particular ad, he said 'It's a crap ad, Dad, and that would be a crap product because it's a crap ad'. I asked, 'Why is it a crap ad?' 'It's just crap,' he said. 'Why then is the product going to be crap?' 'Because the people who made the ad made the product. If they made such a bad ad, when you open the box, all the pieces might not be there.' This is a ten-year old. Therefore, do not underestimate the ability of children to actually

observe the accuracy of the statement that is being made to them and their ability to discern the nuances in it.

I suggest there are four overall contexts in which we should consider the rights and wrongs of advertising and children. Firstly, there is the peer context. I contend that children are fundamentally influenced by parents and their peers; these influences are much more fundamental than advertising communication. Secondly, there is the family context. Family viewing patterns and economic attitudes determine what, if any, influence advertising will have. Family discussion of purchasing decisions can neutralize the influence of advertising. I will refer to one example, even though I have said the research is questionable. This is a child development study undertaken by the Department of Psychology, University of Leeds, 1994, on the question of major influences in family food choices relative to children's food. The study claimed that the level of influence from television advertising was extraordinarily low relative to the other levels of influences that surround the event (see Table 1).

Table 1

MAJOR INFLUENCES ON FAMILY FOOD CHOICES

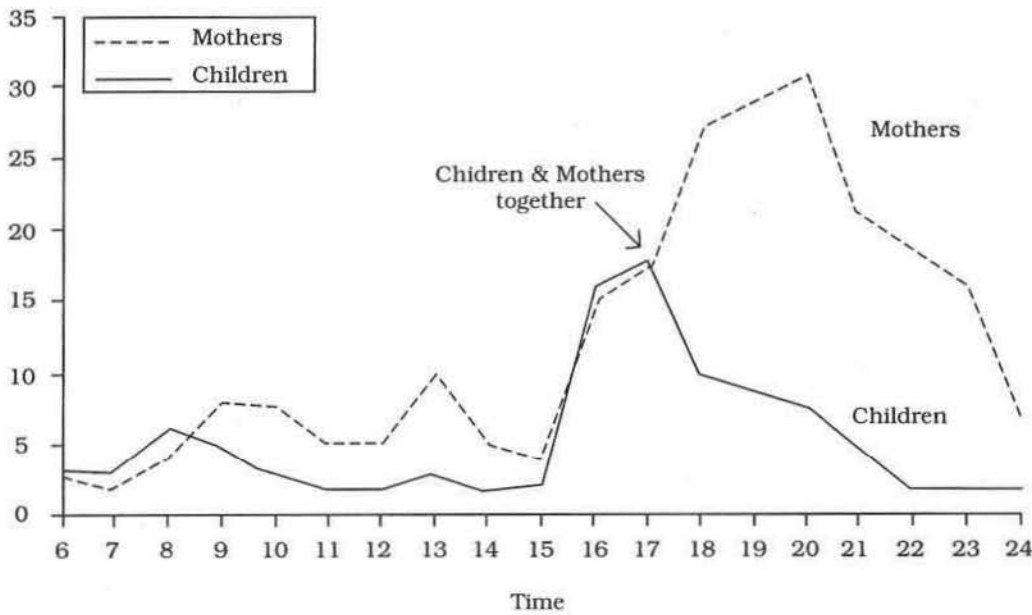
| Proportionate influences on family food choices | |
|--|-----|
| Mum | 20% |
| The Children | 13% |
| Dad | 12% |
| Oldest child | 12% |
| The family | 7% |
| Friends | 6% |
| Younger children | 6% |
| Time of meal | 5% |
| TV advertising | 5% |
| Convenience | 4% |
| Price | 4% |
| On pack | 3% |
| Shelf/checkout | 3% |

Base = 3004

Source: Child Development Study, Department of Psychology, University of Leeds, December 1994

Thirdly, there is the cultural context. We do not have nor do I think anybody should believe that there is a universal child; there are children of different cultures and these children are influenced differently. For example, compare our culture with that of the United States or United Kingdom which are more developed economies. Only a small portion, less than 0.8 per cent, of our Gross Domestic Product is spent on advertising; this is the equivalent of 1.47 per cent in the UK. If we extrapolate, Irish children are encountering half the real level of advertising encountered by children in other cultures. In addition, we have close parental supervision and a lower incidence of mothers working outside the home which, perhaps, does not exist elsewhere. This can be an important influence on children. I refer to information about a typical day's viewing by mothers and children of fourteen years and younger, and the coincidence of them viewing together. While they will not always be viewing together, there is a pattern of viewing for a typical day (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
A TYPICAL DAY'S VIEWING



Fourthly, there is a product market context. An ad for Coca-Cola highlights the brand but it also raises awareness and interest in the product category: carbonated soft drinks. It is a fundamental 'truth' that an ad for a product category, for example toys, will generate a higher degree of interest, desire, possession and ownership of toys.

But commercials should not be viewed in isolation. They appear on television in the context of entertainment and other commercials for similar products and services. The child learns from an early stage to choose, although it would be more appropriate for a psychologist to determine how that actually works. I recall that after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, I saw a news item about an East German housewife in a West German supermarket; she was virtually in tears looking at the display of coffee. The interviewer, mistaking what he thought was her dilemma, asked, 'Have you not got enough money?' She replied, 'No, I have no problem with money, but how do I choose?' This woman had not been subjected to the myriad of influences of Western society where we have great opportunity to choose. We also have a lot of product knowledge, but she was encountering thirty five different brands of coffee and did not know how to differentiate between them. Our children are learning to choose from a very early age.

Positive effects

Are there positive effects? I suggest that there are several. There is the effect on personal behaviour because television commercials are usually pro-social. They are optimistic and contain virtually no aggression. They are effective in creating positive images, and there is evidence that commercials can break down harmful race and gender stereotypes. Regarding health and nutrition, much advertising is for beneficial products, like toothpaste and public health service campaigns which promote anti-smoking and anti-drug attitudes. These commercials also contain useful economic information. Thus, advertising is a valuable source of information about available products and services. The child is the consumer.

There is also the question of social involvement; regardless of the commercial's intent, and I acknowledge that there is a commercial intent, young people use

advertising for their own needs. Advertisements play a large part in the formation of identity, helping young people identify with family and the society to which they belong. Young people also learn to become more intelligent and discriminating users of products.

I believe that the evidence is insufficient to justify the fears that advertising is unduly influential or harmful to children. The best available evidence shows that children are discriminating users of mass media and commercials. There is certainly no evidence to support the view that advertising must be kept from children. Indeed, to deprive them of access to commercials would serve neither their social nor their economic needs. To restrict advertising would have not only undesirable economic consequences but also psychological effects. One such effect would be to enhance the desire and credibility of restricted information.

Self-regulation

I come finally to the issue of regulation. Self-regulation has proved to be an effective mechanism for guiding children's advertising. As evidence, I asked the Advertising Standards Authority to examine three years of complaints and to ascertain the number of complaints relating to advertising to children. These are previously unpublished figures (see Table 2). The figures show that there were only two complaints in the past three years on this matter. Neither of the complaints were upheld. I present these figures not to rest the case but to open up discussion and debate.

Table 2

COMPLAINTS TO THE ADVERTISING STANDARDS AUTHORITY FOR IRELAND

| Year | Total No. of Complaints | Cases involving Advertisements to Children |
|-------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 1992/3 | 425 | 1 |
| 1993/4 | 490 | NIL |
| 1994/5 | 415 | 1 |

Source: Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland

Is advertising on television to children a problem?

Brian Young

Dr Brian Young is a media psychologist, University of Exeter, England. His research interests are in the psychology of advertising with particular reference to special audiences such as children.

Introduction

Why are people concerned about television advertising and its influence on children? Is this concern justified? These are the two main points I want to consider in this paper. First, let me describe my background so that you can better understand my position on this subject.

In the 1980s I managed to obtain a grant from what was then the Health Education Council in Britain and is now the Health Education Authority. Dentists and other people working in health education were concerned at the extent of advertising of sugared products directed at children. What effect did this have on children? Did children buy more sweets as a result of advertising? Did children snack more? I spent eighteen months reviewing the literature in the area and researching this and other issues (Young, 1986b). I went in hope of finding a simple answer and came out with the answers which funding agencies hate: well, maybe, depending on the circumstances and we do not really know but give us some more money and I will try and find out. They did not (give me more money). In 1990 I wrote a book entitled *Television Advertising and Children* (Young, 1990) and in the last few years I and my students have maintained an interest in this area, finding out what recent research has been done and trying out some new research techniques.

When I was looking at the many experimental papers and articles in the field I was puzzled by the recurrence of one particular way of looking at the problem (and it was always conceived as a problem) of television advertising and children. I have always been interested in metaphor and how metaphors influence and guide our thinking on important issues. Metaphorical ways of talking can illuminate our understanding but they also limit and constrain our vision of issues. Much of the writing on this issue talked about advertising as a threat from outside. Advertising was seen almost as an infection or as a form of dry rot that threatens the fabric of the home. For example, Pollay (1986) has looked at most of the writings from North America on the cultural nature of advertising, excluding the European Marxist tradition on the subject. Because much of what has been written by anthropologists and students of contemporary culture can be viewed as a reflection of the values held by people who are members of that culture, Pollay's review can supply us with a ready inventory of common complaints on the subject. Complaints, because the social critic rarely has a good word to say about advertising.

One set of criticisms is based on the pervasive nature of advertising. Advertising is everywhere, cultivating particular attitudes to problems or creating problems where none previously existed. If society is thought of as an old building, then advertising can creep in undetected and affect the very fabric of society, influencing the basic moral and spiritual values which the culture holds dear. Advertising can influence the criteria we use when we make up our minds. For example, car purchase ceases to be a systematic evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of a particular make and model. Instead, it is the selection of a particular life-style that fits with our conception of who we are and what we would like to be. 'Problems' of body odour or perfect whiteness in washing clothes are created by advertising. Qualities of experience, such as the munching and crunching of foods, are exaggerated at the expense of more meaningful and important characteristics such as their nutritional benefit and relative cost. There is no escape either. If the educated consumer subscribes to *Which* magazine or invests in a list of E numbers and a hand calculator for visits to the supermarket, then this image is

appropriated by advertisers and re-presented and manipulated by them. No one is immune and no place is safe.

Why should this be so? Why are people anxious about advertising? In order to understand the fears people have about advertising, particularly in relation to children, it is necessary to look at how people have looked at the home, and the world of commerce, and television, and advertising, and finally the child herself.

Advertising, home and the child

Kessen, an American child psychologist, wrote an article in 1979 with the provocative title 'The American child and other cultural inventions'. In it he argued that the changes from a rural to an industrial economy in the United States in the nineteenth century resulted in far-reaching changes in the way people viewed the family and childhood. Since many West European societies have also gone through this rapid period of change and since many third-world societies are now also going in this direction, Kessen's claims should be looked at carefully. What seemed to be happening was this: the world of commerce and industry was centered round the town. This was where men worked; this was where wheeling and dealing, haggling, arguing, buying and selling and negotiation in smoke-filled saloons occurred. The world of commerce and industry was rough, tough, sinful and self-interested. In contrast, the world of the home – where men returned with a 'Hi honey, I'm home' – was romanticized and transformed into an idealized world of domestic bliss and motherly values. Childhood was sentimentalized. Children were to be protected from the decadence of downtown and to be a child was to be innocent and pure.

This vision of home as a sanctuary was, of course, not solely a result of large-scale changes in patterns of work in the United States. Home in a frontier setting was a refuge, a place that needed to be protected from marauders, real or imagined. Home was where childhood and motherhood existed and thrived.

There are two contradictory images of television in the home. When television was first introduced in Britain as a product for use in the home, the dominant vision was of television as a positive asset. It would bring the family together, clustered round this new hearth watching an exciting window on the world and sharing and participating through the medium of television in great national events such as the Queen's Christmas message, the Boat Race, and of course, the supreme icon of 'The Coronation'. There is father in his easy chair leaning forward and pointing excitedly at the screen with his pipe while Jack stands dutifully by his side and Jill plays with dolls on the carpet. Mother of course is doing the ironing. The alternative image is that of television as a threat to this private world. Television in the home, in the main heart of the home where the family gathered together, is regarded as an infiltrator, as a purveyor of information out there. Here we have the basic metaphor that I mentioned earlier. Television was outside wanting to come in and the television set was the route. Now, imagine if television carried advertising, a symbol of the world of commerce and industry, the world of decadence. Television advertising carries with it two threats. It is a double whammy: it is an invader of the sanctuary, and it brings with it the smell of the other place where women and children are not allowed.

The rhetoric of advertising has always been seen as a sinister threat. Many popular books on the subject, such as Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders*, have presented advertising as a force which bypasses reason and employs passion and emotion in order to get its message across. This volume caught the public's imagination with its lurid vision of people manipulated and lured by advertisers with sophisticated techniques into behaving irrationally and purchasing products that they did not really want anyway. Much of Packard's rhetoric falls flat today and occasionally lurches into self-parody. For example, the following extract positively oozes with a particular vision of the perils of advertising: 'Seemingly, in the probing and manipulating nothing is immune or sacred.'

The same Chicago ad agency has used psychiatric probing techniques on little girls' (Packard, 1957, 5). Psychologists – the men in white coats, the boffins, the backroom boys – are cast in the role of practitioners of this evil art with their craft of subliminal message manufacture.

Now, let us put this together. Advertising, on television, invades the sanctuary of the home. The home is where the child is and the image of the child-in-the-home is one of innocence, of purity. It is also well-known in developmental psychology that history and culture create images of childhood that suit the purposes of that period in time or that place in the world (Aries, 1973; de Mause, 1976; Pollock, 1983). Images of children through the history of Western industrialized societies have swung between the child as angel or imp: as personifications of innocence or as willful creatures whose spirits need to be broken. In television, children are often portrayed as 'kids', as street-wise urchins with more applied sense than adults or as eager 'children', waiting for instruction and education. In British children's television the ITV programme *Tiswas* (popular in the early 1980s) and the still-running BBC production of *Blue Peter* exemplify this distinction.

What happens when the images of the defenseless child and the evil advertiser are put together? What does this produce? An image of the relationship between children and television where the child is seen as the innocent and the advertiser is seen as the seducer. The title of chapter fifteen of Packard's book where he talks of the 'psycho-seduction' of children and the extract quoted above both reflect this implied relationship which has mythic qualities, properties that evoke deep-rooted anxieties about children and advertising.

What I am suggesting is this: the way both lay people and experts view the relation between children and advertising is framed by the stereotypes we have of the child and of advertising. Our mindset means that we quite naturally view the relation as problematic with advertising out there, invading via the television set the sanctuary of the home, and we quite naturally use one of the (many) available images of childhood – the child as innocent – in order to establish a relationship that fits with the problem as we see it. The research agenda is partly determined by the way we view this relationship and the research that has been done in this area is often conducted in a reactive way, in response to outbreaks of moral panic.

'Advertising literacy'

Can we look at the situation differently? Some years ago I coined the phrase 'advertising literacy' (Young, 1986a). Talking about advertising literacy brought advertising back into culture. Advertising was no longer knocking at the door as a malign influence on the defenseless child. Rather the child was seen as at the centre of things, growing and developing an understanding of the economic and social world of which advertising and marketing is an important and inescapable part. It was then possible to establish just what the child knew or did not know about advertising at different ages. So let us now look at that. What is advertising? What do we know about the role of advertising in the life of the child?

Television advertising is only one part, an expensive and important part, of what has been called the marketing mix. The vast majority of the research has looked at television advertising and how this affects children. The situation, however, is changing. Recently the term 'hybrid advertising' was used to describe those forms such as sponsorship and product placement which are in that fuzzy area between advertising and other kinds of promotional activity. Little research has been done here and with rapid changes occurring in the advertising business more research is needed. The child lives in a world surrounded by promotional activity from package design to expensively crafted television campaigns. There is no escape from this.

What does the child make of all this? Do children understand the purpose of advertising? If we look at the functions of advertising, what makes advertising different from other forms of communication, then the persuasive power of advertising is an essential part. Advertising is designed to get you to go out and buy that brand, to maintain or increase sales of brand X at the expense of other brands. So as adults we know that advertisements will only inform us about the virtues of a particular product and if we want to find the whole picture we need to consult a magazine produced by a consumers' association.

Research has been done into how children understand advertising and we now know that young children, before the age of five years, do not understand the purpose of advertising and think it is there as entertainment. Most older children, from eight or nine years of age onwards, do know that advertising is trying to get you to buy products and that is why it is there. What about those who are younger than eight or nine but older than five? When I interviewed English school children about their understanding of advertising, the younger ones about six or seven years of age understood that advertising was not 'just entertainment, just fun'. They had grasped that the television commercial was talking about a brand, that it was telling you something about sweets or soap powder. They were literate to the extent they understood the basic discourse structure of advertising which has a topic (the brand) and a comment (the rest of the commercial) (Kumatoridani, 1982). But because they did not understand the persuasive or advocacy function of advertising they did not 'read' the advertisement in the same way as an adult. They simply thought the comment consisted of information about the brand. Adults realize that this information is presented in a particular way where only information that is favourable to the brand will be given and that this information will be 'dressed up' in order to persuade audiences to buy: the advocacy and persuasive functions of advertising, respectively.

When I first looked at advertising literacy my approach was limited to the extent that literacy was conceived as a progression by the child toward an adult norm, as the acquisition of particular sets of skills by individual children growing up. There are other ways of looking at literacy that avoid these assumptions. For example, by extending literacy into the domain of the collective as opposed to defining it in terms of individual attainment (Buckingham, 1993, chapter 2) one can open up different ways of investigation. For example, the concept of 'interpretive community' (Fish, 1980) would suggest that different groups of children have different approaches to advertising and will appropriate and interpret advertising in ways that enhance their social and cultural identities. This leads to the interesting conclusion that the more ambiguous or enigmatic or polysemic an advertisement is, the more energetic will be the attempts to negotiate a meaning from that advertisement by the group and that 'reading' might be totally different from the reading negotiated by another group.

In the 1970s in the United States the term 'kid-vid ghetto' was used to describe the amount of advertising directed at children after school hours during the week and on Saturday mornings. Much of this advertising was for foods with a lot of added sugar and concern was expressed about what effect all this advertising had on the child's diet. I have looked at this research and also done my own survey of television advertising to children in the 1980s in Britain. Some of the research is methodologically limited, especially in the ways that the advertisements have been sampled. For example, I found seasonal variations in advertising with the pre-Christmas period almost completely taken over by toy advertising. The afternoon after-school time was not wholly food advertising directed at children, there was a lot of advertising aimed at mums at home, too. And yet some of the statistics quoted from the United States on the incidence of advertising to children are based on one day, a Saturday morning in February for example (Doolittle and Pepper, 1975). We can not do a proper audit of what has been shown to children, for example, unless systematic sampling of television commercials is done.

Another term that is often used by journalists when talking about advertising and children is 'pester power'. This refers to a perceived problem where parents, mums mostly, are pressurized by their children to buy things they have seen advertised on TV. Does this cause conflict in the family? Investigations have shown that, with some families, it can cause annoyance and irritation but the effect is not long-lasting. Research has been done where families keep diaries of their viewing habits, whether the child ever requested a particular product, what mothers did when the request was made, and so on. As well as this, some American researchers have even been to supermarkets and recorded behaviour there. So we know quite a lot about this area now. It is known, for example, that the more commercial television the child watches, the more that child is likely to try and get mum to buy what the child wants at the supermarket, whereas this relationship disappears if you just look at the amount of total television the child sees. The important difference here is the fact that commercial television carries advertising. When the independent variable is the amount of commercial television watched then the predicted effect is observed. If the independent variable is a mixture of television with and without advertising then the effect disappears. The variance introduced by also measuring non-commercial television dilutes the effect so it is no longer significant.

What we do not know, and this is where the research agenda needs to be extended, is the effect of pre-Christmas advertising (expensive computer games, clothes, for example) on families with a limited disposable income. Christmas can be a financially crippling time for poor families and it is vital to find out the extent to which marketing to pre-teens and teenagers is affecting budgeting in the family. To a great extent the research agenda has responded to middle-class consumerist concerns about advertising. These are legitimate concerns centering around diet, dental care, and parental control but there are other pressing concerns which less articulate members of any society have and we should speak up for them.

Direct effect on children?

Does advertising have a direct effect on children? Will they go out and buy more of something they saw advertised on TV? As children have a limited disposable income this is a hard question to answer and probably much of the effect is indirect. It is part of the consumer decision-making process within the family in which the child plays a role.

There are some ingenious studies from the United States where attempts have been made to simulate the direct effect of advertising: showing children a television programme with commercials in one room, and, before the children leave, offering them a range of gifts in another room and asking them to choose one as their present for participating. Of course, one of the alternatives 'gifts' would have been shown in an advertisement which they had just watched. Under these somewhat artificial circumstances, there is evidence that children who had seen the ad for X are more likely to choose X when compared with children who had not seen the ad. But does this simulate how advertising works? I think not.

Children do not watch, then go out and buy. Indeed this naive model of advertising effects, where advertising is 'out there' and influences the individual child who then goes off and buys or persuades others to buy, does not do justice to the nature of advertising or marketing or promotional activity. Advertising is a part of the child's culture. It is a cultural resource that the child uses in such everyday activities as joking, playing, talking as well as deciding what to buy. It may not be a valuable or intrinsically worthwhile cultural resource like playing the violin or learning the difference between right and wrong. It may be a symptom of the consumerist culture where materialism rules and people are judged by the price they paid for their trainer shoes. We may dislike it. But it is there and if we are going to examine how it works with children we should be looking at how advertising penetrates the culture of the child. This will be the future of research in children and television advertising.

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S. Hornig Priest *Doing Media Research*

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Eoin Devereux,
Lecturer in Sociology,
Department of
Government and
Society, University of
Limerick.

Eoin Devereux

In moving from the stage of 'I think I would like to do research on...' to actually undertaking a piece of useful and rewarding research work, many students – graduate and undergraduate – recoil from taking sufficient stock of their proposed methodological framework. It is sometimes because of a lack of basic methodological know-how and sometimes because of fear. Oftentimes it is a combination of both. Nevertheless it results in poor research and often poorer results!

It is in this context that I welcome Hornig Priest's text. It is both comprehensive and comprehensible and should prove an invaluable aid to the undergraduate researcher. Hornig Priest manages with great skill to explain the quantitative and qualitative research tools available to the media student. She spells out the importance of a novice researcher considering a wide range of methodological options at the early stage of her research and the implications which they might have for her overall research findings.

In five parts, the book begins by contextualizing methodological issues through an exploration of the theoretical roots of social science. This is an essential exercise given that media and communications studies has straddled a range of social science disciplines in search of both theory and method. The book then demonstrates how social scientists ask questions and engage in data gathering. Parts three and four explain how both quantitative and qualitative data is analyzed and she attempts finally to get the research student to think in terms of their contribution – no matter how modest – to the wider research world.

This book succeeds in demystifying the research process. It is written in a user-friendly style and even draws upon a series of illustrations to reinforce for example the differences between quantitative and qualitative paradigms. Hornig Priest's text should be on the compulsory reading list of any undergraduate student of media and communications who is proposing to do even a short research project. Her text is a welcome antidote in an area which is largely populated by texts which are turgidly written and which fail miserably to inspire confidence in a person beginning research.

Groombridge and J. Hay (eds.) *The Price of Choice – Public service broadcasting in a competitive European market place*

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Amanda Dunne, MA
student in the
Department of
Communications,
Dublin Institute of
Technology.

Amanda Dunne

This book consists of the papers presented to a conference on the future of public service broadcasting (PSB). The conference was organized by a group called the 'Voice of the Listener and Viewer', a consumer rights group for media audiences. In essence, the conference concluded that PSB has a vital function to perform in the cultural and democratic life of society and that there is a need for a pan-European association to represent the 'citizen/consumer' interest in broadcasting. The usual issues and arguments concerning broadcasting in Europe were addressed.

The initial chapter dealt with regulation and choice, specifically focusing on current legislation as it pertains to the UK market. The main points addressed were the future of Channel 5, financial arrangements for commercial television, the future of the BBC Charter, cable and satellite broadcasting, the regulatory framework for the development of telecommunications services and the extent of future restrictions on cross-media ownership. The latter issue was treated as particularly important by the speaker, Lord Hollick who is Chairman of MAI Ltd., an ITV company. The development of the information superhighway in the USA is also discussed; it has the potential to offer video-on-demand, interactive shopping, access to video games and most importantly, information. The commodification of information marginalizes and discriminates against the less well-off. In the USA, public service television has sought to redress this by developing on-line services and information networks. The current struggle is to ensure that the thirty per cent of cable systems channels reserved for PBS remains intact in the face of market pressure.

The impact of technology on the European broadcasting market specifically was addressed in the next chapter. Two broadcasting concepts, that were essentially antagonistic to each other, share the same space raising questions such as 'Do we need PSB?', 'How can public service television compete against media giants?', and 'How can we regulate programmes transmitted from abroad?'. The reality of the inherent disparities embodied by the information economy are acknowledged while the speaker asserted that the salvation of PSB is in remaining true to itself. The media is not just an industry but a cultural phenomenon. This view was counter-balanced by the argument that competition is not in and of itself negative. PSB currently faces a crisis of finance and identity. Viewer choice has increased because of the proliferation of channels. The European Commission sees PSB and commercial broadcasting as complimentary; there is value in diversity.

Who will pay for the new broadcasting order, particularly since the new technology will involve heavy investment? In Germany, the special function of the public side of the dual system has been identified at a very high level in the Courts. There, it is felt that using advertising to supplement the license fee weakens the position of the broadcaster; instead, the license fee should be the dominant method of funding. PSB has the right to be sufficiently funded according to the German Constitutional Court. However, the rationale of a license fee by providing a high quality, universal service is most important in ensuring the vital political support. It is a reality that ascertaining political support for raising the license fee is problematic as it would not be a popular move. Nowhere is this more apparent than Ireland. The more commercially-minded advocate the selling of programmes, launching new channels or offering interactive services. Ultimately, the consumer will pay for the new technology. There is some feeling that more sponsorship and advertisements, which can supplement the license fee and has become the norm, is not the best way forward. The fear is that viewers will pay more for programming previously universally available by having to subscribe to generalist channels.

Another issue raised at the conference was that of citizen's rights within European broadcasting. The point was made that in a competitive environment not best suited to high quality television, however, there could still be good programmes without PSB. It is an obligation of the state to provide a framework for secure funding. The viewer's need for information, education and entertainment is the *raison d'être* of broadcasters. Commercial broadcasters often want PSB to provide the programming they would prefer not to make. Without maintaining standards, public service stations will not get audiences or political support; political will is of utmost importance. Public service broadcasting has the objective of providing the information and the depth of debate and perspective that allows citizens to make the decisions necessary to facilitate democracy and pluralism. Public broadcasting must be a guarantee of programme quality, offer news and current affairs at peak times, demonstrate the range of common experience; it is accountable only to the public interest.

Chapter six concerns itself with the responsiveness of television to viewers. It deals with issues of accountability, practical responses to the needs, interests and tastes of viewers. The assertion is that interests of viewers should be at the heart of broadcast policy. The author of this paper provides an overview of the different methods of evaluation of accountability available to broadcasters, commercial or public service. These include administrative accountability (through regulatory bodies), consultative committees, audience research departments (is this biased towards quantitative issues or quality aspects of broadcasting?). Other points raised ranged from: how much account is taken of advertisers and sponsors?, what account is taken of direct feedback from the audience through calls and letters?, and, in the case of subscription channels, does the direct financial relationship between broadcaster and audience ensure a higher degree of accountability? In conclusion, it was argued that the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, in the UK provided an adequate forum for the expression of viewer concern although there is a necessity for some right to reply mechanism universally.

The book concludes by looking at the major themes emerging from the submissions of the participant groups: increased commercialism, the fate of the public service ethos and the citizens right to receive information. The need for legal and financial support from public authorities to ensure the pluralism of information was highlighted, as were the dangers of increasingly personalized patterns of viewing from a societal point of view. The debate essentially can be said to be not so much about communication as about society. The onus is placed back on the politicians since it is they who are directly responsible for the current state of broadcasting. The final section deals with the citizen's right of access to information and ideas from a plurality of sources. New technologies offer new opportunities but at a cost borne by the audience. The points raised by previous speakers are reiterated, and the necessity for a more effective and fuller representation of the interests of viewers and listeners emphasized again. Ultimately a resolution was drafted based on the main arguments emerging from the conference for submission to the European Union and the Council of Europe.

I found a number of difficulties with this text. The focus of each section was very much determined by the agenda of the speaker, which did not serve the cause of a balanced and provocative debate. The book is suffused with a self-congratulatory air that grates increasingly through the chapters. There is a great deal of repetition of points; it seems to this reviewer that a greater plurality of view-points would have made for a more interesting and stimulating read. The persistence of the organizers in seeing the audience as consumers rather than citizens only serves to add to the dominance of market ideology so disturbing to most of the speakers. To be fair, *The Price of Choice* contains some very valid and interesting arguments from a range of speakers from across Europe who each provide considerable insight into the state of public service broadcasting generally. Finally, the text suffers from the malaise of all books published directly from a conference, you had to be there.

I. Ang Living Room Wars – Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World

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Ciaran McConaghy,
Research Officer,
School of Media and
Performing Arts,
University of Ulster at
Coleraine.

Ciaran McConaghy

In this supposedly postmodern world, a novel yet potentially defining lawsuit looks set to reach the courts. The litigant in this action is John Grisham, lawyer-turned bestselling author. In the dock will be Oliver Stone, film producer and director. The

source of contention is *Natural Born Killers*, Stone's controversial portrayal of the relationship between a young couple of serial-killers and the American mass media. *Natural Born Killers*, suggests Grisham, is directly responsible for a number of copycat killings in the US, where young people have murdered after watching (often repeatedly) Stone's film. Stone, as director of the film, stands accused of negligence. All film directors, so Grisham's suggestion runs, owe a duty of care to their audience to 'manufacture' products which are not 'defective'.

The key to this bizarre case is the question of media consumption and in particular the nature of the relationship between media texts and media audiences. It is precisely this dialectic which also lies at the heart of *Living Room Wars*, Ien Ang's ten-year historical anthology of her research into media audiences and the consumption process. The central tenets of Ang's work are two-fold:

- (i) it is not epistemologically tenable to speak of 'the audience' as an empirically abstract and ultimately quantifiable entity;
- (ii) media consumption is an inherently social process, where 'active' audiences employ interpretative strategies to negotiate meaning.

The meanings which we as readers derive from media texts, suggests Ang, are formulated by the complex and increasingly fragmented experiences of everyday life. Abstract empiricism, she argues, represents audiences as passive aggregates, disempowered, obliging, and faceless. Such methodologies, it follows, fail to recognise that how we, as individuals, engage with media texts and negotiate meaning is shaped by the intersubjective linking of our own media and non-media experiences to the public arena. Meaning is not given, as if a matter of strict linearity between text and reader, or as in Grisham's case, author-text-audience. It is rather the product of the everyday experiences we bring to our interactions with media texts. Postmodernism's continual proliferation and diversification of media forms ensures that such interactions, and the meanings they spawn, are increasingly entangled, self-reflexive exercises.

Ang's starting point in this debate is with, what she terms, 'institutional' audience research, namely those syndicated ratings (focus is only given to television) which predominantly form the basis of 'audience research' within large broadcasting organizations. These ratings, with their predetermined social categorizations of 'gender', 'class', and 'religion', Ang describes as symptomatic of modernity's attempts to 'map' the social world. It is of course, she adds, in capitalism's best interests to identify and if possible control viewing habits, consumption processes and purchasing patterns. The perennial need of broadcasters to attract advertisers (in the case of public service broadcasters to justify their licence fee revenue) who will buy access to an audience means that it is always in the broadcasters' best interests to present their research as objective truth, albeit continually favourable 'objective truths'. This commercial and methodological tension between broadcasters and advertisers, suggests Ang, negates any possible understanding of the consumption process(es), as little or no qualitative emphasis is given to how texts are contextualised by audiences.

Ang's own brand of ethnographic inquiry ('radical contextualism'), which she advocates as a necessary replacement to positivist empiricism, is firmly grounded in both ethnomethodology and general theories of reception. Drawing on the work of Garfinkel and Morley, she seeks to uncover, not so much which meanings audience arrive at but rather the interpretative strategies they employ to make sense of, what she sees as, increasingly dislocated arrays of texts. Her exposition of a small sample of *Dallas* viewers (*Watching Dallas*) in Holland amply demonstrates a multiplicity of meanings that audiences negotiate from a chosen text. For Ang, the key word here is 'negotiate'. The primary implication of Ang's 'active' audience is that theories relating to either text or reader need to be re-examined ethnographically, taking full account of the contextual and historical positioning of the reader. Certainly the sheer plurality of meaning and the very existence of popular subcultures shows that the micro can survive

the macro, with audiences 'resisting' hegemonic flows to some degree. *Living Room Wars* adequately proves, for example, why the commercial success of romance novels and the endless supply of American movies cannot alone confirm the death of feminism or our enslavement by Hollywood. Equally important, however, argues Ang, is the recognition that 'resistance' has semiotic limits, falling some way short of Fiske's 'semiotic democracy'. We do, it seems, in the last instance, operate within capitalism's systematic control of media production.

But it is exactly at this point that Ang's argument loses cogency and most of its convincing qualities. It is quite clear that complete contextualization (as Ang herself mockingly disclaims) is a logistical impossibility – we cannot take into account every reader's previous experiences! Yet for 'radical contextualism' to become a workable mode of inquiry we need some grasp of where the contextualization process is to stop. Ang shys away from prescribing such parameters arguing simply that to do so would be tantamount to universalizing the social world by the back door. Instead she leaves us somewhere between the two extremes of Grisham's strict linearity of meaning and Fiske's empowering model of the reader-as-sovereign.

In the meantime it is not altogether clear how media researchers should proceed. Any attempt to undertake comparative ethnographies will tend to appear as positivistic aggregations to the 'radical contextualist'. Yet, in fact (if not in theory) these strategies are not mutually exclusive. Odd as it may seem, the similarities between Ang's ideal and the methods of commercially motivated audience researchers are really quite striking. Perhaps it is a sign of postmodern times that as audiences fragment and media forms proliferate, broadcasters, among others, find themselves having to sell niche markets. 'Audience appreciation' is currently the advertising industry's Holy Grail. Thus, broadcasters and market researchers have, as Ang overlooks to acknowledge, increasingly been giving greater resources and credence to qualitative focus groups as a legitimate, indeed preferred, means of audience research. Both random and non-random focus group samples are used to expose volunteer audiences to chosen texts. Audiences are usually small and feedback is 'freely' garnered. Comments are viewed by these professional researchers, not as objective truths but rather as snapshots of key strands of opinion (most often the precious ABC1s), at best being viewed as representative of wider trend(s) within the viewing community as a whole.

The implications of Ang's researches are analytically immobilising. If she's right, there can be no point in endeavouring to read (to decode) the ideological meanings of texts; in which case, much of what currently passes for film and television studies is critically redundant. On the other hand, clearly market researchers do know the power and the value of the commodity they are studying and, presumably, unlike Ang and her affiliates, believe there is purpose served in seeking to encode texts in particular ways (in the interests of their clients).

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Brian Torode, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, and Dean of the Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Science, Trinity College, Dublin

S. Aronowitz, B. Martinsons and M. Menser (eds.) *TechnoScience and Cyber Culture*

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Brian Torode

This book has two aims: 1) to develop a new technology-centred method of cultural analysis, and 2) to open up a new field, the cultural study of science. Under the first heading, the book focuses on technology, science and culture, concluding that the three are 'now so intertwined, that to critique one is already to implicate the others'. Under the second, the book addresses many topics including 'unemployment in the global market' and 'violence in American culture'. This well-written and attractive book, illustrated with images which are discussed in detail in the text, advocates a new 'fast track' approach to the study of science by non-scientists which may be very timely. The sociology of science, slow to start when Robert Merton launched it in the 1940s, has been in full flow for three decades since it was relaunched by Thomas Kuhn (1962). Arguably, it is now bogged down. After a decade of navel-gazing around the tedious question of reflexivity, also around the more interesting question of 'symmetry' between humans and objects in the explanation of scientific and technological development, a recent writer (Lynch 1993) concludes that the road ahead is arduous and uncertain. In-depth ethnography of laboratory life (Lynch's preferred method) is 'difficult, time-consuming, epistemologically suspect' and may in practice be incompatible with pursuing a career in the social sciences. Hence, many sociologists seek a short cut.

This book offers several short cuts. Several essays directly address the above concerns. Firstly, the introductory essay by Aronowitz and Menser addresses the old issue of 'technological determinism'. The authors' answer to the chicken-and-egg relation between technology and society is 'co-implication', also referred to as 'complexity' and 'situatedness', the guiding principles of the heterogeneous studies which make up this collection. Secondly, Dorothy Nelkin briefly traces the evolution of science studies. She notes with dismay the way in which natural scientists view research which 'treats science as a social and cultural product, and the scientific community as a labour force'. They fear a 'flight from science and reason' for which both fundamentalists and social constructionists are responsible. But Nelkin fears that cultural models of science often ignore the wider context within which science operates, and defer to the autonomy which it claims for itself. Thirdly, Barbara Martinsons' 'The Possibility of Agency for Photographic Subjects' discusses photographs of veiled women. The one she most admires 'is not... part of the ethnographic discourse or the discourse of sociology' but partakes of aesthetics, ontology and archaeology. Through the technologies of the camera, and of the veil, two women show their curiosity about each other. 'Each empowers the other in small ways'. Hence, 'technology is not, necessarily, the enemy'.

Fourthly, in the longest essay in the book, Betina Zolkower provides an ethnography of 'Math Fictions' in the classroom. She tries to determine the practical impact of one specific cultural product taught in a Latino school in East Harlem, NYC. 'Everyone Counts!' is a curriculum intended to place the US 'first in the world in math and sciences' so individual citizens can escape poverty, marginality, exclusion. New maths is part of the move traced by Basil Bernstein from a 'visible' curriculum comprising abstract but meaningless standard tasks with public praise or humiliation for 'success' or 'failure', to an 'invisible' curriculum which is child-centred, relevant to the specific family, cultural, gender or other circumstances of the individual or small group of children working together. Specimen assignment: The Incas never discovered the wheel, instead they transported things on the backs of llamas. Suppose the Inca emperor had 117 gold bricks, and each llama could carry 9. How many llamas would be needed to carry the load? Children got stuck on 'wheel' (*rueda*), 'llamas', 'emperor' (*emperador*), and

'load' (*carga*). Zolkower's judgement: all this cultural stuff is irrelevant to the maths. If you want to get the maths right, 'Forget about the Incas!' Dystopian effects result when 'culture' is introduced into maths classrooms and tests. More positively, we should 'examine the symptomatic nature of lying-games, tricks, and errors. As we are reminded... maths is a very tricky thing.' Still more detailed ethnographic studies of children's coping strategies in class, and outside it, are required.

The book contains a notable short essay by Arthur Kroker, 'Virtual Capitalism', on technological liberalism, the free movement of labour, and the techno super highway, doing for the world what the railroad did for Canada a century ago. The techno virtual class must eliminate the real working class. They themselves are missionaries, high on their own hype, riding the crest of the wave but due to be subsumed, digitized, made redundant. In global terms, Asia, Africa and Latin America are slave economies: the bodies of its women and children, the body parts of its adult members (blood, kidneys, eyes) are objects of a 'vampire-istic' world trade. Kroker proceeds by taking marketing metaphors literally: the Marlboro economy; Disneyland. There is an absence of real sociological description.

In all, this is a mixed bag of essays, amounting to a lively but lightweight work. Nonetheless, powerful points are made which stay with the reader after the book is put down. Most chapters can be read in a few minutes. They work by the sometimes ingenious coining of new metaphors which enable us to generalize a universal insight out of a known but unassimilated observation. Others work by collecting and retelling anecdotal narratives, both verbal and visual. These stories are intriguing. But they amount to a form of modern myth-making. We never know enough of the context to test their validity. (We cannot really know whether the woman in the veil collaborated with the photographer, though it is nice to imagine she did.)

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