

NEW RADIO AND SOCIAL MEDIA: PUBLIC SERVICE RADIO FORMS OF USER PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most prominent phrases one finds in strategic public service broadcasting (PSB) documents from the late 1990's and early 2000's was that PSB has to be 'present on all platforms.' Visions and initiatives for cross-media and cross-platform engagement were numerous in the early days of the transformation from public service broadcasting to public service media (PSM). (EBU 2002, Nissen 2006) From the perspective of PSB institutions, cross-media engagement opened up for new integrated production procedures, for recycling of program content, and inclusion of external producers, among many other things. From an audience perspective, the broadcasting aspect was supplemented with different types of 'on demand' features, facilitated by streaming and podcasting from the PSM web site.

Another major buzzword in the early days of the PSM roll-out was 'user generated content', which covered a variety of applications including news production, audience/user forums, blogging, and chat rooms etc. – all due to the development of digital media technology. These new interaction affordances are embedded in the traditional European version of PSB obligations: stimulating and facilitating public debate through public participation in, or access to, broadcasting. (McNair and Hibberd 2003) The notion of 'user generated content' carries with it the former key aspect of democratization through media, but it also points to a wider range of user or audience involvement, not only related to traditional political issues, but more dominantly to popular phenomena. Recent developments within this 'democratic turn' in PSM products are especially taking place within social media – in the Scandinavian countries especially through Facebook. In recent years you can observe a doubling of the official PSM websites on the program level with an open access FB profile, and

for some program genres the Facebook program site seems to have more traffic and user interaction than the ‘official’ one. (DR 2013-2016)

It can be argued that this transformation of the public service remit, which was to a large extent initiated by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), represents a contemporary form of transnational radio, not defined by program content or radio programs distributed across national borders, but instead by mutual inspiration and adaptation of program genres, distribution on different platforms – and audience involvement.

The aim and goal of this chapter is to shed light on some of the core elements in the process of transformation from PSB to PSM from two perspectives. First, what consequences did this turn have for radio as ‘medium of everyday life’ – as it often is called in scholarly literature. Second: which PSM strategies have been developed in the Scandinavian countries in order to ‘meet the audiences where they are’, i.e. on different platforms (social media, program web sites etc.), and include them in the programs. Third: a short presentation of an audience study (2013-2015) of *Mads og Monopolet (Mads and the Monopoly)*, one the most popular radio shows at DR – The Danish Broadcasting Company – for over more than a decade illustrating some of the impacts on radio as a medium, distributed on different technological platforms.

THE USE OF RADIO: EVERYDAY MEDIA PRACTICES

In scholarly literature, radio is often described as ‘the medium of everyday life’, based on its dominating functions as background or companion for household routines – you are listening, but not always ‘listening in’. Radio is often part of the background, hardly ever becoming the focus of attention, but instead remaining part of the place or the situation. Radio listening in this sense is a secondary activity. (Åberg 1999: 77) But it can also be a very personal, almost intimate medium because of its personal way of addressing the listener (ibid). In his phenomenologically approach to radio and everyday life, Paddy Scannell emphasizes the incorporation of radio in the time schedules of everyday life, and thus considers radio as “a here and now medium”, giving programs an aura of “liveness” that is perceived by the listener, even though it may not be a live program (Scannell 2005: 134). Furthermore, Scannell claims that the relationship between the audience and the radio throughout the day and over the week is in fact a real-time experience, particularly when talk is part of the program, and when the host addresses the audience directly. Thus, Scannell calls radio “the universal, communicative medium of everyday life” (1996: 23). The listener-radio relationship is individually anchored, but simultaneously the listener experiences being part of a larger community, imaginarily connected

to other listeners though the core quality of radio as a broadcast medium: its communicative ethos (Scannell 1996:23).

However, has radio in its digital forms, digital radio and web radio, affected the specific characteristics that Scannell posits: its ‘here and now’ presence, its ability to evoke the feeling of being part of the listening community, the ‘sociality’ of radio broadcasting? Does the presence of radio on different platforms – analogue and digital – mean that this special quality of radio listening is lost when the listeners can download the programs as podcasts: radio on demand, independent of time and place? This core question will be examined further in the audience study presented in the final part of this chapter.

In many ways, phenomenologically framed radio research and the theory about the domestication of media are cognates. Domestication theory was originally introduced by British media researchers, first and foremost Roger Silverstone, who over the years was part of several research teams that studied the role of media in everyday life (e.g. Silverstone and Hirsch 1992). The notion of domestication is a metaphor, expressing the ‘taming’ of wild or the unmanageable (animals or technologies) and incorporation into the household. Inspired by ethnographic methods (participant observation, field studies, interviews) domestication research explores the correlation between media and technology in a context situated in the routines of everyday life, and the embedding of media in social and communicative patterns. Thus, it distances itself from the media text-centered exploration of media content and audience use.

The idea of the passive media consumer is replaced in this research tradition by empirically-based studies of active media and technology users, and their interaction with media in everyday life, not only in the household (the family), but also in the interaction with the outer world. With the expansion of new digital media types, not least the internet, it is increasingly difficult to sustain the previously clearer distinction between work and leisure time, and between the private and public domains. On the one hand, media are physical artefacts, which can be handled in different ways, like the mobile phone serving as a platform for sound, visual and print media. On the other hand, they can be considered as immaterial elements, embedded in different parts of the social exchanges in everyday life, as happens through the so-called social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

RADIO ON DIFFERENT PLATFORMS – INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES, AUDIENCE REACTIONS AND USER PATTERNS

Since the mid-1990s, the Nordic public service institutions have engaged in developing digital strategies for radio and television broadcasting as a consequence of the intensified competition with the growing national and interna-

tional commercial broadcasting companies after the break-up of the public monopolies during the 1980s.

The PSB/PSM Challenge

The public service broadcasters were confronted with two major challenges. Above all, they had to secure a central role in the establishment of a terrestrial digital radio and television transmission system, and furthermore they had to restructure and develop the institutions in order to be able to offer content at 'all relevant platforms.' This meant not only redistributing the radio and television programs they already produced, but also came to mean an expansion of content production. (Søndergaard 2008: 45) The strategy had to secure the historically-based, core mission of PSB: the universality of the services, or, in other words, accessibility for all citizens in the country. But as a consequence of the new technological affordances and the fragmentation of audiences, the new digital distribution platforms were established also to serve small target groups (audience segments) and offer different, individualized services, such as podcasting and streaming. (ibid.)

The transformation process from PSB to PSM has in reality called for a re-definition of the public service remit, most prominently addressed in the 2007 volume of the RIPE book series. (Lowe /Bardoel 2007) One of the key challenges for the PSM institutions – and for the public service research agenda – has been to determine the demarcation lines to the commercial broadcasting sector, after the public service media entered the market place (Nissen 2005; Nissen 2006; Hujanen/Weibull/Harrie 2013; Lund/Lowe 2013) On the basis of the report to the Council of Europe on *Public Service Media in the Information Society* (Nissen 2006), Karol Jakubowicz took up the task of redefining the public service remit in the PSM era on background of three major challenges:

- In general, the mainstream, market-based media are not meeting individual needs. The public service remit is then to serve the individual citizen, providing content and services to small groups with specific needs.
- The impact of internationalization and globalization processes have called for a defense of national culture as well as cultural diversity as part of the democratic process within the nation state. The public service remit here is to produce and distribute content distinctive from commercial providers and services for large audiences.
- The fragmentation and individualization processes in society call for enhancing social, political and cultural cohesion. It means a wide reach of PSM: the service has to be used regularly. (Jakubowicz 2007: 39)

How do we place Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in relation to these three regulatory-based definitions of the PSB/PSM remit? Sweden is in a special position since the body of laws on radio and television, based on the charter between the people of Sweden and the government on public service radio and television from 1956, simply states in what areas SVT (Swedish Television) and SR (Swedish Radio) is to deliver programming, but not *how* – i.e. on which distribution platforms (Moe & Mjøs 2013: 83). The 2013 charter, running until 2019 (in Swedish: “Sändningstillstånd”) simply states that SR has to broadcast four nationwide radio channels, one of these divided into regional services, for the whole country. Furthermore, SR has a complementary possibility to distribute digital radio. But other distribution platforms – particularly web radio and Internet services – are not mentioned.

In Denmark, DR’s task is defined in the Danish Radio and Television Broadcasting Act. Its §10 states that “[...] the public service activities in total through television, radio, the Internet or the like must ensure the Danish inhabitants access to a wide range of programs and services within news, enlightenment, education, art and entertainment. The services must strive for quality, versatility, and diversity.”

According to Moe’s categorization, it seems that the Swedish body of law circumvents the problem of defining the PSB/PSM remit, leaving it to the broadcasters, while the Danish Radio and Television Act as quoted above is closer to the British solution by giving equal ranking to the ‘old’ broadcast media and the Internet – and whatever may come: “and the like.”

In Norway the tasks of the main national radio and television broadcaster NRK are stipulated in *The Act of Broadcasting and Audiovisual Subscription Services*, and the distribution options are not defined as ‘radio’, ‘television’ or ‘the Internet’, but instead called ‘electronic communication networks,’ opening up for supplementary distribution and communicative options, in a similar way to the Danish phrase ‘broadcast media and the like.’

Digital Radio Strategies – DR, NRK, SR

The transformation process from PSB to PSM has reinforced the political debate about public service remits, and especially the PSM expansion on the Internet has led to regulatory interventions in many European countries. This has been influenced by supra-national media regulation within the EU, but mainly by commercial competitors, who have argued for the implementation of public value tests of new PSM initiatives, and furthermore for restrictions on the content and character of PSM websites in order to restrain unfair competition.

The overall digital radio strategies in the three Scandinavian countries seems quite homogeneous, taken from the legal provisions and the official policy papers, but under the surface once can detect differences in journalistic

and editorial guidelines, in areas of special importance, and not least in the way program genres are organized.

In Denmark the overall public service remit is stated in §§ 10 and 12 in the Danish Radio and Television Broadcasting Act, as well as in DR's annual Public Service Contract with the Danish state on the basis of the present Media Agreement, which normally runs for four years. In the 2013-2014 contract DR activities on the Internet are ranked alongside radio and television: "DR must secure a varied supply of programs and services to the entire population via TV, radio, Internet and other relevant platforms." (DR 2013-2014: 2) This explicit platform neutrality and the term "other relevant platforms" points again to the inspiration from the BBC Charter. In Norway the public service remit rests in the NRK-Plakaten (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation: Statement of Commitments) which is part of the NRK Regulation, chapter 2. The remit for NRK radio and television is listed in the second paragraph, describing the NRK remit (§ 13), while NRK Internet activities are described in paragraph 24: "The Corporation should be present, and develop new services, on all important media platforms so as to achieve the broadest possible reach for its overall program services." Obviously, the Internet and "similar" platforms are considered "an extension of broadcasting," as described by Moe (2010: 5).

As stated previously, SR's digital activities are not mentioned in the legal foundations, not even in the recent charter. Nevertheless, sr.se does not differ substantially in its content from nrk.no or dr.dk. On the whole, every radio program has its own site with basic information, download or streaming options of previous programs, and some will have references or links to the program's Facebook, Instagram or other websites.

Social Media: A Disputed Aspect of Digital Strategies

Since Facebook became a rapidly growing phenomenon in Europe around 2005, DR, NRK and SR have supplemented their program web sites with Facebook sites and later included references to other social media such as Twitter and Instagram. As Moe points out, the Scandinavian broadcasters' engagement with primarily Facebook was initiated by enthusiastic journalists and producers trying out the new possibilities for engaging with the public, motivated by an ambition to reach new (younger) audiences with Facebook's sharing facility, and to develop new kinds of journalistic practices (Moe 2013: 117), similar to the development of web services in the mid-1990s (Brügger 2012). With the rapid growth of Facebook over the years it soon became more legitimate – at least seen from the broadcaster's perspective – to systematize and increase Facebook engagement. "You have to be present where the users are" was the general statement from the broadcasting institutions. This initial enthusiasm and more or less anarchistic expansion on Facebook was replaced little by little

by a less ambitious and more organized practice. The regulatory bodies as well as commercial actors in the media landscape questioned the legal basis for a public broadcaster to publish publicly funded media content within the domain of a multinational, commercial company, which cannot be regulated either by the broadcasters or the national media regulators. (Moe 2013: 119) In his 2011 report, DR's internal ombudsman criticized DR's way of using Facebook. Since only half of the population have a Facebook account, and even fewer are active on Twitter and Instagram, then the other half is cut off from taking part in debates as well as from originally produced DR content (DR 2011). In 2013 internal guidelines for the use of social media were included in *DR Ethics* (DR's etik). Social media are considered as supplementary to DR's own channels, and not a replacement of dr.dk. (DR 2014) "The use of social media must not be similar to advertisements, i.e. through an unnecessary amount of references to Facebook or through praise of specific social media" (DR's Etik 2014: 49). Similar internal guidelines have occurred in Norway (NRK 2010: Sådann lager du en god facebookside for NRK-- retningslinjer og gode råd, Internal guidelines, 30 November, NRK; Oslo – cf. Moe 2013: 119 and 121), and in 2013 SR published *Social Media. A Handbook for Journalists* in 2013, produced by the Communications Department in SR (SR 2013 and 2017)

This short overview of the digital strategies of the Scandinavian public service radio companies illustrates the efforts made to rephrase the public service remit in light of the digital transformation of radio. The future of radio in a European context seems to be digital, given some specific conditions in each of the countries. (Jauert et al. 2017) This tendency is reflected in the ratings for radio listening in the Scandinavian countries. In Denmark the share of daily listening on digital platforms has increased slowly over the years. From 2012-2016 it has raised from 20 to 37% of the listening time (DR Medieudviklingen 2017: 16). In Norway listening on DAB radio has increased rapidly recent years. As a result, the Norwegian Parliament decided to shut down the FM band in December 2017 and replace it by DAB+, even though the percentage for a switch over to DAB+ had not reached 50 %. (Medietilsynet, Norge – Årsrapport 2017). In contrast to Denmark and Norway, Sweden has decided not to implement DAB or DAB+ after an unsuccessful trial period in the beginning of the century and to rely instead on internet-based services for radio distribution. However, radio on different platforms and an increased use of social media as return channel and interactive options has been a constantly growing tendency for radio use during the last decade.

MADS OG MONOPOLE: RADIO TALKSHOW: ON AIR, ON DEMAND (PODCAST) – AND ON FACEBOOK

Through tracking use via PPM (People Portable Meter) or surveys, based on diaries/logs on daily listening, it is possible to conduct quantitative research about radio listening. Understanding user patterns, where the goal is to trace the relations between listening to a specific radio program independent of distribution platform, and the use of additional services (web sites, podcasting etc.) presents methodological challenges, however. To show how we might come to grips with this, the final part of this chapter will describe the research design of a qualitative audience study from 2013-2015, and present some of the main findings.

The program *Mads and the Monopoly* was launched in September 2003, and has aired since then on every Saturday morning between 9 and 12, except for holiday seasons. DR P3 is a full service channel for the younger audience, 20-39 of age, with music, news, sport and entertainment. The program host through all the years has been Mads Steffensen, a very popular radio and television host on DR. The concept of the program was not changed, but in January 2016 it was moved to P4, a channel more in line with the audience composition. For many years it has been the most popular radio program in Denmark – peaking in 2017 with a weekly audience of 1.4 million. (Kantar Gallup 2017)

Basically, it is a ‘problem page’ program, where people can phone or write to the program and present an everyday, personal dilemma. Mads Steffensen will then select the ones to be aired, and then the person will participate directly in the program by phone or by e-mail. For dilemmas presented by e-mail the host will read aloud the mail. For direct participation the host will introduce the caller, and the caller will present the dilemma. Then the dilemma is discussed by a panel, known as ‘the monopoly,’ which consists of three persons, all celebrities – mainly from media: actors, stand-up comedians, musicians, authors, journalists etc. After the conclusion, the caller, who has to be silent during the discussion, will comment on the advice or solution, as summed up by Mads. The monopoly are recruited by Mads by himself, and out of a group of around 25 monopolists, they are selected in changeable combinations from program to program.

Even though *Mads og Monopolet* can be characterized as a ‘problem page’ program, it takes in elements from other genres as well, and as such it can be considered a genre hybrid. Since the problems presented are dilemmas from everyday life, mostly of a character you as a listener can identify with, many of them related to areas of intimacy, such as one dilemma on the Mads and the Monopoly Facebook profile from November 2013:

I have a boyfriend that I love for sure, but he has been working abroad for a period of three months now, but will be back in two weeks. I have for some time been flirting with a colleague on the job, but now it seems to have developed into something more. A week ago I had sex with him after a dinner in town – and now I am in doubt. Shall I tell my boyfriend about it, or shall I wait and see what happens when my boyfriend is back?

This ‘twist of reality’ is often observed in the dilemmas, not always about sex, but also related to conflicts in the family, among friends – and some deal with social manners or how to behave. Some of them on the edge of the plausible, and quite a few among our respondents in the audience study point to that. Another core component in the program is talk: arguments, discussions and conversations – in a special, friendly, teasing and joking atmosphere, always kept on the right track by Mads.

The program concept avoids the extreme positions. You will never experience dilemmas dealing with health issues, social or psychological problems, violence in families or similar severe problems. The attitude from the monopolists towards the dilemmas may be cheerful, but never close to satire or mockery. Perhaps the most important element of the program is ‘sociability’ which is

the most fundamental characteristics of broadcasting’s communicative ethos. The relationship between broadcasters and audiences is a purely social one, that lacks any specific content, aim or purpose. This, of course, is not to deny that a very great deal of broadcast output has content, aim and purpose. (Scannell 2006: 23)

This sociability is assisted by the activities on the Facebook site during the program. Listeners will comment on the dilemmas, ask questions to the panel or to Mads, and Mads will upload photos from the studio – sometime small videos, and on the DR program website one can participate in the nomination for the dilemma of the day and win a t-shirt. Approximately an hour after the show the podcast will be available for download at both the Facebook and the DR sites. It is without the music, making the length just one hour.

For the next few days one will still find comments and discussion threads on the Facebook profile, but the traffic declines rather fast, until the middle of the week, when Mads typically will post a follow-up on one or two of the dilemmas from recent shows, often the dilemma presenters themselves reporting on the decisions they have taken on basis of the recommendations from the monopolists. Thursday Mads will give another update about the upcoming show Saturday – and reveal the names of the monopolists. This update will always end with: “This is going to be fabulous!”

The main reason for choosing this program for the audience study is its constant popularity for more than ten years without any changes of the program concept. Furthermore, *Mads og Monopolet* is a ‘segment crusher’. The

designated listener to P3 is 20-39 years old, but according to the Kantar Gallup Radio-Meter 2015, most of the audience for this program is 40+, most of them leaving their preferred DR channel, mainly P1 (talk and culture) or P4 (regional, music, news and entertainment). The majority of the listeners are women: 53%. All in all, we found that the program contains elements connected to some of the core qualities of 'traditional' radio and as such suitable for studying the connection between the program and the additional services offered on the web – dr.dk and Facebook.

Research Design

The study on *Mads og Monopolet* was conducted in cooperation between DR Media Research Unit (Peter Niegel) and Aarhus University (Per Jauert and research assistants Janne Nielsen (MA) and Signe Skou (MA)). The research design for our user study had three components: focus groups, followed by individual interviews with the participants, and finally each of the participants allowed us to track and store all traffic on their Facebook profile in a period of two months – one month before and one month after the focus group had taken place. This mapping and archiving was made possible by use of the web analytical tool *Digital Footprints* (<https://digitalfootprints.dk/>), which allows one to collect and analyze closed Facebook data with user consent.

The objective of the focus groups was to gather core listeners of *Mads og Monopolet* to discuss and evaluate the program and its qualities. The participants in the focus groups were recruited from the DR Panel, a collection of 3000 volunteers statistically representative for the Danish population. Since the program is a 'segment crusher' we aimed at gender balance, age spread and also different social backgrounds (education, occupation). All respondents should be active on social media, especially Facebook, and have knowledge of the program related sites. 20 participants were selected in the Copenhagen area, and 20 in Aarhus, where the focus groups were arranged in late spring and in mid-autumn 2013. The final selection of the six participants in each group took place after we had been able to follow the activity on their Facebook profiles during four weeks.

Central Findings and Research Perspectives

Taken from the focus groups, and confirmed by the individual interviews, it became quite clear that *Mads og Monopolet* carries traditional core qualities as a radio program, mainly related to its unique atmosphere, created by the conversational style among the people in the studio and the callers. The listeners can identify with many of the dilemmas, not least the most generally applicable, and this creates moments of seriousness. But it is balanced by the more unusu-

al or odd dilemmas, which have clear and fascinating entertaining qualities, calling for reactions among our respondents like: “I am happy that this shit is not happening to me.”

It is also a common view among our respondents that the monopolists are celebrities – it would not be the same, if they were ‘ordinary people.’ The monopolists with the most significant positions and rhetorical skills are the most popular. Even though our respondents had different rankings, they agreed on these qualities as vital for the program atmosphere. Another highly estimated celebrity quality was “honesty, clear arguments, no spineless positions,” but also an ability to listen to arguments, and being able to “open up for personal experiences – to offer something of your personality”. Finally, humor was important: “there must be some good jokes, some teasing and striking one liners.”

All these qualities – and more – create the unique atmosphere for the core listeners: “No Saturday morning without *Mads og Monopolet* – it gives the feeling of Saturday morning.” You do not have to sit down and listen carefully, you can do some cleaning or similar domestic activities, you can go shopping and listen to the program in your car – or you can bring it with you to the fitness center, listening on your smartphone, P3/P4 app etc. And if you have missed the outcome of one of the dilemmas, you can download the podcast soon after the live broadcast has ended. *Mads og Monopolet* carries core elements of ‘sociability’ through its unique atmosphere, which is not confined to the domestic space, but can be experienced anywhere and anytime, but for more of our respondents the “feeling of live” is important.

The core qualities of the program relate to what we could call ‘the Facebook experience.’ The blurring borderlines between the public and private have been aggravated since the introduction of social media. Some of the respondents note that the tendency to share everything, also the most intimate or private issues, on social media is reflected in programs like *Mads og Monopolet* – and in general on television, radio and on the Internet. Speaking of their own attitudes to Facebook use, all respondents stressed the need for privacy. Even though all respondents are core listeners, unfortunately none of them were active, participating users of either the program web site or the Facebook site. They were all using the download facilities, most of them would check the mid-week announcement of the next show, but only very few have ‘dropped a comment’ on Facebook.

The most striking observation in the focus groups and in the interviews as well was the respondent’s fascination and engagement with the program flow during the week. *Mads and Monopolet* did not end Saturday at noon: its duration was extended through the podcast option and, not least, through the mid-week announcement and the Facebook thread during the week. “The kettle is kept on the boil for the whole week”, as one of the respondents remarked.

Similar research in other European countries has pointed to this as a common tendency in radio being part of a cross media interaction, especially to give importance to all listener feedback on radio talk-shows, whichever platform it comes from: e-mail, phone call, SMS, Facebook, Twitter. (Bonini 2014: 83). The personalized and ‘storified’ content is another common denominator for the successful communication between the program hosts and the listeners (ibid.), similar to what our study of *Mads og Monopolet* observed. The ‘sociability’ of radio listening seems to have developed, refined and extended through the multi-platform options for ongoing engagement and inclusion.

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