Public service broadcasting organizations (PSB) sit uncomfortably between two chairs. They sit half-way on a chair which is figuratively located in the post World War II era when the raison d’être of public media was generated, and justified by various scarcities. They also sit half-way on a chair that is defined by highly competitive cutting-edge digital media markets characterized by abundance. These markets stretch far beyond radio and television. Public players on these markets are public service media (PSM).

In this paper, the dividing line between these chairs is called the digital boundary. The misfit is obvious: Although repeatedly adjusted, the inherited public service remit of the 1920s up to the 1960s cannot cope with the market realities of today’s digitally integrated media landscape. National legislation is constantly challenged to respond by appropriate amendments.

In her book on public service media in Europe, Karen Donders (2012) describes the various historic stages of the development of public service broadcasting and arrives at today’s challenges by admitting that conclusive answers to the question are lacking “how to transpose diverging ideas on PSB in policy practice while taking into account the peculiar technological, economic and political circumstances of the 21st century.” (2012: 21)

In this paper, Donders’ question is taken as a starting point and raises the rather fundamental question what the core values of traditional and contemporary public service media organizations are and how they can be maintained under digital rules of the broadcasting game. Core values are elaborated from scholarly and industry literature as well as from the recent and ongoing debate on
the public value of public broadcasting. In a second step, the main characteristics of the digital transformation of broadcasting are discussed, again based on scholarly and industry literature. Thereby, areas of conflict between digital developments and core rationales and values are identified and described. Subsequently, a number of countries is selected to evaluate whether these critical areas of potential conflict are addressed by broadcasting policy and what solutions are provided. Finally, policy recommendations on up-to-date PSM remits are deducted.

1. Core values and rationales of public service media

Public service broadcasting policy is a well-established field of communication research, thus scholars have developed a concise body of literature. Based on mission statements, remits, charters and other obligations enshrined in legislation or in organizational self-regulation documents, core values and rationales of public broadcasting have been identified. Slavko Splichal (2007) goes back to the roots of the idea of public service media and establishes the specificity of genuine public service media as the nature of contents produced and the public constituted (ibid.: 252). Important is thus not just the content produced but the role of PSM for the constitution of the public. Splichal’s twofold specification is well based on early works on the role of public media for democratic societies and remains valid for the analysis if values that underpin contemporary broadcasting policy.

Public broadcasting, this “particular model of media governance” (Syvertsen, 2003: 156), is implemented by a growing number of countries world-wide. Their core values and rationales are relatively few – and they remained relatively unchanged over the decades, as Leurdijk (2007: 71) has observed. In summarizing her comparative work on legislation of public broadcasting in a number of European states, she lists the following four core rationales: “contributing to diversity and quality in broadcasting, providing universal access to independent information, offering a platform for debate, and contributing to national culture and identity” (ibid.) Indeed, these principles are reflected in scholarly works (among many others Bardoel and Lowe, 2007; Collins, 2004; Donders, 2012; Jakubowicz, 2011; McQuail, 1992; Tracey, 1998) as well as in contemporary industry publications such as reports on public value of broadcasters (for example BBC, 2004).

These rationales or public broadcasting principles can be grouped according to technology, content, corporate governance and society at large:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>technology</th>
<th>content</th>
<th>corporate governance</th>
<th>society/public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>universal service / universality of availability</td>
<td>diversity (cultural)</td>
<td>independence/distanced from vested interests</td>
<td>social cohesion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pluralism (political)</td>
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<td>forum for debate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>quality</td>
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<td>identity</td>
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<td>transmission quality</td>
<td>non-profit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>cost effective</td>
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<td>minorities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>organizational quality</td>
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<td>public sphere</td>
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Table 1. Traditional rationales for public broadcasting

Rationales for public broadcasting in table 1 are by no means exhaustive but they are most often reflected and discussed in literature.

The most frequently mentioned technology related rationale is universal service or the universality of availability (Tracey, 1998: 26). This principle should ensure that the broadcast signal is available to all...
within a given territory. Public broadcasting’s legitimacy depends — among other factors — on the indiscriminate distribution of the signal to all citizens, providing equal access irrespective of the physical location of the receiving person. Universal service obligations are a unique feature of public broadcasters as private commercial broadcasters are free to limit their signal distribution to commercially viable areas, mostly urban and sub-urban regions, thereby saving transmission cost. An additional aspect related to technology is transmission quality (Collins, 2004: 136), which refers to the technical standard of signal transport via airwaves (terrestrial), satellite, cable or (broadband) internet, including mobile.

Content-related rationales refer to (cultural) diversity, (political) pluralism and quality. These rationales are somehow interrelated as quality qualifies both as overarching principle and as requirement for all output of public broadcasters. Collins (2004: 136) suggests several types of quality, among them producer quality and professionalism and consumer quality, the latter referring to consumers’ preferences and to what they judge to be good. As some classes of consumers are not good judges of what is in their interest, he confines, “this conception of quality cannot be the only type used in governance.” (ibid.) Other options to operationalize journalistic quality are accuracy, validity, transparency, immediacy and journalistic narration (Wyss, 2013: 91ff). Diversity here refers to the diversity of formats, genres, actors, sources, locations etc. “Ensuring diversity in the organizing of a nation’s key institutions is as important for the health of society as biodiversity is for the health of the environment.” (Spigelman, 2014: 45) Pluralism, in turn, refers to the various (political) voices in society and their ability of raise their voice and of being heard.

Content related rationales of public service broadcasting have been particularly important for two reasons: First, content has been the principal and exclusive contact point between PSB and the audience. Citizens were able to discuss the performance of PSB among them according to their personal experience in front of the television screens and radio receivers. To a certain degree legitimacy is connected of the satisfaction of viewers. Other rationales, like corporate governance or functions for society and the public at large cannot be experienced personally. Second, and even more important, content quality standards were and still are the field where PSB set competition standards for their competitors. Legislation requires PSB to set standards in order to maintain a certain level of content performance quality. Tracey depicts this rationale in his sevenths public service principle: “Broadcasting should be so structured as to encourage competition in good programming rather than competition for numbers” (1998: 31). In this perspective, not the numbers of viewers count (or the advertising revenues achieved, or money spent or saved), but the quality of the programme.

Rationales concerning corporate governance are based on the idea that public broadcasters need to organize their internal workflow in accordance with high standard corporate governance principles. These include both ethical and business aspects. Public service ethos requires the organization to remain distanced from vested interests and to maintain a maximum of independence: “It is a simple but key principle of public broadcasting that its programmes can best serve the public with excellence and diversity when they are produced from within a structure of independence.” (Tracey, 1998: 30f). Independence requires keeping vested political and economic interests at a healthy distance. There is a paradox in this endeavor as public service broadcasters depend to some degree on political support, although their day-to-day business must be off-limits for any kind of political intervention. The paradox is that the more independent they become, the more they risk weakening their political support which is the guardian of their independence. Mature democracies, however,
manage to cope with this paradox. Threats to independence by interventions from vested economic interests increase in parallel with the percentage of advertising money from the broadcasters’ budget.

Business aspects of corporate governance concern public broadcasters’ non-profit orientation (McQuail, 1992) and its cost-effective management. Accountability of PSBs includes not only their content and service performance but also their financial conduct. PSBs are required to use their budgets efficiently and not-for-profit.

Taken together, these aspects of good corporate governance provide for the organizational quality of public broadcasters.

Prominent among the public broadcasting rationales are aspects that refer to their role in society and for the public at large. Splichal calls upon public broadcasters to be

“a service of the public, by the public, and for the public. It is a service of the public because it is financed by it and should be owned by it. It ought to be a service by the public – not only financed and controlled, but also produced by it. It must be a service for the public – but also for the government and other powers acting in the public sphere.” (2007: 255)

The latter aspect of being a service for the public includes the requirement of providing social cohesion to societies by offering a forum for debate and a sense of identity and belonging: “The role of public broadcasters in promoting social cohesion and providing a forum for debate for a democratic polity as a whole (...) remains of critical importance.” (Spigelman, 2014: 45) One aspect of this forum for debate concerns minorities of any kind and their representation. Tracey refers to the provision for minorities, especially those disadvantaged by physical or social circumstances, as principle 3 of his list: “There are whole subcultures of minority social experiences crying out for attention. (...) Public broadcasting is dedicated to a dual role here – on the one hand to give access to such groups, to provide them with the opportunity to speak to one another and to voice the issues as they see them, and on the other to provide coverage of their histories, interests, and concerns for the public at large.” (Tracey, 1998: 28)

Taken together, rationales on technology, content, corporate governance and society provide a comprehensive justification for and reflect legislation on public broadcasting. However, this set of rationales is challenged by the digital transformation in the media and communication field. It raises the question whether new developments increase or decrease the relevance of some or all of these rationales, and to what extent. Good media and communication policy thus constantly reviews its principles and arguments. In the following section dominant features of the digital transformation are discussed, in order to better understand and identify the challenges for broadcasting policy and to answer the research question in what way current processes of change and transformation across the digital boundaries require the adjustment of the public service remit to retain its core values.

2. Forces of transformation

Whenever organizations realize that their well-established procedures become inundated they try to identify both drivers of change and mega-trends steering the development outside their organization. A recent example of such an evaluation has been undertaken by the European
Broadcasting Union who commissioned a report titled “Vision 2020. Connecting to a Network Society. Continuous Improvement of Trust and Return on Society” (EBU, 2014) In this report, a working group together with national experts tried to identify what they call seismic shift in the media world. The authors conclude:

“The media world is experiencing its own seismic shift: fragmented audiences, an explosion of content on new platforms, convergence, competition from ‘the new kids on the media block’, new gatekeepers, media concentration, commercialization of services, tabloidization and the decline of newspapers, deregulation, and neo-liberal policies for media.” (EBU, 2014: 9)

Perhaps borrowing from or at least influenced by scientific literature (for example: Castells, 2000: but not referenced in the report) the authors establish the emergence of a networked society which is due to “the combination of two major trends: fragmentation and digitization.” (EBU, 2014: 10)

Taking a closer look to these buzzwords from a social science perspective, a number of shifts or changes have been discussed in the corresponding literature. Most of these buzzwords refer to extended research concepts which are interrelated and which cannot be usefully separated from one another. In the following, a selection of concepts is briefly discussed which are relevant for our research question on the need to adjust broadcasting policy to the new media ecology.

The most prominent and widely accepted driver of change is digitalization. Although Murdock warns against “nominating digitalization as the driving force of change” as this “necessarily privileges some variant or other of technological determinism” (2004: 21), the transformation of analogue media texts into the digital format had serious consequences for all creative industries concerned (Allen-Robertson, 2013; Flew, 2011a; Hartley, 2012). Digitalization is suspected to changing fundamentally the news environment. As news are essential for the establishment of a public sphere enabling citizens to participate in the democratic processes, its changes by digitalization is highly relevant for public broadcasters. Digitalization has not only made media texts (including news) easy to copy and to share, it has made its distribution over digital networks simple and fast. Meikle and Young identify three consequences:

“First, the digitization of news leads to tensions between the idea of news as a coherent package, such as an individual newspaper, and of news as a database of links. Second, digitized news leads to the related tension between distribution and sharing. And third, networked digital media lead to tensions between news as a monologue and news as a conversation.” (Meikle and Young, 2012: 51)

All three consequences are of relevance for public broadcasters. Newscasts are similar to newspaper news as they are pre-packaged, have a beginning and an end and are not subject to constant updating like news on online websites. This affects the public service rationale of access to diverse and plural quality news. The second consequence, again, affects public broadcasters as their principal way of distribution is one-way via terrestrial air waves, satellite, or cable; and they principal products (news, but also fiction) are finished entities and need first be processed for sharing. “News is no longer simply by media companies to audiences – it is now increasingly distributed by those audiences, as links, stories, videos and images which are meaningful to particular individuals [and] recirculated through convergent networks.” (Meikle and Young, 2012: 53) These additional ways for distribution promise to enable public broadcasters to redesign their distribution strategy, with potential consequences for the rationale of universal access. Third, public broadcasters are
confronted with the opportunity (if not the requirement) of entering into dialogues and conversations with their viewers. It is useful to extend this understanding of sharing beyond news: What becomes highly important and relevant is sharing of digitalized archive material as well as collaborative production of non-news (fiction) programme together with PSB-external creative industries. As all PSB-archive content is somewhat part of the national cultural heritage, new ways of making use of this digital archive material is possible. Also when producing new audio-visual material, collaboration with external creators should become part of the work routines. In the words of the EBU experts, the focus should shift “from exclusive, professional production to joint creation, curation, sharing and partnerships embedded in the national creative industry” (EBU, 2014: 12) Again, all this is beyond their traditional core business and requires additional expert know-how and knowledge. Dialogue and conversation, however, are essential ingredients for the rationale of social cohesion, the forum for debate and the public sphere at large.

Another powerful notion of media change is convergence, coupled with competition and media concentration. Contrary to digitalization which is widely accepted and clearly understood, convergence is multi-faceted and harder to grasp. There are at least two different meanings of convergence. One is technically (bringing together different industries, in our context media, computing/informatics, telecommunication). According to Syvertsen, this form or convergence “clearly challenges the idea that broadcasting is special and requires a different regulatory regime.” (2003: 160) The other meaning is entrepreneurial (fostering integration and concentration of companies and corporations). Both meanings are empirically evident, with telecommunication operators acquiring sports rights or offering video-on-demand services (British Telecommunications BT in the UK), Internet based network companies like Google and Yahoo offering (aggregated) news and large content corporations try be become even larger by acquisition (such as the attempt of Rupert Murdoch’s 21st Century Fox to take over Time Warner in July 2014). For more examples see Meikle and Young (2012), chapter 2.

PSB are in most cases bound to their national territories and they are not easily allowed to expand by acquisition. Their competitors, however, profit from growth in scale and scope. In particular, new market entrants (such as Netflix and similar companies) are likely to change consumption habits and eat into time and attention spent with PSB. On the long run, convergence plays against the position of PSB with a latent need of broadcasting policies to react and protect. According to Bardoel and Lowe, economies of scale realized by processes of convergence reduce market competition and favor transnational conglomerates. In this respect, PSB is a “needed counterweight” (2007: 15).

An important driver of change has been identified as individualization and audience fragmentation, often in response to the abundance of content. These drivers are highly relevant again for the rationale of social cohesion as fragmented audiences do not share the same media exposure and experience. Denis McQuail considers the abundance of content even the most important change associated to the notorious information society:

“The most relevant core phenomenon of the information society has been the exponential rise in the production and transmission of all forms of information (private and public) by numerous means, primarily as a result of advanced telecommunication and then digitisation (…)” (McQuail, 2013: 201)

Audience fragmentation and abundance of content are both adverse to the founding ideas of public service broadcasting, originally commissioned to unite the nations, reach large audiences and to
establish, select and present the highest quality programme and news out of a limited pool of content. All this is subject to change: “By and large, public broadcasters were established to cater for the mass public. The digital era, on the other hand, is characterized by fragmentation and the end of the mass audience, so public broadcasters face the most severe challenge in their long and distinguished history.” (Papathanassopoulos and Negrine, 2010: 145) Despite these challenges, the public service rationale remains nonetheless intact: “If anything, the editorial role of a trustworthy intermediary to find, select, organize and analyse the abundance of material has become more important, not less.” (Spigelman, 2014: 45)

Again, public broadcasters are thus required to adopt additional skills and know-how to respond to these challenges. Although linear television – and with it united audiences – is by no means a thing of the past, public broadcasters need to re-invent their operations with a view to serving citizens and audiences in a much more personalized way. The problem certainly is to develop new personalized services while at the same time not to disregard or even neglect linear programming, as long as this remains the preferred modality of television consumption. It is highly uncertain that this period has a set end. Rather, such a parallel organization of linear television and interactive, personalized services is here to stay. In this sense, PSB has to develop into PSM, as Karol Jakubowicz stipulates: “Because of individualization and fragmentation of society, PSB must redefine its service to social integration and cohesion and go beyond collective experience (that is, generalist channels) and cater to group and individual interests, for example by providing thematic services and online services.” (2010: 10)

A somewhat resulting component of the media changes discussed so far is commercialization. For McQuail “[t]he structural trends (...) have inevitably led to increased commercialisation of the system. In fact this is the driving force and chief logic of change.” (2013: 179) One of the early reasons for the establishment of public broadcasting has been the attempt to counterbalance private commercial media. The relevance of this argument has become even more important over the decades and the epistemic digital turn does by no means render it useless. To the contrary: According to communication and cultural industries scholars (Fenton, 2012; Flew, 2012; Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Picard, 2005), privatisation and commercialization have sharply increased over the last 20 years, thereby raising the need for a counterweight which is non-profit in its orientation. Furthermore, commercial operations of public service broadcasters create a paradox, as the full pursuit of commercial self-interests would harm optimal public service (Picard, 2005: 338). At the broadcasting policy level, this processes require to find adequate ways to finance the non-profit operations of public service broadcasters, in particular, as advertising revenues in the digital media economy do not honour content but connectivity, networks and search.

Finally, deregulation and neo-liberal broadcasting and communication policies have helped to amplify some of the above described trends. Observers identify postmodernism to provide “fertile ground for consumerist and neoliberal claims that consumers are the only relevant arbiters of taste.” (Syvertsen, 2003: 164) Commercial media have been extraordinary successful over the last two decades, growing in number, developing into highly profitable businesses und becoming themselves important economic and even political players (Trappel et al., forthcoming 2015). Neoliberal order considers public service broadcasting as an anomaly within market economies and accepts their raison d’être at best in providing services as a redress of commercial market failure (Collins, 2004: 135; Donders, 2012). As in the above discussed cases of convergence and commercialisation, public service broadcasters are well placed to counter-balance thriving private-commercial broadcasters. However,
in a neo-liberal policy environment, good arguments need to be developed to either justify PSM as market-stimulating institutions, or at least as compensation for market deficiencies.

In conclusion, current forces of transformation privilege interactive, conversation-oriented and joint-productive over one-to-many and pre-package programme oriented broadcasters. However, such broadcasters situated completely beyond the digital boundary are not readily available and existing public (as well as private-commercial) broadcasters are fighting to understand and respond. Apparently, the new requirements come in addition to the core business of television, as traditional forms of television consumption are not likely to disappear anytime soon. Therefore, PSB need to expand their operations to become PSM in the strict sense of the term.

The next step of the analysis will look into a selected number of countries with outstanding public service broadcasting traditions. The following section displays some of the national reactions to these changes in the digital media ecology.

3. National policy reactions

Despite the fact that the forces of transformation outlined above are similar in most PSB countries in the Western hemisphere, strategic polity towards interactive and collaborative public broadcasting differs considerably. While some countries adapt and reform their PSB governance continuously, other countries prefer to wait for others to take the lead. For the following selection of countries legal documents, Government green or white papers, business (annual) reports, company publications on strategies to accommodate the forces of transformation as well as scholarly literature have been collected and analysed. Due to the sheer amount of sources, due to limits in the command of foreign languages and due to restrictions in accessing documents the information presented cannot be considered exhaustive. Rather, a glimpse of the current stage of development of each selected country is given according to our best research efforts. Countries were selected according to their tradition of public service broadcasting, their active promotion of digitalization of some kind and with the ambition to sneak out of our Eurocentric perspective. Countries appear in alphabetical order.

Australia

In Australia, the adoption of strategies responding to the digital transformation is well advanced. In 2013, Australia’s Parliament voted in favour of a change of the ABC Charter that acknowledges ABC’s responsibility to provide digital media services (ABC Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2013: 4). The ABC’s Charter now includes digital media services as a core function, albeit advertising is prohibited. Australian broadcasting policy thus accepts and support digital services, but rejects commercial funding through advertising.

At the company level, ABC has adopted its own digital strategy, containing an advance multi-media portal, applying new methods of digital storytelling and offering audio, video and still image archive material (ABC, 2014: 61). A specially developed digital interface allows users to create their own documentary experience. Furthermore, ABC offers multimedia training workshops, mentoring

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1 I express my thanks to my student assistants Stefan Gadringer Marlene Gsenger, and Roland Holzinger for collecting and compiling the following country information.
sessions for people living in regional Australia to learn new digital skills and to share their own content through the ABC (ibid.: 111). In response to the rising usage numbers of social media, ABC is extensively using this channel to deliver its services. According to ABC, the corporation runs 150 Facebook pages and over 200 Twitter accounts, both for local and for national content. “Social media is being utilised in innovative ways to interact with and build audiences, gather feedback, research and keep abreast of industry trends and as a new platform for the delivery of ABC content.” (ibid.: 61) In order to manage these new tasks, ABC has implemented a web content management system which will improve the production and delivery of digital content and seeks to connect with audiences on the mobile platform of their choice. (ibid.: 86).

Australia’s second public broadcasting service, SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) also implemented strategies to incorporate to a great extent what they call user centered content (UCC). In a study on the digital strategies of SBS, Flew acknowledges the use and usefulness of SBS’s UCC approach for their multicultural purpose (Flew, 2011b).

To conclude, Australia has well crossed the digital boundary by encouraging its PSB to provide digital services. The sharing paradigm has been incorporated within ABC’s and SBS’s strategies and the public broadcasting is well on its way from PSB to PSM.

Austria

Austria created two controversial cases on its way to cross the digital boundary for public service broadcasting. While digital switchover was managed smoothly, the performance extension of the public service broadcaster ORF to the digital ecosystem did not proceed as intended.

The ORF was very early in developing its digital portfolio. Not only became its extensive website quickly and sustainably the most popular online property in Austria, but the ORF also developed Futurezone, a highly interactive platform for mainly young citizens to share ideas and conversations – long before Facebook and Twitter became popular. In 2010, in an attempt to tame the ORF’s internet ambitions, the government forced the ORF to close down or sell Futurezone, as this activity was not explicitly covered by the amendment of the Broadcasting Act. ORF subsequently sold Futurezone to a publishing press company.

A second attempt to limit ORF’s online activities was undertaken with regard to the ORF’s Facebook pages. The broadcasting regulator prohibited ORF’s Facebook activities with the (same) argument that the ORF would overstretch its mission. In 2013, after appealing to the Austrian Constitutional Court, the ORF was finally allowed to continue its Facebook pages. The Court argued that restrictions on the use of social media would infringe ORF’s right to freedom of expression.

These two episodes illustrate the ongoing controversy over ORF’s full transformation into PSM. The Broadcasting Act requires the ORF to undertake digital activities to fulfil the public service obligations, but limits these activities to contents which are connected to radio or television broadcasts (para. 4e of the Broadcasting Act 2010). Programme on-demand must be removed from the internet seven days after their original broadcast. Service-oriented contents (such as commercial portals) are explicitly prohibited, but advertising online is allowed.

Austria, thus, experienced a highly agile and far-sighted public service broadcaster with ambitions to transform quickly into a full-fledged PSM. Legal restrictions, mainly propelled by its commercial competitors, have clipped the ORF’s digital wings.
Canada

Canada’s PSB journey across the digital boundary is considerably strenuous. Departure conditions are quite favorable: CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) is a successful and well accepted player in the Canadian media ecology, and the Canadians are highly active users of digital services all along the way. However, there are stumbling blocks on the road: Possibly the most important hurdle is the absence of any broadcasting legislation since the Broadcasting Act 1991. By that time, online was not available in the public domain and CBC was evidently defined as radio and television broadcaster (subsection 3(1) of the Broadcasting Act 1991). All attempts to amend, renew or extend the 1991-Act have failed so far, leaving Canada with a pre-internet broadcasting legislation. CBC, of course, tries to formulate contemporary objectives in their perennial strategy but do not overcome rhetoric catch phrases such as “In today’s digital world, we have the opportunity to create new spaces and to make new links between the country’s public broadcaster and the public that we serve.” (CBC/Radio Canada, n.a.: 2) In the absence of any governmental digital strategy, CBC is constrained within its inappropriate legal framework which is entirely indifferent towards the digital challenges. Furthermore, CBC suffers from cutbacks in government funding, undermining the quality and universality of its broadcasting (Obar et al., 2013: 6). The only achievement so far has been the successful transition from analogue to digital broadcasting transmission (completed in 2011).

It is, therefore, not surprising that scholarly work regret the Government’s inactivity and suggest immediate action. “The record of the federal government in digital media policy is best described as patchy and inconsistent. It has certainly placed greater emphasis on its broadband rollout policy than on its digital television policy. (...) it is essential that the federal government tables a cohesive and comprehensive Digital Economy Strategy in consultation with all stakeholders, including the public.” (Obar et al., 2013: 9).

France

It took until in November 2013 before the Government adopted the strategic mission for French public service broadcaster France Télévisions for the period 2011 to 2015 (contrat d'objectifs et de moyens). This governmental strategic mission statement contains a number of stipulations on the responsibility of France Télévisions to foster their engagement for communities at the regional, local, metropolitan as well as France’s overseas territories. In line with its cultural policy tradition the production of French audio-visual material is (again) emphasized. Much weaker is the reference to online services, basically enabling PSB to provide websites for news and sports. France Télévisions has thus concentrated on the harmonization of this various websites (France Télévision, 2013: 14f). Against the background of the very early (it not premature) distribution of online services (Minitel) these are feeble ambitions.

Broadcasting policy did well in administering the transition from analogue to digital television and there have been isolated endeavors with regard to levelling out the playing field for digital services, such as the spectacular agreement with Google to support the French creative industry in 2012. A scholarly report concludes: “Overall, however, media policy and regulation have proved largely responsive and adequate to the challenges of digitization. Digital switch-over for television proceeded in a relatively timely and uncontested fashion (...)” (Koc-Michalska et al., 2013: 9)

French broadcasting legislation is bound by its path-dependency with regard to protectionist cultural policy with low ambitions to provide and enable its PSB to thrive digitally. Rather, neo-liberal policy
(in the times of President Sarkozy) withdraws funds from PSB (legally eliminating advertising from PSB, although not yet enforced) rather than providing funds for necessary adjustments.

Germany

Public broadcasting legislation is based on treaties between the German Länder (Rundfunkstaatsverträge) and these treaties are frequently amended according to political opportunities. With regard to digital services, the 15th Treaty (2013) enables PSBs to provide digital content services in addition to radio and television, but restricts them to journalistic content (no pure service character) and to content which is directly related to radio or television programmes. Online content with no such direct reference is explicitly prohibited. Digital content on-demand must be removed from the internet seven days after publication and all new digital channels need to pass a public value test before their launch (How do new services correspond with the social, democratic and cultural needs of the society? To what extent do they enhance competition on quality? How much does the new service cost?). Online-services similar to online-content provided by the press is prohibited for PSB, and all online-service must remain free of advertising. Despite all these restrictions the Treaty stipulates that these PSB online services should “enable all groups of society to participate in the Information Society and provide all generations and minorities with media skills and know-how” (para. 11d (3) of the 15th Treaty).

The digital boundary is understood in Germany primarily as transition from analogue to digital broadcasting in technical terms, and less as an extension of services into the web-based and interactive domain. The sharing paradigm has not yet fully arrived in Germany. In 2011, a report on the development of digital broadcasting and online activities concludes: “Yet the potential of the internet to establish a genuine two-way conversation between producers and users still seems to be at an experimental stage.” (Schröder et al., 2011: 8) The main reason for this slow pace on Germany is the neo-liberal media policy response to strong resistance of private-commercial media (both, broadcasters and the press) against extensive PSB services in what they consider a new digital marketplace in which competition should not be distorted by public service institutions.

Ireland

The Irish Government is particularly proud of its management of the digital switch-over in television, celebrating the period from May 2011 to October 2012 as the shortest switchover period of any country in the European Union (Department of Communications, 2012: 2). While this digital switchover certainly profited from the isolated physical location and the topography of the country, the transgression of the digital boundary toward the interactive paradigm has been confined to the public service broadcaster RTÉ. According to its strategic plan 2013-2017, RTÉ is dedicated to “become an even leaner, fit for- purpose organisation, best described as transforming from a Public Service Broadcaster to a Public Service Media (PSM) organisation for the digital age. To deliver this strategy RTÉ will need to fundamentally change how it works, how it is structured, how it develops its staff and invests in key technologies.” (RTÉ, 2013: 17)

RTÉ is dividing its operations into core services (radio, television) and complementary services (digital only operations). Within the latter part of the organization, two activities excel: First, its Digital Library enables RTÉ to “receive programmes as digital files, more efficiently prepare and manage that content on the server and then play out content from the server to the television channels as well as the RTÉ Player. That content can then be retained as digital files for other scheduled events.” (ibid.:
Second, the Digital Library is used as backbone for further activities, such as the creation of an Open Archive: “Opening up the Archive creates the opportunity to develop a number of partnerships with other creative and cultural organisations in Ireland.” (ibid.: 180).

Although some of the activities of RTÉ are at the time of writing (July 2014) just letters of a strategic plan, the lines of thinking demonstrate the willingness and preparedness of RTÉ to cross the digital boundary not only in technical terms of transmission but in a far reaching attempt to become a PSM in the connected age.

Japan

Next to the BBC, the Japanese NHK (Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai) has been one of the largest and exemplary public service broadcasters world-wide. Founded after the Second World War (1950), NHK today provides four television and three radio channels together with the international service NHK World. It is almost entirely funded through license fees paid by Japanese households. Digitalization, however, is understood in Japan in rather conservative terms. Efforts have been concentrated on the implantation of HDTV to replace the (technically) inferior NTSC standard, on the transfer of broadcast signals to mobile devices and on data broadcasts, with little attention to the development of online services other than online transmission (cf. Oishi et al., 2012: 27). At most, catch-up services of NHK enable citizens to watch time-shift television. Social media do not enjoy priority and linear communication is still the overwhelming television. One reason is that the Broadcasting Act 2008/2010 restricts NHK to the role of a conventional broadcaster and does not provide for internet based activities other than for transmission purposes. It is therefore no surprise when scholars conclude: “While NHK remains the most trusted source of news for the majority of Japanese, it has not adequately embraced the many opportunities provided by digital technology to widen and deepen its public service function.” (ibid.: 80)

Japan has chosen a distinct path toward the future of PSB requiring NHK to deliver its successful services in a traditional setting with contemporary technologies. The sharing paradigm in a connected age is confined to other players in the market.

Nordic Countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden)

Europe’s Nordic region has been a stronghold of public service television for many decades. Legally implemented in similar ways (Finland being the exception here), PSB have been the dominant player in television and radio with private commercial operators growing in importance following from implementing a dual structure in broadcasting legislation.

In general terms, Nordic PSBs are pushed to progress into PSMs, enabled by legislation which requires PSBs to generate value in all available channels. Important strategic elements are mobility (availability on mobile devices), on-demand content, and customization of services to the needs and preferences of citizens. In order to develop new services, open data are used to generate new forms of content and services. To make such contents and services easily available, PSBs are required to use open standards for their online activities. This should provide an engine for closer collaboration with the national creative industries to team-up for productions. In general, PSBs in their new role as PSMs are considered to take the lead – or at least to be central nodes – within creative production networks. For example, the Finnish public service broadcaster YLE has established a centre for creative production in the Tampere (Pirkanmaa) region. Together with partners (including the local
University of Applied Sciences), YLE creates *Mediapolis*. Similar facilities were planned for Helsinki. (YLE, 2013: 26-29)

Legally, Nord countries opted for different settings to enable online activities of the PSBs. In Denmark, the current DR’s (Radio Danish) public service contract does not explicitly mention online activities but refers to the public services to be delivered by DR. “The more or less vague formulations about media types and the obligation (...) has made it possible for DR to interpret and handle the role differently in specific periods of time. Cross media is a good example of this because it is not prescribed in the laws but it is a consequence of the way DR interprets the laws.” (Nielsen, 2012: 2) In Norway, by contrast, the legal statute of the public service broadcaster NRK includes the remit to provide attractive content on the internet, which includes not only news and current affairs, but also services and games that stimulate interactive participation (Sjøvaag et al., 2012: 91).

Compared to these complex and ambitious strategic actions the switchover from analogue to digital television has been managed without serious delays in all countries. In Finland, for example, the digital switchover was completed already in 2007 (Saikkonen and Häkämies, 2014: 7). In contrast, the digitization of radio is still pending, with some countries (Denmark, Norway) being further advanced than others. Sweden nominates an industry coordinator to set clear parameters for digital radio.

Nordic countries excel by experimenting with different models when exploiting the digital potential for public service broadcasters. In most cases, the answer to the forces of transformation is a clear statement that PSB should become PSM, with accountability duties to the general public.

South Korea

South Korea is famous for its high mobile communication penetration with the Korean Communications Commission (KCC) claiming some 32.7 million smartphone users in 2012 (2013: ii). Korea’s digitalization strategy lies pretty much in the hands of the KCC which is entitled by the Government

“to proactively respond to the phenomenon of convergence between broadcasting media and telecommunications; guarantee the freedom of broadcasting and its public and public-interest nature; and ensure a balanced growth between broadcasting and telecommunications so as to strengthen the international competitiveness of the local broadcasting and communications industries; protect rights and interests of the public; and contribute to enhancing the welfare of the public” (KCC: 23)

Within the KCC’s vision “*Smart Korea Enjoyed by All its Citizens*” policy goals are set: “The Realization of an Advanced Country in Broadcasting and Telecommunications where Everyone becomes Happy” (ibid.: 54) At a more prosaic level, the KCC looks after must carry rules and the distribution of the frequency spectrum. What is interesting with regard to our research question is the establishment of a KCC Support Center for Digital Broadcasting Content to “provide one-stop comprehensive support to the overall value chain including planning, production, transmission and distribution broadcasting contents.” (KCC 2013: 140)

The public service Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) maintains several television and radio channels all over Korea. In addition, KBS runs four multimedia broadcast channels just for mobile internet usage. In its most recent annual report, KBS highlights its endeavors in cutting-edge broadcast
technology such as its Augmented Reality-based Promotional Service and its advanced K Player for PCs, smartphones and tablet PCs (KBS 2013: 35).

Acknowledging its sound integration into Korean’s society, scholars have critically observed KBS’s tendency towards commercialization and its exaggerated bias towards new technical services (Park, 2007). Korea certainly excels in its high adoption rate of technological innovation, which seem to be geared towards more and more sophisticated transmission modalities, rather than in content quality.

Switzerland

The Swiss Government has issued a strategy for the Information Society (March 2012) which emphasizes issues like infrastructure, security, e-government and e-democracy, culture, health, research and innovation (DETEC, Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications)(2012). But the strategy does not refer to the role of public service broadcasting. This enables the Swiss public service broadcasting SRG/SSR to define its own digital strategy, external, however, to Government action. This might be welcome as manifestation of state independence of SRG/SSR, but it is also demonstrates that SRG/SSR represents no core strategic element in the Swiss Information Society.

This low political priority is reflected in its own digital strategy (SRG/SSR, 2013). This document briefly mentions online as distribution channel for linear broadcasts, it also mentions the internet as suitable platform for its services and as suitable source for its operations, but it does not highlight online or digital activities as any strategic priority.

This rather conservative Swiss attitude towards crossing the digital boundary is also reflected in the SRG/SSR Charta (Konzession) from 2007 which regulates its operations. The Charta stipulates that SRG/SSR should produce radio and television broadcasts in all four Swiss languages and through all appropriate channels. In addition to digital terrestrial, cable and satellite, this explicitly includes the internet as distribution channel (art. 9 of the Charta 2007). But digital operations may go well beyond digital signal distribution. Art. 12 and 13 of the Charta 2007 entitles SRG/SSR to establish services beyond radio and television, called “additional editorial services”. Strings apply, however: digital services should complement radio and television in the first place with an obvious connection to specific broadcasts. This applies also to digital games and chat rooms. If there is no connection to a specific broadcast, digital news texts on sports, regional or local affairs, must not exceed 1000 characters in length (sic!). Such non-connected digital texts must not exceed 25 per cent of the overall digital texts.

Despite its long public service tradition, Switzerland has chosen a tentative approach towards digital television with a narrow focus on digital distribution and signal transmission and less emphasis on connection, sharing and interactive digital features.

United Kingdom

It the UK, the BBC is driving digitalization together with the Government (Department for Culture, Media & Sport; DCMS) and the broadcast regulator OFCOM. The BBC has set world-wide digitalization standards for example with its prolific iPlayer, copied by many other broadcasters world-wide and with the switchover from analogue to digital television. “[T]he BBC’s key role in digital switch-over has kept it at the cutting edge of digital innovation. Digitization has, on the whole, greatly expanded and diversified the BBC news output, and the success of its online operation has
gone some way to plug the public service gap in digital media.” (Freedman and Schlosberg, 2011: 7) UK has a very high take-up rate of digital television, as well as a high internet penetration rate. Both have been certainly influenced by digital contents produced by the BBC in the realm of online news as well as entertainment. BBC news online continues to be the preferred and trusted source for news in the UK.

Nonetheless, digitalization has also delivered failures such as the BBC’s *Digital Media Initiative* which should have enabled BBC staff to create, share and manage video and audio content and programmes from their desktops. As this system never worked as planned, the BBC was austerely criticized by the Committee of Public Account of the House of Commons (2014).

Despite such drawbacks, the DCMS, the OFCOM and the BBC have developed an coherent digitalization strategy which includes not only the digital transmission, but also the production of content (news and fiction, entertainment) in collaborative settings with the BBC and partners (e.g. BBC Worldwide’s Labs), as well as the presentation of market-leading online websites by the BBC. DCMS’s 2013 strategy plan contains four main principles, among them striving to “establish world-class connectivity” and to produce “world beating innovative content and services” to be marketed across the globe (DCMS 2013: 7). In more concrete terms the plan lists investments and partners to achieve these strategic goals, with the BBC (and other UK public service broadcasters) playing a central role.

The UK entrusted the public broadcasters, BBC and others, with the leading role in broadcasting digitalization in a strategic move to cope with the transformation challenges. Despite drawbacks, PSBs are successful and acknowledged digital agents, competent both in delivering linear broadcasting and interactive services.

In conclusion, the selection of countries – all with reputable public service broadcasters – display a wide variety of national strategic options from constraining PSB to the strictly necessary digital programme transmission all the way to endorsing short-cut transformation from PSB to PSM.

### 4. Broadcasting policy solutions

The overview over the incorporation of broadcasting digitalization in various countries has shown wide ranging differences. In order to answer the research question – how core values and rationales of public service broadcasting can be maintained under digital rule – we now return to these values and rationales and discuss them against the background of the ongoing change and national practices:

*Technology: Universal service, universality of availability, transmission quality*

This rationale has been transferred to the digital media ecology in most countries by switching analogue broadcasting signals into digital signals and distributing them over all channels, including (mobile) internet. PSM remits should contain such provisions.

*Content: diversity (cultural), pluralism (political), quality*

The PSB paradigm required public broadcasters to produce and deliver content of a certain quality of citizens. This has been pretty much the only contact point between citizens and broadcasters. Digital
transformation has changed this setting. In addition to classic in-house productions, contents can be produced collaboratively with external partners. Produced contents are regarded as raw material for further processing and digital archives with open access are valuable sources to deliver diversity and plurality. PSM remits should therefore empower PSMs to set up digital archives with transparent and open access rules on how to use material. Sharing, curating and collaboration with external creative industries should become part of the PSM mission and of its identity. Some Nordic countries have already implemented such provisions.

Another aspect concerns the alleged deterioration of news quality because of the growing popularity of online news, which are often produced under time pressure with little room for journalistic investigation and very low budgets. Commercialization and convergence are amplifying this trend and the crisis of print publishing needs to be balanced by even higher PSM standards. The core competition function of PSB to set quality standards has grown in importance under digital rule. More than ever, PSMs need to define the highest quality standards with the ambition for private commercial competitors to comply. It is all about Tracey’s competition for quality, not for numbers (1998). Thus, up-to-date PSM remits should explicitly require high quality standards with regular quality assessments, internally and externally.

**Corporate governance: independence, distance from vested interests, non-profit orientation, cost-effectiveness, organizational quality**

Forces of transformation have not much changed the policy requirement for these values and rationales. Nonetheless, convergence, the growing corporate integration and ownership concentration are constantly eroding the market position of PSMs. Because of the new opportunities to share contents, programmes and services, PSMs should be entitled and encouraged to enter into strategic partnerships with organizations which complement the strengths and weaknesses of PSM.

**Society/public: social cohesion, forum for debate, identity, public interest, minorities, public sphere**

These are the values and rationales probably most affected by the digital rule. Clearly, social cohesion and identity emerge under fundamentally different conditions today than at the time when PSB missions were first issued. Most obvious, individual and group communication did arise next and complementary to the traditional one-to-many supply of contents. PSM cannot be excluded from social media explicitly (as has been the attempt e.g. in Austria) or implicitly (by disregarding the need to amend the mission; as e.g. in the Canadian case) unless these values are sacrificed.

Most obvious, the rationale of providing a forum for debate requires determined action by PSM to organize the digital dialogue and conversation at the highest quality level. Internet-based fora are more often than not ill managed and provide platforms for all kinds of undesired ideological crap. PSM are excellently placed to encourage and moderate public debates online, as well as on radio and television. By integrating these platforms, additional value can and should be created.

Furthermore, minorities of all kinds and their right to speak and being heard, can be much better served by PSM when using a combination of one-to-many (radio, television) and peer-to-peer communication. As most minorities are commercially not viable, PSMs should be mandated to develop conversational platforms to cater for their needs.
Denis McQuail advanced the idea of “civic commons” (2013: 218) and this idea fits well to the contemporary mission of PSMs which should interpret their role as eminent organizers of the public sphere and as principal nodes of divers civic and public networks, as Murdock claims (2005: 213).

Up-to-date PSM remits therefore should not only allow for but strongly encourage PSB to become PSM with a strong corporate identity as digital, interactive and conversional network nodes. There are some encouraging examples (e.g. Australia, Ireland) of how legislation together with an open minded management can achieve results.

5. Concluding policy recommendations

- Allow PSBs to become PSMs: As exemplified by several countries (notably, Australia, Denmark, United Kingdom) authority to provide linear and interactive services at the same time enables public service media to deliver all four rationales: technical universally available (all transmission means, including the internet), providing diverse and plural content services, organize internally according to good governance principles and provide society with a maximum of social cohesion and internal debate. Restricting PSB from becoming PSM reduces their capacity to deliver on some or all of these rationales.

- Allow for the constant delivery of relevant news in addition to the prepackaged newscasts from the past and the present: The examples form the German speaking countries (Austria, Germany, Switzerland) shows that restrictions in the online presentation of public service content limits their capacity to deliver a forum for debate and to enhance the public sphere. To withdraw content from the public – or to limit the permitted number of characters on website texts – seriously constrains the service to society. Furthermore, such practices deprive the public from divers and plural contents and even the principle of universality is negatively affected by the withdrawal of content.

- Enable PSB to make best use of all distribution channels for their home-produced, co-produced and curated content (in the wide sense). Encourage PSMs to set up open access digital archives, allowing and encouraging creative industries and creative citizens to share and process content to the widest possible array.

- Enable PSB to enter into dialogue and conversation with their audiences, preferably in their quality as citizens (which have obligations and duties) and not in their capacity as consumers (who have needs and desires) (cf. Spigelman, 2014: 48)

- Counterbalance the weakening market position of PSBs with regard to global convergence, integration of corporations and conglomerates and ownership concentration by increasing entrepreneurial flexibility towards new business opportunities

- Ensure that public service broadcasting is entitled and encouraged to establish dual operations, both delivering linear radio and television and catering for conversation, dialogue, interactive and even personalized services.

All these recommendations for up-to-date PSM remits are necessary to just maintain the status quo enshrined in incumbent public service obligations. Today’s socio-demographic and socio-cultural upheavals might call for additional values and rationales to be incorporated in contemporary PSM remits. To deal with these, however, would be another story.
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