

Value for Public Money – Money for Public Value

RIPE@2012

September 5 – 7 in Sydney, Australia

Call for Proposals

For the 6th RIPE conference we will focus specific attention on research that demonstrates how and why the public receives good value for the money spent on public service media provision. Is PSM a good deal, how good a deal it is, and why does that matter? How much does this vary inside Europe, and what can we say about the situation outside Europe? How best to define ‘public value’ today? It is important to address claims that PSM is wasteful, inefficient, unresponsive, irresponsible, etc. We invite analysis and research that grows understanding of PSM performance in relation to the private commercial sector. It is expected that attention will be given to the quality, variety and differentiation of programmes and services PSM provides, and the value that publics derive economically, culturally and socially. This signals, as well, the importance of money for public value, which shifts the focus to issues that include governance systems, public value testing and similar accountability mechanisms, critical discussion of concerns and problems in taking economic criteria too far or too exclusively, and recognition that the remit of PSM is fundamentally normative. The organisers invite proposals that will address relevant issues related to the following topics that are especially pertinent to the conference theme:

1. PSM Financing & Business models

In the traditional arrangement PSB is financed by public money. Approaches to funding have become a hot topic and a focus of debate.

- Is the traditional ‘business model’ best for PSM today? What are the pros and cons of various alternatives or combinations?
- Are new models emerging for different platforms or types of services?
- How politically feasible and economically viable are various options?
- Where is PSB / PSM sustainable, in what form/s and under what conditions?
- What differences are essential when looking at countries that are only beginning or trying to start PSB / PSM? Is the traditional institutional approach as useful today, and where are there significant developments and alternatives?

2. PSM Structures & Production

This sector has undergone a dramatic shift from mainly in-house production with hierarchical structures and mostly permanent employees with civil servant status, to pursue outsourcing, temporary or freelance contracts, flat organisations, and business-like approaches that favour cost reduction and efficiency.

- Does this produce better value? What are the trade-offs?
- What is essential to understand about the economic foundations of PSM as a financial organisation, despite its non-profit status?
- What do we know about trends in the volume and percentages of programme output and production, number of employees under various contract categories, in different areas and positions, with what productivity gains and losses, etc?
- What is important to know about copyright issues and intellectual property?

- How is media work changing in PSM companies, and with what consequences?
- Where is local production still viable, and why? Where isn't it viable, and why?

3. PSM policy and accountability

The commercial sector claims PSM is causing market distortion that disturbs a 'level playing field'. Politicians and other stakeholders are keen for the public sector to be more transparent and accountable.

- What is most important to know and respond to in policy debate about these issues?
- What new measures are recommended to improve accountability?
- Which approaches to ex ante evaluation work best, and which are not working? Is there evidence that the approach is counter-productive?
- How much is all of this costing and what do we know about cost/benefit ratios?
- In what ways has the New Public Management approach improved or undermined public value?
- Can public value be measured? How, at what cost, and with what consequences?

4. Defining 'Public Value' in PSM today

Traditionally PSB was expected to provide information, education and entertainment, and to strongly emphasise domestic culture and national identity. Reconceptualising what the PS in PSM means and consists of today is a pressing need.

- What counts as 'public value' today, and how is it both different from and the same as historic understandings? Are there discernable periods that characterise shared understanding? Are there significant patterns of consistency or variation when comparing countries, regions, or discourse in different languages, etc?
- Where has reinterpretation of historic meanings been successful, how and why, and what remains problematic?
- Have there been consequences for the profile and character of service provision as a consequence of new conceptualisation?
- Has anything been lost or neglected that needs to be revitalised?
- What is not good value for public money today and ought to end? Where and why?
- What is still vital in the historic PSB mission that must be protected and also nurtured?

5. Improving PSM value

The move from PSB to PSM has not been smooth or even. While governments traditionally expect the sector to support technological development and the creation of digital content, the costs and effects have been unpredictable and in many cases controversial.

- Where has PSM contributed to market development? Where has it improved mediated services as a result of innovation? Where is it lagging? Where is it a problem for developing public value in media due to institutional self-interests?
- What has PSM created that is new compared to PSB? What is distinctive compared to the private commercial sector?
- How is PSM responding to social media on the basis of lessons learned? In what ways are these companies contributing to or inhibiting development in this area?
- Are there clear gains in efficiencies or effectiveness in the shift to PSM?
- What is essential for PSM to be viable and sustainable? How does this differ in comparing countries, regions and communities?

6. PSM value for audiences and users

In social reality and research schema, media audiences are more complex and complicated than was the case historically, often also more contradictory in the light of multiple identities.

- What are the implications related to public value when defining audiences in varied terms (e.g. as citizens, consumers, customers, clients, tax-payers, markets, etc)?
- Are there convincing arguments for supporting collective needs and social welfare given the growth of individual choice and personal preference? How can that be articulated to have real impact?
- How is audience research changing, and with what consequences and impact for doing PSM?
- How should contradictions and complexity in identities be conceptualised? Are certain formulations most suitable for PSM?
- What does the evidence reveal regarding re-valuation of audiences as participants in PSM? In what ways are historic valuations still relevant? What needs to be developed?

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Provide the working title of the paper and include your name, organisational affiliation with location, and e-mail address on a cover sheet
- Write the abstract on a separate page that only includes the title of the paper and specify which of the 6 topics (above) your paper would contribute to (you may specify more than one)
- The maximum length for the abstract is 600 words
- Proposals are due on or before January 11, 2012

All submissions will be peer reviewed as the basis for acceptance. Reviewers will use the following criteria to assess proposals:

1. Relevance to the conference theme and connection to at least one specified topic
2. Conceptual and analytic quality (not purely descriptive)
3. Importance of the contribution for contemporary theory in PSB / PSM
4. Relevance of the contribution for PSM practice and management
5. Comparative research is highly desired.
6. Empirical research is prioritised.
7. Broadening the scope beyond Europe is welcome.

Sixty proposals will be accepted for papers to be presented in the conference. Decisions to accept or reject will be taken in February with notification sent on or about March 1, 2012. Please send your proposal as an e-mail attachment to **both** of the following:

Gregory Ferrell Lowe, University of Tampere in Finland (glowe@pp.inet.fi)
Anne Dunn, University of Sydney (anne.dunn@sydney.edu.au)

The conference registration fee will be €250 for authors. The fee does not include payment for accommodation, but does cover the cost for shared meals and conference materials. For those attending but not presenting, the registration fee is €300 and space is limited. A select number of doctoral students can be included and the fee in these cases will be €100. The RIPE conference does not have funds to supplement personal travel costs except for invited keynote speakers. For more information, please visit our website: www.ripeat.org.

