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# **PUBLIC TELEVISION IN TRANSITION: A COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BBC AND THE NRK**

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# PART ONE: INTRODUCTION, THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

## CHAPTER 1:

### INTRODUCTION

The broadcast media are among the most important sources of information and culture in developed societies. Most people spend more than half their free time with radio and television; more than they spend on anything else except work and sleep. However, broadcasting is not only important on an individual level: The broadcast media have also come to occupy a central position in the collective processes of social, political and cultural life. Radio and television define social issues, orchestrate political debates and set cultural standards.

These roles of broadcasting are constantly in transition. Particularly over the last decade, there has been an indisputable upheaval in the global broadcasting scene: While satellite dishes are becoming an integral part of the scenery and the number of commercial outlets are multiplying, one of the key issues has come to be: What is happening to national public service broadcasting (PSB) in this era of commercialisation and internationalisation?

For the dominant part of this century, broadcasting in Western Europe, and also in other countries around the world has been organised in the form of public corporations. In the last decade it has become commonplace to talk about a crisis for these institutions. All over Western Europe the arguments rage over whether or not public broadcasting will survive in the present commercial and competitive environment. In many cases the prospects look bleak. As Schlesinger (1987:xiii) has observed:

'The politico-ideological drive towards deregulation, the growth of new distribution systems for television, which, especially in the case of direct broadcasting satellites (DBS) could threaten the viability of present national terrestrial television networks, the pressures on finance as broadcasting inflation consistently outstrips the general rate, and political intervention to reshape the existing structures of ownership and control - all these are normal parts of the scene abroad as well as here.'

Such arguments also rage in Britain and Norway, which are the two countries examined and contrasted in this study. In Britain, the future of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is uncertain beyond 1996, which is the year when its present Charter expires, and in Norway, the Norsk Rikskringkasting (NRK) is at the moment going through momentous changes in preparation for the commencement of the second national television channel in September 1992. These specific events are only the tip of the iceberg for these institutions, which over the last decades have been facing profound changes in their social, economic and political environment.

These changes and challenges vary between the two countries, however. To some observers it may seem strange to combine the cases of Britain and Norway in one study, as these countries' broadcasting systems exhibit very different characteristics. Britain is a densely populated country with an extensive broadcasting system, and the products of this system are hugely successful commodities on the global television market. Norway, in contrast, has a small population scattered over a large area, and a very limited broadcasting system compared with almost all other developed countries. Its different broadcasting services (radio, television, commercial television etc.) developed later than in most other countries, and the influence of its broadcasting system abroad is almost negligible.

There are also a series of specific differences between the BBC and the NRK. The BBC is a huge institution, employing more than twenty thousand people, and its operations cover two television channels, five radio channels, extensive regional services, and international services both on radio and television. The NRK, in contrast, employs around two thousand people, and operates only one television channel, two radio channels, and a limited external radio service.

Finally, there are major differences in terms of television consumption. In Britain the average viewer watches television for more than three hours a day (Barwise and Ehrenberg 1988), whereas in Norway, the average is less than two hours. This in turn implies that in Norway, the average person still spends more time listening to the radio than watching television (NRK 1990-92).

Despite these differences between the two countries, the public broadcasting structures in Britain and Norway exhibit many similar characteristics. Both the BBC and the NRK were established as monopolies in the inter-war period, both are publicly regulated and predominantly funded through a licence fee, and both were originally radio broadcasters which eventually became television institutions. In addition, both the BBC and the NRK have enjoyed a dominant position in the national life of their respective countries. In an article from 1977, Krishan Kumar (:234) claimed that even if other countries' broadcasting institutions exhibited the same constitutional characteristics, it was wrong to assume that there were equivalents to the BBC elsewhere in the world. Broadcasting corporations in other countries, he claimed, did not occupy a singular position as 'a major component of the national culture' to the same degree. Kumar, however, chose to compare the British system only with the US and the French systems, which are fundamentally different from the British in terms of the commercial and state influence. Had he instead compared the BBC with the broadcasting corporations in the Scandinavian countries, he would have found not only the same singularity, but also structural similarities in terms of the balance between state and commercial interests.

Nevertheless, it is important not to exaggerate the similarities. BBC and NRK are two different institutions existing in two different national contexts, and there are, as we shall see, marked cultural and political differences between the two. There are also major historical differences. In Britain television was implemented as early as 1936, and only two decades later, a commercial television station was established to compete with it. The NRK television service, in contrast, was not formally established until 1960, and it was not until 1990 that the decision was taken to establish a competitive national television channel.

In the last years, the situations of the two corporations have again become more alike. This is partly due to a series of similar developments in the two countries, and partly to increasing internationalisation, which implies that the same forces and interests increasingly are working across national boundaries. As Gardner (1986) has observed: 'enormous transnational processes are at work here which find their echoes, and demand solutions, in every national context.' For example, in all countries these processes have abolished the possibility of upholding a broadcasting monopoly, and have also made it more difficult for the traditional public broadcasting corporations to sustain their dominant position in national life.

### 1.1. Approach and research questions

The aim of this study is to conduct a long term structural analysis of how broadcasting systems develop and change. The study focuses primarily on the establishment and development of public service television, but since television was implemented into an already existing structure, it is also necessary to examine its roots in the radio era. Furthermore, in many instances the radio and television activities are so difficult to distinguish from each other that it is more fruitful to apply a general institutional perspective.

The analysis combines two different approaches: broadcasting policy studies and historical analysis. Broadcasting policy studies is a research tradition which has proliferated in the 1980s in the wake of the upturn in media-regulatory activity (see for example McQuail and Siune (eds.) 1986, Collins 1990a, Dyson and Humphreys (eds.) 1986, 1988, Etziony-Halevy 1987, Kuhn (ed.) 1985a,b, Kleinstaub et.al. (eds.) 1986, Østbye 1988, Gramstad 1988). Within this type of study, at least two different traditions can be identified. There is firstly the rather limited tradition which originated from the pluralist type of political science, and which in turn can trace its roots back to a Weberian definition of politics (Weber 1990). As Leys (1989:10) has pointed out, studies within this tradition discuss politics 'largely in isolation from the economy and (to a lesser extent) the society', and focus primarily on explicit and overt decisions taken by parliaments and governments. In line with this tradition, Østbye (1988: 31) has defined media policy as: 'the relationship between the mass media and the state' (1988: 31, see also Gramstad 1988), a definition which largely excludes the underlying economic, political and

cultural trends, and also, at least to some degree, decisions taken within economic and industrial establishments.

Policy research can also be defined more extensively, however, as the analysis of how different social forces, constraints and interests interrelate to promote changes in broadcasting policy and structures, both nationally and internationally. Such a wide approach has the advantage of integrating the agency-oriented tradition outlined above with more structural theories, and it also opens up the possibility of the inclusion of a wider range of actors: industrial, social and cultural. This kind of wide focus also carries with it a lot of problems, however, of which two are particularly important (Collins 1990a: vii). The first problem is that 'it is difficult too see the wood among the trees', i.e. that it is easy to get lost in the mass of data regarding the impact and cross impact of different political, technological, social, economic and cultural forces. Secondly, the problem that 'the trees age rapidly and are supplanted by new growth', i.e. that it is difficult to keep up to date with a broadcasting market in rapid transformation. Many of the developments involve very rapid change, and the conclusions may therefore have a very short 'shelf life'.

Despite these problems, there is no escape from a wide approach in the current situation. The structural constraints and long term trends must be integrated into the analysis in order to understand the framework within which the social actors operate, and as concentrated cross-media interests increase their influence over media policy-making, it is not sufficient to study 'political' actors in the traditional sense of the term alone.

Most analyses within the field of broadcasting policy research are concerned solely with the present. Historical information is often added - but more often than not it just serves as 'background' and does not form an integrated part of the analysis. This is not just a problem for media researchers, however; other commentators and critics have interpreted media institutions, and particularly broadcasting institutions, as static and non-evolutionary. As Negrine (1985b:38) has pointed out, this situation leaves much to be desired:

'Such a perspective not only distorts the real history of broadcasting, but also the necessary evolutionary nature of organisations that exists in the public domain.'

The problem is further compounded by the fact that most contemporary historians have regarded the mass media as peripheral to their main concerns. This situation has improved, however. As Ward (1989) points out in the introduction to his comparative history of media developments in Britain, Germany and the US, the last two decades have witnessed a growing awareness among contemporary historians of the importance of the media in understanding historical developments. Nevertheless, as is evident in recent historical works such as Furre (1991) for Norway and Marwick (1990) for Britain, there is still some way to go before the media is given the status of an important social force in its own right.

The present study is historical in the sense that it does not concern itself only with the present situation, but understands the broadcasting corporations as systems originating in another time and within other constraints than those of the present. The analysis is also historical in the sense that chronology is one of its organising principles. This does not mean that its aim is to write or rewrite the British or Norwegian broadcasting histories. The study has consciously avoided a descriptive or narrative writing style, in order not to give the impression that its aim is to re-create the situations which are analysed. As Tosh (1991: 15, 112-113) has pointed out, a narrative writing style is a technique used predominantly by historians operating within a historicist tradition, whose main aspiration it is to study the past 'for its own sake' or 'from the inside' (see also Allen and Gomery 1985, Kj rup 1991). Although the kind of enquiry whose sole object is to recreate a particular conjuncture in the past remain valid in its own right, the historical discipline generally has become much more analytical over the last hundred years. In historical analysis the main outline of events tends to be taken for granted, and what is at issue is their significance and their relationship with each other; this also implies that chronology becomes less important. As Tawney (1978: 54) has pointed out:

'Time, and the order of occurrences in time, is a clue, but no more; part of the historian's business is to substitute more significant connections for those of chronology'.

In the present study, the principle of chronology is cross-cut with a range of sociological 'variables', and the aim is to determine how general social forces and interests have interacted in specific historical settings. The importance of such an analysis lies in establishing those factors which were common to different societies, and understanding why they arrived at different solutions to common problems. Specifically, the analysis focuses on three crucial 'historical moments' in the formation of public television in Britain and Norway: the establishment of the institutions as radio monopolies, the implementation and impact of television, and the profound changes in the television situation in the 1980s and early 1990s. At each stage, the aim is to identify how the broadcasting institutions interrelated with various social forces and interests, and how they adapted in order to continue to exist.

As should be apparent from the above, the approach sees no problems in combining historical and sociological perspectives. Despite what has previously been said above about the traditional lack of historical perspective in much sociological analysis, and despite the fact that historians usually emphasise changes over some span of time and work in a non-comparative way, historians and sociologists are not concerned with entirely different forms of analysis. On the contrary, as Wright Mills (1970: 160) has pointed out, 'this difference is merely one of emphasis and of specialization within a common task'. Other social theorists have also, in the last two decades, made empathic assertions of the essential unity of their discipline and history. Anthony Giddens, for example, has argued that 'There simply are no logical or even methodological distinctions between social sciences and history - appropriately conceived' [emphasis in original] (Giddens 1979: 230), and Philip Abrams has gone as far as to argue that 'in terms of their fundamental preoccupations, history and sociology are and always have been the same thing' (Abrams 1982:x).

These efforts to break down disciplinary boundaries have not been reciprocated by historians to the same degree. Until recently, the most common view among historians was, in line with the historicist tradition, that history and social theory had little in common. Langholm (1977: 12) represents this traditional view when he argues that:

'Despite its interest in the abstract and regular, history is still an individualizing or singularizing science. ... The regularities that historians observe are limited, limited to certain areas in time and space. This distinguishes history from the so-called generalizing sciences, such as for example physics, and today's dominating schools within sociology and the related social sciences, which are trying to arrive at results that are general or universally valid.'

As the social sciences have become less concerned about producing 'universally valid' results (see for example Holter and Kalleberg (eds.) 1985, Berntzen and Selle 1988), and the historical discipline has become more analytical (see for example Tosh 1991, Callinicos 1987), the gap has narrowed. Many of the most innovative historical studies of recent years have drawn heavily on insights and approaches traditionally associated with the social sciences. This characterisation applies, for example, to many recent studies of broadcasting history, which display a high degree of sociological sensitivity despite being more detailed and descriptive than is common within the social sciences (see for example Dahl 1975, 1978, 1990, Scannel and Cardiff 1991, Ward 1989). The BBC historian, Asa Briggs, has even argued in favour of combining historical and comparative analyses. In 1979, he wrote that:

'It is impossible to understand British Broadcasting, a unique structure in the world context, without comparing it with other broadcasting structures, and without tracing its origins back to the 1920s' (Briggs 1979a:11).

Within the framework of what is said so far, the present study focuses on three main questions:

1. What is the relationship between general social forces and the establishment and development of broadcasting systems? Which are the most important constraints, and in what way do these limit the possibilities open to social actors? Which actors and interests are most important in determining broadcasting structures?

2. What were the original characteristics of the public service broadcasting corporations, the BBC and the NRK, and how have these characteristics developed and changed? What are the options open to such institutions when it comes to adapting to changes in their environment?

3. In what way have the important social changes in this century impacted both on the relationship between the social forces and interests, and the positions and structural characteristics of the broadcasting corporations?

As should be apparent from the above, the study is comparative and concerned with relations at the macro-level of society. In addition to examining, on a specific level, the transformation of the situations and positions of the public broadcasting corporations, the BBC and the NRK, it aims to establish a general framework for understanding how broadcasting structures may develop and change in liberal capitalist societies. Thus, the study is less concerned with historical detail (and thereby also with disproving previous accounts), and more with the relationships between different forces and processes. Although the framework is intended to be applicable also to analyses of other types of social and institutional change, however, it is not meant to represent a universal theory. Instead, it is built around a series of analytical concepts, the generality of which are limited in time and space.

The study does not concern itself specifically with either programmes or audiences, but approaches the public broadcasting corporations largely as social actors which operate in the public sphere along with other social actors. For this type of research, documentary analysis is particularly well suited. Large formal organisations of the type analysed here generate masses of written material, of which much is easily accessible to the researcher.

#### 1.2. 'Public service broadcasting'?

So far, the term 'public broadcasting' has been used as a synonym for the original European broadcasting corporations which were set up as licence-fee funded monopolies in the inter-war period, but public service broadcasting is in no sense a precise social term. As many contributors have pointed out (see for example Nossiter 1986, Peacock Report 1986, Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture 1987), not even in Britain is there an explicit, generally accepted definition of 'public service', and in Norway, not even a generally accepted term to describe what was thought of as a public service broadcasting in Britain existed until the mid-1980s (Syvertsen 1990, Gramstad 1989). As long as the NRK had a monopoly and no other forms of broadcasting existed, there was little need for a term which could distinguish 'public' broadcasting from other forms, and it was generally sufficient to use terms like 'broadcasting' and 'the NRK'.

As new television and radio channels began to proliferate, however, so did the search for analytical concepts which could be used to distinguish between different systems and solutions. To many contributors, the concept of 'public service broadcasting' (and its more recent Norwegian counterpart 'allmennkringkasting') seemed well-suited to distinguish between the 'old' system of broadcasting and certain new forms. The concept was not only used by commentators and critics eager to identify new trends, however, it was also increasingly used by a variety of institutions and individuals in order to legitimise more specific interests and privileges. With its vague, but positive connotations, the concept of 'public service' was useful in a broadcasting environment characterised not only by a struggle over money and resources, but also by a struggle over political and cultural legitimacy.

Thus, over the last decade, the concept of 'public service broadcasting' has been subject to inflationary use. The fact remains, however, that the meaning of the concept is not clear. To anyone who bothers to compare the different definitions present in the debate, it becomes apparent that these vary tremendously in shape and form. Some use the concept in order to describe a national system as a whole, others use it in order to describe certain institutions, and others again use it to describe a certain mixture of programmes. There are also substantial disagreements as to which precise characteristics that should be included in the definitions. In a survey of more than twenty public service 'definitions' put forward in the 1980s, I was able to identify more than thirty different features which the contributors claimed characterised public service broadcasting today (see also Syvertsen 1990).

In this study, the development of the concept of public service broadcasting is examined along with the development of the institutions. In those parts of the study where the development of the concept is not the issue, however, the term 'public broadcasting corporation' is used as a synonym for the BBC and the NRK. This is only done in order to vary the language, and is not meant to indicate that the concept of public service broadcasting is necessarily an adequate description of these institutions.

### 1.3. Thesis outline

The thesis consists of five main parts:

In the first part, titled Introduction, Theory and Methodology, I present the theoretical and methodological considerations underlying the study. In chapter two, I present a theoretical argument in three parts, each corresponding with one of the main research questions outlined in the introduction, and in chapter three, I discuss the comparability of the two cases: Norway and Britain, and the problems and advantages connected with documentary analysis.

In the second part, titled: Public Broadcasting and Public Television in Britain and Norway Before 1980, I examine the establishment and development of public broadcasting in Britain and Norway, prior to the major changes in the 1980s. The analysis is based on both primary and secondary sources. In chapter four, I begin by examining why the public broadcasting corporations were established, and identify their original characteristics. This includes a discussion of how the corporations interpreted their duties in the years when they were only operating radio services. In chapter five, I discuss the implementation of television into the public broadcasting structures in the two countries, and examine how this and other changes led to a redefinition of public broadcasting in the 1960s and 1970s. Finally, in chapter six, the legitimacy of the corporations by the early 1980s are assessed, as a background for an analysis of the more recent changes and challenges.

In the third part, titled: Reregulation of Broadcasting in the 1980s and early 1990s, I discuss the changes in the British and Norwegian broadcasting structures over the last decade. The analysis is based predominantly on primary source material. The discussion begins in chapter seven where the transformation of the broadcasting constraints are outlined, and in the next three chapters, I examine how different groups and actors responded to the new possibilities opening up within the area of television. In chapter eight, I examine how various business and industrial interests began to take advantage of the new possibilities, and how this put pressure on policy-makers to liberalise broadcasting legislation. In chapter nine, I discuss the policy-initiatives launched by the British and Norwegian governments in response to these and other pressures. Finally, in chapter ten, I examine how the public as citizens responded to the new policy-initiatives and to the more general changes in the broadcasting situation.

In the fourth part, titled: Public Television in Britain and Norway in the 1980s and early 1990s: Implications and Responses, I examine the specific implications of the changes in the media environments for the public broadcasting corporations, the BBC and the NRK. The analysis is based predominantly on primary sources. In chapter eleven the implications for the corporations' control structures are examined, in chapter twelve I discuss the implications for the corporations' privileges, and in chapter thirteen, I examine the implications for the corporations' obligations. In this part, I also discuss how the corporations responded to the new challenges, and to what degree these responses lead to a redefinition of public broadcasting in the two countries.

Finally, the fifth part (chapter fourteen) contains the conclusions of the study.

## CHAPTER 2:

### THEORY AND APPROACH

In this chapter, a theoretical argument concerning the establishment and development of broadcasting systems, is outlined. The argument consists of three main parts, each corresponding with one of the three main research questions outlined in the introduction.

In the first section, a general sociological perspective on the relationship between various social forces and the development of broadcasting systems, is presented. How are broadcasting systems established, what are the forces and interests involved, and what happens when these forces and interests develop and change?

In the second section, the emphasis is on the broadcasting systems themselves. What is the overriding logic of such institutions, and what are the options open to them when it comes to adapting to changes in their environments?

Finally, in the third section, an historical argument concerning the relationship between social change and the development of broadcasting structures, is outlined. In what way have important historical changes in this century impacted on the development of broadcasting structures, and in what way have they influenced the relationship between the social forces and interests?

## 2.1. Constraints, forces and interests

In this section, a sociological argument concerning the relationship between different social forces and interests, and their relations again with the establishment and development of broadcasting systems, is outlined. The argument is general in the sense that it applies to broadcasting systems across different contexts, and with some modifications it can also be used to analyse other publicly regulated institutions. However, it is not meant to represent a 'grand theory' in any sense of the term. It is an approach derived from analyses of the development of broadcasting systems in western liberal capitalist societies in the 20th century, and its validity is limited to these and structurally similar institutions.

The starting point for the argument is that a communication system can be organised in many different ways, and that any one communication technology can be implemented into many different institutional forms. The broadcasting technology, for example, could have been organised as a series of local stations, a national network, a state department, an educational service, an interactive communication system and a commercial enterprise, to mention just a few alternatives. The possibilities are not endless, however. On the one hand the alternatives are limited by the type of communication under study (the 'technology') and by the general constraints of the social structure. On the other, they are limited by the specific composition of economic and social forces in the society and the period when the communication system is established.

Thus, the argument is concerned both with the role played by social structures and the role played by human agency. Studies of structures and studies of actions have had a tendency to develop separately, but as many contributors have pointed out, this is a false dichotomy (see for example Murdock 1982, Giddens 1984, 1979, Callinicos 1987). In the present study, a structural analysis is necessary to map the range of options open to the social actors and the pressures operating on them, but such an analysis, for example in the form of political economy, is too limited on its own. As Curran et al. (1982) have argued, it allows little in the way of historical analysis of specific institutions beyond the level of ownership and allocative control (see also Hughes 1981), and it also obscures the fact that there are always a range of possibilities open to the social actors within the limits of the structural constraints.

Abolishing a structural perspective altogether, however, is no option. Even if it can be argued that all structures are, within a long term perspective, created and reproduced by human agents, structural constraints do determine the options open to social actors operating within a limited time span. The concept of determination is here used in Williams' (1977: 83-89) sense of the setting of limits of variation, rather than in the causal sense which is often associated with structural analysis. As Garnham (1990:6) has observed, determination in this sense implies that social structures 'makes some courses of action more likely than others, if only because it makes some more difficult than others' (see also Corrigan 1990). This also emphasises the fact that structural constraints should not be seen purely as limitations, but also as enablers defining new possibilities and opening up new options.

In the case of the establishment and development of broadcasting systems, both technical, economic and social constraints are relevant. The technical limitations are of obvious importance, since any one technique can only perform a specified set of tasks and have a limited range of applications. Still, what appears to be purely technical limitations are more often than not a product of the way in which the technology is socially perceived. As Williams (1975) has pointed out, technological development is an intentional process, where some outcomes are pursued and others left uninvestigated. Many potential

applications are never developed because they do not have a sufficiently high level of expected returns.

We understand broadcasting today as an oligopolistic system of mass communication, whereby a small number of centralised institutions produce and transmit a certain mixture of cultural and informational content to a large number of customers. This appears to be a logical and 'natural' utilisation of the broadcasting technology. If we examine the original conceptions of radio and television, however, we find few indications that this system of centralised distribution and private reception was to become the dominant one. The first application of the wireless technique was for point-to-point communication, whereas when television was first developed, it was perceived by some as a medium for collective reception (like the cinema) and by others as a facsimile device for transmitting newspaper pages to individual homes (Corrigan 1990, Gorham 1949, Williams 1975, Winston 1990). Bearing this in mind it is worth asking the question: How is a certain technical 'invention' given a certain socially defined form, and how are other applications ruled out?

Marxist contributors have argued that technological developments are, as a rule, aimed at serving the prevailing power structure in society. Schiller (1976), for example, claims that technological developments take place out of the perceived needs to consolidate, utilise and extend the social power of capital. Within large corporations, which is where these development processes take place, money is not allocated randomly, but is put into research that can further the interests of the institutions themselves. This in turn sets real limits upon what technological applications are developed.

This perspective is important as an alternative to the technological determinism which permeates many debates on broadcasting (see, for example, Williams 1975, 1983b, Winston 1990 for discussions of this concept). Still, substituting technological determinism with economic determinism runs the risk of losing sight of the fact that the system of social power might not always be unitarian as to what technologies should be invented, developed, marketed and utilised. In the process whereby a specific technique is being 'socialised', conflicts erupt on many levels, and often technologies are created whose applications are changed or subverted by others. As Hamelink (1989) argues, the social implications of a technology can never be fully predicted, and any technical development will therefore include an element of risk. Once a certain 'technique' exists, it can be employed by many different interests. Even if industrial interests are the dominant ones, also other social forces and interests may play a part.

Williams (1975) has argued that modern communications technologies are developed in response to social changes on two levels. At one level, new communication technologies come about as a result of problems of communications and control in military and commercial operations of expanded, mobile and complex societies. At another level, however, they are created in response to the new social and cultural demands that emerge in the wake of the development of such societies.

So far, the development from a technical 'invention' (such as wireless communication) to a socially defined 'system' (such as broadcasting), has been discussed. As has been pointed out, this is a complex process where only few alternatives are pursued. Even if the social application of the technology is taken for granted, however, the nature of the system still sets limits to the institutional form. Many technologies are outright dangerous or create problems in terms of pollution, whereas other systems have other inherent characteristics which limits the process of institutionalisation. Communication systems (including postal, telecommunications and transport) are a particular case here. These systems can only function properly if they are organised as whole systems reaching the totality of the population, and this characteristic set real limits to the choice of institutional form (see for example Dahl 1975, 1978b, Collins et.al 1988, Wedell 1968).

The second important constraint is economics. Western societies are capitalist societies, and wherever capitalism exists as an organised system of production, all institutions need to be able to generate revenue. More specifically, all institutions need a 'market', i.e. a constituency of 'customers' able and willing to pay for the services. In principle, such a 'market' can be based on a variety of constituencies - the state, the advertisers, the parliament, the manufacturers, the audiences - to mention but a few. The main point is, however, that the system must be organised in a way which

makes such a financial exploitation possible, and that this sets yet further limits to the possible range of institutional forms.

Thirdly, the social actors are constrained by the general social consensus. Western societies in the 20th century are ruled not so much through coercion as through consent, and this implies that the technology must be institutionalised in a form which is not only considered legal, but also socially legitimate. As has been demonstrated in studies of social policy, for example, public opinion, at least insofar that the public is prepared to act on its beliefs, sets clear limits to the range of political and government action (see for example Cohen and Young 1981, Brox 1991). Social legitimacy is particularly important if scarce and much sought-after resources are at stake, as has traditionally been the case with broadcasting. If, for example, the policy-makers decide to give preference to one set of institutions, they need to make sure that this decision is widely accepted. If not, these institutions will find themselves constantly in the firing line of those not granted the same privileges.

Whereas the possibilities are numerous in principle then, the actual institutional forms which do develop are constrained technologically, economically and socially. Within the limits of these constraints, however, there are still a number of choices to be made. Who makes these choices as to how broadcasting systems should be organised?

Three sets of interests are particularly important here. There is firstly business and industry. This comprises of a diverse set of actors, involving anything from newspapers and other media, via set manufacturers, to external businesses with no other interest in broadcasting than as a means of advertising their goods. Common to these interests, however, is that they will press for an institutionalisation of the technology which provides the optimal conditions for profit-taking. Although the most favourable form is generally an institutional structure where public regulation is kept to a minimum, and where there is no limitations on ownership, advertising or content (see for example Schiller 1983, Murdock and Golding 1977), there may well be differences as to how the economic and industrial potentials of broadcasting should be realised. A publicly owned broadcasting system may for example be more beneficial to the manufacturers than to the advertisers, and a strict national regulation may well be more beneficial to domestic manufacturers and producers than a free trade regime.

The second set of actors are the ministries of the state, which also may have different interests when it comes to the institutionalisation of communication systems. At one level there are the interests of the coercive branch of the state (police and military) that have to do with surveillance and control, and which have been closely involved in all communication developments in this century. At another level, the state has an interest in creating and improving national communication structures, as a way of fulfilling their own communication needs and improving the profitability of national industries. Finally, the state may also have a range of more political aims concerning the organisation of communication systems, aims which vary according to whatever government is in power at any one time.

In many ways, broadcasting can be seen as a constant problem for Governments. Heller (1978:12) argues, for example, that the state interest in broadcasting in Britain was initially essentially negative, concerned with protecting essential services from outside interferences and disruption. In addition, the fact that broadcasting involves scarce resources poses problems for the state. Decisions have to be made as to how these are to be managed, and this in turn raises questions about the degree of legitimate state involvement in the cultural and informational industries. It also raises a series of tricky financial questions: Should the state spend money on it, earn money from it, or leave it to survive by its own means?

These questions point to the importance of media policy, and the fact that it is, in highly regulated mixed economy societies, up to governments and parliaments to reach the final decision on the institutional form. Such a decision may have wide implications, or it may be a decision to introduce only limited regulation and let the market rule. It may even be a non-decision, i.e. a conscious or unconscious decision not to place the issue on the political agenda (see for example Lukes 1984, Østbye 1988).

What is important, however, is that the decision in the end depends on the strength of the various actors involved, and the alliances between them. The industry and the state are the most important actors in the field of broadcasting, and if these interests are in harmony with one another, changes in the broadcasting structure are likely to come about without much public debate. Institutional 'models' will be rapidly worked out and smoothly put into operation in the technocratic fashion, and the role of parliaments and other social actors will be a limited one, only sanctioning what has already been agreed by the main players.

In many instances, however, the pattern is not one of consensus, but of conflict. As has already been pointed out, there might be conflicts between different business interests, and there might also be conflicts between different state departments or between business and the state. Conflicts along these lines are visible in the development of all cultural and informational industries, and the more major the conflicts between the dominant actors, the more likely it is that the struggle will be fought out in public and involve a wider set of social and cultural interests. We then have what we may term an historic moment, whereby different interests all attempt to maximise their gains and minimise their losses in the struggle over what institutional form should be applied.

This struggle takes place in the institutions of parliament, in the media, and on other political and cultural arenas. Here, different alternatives and solutions are proposed and defended, alliances are made and revoked, and there is a general confusion as to what will become the final outcome. In this struggle, ideological perspectives and normative judgements also play a part. As Tunstall (1983:40) has argued in the case of television developments in Britain:

'Broadcasting committees and politicians decide the fate of British television, and since they do so to a large extent on the basis of ideology and imagery, political public relations and lobbying are important'.

Stressing the importance of ideology and imagery is just another way of saying that the legitimacy of the different alternatives is important. Within political theory there are many different conceptions of legitimacy (see for example Held 1989, Slagstad 1980), but common to them all is that they define a legitimate institutional arrangement as one which is normatively sanctioned by the public. But what does 'the public' mean in this context? There are obviously, both in principle and in practice, different definitions of 'the public interest', and the concept of the public itself is ambiguous.

In the context of the development of communication systems, at least two different connotations of the term 'public' are relevant. This is firstly the public as citizens, as a body made up of different social actors with opinions as to how a communication technology should be institutionalised. As such, the public is a body which make their voices heard in what we - following Habermas (1984) - may loosely term 'the public sphere', or in the pluralist tradition 'the marketplace of ideas'. The concept of the public sphere identifies a sphere distinct from the economy and the state, and include a whole set of institutions within which public debates and decision making is carried out: parliament; the media; ad hoc committees; letters; submissions; public hearings; public inquiries etc. According to fundamental bourgeois principles, this sphere should be characterised by general accessibility of information; free and unconstrained access, and possibilities for rational discussion (see for example Mortensen 1977, Elster 1983, Eide 1991, Garnham 1986, Helland 1988, Habermas 1979, 1984, Skogerbø 1990, Scannel 1989, Keane 1984).

In practice, however, these institutions are like all other social institutions, both inequalitarian and restricted. Whether we follow Habermas' (1984) claim that this 'decline' is due to the invasion of the state, the market and general strategic thinking into the public sphere, or look to more general marxist or pluralist approaches focusing on the differences of political power and access, the major restrictions are easy to identify. Firstly, there is a difference of resources. Taking part in political negotiations and lobbying requires not only material resources such as money, staff, office resources etc., but also the educational and social resources needed to understand 'the rules of the game' (see for example Martinussen 1973, Hernes 1980, NOU 1982:3).

This brings us to the second limitation, the fact that the public sphere is limited due to the presence of strategic communication. Many actors operating in the public sphere are, in the same way as the state and the economic interests, primarily taking part in the discussion as a means of furthering their own

specific interests. In fact, all arguments have both economic and cultural connotations, they are at the same time promoting certain views and favouring certain interests. This does not mean that all views expressed can be directly inferred from material interests, as is sometimes claimed from the perspective of a (simplistic) marxist sociology of knowledge (see for example Brox 1991, Leys 1989). In fact it is rather difficult to know what determines the emergence of a particular system of ideas, and why some, and not others succeed in penetrating the practical consciousness of important segments of the population. What is possible, however, is to distinguish between those actors who have an explicit, instrumental interest in certain broadcasting developments, and those who argue more principally on behalf of what they perceive to be in the general interest.

Thirdly, there is a power difference. Some have more power over public decision-making than others, whether this is defined in a pluralist way: as different possibilities for making others comply with your wishes (Hernes 1975), or in a more radical sense as some institutions being hegemonic, i.e. exerting an influence which makes their power and dominance appear natural and legitimate (Gramsci 1971, Lukes 1984). The power differences do to a large extent correspond with the differences of resources, but there are exceptions. Some cultural, ideological or religious interests may be more powerful than their resources indicate, if only through being considered too risky to alienate.

Due to the restrictions on the public sphere then, the views, arguments and perspectives put forward in the public debate, represent only a fragment of the total body of opinion on broadcasting matters. Furthermore, the views represented are for the most part the views of social elites and resourceful organised interests.

So far, only one connotation of the term 'public' has been discussed, that of the public as citizens. In this context, this refers to the essentially public activity of trying to have an impact on how a communication system should be regulated and institutionalised, through the institutions of the public sphere. Additionally, a second connotation of the term 'public' is relevant in this context. This is the public as customers, as a body primarily defined by their private consumption of the products of the communication system. In contrast to the public as citizens, the public as consumers do not generally express their opinions and preferences publicly. There are exceptions to this rule, for example many consumers write letters to the broadcasting corporations or attempt to influence media policy makers in regard to specific issues (see for example Madge 1989, Bastiansen 1991a,b). Generally, however, the public as consumers manifest themselves primarily as a demand in the economic sense of the word.

Nevertheless, the conception of consumer demand is problematic in relation to the audiovisual media. Whereas commercial print media relate to their audiences as consumers exercising private rights through purchasing power on the market, no direct transaction between producer and consumer takes place in the case of broadcasting (see for example Smith 1978, 1986). This in turn makes indirect forms of 'feedback' more important. One such form is the sale of hardware such as radio and television sets, whereas another form, which has gradually achieved more importance also in the European context, is market research (see Ang 1991).

These and similar indications of consumer preferences influence the public debate on broadcasting in at least two different ways. Firstly, and most importantly, consumer preferences help in determining the relative strength of the different industrial and corporate interests, through providing them with greater or lesser profits and resources. In addition, consumer preferences are used as arguments in the debate, as a means of legitimising different views and perspectives. Both these ways of influencing the debate are indirect, however, and it is therefore up to the public as citizens to determine to what degree consumer preferences should be taken into account.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that as individuals, people play a number of different roles in regard to the development of communication systems. In principle, the same person may switch between parts: one day acting the part of a business employee advocating changes in the communication structure in one direction, the next day acting the part of a concerned citizen advocating changes in an opposite direction, and the third day exercising her preferences as a consumer in a totally different direction again. It is perfectly legitimate to argue politically and culturally in favour of a certain type of programming, for example, while privately we may not prefer to watch

these programmes; similarly we might pursue a certain specific corporate interest on the one hand, while expressing a broader concern for the general public on the other.

Returning to the question of how certain broadcasting structures are established, it is clear that the interest of the public as citizens (with the limitations outlined above), in many cases has a decisive influence in the latter stages of a decision making process. Specifically, it may be up to the political, social and cultural actors to make the final choices between different alternatives or 'models'. This does not imply that the 'models' are primarily socially or culturally determined, on the contrary, at this stage only the 'realistic' alternatives remain, i.e. the alternatives which are already deemed 'possible' within the limits of the structural constraints, and which are sanctioned by at least some of the more powerful interests.

Thus, at the final stage, the wide range of initial possibilities has been narrowed down to a few alternatives. These are determined by general limitations and constraints, and by the specific composition of social forces and interests in that historical period. At each stage of the process, choices are made. Consequently, broadcasting systems are determined not only by structural factors, but also by conscious and intentional actions carried out by a set of different interests.

## 2.2. Broadcasting institutions: Survival, legitimacy and change

The outcome of the processes discussed above is a broadcasting institution with certain structural and organisational characteristics, but the fact that a certain structure has been agreed upon, does not necessarily mean that it is stable. As argued above, institutional arrangements come about as a result of alliances between different social actors, but since the views and interests of these actors are likely to be conflicting, the alliances may well be of a negative nature. A negative alliance implies that the participants differ on what solutions they favour, but come together in coalitions because they agree on what solutions to oppose. Since all institutional forms benefit some interests more than others, they are likely to remain controversial after the 'historic moment' passes. In some cases the establishment of a specific institution may even intensify the struggle, by providing a concrete focus for the discontented.

Thus, from the very beginning, a new broadcasting institution must take steps to secure its foundations. Organisational strategies must be developed to deal with the external interests, and procedures for treating criticisms and conflicts must be designed (see, for example, Jacobsen 1992). These practices and strategies may contain a variety of different elements and characteristics, but at the bottom line, what they are really about is institutional survival. Once an institution is established it does to some extent take on its own life and start following its own operational 'logic', and the need to survive is a necessary prerequisite for all further operations.

In this context, the term 'survival' concerns two different aspects of the operations of broadcasting institutions. At a very fundamental level it means surviving in an the economic sense, i.e. that the institution behaves according to the dictates of cost-effectiveness. This element has often been ignored or played down in the case of public broadcasting institutions, but as Murdock and Golding (1977:21) have pointed out, any public corporation operating in a capitalist economy has to behave in some ways 'as though it were itself a commercial undertaking'. It must for example avoid accumulating a deficit, and if one is in sight it must take steps to maximise its revenue and improve its trade balance vis a vis its external 'markets' (see also Kumar 1977).

Broadcasting institutions operate on a variety of markets and trade in a variety of commodities. Audiences, events, programmes, equipment, staff - all these are products to be bought, sold and exchanged. Consequently, broadcasters cannot concern themselves with the qualitative development of their services alone. They must also make sure that their operations are economically sound so that they do not undermine their position in the long term. As with other profitable businesses, they are vulnerable to pressures from financial and industrial interests, eager to exploit their money-making potentials.

On a second level, survival means sustaining the privileges of the corporations. All broadcasting institutions enjoy a privileged position by the very fact that they control scarce resources, and this position must be defended and justified. Just as important as defending the privileges as such,

however, is the need to maintain the balance between privileges and obligations. All institutions will be expected to fulfil certain duties in return for a privileged position, and the privileges are usually seen to be necessary for the institutions' ability to fulfil their obligations. If privileges were to be removed, or obligations added without reimbursement, there is a danger that the institutional structure may simply exhaust itself. It may become over-strained and impossible to manage, or it may collapse under the weight of external pressures. To prevent this from happening, i.e. to survive in this organisational sense, the strategies of the institutions must include provisions to keep the privileges intact: This implies designing strategies to legitimise the institutional arrangements.

As already pointed out, a legitimate institutional arrangement is an arrangement that is normatively sanctioned by the population, and a legitimation process is accordingly a process whereby such normative justification is sought. Thus, the corporations cannot act as a simple channel of the attitudes and values of certain (dominant) groups, but must struggle to maintain a valid relationship with the population at large. This may well be a difficult task for the institutions; particularly if major privileges are involved, so the mobilisation of consent and support requires careful attention. In order to sustain its legitimacy, the institution must not only convince the external interests that it is fair and just and that it should be privileged, but also that the general arrangement is beneficial to their interests, at least in the negative sense of it being the least worst alternative.

To achieve such a normative 'agreement', it is, as a rule, necessary to justify the arrangements with reference to factors external to the institutions themselves. The corporation must convince its surroundings that it is in the general interest, or in the interest of some other non-material goal, that its privileges should be upheld, and this in turn explains why it is important for broadcasting institutions to associate themselves with positive values which command a widespread agreement in society. The values chosen to legitimise the institutions may well be vague ('quality', 'fairness', 'democracy' etc.) so as to give the institution a maximum flexibility of operation. They cannot be too controversial, though: In the long term, no broadcasting institution aimed at the mass public can stray too far from the heartland of the cultural and political consensus.

Nevertheless, even if the institution at some point manages to achieve a high degree of legitimacy, the situation may still alter. As Garnham (1978:28) has pointed out, broadcasting structures are 'partial and temporary solutions to complex social and political problems', and both the solutions and the problems might change. The processes outlined in the previous section are therefore liable to repeat themselves all over again. The technological, economic and political constraints may all shift over a period, as may the balance between different actors and interests. This in turn requires the broadcasting institutions to be constantly sensitive to changes in their environment, and to respond and adapt accordingly. To quote Garnham (1978:27) again, broadcasting should be seen as:

'an open system that takes its particular configuration by adapting to an environment made up externally by the public or audience, of commercial pressures and of government and internally of the broadcasters themselves.'

Consequently, broadcasting institutions are neither completely 'free' or completely 'dominated', but 'structured' and 'constituted' through constant negotiations with their surroundings. In the case of the NRK, Dahl (1975: 13) has described this as a process of socialisation. When the NRK was established it was more or less a set of empty places, he argues, but gradually and through a series of conflicts with other interests, the institution took on a definite shape and form. Similarly, Schlesinger (1987:45) has, in his analysis of the formation of BBC news, argued that:

'Most of the impetus for change has derived from factors external to the BBC, rooted in the politics and economics of British society. The BBC was faced with a series of crises ... which successively promoted innovation in the scope, form and content of news'.

Siune (1989) has identified some of the options open to broadcasting institutions that experience changes in their environments. One is ritual behaviour whereby the corporations continue to operate as they have done in the past, in the belief that the challenges will blow over, but external changes might also promote various forms of innovative behaviour, including adaption to the standards of new competitors and the integration of new media and communication technologies. These responses will

vary, however, depending on the character of the challenge. In most institutions, long periods of relative stability are interspersed by innovative bursts, and the development process is disjointed, rather than being one of steady expansion.

Adaption, expansion and survival is not always possible, however. The balance of forces may shift significantly, thereby creating an institutional crisis which is impossible to solve through the regular mechanisms of adaption. As Taylor-Gooby (1985:5) has pointed out, social scientific concepts of crisis concerns the dilemmas of institutions incapable of resolving the conflicts that threaten them. Such conflicts are generally provoked by a series of constraints and pressures: economic, political and organisational, as well as a general loss of legitimacy. In other words, they do not develop unless different conflicts and pressures interact to create a wider set of threats.

Before proceeding, it is important to point out that the widespread use of the term 'crisis' within the context of broadcasting, in itself merits further discussion. As Raboy and Dagenais (1992) have noted, the notion of crisis as an analytical category has spread to every horizon in the twentieth century: Society, the family, the economy, the environment, the nation state - and now also public broadcasting - have been scrutinized from the perspective of crisis. In the latter case, the proliferation of the term 'crisis' has to do in large measure with the political struggle over broadcasting; by labelling a situation a 'crisis' one is indicating that something has to be done urgently in order to improve it. Nevertheless, the concept of crisis is useful as an analytical category. Tracey (1975) distinguishes between change (a constant feature of systems) and crisis (which is not), and sees the latter term as a description of a system which may, relatively soon, become something quite different than it has been. Raboy and Dagenais (1992:3) similarly defines a crisis as 'a state of affairs in which a decisive change for better or worse is imminent', and it is also worth recalling Offe's (1984:36) definition of a crisis as a process 'in which the structure of the system is called into question'. In all these definitions the concept of 'crisis' is used to describe a serious disruption in the life of an institution, and the challenge to the researcher is in each case to identify the elements of this disruption more precisely.

In this section, the ways in which a broadcasting corporation may respond to changes in its environment, has been discussed. As should be clear from the above, I do not see the apparent stability of these institutions as something which should be taken for granted: On the contrary, I agree with those who describe the public broadcasting systems as 'very vulnerable and assailable constructions' (Findahl 1991: 12). As Anthony Smith has pointed out, the BBC has, for most of its life, lived under a more or less constant threat to its security and even its sheer survival (Smith 1973, see also Kumar 1977), and even if the threats have been less apparent in the case of the NRK, the fact that these institutions were organised in a way which deviated from the 'normal' pattern of capitalist production, made them vulnerable from the beginning. The fact that they have survived for such a long time, indicates that institutional stability requires just as much investigation as institutional change. As C. Wright Mills has argued:

'Rather than 'explain' something as 'a persistence from the past', we ought to ask, 'why has it persisted?' Usually we will find that the answer varies according to the phases through which whatever we are studying has gone; for each of these phases we may then attempt to find out what role it has played, and how and why it has passed on to the next phase.' (Wright Mills 1970: 171)

In the present study, the fact that the public broadcasting corporations have survived throughout the dominant part of this century, is seen as a product of their ability to change and adapt to transformations in their environments. However, it will also be argued that the past four or five decades have seen social changes which has made such adaption increasingly difficult. Before proceeding to a discussion of these transformations, however, it is important to stress that changes within large organisations may occur for many different reasons, and should not be seen purely as 'responses' or 'adaptions' to challenges from external constituencies. As has been demonstrated by studies of the 'inner life' of the BBC and the NRK, the processes of change which have taken place within these institutions over the last decades, are rather more complex than they may appear from the outside (see, for example, Burns 1977, Schlesinger 1987, Jacobsen 1992, Puijk 1990). Furthermore, if we follow the strict criteria established by theorists within the school of methodological individualism as part of their criticism of functionalist approaches (Elster 1978, see also Callinicos 1987), an institutional strategy would not deserve the label 'response' unless it could be demonstrated

that specific actors had, on a distinct occasion, decided to implement these measures as a way of countering external pressures. Thus, it would be necessary to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the decision-making process within the corporations in order to identify, more specifically, where the changes were 'coming from'.

Such an analysis is not carried out in the present study which is, after all, primarily an examination of the interactions between the broadcasting corporations and their external environments. Thus, the aim is not to analyse internal changes within these corporations, but the strategies they have developed in order to deal with the specific problems which have emerged in the wake of the transformations of their social contexts. Within such a framework, it is sufficient to demonstrate that changes have taken place, that these changes do pose challenges to the broadcasters, and, finally, that the corporations, perceived as social actors, develop strategies which explicitly or implicitly are related to these challenges.

### 2.3. Historical and social change

So far, the relationships between social forces, interests and institutions have been discussed on a general level. Although these relationships are relatively stable across different points in time and across different societies of the same type, there are also variations. In chapter three, the possibilities for generalising across national contexts is discussed, whereas this section outlines the historical transformations which have had the most impact on broadcasting developments in this century.

The development of broadcasting and other new forms of cultural production was a feature of the modernisation process which entered a new and more intensive phase in Europe and the US in the late 19th and early 20th century. Many radical transformations took place in this period (see for example (Palmer and Colton 1965, Williams 1979, Berman 1987, Schiller 1986, Raboy 1987, Winston 1990), of which four were particularly relevant for the establishment of broadcasting systems. Firstly, there was the development of more profitable and practical technologies (including the discovery of electronic communication and new means of reproduction of symbols, images and sound), from the late 18th century onwards. Secondly, the rise (and transformation) of capitalism, whereby higher productivity throughout the economy and the financial ability of large numbers of people to be consumers of culture, resulted in a vast increase in the production and consumption of cultural goods. Thirdly, there was the process of mass democracy: the development of broadcasting coincided with the moment that the vote was conceded to all men and women, and thereby with the period when the media became crucial both for mobilising consent and for mediating between the government and the population at large. Finally, there was the process whereby the state became more involved in social life, a process which accelerated after the First World War in the face of the increasingly polarised class interests.

On a social level, these processes can be summarised in the concept of modernity, which describes the radically transformed character of life under new conditions. Williams (1979) has pointed to mobility (both physically, economically and socially) and privatisation (a move towards the apparently self-sufficient family home) as two of the main transformations of this period, and notes that (1975: 22) the new conditions led to an increased awareness of mobility and change 'not just as abstractions but as lived experiences'. This in turn led to a major redefinition of the function and process of social communication:

'new information and new kinds of orientation were deeply required, more deeply than any specialisation to political, military and commercial information can account for.'

As Schiller (1986:77) has pointed out, within capitalist societies this process of cultural creation generally adopted market methods and broadly the same organisational structures as the rest of the capitalist economy, but there were also exceptions to this rule. Among these were the European public broadcasting systems which were different in the sense that their declared objective was 'to provide a social utility rather than to maximise profit' (Murdock and Golding 1977:21). In contrast to commercial media, the public broadcasting corporations were publicly owned, and answerable to parliaments and governments rather than to consumers or advertisers.

As we shall see, these structural characteristics were products of the interactions between different social forces and interests in the specific period when the institutions were established. Due to a combination of technical and economic constraints the institutions were organised as monopolies, and due to a specific alliance between different interests, their main source of funding became the licence fee. The institutions' obligations were also products of this type of interaction. At the time of their establishment, the dominant view of broadcasting was that it was a primarily a system of social communication (rather than a commodity), and this implied that the institutions were set up to perform a range of social and cultural tasks. As will be demonstrated later, this included the expectations that they would provide a universal and egalitarian service, that they would raise cultural standards, and that they would serve the national interest.

Like the relationship between the various forces and interests, however, these characteristics were also liable to change in the course of time. Both Britain and Norway have, in the period since the broadcasting institutions were established, undergone major social changes, and these have in turn transformed the context within which the corporations operate.

Three long term trends are particularly important here. Firstly there are the developments within the sphere of technology. Despite the immense achievements of technology by the early 20th century, the following seven decades have witnessed more advances over a wide range of activities than the whole of previously recorded history. Developments within communications, electronics, nuclear power, and a host of other areas, have had an impact on the social situation in a way which must have been virtually unimaginable at the beginning of the century. In the same period, there have also been profound changes regarding technological leadership and capacity. In the course of the two world wars, technological leadership passed from Britain and the European nations to the United States, and later also to Japan.

These processes have, among other things, led to a shift towards more advanced and capital-intensive technology. Within broadcasting, an important development in this sense was the process whereby television replaced radio as the dominant medium, a process which in turn reinforced the industrial interest in broadcasting. Television sets were, along with cars, telephones, household appliances and package holidays, among the key commodities of the post-war 'consumer societies', and a wide range of industrial interests pressed for an expansion of the services so as to increase their own profits (Ward 1989, Briggs 1985, Leys 1989, Hood and O'Leary 1990). This process intensified further with the development of new information and communication technologies in the 1960s and 1970s, which had even more far-reaching implications. Firstly, an increasing number of distribution channels became available, which in turn undermined the technological justification for the strict broadcasting regulation. Secondly, some of these 'newer' technologies, in contrast to more traditional forms of television distribution, transcended national boundaries. Finally, there was the increasing convergence between broadcasting and information technology, which made it even more difficult to sustain the barrier between broadcasting and general industrial policy.

These developments were also symbolic of a different process taking place in the same period: the shift from 'little science' to 'big science'. In the early days of radio and television, technological innovation was still a process where individual innovators played a significant part, whereas after the war more systematic and collective efforts became more common. In the post-war years, technological innovation became a way of increasing national productivity, and large research teams, sponsored by governments or large industrial conglomerates, were established in all Western countries.

The second important long term trend to be discussed here, is the development whereby economic interests gradually invade the spheres of culture and information. Many observers have argued that the development of capitalism has transformed the media from critical institutions of the public sphere to institutions of the marketplace, and that this has, in Elliott's (1986: 106) words, led to 'a shift away from involving people in society as political citizens of nation states towards involving them as consumption units in a corporate world' (see also Habermas 1984, Sennett 1978, Garnham 1986). This is not a new argument, as early as 1921 Walter Lippman argued that the degeneracy of the commercial press at the time was a serious threat to political democracy. In the case of European broadcasting developments, however, this is an argument which is in need of some modification.

As previously mentioned, the organisation of broadcasting in the form of public corporations represented from the beginning a deviation from the capitalist mode of production. As the mixed economy welfare states developed, however, such deviations became more common. The state expanded enormously in the post war years: in quantitative terms the proportion of state expenditure of GNP increased both in Norway and Britain from around ten per cent in the beginning of the century to almost sixty per cent in the 1980s (Leys 1989:76, Furre 1991: 492). Particularly in the one and a half decades following the second world war, a series of social reforms within health, education and culture made publicly regulated corporations based on the principle of universalism, more common.

In Britain, these reforms were associated both with the Labour government which came to power after the war and (to a lesser extent) the conservative governments of the 1950s and the early 1960s (Leys 1989), whereas in Norway, they were the main building blocks of what has been labelled the 'social-democratic order' (Furre 1991, see also Bergh and Pharo (eds.) 1977). In both countries, however, the two decades following the war was characterised by a widespread consensus on social and economic policy, and an agreement that it was undesirable to restore high unemployment or privatise the principal nationalised industries. These political developments benefitted the broadcasting institutions in the sense that they made them appear less 'different' than when they were first established. On a large scale economic level, however, the industry remained largely in private hands, and despite the strong welfare state elements, the development of the consumer society continued undeterred. Following years of rationing and austerity in the late 1940s, the 1950s became a decade of unprecedented economic growth, and production ratios, wages and consumption expenditure all rose sharply. At the same time, the number of working hours fell, which in turn meant that the general population had more money to spend and more leisure hours to fill. The manufacturers responded by differentiating the number and range of products, and by increasing their advertising expenditures (Leys 1989, Ward 1989, Skretting 1988).

Along with the technological developments, this process also reinforced the industrial interest in broadcasting. The American experience had demonstrated that money could be made from owning and operating commercial television stations as long as these provided beneficial conditions for advertisers, and the advertisers themselves pressed for access to the screens, believing, as they did, that television was a particularly efficient medium for marketing (Ward 1989, Briggs 1985, Leys 1989, Hood and O'Leary 1990).

Since the late 1960s, the commercialisation of culture and information have intensified. As profits dropped in the traditional manufacturing industries, large corporations moved into the sectors for information and entertainment in search of new products, new markets and renewed growth, and gradually the media and cultural industries grew to become one of the largest industrial markets worldwide. Within these industries there has been a general development towards diversified activities and cross-media ownership and control (Mosco and Wasco 1984, Hamelink 1989, Schiller 1986, Garnham 1983). Thus, the whole sector of culture and information moves towards increased industrialisation and oligopolisation, where a small number of companies control larger and larger parts of the sector. This in turn has led to the development of what McQuail, Tunstall and Siune (1986: 200) have labelled a new 'logic' for broadcasting policy-making:

'a way of thinking and argument, which help to incorporate cultural and information services and communication more generally into economic and industrial thinking'.

This shift in logic is not only a result of technological and economic changes, however. It is also a product of political and cultural differentiation and pluralisation, which is the third long term trend to be discussed here. This differentiation is in itself one of the dominant features of the modernisation process. In the beginning of the 19th century most cultural, political and economic actors belonged to a small social elite, but since then a multitude of characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, class, profession, sexual preferences, education, taste, leisure interests etc.), have laid the foundations for a wide range of different subcultures, associations and organisations (Østerud 1986, Hallenstvedt 1983). As with the other social transformations discussed here, this process also sped up in the post-war period. The development of a critical youth culture based on large numbers of young people crowding into expanding educational institutions, the increased 'Americanization' based on the import of US films, cartoons and music, increased wealth and a multitude of new social movements, are all familiar images from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s (Furre 1991, Marwick 1990).

These movements, in all their variety, signified the breakdown of a unitary social and political culture and posed enormous problems for all hierarchical cultural institutions. The opposition against a common standard for what was valid cultural and educational goals, and the democratisation of social institutions, were central aspects of this transition. Within cultural policy, the focus was moved from the quality of the product to the cultural process in itself, from a focus on 'art' to a focus on culture as a means of expressing a diversity of lived experiences and realities, and this in turn helped to delegitimise the paternalism upon which the cultural and educational institutions were based (see, for example, Syvertsen 1987).

By some, these transformations have been seen as elements of a democratisation process, whereby different subcultures have displaced the cultural hegemony of the bourgeoisie, and forced the cultural and educational institutions to respond to a wider range of publics (see for example Connell 1983). Others have seen it as part of an ideological crisis, either in the general sense of the public sphere having degenerated to a place where private interests are legitimated (Habermas 1984), or more specifically as a process whereby the post-war consensus based on solidarity and equal access to social goods, have disintegrated (Furre 1991). Yet others have seen it as part of the process of commercialisation, whereby the public at large have been given the financial ability to exercise control as consumers, and thereby to support more 'consumer-oriented' cultural commodities and services (Elliott 1986, Garnham 1983, 1986, see also Featherstone 1991, Hall and Jameson 1990).

Whatever perspective is applied, it is obvious that the cultural fragmentation and pluralisation have increased the range of publics to which the broadcasters must respond, and made it more difficult to provide a service aimed at the whole of the population. The social elites which at the time of the corporations' establishment defined what was acceptable (i.e. which cultural forms and social and political perspectives which were within the boundaries of the prevailing consensus), have become fragmented, and no new coherently organised elite have taken their place.

Just as important in the context of the present study, however, is the fact that these processes have brought a wider range of actors into the debate about broadcasting. One indication of this is the increase in the number of bodies who submit comments to official inquiries. In Britain, the Crawford committee (1926) which proposed that a public broadcasting corporation should be set up received only 22 submissions from public organisations and individuals, but the number increased from inquiry to inquiry. The Ullswater committee (1935) received 28 comments, Beveridge (1950) 119, Pilkington (1962) 503, and Annan (1977) nearly 750. More recently, almost 3000 interests responded to the 1988 Broadcasting White Paper. In Norway, where there was not the same sort of practice of systematic broadcasting reviews, the process was more disjointed, but here there was also a massive increase in the number of bodies who submitted comments. Whereas the 1931 Vigstad committee received less than ten comments, 21 bodies commented upon the proposal to set up a television service in the 1950s (Kjekstad 1974: 168), and around 200 organisations and groups responded to the proposal to establish a second television channel in 1985.

As has been argued so far, the context of broadcasting changed significantly in the post war years. The development of new and capital-intensive technology, the growth in advertising and the consumer industry, and the fragmentation of the broadcasting public, all posed important challenges to the broadcasting institutions. However, it was not until the 1980s that these developments, under the impact of a new political situation, assumed the characteristics of a crisis. The emergence of Thatcherism and the end of the 'post-war consensus' in Britain, and the dismantling of the 'social democratic order' in Norway, demonstrated to the full that the welfare state idea had lost credibility, and vital sectors of the economy were deregulated or privatised in both countries.

These developments are discussed in more detail later in the study. Their implications, however, can already be spelt out: The social changes outlined here have, in the long term, led to a significant undermining of the broadcasting corporations' privileges, as well as shifting the balance between privileges and obligations. By 1980 all the constraints which had limited the options open to the policy-makers in the inter-war period were either removed or transformed, and the social actors involved had regrouped and made new alliances. This in turn implied that the delicate balance of forces and interests which had led to the establishment of the broadcasting institutions in the inter-war period had been shattered, leaving the institutions in a position where it became increasingly difficult for them to survive with their original structural characteristics intact.

This is not a one-dimensional and unilinear development, as we shall see later, there are many contradictory trends. One of these is that the broadcasting institutions, in the face of increasing threats, have regained some of their public support. There seem to be a greater willingness to protect these institutions now than only a decade ago, as new actors have joined forces with old supporters in an attempt to fight back at what they see as a multi-faceted attack on broadcasting and more generally, on the political and cultural public sphere. There is a danger that the broadcasting corporations may alienate or break up this alliance, which is already fragile, however, in their attempts to appeal to other segments of the market. In a situation where there is no stable social consensus upon which the corporations can base their operations, a move in one direction will almost inevitably produce a reaction among some other groups of actors.

\* \* \*

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, the development of broadcasting links up with many of the leading issues of Western society and social science in the 20th century. Questions regarding the balance between structural constraints and human agents; the role of technology, economics and public opinion in determining social developments; the mechanisms of political democracy and the role of public debate; questions of national integration and national culture; issues of paternalism and social control; and the relative weight given to private vs. public ownership in capitalist societies, all come together in the study of broadcasting. This in turn makes an analysis of the establishment and development of broadcasting structures a valid meeting point for a wide range of approaches, disciplines and methods of analysis.

## CHAPTER 3:

### METHODOLOGY, CASES AND SOURCES

All empirical analyses within the cultural and social sciences at some point have to answer the same questions: what methodology to use, what population to cover, what information to seek, how to collect this information, and how to analyse and interpret it. This is, however, as far as common conditions go. From here ideological and scientific debates about what are the proper answers to these questions take over. Due to the fact that it is now commonly established within the field of media studies that a plurality of methods and approaches are applicable, it is, however, necessary to explain the methodological assumptions underlying each research design in some detail.

As has already been pointed out, the aim of the present study is to conduct a long term structural analysis of how broadcasting systems develop and change. In order to answer the questions posed, I have used a comparative research design based on documentary analysis. These two approaches complement each other. The comparative method provides insights as to the selection of cases and the possibilities for generalisations, whereas documentary analysis is a research technique developed in order to analyse historical documents and other written material.

#### 3.1. Comparative analysis: The cases

In contrast to case studies (one case - many variables) and survey analysis (many cases - few variables), a comparative research design is based on a small number of cases and a relatively large number of variables (Lijphart 1969). Thus, the comparative method allows for more richness in detail than the survey method, while at the same time escaping the narrow focus of the case study by making it possible to identify and discuss the presence of common structuring factors across different contexts. In contrast to case studies, the comparative approach is also useful in the sense that it helps us to identify 'unseen' features, for example by inviting questions about why some elements did not change in one context while it changed in others. As Wright Mills (1970: 163) has argued:

'We must observe whatever we are interested in under a variety of circumstances ... If we limit ourselves to one national unit of one contemporary ... society, we cannot

possibly hope to catch many really fundamental differences among human types and social institutions.'

There are many different types of comparative studies. The present study is a cross-national analysis whose aim it is to identify relations on the macro level of society. When choosing cases for such a cross-national analysis, the comparability of the cases is of crucial importance. 'Comparability' in this context means that the cases are similar in a large number of fundamental characteristics (which can then be treated as 'constants' in a traditional methodological sense), while being dissimilar enough as to make a comparative analysis worthwhile (Lijphart 1969). However, as Rustow (1968) has pointed out, 'comparability is a quality that is not inherent in any set of objects; rather it is a quality imparted to them by the observer's perspective'. Consequently, it is necessary to argue the presence of comparability in each study, based on a more general assessment.

In principle, all national characteristics can be compared or contrasted, if for no other reason than to point out the differences between them. If the aim is to examine the presence of common structuring factors and arrive at more general conclusions, however, it is important that the countries compared share some fundamental properties. The two cases chosen here, Britain and Norway, fulfil this criteria on three counts. They are both industrialised and belong to the affluent and developed part of the world. They are both capitalist in the sense that private ownership and profit maximisation remains the primary driving force within their economies. Finally, they are both liberal democracies in the sense that they have long traditions of being governed predominantly through consent rather than coercion.

Within this framework, however, the two countries are also dissimilar in enough ways so as to make the comparison worthwhile. In this chapter, the differences between the two countries which have implications for the present study, are discussed under four headings: Firstly, the differences of geography, demography and wealth which are crucial for broadcasting economics and structure; Secondly, the historical, cultural and social differences which are important for the definition of crucial concepts such as enlightenment and national culture; Thirdly, the differences in terms of the character of the state, which are important for secrecy and information-policies; Fourthly, the differences in political history and party system which can account for variations in broadcasting policy.

In terms of demography, geography and wealth there are crucial differences between the two countries. Britain is a densely populated and easily accessible country with a large population, whereas Norway is sparsely populated and for the most part uninhabitable. Nearly two thirds of the latter is mountainous, a factor which makes the establishment of terrestrial broadcasting networks an expensive and difficult affair. Broadcasting is an activity which favours easily accessible and small countries with large populations since the production costs stays the same however many view or listen to a programme, and this implies that Britain is in a much more favourable position than Norway. Britain also shares a language with other large markets, a fact which favours the country when it comes to programme trade. Britain is one of the largest programme exporters in the world, whereas Norway, with its peripheral position and marginal language, imports far more than it exports.

These differences can to some extent be compensated for by the differences in wealth. Norway is one of the richest countries in the world with a GDP per capita almost twice that of Britain, and Norway also has a higher level of welfare distribution and a smaller gap between the poorest and richest social classes. Norway's projections for life expectancy are among the highest of any in the world, and compared with Britain it has more doctors per capita, better working conditions, lower unemployment and a shorter working week. It also spends a larger percentage of its GDP on education, and a substantially larger proportion of its young people attended educational establishments (United Nations 1990, UNESCO 1990). These differences in wealth and welfare means that Norway can, as a country, set more money aside for cultural purposes, and also that it is possible to charge higher licence fees than in Britain. The principle of universality requires that the fee should be affordable to 'everybody', and without a high degree of income distribution the fee must be kept very low so as to avoid excluding substantial proportions of the population.

Also in terms of social structure there are important differences between the two countries. Britain has a very cohesive, long-lived and distinct upper class, which throughout the 20th century has continued to exercise a dominance on culture, politics and the economy totally disproportionate to its size. The upper class originated from the landed class and the gentry who, instead of being overthrown in the

course of the industrial revolution, were gradually joined by the successful commercial families and entrepreneurs. Thus, the upper class has been adept at surviving and socialising new recruits into its long-established traditions, and not until the 1980s has there been any substantial evidence to indicate that positions of power and influence have been opened up for people who have not taken the trouble to absorb the traditional upper-class lifestyle. The upper class continue to supply a large number of both the members of parliament and the principal policy-makers in various state departments, however, and access to the higher civil service remain largely confined to Oxford and Cambridge graduates (Leys 1989, Marwick 1990).

Historically, the BBC has occupied a central position in British society equal to that of Parliament, the Civil Service and the Law Courts, and a career within the BBC has been perceived as attractive and worthwhile as a career within the other venerable institutions of British society. For years the BBC has had the first choice among a disproportionate number of the nation's best qualified graduates, and this in turn has led to a conception of the BBC as another Oxbridge enclave. As Burns commented in his 1977 study, this had changed somewhat since the early days of broadcasting, but the pre-war notion of the BBC as the cemented worlds of 'gentility, government, the higher professions and the high table in a social combination of the 'well-connected' (:99), still remained valid to some extent (see also Kumar 1977).

In Norway, the liberal intelligentsia has also been dominant within the broadcasting corporation, but this intelligentsia has in many respects been different from its British counterpart. Historically, Norway is a country with a limited urban tradition, with few formalised privileges, and without a powerful landed gentry (Galtung and Gleditsch 1975), and these egalitarian characteristics have in turn been crucial for the definition of 'Norwegian-ness' both at home and abroad. As many contributors have pointed out, however, these characteristics are not so distinctively Norwegian as many nationalists tend to claim (Berggreen 1989, Østerud 1986, Johansen 1991). Nevertheless, the fact remains that the social structure in Norway is more egalitarian than in Britain, and also that the political and cultural establishment has been influenced less by traditional upper-class values and more by the powerful social and cultural movements of the late 19th and the early 20th century: the labour movement and the regionally based libertarian movement (Fuglestad 1988, Skirbekk 1984, Gripsrud 1981, see also Sagen 1971, Utgård 1971).

Common to both these movements was an emphasis on equal access to social goods, and this in turn became a dominant value within the Norwegian political culture from the inter-war period onwards. The priority was to secure everybody's access to a certain good wherever they lived, rather than encouraging the development of higher quality and more diverse services for some segments of the population. This led in turn to an extremely high degree of singularity, comparatively speaking. For the dominant part of this century, Norway has had one educational system, one health service, one church, one major trade union and one broadcasting corporation, and it has been considered both illegal and illegitimate to establish market-based alternatives to the public institutions (Galtung and Gleditsch 1975).

The differences between the two countries in this respect led in turn to differences in the expectations levelled at the two broadcasting corporations. Two aspects are particularly important here: the concept of enlightenment and the definition of the national culture.

The ideas of popular education and enlightenment can be traced back to the enlightenment-period of the 18th century. The fundamental idea was that education would lead to economic and social progress and also to moral improvement. Both in Britain and Norway, the enlightenment idea eventually became widespread. In Britain a key figure was Matthew Arnold, who claimed that the state should intervene on the terrain of culture and information in order to 'civilize' the masses and incorporate the working classes into the existing social and political order. The first Director-General of the BBC, John Reith, was strongly influenced by Arnold's ideas, and saw the technology of broadcasting as an opportunity to realise his mission of disseminating 'culture' to the general public. Within this framework, the Reithian definition of enlightenment became a top-down project, based on the shared cultural assumptions of the aristocracy and the metropolitan bourgeoisie. As such the idea of enlightenment in Britain was closely linked with the Victorian reforming ideal of service (Williams 1968, 1975, 1979). As Scannel and Cardiff (1991) have pointed out, this ideal was animated by a sense of moral purpose and of social duty on behalf of the community, aimed particularly at those

most in need of reforming: the lower classes (see also Reith 1924, Kumar 1977, Garnham 1978, Murdock 1989, Schlesinger 1987).

In Norway, the conception of enlightenment was from the beginning also a paternalistic and top-down project. A key figure here was Henrik Wergeland, whose ideas had much in common with Arnold's, but due to the influence of the two counter-cultures mentioned above, the enlightenment project in Norway became more deeply rooted in the popular consciousness. The movements and organisations concerned with popular education had a broad social base, and the dominant ideal was that popular education should be provided for the people by the people. As Skirbekk (1984: 306) has pointed out, the conception of enlightenment in Norway (and in the other Nordic countries) thereby contrasted with the tradition both in the rest of Europe and the US. While the large European states developed a 'non-popular tradition of enlightenment' and the US developed a 'non-enlightenment tradition of popularity', the Nordic countries developed a unique egalitarian tradition of popular education based on mass movements (Fuglestad 1988, Skirbekk 1984).

The second difference between the two countries concerns the definition of national culture. In both countries, broadcasting played an important part in synthesising and defining a common culture and creating a sense of participation in national life, but the foundations upon which this project was based varied between the two countries. England was, along with Spain and France, among 'the first nations' in the modern sense of the term, and by the fourteenth century some of the processes that help to form nations had already become discernible. There was a common name and an established myth of ethnic descent, a variety of historical memories and traditions, and a growing sense of common culture revealed in the English language (Smith 1991). Unity in other respects appeared much later, but by the early 20th century prominent elements of the English cultural tradition was already nationalised as 'the British culture' and disseminated globally through colonialism. By that time, the English regional divisions had already to some extent been ironed out, and there was consensus among the cultural establishment about what constituted 'Britishness' (Madge 1989, Scannel and Cardiff 1991, Smith 1991).

In Norway the situation was different. It was not until 1905 that the country was granted full independence after more than five hundred years of colonial status under Denmark and Sweden, and throughout the 19th century nationalist sentiments blossomed among the political and cultural elites. As in the case of other national formations, the conception of a distinct 'Norwegian' identity and culture had begun as an historical and literary idea - 'a programmatic conception among a political and intellectual elite' (Østerud 1986: 11, see also Johansen 1991, Berggren 1989), and it was not until the 20th century that national unity became a social reality for most people. By the time broadcasting was developed there were still deep regional divisions and little consensus to what the core elements of the national culture were. At the same time, however, the idea that the broadcasting corporation should help to build a national identity and national unity was widespread. This was also linked with the conception of Norway as a small and peripheral country in great need of identifying and defending its own cultural traditions.

Within broadcasting, the contradiction between the desire for national unity and the actual regional divisions was particularly apparent in the struggle over language. From the beginning in Norway (as in Britain where 'BBC English' became a concept in its own right), there was an agreement that broadcasting should strive to improve the linguistic abilities of the population: But on what linguistic norms should these efforts be based? A multitude of dialects are still spoken in different parts of the country, and Norway also has two written languages. Until 1886 there was only one national language which was strongly influenced by Danish ('Book Norwegian'), but after a long feud a second language, created out of the rural dialects ('New Norwegian'), received equal status. This in turn has created problems for the NRK, which has struggled hard to find a generally accepted linguistic formula.

Thus, when broadcasting began, the 'national culture' was more clearly defined in Britain than in Norway. Gradually, however, the divisions within the supposed unity of British life and culture became more visible, and it became apparent that very few people identified with the 'English way of life' and the establishment's definition of the national culture. Indeed, if we examine the factors of ethnicity, nationality and social cohesion in more detail, we find that Britain is, in fact, far more heterogeneous than Norway.

The United Kingdom consists of four nations: Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England, and Scottish, Welsh and Irish people make up around 17% of the population (Sullivan 1991). Since the 1950s large immigrant populations have also arrived from former colonies, particularly from the West Indies, South Asia and East Africa, and people of non-Western origin now constitute around 5% of the population. From a broadcasting perspective, this linguistic and cultural diversity implies that it is extremely difficult to serve the whole population through a unitary and centralised system, and that a large degree of differentiation and 'targeting' is necessary in order to keep the different publics satisfied. This is not to the same degree a problem in Norway, which due to its location on the outskirts of the European continent, has maintained a great homogeneity among its people. Until the late 1960s, the only significant ethnic minority group in Norway was the Sami people, which constituted less than 1% of the population. Even if Norway has become more heterogeneous over the last two decades, however, nationals of non-western countries only constitute slightly over 1% of the population (Statistisk sentralbyrå 1991).

A third difference between the two countries which has implications for broadcasting, is the character of the state. Britain has no written constitution, and consequently there is no constitutionally significant protection of the freedom of expression or of information. Any protection there is depends on conventions of restraint on the part of the law-making and law-enforcement authorities, and although restraint is exercised, it is so to a lesser extent than in many other Western countries. For the dominant part of the 20th century, government practice within the field of information and secrecy has been guided by the 1911 Official Secrets Act, which makes it illegal for any public official or civil servant in Britain to give any information about Government activity to the public unless the Government has authorised it first (Campbell 1988). Although a new Official Secrets Act came into force in March 1990, there is no evidence of a liberalisation of policy. Instead it can be argued that restraint on the part of the authorities became even more superficial in the era of Thatcherism (Lloyd 1988, Campbell 1988, 1989, Douzinas et.al 1988, Dworkin 1988, Hennessy 1988, Article 19 1991a).

Compared with Britain, Norway has a liberal freedom of information policy and a more open government. Article 100 of the Norwegian constitution guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of the press, and the 1970 Public Access Act decrees a general right for any persons to inspect documents held by state and municipal administrations. Exceptions to this basic right are limited by the law, and where documents are withheld, the reason must be given. Despite this general openness, however, the Norwegian media has until recently lacked a tradition of investigative journalism. The close links between the media and the state and the overall loyalty to the 'social-democratic order' has promoted a rather careful political journalism, which in fields like corruption and national security have tended towards self-censorship. These trends have also been prominent within the NRK, whose political journalism has been geared more towards passively reporting what has happened rather than investigating what has not (see for example Lindh 1984, Article 19 1991b).

The fourth relevant difference between the two countries concerns the party-political history. In Britain, there is a bi-partisan political system which for the large part of this century has been dominated by the Conservative Party. This is somewhat of a paradox in the country with the most proletarianised population in Europe, but the fact remains that at least a third of the manual workers have tended to vote Conservative (Leys 1989: 193). In Norway, as has already been pointed out, the situation is different. Norway has a multi-party system where the Labour Party has been the dominant force. Between 1935 and 1963 the party was continuously in power (only interrupted by the German occupation and a short transitional period), and is still the largest party in Norway.

Due to these differences in political history, different parties have dominated the agenda for broadcasting policy-making in the two countries. In Britain, the Conservatives have been dominant, and as they themselves like to point out, all major reforms within broadcasting have taken place under Conservative governments. This in turn implies that the interests of industry and commerce have been considered more legitimate in Britain than in Norway, where the broadcasting agenda has been dominated by social democratic values.

The discussion in this section has been concerned with the possibilities for making valid comparisons across national contexts within the area of broadcasting. There are many more differences between the two countries than the ones which are mentioned here, but these are less relevant within the context of the present study.

### 3.2. Documentary analysis: The sources

In a literate culture there is no limitation on the amount of written material available to the researcher. Most sociologists now deal with societies where the accumulation of records and documents has been going on for centuries. Indeed, as Giddens (1989: 675) has pointed out, there are very few pieces of social research which do not involve the use of such material in one way or another. Mann (1971: 80) goes even further, stating that 'to ignore documents is to cut off sociology from the whole process of social change, which is one of the fundamental concepts of the discipline itself'.

Yet documentary research, the systematic use of printed and written materials for investigation, is a method which traditionally has been more closely associated with historical than with social science research. This is about to change, however, and different approaches within the social sciences have begun to make more extensive and systematic use of documentary material. For example Mann's book Methods of Sociological Analysis from 1971, and the more recent book Ethnography by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), devote whole chapters to the use of documents within the context of general sociology and field studies (see also Cicourel 1964, Kidder 1981, Giddens 1989).

Documents have always been crucial to historical analyses and thereby also to broadcasting history, but also within policy analyses and other analyses of the more recent transformations of the media industries, different types of documents provide the most crucial sources. The 1973 study by Murdock and Golding on media ownership for example, drew on a wide range of different documentary sources: personal documents, personal archives and records, institutional archives, annual reports, government archives, statistics, key documents and cabinet minutes (see also Tracey 1978).

The main reason for this increased use of documentary sources among social scientists is, of course, that these sources provide the most accurate and relevant information about a wide range of social phenomena. Three aspects are particularly important here: Firstly, information of this sort is, as a rule, collected under natural conditions, in the sense of being part of the everyday operation of modern life. Secondly, such information is often collected repeatedly, thereby making possible the determination of trends over time (Kidder 1981). Finally, the increased use of documentary sources is also due to reasons of research economy. By using documentary sources the researcher can widen the focus of her research considerably, since she is spared much of the time and cost involved in primary data collection and recording.

Like all research methodologies, however, documentary analysis has its pitfalls, problems and disadvantages. On a general level, there are the classical problems of reliability and validity. Since many of the sources used in documentary analysis are gathered using other research methodologies (survey, content analysis or even experiments), it risks 'recirculating' and replicating information which was not valid or reliable to start with. Similarly, when dealing with other types of sources, whether it is newspaper articles, personal letter or even statistics, the researcher has no guarantee that even the 'facts' are recorded truthfully and accurately.

These may seem like serious and disturbing problems for a documentary analyst, and indeed they are. In principle, however, these problems are no different from those that any social scientist has to face. Problems of interpretation, validity and reliability are common to all research, and as other methods, documentary analysis has its ways of dealing with these problems.

Two techniques in particular are important. This is firstly source criticism, which means much more than just checking for 'inaccuracies' or 'untruths'. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 137) point out, all documentary sources need to be viewed as social products, which have been created under specific circumstances, in specific contexts and by specific people. The researcher must therefore inquire into the motives and situations that induced their production, and interpret the sources in the light of who has written them.

The fact that all sources reproduce the ideology of the author who creates them is particularly obvious in the case of personal sources (such as letters and autobiographies), where the authors should be expected to want to present themselves in a favourable light. Everybody has scores to settle, axes to grind and apologies or justifications to make, and these factors influence the way an account is written. In the case of official documents, who should, on the face of things, be the most reliable sources, there

might be similar problems. Official and institutional statistics, for example, might be highly misleading, designed to present the institutions in a favourable light, and official sources originating as part of an institutional or bureaucratic procedure (such as transcripts of proceedings, annual reports and other governmental and non-governmental material) might contain inaccurate information. Such accounts are all written in a way which favours some interests and arguments at the expense of others, and the 'evidence' and 'facts' presented will have been carefully selected to suit these purposes.

These references and interpretations may well be treated as 'bias', 'distortions' and 'flaws', and it may be argued that their presence makes such documents unsuitable as sources. However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) rightly points out 'the sources of 'bias' are ... data in themselves'. If a Government White Paper claims that a broadcasting monopoly is the best way of achieving quality broadcasting, for example, the interesting question is not whether or not this is 'true', but why the Government has chosen to use this particular argument to defend the institutional structure. Within this framework the more 'bias' there is the better, as the arguments presented provide additional information and improves the document's utility as a source (see also Mann 1971, Giddens 1989, Tosh 1991, Kidder 1981).

The second main technique employed in documentary analysis is triangulation. Triangulation is usually used to describe a process whereby information derived using one type of methodology is verified through information derived using different methodologies (Giddens 1989). However, it can also be used to describe a process whereby different documentary sources are combined, each used to supplement and check upon the others. Documentary research is therefore not a matter of identifying the authoritative source and then exploiting it for all it is worth, but to amass many pieces of evidence from a wide range of sources, and use these to build up a comprehensive account.

There are many different types of documentary sources, and a variety of labels are used in the literature to distinguish them from one another. In the present work, however, only two distinctions will be made. Firstly, the distinction between contemporary sources, i.e. material originated within the period studied, and retrospective sources which are written afterwards. Secondly, a distinction between primary and secondary sources, i.e. between original accounts produced by the person(s) who first recorded the information, and accounts based on other people's reports, must be made. These dimensions crosscut each other (and they also crosscut with the distinction between personal and official sources mentioned above). As we shall see, there are distinct advantages and disadvantages worth noting in connection with each type of source.

As Marwick (1990:397) points out, no serious historical work can afford to ignore contemporary documents, written 'by individuals and groups pursuing their own particular purposes rather than consciously striving to provide comprehensive accounts for posterity'. Only by consulting such material directly is it possible to grasp how various events were viewed in the time when they actually took place. It is clear that such sources also have their limitations, and a wider picture can be gained by combining them with retrospective sources. While the time lag involved in retrospective sources creates its own problems, particularly the problems of long-term recall and the benefit of hindsight, such sources have the advantage of providing a context to the contemporary accounts by drawing on a wider variety of information, including information which might not have been known at the time of the event. Information from contemporary sources can be interpreted in the light of what happened since, and thereby contribute towards an identification of more general trends.

A similar trade-off takes place between the use of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources must be consulted, as this is the only way to ascertain that the events are interpreted correctly within the framework of the study conducted. This does not mean that the primary sources provide a full picture: As Tosh (1991: 33) has pointed out, they may well be 'inaccurate, muddled, based on hearsay or intended to mislead'. Nevertheless, it is only by consulting them that one can evaluate other people's interpretations of them, and so make up one's own mind as to the significance of different passages. Secondary sources are also of great importance, particularly in the sense that they weigh different developments against each other, or combine many strands into a coherent account. Indeed, if historical researchers were confined to write only of those topics for which they had mastered the primary sources, historical knowledge would be so fragmented as to be meaningless. Making sense of the past means explaining those events and processes which appear significant with the passage of

time, and these are inevitably defined in terms that are broader than any researcher can encompass by her own efforts.

Broadcasting activities generate massive amounts of primary documentary sources. Even if we exclude the programmes and concentrate on the relationship between the broadcasting corporations and their external constituencies, as is done in this study, there are massive amounts of reports, statistics, white papers, submissions, parliamentary debates and annual reports to consult. Most of this is publicly available, but the sheer amount makes it impossible to consult everything. Consequently, two crucial decisions have to be made. Firstly, in respect to which part of the analysis secondary and retrospective sources should be used, and secondly, which primary and contemporary sources should be selected for systematic consultation.

The answer to these questions depends firstly on the character of the study. Most academic dissertations and theses use secondary sources for their 'background' and 'literature review', and then turn to their own 'data', collected either through survey, content analysis, interviews and field studies. The present work is different from this 'standard' as it combines different types of source at each stage of the analysis. This approach has been necessitated by the wide and historical focus of the thesis. Since the aim of the study is to say something about general and long-term trends across different contexts it has been necessary to rely on secondary sources on many occasions, while reserving the analysis of primary sources for the 'crucial moments' and periods less well documented in the literature.

This brings us to the second factor, which is the availability of sources in different contexts. Here there is an important difference between the two cases. In Britain, the secondary literature on broadcasting is ample, and many books begin with their own version of the history of British broadcasting. There are also detailed and thoroughly researched broadcasting histories available for the period up to the mid-1970s (Briggs 1961, 1965, 1970, 1979b, 1985, Scannel and Cardiff 1991). This implies that as far as the pre-1980-history goes, it could have been possible to rely on secondary sources in the British case. The same is not true for Norway. The broadcasting history written by Dahl (1975, 1978a, 1991) has so far not progressed beyond 1945, which is more than a decade before television was introduced, and there are no comprehensive accounts available for the later period. A project aimed at writing the history of film and television in Norway has recently been initiated, but until this is completed, the researcher is dependent on the information provided by individual case studies and primary sources.

In regard to the 1980-1991 period, there are also differences between the two countries. In Britain, the upheavals in the broadcasting sector have led to a massive amount of material being produced, particularly towards the late 1980s and the early 1990s, and this implies that there have constantly been new contributions to consider. Much of this does not go very deep, as it has been assembled hastily in order to influence the political process, but the sheer amount creates an imbalance as far as the Norwegian case goes. The new media situation in this country has also led to a proliferation of studies on various aspects of broadcasting, but compared with Britain there are still few accounts published that are of relevance for the present analysis.

The differences between the two countries suggest different possibilities for verifying information. In Britain, it is usually possible to consult different accounts of the same event. In addition to the crucial contemporary, primary and official sources, there are a variety of retrospective accounts (sometimes deliberately set out to counter each other), and there are biographies and autobiographies of all the important characters involved. All the BBC Director Generals since the 1960s have written their autobiographies, for example, and so have also numerous broadcasters, Governors and broadcasting regulators. In Norway, there are few secondary accounts available, and although several broadcasters have written their memoirs, no Director-Generals or other important decision-makers have done so. This implies that in the Norwegian case, it is more difficult to check the information available from primary sources against more comprehensive accounts.

As the availability of material varies from country to country, the analysis is, to some degree, based on different types of sources in the two cases. In order to make valid comparisons, certain types of primary source material have therefore been selected for systematic analyses in both countries. The first of these types is official publications on broadcasting, which have been examined in connection

with the three crucial 'historical moments' discussed in this study: the establishment of the public broadcasting corporations, the introduction of television into the same structure, and the upheavals in the 1980s and 1990s. Secondly, comments on broadcasting structures and policy from various actors and interests in response to broadcasting reviews and reports have been selected. Such material has been examined in connection with all three crucial moments outlined above, but it is only in the last period that a systematic study of several hundred responses has been carried out. Thirdly there is material from the broadcasting institutions themselves. This type of material has been consulted in connection with all the crucial moments outlined above, but it is only for the 1981-91 period that all BBC and NRK annual reports, and all publicly available policy proposals, have been examined in a systematic way.

These selections are in turn connected with the research questions asked, which is the third factor in determining which primary and contemporary sources should be selected for systematic analysis. In the context of the present study, it is particularly difficult to decide how to ascertain the public interest in broadcasting. In contrast to the state, the industry and the broadcasters, which have both the financial and human resources to engage in continual lobbying and who express their interests as a matter of routine in official publications, comments to broadcasting committees, annual reports and policy-documents, the population at large is not organised so as to be able to coherently argue their views.

As mentioned previously, at least two different conceptions of the public are relevant in connection with broadcasting: the public as citizens and the public as consumers. When it comes to the public as consumers the most relevant sources are, as has already been indicated, hardware sales statistics and market research. These indicators have serious shortcomings when it comes to describing the multitude of audience experiences (see for example Ang 1991) and their validity in many cases are also limited by their research designs (see for example Høst 1989), but as indications of actual consumption among large populations, they cannot be replaced.

When it comes to the interests of the public as citizens active in the broadcasting debates, however, it is more difficult to decide which are the most relevant sources. The three most obvious alternatives are newspapers, submissions to broadcasting committees, and parliamentary debates, but all these alternatives have serious shortcomings. As Ward (1989: 4) has pointed out, contemporary historians for many years considered newspapers as unproblematic sources of evidence of public opinion, and while this is, of course, a problem in its own right, it is particularly problematic in the case of media developments. Newspapers have always had their own interests to defend in connection with broadcasting, and as the incidences of cross-ownership increases, it becomes even more difficult to regard them as reliable gauge to public opinion on broadcasting. Indeed, as Eide (1991) has noted in a different context, the press is both arena and actor, and their role as the latter influence that of the former.

Submissions to broadcasting committees and parliamentary debates also have their shortcomings as indicators of public opinion. The most important shortcoming is, as has already been mentioned, that the interests who control these channels of influence, are either social elites or well organised and resourceful associations. Whereas, for example, trade and professional interests are highly organised, social groups such as pensioners and immigrants are not.

What has been important in this study, however, is to offer a perspective on broadcasting developments which include a wider set of actors than those usually taken into account in more limited studies of broadcasting policy-making. Within this framework, the information provided by submissions and parliamentary debates, offer insights which are not easily provided by any other types of sources.

Since the present study is atypical in the sense that the empirical analyses are 'spread out', I have found it unnecessary to describe the sources in more detail in this chapter. Instead there is a description of the examined sources in the introduction to each part of the thesis. There is also a detailed overview over the totality of the sources examined in Appendix A.

In this section, the advantages and problems connected with documentary research has been discussed in some detail. Before concluding, however, it is important to make a few comments about the technique employed in documentary analysis. Documentary analysis is a form of qualitative

content analysis, and as in other kinds of content analysis where large amount of material is analysed, it is common to use selected textual fragments as illustrations and examples of views, perceptions and arguments (see for example Brox 1991). This is the technique adopted in this study, and might, as it has done in other cases, lead to criticism of (excessive) subjectivity. It is important to emphasise, however, that the examples and illustrations are carefully selected in order to represent different types of arguments or views. In all the chapters where large amounts of material has been analysed, everything has been examined first in order to establish categories, and only afterwards have I selected the textual fragments which best illustrate the different types of arguments. As pointed out above, I have also made an effort to ensure that the analysis is systematic, in the sense that the same types of sources have been analysed in both countries at the same points in time.

## PART TWO: PUBLIC BROADCASTING AND PUBLIC TELEVISION IN BRITAIN AND NORWAY BEFORE 1980

On January 1st. 1927 the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was established by a Royal Charter to be the sole body responsible for broadcasting in the United Kingdom. Six and half years later, on July 1st. 1933, its Norwegian counterpart Norsk Rikskringkasting (NRK) was set up through an Act of Parliament. Despite the difference of time, place and formal legal framework between these two institutions, they exhibited largely similar features. Both were monopolies, both were publicly regulated, both were predominantly funded through a licence fee and both were preceded by a structure of private broadcasting companies dominated by industrial interests. Last but not least, both were originally established to produce radio and not television programmes. It was not until several years later that television was implemented into the same structure.

Television had been an experimental possibility for almost as long as radio, but it was not until 1936 that the first so-called 'high definition' television service in the world was started by the BBC. The service was not operative between 1939 and 1946, and it was not until the 1950s that television really took off in Britain. In this decade many other Western European countries also implemented television into their already established radio corporations. Among the last to do so was Norway, whose service was formally opened in 1960 after a three year trial period.

One of the most notable developments that followed in the wake of television was the enormous expansion of the corporations. In Britain, BBC staffing levels more than doubled between 1945 and 1980 (Briggs 1985, BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1982), whereas the number of NRK staff tripled in the 1960s and 1970s (NRK Annual Report 1970, Central Bureau of Statistics of Norway 1962-83). As a result, the corporations became huge institutions with large workforces, many of them recruited from the same generation, but the advent of television as the dominant mass medium also had other and more profound implications for the public broadcasting structure. Compared with radio, television attracted a wider set of economic, political and cultural interests, and many of these gradually became more hostile to the corporations. This was partly due to television's enormous money-making potential, which made a wide variety of business interests press for a deregulation of broadcasting and thereby an undermining of the corporations' privileges. It was also due to television's perceived ability to influence people, however, which made a number of cultural and political interests highly attentive to what it had on offer. This again made the corporations obligations more difficult to fulfil.

As we shall see in the next chapters, these developments were closely linked with the more general social, cultural and political change in the post-war years. The first post-war decade was one of exceptional social consensus, phenomenal economic growth, increased democratisation and a sharp rise in public welfare and living standards. This was followed, in the 1960s and 1970s by a fragmentation of the social consensus, increased political and cultural pluralisation, and eventually a deep economic recession. In all, this meant that the context within which broadcasting was operating, changed dramatically in the post-war years. As it did so, a gap was opening up between the corporations on the one hand, and a wide variety of economic, cultural and social interests on the other.

If the publicly-regulated radio corporations had not already been in existence, it is unlikely that public television would have become a common and durable type of broadcasting organisation. This is not so much because of the technical differences between the two media, but because television belonged to a different and far more affluent historical period and attracted a wider set of economic and cultural interests than the radio medium. In a way, it is possible to perceive public service broadcasting as - at best - a certain form of radio. When television became the dominant medium, the whole broadcasting structure was gradually but inevitably transformed.

Nevertheless, the fact that television 'inherited' a structure essentially tailored to radio was significant both for the way in which the medium was initially defined in the two countries, and how it evolved later. To understand the changes and challenges to the public television structures in the latter years,

it is therefore necessary to examine their origins in the radio era. Why were public broadcasting corporations established, what were their original characteristics, and why was television implemented into the same structure?

In chapter four of this part it is demonstrated how the public broadcasting corporations came about as a result of a specific 'fit' between constraints, interests and alliances in the inter-war period: Then the products of this 'fit' are examined in more detail. What did it really mean, in concrete and specific terms, for the corporations to be set up as public rather than commercial or state corporations, and how did the institutions define their duties in the years when they were only operating radio services?

Next, in chapter five, the development and implementation of television into the public broadcasting structures, is discussed, as are the reasons for this occurrence. What sort of forces and interests were involved, and what were the implications of the introduction of television and the general historical changes for the control structure, the privileges and obligations in the period before 1980?

Finally, in chapter six, the legitimacy of the corporations by the late 1970s/early 1980s is assessed to provide the background for the analysis of the more recent changes and challenges in part three and four. In this chapter I also present a survey of the composition of the programme schedules on the different television channels in the two countries.

## **Part II: Sources:**

The analysis in this part is based on both primary and secondary sources. Among the secondary sources, the work of Ward (1989), Williams (1975, 1979), Lewis and Pearlman (1986), Gorham (1949), Ross (1961), Wheen (1985) and Winston (1990) have provided valuable background on the development of radio and television, whereas Dahl (1975, 1978a), Briggs (1961, 1985) and Scannell and Cardiff (1991), have been extensively used in regard to the specific broadcasting history of the two countries. In the British case, Burns (1977), Briggs (1979a), Schlesinger (1987), Wedell (1968), Hood (1967), Wilson (1961), Curran and Seaton (1985), Hood and O'Leary (1990), Tunstall (1983), Corrigan (1990), Madge (1989), Sendall (1982, 1983) and Negrine (1985b, 1989), have provided additional background information, and the same is true for Østbye (1977, 1982, 1991), Sælen (1991), Kjekstad (1974), Christophersen (1975), Dahl (1981, 1982), Puijk (1990), Gramstad (1989) and Bastiansen (1991b) in the Norwegian case.

In addition to these accounts, a range of primary sources have been examined. The discussion of the establishment and original characteristics of the BBC as a public corporation in chapter four, is based on the 1926 Crawford Report (Cmnd. 2599), the 1926 Government White Paper on 'Wireless Broadcasting' which contained the draft of the first BBC Charter and Licence (Cmnd. 2756, 1926), the debate in the House of Commons Committee on Post Office Matters on November 15. 1926 (HC Official Report vol. 199, 1926, cols. 1563-650), and John Reith's book Broadcast over Britain (1924). The parallel discussion of the establishment and original characteristics of the NRK (also chapter four), is based on the Vigstad Report (1931), the 1932 and 1933 Government White Papers on Broadcasting (of which the latter contains the draft of the 1933 Broadcasting Act) (St. prop. 69, 1932 and Ot.prop. 74, 1933), the report from the parliamentary committee (Innst.S. 1, 1933) and the debates in the different chambers of parliament (S.tid. 1933: 38-78, O.tid. 1933: 577-610, L.tid. 118-28). Some supplementary information has also been drawn from the first NRK annual report (NRK Annual Report 1934).

The discussion in chapter five about the development and implementation of television, is partly based on primary sources. In the British case I have consulted the Selsdon television committee report (1935, Cmnd. 4793) and the debate in the House of Commons about the BBC's second charter on December 12. 1936 (HC Official Report vol. 318, 1936/37, cols. 2727-81), whereas in Norwegian case I have consulted the report from the parliamentary committee in 1952 (Innst.S. 334 1952), and the 1952 and 1957 parliamentary debates (St.tid 1953: 1502-16, St.tid 1957: 2446-78).

I have also used a range of primary sources in connection with the discussion about the developments in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s (chapter five and six). In the British case, the three broadcasting committee reports of the 1950-1980 period: Beveridge (1950, Cmnd. 8116), Pilkington (Cmnd. 1753, 1962) and Annan (Cmnd. 6753, 1977) have been consulted, and so have also the autobiographies of

all DG's active in the period: Greene (1969), Curran (1979), Trethowan (1984), Milne (1989). In the Norwegian case I have examined the four broadcasting committee reports: Bratholm (1967, 1968) and Dæhlin (NOU 1972:25, NOU 1975:7), and all parliamentary proposals and questions regarding broadcasting put forward between 1960 and 1980. I have also examined the 1975 parliamentary debate where the NRK was heavily criticised (St.tid. 1974-75: 2875-919), and the political documents generated in connection with the 1980 revision of the Broadcasting Act (Ot. prop. 67, 1978-79, Innst. O nr. 57, 1979-80, O.tid. 1979-80: 544-92). Finally, I have consulted contributions by two NRK DGs: Ustvedt (1969) and Elster (1972), occasional NRK budget debates, and a range of books and pamphlets from the 1970s containing criticisms of and perspectives on the NRK.

In addition to this, two other sources have been examined in both countries. Firstly, statistical data on licences and programme categories generated by the corporations themselves and published in the Annual Reports (in the Norwegian case, also in the yearbooks from the Central Bureau of Statistics). Secondly, the legal documents: the 1980 Norwegian Broadcasting Act, the 1980 British Broadcasting Act, and the 1981 BBC Charter and Licence and Agreement.

## CHAPTER 4:

### PUBLIC BROADCASTING: ORIGINS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The fact that the public broadcasting corporations emerging in Britain and Norway in the inter-war period exhibited largely similar characteristics, has led many observers to believe that Norway, as the latter of the two countries to establish a public broadcasting structure, consciously adopted the BBC model. An examination of the political documents, however, does not support this view. The BBC was frequently referred to in the political debate about the establishment of the NRK, but it is apparent from what was said in parliament that the policy-makers had only a rudimentary knowledge of how it was actually organised. This should not be taken to mean that there were no exchange of ideas between civil servants and others involved with broadcasting in the two countries, and that the broadcasters themselves had no contact. It is interesting to note, however, that in the final debate in parliament, it was proposed that the decision should be postponed until more information about the BBC - and other systems - had been brought forward (see for example St.tid. 1933: 45, 57, 64, 73, see also Dahl 1975: 219).

Rather than adopting systems from other countries then, the policy-makers in Norway - as in Britain some years previously - operated predominantly within a national context. Their primary interest was to come up with an institutional form which could solve the specific problems associated with broadcasting in their own countries, and there is little evidence to indicate that they were inspired by the solutions adopted elsewhere, with the exception of the US which served as a negative source of inspiration. This does not mean that the policy-makers in Britain and Norway, or in other European countries for that matter, arrived at completely different solutions. As a Norwegian broadcasting enquiry concluded in 1931, after having surveyed broadcasting developments in no less than sixteen countries, there was 'a general development away from private broadcasting, which dominated programme-making in the beginning, and towards a more public form of organisation, for the most part vested in statute' (Vigstad 1931: 6, see also Kleinstaub et al. (eds.) 1986 for a survey of broadcasting developments in different European countries).

How can this general trend be explained? If we accept the assumption that the policy-makers operated largely within a national context, there is only one explanation: That the forces which helped bring about public broadcasting corporations took on a similar configuration in different countries.

In this chapter, these forces, as they appeared in Britain and Norway, are examined in some detail. This is followed by a discussion of the original characteristics of the BBC and the NRK. Two questions are addressed here. Firstly, what it did really mean, in concrete and specific terms, for the BBC and the NRK to be organised as public corporations? In what way were the corporations different from privately owned media, and how did they differ from other state enterprises and departments? Secondly, how did the institutions themselves define their roles in the years before television became

the dominant medium? To sum up: What were the characteristics of the broadcasting structure within which television was implemented in the 1930s and the 1950s respectively?

The analysis in this chapter is, as has already been pointed out, based on a combination of primary and secondary sources. Among the primary sources the original legislative and political documents have been the most important. This includes, in both countries, material from broadcasting committees, government white papers, and debates in parliaments and/or parliamentary committees (see Introduction to part II and Appendix A for details).

#### 4.1. Why public broadcasting? Constraints, interests and perspectives

A prerequisite for the development of broadcasting systems was the invention of the wireless technique. The invention of this technology preceded popular demand, state regulation and the cultural definition of the broadcast media. As Raymond Williams (1975:25) has pointed out, it was not only that 'the supply of broadcasting facilities preceded demand', it was also that 'the means of communication preceded their content' (original emphasis).

The first commercial application of the wireless was for point-to-point, ship-to-shore communication. This was a flourishing business around the turn of the century, and it was led by large industrial corporations. However, the outbreak of war in 1914 stalled the commercial operations, and the initiative passed into the hands of the armed forces. Both in Norway and Britain, the military had from the beginning seen the potential of wireless telegraphy for improving their command and control systems, and during the war years there were significant developments of the technique and its applications. The widespread use of wireless in the forces also had important social implications; millions of ex-servicemen who had learned to build and operate wireless in the forces turned into enthusiastic radio amateurs after returning home (Briggs 1985, Dahl 1975, Williams 1975, Lewis and Pearlman 1986).

Prior to the war there had been little appreciation of the potential for mass communication inherent in the wireless technique. The fact that signals could be received in all directions was actually regarded as a problem rather than an untapped potential, but in 1916 David Sarnoff in the American Marconi Company came up with the idea of radio as a household commodity bringing music directly into the homes of millions. The idea was taken up by his company, and from then on the development of broadcasting in the US happened with great speed. By 1920, the commercial potential of radio was widely recognised, and many stores took part in the establishment of stations as a way of advertising their own services.

When the war came to an end in 1918, the manufacturers were keen to see similar developments in Europe. Deprived of the sales to the military, they needed new markets for their radio components. However, the states were reluctant to give up their control over the radio spectrum: Wartime experience had confirmed the belief of many government officials in Europe that wireless was an important national resource, and that the state should be intimately involved in its development. Both in Britain and Norway, licences from the Post and Telecommunications Authorities (PTT) were required for those wishing to engage in telephonic or telegraphic activities (Ward 1989, Dahl 1975, Briggs 1985).

As the pressure from the manufacturers and amateurs increased, the governments eventually gave in. In 1922 the Post-Master General in Britain agreed to an arrangement whereby the six main wireless manufacturers were to provide the original capital for what was to become the British Broadcasting Company. The Company was owned entirely by the manufacturers and was granted a national monopoly. The revenue came from two sources: a duty charged on BBC-marked sets and a percentage of the receiving licence, which was collected by the GPO. The Company began broadcasting in November 1922. In 1923, the company's licence was extended after a recommendation from the Sykes committee, and from 1924 it relied on licence fees as the sole source of revenue.

In Norway there was also a strong pressure from the manufacturers, but it was not until the British services began in 1922 that the state began to yield. The transmissions from the British company could be received in Norway, and vast numbers of sets were imported, many of them illegally. A

familiar pattern ensued: the foreign stations stimulated home listeners and the demand for a national service grew. In 1924 a licence was granted also to a Norwegian broadcasting company. This company was based in Oslo, and like the British Company it was dominated by the manufacturers and funded through a licence fee. However, unlike its British counterpart it was only granted a regional monopoly, and soon afterwards other regional companies were set up: Bergen 1925, Ålesund 1926 and Tromsø 1927 (Dahl 1975).

So far we have seen that while the state, the military and the amateurs were all involved in the development of the radio technology, the hardware manufacturers were the dominant force. Within a few years, however, public corporations replaced the previous structure. To understand why this happened it is necessary to examine the wider set of constraints and interests involved, as well as the main problems built into the private broadcasting structures in the two countries.

The primary constraint limiting the options open to broadcasting policy-makers in the 1920s and 1930s was the scarcity of wavelengths. In the more advanced broadcasting market of the US there were major problems with interference, and the European policy-makers were concerned to avoid a similar 'chaos of the ether'. With 6% of the world's population crowded into 3% of its land area, and with a disproportionally large number of autonomous nation states, Europe had the potential for becoming the most densely covered broadcasting area in the world (Head 1985:20). Indeed, it did not take long before interference had become a serious problem. In 1922 and 1923 there were so few stations in Europe that almost all broadcasts could be received on a simple receiver in Norway, but from 1924 onwards the situation was becoming more difficult. In 1925, Union Internationale de Radiophonie (UIR) was established in London in an attempt to overcome the inference-problem, and from then on frequent international conferences allocated and reallocated frequencies to the growing number of participants (Dahl 1975, Briggs 1985).

The scarcity of frequencies meant that each country would have to make do with a very limited supply of channels, and these technical limitations were further reinforced by the economic constraints. Establishing terrestrial broadcasting networks was an extremely costly venture in all countries, and the funds needed to establish a multi-channel system would have been impossible to raise in a period characterised by great economic problems. The situation was particularly difficult in the large, mountainous and sparsely populated country of Norway, where achieving national coverage for just one service seemed an almost hopeless prospect. Dahl (1975: 165) cites IUR statistics from 1929-30 showing that whereas Denmark, Sweden and Britain topped the list with 88, 70 and 65 licences pr. 1000 inhabitants, the figure for Norway was only 23.

In addition to the sheer cost of establishing and maintaining transmission networks, there were also other economic problems associated with radio. As a commodity, broadcasting possesses two economic characteristics which makes it difficult to organise it as a private business (Collins et al. 1988). Firstly, broadcasting products are non-rival: If one person listens to a programme, other people can listen too. Contrary to products such as bread and cars, radio programmes are not destroyed by the act of consumption. Secondly, broadcasting products are non-excludable: When a programme is broadcast to one household, it can simultaneously be received by all households within the reception area.

These economic characteristics posed problems for the early broadcasting companies. The fact that everybody with a set could receive the signals was exploited by the audiences who - in large numbers - simply did not pay. In Britain it was stipulated in 1923 that only one in four listeners was actually paying (Briggs 1985:42-3). A similar estimate from Norway in 1930 showed that one third of the listeners were free-riders (Dahl 1975:166). However, the PTTs, which were responsible for collecting the fees and enforcing the law that required listeners to pay, were reluctant to be seen to operate on behalf of the private companies. Entering peoples homes to enforce a law which was ultimately intended to bring profit to private pockets, was a difficult thing to justify.

This points to the third major constraint limiting the options open to policy-makers at the time: the problems of finding a solution that was socially legitimate. As we have seen, the technical and economical constraints limited the number of broadcasting channels that any nation could establish, but in liberal capitalist states, private monopolies were difficult to justify. In both Britain and Norway, the private broadcasting monopolies were seen as giving undue privileges to one set of interests at

the expense of others. In Britain, the smaller companies, supported by press interests which had not been able to get into radio, claimed that it was a monopoly to enrich the six large firms (Hood and O'Leary 1990, Briggs 1961). In Norway, there were no obvious industrial competitors, but the legitimacy of the broadcasting monopolies was still a major issue. A dispute between the Authors' Society and the largest broadcasting company, which broke out in 1927, was particularly crucial in delegitimising the private broadcasting structure. The issue was initially one of compensation claims, but developed into a dispute over whether or not a commercial company could claim special privileges as a national cultural institution (Dahl 1975).

So far, we have seen how the technical and economic constraints narrowed down the alternatives, and left the policy-makers in both countries with the problem of creating an institutional form which was both economically viable and more legitimate than the private companies. The actual transition from a private to a public structure, happened differently in the two countries. In Britain, the initiative towards a constitutional change came largely from within the company itself, and due to a higher degree of consensus between the main actors (the state, the company and the manufacturers), the transition from company to corporation was accomplished in less than four years. In contrast, in Norway the process took nine years, and was riddled with controversy. Conflicts erupted on many levels, including within the state itself, and broadcasting was debated in parliament on several occasions before a final solution was reached.

Despite these differences, a multitude of interests were involved in both countries and similar issues required resolution. In regard to the major questions of ownership, control and funding, for example, there were at least four different alternatives. The first of these alternatives, a private commercial system, was never seriously debated in either country. This system would not solve any of the problems associated with the existing private companies, and since this was the system operated in the US, it was also the anti-thesis of what the European policy-makers desired. At the other end of the scale, complete state take-over of all elements of broadcasting was also ruled out. There was never a question of extensive state control over the content of broadcasting even if the argument that radio was too powerful a medium not to be publicly controlled was put forward in Britain (Hood and O'Leary 1990:5). Neither did public authorities attempt to control the receiving end of the system. In contrast to the telephone system, for example, where the receivers also were owned by the PTTs, broadcasting was carved up in a way that left a large market open to commercial exploitation.

With these 'extreme' alternatives ruled out, only two remained. Both were based on a mixture of public and private ownership and control. The first of these alternatives was a semi-private structure where production and scheduling was controlled by a privately owned company, while transmission was the responsibility of the state. Such a 'model' was rejected by the Crawford committee in Britain who concluded that 'no company or body constituted on trade lines for the profit, direct or indirect, of those comprising it' could be regarded as adequate for the conduct of broadcasting (Crawford 1926). In Norway, however, a proposal along these lines, suggesting that newspaper interests should be in control of the production company, was proposed by a Liberal government in 1930 (St.prop. 70, 1930). This alternative initially gained the support of the PTT, some press interests, and Conservative and Agrarian party politicians, but never made it through to the statute book.

The final alternative was to set up a public corporation responsible for administering all aspects of broadcasting (apart from the manufacturing of sets) under some form of statutory control. This was a model which was already tried and tested with other services of public importance. In both countries autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies responsible for national or local services were already in operation. In Britain, the more obvious examples were the Port of London Authority and the Forestry Commission (Heller 1978, Curran 1979). In Norway, the Farmers Bank had been set up already in 1887 through a separate Act of Parliament. In 1928 the National Cereal Board was established, and in 1931 a public corporation was set up to be in charge of the production and retailing of alcoholic beverages (Dahl 1975: 212).

In Britain, this was the solution desired by the Company's Director John Reith. After taking up his position in 1922, Reith had campaigned for an institutional form where the private interests of the manufacturing industry played a less dominant role, and by 1925 he had come to the view that the constitution of the BBC needed to be changed. Thus, it was largely due to his efforts that the transition process went so quickly in Britain. There was some controversy surrounding the work of the Sykes

Committee which in 1923 proposed more public and less private control over broadcasting, but by the time the Crawford committee reported in 1926, Reith's views were almost unanimously accepted. In fact an agreement between the Board of the Company and the GPO to establish a public corporation had already been reached before the Crawford committee reported in March 1926. Then, in July, the PMG announced officially that the main recommendations of the enquiry had been accepted by the Conservative government, and in November the decision was endorsed by the House of Commons (Cmnd. 2756, HC Official Report 15.11.1926, vol. 199, Crawford 1926, see also Briggs 1961, 1985, Hood and O'Leary 1990, Scannel and Cardiff 1991).

In Norway, no similar consensus was reached between the main actors until the early 1930s. Firstly, the private broadcasting structure exhausted itself completely through a series of crises that peaked in 1929 (Dahl 1975). Another three years passed before a permanent solution was reached. During that time, three successive governments each proposed different solutions (St. prop. 70, 1930, St. prop. 69, 1932, Ot.prop. 74, 1933). A public corporation was first proposed by the Vigstad Committee of 1931, the first public enquiry into broadcasting. Later, a modified version of this alternative was taken up by the Agrarian Party government which came to power in 1931 (St.prop.69, 1932). After the main principles had received a two thirds majority in parliament, it was modified yet again by the third government involved (also liberal) when the final details were worked out in 1933 (St.tid. 1933: 77, Ot.prop. 74, 1933).

Despite the fact that agreements to establish public corporations were reached in both countries, there was no great enthusiasm over the outcomes. Rather, a series of 'crises' (Dahl 1975) or 'reluctances' (Briggs 1961) seem to have prompted the final compromises. Different interests were dissatisfied with different aspects of the original private broadcasting companies, and a public corporation emerged as the least objectionable solution to the interests involved. Indeed, it is possible to agree with Burns (1977:9) and say that the establishment of public broadcasting corporations was visible as 'a superb example of accomodatory politics, spreading satisfactions and dissatisfactions fairly evenly among the interest groups concerned'.

Of these interest groups, various types of broadcasting manufacturing industries were among the most important, and in neither country these put up more than a symbolic resistance to a public broadcasting structure. In Britain, Reith met little resistance when he told the Board at a meeting in March 1925 that the present constitution was 'anomalous and absurd' and that 'the trade was a 'nuisance' (Briggs 1985:84). In Norway it was the manufacturers' themselves who in the end, as members of the Oslo Company's Board, asked the state to take over responsibility for distribution and transmission (Dahl 1975: 197). This reflects the fact that the manufacturers' primary interest was not to operate broadcasting companies, but to sell equipment. They had got involved in programme production to get the services started, but once that had happened the manufacturers had little to lose and much to win from public take-over. This was particularly true in Norway, where the expansion of broadcasting progressed much more slowly in private hands than in most other European countries.

The attitudes of rival cultural and informational interests also helped to bring about a public broadcasting structure. Interests such as the press; the concert-givers; the proprietors of theatres and music halls; and owners of dramatic, musical and literary copyright, all saw broadcasting - at best - as an unwelcome competitor. Once they had realised that broadcasting had come to stay, however, they had no objections to it being organised as a public system. This was partly due to reasons of cultural policy, many interests felt that the cultural potential of radio was not being exploited to the fullest within the private companies, but it was also due to economic factors. The press was particularly opposed to commercial broadcasting since this would directly threaten its advertising revenue in what was already a difficult period of concentration and stagnation (Ward 1989, Curran and Seaton 1985, Høyer 1982b, Crawford 1926, Dahl 1975).

In Britain, the press's attitude successfully prevented adverts from being introduced when the broadcasting company was granted its first licence. Advertising was further rejected by both the Sykes and the Crawford committees. In Norway, the press was less successful as both the early Norwegian broadcasting companies and the NRK were partly funded by advertisements. However, the Norwegian press did manage to limit the amount of advertising to a small share of the revenue (Dahl 1975: 123, 336).

A public broadcasting structure was also endorsed by the state institutions responsible for broadcasting: the PTTs, which perceived radio to be a form of public utility. Like public goods such as fresh air and clean water, good broadcasting could not be achieved through the use of the price mechanism, and like other communication infrastructures such as post, telephones, roads and railways, it could only be managed rationally if it was organised as a whole system. Thus, the PTTs saw it as 'natural' that, in the long term, broadcasting should also be nationalised. As the British Postmaster-General expressed it in the House of Commons debate, the private broadcasting system, 'however admirable in the infancy of the art, was not designed to meet the requirements of its maturity' (HC Official Report 15.11.1926 vol. 199 col. 1565, see also Dahl 1975, 1978b, Collins et al. 1988, Briggs 1985).

This did not mean that the PTTs were in favour of spending money on broadcasting. The expansion of the state and the increase in public spending were sensitive issues in the inter-war period, and particularly in Britain, the state was more concerned about earning money from broadcasting than on spending money on it (see below). So instead of advancing the use of public funds, the PTTs supported the licence fee system. This system provided the state with a measure of control, without them having to come up with the money for investments.

A public structure was also seen by the governments as the least objectionable option in terms of control over content. Broadcasting was by many regarded with suspicion, a fact which fits in with the general notion in the inter-war period that the mass media exercised a powerful, direct and persuasive influence (see for example Curran et al. 1982, Halloran (ed.) 1970, Ward 1989, Bennet 1982, McQuail 1977). Neither countries' government attempted to establish direct control over content, however. Such control would have been difficult to justify, and might also have backfired - a government in position one day might well find itself in opposition, and with no control over broadcasting, the next. As a conservative British representative expressed it in the 1926 House of Commons debate, 'At the present moment, we have ... a first-rate Government, but Heaven knows what sort of Government we may have in a few years to come' (HC Official Report 15.11.1926 vol. 199 col. 1621).

In both countries then, the governments wanted a measure of control, but were reluctant to take over complete responsibility for broadcasting. The aim was to establish a structure which would be responsive to the general interests of 'the state and the nation' without acting as a mouthpiece for each new government in power. In Britain, what happened during the two week long General Strike of 1926 seems to have convinced the government that the BBC had the potential for becoming such an institution. During the strike the BBC acquired a reputation for 'responsible reporting' and the Conservative government felt satisfied that in moments when the social order was threatened, it was not going to turn into a 'subversive' institution stirring up public feelings (Curran and Seaton 1985, Schlesinger 1987, Tracey 1975, Hood and O'Leary 1990, Reith 1949).

In Norway, the establishment of the NRK was not meant to continue the tradition from the private companies in the same way. None of the private Norwegian broadcasting companies acquired a similar reputation for 'responsibility', not because they were particularly radical, but more because they were amateurish and somewhat unpredictable. This in turn meant that in Norway, the policy-makers had to take special care to establish safeguards which could secure that the corporation would act responsibly in the case of a national crisis (see below).

In both countries the public enterprise solution was also endorsed by most political parties. In Britain the BBC was established under a Conservative government, but was supported by the Labour party. Indeed, one of the Labour representatives stated his amusement at seeing that a conservative government 'willy-nilly, is forced to go some way along the line of socialism when dealing with a new and vital service' (HC Official Report 15.11.1926 vol. 199 col. 1603). Liberal party representatives were more sceptical, however. In the House of Commons debate they claimed that a public take-over of broadcasting represented 'socialism pure and simple', and that it was far too early to decide on a permanent structure for broadcasting (HC Official Report 15.11.1926 vol. 199 cols. 1611-12, see also Briggs 1961).

In Norway, it was the alliance between Labour, Liberals and some Agrarians which were behind the nationalisation of broadcasting. In the same way as their British counterparts, the Norwegian socialists preferred a public corporation, whereas representatives from the parties in the centre endorsed the

public enterprise model because they perceived this to be the only way to achieve national coverage. The Norwegian conservatives, however, were opposed to public take-over. Whereas in Britain many Tories had, on the basis of experiences gained in the management of scarce resources and essential services during the First World War, come to the conclusion that public corporations were the most acceptable instrument for managing certain sectors of the economy (Hood 1986, Heller 1978), the Norwegian Conservatives only saw it as an undue extension of state control (see for example Innst. S nr.1 1933, St.tid. 1933: 39, see also Dahl 1975).

So far we have seen how a public broadcasting structure emerged as a compromise between a variety of economic and political interests, within the framework of the economic and technological constraints. But what about the public interest in broadcasting? How was a public broadcasting structure conceived among the 'citizens' active in the public debate, and the 'consumers' of broadcasting services?

Judging from the number of submissions received by the early broadcasting committees, there was no widespread citizen-interest in matters of broadcasting policy. Neither the Crawford committee in Britain and the Vigstad Committee in Norway received more than a handful of comments from bodies with no vested interest in broadcasting. However, this does not indicate that ideological perspectives played no part in the discussion, only that the comments received reflected perspectives which were already present among the political and cultural elites.

In Britain, the foremost ideologue was the Chairman of the Company, John Reith. The main principles of his broadcasting ideology - which later came to be called 'Reithianism' - were set out in his 1924 book Broadcast over Britain. In this book, which was voiced as an argument in favour of a public broadcasting structure, Reith takes stock with opponents claiming that broadcasting should give people 'what they want'. Few know what they want, and very few what they need, Reith proclaimed, and continued to say that 'our responsibility is to carry into the greatest possible number of homes everything that is best in every human department of knowledge, endeavour and achievement, and to avoid the things which are, or may be hurtful' (Reith 1924: 34).

Among the interests presenting evidence to the Crawford Committee, the representatives of the British Institute of Adult Education and the National Federation of Women's Institutes explicitly supported Reith's views. The Crawford Report (1926: para. 13), also did, stating that 'we are much impressed by evidence reaching us from Authoritative witnesses who advocated the vigorous and extended employment of broadcast for education in the widest and most liberal sense'. Similar perspectives were also voiced in the House of Commons by those in favour of a public broadcasting corporation (HC Official Report 15.11.1926 vol 199).

In Norway, Reith had no counterparts within the broadcasting companies, but visionaries existed outside: One of them was the Minister of Church and Education, Knut Liestøl, who was instrumental in engineering the details of the Norwegian public broadcasting structure. Like Reith, he perceived radio as an educational and cultural opportunity not to be missed (Dahl 1975). The same view was held by the parliamentary committee majority, who claimed that radio should be organised as a public corporation due to its potential for 'becoming a principal force of enlightenment in society' (Innst.S. 1 1933: 17), and it was also endorsed by a wider set of interests: The teachers organisations, the teetotalists, and the Norwegian League of Youth, all wrote to the Vigstad Enquiry to express their support for a public broadcasting institution under the patronage of the 'cultural' ministry. This, they claimed, was the best way to exploit the potentials of radio as a vehicle for enlightenment and education (Vigstad 1931).

Together, these perspectives can be seen to represent a specific ideological definition of broadcasting as a collective force in society. Rather than being defined as a business or a commodity for private consumption, radio was seen as a force for enlightenment and democratisation. This was a strongly paternalistic view, conceiving broadcasting more as an educational than an entertainment medium. The emphasis was on widening the perspectives and raising the standards of the public, rather than just catering for whatever tastes they had already developed.

Even though these perspectives were the dominant ones among the social elites, however, there was also an alternative ideological definition of broadcasting present in the debate. This was the idea that

rather than being organised in a paternalistic way, the broadcasting corporations should be set up in a way which made them responsive to popular demand. In Norway, this was the perspective of the Conservatives, who feared that the motive of 'uplift' would prove hostile both to conservative and city interests (St. tid. 1933: 38-78). In Britain, the Conservative party was firmly behind the paternalist definition, but here the Liberals and occasional Labour backbenchers voiced oppositional perspectives. One of the Labour MPs complained that 'some of the programmes are absolutely tragic, boring to the extreme' and suggested that the newly-appointed governors took into account that 'perhaps 90 per cent. of the people who instal wireless outfits ... instal those sets for the purpose of being entertained' (HC Official Report 15.11.1926 vol.199 cols. 1644-6 see also cols. 1611-4).

In contrast to the citizens' interests in broadcasting, the consumer interest showed itself primarily in the demand for radio sets. Judging from the high number of letters to the broadcasting companies, there was also considerable interest in specific programmes (Briggs 1985, Reith 1924, Dahl 1975). No attempts were made in either country to elicit the opinions of the consumers in regard to the organisation of broadcasting, however. Newspapers in both countries conducted polls presumably demonstrating the public preference for different types of programming, but there is no evidence to indicate that the results of these made any impact on the debate about whether or not broadcasting should be organised as public corporations.

In this section, the forces behind the establishment of the two corporations have been discussed, and we have seen that the transition from a private to a public structure progressed at different speed and in different ways in the two countries. In Britain the positive commitment of John Reith as an influential social actor was crucial for what became the final outcome, whereas in Norway the problems connected with the private broadcasting structure and the economic and social constraints, played a more dominant role. Despite these differences, however, the actual broadcasting institutions which emerged in the two countries, exhibited structurally similar characteristics. These characteristics are discussed in the next section.

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#### 4.2. Public broadcasting corporations: Original characteristics

So far, the term 'public corporation' has been used rather loosely to describe a certain type of broadcasting organisation. But what it did really mean for the BBC and the NRK to be organised as public corporations? In what way were the corporations different from privately owned media, and how did they differ from other state enterprises and departments? And how did the institutions themselves define their roles in the years before television became the dominant medium?

In this section, the original characteristics of the broadcasting corporations, as they emerged in the original legal documents, are discussed. Three types of characteristic are particularly relevant here. Firstly, the structure of public regulation and control: What were the formal links between the institutions and the state, and what were the mechanisms set up to ensure that the broadcasters were accountable to the public, rather than to the state or the market? Secondly, the privileges of the corporations: In what way were the BBC and the NRK insulated against the pressures of the marketplace, and how were these privileges interconnected? Thirdly, the obligations or duties of the corporations: Which social, political and cultural tasks were they expected to fulfil in their capacities as the national instruments of broadcasting?

The fact that the corporations were expected to fulfil a range of duties in return for their privileged position, is a point often ignored by those who argue over whether or not the broadcasters are 'independent'. The corporations were definitely intended to have a large degree of editorial and operational autonomy, but this autonomy was by the very nature of the broadcasting structure qualified by the duty of the broadcasters to operate within the boundaries of the prevailing social consensus. In this sense, the public broadcasting corporations posed tricky problems for liberal democratic states. As Etzioni-Halevy (1987:7) has pointed out, they were expected to be 'both controlled by the government and uncontrolled by the government at one and the same time' (see also Williams 1975, 1979).

##### 4.2.1. The control structure

In both countries, the control structure had four main components: Firstly, and most importantly, the ultimate authority to broadcast came from the state, and it was to the state that the institutions in the last instances were accountable. Secondly, the controllers of the corporations were publicly appointed. Thirdly, allocative financial control resided with the state. And finally, the states retained a measure of control over content.

#### Control over the licence to broadcast

The most fundamental element of the control structure was that the state retained the ultimate control over the radio spectrum, and thus over the corporations' licences to broadcast. As Stuart Hall (1972a:1) has contended, the broadcasters 'ultimate authority to broadcast derives from the state and, in the last instance, it is to the state that they are responsible' (see also Smith 1973:140, Negrine 1985b: 28). In both countries, however, the licence to broadcast implied that the state delegated parts of its authority. Once the broadcasting corporations were established, the governments' power to intervene directly was restricted by the legal documents.

The issuing of the first Charter in 1927 made the BBC a public corporation. In contrast, the NRK was owned by the state and regulated through an Act of Parliament. This left the BBC with more formal autonomy than the NRK. Reith himself described the Charter as 'one of the least restricting legal instruments known in Britain' (The Times 29.3.1966 cited from Wedell 1968:57), whereas the NRK was more tightly controlled, particularly in financial matters, than other state enterprises in Norway (Dahl 1975: 214). This difference reflects the different degrees of confidence in the broadcasting corporations held by the political elites in the two countries. In Britain, the cohesiveness of the ruling class and the precedent set by the Broadcasting Company under the leadership of John Reith, implied that the government could proceed by a large degree of delegation and appointment and still feel confident that the corporation would behave 'responsibly'. In Norway, in contrast, the elites were less sure of what the broadcasters would deliver, and retained a higher degree of administrative control.

Following the recommendations from the Crawford committee, the first Charter was for a ten year duration. In 1937 a second, and similar, Charter was issued following the recommendations of the Ullswater committee. In contrast, the Broadcasting Act in Norway was not meant to be reviewed at designed intervals, and no significant changes were made until 1948 (see below).

Despite the legal differences outlined so far, both the BBC and the NRK were required to present their annual reports and accounts to parliament (BBC Charter 1927 para. 16, Broadcasting Act 1933 para 7). Thus, it was to the politically elected citizens, rather than to the governments or the consumers, that the broadcasters were formally accountable.

#### Appointment of the controllers

The second element of the control structure was the appointment of controllers. In Britain, a single body was appointed to control broadcasting, the Board of Governors. In Norway a Board was also established, but here two additional bodies were appointed: the Broadcasting Council, and the Chief-of-Programming.

Both in Britain and Norway the Board was given the responsibility for the operation of the service within the framework of the Royal Charter and the Broadcasting Act respectively. In both countries there were to be five governors (or Board Members as they were called in Norway). They were all appointed by the Monarch in Council after having been nominated by the Minister in charge - in Britain by the Post-Master General and in Norway by the Minister of Church and Education. The fact that the members of the respective Boards were appointed by the Crown rather than by the government directly, was significant for two reasons. Firstly, it was intended to safe-guard the operational autonomy of the broadcasters in day to day matters. The idea was that Board members could not be dismissed just because they had displeased a specific government. Secondly, the system of Crown appointments was meant to underwrite the constitutional position of the BBC and the NRK: they belonged to the nation as a whole, and not to the state or the government of the day.

In Britain, the Crawford Committee supported Reith's view that the Board members should not be representatives of particular interests but 'persons of judgement and independence, free of commitments, with business acumen and experienced in affairs' (1926: 14, para. 20). Even if the convention which developed required that there be a political balance between members of known party affiliation, governors were not normally appointed on a party ticket. Instead, they were prominent establishment figures in their own right, drawn from the Whitehall list frequently referred to as 'The Great and the Good', or, in Leapman's term 'The Worthy' (1987: 122). From the beginning the convention required that at least one was a City or business figure, one was a retired diplomat, one was a senior civil servant and at least one was 'a woman'. The educational and cultural establishments and the press were also well represented (see Briggs 1979a, Annan 1977 para. 5.24, Hood and O'Leary 1990, Tunstall 1983, Trethowan 1984, Hood 1967, Madge 1989, Milne 1989).

In the case of the BBC, the Charter makes no mention of any other regulatory body than the Board of Governors. Indeed, as many commentators have pointed out, the governors are the BBC in the legal sense of the term. As representatives of both the public and the official interest in broadcasting their task is both to run the service and to review its performance. Although the charter (para. 9) stated that 'The Corporation may appoint a committee or committees ... for such purposes and on such conditions as the Corporation may decide', the advisory councils had no formal legal status.

The same principle of 'non-representative' board members was laid down in Norway, but in contrast to the BBC governors, the NRK Board was surrounded by relative anonymity. Far more attention was given to the other bodies appointed to be responsible for broadcasting: the Broadcasting Council and the Director General. The Broadcasting Council was made an Act of Statute, and although it had no specific legal authority, its task was to 'assist the Director of programming and the Board in laying down a general programming policy' (Ot. prop. 74, 1933). In contrast to the Board, whose task it was to represent the official interest in broadcasting, the Council was meant to represent the 'public'. It was not intended to be a party-political forum, but parliament still retained the right to appoint four of the fifteen Council members, a sufficient number for all political parties to have one representative each (Sælen 1991). The remaining eleven members were to be appointed by the King in Council (Broadcasting Act 1933, para. 3).

The Broadcasting Act made no mention of the qualifications of Council members, but the Vigstad Committee had suggested that the Council should include representatives from the churches, education, industry, social interests, the press, drama, literature, music, the regions and the 'average listener' (1931: 15). In practice, however, the Broadcasting Council became an arena for the cultural and political establishments. Labour party supporters were always in majority, and women, young people and business and trade interests were consistently underrepresented. In terms of occupation and status, academically qualified people dominated along with press and educational interests (Sælen 1991 Dahl 1975, 1981).

In Britain the authority to hire and fire the corporations' Director-Generals was placed in the hands of the Board of Governors. It was taken for granted, however, that Reith was to be the Corporation's first Chief Executive. The original Charter stated that 'The Corporation shall appoint such officers and staff as they may think necessary including any Director-General who may be appointed in succession to the first Director-General' (Clause 7).

Despite the fact that the Charter left no doubt that it was the governors who were to have absolute authority over the BBC, at times there was considerable tension between Reith and the governors. In his diaries Reith expressed dismay for several of the governors, whom he perceived to be far too active (Reith 1949). Fortunately for him, J.H Whitley who became Chairman in 1930 shared his views, and from 1932 what came to be known as 'The Whitley Document' laid down the ground rules. The document stated that the concern of the governors should be 'general and not particular', and that 'the execution of policy and the general administration of the service' should be left to the DG. This became the definite directive of rights and duties for the next three decades (see Briggs 1979a, 1985: 109-10, Beveridge 1950 para. 554).

In Norway, the title of the DG was originally Chief-of-Programming, and like the Board members, she was to be appointed by the King in Council (Broadcasting Act 1933 para. 5). The position carried very limited powers, however, and after the first Chief-of-Programming resigned in 1948, the position was

replaced by the new chair of Director-General of Broadcasting. Whereas the Chief-of-Programming had only been responsible for editorial matters, the Director-Generals who followed were the Corporation's Chief Executives with responsibility for all day-to-day operations (Broadcasting Act 1980 para. 7.1.).

### Financial control

In both countries, allocative financial control was to reside with government and parliament, and it was their task to collect the revenue and determine the size of the licence fee (in the NRK's case also the duty on sets). In Britain it was the government who determined the size of the fee after negotiations with the BBC, whereas in Norway the size of the two fees were determined by parliament. It was also up to the state to determine how much of the revenue that was to be retained as 'broadcast tax'. The tax issue was particularly controversial in Britain, where large sums were collected by the Post-Master General. The NRK, in contrast, only had to pay a small amount, but also here the principle that the broadcasters should pay a 'fee' in return for the broadcasting franchise, was a feature of the original broadcasting legislation (BBC Licence 1927 para. 18 and Charter para. 14, Broadcasting Act 1933 para 8).

In Norway the system of revenue collection was changed in the 1948 revision of the Broadcasting Act. From then on the NRK collected its own revenue (NOU 1972:25: 40). In Britain the Post Office continued collecting the fee until 1990, charging the BBC heavily for the service. Once they had received the money, however, the BBC themselves could decide how they wished to spend it (BBC Charter, para. 14), whereas the Norwegian Broadcasting Act allowed parliament extensive financial control (1933 para. 7). In practice, however, the convention that developed in the period was one of less comprehensive control. Whereas parliament had the last word concerning major investments, the number of employees and the overall tact of expansion, it generally abstained from changing more specific priorities in the NRK budget proposal (NOU 1972:25, NOU 1975:7, Ot.prop. nr. 31 1986-87, Sælen 1991, Østbye 1982).

### Control over content

As previously noted, the original legislative documents said little about content. Instead it was stated on several occasions that the corporations themselves had full editorial responsibility. In Britain the Post-Master General stated in the House of Commons that while he was prepared to take responsibility for broad issues of policy, and while he felt it necessary to impose some general limitations, the BBC governors should have 'the greatest possible liberty ... to do anything ... that they might think desirable in the best interest of the service as a whole' (HC Official Report 15.11.1926 vol. 199, col. 1580, see also Crawford 1926 para. 16 and Ullswater 1935 para. 50).

Similarly, in Norway, the 1932 Government White paper stated that the NRK should have a 'strong and autonomous position' (St. prop. 69, 1932: 56). The parliamentary committee added that state control over the broadcasting structure was not supposed to mean that the state should be 'the creative element in the production of programmes'. On the contrary, there should be 'elbow-room for creative and competent men' (Innst. S. nr. 1 1933: 17, see also S.tid 1958: 554).

The main principle thus laid down in both countries deemed that it was the corporations themselves, and not the Post Office or any government minister, who were responsible for broadcasting. When asked questions about broadcasting in parliament, ministers in neither country would present their own views as answers. In Britain the minister in charge would draw the board's attention to the questions, whereas in Norway the minister would read a reply from the DG (Wedell 1968, Østbye 1982: 255).

This policy did of course not imply that the broadcasters could transmit whatever they wanted. Their operational autonomy was curtailed by the prevailing political and cultural consensus, and the governments also had a series of more informal sanctions at their disposal - everything from withholding information and favouring other media for press releases and interviews, to face to-face threats or threats leaked through other sources (see for example Cockerell 1988, Etziony-Halevy 1987). There were also formal limitations on the corporations' autonomy, however: In both countries, the governments retained the right to use the broadcast channels to convey official statements and messages to the public.

In Britain, the original Licence and Agreement (Clause 4.2) stated that any government department could demand that the corporation transmit 'any matter which such a Department may require to be broadcast'. The Post-Master General at the time stressed that these provisions were only meant to cover such announcements as police messages, gale warnings, traffic information and outbreak of foot-and mouth disease (HC Official Report 15.11.1926, vol. 199 col. 1579). In effect, however, messages which bordered on government propaganda were also transmitted (Scannel and Cardiff 1991). Following a controversy over such messages during the war and in the early post war years (Wilson 1961), a set of ground rules were agreed between the government, the opposition and the BBC in 1947. These stated that on matters where there was a 'general consensus of opinion' the government could request airtime without the Opposition having a right of reply. In Britain the political parties also retained the right to make 'party-political broadcasts' over which the BBC had no editorial control (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1982: 169-70).

The Norwegian Broadcasting Act also contained a clause obliging the NRK to transmit government messages when asked to do so (para 9). Contrary to the case in Britain, the Norwegian regulations did not formally permit anything other than public service messages being transmitted (Kgl. res. 10.11.1939).

Far more controversial than the states' right to have messages conveyed, however, was the British government's right to lay down editorial policy guidelines, and to require the BBC to refrain from broadcasting specific programmes (BBC Licence 1927 Clause 4.3). Whereas the right to veto specific programmes was never used in the period, the Postmaster General at once specified two general restrictions on the editorial autonomy of the BBC: Firstly that the Corporation should refrain from broadcasting its own opinions on matters of current affairs and public policy, i.e. a ban on editorialising. Secondly, the Corporation was instructed to refrain from broadcasting matters of political, industrial and religious controversy (HC Official Report 15.11. 1926, vol. 199 col. 1579-81). This latter ban was 'experimentally' lifted in 1928, and was replaced with the self-imposed '14-day rule' which prohibited the broadcasters from dealing with issues within a two week period of them being raised in parliament (Briggs 1961, Hood 1967, Annan 1977).

In Norway, no similar pre-censorship clause appeared in the 1933 Broadcasting Act. Nor did the government specify any general restrictions on programming. This did not mean, however, that the authorities were unconcerned about controversial programming. The PTT had from the beginning argued in favour of a clause banning political agitation from the service (cited in St. prop. nr. 69 1932: 44), and this was later supported by the Conservative and Farmers parties. However, no such clause was included in the Broadcasting Act, and the minister responsible stressed instead that these matters were to be decided by the bodies appointed to discuss programming policy (S. tid. 1935: 1368). In one of the first meetings of the Broadcasting Council a set of principles were laid down which in practice banned editorialising and required all news presentations to be 'absolutely factual and neutral' (NRK Annual Report 1934: 30)

#### 4.2.2. The privileges

The emphasis so far has been on the formal restrictions on the autonomy of the broadcasting corporations vis a vis parliament and government. Compared with other state departments, the corporations had a large degree of operational autonomy, but compared with privately owned media the limitations were extensive. However, the broadcasting corporations also differed from commercial media in other respects. Compared with newspapers, for example, they were entrusted with some formidable privileges guaranteed by the state.

#### Absence of competition

Both the BBC and the NRK received, in effect, an exclusive licence to broadcast. In Britain there was no specific monopoly clause in the broadcasting legislation, but the BBC's licence was exclusive in the sense that no mentioning was made of the PMG's right to licence other corporations. In the parliamentary debate it was stressed that there was practically a general agreement that there had to be a monopoly, so that no specific monopoly clause was necessary (HC Official Report 15.11.1926 vol. 199 cols. 1563-650). In Norway, the legislation was more explicit. The first phrase of the first paragraph of the 1933 Broadcasting Act stated that the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation 'shall

have the exclusive right to establish and operate stations and transmission networks for the broadcasting of oral messages, music, pictures etc.'

The absence of competition secured the BBC and the NRK enormously important positions in their respective countries. In moments of national celebration and distress, as well as in day-to-day life, people turned to these institutions for information and diversion. However, the BBC and NRK were not granted such a privileged position because monopoly broadcasting was considered an end in itself. In addition to reflecting the technological and economical constraints, a monopoly solution was seen as a means to achieve other aims. Firstly, the monopoly provided an economic and efficient way of expanding and managing the broadcasting system in the early years of scarce resources. As Reith (1924:70) argued, 'unity of control is essential' in a concern where 'expansion is so rapid and the problems so unique'. Secondly, the monopoly was important because it solved the problem of funding. Without a monopoly it would be difficult to sustain a compulsory licence fee. Finally, a monopoly solution was, at least in Reith's view, seen to be important for realising the cultural potentials of broadcasting (Reith 1924, see also Kumar 1977: 245).

From the very beginning, therefore, crucial links were made between the two main privileges of the corporations: the monopoly and the licence fee, and between the privileges on the one hand and the possibilities for fulfilling the obligations on the other.

#### A secure and independent source of revenue

From the perspective of the broadcasters, the licence fee was almost as important as the monopoly, since it implied that the revenue would pour in almost independent of demand. Contrary to other forms of direct payments, the licence fee had, in principle, no direct links with the service provided. As was made explicit in the Norwegian Broadcasting Act (para 11), what the public was paying for was not a specific service but the right to own and operate a receiver:

'Without a licence ... it is prohibited to use, possess or have at one's disposal a set for the reception of oral messages, music, pictures etc. by the means of radio electricity ...'

Thus, in principle, the licence fee did not entitle the public to demand anything in particular from the broadcasting corporations. In Britain, the BBC was not even mentioned in the document held by each household. In Norway the connection was made somewhat more explicit as the 1933 Broadcasting Act (para. 11) left it to the NRK to determine the conditions upon which a licence could be obtained. This was also the case for the other main source of NRK revenue, the duty on sets.

The licence fee, however, was not only understood in technical terms. It was also perceived to be a crucial device for safeguarding the autonomy of the broadcasters. Although parliament and government could, in principle, divert the whole sum to the Exchequer, both the Crawford Report (1926 para. 9) and the Norwegian Broadcasting Act (1933, para. 8) endorsed the principle that the corporations should be self-funded. The return to the BBC and the NRK was supposed to be based only on the number of licence-fee holders, and not on the views of the government currently in power.

More important than the protection against government pressures, however, was the fact that the licence-fee created a 'buffer' between the corporations and the market. Compared with commercial media, the public broadcasters could, at least in principle, ignore the pressures from advertisers and consumers. This was particularly true for Britain where adverts were ruled out from the beginning, whereas in Norway, where adverts were permitted as a supplementary source of revenue, they were strictly regulated. The Broadcasting Council stated in November 1933 that radio advertising should not exceed fifteen minutes daily, and that preference should be given to adverts that had the character of being public announcements (NRK Annual Report 1934: 34). When war broke out six years later, however, adverts were prohibited for military reasons (NOU 1984:5: 18).

#### 4.2.3. The 'obligations'

In return for their privileged position and their high degree of operational autonomy, the corporations were expected to perform certain social and cultural tasks. While the legislative documents were explicit with regard to the control structure and the privileges of the corporations, they were more vague in the case of the obligations. It appears that the policy-makers did not want to be specific, they were after all creating broadcasting corporations which were supposed to have a large degree of operational autonomy. It is also likely that they abstained from detailed instructions because they lacked knowledge about the operation of a radio service. Like the average listener, the policy-makers' impression of radio was based on what the private companies had delivered, and their expectations of what the public corporations should provide was determined by what they thought of the service they had been given so far.

This does not mean that the citizens active in the debate about broadcasting had no views of their own, but rather that these views were put forward more in the shape of general expectations and/or criticisms, than as legally binding obligations. Thus, it was up to the broadcasting corporations to interpret these expectations, transform them into services and programme policies, and, finally, to legitimise their interpretations vis a vis the citizens. In other words, the broadcasters had to convince their publics that the specific services provided were in accordance with the general expectations levelled at the corporations.

As previously noted, there were different ideological perspectives present in the debate, and the expectations levelled at the broadcasters varied accordingly. In this section, I have tried to identify the most important of these expectations as they emerged in the political debate about broadcasting in the two countries. I have not attempted to classify the whole range of opinions, however. Instead, I have concentrated on those opinions that were either consensual, i.e. endorsed or taken for granted by most all participants in the debate, or official, i.e. expressed or endorsed by the government of the day.

In addition to identifying the expectations, I also examine how these were interpreted by the corporations in the early days of radio broadcasting in Britain and Norway. This is done in order to determine the main characteristics of the broadcasting structures within which the new medium of television was implemented in the 1930s and the 1950s respectively.

On a very general level, three similar sets of expectations can be identified in the two countries: Firstly, the expectation that broadcasting should be conducted as a universal service, i.e. a service which was available to the whole population at a low cost. Secondly, the expectation that the corporations should provide a balanced output both in terms of subject matters, views and programme categories. And thirdly, the expectation that the broadcasters would act in the national interest. This implied refraining from material that might threaten the social order, and transmitting material which might help strengthening national culture and identity.

#### A universal service

The duty to conduct broadcasting as a universal service had two components, of which the first was that the service should be available to the whole population wherever in the country they lived. In the case of the BBC, the obligation to carry on a broadcasting service within all parts of the United Kingdom was set out in the Charter (BBC Charter 1927 para. 3a), whereas in Norway, the first Government White Paper (St. prop. 69, 1932) stated explicitly that the primary goal was to establish a structure which would secure all members of the population access to Norwegian broadcasting.

In both countries the geographical expansion of the services was seen as a primary target from the very beginning, but in Norway this target was far more difficult to reach than in Britain, due to the small population and the difficult topography (and in the post-war years also restrictions on imports). By 1935, 98% of the British population had access to one radio programme, whereas 85% had access to two (Briggs 1985: 110). In contrast, it was not until the 1960s that more or less the whole of Norway had adequate conditions for radio reception (Kjekstad 1974, Dahl 1982, Østbye 1975).

The second component was that of equal payment. This was an obligation which was from the beginning built into the licence-fee system. As was the case with other public services, the broadcasting institutions were not allowed to claim higher fees from people who lived in sparsely populated areas. However, the principle of equal payment implied not only cross-subsidies between

geographical areas, it also meant subsidies from those who listened less to those who listened more. Access to radio was considered a social necessity in the same way as access to roads, water and electricity, and the principle that radio should also be affordable to those on low incomes, put pressures on the authorities to keep the size of the fee down.

#### A balanced output

The second obligation was that the broadcasting corporations should provide a balanced programme schedule. They were expected to transmit not only the more popular types of programming, but also programming that was considered to be of high societal value. As we have seen, the dominant cultural and political elites in both countries conceived broadcasting to be of paramount importance for the 'uplift' and enlightenment of the population, and it was expected that the broadcasters would make the 'best' within the fields of education, information and culture available to the general public.

The Crawford Report stated that 'every effort must be made to raise the standards of style and performance' (1926: 12, para. 14). It did recognise, however, that the educational purposes of broadcasting might come into conflict with the demands for varied programming. Consequently, it stated that the listener was 'entitled to latitude', and that 'he should not be pressed to assimilate too much of what he calls 'highbrow' broadcast' (1926: 12, para. 14). This did not imply that 'low-brow' programming should have any prominent place: On the contrary, the Report stated that (1926: 12, para 14):

'Special wave-lengths or alternative services may provide an escape from the programme dilemma, but we trust they will never be used to cater for groups of listeners, however large, who press for trite and commonplace performances.'

In Norway, the idea that broadcasting should help to raise cultural standards was also prominent. The first Government White Paper (St. prop. nr. 70 1930:36) stated that the NRK 'in the best possible way and with the most advanced technology' should 'strive to fulfil its important cultural role'. The Vigstad Report stated similarly, that 'the quality of the programmes must be high to prevent our people from lagging behind in a cultural sense' (1931: 14).

Regarding the definition of enlightenment, however, there was an important difference between the two countries. In Britain, the Reithian definition of enlightenment was a top-down project, based on the shared cultural assumptions of the aristocracy and the metropolitan bourgeoisie with their emphasis on art and high culture (Reith 1924, Scannel and Cardiff 1991, Williams 1968, 1975, 1979, Kumar 1977). Such values were also strongly present within the NRK, but due to the influence of the labour movement and the regionally based libertarian movement, they were complemented with a more down-to-earth and practical component. The first Chief-of-Programming, Olav Midttun, was himself an exponent of the rural libertarian counter-culture, and he also saw it as his task to incorporate some of the demands and ideas of the labour movement in order to broaden the NRK's support base (Hansen 1979). This in turn implied that the NRK was somewhat less dominated by the tastes of the urban middle-classes than the BBC, and far less dominated by traditional upper-class values.

Despite this difference, the BBC and the NRK had in common a strongly paternalistic approach to their audience. From the beginning, the emphasis was on raising rather than reflecting popular taste and standards, and rather than attempting to set their own standards for what was good and proper, the broadcasters sought out the standards prevalent within the cultural, political and educational establishments. The academic institutions were accepted as the arbiters of truth and the cultural institutions as the arbiters of quality, and the corporations did not challenge the larger-than-life proportions assumed by the cultural and educational establishments.

In neither country, however, were the broadcasters expected to provide only 'serious' and 'educational' programming. The requirement was that programming should be 'balanced', i.e. that there were to be variety and diversity. As the first BBC Charter stated, the service was 'of great value ... as a means of education and entertainment' (my emphasis). This was echoed in the 1930 Norwegian Government White Paper which stated that the primary purpose of broadcasting was, 'as it has frequently been pointed out, that of enlightenment, education, entertainment and general information' (St.prop. nr. 70 1930: 36).

Thus, from the beginning, it was taken for granted that providing entertainment was also a duty of the broadcasting corporations. In Britain, Reith even defended broadcasts 'of no permanent value' on the grounds that 'they may assist the more serious work by providing the measure of salt which seasons' (Reith 1924 :212-3). Nevertheless, this quote does highlight the fact that entertainment was seen as a 'bait' for enlightenment, rather than a programme category which the audience was 'entitled to' as consumers of broadcasting. Furthermore, the criterion of 'high quality' was also to apply to entertainment. Broadcasting was seen as a vehicle for bridging the cultural gaps between different classes and groups, and a 'balanced' schedule was taken to mean a balance between education, 'educational' information, and 'quality' entertainment (Dahl 1975, Williams 1975, Bondebjerg 1990).

One element of this balance caused particular problems, however, and that was the field of topical and political 'information'. Although they steered clear of outright political controversy, the broadcasting institutions had from the beginning pressed for a greater opportunity to broadcast debates and talks on topical issues. In Broadcast over Britain (1924:112-3), Reith stated that sooner or later, 'more debates will be held so that people may have an opportunity to listening to outstanding exponents of conflicting opinions' (see also Scannel and Cardiff 1991), but these times were slow in coming. In the debate in the House of Commons in November 1926, the Post-Master General defended his decision to uphold the ban on political, religious and industrial controversy because, as he contended, 'if you once let politics into broadcasting you will never be able to keep broadcasting out of politics' (HC Official Report 15.11.1926 vol. 199 cols. 1581-2).

The debate showed, however, that many were in favour of allowing more controversy and topical discussions on the air, and the same was the case in Norway when the NRK was established some years later, but in both countries it was seen to be crucial that the amount was moderate and limited. The Crawford Report (1926 para. 20) suggested that 'a moderate amount of controversial matters should be broadcast' provided that 'the material is of high quality and distributed with scrupulous fairness'. Similarly, the Norwegian Broadcasting Council stated that the NRK 'on special occasions' should have the opportunity to 'elucidate topical political and other important social questions through independent expositions by representatives of different political views' (NRK Annual Report 1934: 65).

From the very beginning, therefore, the concept of balanced programming also applied to different views and opinions, and also in this sense, the programme policy which developed was detached and paternalistic. Neither the broadcasting corporations nor the public at large were to play a part in political discussions; their role was merely to chair and to listen to (in Reith's phrase) 'outstanding exponents of conflicting opinions'. Within this conception it was not surprising that the political parties came to play a dominant role. In Norway, party-political broadcasts was already introduced in the very first year of the NRK's existence, as each party was given twenty minutes each to present their views prior to the 1933 General Election. In the same period, political broadcasting in the BBC was developing rapidly in the wake of the removal of the restrictions on controversial programming in 1928 (Scannel and Cardiff 1991).

### In the national interest

As with the obligation to broadcast 'balanced' programming, the obligation to broadcast in the 'national interest' had both negative and positive implications. The negative implication was that the broadcasters were expected to refrain from transmitting anything that might threaten the social order or national security. These obligations were laid down in the form of general legislation and the limitations on controversial programming, and further endorsed by the fear expressed by official representatives in both countries, that broadcasting might be used for subversive purposes.

From the beginning, the implications of these obligations was well understood by the broadcasters. As Reith wrote in the aftermath of the General Strike, the BBC had a special responsibility as a national institution. Since the government was acting on behalf of the people, he wrote, then 'the BBC was for the Government in the Crisis too' (Reith quoted in Curran and Seaton 1985:137, see also Schlesinger 1987, Briggs 1961, 1985, Tracey 1975, Scannel and Cardiff 1991). In Norway, social unrest was also treated with extreme caution by the broadcasters, and as late as 1935, the President of the national assembly proposed that all forms of agitation against the state and the constitution should be explicitly banned from the radio service (S. tid. 1935: 1361). Although the motion was defeated on the grounds

that the NRK could be trusted to behave responsibly, this and similar proposals worked to remind the NRK of what was expected of it.

The expectation that the broadcasters would serve the national interest also had positive implications: it was expected that they would help to strengthen national identity and national culture. The idea of a national identity was based on the view that there were certain values, ideas and institutions in society which were beyond controversy and conflict - i.e. common to the nation as a whole. The broadcasters were, along with other social institutions, expected to strengthen and pay respect to these values. This meant that a series of issues and events, in which 'the nation' was involved, would not have to be 'balanced'. Sports and other forms of competition, and state and royal occasions provide possibly the best examples of such coverage, and from the beginning, such events were among the broadcasters' favourites. In addition to the fact that they were spectacular, and extremely popular broadcasting events, they also strengthened the legitimacy of the broadcasters as the 'voice of the nation'.

In the British case, Scannel and Cardiff (1991: 278) have pointed to the BBC's calendrical role: 'the cyclical reproduction, year in and year out, of an orderly and regular progression of festivities, rituals and celebrations', as the best indication of the matter in which the BBC became the central agent of the national identity. Threaded through the year was a tapestry of civic, cultural, royal and state occasions, and although not all these events recurred annually, they created an underlying stable framework for broadcasting both in Britain and Norway.

Whereas the idea that broadcasting should strengthen national identity through these forms of coverage was readily accepted in both countries, the idea that it should strengthen national culture was more problematic. As previously mentioned, the concept of a national culture is often nothing more than 'a programmatic conception among a political and intellectual elite' (Østerud 1986: 11, see also Johansen 1991, Berggren 1989, Smith 1991), and this left the broadcasting corporations with a difficult task in terms of determining which elements should be included. To begin with, this appeared to be more difficult in Britain than in Norway. In Britain there was, as has already been pointed out, consensus within the cultural establishment at the time about what constituted 'Britishness', and the fact that this 'national culture' was defined within the English cultural aristocracy and based on a narrow social consensus was not questioned at the time (Madge 1989, Scannel and Cardiff 1991). In Norway the situation was different, as there were deep regional divisions and little consensus as to what should be the shared cultural values of the broadcasting corporation. Regional interests in Bergen fought to keep their own broadcasting company, and other interests expressed scepticism about the potentially standardising influence of a national broadcasting corporation. The Norwegian League of Youth, for example, demanded in a letter to the Vigstad committee that the regional and rural population should be offered programmes based on their own culture rather than programmes which would 'divert people from life in the country'. They were also worried that broadcasting would introduce the people in the regions to all sorts of 'low-taste' city-based entertainment (Vigstad 1931, see also evidence to Innst.S no.1 1933).

Nevertheless, the presence of regionalism was not the only factor which presented problems for the definition of the national culture. The expectation that the corporations would serve the national culture was also directed against international influence. In Britain, the BBC was explicitly expected to oppose the 'Americanisation' of popular culture which had already started to concern the cultural critics in the 1920s (Scannell and Cardiff 1991); in Norway, where nationalist sentiments were strong in the wake of the independence from Sweden in 1907, concerns were expressed about the fact that large proportions of the population only had access to Russian, Finnish or Danish services (S.tid. 1933: 40).

The corporations' response to the twin challenges of regionalism and international influence, was to adopt a policy of national cultural standardisation and patronage. By the mid-1930s, the BBC was easily the largest single employer of professional musicians and the most powerful patron of musicians in the country, and by the end of the decade the Performing Rights Society collected more than fifty per cent of its total annual revenue from the BBC (Scannel and Cardiff 1991: 181). Similarly, in Norway the NRK supported its own orchestras, and became an important source of income for musicians generally. From the mid-1930s it also put a higher priority on the development and preservation of 'national' musical forms (Dahl 1975: 267).

Both the BBC and the NRK also aimed to develop a sense of discrimination in its audience by giving it the opportunity to listen to 'high quality' music, and the policy of cultural standardisation also extended to linguistic questions. As Reith (1924: 161-2) commented on the state of the Kings English:

'even the ... simplest words are subjected to horrible and grotesque abuse. One hears the most appalling travesties of vowel pronunciation. This is a matter in which broadcasting may be of immense assistance ... there is now presented to any ... an opportunity of learning by example'.

As Scannell and Cardiff (1991:176) point out, the BBC's institutional voice was middle-class English, and its speakers were trained to be formal, correct and unvarying. In Norway the presence of two national languages made it more difficult for the NRK to develop a policy of linguistic standardisation. Whatever formula was adopted, the corporation did not escape criticism, and in the mid-1930s specific pressure groups were set up in order to push for the strengthening of their own languages (Dahl 1975).

## CHAPTER 5:

### TELEVISION: INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENTS BEFORE 1980

More than two decades passed between television's introduction in Britain, and its formal introduction in Norway. The BBC television service was officially opened on November 2nd. 1936, whereas the NRK service did not formally commence until August 20th. 1960. In terms of the development of television as a mass medium, however, the difference between the two countries was not so marked. Pre-war television in Britain was a tentative affair, and it was not until the service had been reinstated after the war that it really began to take off.

The main period for the expansion of television in the industrialised parts of the world was the 1950s and 1960s. In 1949 only four countries - Britain, France, the USA and the USSR - had a television service; two decades later there were regular transmissions in no less than 137 countries (Wheen 1985). Due to the fact that the technology was already developed and many of the problems associated with the medium solved, the late-comers could rapidly catch up with the innovators.

As has been pointed out, television in both Britain and Norway was implemented into the already existing broadcasting structure, and in this chapter, the forces and interests involved in this process in the two countries, are discussed. Then shall I turn to a discussion of the impact of television and the general historical changes in the corporations' control structures, privileges and obligations in the period before 1980.

The analysis in this chapter is based on a combination of primary and secondary sources. Among the primary sources, I have consulted the most important political documents relevant to the introduction of television in both countries, and a wide range of material from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s on the further development of the corporations. This includes reports from broadcasting committees, political documents and broadcasting statistics (see Introduction to part II and Appendix A for details).

#### 5.1. The development and implementation of television

As Wheen (1985) has pointed out, television was 'invented' in at least five different countries at the same time. In Britain, the US, Germany, USSR and Japan, major developments in this respect took place from 1880 onwards. In Germany, Paul Nipkow patented his ideas for a complete television system based on mechanical scanning in 1884, and between 1900 and 1920 other innovators produced early versions of the cathode-ray tube (necessary for the transformation of the signals), and the theoretical formulation of electronic scanning.

At this stage, however, the major radio industry players were not very interested. Even if they judged that television had interesting future possibilities, the consumerist economy was still not developed to

the extent that much money could be made on delivering entertainment to the home, and the money necessary to diffuse the new medium was being applied to the movies and radio. The process therefore continued to be dominated by the individual 'inventors'. In Britain, a central figure was John Logie Baird, who in 1926 carried out demonstrations of what he called 'Wireless projection of moving pictures', in London. Like the other innovators, Baird had little financial support, and fitted the traditional image of the 'eccentric inventor' well. He seldom ate and carried out his experiments in a draughty attic room, endlessly worrying that the money would run out (Winston 1990, Gorham 1949, Ross 1961, Wheen 1985, Briggs 1985, Corrigan 1990).

Once the early experiments had proved that the technology was workable, however, city speculators became more forthcoming with their money. From then on a familiar pattern evolved as the manufacturers became the main force pushing for the development of television as a mass medium. This time they were not the only major group of actors with a positive interest in the expansion of the medium, however, in most countries, there were now large corporations set up to be in control of broadcasting, and these were not willing to let themselves be dictated by the manufacturers.

Both in Britain and Norway, the corporations were at first reluctant to develop television. In Britain, this became the subject of a heated debate in 1928 when the manufacturers, along with sections of the press, expressed themselves strongly about the corporation's lack of co-operation in this area. The BBC defended itself, issuing a statement where it claimed that the technology was not yet sufficiently developed:

'the BBC wishes to make it plain that it has not so far been approached with apparatus of so practical a nature as in the opinion of the Corporation to make television possible on a service basis' (BBC Statement July 1928 cited from Ross 1961:16).

The Post-Master General had become convinced that television should be developed, however, and threatened the BBC that if it continued to be uncooperative, he would issue Baird with a licence not unlike that of the BBC itself (Wheen 1985). Thus, in 1929 Baird was contracted by the BBC to conduct further experiments (Wheen 1985, Corrigan 1990, Ross 1961, Briggs 1985, Williams 1975, Selsdon Report 1935).

From that point on and until 1937, there was a fierce conflict over standards. Baird used a 240 lines television system based on mechanical scanning, but in 1932, EMI carried out a demonstration for the BBC of a 'high definition' electronic television system, using 405 lines. The competition between these and other manufacturers led in turn to the appointment of the Selsdon television committee, who were asked to advise the PMG on 'the relative merits of the several systems' (1935, para. 1). After having seen a range of different solutions demonstrated, the committee recommended that the service should start by using the Baird Television Ltd. and Marconi-EMI standard on a rotating basis (Selsdon 1935: para. 5 and App. 1). Only a few months after the service had been officially opened on November 2. 1936, however, the 'London television standard' proposed by Marconi-EMI was declared the winner (Corrigan 1990, Ross 1961, Briggs 1985, Williams 1975).

The NRK was also to begin with reluctant to take part in the development of the new medium. Before the war, the question of television was not even discussed, and although television was demonstrated within the NRK in 1947, the corporations declined to take part in a public demonstration organised by Phillips in 1949. The reason given was that the time for television had not yet come; the priority was on developing the radio service which still was far from universally available (Kjekstad 1974: 17). Contrary to what happened in Britain, however, the NRK was at this early stage supported by the domestic radio industry. They wanted time to prepare for the introduction of television so that the market would not be swamped with foreign sets (Østbye 1991: 149).

So far, the early developments of television as a communication technology have been discussed. Once the technology was developed, however, a new set of questions arose: What should be done with this new medium? Who should control it and how should it be funded? In other words: What was the most appropriate institutional form?

In Britain, the BBC's monopoly did not originally cover television, but because it was in charge of radio, the corporation was seen as the natural focus for the early experiments. As the Selsdon Report (1935 para. 39) stated:

'Holding the view which we do of the close relationship which must exist between sound and television broadcasting, we cannot do otherwise than conclude that the Authority which is responsible for the former - at present the British Broadcasting Corporation - should also be entrusted with the latter'.

These recommendations were endorsed by the 1935 Ullswater Report and the subsequent Government White Paper, and in the Second Charter the BBC was formally entrusted with television broadcasting (Briggs 1985: 164).

In Norway the broadcasting corporation had an even higher degree of control. According to the 1933 Broadcasting Act, the NRK monopoly already covered the transmission of 'pictures', and in June 1950 it set up a committee to discuss the potential introduction of a television service. In 1951 the committee concluded that although the establishment of a television service would be costly and difficult, the cultural and economic benefits might outweigh the disadvantages. On this basis, the parliament granted the NRK permission to begin technical experiments in 1953, and after a four year trial period, parliament agreed against 24 votes that permanent service should be established (Innst.S. 334, 1952, S.tid 1953: 1502-16, S.tid.1957: 2478, Kjekstad 1974). The service was formally opened on August 20. 1960.

Thus, in both countries, the broadcasting corporations took for granted that they were to be in charge of the new medium. Apart from the fact that they did not want any competitors, this was because the constraints which had been instrumental to their establishment as radio institutions, prevailed also with regard to television. Television used up large amounts of the electro-magnetic spectrum, and the technological situation therefore determined that only a small number of channels could be broadcast (Locksley 1989). The television signals (UHF and VHF) also had a relatively short range, and this favoured an institutional form based on national sovereignty and implied that the economic constraints were severe (Østergaard 1986, see also Mortensen 1990a). Thirdly, and possibly even more importantly, however, was the fact that the corporations enjoyed a high degree of social legitimacy. As it turned out, no major actors in either country objected to the radio corporations being in charge.

Firstly, the manufacturers and business interests, represented no obstacle to the broadcasting corporations taking control. Their interests had up to that point been served well by the BBC and the NRK, and although some manufacturers did push for a more rapid development of the services, and also for more popular programming (at least in Britain) (see Corrigan 1990, Dahl 1981, Kjekstad 1974), they expressed no desire to re-privatise broadcasting. Such desires did not develop until the market for both television and radio sets had begun to reach saturation point, which happened in Britain in the 1950s and in Norway in the 1960s.

In addition, the state departments involved favoured the existing public corporations. In Britain, both the government and the Post Office preferred the BBC to be in charge rather than setting up a separate organisation; as the Selsdon Report (1935, para. 21) commented: 'The view taken was that when a system of television showed sufficient promise to justify its trial for public transmissions, the British Broadcasting Company should provide reasonable facilities' (see also Briggs 1985). A suggestion from the committee (1935 para 71) that half of the money needed to establish the service should be provided by the Treasury because of the potential of television to 'directly assist British industries' was not accepted, however, and it was up to the BBC to find the necessary funds.

In Norway, the state departments preferred the NRK to be in control. By the time television had begun to be discussed, a more or less 'symbiotic' relationship had developed between the NRK and the Department of Church and Education, and the government made no independent initiatives in regard to television at all. On both occasions when television was discussed, 1953 and 1957, they merely endorsed the proposals they received from the NRK and forwarded them to the parliament. The PTT was rather more reluctant, but this was due to disagreements over priorities, and not over whom should be in charge (Dahl 1981, Kjekstad 1974, Østbye 1991).

Political and cultural legitimacy was also apparent, since there was in neither country any opposition to the prospect of the radio corporations being in charge. In Britain, the subject of television was only mentioned twice in the 1936 House of Commons broadcasting debate, and nobody expressed any doubts about the BBC's capacity to develop the service (HC Official Report 17.12.1936 vol 318: 2728-81, Selsdon 1935). In Norway the situation was different in the sense that many were opposed to the introduction of television and accepted it only because they considered it an inevitable development, although there was no opposition to the NRK being in charge (S.tid 1957: 2446-78, Dahl 1981, Kjekstad 1974).

In regard to the introduction of television and the social legitimacy of the institutions, the timing was crucial in both countries. Whereas BBC television was introduced early enough to escape the post-war controversy over broadcasting in Britain, NRK television was introduced late enough to escape the Norwegian pre-war conflicts over broadcasting.

In Britain, the second charter which was debated in the House of Commons in December 1936 was passed without a division, and the controversy over the organisation of broadcasting did not really heat up until after the war had come to an end in 1945. This did not mean that the corporation escaped criticism, however. The Ullswater report (1935) had received many complaints against the BBC's interpretation of 'the national culture', and more such complaints were put forward in the debate in the Commons. Furthermore, the BBC was criticised by Labour delegates for its failure to set up staff associations, and labelled a 'despotism in decay' and a 'miserable and rotten' corporation by certain backbenchers. Reith also came in for criticism; members described him as both 'dictatorial', 'autocratic' and 'fanatical' (HC Official Report 17.12.1936 vol 318: 2728-81).

Among the conservatives, however, there was a spirit of self-congratulation. The assistant Post-Master General claimed that the BBC was 'giving a far better programme than any other broadcasting system in the world', and the PMG described it as a 'wonderful' institution sustaining 'high ideals' (HC Official Report 17.12.1936 vol. 318: 2744, 2780).

In Norway there had, as we have seen, been huge conflicts over broadcasting in the 1930s. By the 1940s and 1950s, however, this controversy had died down completely. This was partly due to the spirit of reconciliation and consensus which developed after the war, and the fact that many of the people who had been central to the pre-war conflicts over broadcasting were replaced by others (Dahl 1991), but it was also to the successful efforts of the NRK in terms of strengthening its public support base. As has been pointed out, the first Chief-of-Programming was instrumental in strengthening the ties between the NRK and the labour and regional interests, and after the war the second DG, himself an ex-politician and a smart political operator, helped to improve the relationship between the NRK and the Conservatives (Østbye 1977). By the time television was introduced, all political parties endorsed the public broadcasting structure, and hardly any remarks critical of the NRK were heard in the parliamentary debate.

So far, we have seen that there was no controversy in either country over who should control and operate the television services. The question of funding, however, was more problematic, and in both countries, the possibility of introducing advertising as an additional source revenue was explored. In Britain, both the Selsdon and the Ullswater reports (1935) were vague on the matter of finance; Selsdon recommended 'sponsorship', for example (1935 para. 65), and the Postmaster-General was clearly in favour of advertising. It came to nothing, however, and the licence fee remained the sole source of revenue.

In Norway where television was introduced much later, there was some pressure from the advertisers. The Norwegian Association of Advertisers lobbied both the NRK, the parliamentary committee and the minister in charge in an effort to make television advertising legal, but as in Britain, it came to nothing at the time (Kjekstad 1974, see also Østbye 1977, Helland 1988, Dahl 1975, 1981). The advertisers were still not a major pressure group, and calculations showed that adverts would not bring in much revenue compared to the cost of producing and transmitting them.

In both countries, the advent of television was met with resistance from radio executives and others fearful and suspicious of the new medium. Gradually, however, television won the upper hand. From the 1970s onwards, all other media and cultural institutions were relegated in importance and general

status. This did not mean that other media and cultural institutions became obsolete, but rather that they were forced to reconsider their roles. As Anthony Smith (1978:4-5) puts it, television 'invaded every available field of information and entertainment to the extent that all other media were obliged ... to redefine their function and their publics.'

The development of television as a mass medium did not only force other media to redefine their roles. It also brought about a transformation of the broadcasting corporations themselves. In the rest of this chapter the development of public television in Britain and Norway before the 1980s are discussed. In what way did the introduction of television and the general social changes in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s lead to changes in the public broadcasting structure, and in what way can these changes help to explain the challenges to this structure in the 1980s and 1990s?

## 5.2. The control structure

The most obvious starting point for an identification of the changes which took place in this period, would be to examine the changes in the formal broadcasting legislation. However, such a comparison provides few clues as to what actually happened. In Britain, the Charter issued by the Thatcher government in 1981 was the sixth in a row of largely similarly worded Charters, and even in Norway, where a completely new Broadcasting Act was passed in 1981, the formal changes were microscopic. Judging by the legal documents, the only substantial changes that took place in the period were in the size and composition of the governing bodies.

In Britain the number of BBC governors were gradually increased, from the original five to twelve by 1967. The most important addition came in the 1952 Charter, when a partial retreat was made from the principle that no governor should be a representative of a particular interest. From then on, three of the governors were, in effect, delegates, representing what the BBC called the National Regions: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively (1981 Charter, para 10). The increase in the number of governors also meant that people from a wider range of backgrounds could be included. In his autobiography, the ex-BBC DG Alasdair Milne (1989: 105) described the convention which developed in regard to the composition of the Board of Governors in the following way:

'There is a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman. There are three national Governors ... Then there are seven other Governors, one of whom will always be an academic, another a trade unionist, another representing the ethnic minorities, another interested in music and the arts, another with a Foreign office background ..., another (or two) from the city or the world of business.'

(see also Leapman 1987, Briggs 1979a, Annan 1977 para. 5.24, Hood and O'Leary 1990, Tunstall 1983, Trethowan 1984, Hood 1967, Madge 1989).

The Norwegian Board was also extended in the period (from five to seven members) but for a different reason. Following a proposal from the Dæhlin Committee which was appointed to revise the broadcasting Act in the 1970s, the NRK employees were given two representatives on the Board (1980 Broadcasting Act para. 6). This was part of the general trend towards industrial democracy which gained momentum in the 1970s. In Britain, a similar demand for staff representation was rejected by the Annan Committee because it considered that 'worker participation' could, among other things, be seen as a 'major threat to the broadcasters' editorial independence' (Annan 1977 para. 5.18-5.21).

In Norway, changes were also made in the composition of the Broadcasting Council. In 1963 the number of parliament-appointed representatives was increased from four to twelve, bringing the total up to twenty three (NOU 1972:5), and when the new Broadcasting Act was passed in 1980, two more parliament-appointed members were added (para. 13). The official reason for the changes in 1963 was that the introduction of television required more people, but just as important was the increase in the number of parties in parliament in the post-war years. Four seats were no longer enough to secure representation for all, and both the Labour and the Conservative parties were keen to increase their representation (Sælen 1991).

Apart from these changes in the composition of the governing bodies, the formal control structure remained largely the same for fifty years. The NRK continued to be a state-owned corporation under close financial control, whereas the BBC remained a public enterprise. The authority of the governing bodies remained the same in legal terms, and in both countries, the state formally retained a measure of control over content.

At a more subtle level, however, there were important changes. Compared with radio, television attracted a wider set of economic, political and cultural interests, and many of these gradually became more hostile to the corporations. This was partly due to television's money-making potential, but it was also due to the perceived ability of television to influence people - which made a number of cultural and political interests highly attentive to what it had on offer.

### 5.3. The privileges

In both countries, the absence of broadcasting competition placed the corporations in a position of unique centrality and authority. Burns (1977:144) describes the BBC's authority during its years of monopoly as 'almost supranational', and in Norway the NRK was regularly named 'our most important cultural and political institution' (see for example NOU 1972:5: 25). This position made the corporations hugely self-confident, and they became even more so when television was introduced. Criticisms of complacency, arrogance and exclusivity were ignored, or simply taken as confirmations of the corporations' power and authority. As the NRK DG Torolf Elster commented in 1977, the NRK had accepted the role as a national 'stabbing stone' in return for its privileged position (Aftenposten 30.12.1977, cited from Anderson 1978:13).

In the long run, however, the two corporations did not manage to retain their monopoly positions. In Norway this process took a long time; it was not until the 1980s that the NRK began facing competition on a national level. In Britain, however, commercial television was introduced less than a decade after BBC television had been reinstated after the war.

The introduction of commercial television in Britain was, on the surface, a product of the changed position of the Conservative Party in British politics. The Labour Party's landslide election victory in 1945 had left the conservatives in a defensive position from where it was easy to blame the BBC's election coverage, and as the Attlee government embarked on its nationalisation programme, the anti-BBC stance was fuelled by more general anti-monopoly sentiments (Leys 1989, Madge 1989, Wilson 1961, Hood and O'Leary 1990, Tunstall 1983). These sentiments were not shared by the whole of the Conservative Party, however, within the second Churchill government which came to power in 1951, a majority was still opposed to breaking the BBC monopoly. Only a year later, however, the very same government recommended in its 1952 White paper that 'an element of competition' should be allowed in British broadcasting.

The reason for this dramatic shift in policy has, in retrospect, been accounted for as a 'conservative backbench revolt' reinforced by an 'impressive PR machinery' and American advertising interests (Wilson 1961: 81). According to Wilson's study Pressure Group, it was because of the untiring efforts and careful planning of a handful of backbenchers that the government changed its mind. At a deeper level, however, the changing relationship between the Conservative Party and the BBC was due to more profound transformations. As business began to regain its power and prestige in the 1950s, traditional aristocratic values of service and public duty was declining in importance and was substituted by commercial standards. As such, a growing proportion of the Conservative Party membership consisted of people with business background and experience.

The pressure to break up the BBC monopoly stemmed not only from business interests. As previously mentioned, the Reithian BBC had made many enemies in political and cultural circles, particularly from Labour backbenchers who were critical of BBC's close establishment connections to Welsh and Scottish representatives opposed to the imposition of English cultural values. Even if these interests did not all endorse commercial television, they did claim that the shortage of wavelengths no longer provided sufficient justification for a broadcasting monopoly (Briggs 1985, Hood and O'Leary 1990, Wilson 1961, Tunstall 1983, Madge 1989).

Thus, the break-up of the BBC's monopoly provides another example of a negative alliance, where different interests agreed on what they opposed, but where there was no agreement as to what should be substituted. The solution that was found was a classic compromise. It was not a public structure like the BBC, but neither was it a system of commercial competition which was what the Conservative backbenchers had campaigned for. Only one network was to be established, and this was to be closely supervised by a new public corporation, the Independent Television Authority (ITA), which was also to own and operate the transmitting stations. To minimise the commercial influence and the allegedly harmful effects of advertisements, a system of spot-advertising rather than sponsorship was introduced.

Following the decision to establish a competitive system, the new licence, which the BBC acquired from the PMG in 1952, was for the first time described as a 'non-exclusive licence'. Its privileged position as the sole national instrument of broadcasting was further fractured in 1966 and 1972 by the experiments with pay-television and community cable television respectively.

In Norway, the broadcasting monopoly became a non-issue in the course of the Second World War, and until the late 1970s, anti-monopoly sentiments were largely ignored by the political establishment (see for example S. tid. 1961: 3829 and S. tid. 1963-64: 2425). The issue did heat up somewhat, however, when a commercial organisation launched an experimental cable television service in the Oslo area in 1965. Unlike Britain, where parallel services were being licensed to transmit, the Norwegian cable transmissions led to a clamp-down by the authorities. The NRK claimed that the service was violating the Broadcasting Act, and this view was supported by an inquiry appointed by the government in 1966. Their report advised against all deviations from the monopoly principle, claiming that 'competition is unlikely to improve programme quality'. Interestingly, this was backed up not only by the customary reference to the US experience, but also to the development of British television in the wake of the establishment of ITV (Bratholm Report 1967: 5,16).

The mood of this committee was comparable to that of the Beveridge enquiry (1950) in Britain, which voted against the break-up of the BBC monopoly only four years before commercial television was introduced. Faced with the prospects that the technical justification for the strict broadcasting legislation was becoming undermined, both committees chose to stress the cultural and social advantages of non-competitive broadcasting. In retrospect, their reports can be seen as the first indications of the shift in the public perception of the broadcasting corporations in the two countries. The vulnerability of the original broadcasting structures was beginning to show, and it became clear that the privileges would have to be actively defended if they were to be sustained.

The recommendations from the Beveridge committee (1950) did little to stem the tide towards commercial television in Britain. In contrast, in Norway not even a limited cable service was permitted when this became an issue more than ten years later, and the monopoly did not really come under threat until the Broadcasting Act was revised in the late 1970s. Which social and cultural characteristics can explain these differences?

The first factor was the relatively late development of television. In Norway it was not until the 1970s that television progressed from being a luxury to being considered a necessary household item (NOU 1975:7: 42), and as in other countries, the pressures on the monopoly did not really start until television had expanded sufficiently to become a profitable medium. Added to that was the fact that Norway was a small market, and a market where the development of communication infrastructures remained difficult and expensive. It was obvious that there was not enough private capital around to establish a private terrestrial television system alongside the public one; as the Bratholm Report (1967:5) stated, the costs of a second television channel 'would be considerable and would one way or the other have to be paid for by society'.

Even more important than the economic reasons, was the fact that the political parties remained loyal to the public monopoly structure. This was, of course, particularly true for the social-democratic parties, but also for the parties on the other side of the political spectrum. Among the parties in the centre, this loyalty was based on the view that only a publicly regulated structure could secure everybody access to the same services independent of where they lived, whereas within the Conservative Party, broadcasting remained the privilege of the 'cultural' and 'intellectual' factions.

From the 1970s this began to change, however, and commercial considerations began to penetrate more and more of the policy-making within this party too (Vaagland and Østbye 1982).

Despite the fact that the NRK had no national competitors, it did experience increasing competition from outside the national boundaries. Whereas in Britain such competition was restricted to radio, in Norway almost a quarter of the population had access to Swedish television by the beginning of the 1980s (Central Bureau of Statistics 1988).

The second main privilege of the public broadcasting corporations was also gradually undermined after television was introduced. The licence fee, which was designed to provide the corporations with a secure and independent source of revenue, appeared by the late 1970s to be less 'independent' and 'secure', and although both the BBC and the NRK made it to the 1980s without any fundamental changes in their system of funding, they had begun to experience financial difficulties.

These difficulties were due to a combination of rising costs and the in-built shortcomings in the licence fee itself. Due to the highly labour-intensive character of the broadcasting industry, productivity could not be increased by investing in labour-saving technologies the way it was done in other sectors (Collins et al. 1988), and this left the broadcasting corporations struggling with increasing pressures on production costs much higher than the national average. In Britain, the additional presence of ITV made problems worse by substantially increasing the price of broadcasting talent. Since 1960 the ITV-system had virtually been 'a licence to print money', and the BBC had to keep up with the high wages paid in the commercial sector. The launching of BBC2 in 1964 led to a doubling of the programme costs without any extra revenue being brought in (Wedell 1968, Tunstall 1983).

From the early 1970s onwards, inflation rose sharply due to increased world market competition, and this created new problems for the corporations. As a source of revenue, the licence fee was particularly unsuitable for coping with inflation, since the absence of direct links between the price paid by the consumers and the quality of the product made it impossible to increase the revenue by improving the services. Added to this was the fact that the era of inflation dawned at a time when television set ownership was beginning to reach the point of saturation. Thus, more money was needed just at the moment when natural growth was beginning to cease.

In Britain, the decline in radio licences from 1935 onwards was offset by the steep increase in combined licences (radio and monochrome television). By the mid-1960s, however, close to eighty per cent of all UK families had obtained a combined licence, and it was obvious that there were little scope left for growth (BBC Annual Reports and Accounts 1965-66). Following the recommendations of the Pilkington Report, a supplementary fee on colour television was introduced in 1968. By the late 1970s, the saturation of colour television sets had been more or less accomplished, and the squeeze on revenue became acute (Madge 1989, see also Annan 1977, chapter 10).

The same pattern was repeated in Norway albeit some years later. The increase in radio licences slowed down after 1952, but was offset by the sharp increase in television licences from 1960. The increase peaked in 1964, and by the early 1970s television saturation was about to be reached (NRK Annual Report 1970, see also Dahl 1971, NRK Annual Report 1975). However, the decline was again offset by the rise in colour licences from 1972 onwards which did not reach saturation until the late 1980s.

The squeeze on revenue undermined the operational autonomy of the corporations. Both the BBC and the NRK had to put pressure on the authorities to raise the fee, and financial negotiations between the corporations and the governments became difficult and frequent processes. In the course of Reith's fourteen years as Director General he never once had to negotiate an increase in the fee, whereas Ian Trethowan who was DG for five years in the late seventies had to negotiate three increases (Trethowan 1984: 171). In Norway, the combined licence fee was raised five times in the 1960s, and the pattern of bi-annual increases continued in the 1970s. In all, the nominal price of a combined licence doubled in Norway between 1960 and 1975, whereas in Britain the nominal increase was just above sixty per cent (Briggs 1985: 279-280, Dahl 1971, for Norway see also annual NRK budget debates).

The squeeze on revenue made the governments put pressure on the corporations to reduce costs, and in Britain the costs of BBC television programmes were reduced by almost 20% during the first half of the 1960s (BBC Annual Reports and Accounts 1965-66). In Norway, the NRK's investment budgets were cut by parliament from the 1960s onward, and from the 1970s cuts were also made in the operational budget, particularly in the number of new jobs (NOU 1975:7: 70, Østbye 1982). Despite the reductions, however, it was becoming apparent in both countries that the licence fee could not indefinitely sustain growth, and so the possibility for introducing advertising as a supplementary source of revenue returned to the agenda. In Britain this was not endorsed by any of the regular enquiries into broadcasting, but was strongly advocated by Anthony Benn after he became PMG in the 1964 Labour government. It came to nothing, however, and the BBC remained without advertising.

In Norway, the reintroduction of broadcasting advertising was rejected by a majority of the Bratholm committee which reported in 1968, and when the new Broadcasting Act was passed in 1980, the NRK was explicitly prohibited from taking adverts (para 9.2, see also St.meld. 80 1973/74). Thus Norway remained without television advertising altogether until the 1980s, a fact which illustrates that the broadcasting climate in the period was not only anti-competition, but also strongly opposed to commercialisation. Within the 'social-democratic order' (Furre 1991), it was not considered legitimate for business and industry to earn money from what was considered primarily a cultural industry, and the social elites were also worried about the impact of advertising on vulnerable groups. However, there were not only social and political considerations. In the small Norwegian media market, the introduction of broadcasting advertising could have led to the death of many smaller newspapers, and as had been demonstrated when the system of press subsidies were introduced in 1968, the newspapers regularly used their close connections with the policy-makers to prevent anything that could threaten their financial base (Raaum 1978).

Nevertheless, the strength of the opposition against television advertising in the period is remarkable when confronted with the fact that the Norwegian public paid the highest licence fee in Europe for one of the most limited broadcasting services. A Norwegian economist, Helmer Dahl, calculated in 1971 (:8) that the British customers received more than eight times more television than the Norwegian ones in exchange for the same unit of cost, and then the differences in radio services and the large sums paid in Norway through the duty on sets were not even included.

As has been demonstrated above, the two main privileges of the broadcasting corporations became progressively less valuable in the period leading up to the 1980s. This was particularly the case in Britain where the monopoly was succeeded by the duopoly, and where the saturation of the colour television market gradually exhausted the licence fee as a source of revenue. In Norway, however, the shortcomings built into the licence fee and the accelerating inflation led to a situation where the licence fee became a highly politicised source of finance and a potential source of public discontent. Until the 1970s the licence fee was rarely questioned or debated in either of the two countries, but as inflation and thereby the fees increased, the number of complaints proliferated. This coincided with the rise in consumerist attitudes and the declining legitimacy for welfare-state institutions. For the first time, questions were asked publicly about whether or not the broadcasting 'customers' were getting 'value for money', and whether the compulsory licence fee was just and fair.

Again, the problems were more serious for the BBC because of the competitive situation. Despite the fact that the licence fee in principle was a tax permitting households to listen to all broadcast services, it was the BBC who used the money and had to put the case for higher fees. Many attempted to get around paying the licence fee by claiming that they were only watching the commercial channel. As had been assumed when the corporations were established, the legitimacy of the compulsory licence-fee was closely linked with the broadcasting monopoly. Once the monopoly was removed, the fee had to be legitimised on independent grounds.

#### 5.4. The obligations

In return for their privileges, the public broadcasting corporations were, as we have seen, expected to fulfil a range of duties. These were partly related to the individual broadcasting consumer (a universal service), partly to the cultural and political spheres (a balanced output), and partly to the aims of the state and nation (in the national interest). All of them, however, were based on a view of broadcasting as a medium for social communication serving the general interest. As society grew more fragmented

and commercial considerations began to permeate more and more areas of social life, these obligations became increasingly difficult to fulfil. These problems were compounded by the fact that the corporations privileges had become less valuable.

#### A universal service

Pre-war television in Britain was an experimental, London-only service, and it was not until the post-war years that an effort was made to cover other parts of the country. The expansion was not fast enough to avoid complaints, however, but, as Tunstall (1983) has pointed out, the BBC's development of television was still rapid in view of equipment shortages and governmental restrictions on capital spending. Between 1950 and 1953 the proportion of the population who could receive television doubled from around forty to over eighty per cent, and by the end of 1960 television was (in geographical terms), available to almost 99% of the population (BBC Handbook 1960, 1961, see also Wedell 1968, Briggs 1985, Hood and O'Leary 1990).

In Norway, the poor radio reception was a crucial issue in the debate over whether or not a television service should be established. Parliament agreed to the introduction of television only on the condition that the extension of the radio network would not suffer, but this did not imply that they wanted only a limited television service. Contrary to the wishes of the manufacturers, who would have been content with a more rapidly developed but less extensive television network, the parliament was not prepared to accept the new medium unless it was established with an aim towards universality (Dahl 1981, Kjekstad 1974, Østbye 1982).

When the Norwegian television service was formally opened in 1960, 35% of the population lived in areas where reception was good enough to make it worthwhile obtaining a set. In 1965 this figure had risen to 75% and by 1970 to 95%. As in the case of radio, it was the most remote Western and Northern parts of the country that were the last to get adequate reception (NRK Annual Report 1970:91, see also NRK Annual Reports 1960-80).

Whereas the establishment of transmission networks in central areas was rather profitable in the sense that many new licence payers were quickly drawn into the system, the extension of the television network to remote geographical areas was extremely costly. The principle of equal payment, however, meant that no extra fees could be charged from those living in far-away areas, and consequently that most people would have to pay a much higher price than the actual cost of the service they received. This was particularly the case in Norway where the high costs of establishing the transmission network led to very high licence fees -throughout the period discussed here the Norwegian fees were almost twice as high as the British ones in absolute terms (Dahl 1971). Despite this, there is no evidence to indicate that more people were excluded on the grounds of costs in Norway than in Britain. The high degree of dispersion of wealth and the higher willingness to pay for universal services in the early post-war decades, thereby outweighed some of Norway's geographical disadvantages.

#### A 'balanced' output

As we have seen, the broadcasting corporations started out with a strongly paternalist definition of the obligation to provide a 'balanced output'. It did not take long, however, before this definition began to change in both countries. Two trends were particularly important. Firstly, the paternalist approach was gradually undermined and little by little replaced by a more value-relativistic attitude. Popular taste and audience research to some extent replaced external standards for determining programme schedules. The second trend was that the corporations took on an increasingly active and autonomous role in the field of news, current affairs and social controversy. This was again related to the advent of 'professionalism' and the influx of journalistic norms and standards.

The advent of television as the dominant broadcast medium was seen by many as the main force undermining the paternalist enlightenment ideology within the areas of art and culture. As the Pilkington Report commented, 'triviality is a natural vice of television, and where it prevails it operates to lower general standards of enjoyment and understanding' (1962, para. 102). However, while it seems like television does, to some extent, favour the spectacular and dramatic, television itself cannot alone bear responsibility for the increased proportion of popular and entertaining programmes

in the post war years. Before television was introduced, the criterion for determining programme content had already shifted considerably towards popular taste and away from external standards of 'quality'.

In Britain, there were an increasing 'popularisation' of BBC programmes even before Reith left the Corporation in 1938, and immediately after the war, the radio services were divided into three channels aimed at the 'high-brow', 'middle-brow' and 'low-brow' audiences respectively. In Norway, the range of programmes was extended in the early post-war years to include more popular cultural forms, particularly in the field of music. There was also a development towards a more relaxed, informal and 'personal' communicative style in both countries, and a shift away from university-style lectures. Talks and features were made shorter and more to the point, and entertainment programmes were made shorter and tauter (Scannell 1989, Briggs 1985, Scannell and Cardiff 1991, Klæbo 1953, Dahl 1975, 1982).

Two factors can explain these developments. Firstly, an increasing awareness that the audiences were not behaving like the broadcasters expected them to: They did not listen in a disciplined way as they would have done in a lecture theatre or the concert hall, but used broadcasting for a large part as a source of diversion and entertainment. Letters to the corporations and opinion polls carried out by newspapers demonstrated a preference for entertainment among many people (Briggs 1965, Dahl 1975), and these results were backed up by the early audience research carried out by the corporations themselves. In 1936 the BBC's Listeners Research Department was set up, and only a few years later the department had established a system for the continuous measurement of audiences (Briggs 1985, Ang 1991). In Norway, ratings played a less important role, the NRK did not begin to carry out systematic audience research until 1967 (NRK Annual Report 1969, 1977, see also Torsvik 1975). Long before that, however, there is evidence to indicate that the corporation had begun to take more notice of the views of the audiences. In the first issue of the NRK listings magazine published after the war, the NRK Chief-of-Programming stated that (Midttun 1946):

'Among those tasks which we will embark on in the new year is to begin to identify more thoroughly what people listen to and why they listen to the different programmes, and what they think of them. This will undoubtedly help us to correct many mistakes and make it possible for us to 'present our dishes' in a way which will be more favourably received'.

Linked with the fact that broadcasting had to change to accommodate the constraints of reception was the fact that political and cultural change produced new subcultures and brought about a 'rediscovery' of popular cultural forms. While radio was the dominant medium there were already signs that the influence of the traditional cultural and educational establishments were declining, and from the 1940s onwards, this decline coincided with the increase of US influence and a rise in pro-American sentiments (see for example Briggs 1985, Schou 1987, Dahl 1981, Wilson 1961). These trends together indicated that the broadcasters sooner or later would have to widen the social and cultural foundations upon which their programmes were based.

Television escalated all these trends. Briggs (1985: 169) writes that from the moment television was introduced in Britain, it became apparent that the tastes of the viewers were 'undisguisedly lowbrow'. The public did not like 'morbid, sordid and horrific plays', they were sceptical about foreign cabaret and ballet, and they were 'unmoved by Handel's *Acis and Galatea* in mime' (Briggs 1985: 169). Bastiansen, who has carried out a study of the letters to the NRK regarding television between 1960-1963, reaches a similar conclusion. The response from the viewers in these early years, he claims, were for a large part directed against the NRK's paternalistic programme policy. Several viewers threatened to sell their television sets if the programmes continued to be 'so boring' and so dominated by the tastes of the 'so-called 'cultivated' or 'intellectual' people' (Bastiansen 1991b: 40-6).

Another reason why television hastened the development towards more popular programming was that it brought increased competition. In the days when they were only operating radio services (and particularly before commercial radio from abroad began to pose serious challenges to the BBC's programming policy), the broadcasting corporations could to a large extent ignore the wider cultural demands from their audiences. As different radio services (in Britain) and radio and television (in both countries) started competing with each other, however, more popular styles and discourses were

adopted. In Britain this development was, of course, further accelerated by the success of the commercial television service from the mid-1950s.

As Tunstall (1983: 39) has noted, ITV was launched with excessive speed and grossly inadequate planning and finance, and for the first year it fought desperately for audiences and advertising. By the late 1950s, however, the profits were coming in and it became a 'licence to print money'. The key to its survival and success was that it made a point of presenting an alternative to the BBC's style of programming. Its 'people television'-style meant the introduction of popular programme formats such as quiz shows and imported US series and serials, paired with novelty in presentation and scheduling. In contrast to the BBC which trained its presenters to be unobtrusive and impersonal and speak the 'King's English', people appearing on the ITV were expected to 'be themselves' and set up a personal relationship with the viewer. In contrast to the BBC which had avoided regularity in the programme schedules in order to present a varied diet, ITV based its scheduling on the competitive television principles of serialisation, regularity and a fixed pattern of programmes (Sendall 1982).

To begin with, the BBC was reluctant to respond to the challenge from ITV, but as its share of the audience dropped to below thirty per cent among viewers who had a choice within a few years, it became apparent that something had to be done to counter the popularity of the commercial channel. The television schedules were reorganised in a more competitive way and a series of new and more entertaining programme formats were developed. Among them were the celebrated new formats for topical information and satire: The current affairs magazine 'Panorama' (1955) the topical news magazine 'Tonight' (1957), and the Saturday night review programme 'That Was The Week That Was' (1962) (Scannel 1989, Milne 1989, Schlesinger 1987).

Since the early 1960s, the explicit aim of the BBC was to reach a fifty per cent share of the audience. This policy was largely successful. By 1960 the BBC's share of the audience who had a choice was back to almost forty per cent, and after BBC2 was introduced, the ratio of ITV 50%, BBC1 40% and BBC2 10% became the pattern of the 1970s. However, the BBC's entrance into the ratings war also had implications for the wider definition of public broadcasting. Once the BBC had started competing for audiences it had accepted that it would have to respond not only to demands emerging from the cultural, political and educational establishment, but also from the broadcasting consumers (BBC Handbook 1962, Tunstall 1983, Burns 1977, Negrine 1985b, Curran and Seaton 1985, Schlesinger 1987).

In Norway the advent of television led to major changes, but here the most profound development was the rise in imported entertainment. Television was an expensive medium, and as we shall see below, the NRK television service depended heavily on imports and international events. The characters in British and US series such as 'The Ashton family', 'the Forsythe saga', 'Columbo' and 'Gunsmoke' acquired national fame, and the Eurovision Song Contest became a grand national event despite Norway's generally poor showing. There were also marked developments within the factual genres. From 1966 onwards the NRK had its own home-spun version of 'That Was The Week That Was', followed by other successful programmes based on reworked international formats. As in Britain, these programmes created broadcasting history and were distinctly different, both in content and form, from the talks and features which had been dominant in the radio era (Christophersen 1975, Puijk 1990).

The innovation and development of these programme formats in the British context has largely been explained with the challenge from the commercial channel (see for example Schlesinger below), but the fact remains that such formats were also developed around the same time in countries with a different system. Ang (1991), for example, describes the 1960s as the 'golden age' of Dutch television, and points to how the socialist channel VARA played a major part in this through its transmission, among other things, of satirical programmes based on the 'That was the week that was'-format. In regard to the fact that such programmes were developed and caused controversy in many countries, she comments that: 'This suggests that the turmoil these programmes generated has international dimensions, and is not so nationally specific as some commentators have implied' (Ang 1991: 181).

Dahl (1990a: 19-20) has made a similar but more general point. He argues that all countries, sooner or later, develop more or less the same type of radio and television programmes, and suggests that the audiovisual media, in contrast to many other cultural forms, have developed a 'genuinely supranational

mentality - which we may not yet understand'. Raymond Williams (1975, 1979), for his part, has argued that because all new technologies bear the hallmark of the producing culture, certain cultural uses are almost 'programmed-in' from the moment of inception. A third, and more specific, explanation for why the same programmes can be found in different contexts is, of course, diffusion. Broadcasting executives and producers are always on the lookout for new ideas and formats which have been successful in one context are quickly picked up and tried out elsewhere. Formats are also traded on the international television markets in the same way as programmes, and many broadcasters and broadcasting executives have picked up new ideas through visiting other countries' broadcasting corporations. The fact remains, however, that many formats and ideas do not travel well. For genuinely new formats to become a success in more than one context at the same time, there must be some shared features in the cultural climate. It is possible that the developments in the 1960s were products of a more general 'climatic shift', rather than being caused by specific developments in each national context.

Both in Britain and Norway, the changes taking place within the public corporations were associated with specific Director-Generals. In Britain it was Hugh Greene, DG between 1960 and 1969, who was responsible for 'opening the doors and letting in a breath of fresh air' (Schlesinger 1987, Milne 1989, Madge 1989). In Norway, Hans Jacob Ustvedt, DG between 1962 and 1972, has been credited with a similar liberalism, openness and willingness to experiment with programme content and form (see for example Østbye 1975, Gramstad 1989). Both Greene and Ustvedt were controversial characters, and the fact that they were appointed says something about the 'Zeitgeist' of the 1960's: the widespread feeling that change was taking place - both in the media and in society at large.

The changes towards more popular programming was also visible in the composition of the programme schedules. In Britain, almost one quarter of the television programming consisted of 'talks, demonstrations and documentaries' (later changed to 'talks, documentaries and other information programmes') in the latter half of the 1950s. Following the changes in the programming policy, the proportion declined to less than one eighth in 1965/66. In the wake of the introduction of BBC2 it rose again - gradually - to almost one fifth in 1975/76. The proportion of 'British and foreign feature films and series' began to rise in the late 1950s, from well below 5% during 1951-1956 to more than 14% in 1965/66. From then on the proportion rose slowly to 16% in 1980/81. In absolute terms this implied an enormous increase. In 1951/52 the BBC presented a total of eighty hours of 'entertainment films' (as the category was then called). By 1975/76 the total number of hours was 1,327, which was more than sixteen times as much (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1955-1982).

In Norway the increased popularisation was also visible in the programme statistics. The proportion of 'lectures, education etc.' in the television output declined from an all time high of around 30% in the mid-1960s to around 15% in the mid-1970s. The proportion of feature films and entertainment on the other hand, increased with fifty per cent between 1965 and 1970 (from 15% to 23%) (Central Bureau of Statistics 1967-1972).

Nevertheless, these changes represented no wholesale transformation of the traditional public service ethos. Despite the inclusion of more populist and popular cultural forms, the corporations remained paternalist both in policy and programming. Successive DGs in both countries continued to defend the duty of the broadcasters to develop the tastes and standards, and widen the cultural experiences of their audiences (see Ustvedt 1969, Elster 1972, Greene 1969, Curran 1972, 1979, Trethowan 1984, Milne 1989). From the 1960s onwards, however, this defence was no longer used only to justify 'serious' and 'difficult' programming vis a vis the general public: It was also directed towards the traditional political and cultural establishments, as a way of defending avant-garde and other experimental cultural forms, and the explicit treatment of controversial and 'sensitive' topics.

This brings us to the second trend greatly escalated by the advent of television: the tendency towards the corporations playing an increasingly independent and active role in the field of social controversy and news. As we have seen, both the NRK and the BBC had already increased their coverage of political issues while radio was the dominant medium: In Britain, the coverage of news and political affairs was established as one of the main duties of the BBC following the report of the Ullswater enquiry (1935), and the NRK had also begun to develop its own news service NRK in the mid-1930s (Dahl 1975). After the war, both corporations began presenting more extensive accounts of the proceedings of their respective parliaments and governments. The style was still 'official' and

detached, however, and there was no space for comment and analysis (Dahl 1982, Sælen 1991, Day 1989, Schlesinger 1987).

As television began to replace radio as the main news and current affairs medium, however, the style changed. In Britain new norms and standards were pioneered by 'Independent Television News', many of whose newscasters and reporters later worked for the BBC. Where the BBC was 'stiff and stuffy', ITN combined 'punch and sparkle' with 'humanity', 'humour' and 'a spirit of enquiry', in the words of one of its pioneers (Day 1989: 94). More important than the 'sparkle', however, was the fact that the advent of ITN brought about a general transformation of the standards guiding the treatment of social and political controversy - also within the BBC. Gradually the traditional and detached style based on reporting only the 'facts' and only what was stated by official sources, was replaced by a more active and speculative journalism.

Schlesinger (1987) writes that it is highly unlikely that BBC news would have changed as early as it did if it had not been challenged by ITN. As has been mentioned, however, this does not mean that the changes were only due to competition. When similar changes occurred in Norway in the early 1970s (Dahl 1982), the NRK did still not have any competitors. Thus it is necessary to look for other explanations as to why these changes occurred.

One important cause was that the expansion of the services brought a new generation of producers and journalists into broadcasting. These were hired to work with television and had not been socialised into the tradition of neutrality and caution which had characterised the corporations in the early days to the same degree. Another explanatory factor was the 'news explosion' itself. In Britain, the number of hours of television news almost doubled between 1960/61 and 1970/71, and there was also a substantial increase in the current affairs coverage in the same period (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1962-1972). Similarly in Norway, the amount of television news doubled between 1964 and 1971 (Central Bureau of Statistics 1967-1972). These hours had to be filled somehow, and since the amount of 'hard news' was limited, it was necessary to fill out with more comments, analyses, and 'background'. Thirdly, the new journalism was a response to the demand for more entertainment. Television seemed well-suited for dramatic and spectacular presentations, and confrontational debates and provocative interviews acquired high ratings (see Dahl 1982, Schlesinger 1987).

The new policies within news and current affairs were justified on the grounds that broadcasters had a duty to ask questions and challenge the social elites on behalf of the public. This was an updated version of the idea, expressed powerfully in the form of liberal press theory, that a working democracy was dependent on people having access to newspapers with different views and perspectives. In the updated version the journalists occupied centre stage, and the theory was that society was now so complicated, and information so abundant that the journalists had to take on a more active role in explaining to people what was really going on. This ideology, often labelled 'social responsibility-theory', was part of a strategy to protect and expand the labour market of journalists in a time with increased media monopolisation and a decline in newspapers with a mission. Many claimed, however, that it was an ideology particularly appropriate within broadcasting. The broadcasting corporations occupied a central position in the life of the nation, they were already obliged to provide information that was considered particularly valuable to the public, and they were - for political rather than economic reasons - already obliged to present a 'balanced' and 'impartial' account of reality (see for example Birt and Jay cited in Annan 1977, para. 17.47, Ustvedt 1969 and Elster 1972, Madge 1989, Dahl 1982, Burns 1977, Puijk 1990, Bondebjerg 1990, Schlesinger 1987, Scannell 1989, Christophersen 1975).

From the 1960s onwards, this ideology became an important part of the rationale for public broadcasting, not only in Britain and Norway but in other Western countries as well. It had obvious advantages, particularly that of putting the broadcasting corporations more firmly into the centre of the nations' social and political stage. Election nights and political debates became television events in their own rights, and the news and current affairs departments replaced 'talks and features' as the 'flagships' of the corporations. However, these developments also brought new problems. From attempting to be above controversy, the corporations now entered it full scale, and accusations about sensationalism and bias followed.

In neither country were such accusations new, as Briggs (1985) and Berg (1975) point out they dated back to the mid-1930s, but the early complaints were mild compared to what followed as the social consensus became more fragmented in the 1960s and 1970s. In both countries, there were major losses of support for the traditional political parties as politics grew more polarised. Right wing authoritarianism and left wing-militancy developed along with the anti-war, student and womens' movements. Attempts to regulate economic policy and the subsequent radicalisation of the trade unions from the early 1970s led to strikes and militant industrial conflicts. In Britain, the collapse of authority in Northern Ireland and the advent of the third large party brought special problems. In Norway, as in the other Nordic countries the position of the social democratic parties was undermined as criticism of the centralisation and statism of the welfare state era intensified.

In Norway and Britain, as in many other Western countries, these developments led to clashes between the broadcasters and the political and industrial establishments. In Britain, the appointment of Charles Hill as Chairman of the Board of Governors in 1967 was widely interpreted as a warning to the broadcasters that they were off course (Annan 1977, para. 2.28), but clashes continued to erupt, most seriously over the portrayal of the Labour leadership in 'Yesterdays Men' (1971) and the conflict in Northern Ireland in 'The question of Ulster' (1972) (see for example Burns 1977, Briggs 1979a, Tracey 1975). In Norway, there was general criticism of news and current affairs, as well as more dramatic clashes over the coverage of industrial conflicts (1970/71), housing policy (1972/73) and the Palestinian question (1975) (Nilsen 1975, Skirbekk and Agedal 1973, Christophersen 1975, Thomsen 1987).

In both countries, this led to demands from politicians and industrialists that the broadcasters 'put their houses in order' (see for example S.tid. 1974/75: 2875-2919, Nilsen 1975, Burns 1977, Schlesinger 1987). To begin with, the corporations attempted to cope with this by referring to their self-imposed policies of 'impartiality' and 'balance', but as the pressure increased, both judged it to be necessary to formalise these policies. In Britain, the informal policy of impartiality was supplemented with a formal undertaking from Lord Normanbrook, then Chairman of the Board of Governors, to the Minister in 1964, claiming that the BBC would continue to treat 'controversial subjects with due impartiality'. The early 1970s also saw memoranda issued by the Board of Governors on other controversial subjects, including the 1971 guide Principles and Practice in News and Current Affairs (Annan 1977, para. 17.6, 16.18, BBC 1971). The NRK also formalised its internal policies in the period: In 1975 the DG issued a comprehensive set of Principles for Programming which reinforced the ideas of 'impartiality' and 'balance' (NRK 1975).

Even though the formalisation of the editorial policies was applauded by the political establishments, it was not seen by all official representatives to be sufficient to curb the so-called excesses of the broadcasters. In both countries, attempts were made to extend the formal political control over broadcasting content. In Britain, the Callahan government proposed in its 1978 White Paper that a new layer of management - of which half of the members were to be appointed directly by the Home Secretary - was to be inserted below the Board of Governors (Robbins 1978, Briggs 1985, Trethowan 1984, Milne 1989, Day 1989). In Norway the right-wing Progressive Party put forward a proposal in 1975 to grant Broadcasting Council executive power over some programme and personnel matters (S.tid. 1974/75: 2919). Later the same year, the Dæhlin Committee, which was set up to review the Broadcasting Act, proposed that the obligation towards balance and impartiality, and also a series of other NRK obligations, should be made an Act of statute (NOU 1975:7: 84, see also Hovdhaugen 1969).

None of these proposals made it into the formal broadcasting regulations, due, among other things, to the opposition of the broadcasters in both countries (see for example Robbins 1978, Madge 1989, Calmeyer 1975). Nevertheless, they served as a warning that the only way to avoid having regulations imposed by external bodies, was for the broadcasters to comply with the general norms of the political establishment. At least in the British case, many contributors have argued that the developments outlined above led to a return to more conventional forms of broadcasting and a more open endorsement of the established social order (Tracey 1975, Schlesinger 1987).

#### In the national interest

The obligation to serve the national interest became increasingly difficult in the 1960s and 1970s. In the wake of the development towards more extensive treatment of social conflicts and more diverse programming, new questions were raised about what were the shared interests of the nation as the whole, and what were the sectional interests and tastes of particular classes, groups and subcultures. In other words, which type of programming should be subject to the criteria of 'balance' (in both the political and cultural sense of the term) and which should not?

As we have seen, the obligation to serve the national interest had both negative and positive implications. The negative implication, that the broadcaster should avoid transmitting material which might threaten national security or the social order, was particularly sensitive; the broadcasters knew that a 'mistake' here might lead to the imposition of direct state control over the corporations. However, the broadcasters had to concern themselves also with their legitimacy vis a vis the public and those who might oppose the states' interests. It therefore became crucial for the broadcasters to determine when the government represented the national interest and when it was merely defending its own views and position.

In Britain, the BBC came under strong pressure from the government on several occasions in the post-war years. During the Suez crisis of 1956 the Foreign Office was openly hostile to the BBC coverage. In this case, there was a fair amount of opposition to the government policies, and it was therefore easier for the BBC to justify broadcasting oppositional perspectives. The opposite happened in the case of Peter Watson's film 'The War Game', a film about the horrors of nuclear war. The Board of Governors decided not to show this film in 1965, allegedly because it might strengthen the opposition to the government's policy of nuclear deterrent (Negrine 1989, Briggs 1979a, Schlesinger 1987, Burns 1977, Tracey 1975).

More difficult than any of these cases, however, was the question of how to treat 'the troubles' in Northern Ireland. Before 1968, the Northern Irish situation was largely ignored by the BBC, and when the civil rights protests erupted in the late 1960s, the issue was, for a short time, treated like any other social conflict. After the British army moved in and clashed with Irish civilians, killing several unarmed demonstrators on what came to be called 'Bloody Sunday', however, there was a progressive tightening of editorial control. In November 1971, the Minister for Post and Telecommunications made a speech where he warned the BBC to suspend the principles of balance with regard to Northern Ireland, and from then on the issue was no longer treated according to the criteria of 'balance', but as a case of a legitimate army fighting an illegitimate opposition of 'terrorists' (Schlesinger 1987, Chapter 8).

The cautious policies were legitimised on the grounds that the BBC had to join forces with the government in defending the social order, and that broadcasting coverage of 'terrorist attacks' led to increased violence. However, caution was not enough to avoid government pressure. A 1972 current affairs programme about Northern Ireland, 'The Question of Ulster', led to a major row and explicit protests from the government Minister. The fact that the BBC still transmitted the programme has been claimed to be evidence of the editorial independence of the BBC. However, as Schlesinger (1987: 242) points out, this was 'a success story in the midst of general defeat'.

In Norway there were no similar occasions in the period when the NRK stood up to the government over matters of national security or foreign policy. Its complicity with the state was particularly obvious in the celebrated 'Loran C-affair' of 1977. This was a case of two Socialist Party MPs disclosing 'secret' documents about an element of the NATO defence system because, they claimed, the public had been misled by the government and the US Authorities (Gleditsch 1980). Despite the fact that the information was published and discussed in several newspapers, the NRK declined to discuss it. The DG at the time, Torolf Elster, defended this decision with reference to the 'party-political' nature of the issue, and the fear that a strong governmental reaction would follow if the NRK had behaved differently (Elster 1977).

The difference between the two corporations in this respect reflects the political and cultural differences between the two countries. In the Norwegian case, the overall loyalty to the 'social-democratic order' has, as has already been pointed out, promoted a rather careful political journalism, and national security has traditionally been one of the fields where the restraint among the journalists have bordered on self-censorship (see for example Lindh 1984, Article 19, 1991b). In Britain, on the

other hand, a stronger tradition of investigative journalism has developed. The differences also reflect the secretive character and the historically imperialist role of the British state, however: The British ambition to retain what remains of its empire and play a role in global politics, regularly leads it into armed conflicts where the media and the state have very different interests, and where the interests of the media have been curbed.

Nevertheless, the cases outlined above indicate that a similar policy was adopted in the two countries to deal with question of national security and law and order. If there was a serious threat to the public order (as was the case for the British in Northern Ireland) or if there was only a small or marginal opposition to the government policies (as in the case of the War Game and the Loran C-affair), then the issue would be treated like a 'national' one, and the views of the government did not have to be 'balanced'. In those cases, both the BBC and the NRK preferred to censor themselves, rather than risking a confrontation with the government and the imposition of formal state control.

Such policies did not prevent the corporations from being criticised, however. The corporations were constantly vulnerable to charges that they were either 'aiding the enemy' or 'complying with the state'. To resolve these problems on a more permanent basis, broadcasters in both countries attempted to map out areas where they did not have to be 'impartial'. In Britain, Hugh Greene (1969: 107) claimed that in matters of 'basic moral values - truthfulness, justice, freedom, compassion, tolerance', or in 'things like racialism and extreme form of political belief', the BBC was not 'neutral, unbiased or impartial'. This was echoed by Charles Curran in 1974 (:782) when he stated on behalf of the BBC that: 'Yes we are biased, biased in favour of parliamentary democracy' (see also Curran 1979). This was echoed again in the BBC's evidence to Annan (1977, para 17.7) which stated that the BBC did not 'pretend to be impartial about those things which Parliament had decided were unacceptable by making them illegal' or 'between the maintenance and the dissolution of the nation'.

In Norway, the most authoritative statement in this respect came in a speech made by NRK DG Hans-Jacob Ustvedt in 1969. He cited four areas, or sets of values, where NRK, in his view, had a duty not to be impartial. These were, firstly, the democratic values: the NRK should support parliamentary democracy and civil liberties, and oppose racialism and other forms of discrimination. Secondly, what he called the national values: patriotism, national culture and tradition. Thirdly, the humanistic values: compassion, tolerance and protection of the most vulnerable citizens (e.g. children). Finally, there were the character-building values: personal maturity, critical sense and openness towards new experiences (Ustvedt 1969). Of these values, the democratic values were echoed some years later by Ustvedt's successor Torolf Elster. He stated in a speech to the Broadcasting Council in 1972 that the primary task for broadcasting was to bring about 'the optimal functioning of our democracy' (Elster 1972).

These contributions demonstrate the broadcasting corporations' adherence to what they perceived to be the national consensus. When these values were challenged, whether it was by extra-parliamentary pressure groups, violent strikers, insurgents in Northern Ireland or National Front marchers, the broadcasters saw it as their task to side with the status quo. This did not imply that the views of such groups could not be presented: for example, as Ustvedt stated in his 1969 speech (:20), no programme could aim to challenge the fundamental national values and beliefs. In Britain, the BBC in its evidence to Annan (1977, para. 17.7) similarly claimed that the broadcasters duty was to reflect the differences within parliament, but it was not for them 'to go outside and, as it were, bring in ideas which we like better than those ideas which have been produced by Parliament'.

The so-called 'fundamental social values' defined above are all typical of middle-ground liberalism, and researchers investigating the output and the journalistic norms of the two corporations in the period, found such values to dominate also within the corporations. In his studies of the BBC in the 1970s, Schlesinger found that all forms of 'extremism' were considered bad, and the dominant ethos was to produce a journalism which would, in the long term, heal social conflicts (Schlesinger 1987:163). In Norway, Skirbekk and Agedal (1973) found liberalist values to dominate in the NRK news and current affairs output.

So far, the negative implication of the obligation to serve the national interest has been discussed, but the corporations were also expected to positively encourage the development of national identity and culture. Here television followed in footsteps of radio. Sport and other forms of competition, and royal

and state occasions were from the beginning lavishly covered by television. One of the early successes of BBC television was the Coronation of George VI in 1937, and later, the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1952, the World Cup final between England and West Germany in 1966 and Prince Charles' wedding in 1981 became major television events. In Norway, television got off to a flying start with the coverage of the Rome Olympics in 1960, and the most massive coverage (in terms of the number of staff and technology) of that period was in 1968, when Prince Harald was married.

More problematic than all this, however, was the expectation that the corporations should help to strengthen the national culture. As previously mentioned, this obligation was, from the beginning, directed both against the influence from other countries and against regional variations, and both these concerns prevailed when television was introduced. In terms of the international influence, Tunstall (1983) has argued that a basic tenet of British television from the beginning was that it should be British and not deluged with American imports, and also in Norway, concerns were expressed over the possible 'Americanization' that would follow in the wake of the introduction of television (S.tid 1957: 2447-2478, see also Kjekstad 1974). In both countries, these sentiments manifested themselves within the corporations in self-imposed quotas of home-produced material.

In Britain, the BBC voluntarily limited itself to fourteen per cent imported programming, which was the same amount specified in statute for commercial television (Annan 1977, para. 22.3). It is difficult to know, however, to what extent the BBC managed to stay within this quota. The corporation itself provide no specific figures, and in its Annual Reports it groups together 'British and foreign feature films and series' in a single category. Among the unofficial figures, Tapio Varis estimated that the BBC's imports were around 12% in 1971-72, and around 15% in 1983 (21% in prime time). The dominant proportion of imports came from the US and fell within the category of entertainment (1984: 146, see also Schlesinger 1986, Collins 1990a, Broadcast 3.5.1991).

If these figures are correct, the proportion of imported programming on BBC television fell far behind the Western European average of thirty per cent (Varis 1984: 148). Furthermore, the BBC was the only Western European country which managed to uphold a positive trade balance against North America (Collins 1990a: 155). It is also important to point out that only a tiny proportion of material from other European countries (and from most other countries in the world), is transmitted on British television. Thus in Britain, 'imports' for the most part mean US programming (Broadcast 3.5.1991).

In Norway, the situation was very different. Due to the limited home production base and the geographical and economic characteristics outlined previously, the self-imposed imports quota was set as high as fifty per cent (Ustvedt 1969: 28, see also Gramstad 1989), and each year the figures provided by the NRK were scrutinised for deviations to this principle. Although the proportion of imports fluctuated from year to year, the NRK generally managed to stay well within its own limits (NRK Annual Report 1970-80). As Østbye (1982: 277) has demonstrated for the year 1977, the UK was the single most dominant source-country, accounting for around 30% of the imports, whereas 20% came from the US and another 20% from other Nordic countries. As in Britain, there were few programmes from non-Western countries and US imports dominated within the category of feature films. In terms of general entertainment, however, the UK was the dominant source country.

These figures demonstrate an important difference in the way in which the obligation to serve the national culture was interpreted in the two countries. In Norway a large proportion of prime-time programming was produced elsewhere, and this in turn meant that the Norwegian public became less averse to the cultural expressions of other countries. Although the NRK justified the many imported programmes on the grounds that they cost less than the home-produced ones, they stressed that this was subordinate to their (self-imposed) obligation to 'present material from both near and more remote societies and cultures' (see for example NRK Annual Report 1982: 21). Within the same framework, the NRK frequently referred to the BBC's productions, and prided itself on its presentation of both the BBC's and other British programmes and drama series.

In contrast to the principle of limiting imports which was widely accepted among the citizens taking part in the broadcasting debates, the policy of levelling out regional cultural differences caused much controversy in the period. Although both corporations had now developed regional services, the underlying philosophy of cultural standardisation prevailed. The regional services were primarily measures of decentralisation and not intended to encourage the development of alternative cultural

forms. As the Pilkington Report (1962, para. 108) commented, the location of programme production did not by itself confer on the programme a 'distinctive regional quality' (see also Briggs 1985, Østbye 1982). The regional offices were for the most part located in cities, and apart from occasional innovations in content and style, they generally adapted the same way of presentation as the centralised body (see Briggs 1985, Beveridge 1950, Pilkington 1962, Annan 1977, Kumar 1986 for the UK, and Østbye 1982, Sagen 1971, Natvik and Utgård 1971, Versto and Aarekol 1988 for Norway).

As we shall see in the next chapter, this policy became increasingly controversial from the 1960s onwards, and this led the broadcasting corporations to attempt a somewhat wider portrayal of local and national lifestyles. The only area where really significant changes were made, however, was in the area of minority-languages. In Britain the BBC introduced a separate service for Wales after this had been recommended by Pilkington (1962), and following the 1977 Annan inquiry (para.15.14) and successful lobbying from Welsh nationalists, Channel Four in Wales was established as a separate Welsh service in the early 1980s (see also Walton 1988, Lambert 1982). In Norway, the NRK adapted the policy that at least 25% of the programmes should be in the minority language 'New Norwegian' after this had been recommended by the parliamentary committee in 1970. This percentage was larger than the proportion who spoke the language, but as the then NRK DG (Ustvedt 1969: 28) commented, the NRK felt a 'special obligation' towards serving cultural and linguistic minorities.

The advent of television also brought new forms of cultural patronage as drama was added to music as a cultural form massively supported by broadcasting. Both the BBC and the NRK were major employers of actors and writers, and through their support structure for the arts they also continued to provide access to cultural events for viewers and listeners living far away from arts venues.

## CHAPTER 6:

### PUBLIC TELEVISION PR. 1980: CORPORATIONS AND CONCEPTS

As we have seen, the formal control structure regulating public broadcasting in the two countries remained largely unchanged for fifty years. Neither the 1981 BBC Charter nor the 1980 Norwegian Broadcasting Act differed much from the original legislative documents which were issued in the inter-war period. While the legal structure remained intact, however, the legitimacy of the corporations came increasingly under threat. Their privileges were not only challenged, they were also declining in value, and their obligations had become more difficult to fulfil.

The fact that the corporations were challenged, however, did not mean that the idea of 'public service broadcasting' lost support. On the contrary, the idea of a broadcasting service operating 'in the public interest' figured prominently in the debate, often as a starting point for a critique against the institutions. As a 'public service broadcaster', or a 'broadcaster for the whole nation', critics argued, the corporations should take upon themselves to serve the public better. This was part of a more general concern with the workings of the welfare state and the conduct of public institutions. Many critics claimed that while the idea of public service remained valid in principle, the actual practices of the welfare state bureaucracies had perverted these purposes.

Although such arguments were much more dominant in Britain, they were also present in the Norwegian debate. Here, however, they had not yet permeated the language used to talk about broadcasting. In the early 1980s people still used the terms 'broadcasting', 'NRK', and (occasionally) 'public service' more or less interchangeably (see also Gramstad 1989), and no distinctions were made between different forms of public service broadcasting. In Britain, on the other hand, by the late 1970s there was no longer a common agreement that the BBC alone - or even at all - was the national instrument of public service broadcasting.

At least two different developments had prompted this situation. Firstly the emergence of a range of movements and perspectives strongly critical of the way in which the BBC interpreted its obligations towards the public, and a corresponding demand for alternative forms of broadcasting. What needed to be done, many critics argued, was to establish new and more democratic broadcasting

corporations, as the existing ones did not operate in the public interest. Indeed, these institutions could no longer be said to represent the ideal of public service at all. As Nicholas Garnham argued (1983: 24):

'it is important to stress that the historical practices of supposedly public service institutions, such as the BBC, do not necessarily correspond to the full potential of public service and may indeed, for precise historical reasons, be actively in opposition to the development of these potentials'.

The second reason why the BBC lost its claim to being the sole national instrument of public service broadcasting, was the apparent similarities between the BBC and the commercial channel. As we have seen, many legislators were from the beginning, sceptical of commercial television and made an effort, through regulation, to curb any possible excesses in advance. As Hood and O'Leary (1990: 24) comment: 'There was an unmistakeable feeling that a distinction was made between the gentlemen and the players'. Despite the relatively strict regulatory framework, ITV soon became a commercial success, and by 1961-62 the companies were earning a return of at least 75% of their capital. While this was beneficial for the owners, it left the commercial network vulnerable to attack. The commercial success was, after all, based on an advertising monopoly, and the question of monopoly profits soon became a major issue in the broadcasting debate.

As Sendall (1982:371) points out, however, adverse opinion was not limited to 'the perverse, but understandable belief that there must be something fundamentally wrong with the products as well as the organisational control of a public service that was making so much money'. Concerns were also expressed about the advertisements, and the populist (and popular) programme profile, and while the network was still doing well in the ratings, the service was not enjoying approval among many of the citizens and groups taking part in the broadcasting debates. This became painfully clear in the 1962 report from the Pilkington Committee. While the committee praised the BBC because, as they contended; 'The BBC know good broadcasting; by and large they are providing it' (para. 149), it was strongly critical of the commercial network and blamed it for everything that was wrong with British television. As a result of this view, the committee recommended the imposition of stricter regulation and that the third television channel should be given to the BBC.

In the wake of the Pilkington report and the climate surrounding it, the Independent Television Authority entered a new and much more interventionist phase. In the 1964 Television Act a levy on profits was introduced, and the ITA, in Tunstall's (1983: 43) phase, began to 'bully' the companies into putting on more serious programming. The ITV companies in turn began to take their social legitimacy more seriously. They had now learned the lesson which the BBC had learned the hard way a decade earlier, namely that a television channel which does not take its relationship with the powerful political and cultural elites seriously will sooner or later run into problems - whatever their relationship with the broadcasting consumers.

As a result of this, the ITV network adopted a new legitimisation strategy and began to stress the similarities, rather than the differences between itself and BBC. This marketing strategy, in combination with an increased priority on prestigious drama and information programmes, led to a situation where the commercial channel could also, according to common agreement, describe itself as a 'public service' broadcaster. Thus the concept of public service broadcasting had undergone yet another transformation. As Philip Schlesinger (1987: xii) has observed:

'In Britain, the label of 'public service' was first affixed to the early paternalist BBC when it enjoyed what Lord Reith called 'the brute force of monopoly'. It was next used to justify the BBC's subsequent 'generic' programming as it discovered audiences with diverse tastes in the drift away from paternalism. Then the notion was further extended to characterize the now more than thirty-years-old 'comfortable duopoly' ... jointly regulated by the BBC and the IBA.'

In this chapter, I discuss firstly the fragmentation of support for the original corporations towards the end of the 1970s, and point to how this development, particularly in Britain but also to some extent in Norway, implied a loss of legitimacy for the way in which the corporations had interpreted their

obligations. This is followed by a discussion of the similarities and differences between the various broadcasting corporations in the two countries as they appeared prior to the changes in the 1980s.

The analysis is based on a combination of primary and secondary sources. Among the primary sources, I have consulted the reports of the broadcasting committees involved in the review of the services in the 1970s in both countries, and, in the Norwegian case, also other political documents. I have also consulted the legal documents in both countries: the 1980 Norwegian Broadcasting Act, the 1980 British Broadcasting Act, and the 1981 BBC Charter and Licence. Finally, I have consulted statistics on programme categories provided by the corporations themselves (see Introduction to part II and Appendix A for details).

### 6.1. Fragmentation of the PSB support base

The loss of legitimacy for the public broadcasting corporations was not a linear development, and it was not a development which happened in the same way in the two countries. As we have seen, the NRK hit an all time low in its level of public support in the 1930s, whereas the most difficult time for the BBC was in the 1950s. Despite these earlier challenges, however, something new was happening towards the end of the 1970s: questions were being asked about the very foundations of the public broadcasting structure in the two countries.

These foundations were very different, however. In Britain, the broadcasting structure consisted of a three-channel duopoly with a strong presence of competition and commercial influence, whereas in Norway the 'old order' still meant a one-channel monopoly. Much of the opposition to the NRK in the 1970s was thus comparable to the sentiments which had faced the BBC in the 1940s and 1950s and which had led to the introduction of commercial broadcasting in Britain. It also seems evident that the opposition to the existing order was not nearly so profound in Norway as in Britain, at least not among the social and cultural elites feeding their perspectives into the broadcasting debate.

Despite these differences, however, there were signs that the broadcasting consensus in both countries was beginning to crack in a serious way towards the end of the 1970s. In Britain, the Ullswater (1935), Beveridge (1950) and Pilkington (1962) committees had all received comments strongly critical of the broadcasting corporation(s), and the Pilkington committee even stated that: 'A large volume of sharply critical submissions reached us' (para 38), but these submissions were still less critical than those of the 1970s. As the 1977 report of the Annan committee commented, the questions which the public were asking about broadcasting were vastly different from those which concerned the Pilkington committee: 'They were more critical, more hostile and more political', and they included 'lengthy critiques of the whole system of broadcasting' (para. 2.1).

Although the evidence of frustration and distress was less visible in Norway, they were clearly present also in this context. As the first speaker in the 1975 parliamentary debate about broadcasting observed, 'today storm clouds are gathering over the broadcasting house' (S. tid 1974/75: 2875). A few years later Conservative MP's who had supported the NRK all through the post-war period, labelled the broadcasting structure a 'hopelessly outdated' system (Innst.O 57 1979-80).

Common to many of the criticisms that were levelled at both the BBC and the NRK in the 1970s, was a concern with accountability. The broadcasters had become powerful establishments in their own right, it was claimed, and professional arrogance and complacency made them insensitive to the views and perspectives of their publics. The Annan Report (1977 para. 4.10) summarised the prevailing mood in Britain when it wrote that 'the greatest volume of criticism about the present structure has come to us from those who believe that broadcasters have been insensitive in the past ten years to the views expressed by large sections of the public, and are insufficiently accountable to them'. In Norway, a commentator sighed in 1978 that 'it is quite obvious that the public wants a dialogue. They want to talk. ... (But talking to the NRK) is like running one's head against a wall' (Anderson 1978: 13, see also S.tid. 1974/75: 2876).

Whereas some of the critics were primarily concerned with issues of representation in the output, others demanded access so that they could set up their own community radio and television stations (Annan 1977, para. 14.46, NOU 1975:7). Others again were concerned with breaking up the monopolistic structure in order to increase the amount of externally produced programmes. In short,

they all wanted broadcasting to 'open up'. But why should it open up? What kind of perspectives did the critics want to see included in the output?

Here there were a variety of different perspectives, many of which had been present in the broadcasting debate from the beginning, but which had grown more hostile in the 1960s and 1970s. Among the most audible voices in both countries, were those of the regional and local critics, who were opposed to the portrayal of the culture of the capital and the cities as the 'national culture'. The most militant among these critics were also opposed to the decentralisation policy of the broadcasting corporations, and claimed that the regional services should more rightly be called 'imperialist' since they precluded the development of alternative cultural forms (see for example Sagen 1971: 12). In Norway, this critique was launched on behalf of the local communities and regions against the capital and the urban city culture (Østbye 1982, Natvik and Utgård 1971, Sagen 1971, NOU 1975:7), whereas in Britain such concerns were expressed mainly on behalf of the Scottish and Welsh culture. Less concern was expressed about the English regions, whose cultural autonomy had been largely eroded in the first half of the twentieth century (Kumar 1986, Annan 1977 chapter 26, see also Beveridge 1950, Pilkington 1962 para 104-106).

A second and different type of criticism concerned moral standards and the amount of sex and violence in television output. Critics in both countries claimed that the portrayal of sex and violence on television was responsible for a certain lowering of standards in society in general, and for the emergence of 'permissiveness' and value-relativism. As the Annan Report (1977, para. 16.7, 16.15) stated, 'a sizeable part of the public' believed that 'broadcasting was failing to reflect and endorse the values to which society should conform' (see also NOU 1975: 7).

Both in Britain and Norway, the 'moral' movements criticising the broadcasting corporations in this respect, were to some extent made up of people who felt alienated by the more mainstream and 'official' religion adhered to by the broadcasting corporations. Their criticism was populist and supported by people on the 'wrong end' of the cultural gap. Much of the concern they expressed was also shared by the more traditional guardians of moral standards: churches, teachers, 'parents' and child-psychologists. In Britain, the 'National Viewers and Listeners Association' led by Mary Whitehouse was the most prominent of these movements. Its 1965 manifesto claimed that (Whitehouse 1967:23):

'Crime, violence, illegitimacy and venereal disease are steadily increasing, yet the BBC employs people whose ideas and advice pander to the lowest in human nature, and accompany this with a stream of suggestive and erotic plays which present promiscuity, infidelity and drinking as normal and inevitable.'

(see also Wedell 1968, Hoggart 1965, Tracey and Morrison 1979).

In Norway, the most vocal 'moral' critics were the Christian Democratic Party and its ally, the pressure group and monitoring unit Christian Broadcasting Theme, which had been established as early as 1935. These bodies frequently criticised the NRK for its bad language and its portrayal of what they conceived to be non-christian behaviour. Complaints increased in the late 1960s after the NRK had broadcast a few 'sexually explicit' plays and a programme demonstrating methods of birth control (Christophersen 1975, Sivertsen 1986). When the broadcasting legislation was debated in the late 1970s, the Christian Democratic Party argued strongly in favour of a paragraph in the Broadcasting Act obliging the NRK to broadcast in accordance with 'christian, humanistic and democratic values' (Ot.tid. 1979/80: 587)

Both in Britain and Norway the moral guardians were countered by cultural libertarians who represented a third type of criticism against the broadcasting corporations. In contrast to the 'moral movements' these critics pressed for more experimentation and a widening of the cultural forms presented on television. Writers, intellectuals, journalists and artists complained about the 'self-censorship' of the broadcasting institutions, and claimed that despite their attempts at opening up, the broadcasters were still far too cautious, restricted and conventional in their portrayal of art and human life (see for example Wedell 1968, Garnham 1978 and Annan 1977 para. 16.8 for Britain, and Nilsen 1975, Christophersen 1975, Ellefsen ed. 1969 and Calmeyer 1975 for Norway).

A similar pair of oppositions could be found within the field of politics. On the one hand, ultra conservative critics fresh from the Cold War saw the conduct of the broadcasting corporations as part of the explanation for the increasing support enjoyed by radical social movements. In Norway, the ultra-conservative monitoring unit Libertas published two reports presumably documenting 'Marxist bias' in the NRK coverage in the mid-1970s (Libertas 1974, 1975), and claimed that the corporations were part of a widespread Marxist conspiracy aimed at 'destroying our democracy' (Libertas 1975:3, see also Minerva 1966, Hanssen 1967). In Britain, the pressure group 'Aims of Industry' complained to the Annan committee about what they saw to be consistent bias against right and centre views and perspectives (Annan 1977, para. 17.15).

On the other hand, and more prominently, a range of radical political groups claimed that their views were not given adequate representation. They argued that due to the links between the public corporations and the powerful agencies of state and capital, the corporations did not represent the views and interests of socialist and communist parties, women, immigrants, gays, trade unions and the working classes more generally (see for example Cohen and Young (eds.) 1981, Annan 1977 para. 17.15 and Garnham 1978 for Britain, and Nilsen 1975, Ellefsen ed. 1969, Calmeyer 1975, S.tid 1974/75: 2885, 2900 for Norway). In Britain, these views were reinforced by academically based criticisms from the late 1960s onwards. Research centres such as the Centre for Mass Communication Research in Leicester, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham and the Glasgow University Media Group all produced studies attempting to puncture the idea that public service television was 'neutral' in its interpretation of events, and argued instead that the output was highly ideological and played a crucial role in maintaining the legitimacy of the capitalist consensus (see for example Hall 1972 a,b, 1975, Glasgow University Media Group 1976, Halloran et al. 1970).

Arguments about 'left'-wing and 'right'-wing 'bias' were also voiced from time to time by the dominant political parties and the major industrial organisations, but these organisations had also other complaints: In both countries, the mainstream trade unions and the industrial and commercial associations complained all through the 1970s about what they saw to be an inadequate and distorted portrayal of industrial and commercial life on television. For the most part, they contended, the broadcasters ignored the positive contributions made by industry and commerce, and in the few instances where coverage did occur, they concentrated only on drama, confrontation, violent strikes and the (unrepresentative) views of militant shop-floor activists (see Annan 1977 para 17.6, 17.19 for Britain, and Nilsen 1975, Anderson 1978, S.tid. 1974/75: 2903 for Norway).

A similar criticism was voiced from the major political parties. They claimed that television, rather than acting as an agent of a rational and enlightened discourse, thrived on scandal, sensationalism and drama, and that this again was responsible for the increase in extra-parliamentary activity and for stirring up contempt for the democratic process as a whole. The Annan Report in Britain (1977: 17.24, 17.35, 17.36) agreed with these criticisms to some degree and claimed that the broadcasters from time to time presented issues in a way which damaged the work of those involved in public affairs. 'Hard-hitting criticism is one thing', the report claimed, 'but statements which in effect discredit not merely the politician himself but the whole system of Government ... destroy public confidence in the nation in a peculiarly poisonous way' (for Norway see Ryssdal, Børde, Borthen and Nordli (all cited in Høyer 1982a) and S. tid. 1974/75: 2875-919).

The claims that television was responsible for the decline in party loyalty and the increase in extra-parliamentary issue-politics also found some support among political scientists. Butler and Stokes, for example, in their study of Britain in the 1960s claimed that: 'It should occasion no surprise that the years just after television had completed its conquest of the national audience were the years in which the electoral tide began to run more freely' (Butler and Stokes 1974: 419, see also Hernes 1977). The actual research evidence to support such claims was rather anecdotal, however (see Høyer 1982a and Blumler 1977 for summaries and overviews). Indeed, as the Pilkington report (1962) stated more generally, there was a widespread view that 'the power of the medium to influence and persuade is immense. ... But we cannot say that this assessment of the power of the medium is proved' (1962, para 38, 42).

The proliferation of media criticism among the political and industrial elites reflected an important shift in the legitimacy of the broadcasting corporations. Gradually, the elites' perception of the broadcasters

as friendly allies was being substituted with that of a powerful and hostile political force. In both countries, the new type of satirical, populist and confrontational current affairs coverage from the 1960s onwards was instrumental in bringing about this shift. The Labour parties, which had historically been more strongly in favour of the broadcasting of controversial issues and a less submissive mode of address, were the last to come around to seeing the corporations as an adversary. Gradually, however, the loyalty of these parties also became more fragile. In Britain, the turning point came with 'Yesterdays Men' in 1971, which was a programme portraying the defeated Labour Party leadership in a satirical and unconventional way. This programme led to one of the most hostile political rows in the history of the BBC (Tracey 1975). In Norway, the shift was not due to a single episode, but to a steady deterioration of relations during the first half of the 1970s. The turning point came in a heated Parliamentary debate in February 1975 when Labour politicians for the first time joined forces with the Conservatives in a fierce, comprehensive and explicit criticism of the NRK (S.tid. 1974/75: 2875-919). Although the relationship between the NRK and the Labour Party improved in the latter half of the 1970s, this debate represented a watershed in the relations between the corporation and the Norwegian political establishment.

The criticism of the broadcasting corporations discussed so far had grown more hostile in the 1960s and 1970s, but the prevalence of these 'newer' demands did not mean that the traditional concerns with enlightenment and the national culture had vanished. In Britain, as we have seen, the perspective of cultural 'uplift' and the traditional anti-Americanism had both surfaced powerfully in the Pilkington Report's (1962) criticism of the ITV-system, and such sentiments were also strongly present in the Annan Report (1977). The report stated that many had written to ask for more drama, art and classical music, and that yet others had expressed concern over the 'importation of American standards and way of life' (paras. 19.6, 21.8). There was also a powerful lobby demanding that the fourth channel should be used for educational purposes (para. 15.9, see also para. 19.6).

In Norway, similar sentiments were expressed in the annual parliamentary debates and also by the Broadcasting Council, but the most powerful indication of the strength of these perspectives came in the debate about the NORDSAT satellite project. This project could, if it had been realised, have given all Nordic television consumers access to all the Nordic television programmes. However, the idea did not attract much enthusiasm among the political and cultural elites, who feared that access to more channels would encourage viewers to watch 'low-quality' US imports on all the Nordic channels (Hemanus and Østbye 1979).

As we have seen in this section, a variety of different perspectives and criticisms were put forward in the broadcasting debates of the 1960s and 1970s. The critics had little in common in terms of what type of content they wanted, but they shared the belief that the broadcasting institutions had become too powerful, too centralised, too monolithic and too bureaucratic. In the case of the BBC this criticism was particularly strong, as Annan (1977, para. 8.44) claimed, 'We felt at times the television service was in danger of forgetting that BBC1 and BBC2 existed to serve the public' Annan 1977, para. 8.44).

In Norway, the criticism was less hostile. This was partly a reflection of the higher degree of support for welfare state solutions in general, and partly due to the fact that the NRK was less monolithic: expansion in the capital had been curbed from 1970 onwards as a result of the government's decentralisation policies. Nevertheless, complaints about bad management, inefficiency and overstaffing were also launched against the NRK (S. tid. 1974/75: 2879, see also 2876-77).

In both countries, the broadcasters were also perceived to be arrogant and uninterested in the views of their publics. The strong professional ethos which had developed within the corporations did seem to prevent the development of a real dialogue. All too often, external interests such as community groups, access movements, media monitoring units, politicians, intellectuals and researchers were met with hostile and condescending behaviour (see for example Heller's 1978 account of the treatment of Mary Whitehouse, see also Burns 1977, Garnham 1983, Anderson 1978). This was despite the fact that these critics were essentially positive towards public broadcasting, and had a serious interest in the development of the television medium.

This brings us to the final point regarding the criticisms of the broadcasting institutions in the 1970s, namely that most of the citizens active in the public debate argued in favour of a strengthening of television as a medium for social communication. The populist view that broadcasting was primarily an

entertainment medium and should concentrate on 'giving the audiences what they wanted', hardly surfaced at all in the political debates. The complaints about 'incomprehensible' plays and 'boring' art programmes which surfaced both in the newspapers and in the letters to the broadcasting corporations, were not present to any great degree in the submissions to the broadcasting committees or in parliament. Rather than demanding more entertainment, what seemed to be the consensus among the critics active in the public sphere in both countries was that the broadcasters paid too much attention to what was popular, and too little to what was really important.

## 6.2. Public broadcasting anno 1980: Structures and programming

So far, the criticisms against the BBC and the NRK by the early 1980s have been discussed. It is important to point out, however, that in the British case, the same type of criticism was also directed against the ITV-network. As a result of the changes outlined in the beginning of this chapter, many commentators argued from the 1960s onwards that there was, in effect, very few differences between the 'commercial' and 'public' broadcasting systems in Britain (see for example Hood 1967, Wedell 1968, Schlesinger 1987, Smith 1983, Tunstall 1983, Curran and Seaton 1985). It was in order to break up the 'comfortable duopoly' that the Annan Committee recommended that a fourth channel be set up in a way which encouraged experimentation and new ideas.

As Negrine (1985b) has pointed out, the committee was attempting to come to terms with the changes in society and the climate of opinion, and to satisfy the demands for access, accountability and representation. As a result of the committee's recommendation and the government's acceptance of it, it was decided in 1980 to establish a fourth channel through an amendment of the 1973 Independent Broadcasting Authority Act (Broadcasting Act 1980). The channel was set up as a wholly owned subsidiary of the IBA to be financed by subscriptions levied on the ITV-companies, and in contrast to the BBC and the ITV-network, the fourth channel was organised as a 'publisher', buying most of its programmes from external producers, programme suppliers and the ITV-companies. In Wales, the Welsh Fourth Channel (S4C) was set up to relay most of Channel Four's UK output, but to add to it some twenty hours weekly of Welsh language programmes supported by an arrangement between a commercial company and BBC Wales.

With the emergence of Channel Four, the British definition of 'public service broadcasting' was yet again extended. Indeed, many contributors have argued that the fourth channel, with its obligation to broadcast innovative and minority programmes, represented an even greater challenge to the BBC's 'ownership' of the concept of 'public service broadcasting' than the ITV-network had done. As Madge (1989: 161) argues, the establishment of Channel Four was 'cutting away at a stroke the old BBC argument that public service broadcasting and advertising-based programme revenue are incompatible'.

So far, we have seen how the broadcasting structures developed differently in Britain and Norway in the period before 1980, and thus how the concept of 'public broadcasting' came to describe very different systems in the two countries. In Britain a four channel system had come into existence and the definition of public service broadcasting had been extended to cover the whole structure, whereas in Norway, the NRK still had a monopoly. But what about the programming? To what degree did the broadcasting corporations in the two countries put out the same mixture of programmes, and what was the difference between the 'commercial' broadcasting channel in Britain and the licence-fee funded BBC and NRK?

Despite widespread claims that the ITV and BBC output had become very similar in the 1970s, there seem to have been little research comparing the output of two services. In the following, the proportion of different programmes on ITV, the BBC and the NRK are contrasted in order to get an indication of the situation in the early 1980s (1980/81). The comparison is based on the statistics provided by the corporations themselves, and follows a pattern instituted by Raymond Williams in his study Television: Technology and Cultural Form (1975). In this study Williams made a useful distinction between what he called 'Type A' and 'Type B' programming. 'Type A' programming described the programme categories which in Williams' view were crucial to public broadcasting: news and public affairs; features and documentaries; education, arts and music; children's programmes and plays. 'Type B' programming, on the other hand, were programmes which were also found on the public channels, but

which in principle could have been provided by market-based television services: drama series and serials, and movies and general entertainment.

This typology was in turn used to compare one week of programming on five channels in 1973: two US channels (one of them a public broadcasting channel PBS), one British commercial channel (the ITV-contractor Anglia Television) and the two BBC channels (BBC1 and BBC2). While the distinction between different types of programming was a crude one, it was useful in the sense that it demonstrated striking differences between the different channels. If we weigh the results so that they add up to 100%, Williams' survey showed that while BBC1 and BBC2 had a share of 77% of 'Type A' programming, the share of the same type of programming on the ITV-channel was 53% and the share on the commercial US channel was only 26% (Williams 1975: 84).

In the following, I have used a similar typology to compare the programmes on BBC, ITV and NRK in the early 1980s. While Williams' study was based on a survey of one week's content, mine is based on the annual statistics provided by the corporations themselves. In contrast to Williams, I have therefore had to stick to already established categories, and I have also had to modify the analysis in order to be able to make valid comparisons across the different channels. In my study, 'Type A' programming include news and public affairs; features, documentaries and art; and children's, religious and educational programmes. 'Type B' programming include entertainment; music; feature films; sport; and drama, and in the Norwegian case also 'mixed' programming'.

This implies that in my survey, 'Type A' programming is likely to be underrepresented compared with Williams' study, since I have had to group some forms of 'serious' programming (single plays and music programmes) with 'Type B' programming. Nevertheless, the comparison across the different channels should still be valid. When I weigh my results so that they add up to 100%, I find that for the year 1980/81, **52%** of BBC1's schedule consisted of 'Type A' programming whereas the comparative figure for BBC2 was **54%** (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983). For the NRK in 1980 the figure was **55%** (Central Bureau of Statistics 1983), whereas for the ITV-network in 1980/81 the proportion of Type A programming was **46%** (IBA Annual report and Accounts 1980/81).

As these figures demonstrate, the most substantial difference in the early 1980s could be found between the ITV-network on the one hand and the three licence-fee funded channels on the other. Compared to the results which Williams found for the US commercial channel in 1973, the ITV-network was still much closer to the BBC and NRK norm. The survey also indicate that there had been some development since 1973 when Williams conducted his survey. While the differences in categories makes it difficult to conclude to what degree the BBC and ITV channels had become more market-oriented, the differences between Williams' and my results at least indicates that programming on the ITV and the BBC had become much more similar between 1973 and 1981. While the difference between the proportion of 'Type A' programming on BBC1 and Anglia television in Williams' survey was 24%, the corresponding difference between BBC1 and ITV was only 6% in my survey.

The similarities between the two British networks are, as we have seen, not only due to the fact that the BBC had become more market-oriented. It was also a product of the political pressures on the ITV-system following the Pilkington Report. As Annan 1977, para. 11.6 commented, 'there is no doubt that Independent Television, while remaining popular, has improved in quality during the last 12 years.'

The fact that the ITV-network was judged in terms of the 'quality' of its programmes rather than its popularity, underlines the fact that the BBC was still considered the most important reference point for broadcasting in Britain by the early 1980s. Despite the fact that it was no longer the only broadcasting corporation, and in the view of many, not even the only public service broadcasting corporation, it was still, as the Annan report (1977: 476) argued, 'the main national instrument of broadcasting'. According to the report, it was in the best interests of British broadcasting that it continued to be so in the foreseeable future.

The survey also demonstrated that the NRK had the most 'serious' output of all the four channels, a result which is not surprising in the light of the Norwegian broadcasting structure anno 1980. On this point, however, the similarities between the different channels were more striking than the differences. Even though the NRK did not face competition on the national level, its television output in the last decade of monopoly still contained a substantial proportion of material primarily designed to entertain.

With the reservation that this is a crude form of measurement and that any definite results would have to be based on a survey of the actual output, this might indicate that the pressures operating in Britain and Norway in the 1960s and 1970s were not so different after all.

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In this chapter we have seen how a wide range of different expectations and demands were levelled at the broadcasting corporations in the 1960s and 1970s. These demands could, to some extent, be met by expanding the services, particularly in Britain where the licence fee and advertising together provided sufficient funds to support at least three television channels. In Norway, the single channel system made it more difficult to satisfy a wide range of demands. Despite these differences, however, it was becoming apparent in both countries that the loss of legitimacy for the public broadcasting corporations could not be 'resolved' through an indefinite expansion of the services. The worsening financial situation and the exhaustion of the licence fee as a means of funding, clearly precluded this possibility.

## PART THREE: RE-REGULATION OF BROADCASTING IN THE 1980S AND EARLY 1990S

As demonstrated in part two, much had changed in broadcasting in the decades following the second world war. The development of the consumer industry and the growth in advertising, the fragmentation of the broadcasting public, and the loss of legitimacy for traditional welfare state political solutions had all had a significant impact on broadcasting. In Britain, a privately owned television service had been set up alongside the BBC in 1954, and the BBC had significantly altered its programme mix towards more 'popular' programming. In Norway, the changes had been less profound; advertisers were still excluded from the airwaves, and the NRK was still without competition on the national level, but changes had also occurred in this more regulated context. The advent of television had brought new types of programming (much of it imported), and increased the pressures from commercial interests. Furthermore, the increased criticism of the NRK from the mid-1970s onwards indicated that the legitimacy of public broadcasting also was in decline in this context.

Despite these changes, however, governments and parliaments both in Norway and Britain were still, by the early 1980s, committed to the continued existence of the public broadcasting structures. In both countries, the broadcasting committees of the 1970s (the Annan committee in Britain and the Dæhlin committee in Norway), proposed that the broadcasting ecology in their respective countries should be sustained, and this was endorsed by the two parliaments. In Britain this was done in an innovative manner, as the fourth channel was set up with a more 'open' structure than the existing channels, whereas in Norway the traditional broadcasting framework was only slightly adjusted. Despite these differences, both decision-making processes reflected the traditional framework for broadcasting policy-making. As we have seen, this framework was based on the assumption that it was both necessary, desirable and possible to control the number of television channels and the programme mix. Furthermore, it was a framework within which television was treated almost entirely like a national medium, despite the large proportion of imports and the high degree of spill-over in countries like Norway.

The explicit decisions in both countries to preserve the traditional ecology, however, turned out to have a relatively short 'shelf life'. While the committees were deliberating in the 1970s, technological, economic and political developments were about to converge in a way which, only a few years later, would significantly alter the 'fit' between constraints, interests and alliances upon which the traditional broadcasting structures had been based.

In this part, the changes in the British and Norwegian television structures in the 1980s and early 1990s are examined. The discussion begins with an examination of the transformation of the broadcasting constraints in chapter seven. As will be demonstrated, the constraints were transformed in a way which removed barriers to entry and opened up new possibilities within broadcasting. Then, in the next three chapters, I examine how different groups and actors responded to these changes. In chapter eight, I examine how various business and industrial interests moved in to take advantage of the new possibilities, and how this put pressure on policy-makers to liberalise broadcasting legislation. Then, in chapter nine, the policy-initiatives launched by the British and Norwegian governments in response to these pressures, are discussed. Finally, in chapter ten, I discuss how the public as citizens responded to the new policy-initiatives and to the more general changes in the broadcasting environment.

The focus in this part is thus on the general re-regulation of broadcasting in the 1980s and early 1990s. The aim is to identify the pressures for change, the responses of the policy-makers and the conflicts and alliances between different interests. Then, in the next part, the implications of the new broadcasting environment for the BBC and the NRK, and their responses to the various challenges, are examined.

### Part III: Sources:

The analysis in this part is based on both primary and secondary sources. Among the secondary sources, McQuail and Siune (eds.) (1986), Tydeman and Kelm (1986), Negrine and Papathanassopoulos (1990), Dyson and Humphreys (eds.) (1988), Negrine (ed.) (1985a, 1988), Collins (1990a,b), Ferguson (ed.) (1990), Sepstrup (1985, 1986, 1988), Mosco and Wasco (eds.) (1984), Syvertsen and Vaagland (eds.) (1989): Syvertsen (ed.) (1990), Hoskins and McFayden (1988) and Hoskins and Mirus (1988) and Mortensen (1990a,b) have been particularly useful in providing information about the changes in the technological, economic and social constraints (chapter seven) and the general developments within the media industries (chapter eight). In addition to this, Hood and O'Leary (1990), O'Malley (1988), Dunkley (1985), Wade (1985), Murdock (1984), Lee (1987), Goodfriend (1988), Negrine (1985, 1988), Article 19 (1991a) and the articles in Index on Censorship (8/88) and New Statesman and Society (3.2.1989), have provided valuable background on broadcasting developments in Britain, and the same is true for Gramstad (1988, 1989), Knapskog (1988), Werner et al. (1984), Mathiesen (1984), Article 19 (1991b) and Vaagland and Østbye (1982) in Norway. Trade journals, magazines and newspapers in both countries have also provided useful information.

Apart from the analyses of the changing constraints and the general developments within the media industries, the discussion in this part is based on primary sources. These are, firstly, all government white papers and bills, and reports from government-appointed committees concerned with television from the early 1980s onwards. In the British case this includes the 1982 Hunt report on cable developments (Cmnd. 8679), the 1983 government White paper on Cable (Cmnd. 8866), the 1986 Peacock Report (Cmnd 9824), the 1988 Broadcasting White Paper and the 1989 Broadcasting Bill. In the Norwegian case it includes the early 1980s White papers and committee reports on general media policy (St.meld. 88 1981-82, NOU 1983:3, St.meld. 84 1984-85), the White Papers and Bills concerned primarily with the establishment of the second television channel (NOU 1985:11, St. meld. 44, 1987-88, Ot. prop 55, 1989-90), and White papers, Bills and Committee reports concerned with local, satellite and cable television (NOU 1982:33, NOU 1982:34, NOU 1984:5, NOU 1984:25, Ot.prop. 80 1984-85, Ot.prop. nr. 47 1986-87, Ot.prop. 53 1987-88).

The second primary sources are reports from the parliamentary committees in both countries. Both in Britain and Norway the parliamentary committees responsible for broadcasting matters (the Home Affairs Committee and the Committee for Church and Education respectively), conducted extensive inquiries into broadcasting developments in the period discussed here. In Britain the inquiry resulted in a report which was published in June 1988 (Home Affairs Committee 1988a), whereas in Norway the parliamentary committee published a series of comments on different broadcasting policy-initiatives. Among these, I have consulted the ones most relevant for my analysis: the two reports discussing the establishment of the second terrestrial television channel in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Innst.S 187 1988-89 and Innst.O 2 1990-91).

The third source are the reports from the deliberations in the two parliaments over the new broadcasting legislation which emerged towards the end of the 1980s in both countries. In the British case it was necessary at this point to make a selection, since the material is too comprehensive to be analysed in full. As is the usual practice, the 1989 Broadcasting Bill was subjected to three readings and a report stage in the House of Commons (16.12.1989, 18.12.1989, 10.5. 1989 and 8-9.5 1989), and similar proceedings took place in the House of Lords (15.5.1990, 5.6.1990, 22.10.1990 and 9,11,16.10. 1990). Various amendments were also discussed in standing committees, and there were final debates in the two houses considering amendments made by the other house.

From this abundance of material I decided to consult the proceedings from the second reading in each of the two houses (House of Commons: Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 cols. 40-122, House of Lords: Official Report 5.6.1990 vol 519 cols 1220-357). These debates are chosen because it is generally during the second reading that the most wide-ranging and principled viewpoints are brought forward. The two debates are also complementary, since some time elapsed between them.

In the Norwegian case the material is less abundant and I have therefore been able to analyse it in full. The new broadcasting legislation (which among other things led to the establishment of a second television channel), was debated twice in the parliament. In October 1990, the main principles of the new Act were passed (Ot.tid 22.10.1990: 5-56) and in the spring of 1991, a number of more specific questions regarding the new channel and the new legislation were decided (S. tid. 1990-91: 677-699).

The fourth (and most voluminous) source is the comments from various interested parties, groups and organisations in response to the proposed changes in the broadcasting legislation in the two countries. In the British case, the analysis is based on a selection of the responses to the 1988 White Paper, supplemented with the most central memoranda from various bodies to the 1988 Home Affairs Committee (printed in Home Affairs Committee 1988b) (see Appendix A and the introduction to chapter ten for further details). In the Norwegian case, the analysis is based on the complete set of responses to the 1985 inquiry into the question of a second television channel (the 'TV2'-inquiry) (see Appendix A and the introduction to chapter ten for further details).

The fifth source is the actual broadcasting legislation which was finalised in the 1980s and early 1990s in both countries: The 1990 Broadcasting Act in Britain, and the 1990 Broadcasting and Advertising Act in Norway.

The final source is the intergovernmental agreements which also were finalised around the turn of the decade. In the case of the European Community, this was the 1989 EEC Directive on Television Across Frontiers, and in the case of the Council of Europe the 1989 European Convention on Transfrontier Television.

## CHAPTER 7: CHANGES IN THE FRAMEWORK FOR BROADCASTING POLICY-MAKING

In the discussion about the establishment of the BBC and the NRK in chapter four, it was argued that three types of constraints were important for bringing about public broadcasting structures in the first place. Firstly, and most importantly there was the scarcity of frequencies, which determined that there could only be a limited number of broadcasting outlets in each country. Secondly, there were the economic constraints which were particularly important in Norway: the high cost of establishing transmission networks and the lack of business (and state) investors able and willing to produce the necessary funds. Thirdly, there was the need to come up with structures which were more legitimate than the private broadcasting companies. Taken together, these constraints limited the options open to policy-makers at the time, and influenced the decisions to set up licence-fee funded public corporations.

By 1980 all these constraints were either removed or transformed. Developments within broadcasting and the related technologies had more or less removed the scarcity argument, developments within the manufacturing and consumer industries had transformed the economic context of broadcasting, and, as has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, it was now the public broadcasting institutions who were struggling to retain their legitimacy in the face of an increasingly fragmented public sphere.

These developments together implied that the constraints which had helped bring about public broadcasting corporations in the first place were no longer present to the same degree. It did not imply, however, that all limitations were removed, or that the policy-makers had total autonomy of operation. On the contrary, these developments constituted a new set of constraints for broadcasting, which were just as powerful in limiting the possibilities open to governments and policy-makers.

### 7.1. Transformation of the technological constraints

Within the field of technology, three developments were particularly important for transforming the context for broadcasting policy-making. Firstly, an increasing number of distribution channels became available, which in turn undermined the technological justification for the strict broadcasting regulation. Secondly, some of these 'newer' technologies, in contrast to more traditional forms of television distribution, transcended national boundaries. Finally, there was the increasing convergence between broadcasting and information technology, which made it even more difficult to sustain the barrier between broadcasting and general industrial policy.

Among the 'new' technologies, the developments within satellite communication were the most significant. In October 1957 the first satellite was put in orbit by the USSR, and in 1962 the first transatlantic television transmission took place on the AT&T satellite Telstar. In the decades that followed, the satellite technology developed largely in response to military and commercial demands. For the military, satellites offered unique potentials both for reconnaissance (mapping geographical features and enemy installations) and communication (between ships, planes and fixed installations). Commercial uses, on the other hand, included scientific research and earth resources management, weather forecasting, telecommunications and broadcasting.

Throughout this period, the technology itself was greatly improved. More powerful launchers and more sensitive reception equipment was developed, and this implied in turn that bigger satellites with stronger signals and smaller ground stations could be used. These developments also affected the costs: In twenty years the price of a communications satellite declined to less than one per cent of the original price. All other components also became cheaper (Collins 1990b, Wigand 1980).

The developments within satellite technology had important implications for broadcasting. As long as satellite communication required large and costly ground stations they were seen primarily as a producers' technology facilitating communication between different broadcasters, but once it was possible to reduce the size and cost of the dishes, transmitting television programmes via satellite directly to individual households emerged as a possibility. By the mid-1970s, satellite-to-cable transmissions were already a reality in the US and the prospects for Direct Broadcasting by Satellite (DBS) loomed on the horizon. This possibility created much anxiety among governments. In the 1970s television was, as we have seen, perceived almost entirely as a national medium, and the developments in DBS posed a threat to the tradition of national regulation and control.

To prevent this from happening, attempts were made to regulate DBS technology according to the traditional terrestrial principle of national coverage. At the 1977 World Administrative Radio Conference in Geneva, delegates agreed to share out the orbit-slots so that each country, including the European mini-states of the Vatican, Monaco and Luxembourg, were allocated five DBS-channels (Weibull and Severinsson 1988, Grandi and Richeri 1980, Østergaard 1986, Littunen 1980). In retrospect, however, this preoccupation with the potential for direct broadcasting satellites did not address the most urgent issues. The DBS-technology turned out to be difficult to develop, and more than a decade passed before any such satellites were successfully established in space. In the meantime, pan-European television services had become available via ordinary telecommunication satellites, and there had also been important developments within the so-called medium-powered satellite technology.

Following a decision by the European agency in charge of civilian telecommunications to rent out surplus capacity on its OTS-1 communication satellite, new television services became available to cable subscribers in Europe in the same way that it had previously in the US. These services were later moved to other telecommunication satellites, and in December 1988, the first medium-powered satellite in Europe (Astra) was launched. Compared with the planned European DBS-services which at that point had not yet been realised, the Astra satellite was less expensive and had greater channel capacity, while still making reception by individual dishes possible. Due to these developments, the distinction between direct, medium-powered and telecommunication satellites gradually became meaningless. In December 1989 the EEC declared the original DBS concept stemming from the 1977 WARC conference redundant (Negrine and Papathanassopoulos 1990:26), and by that time most national governments had sought to overcome the distinction between different forms of satellites in their national legislation.

In addition to satellites, developments within the field of cable were important for the transformation of the broadcasting constraints. In Britain, cable started out as a radio relay system in the 1920s, but it was not until the television expansion of the 1950s that cable systems really took off. Both in Britain and Norway cable provided a means of improving television reception for people who could not receive a satisfactory off-air signal, and who were not permitted to put up external aerials for environmental or aesthetic reasons (Murdock 1984, Goodfriend 1988, Negrine 1988, Gramstad 1988). As off-air reception improved, however, the cable industries began to survey the field for other sources of income. In Norway the cable companies successfully managed to exploit the market for Swedish

television in the Eastern parts of the country (Gramstad 1988), and in both countries the companies lobbied the authorities for permission to transmit other kinds of material.

In the British case, as we have seen, experiments with pay-television and local access television took place from the 1960s onwards, whereas in Norway, a limited advertising-funded service broadcast for short period in the mid-1960s. Even when permitted, however, these services did not attract any large amounts of revenue, and until the mid-1970s, cable remained a supplementary distribution system for the traditional public service broadcasters. In Europe it was only in the three countries of Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg that a large proportion of the population were connected to cable systems, in all three cases because of the widespread availability of channels from neighbouring countries (Brants 1986, Tydeman and Kelm 1986).

Like satellites, however, there were also technological developments within cable television. Whereas the traditional cable networks were 'narrowband' systems which could only relay a handful of channels, the development of cables made of optical fibres made so-called 'wideband' systems possible. These systems could provide a whole range of information and interactive services: teletext, telephony, teleshopping, facsimile services, security facilities, electronic data interchange and interactive communication. The new possibilities had thereby far wider implications than just increasing the number of television channels; they also linked broadcasting and television with the far-reaching developments within the field of information technology.

From the 1970s onwards, the implementation of computer power and other forms of information technology into many different manufacturing and service industries, helped to bring about new levels of automation in these areas. Developments within information technology also sparked off a whole range of leisure commodities based on micro-electronics: Video cassette recorders, home computers, compact disc players and video discs. If it had not been for the development of broadband cable networks and the possibilities for digitalisation (a common system for information processing, storing and distribution) these processes would have remained separate, but the technological developments pointed increasingly towards the possibilities of homogenising all existing forms of information into just one type of network. This in turn promised a major improvement in the speed and capacity of all information processing, a development with potentially massive implications for all national industries (Bannon 1982, Howard 1981, Hamelink 1983, Dyson and Humphreys 1988, Negrine (ed.) 1985, Bell 1983).

Thus the developments with the field of satellite and cable promised to make traditional distinctions between different forms of technology redundant, and thereby end the era when broadcasting could be treated like an autonomous sphere of policy. There were not developments only within the 'new' technologies, however; the transformation of the technological constraints were also products of changes within more traditional terrestrial television distribution. As noted previously, frequencies along the radio spectrum are distributed by international conferences, and each country is allocated a 'slice' of the spectrum for their own services. These services include, in addition to broadcast transmissions, services such as defence, navigation, astronomy, space research, radio location, metrology, aeronautics, outside broadcasting and emergency services (Peacock 1986:175).

The demand for spectrum capacity has traditionally limited the space available to broadcasting, hence the scarcity of wavelengths. Throughout the post-war years, however, it became apparent that it was possible to use the spectrum more economically, and also that previously unused segments of the spectrum could be used for television distribution (see for example Locksley 1989, Dyson and Humphreys 1988). In Britain these possibilities were exploited as they became available, whereas in Norway there was little debate about the possibilities for establishing more channels until the 1980s, when the interest in the spectrum grew in both countries along with the increased focus on broadcasting matters in general.

In Britain, a feasibility study commissioned by the government in 1987 concluded that it would be possible to accommodate a fifth national television channel on the Ultra High Frequency bands (UHF) by 1992, covering 65-70% per cent of the population. The study also suggested that a sixth channel might be accommodated on the Very High Frequency band (VHF). In addition, a study of the possibilities inherent in the technology known as microwave video distribution (MVDS), suggested that it might be possible to make available between six and twelve television channels all covering 70% of

the population (Department of Trade and Industry 1988, para. 20-23, see also Home Office 1988, para 5.6).

In Norway, the government-appointed 'TV2'-inquiry stated in 1985 that it was technically possible to accommodate two more terrestrial television channels, using a combination of UHF and VHF bands. At that stage Norway was allocated one VHF and three UHF frequencies (NOU 1985:11: 85). Two years later, a government White Paper stated that if desired, four terrestrial television channels could be accommodated (St. meld. nr. 44, 1987-88: 28). Considering the fact that Norway at this stage only had one terrestrial television channel, this invited major possibilities for expansion.

## 7.2. Transformation of the economic context for broadcasting

The new broadcasting technologies have so far been discussed only in terms of their technical capabilities, but their development was also closely linked with economic transformations, and particularly with the saturation of the traditional consumer markets from the 1960s onwards. After the boom in the sales for home electrical appliances in the early post war period, the market for everything from refrigerators to television sets gradually became saturated, and although there was still a certain growth-potential built into making new versions of the same products, it became apparent that the traditional markets would only offer a decline in the long term. As profits dropped, the traditional manufacturing industries increasingly looked to electronics, communication and information as sectors which could provide new growth, and gradually electronics and communication emerged as key sectors of the global economy. This shift was further encouraged by the closure of the space race and the end of the Vietnam war in the mid-1970s. Following the successful launch of the first USSR satellite in 1957, the US government had unleashed research and development contracts worth billions of dollars on the domestic electronics industry. A wide range of corporations were created and consolidated around the space race, but after the successful lunar mission and the war ended, the defence contracts began to even off. From then on, the corporations had to adopt their products to fit civilian markets (Murphy 1983, Mattelart 1982, Østergaard 1986).

As a result of the developments whereby the communication and information sectors assumed more importance, large conglomerates began to dominate, and it became apparent that the European industries were losing out to the US and Japan. In the field of satellite technology, Europe was clearly lagging behind the US, and Japanese products turned out to be difficult to beat within the field of computers and consumer hardware. In an attempt to regain lost ground, European governments initiated a series of cooperative projects, but many of these backfired in the sense that they paved the way for more non-European imports. The European space programme provides a good example. In the early 1970s, ten European nations agreed to pool resources and embark on a coherent satellite programme and in 1978 this led to the launch of the Orbital Test Satellite (OTS) and later the so-called ECS-satellites. Once these were in place it became obvious that the capacity by far exceeded demand, however, and transponders were rented out to television distributors which in turn established television services based mainly on US programmes.

Attempts were also made under the auspices of the EEC to compete within the field of consumer electronics, but by the early 1980s this had not been very successful. The development of the Video Cassette Recorder provides a particularly telling example of how European-made products lost out to Japan. When the VCR-market began to open up in the mid-1970s, the VCRs developed for domestic purposes by Phillips-Grundig (the Dutch-German Consortium) were the ones to be purchased by consumers in the UK, West-Germany and the Netherlands, but when the Japanese-produced VCRs were introduced on the European market in 1978, the European-produced recorders were unable to compete. By 1984 Japanese VCRs, most of them using the VHS format, accounted for nine-tenths of sales in EEC countries (Dyson and Humphreys 1988: 12, see also Tydeman and Kelm 1986, Flick et.al. 1986, Wade 1985).

These developments made European industries and governments even more convinced that economic restructuring and a further shift towards the electronics and communication sector, was necessary if Europe was to compete successfully on the world markets. The problem was where to find the money for the investments. The technological advances of the US and Japan had been supported by large scale public funding, and public investment in the infrastructure would have been the traditional European approach, but now the traditional interventionist mixed-economy model was in

crisis. As has been noted previously, the mid- and late 1970s was a period of inflation and economic difficulties both in Britain and Norway, and the intensification of social dissent compounded the problems for the ruling labour parties, which in both countries held power based on a precarious political balance.

In Britain, the minority Wilson Government which had come to power in 1974 was faced with a catastrophic balance of payment-deficits, inflation accelerating towards twenty per cent and the pent-up frustration of a labour movement more mobilised than ever before. This situation went from bad to worse throughout the 1970s, culminating in the 1979 so-called 'winter of discontent' when a series of large scale strikes broke out in what coincidentally turned out to be one of the coldest winters for a generation. The strikes hit the public sectors particularly hard and had some particularly unpopular consequences, such as rubbish not being collected and schools being closed. The Conservative party and many newspapers attacked the unions and argued that the Labour Government was not, as it had promised, able to exercise control over the labour movement and prevent wage increases. This in turn reflected a shift in the political climate, whereby many began to argue that the reformist labour policies were no longer adequate to solve the long term structural problems of the post-imperialist British economy (Marwick 1990, Leys 1989, Osborne 1987).

The Norwegian Labour Party also experienced problems in the mid- and late 1970s. The party had suffered a loss of confidence after losing the 1972 European Community referendum, and the international economic recession from 1974 onwards, threatened to make matters worse. To avoid the problems faced by Labour Governments elsewhere, the party, which ruled with the support of the Socialist Left Party, used the expected revenue from the North Sea oil to grant wage increases and prevent unemployment. Although this meant that Norway avoided some of the crisis symptoms so prevalent elsewhere, it was a controversial policy. The Conservative Party opposed it, and many others also claimed that it was short-sighted and that a more radical restructuring of the economy was necessary (Fagerberg 1988).

As a result of these developments the traditional model of state intervention lost credibility, and a policy of large-scale public involvement in the establishment of new communication infrastructures appeared to be unrealistic. Furthermore, the crisis for the interventionist welfare-state policies also meant that the traditional model of public corporations, of which broadcasting was a prime example, were brought into disrepute.

### 7.3. Shifts in the balance between citizens and consumers

The third major change in the framework for broadcasting policy-making was the shift in the balance between the public acting as citizens and the public acting as customers. As pointed out in chapter two, members of the public in societies like Britain and Norway have historically had the option of acting out both these roles in regard to broadcasting: On the one hand they have had the opportunity to put forward their views as to how the services should be organised, funded and regulated, and to support parties and organisations that have shared their views. On the other hand they have had the opportunity to choose which of the broadcasting products they have wished to consume, according to their own individual tastes and desires.

Of these two roles, the role of the public as citizens have always been the most important for influencing broadcasting structures. Since broadcasting has been strictly regulated by parliaments and governments and funded through public charges, the only really efficient way to influence or change the system was through some form of political or public activity. This does not mean that the broadcasting institutions could totally neglect the preferences of their audiences, on the contrary; audience data played an increasingly important role in the determination of programme schedules. With limited or non-existing competition, the consumer had few alternatives; they either watched what was on offer or they turned the set off. Compared with this, the public acting as citizens exercised a disproportionately strong influence. Through their power over broadcasting structures, they were able to lay down the general framework for both broadcasting systems and programme policies.

From the mid-1970s, however, the technological and economic developments outlined above began to undermine this situation. Whereas previously the only efficient way to influence the broadcasting system had been through some form of public or political activity, the new range of television

appliances and channels seemed to promise the public more direct control as consumers. With the advent of satellites, VCRs and cable, the era of scarcity was coming to an end, and if the new possibilities were exploited it would mean that the consumers could, if they were able and willing to spend the required amount of cash, achieve more control over the ingredients of their television diets.

Whether or not there was actually a demand for more control and greater 'choice' among the population at large, is not easy to ascertain. Surveys indicated that such a demand was present, particularly in Norway where there was only one television channel, but there was no way to find out for sure if, and how much, people would actually pay to have more television. In this vacuum, two developments in particular influenced those who were in favour of a more liberal broadcasting structure. Firstly the so-called 'cable revolution' in the US which began when a pay-movie channel owned by Time Inc. (Home Box Office), began transmitting to cable operators via the Westar satellite in 1975. The channel was a huge success, leading to an array of new services and a tremendous increase in the number of cabled households, and this had a profound impact on the broadcasting climate both in the US and in Europe. Extensive information about the sudden growth of the US cable industry was made available to governments and industrial interests on both sides of the Atlantic, and television prophets of various inclinations, whether interested in 'subversive' or 'commercial' services, claimed that the possibilities for networking via cable would create an era of television abundance, and transfer the power from the broadcasters to the consumers (Tydeman and Kelm 1986, Berrigan (ed.) 1977, Negrine (ed.) 1985).

The second development was the boom in the sales of VCRs in Europe which occurred around 1980. After years of slow expansion and fierce competition over standards, VCR sales suddenly began to take off. Between 1979 and 1982 annual growth rates of over 100% were experienced in many countries. The UK and West Germany led the way, followed by the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Ireland (Tydeman and Kelm 1986: 159). By 1982, the UK had the highest VCR penetration in Europe totalling 19.2% of all television licence fee holders, whereas Norway was fifth on the list with a penetration of 11.9% (Flick et.al 1986: 89).

The reasons for purchasing a VCR and the amount of cash necessary to do so, varied between different countries. In Britain, the VCRs were, from the beginning predominantly used for time-shifting, and the presence of a television rental market which was quickly adapted to include the new products was crucial because it made expansion to low-income households possible. In Norway, in contrast, most VCRs were bought and not rented, and here its expansion was inextricably linked with the development of a rental system for pre-recorded films and entertainment programmes. Despite these and other differences, the boom in the sales of VCRs was generally seen as an indication that the demand for more television which had prompted the 'cable revolution' in the US could be repeated in Europe, and that at least a substantial proportion of the consumers was willing to back this demand with hard cash.

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In this chapter we have seen how the technological and economic transformations of the post-war years led to important changes in the framework of broadcasting policy-making. By 1980 the constraints which had originally limited the options open to the policy-makers, were no longer present in the same way. These changes did not imply that the policy-makers now had a total autonomy of operation, however. On the contrary, the developments outlined above constituted a new set of constraints, which were just as powerful in limiting the possibilities open to governments and other decision-makers.

The most important of these new constraints was that the 'no-change-option', which among policy-makers had previously been a frequent response to new technological developments in the area of broadcasting, was eliminated. By removing the technical and economic justifications for the strict broadcasting regulation, the new developments had left the traditional regulatory regimes in vulnerable positions where they could only be defended on social and cultural grounds. This did not mean that the transformations of the constraints were sufficient to bring about a re-regulation of broadcasting on their own. As had already been powerfully demonstrated both in Britain and Norway in the post-war years, the fact that more distribution possibilities became available, did not, for example automatically lead to the establishment of more television channels. For this to happen, it was not sufficient that the

constraints were transformed, it was also necessary that various groups and actors began to take advantage of the new possibilities. As we shall see in the next chapter, this was exactly what happened in both countries in the 1980s.

## CHAPTER 8: ECONOMIC INTERESTS AND DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE MEDIA INDUSTRIES

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the technological framework for broadcasting policy-making was transformed in the post-war years. These developments did not change the broadcasting structures by themselves, however. As in the case of radio and television before them, the 'new' technologies were first and foremost developed as carriers, as technologies primarily intended to improve existing distributions systems. It was only gradually that it became clear that they could also be used for carrying other types of content, including content which was in limited supply on the traditional European broadcasting networks.

Consequently, the new technologies continued the tradition whereby 'the supply of broadcasting facilities preceded demand' and 'the means of communication preceded their content' (Williams 1975: 25). Like radio and television technologies before them, they did not in themselves bring social change. They merely framed the social developments and helped bring about what I have labelled an 'historic moment', an open-ended situation where many different developments were possible. Which of these developments would be realised depended on the strength of different actors, and the struggles and alliances between them.

Among the actors and interests which from the early 1980s moved in to exploit the new possibilities, industrial and business interests were clearly the most dominant. As information and communication grew to become important industrial sectors both globally and within each national context, these interests increasingly merged into large conglomerates, which in turn controlled capital and resources crucial to economic development world-wide. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, however, the industrial operators could not exploit the new potentials fully without a political re-regulation of broadcasting. In the early 1980s, a strict regulatory regime was still in force both in Britain and Norway, and business interests in broadcasting were guarded with suspicion. It was not legal to establish competing channels, advertising and other forms of commercial exploitation were strictly limited, and the broadcasting environments were still dominated by traditional public service ideas, institutions and regulations.

To change this situation, business and industrial interests intensified their pressures on the policy-makers to make them remove the obstacles to commercial exploitation. An examination of the more specific business interests active in each national context in the 1980s, however, makes it clear that not all industrial operators shared the same interests here. While some pressed for a complete deregulation of the broadcasting market and a privatisation of the public corporations, others merely wanted the traditional institutions to open up to external economic interests. A third group of business and industrial actors preferred the no-change option, but as the 1980s evolved most of these either became marginalised or were themselves tempted into taking advantage of the new possibilities.

The interests of the different economic actors also varied between the two countries. In the small Norwegian media market, few business interests argued in favour of an outright privatisation of broadcasting, while such views were more common in Britain. Apart from these and other structural and cultural differences, however, the rationale of the industrial interests was largely the same in the two national contexts. In this chapter I examine the hardware, software and advertising interests separately, before turning to a discussion of the more general developments within the communication industries.

The analysis in this chapter is based on a combination of primary and secondary sources. Among the primary sources I have consulted the complete set of comments from various business and industrial interests to the 1985 'TV2'-inquiry in Norway and the 1988 Home Affairs Committee inquiry in Britain,

supplemented with a selection of responses from business and industrial interests to the 1988 British Government White Paper on broadcasting (see Introduction to part III and Appendix A for details).

### 8.1. The hardware interests

The hardware interests comprises many different actors and industries, of which only a couple are discussed here. Firstly there are the manufacturers of sets and other forms of broadcasting equipment, which are included because of their historical importance within the area of broadcasting and television. Secondly, there are the more recently developed television distribution businesses: the satellite owners and the cable companies, which are both included because of their importance for the transformation of the broadcasting structures and because their situations are well suited to illustrate the position of industrial interests in broadcasting more generally.

As has been noted previously, the manufacturers of broadcasting equipment have always had one overriding interest: to sell as many sets and as much other equipment as possible. In the early stages of broadcasting this meant that the manufacturers accepted the public takeover of broadcasting, because public control secured that the network was extended in a way which increased the demand for equipment. Throughout the post-war years, however, the situation changed as the market for product after product (radio, monochrome television, colour television), became saturated. Gradually, employment and profits dropped, and in several countries, of which Norway was one, the domestic radio manufacturing industry was eradicated. In other European countries, the larger companies survived, but they became increasingly desperate in their search for new products, and in this situation the information technology and home entertainment sectors seemed to offer promising opportunities.

As a result of the move into these sectors, the 1980s and early 1990s saw a series of fierce battles over standards and technological supremacy, not just between corporations but also between Western Europe, the US and Japan. The struggle over VCR-standards (which the European corporations lost), and the on-going battles over High Definition and Digital Television all provide good examples. The presence of these battles illustrate that the various industrial actors had different interests, and that they did not act in unison. Despite these differences, however, the manufacturers of broadcasting equipment also had a shared interest in the expansion of the broadcasting market. More television channels and services would mean a greater demand for sets within each household, and also a greater demand for traditional and new appliances linked to the sets, and this in turn would mean more profit and more employment within the industries. Thus, as the market for product after product became saturated, the manufacturers were less and less content with the strictly regulated broadcasting structures, and lobbied governments and policy-makers in order to remove the obstacles to a proliferation of services.

An explicit expression of the interests of the manufacturers in regard to broadcasting in the 1980s, can be found in the memoranda from the aerial industry in Britain to the 1988 Home Affairs Committee. The Confederation of Aerial Industries declared its strong support for the 'moves to widen consumer choice' in the form of additional television channels because this could, according to statistics from France, increase sales of aerials by fifty per cent (see also memoranda from the UK's leading radio and TV aerial manufacturer Antiference to the same committee). At the time when this was written, the British electronics giant Amstrad was also reaping the benefits of the new media environment by producing the small dishes necessary to receive the signals from the Astra satellite.

The second type of industrial actor to be examined in this section are the television distribution businesses: the satellite and cable operators. Among the satellite operators the most significant actors in the early days of transfrontier television in Europe were the European Space Agency (ESA) and the quasi-official body Interim-Eutelsat (which was formed to act for the PTTs in establishing the European telecommunications satellite network). As noted previously, the ESA launched its first satellite in 1978, followed in 1983 and 1984 by the two European Communication Satellites (ECS). These satellites were originally designed to provide point-to-point telecommunication between European countries and to meet the needs of the European Broadcasting Union for the exchange of television programmes, but once they were in place, it became clear that the supply of transmission capacity far exceeded demand. This in turn led to the historic decision by Interim-Eutelsat that transponders should be rented out to parties interested in television distribution, a decision which was made permanent in June 1982

(Østergaard 1986, Mortensen 1990a, Giersing 1984, Sepstrup 1985, Murdock 1984, Tydeman and Kelm 1986).

Thus, the early developments of transfrontier television in Europe illustrates that it does not always matter who owns the distribution system. In this case an official organisation, formed and owned by the national PTTs, behaved just like a commercial carrier in the pursuit of a return on its investment. At this stage, there were no commercially-operated satellites in Europe, although several countries had initiated plans for the development of DBS. The moves made by Interim-Eutelsat also paved the way for the private industrial operators, of which the consortium behind the Astra satellite was perhaps the best example. In late 1982, the Government of Luxembourg, which had a long tradition of housing transfrontier broadcasting services, initiated plans to develop a medium-powered private satellite system designed specifically for the delivery of Europe-wide television. These efforts matured in March 1985 with the establishment of Société Européenne des Satellites (SES) as a private company under Luxembourg law, and in December 1988, the Astra satellite was launched (Société Européenne des Satellites 1989). The Astra consortium was set up in direct competition with the Eutelsat ventures, and did indeed draw business away from the ECS-satellites. Of the sixteen available transponders, five were from the beginning controlled by Rupert Murdoch's enterprises, two were controlled by the ScanSat/Kinnevik consortium, and the rest were shared by a number of other interests, including British Telecom (Dyson and Humphreys 1988, Negrine and Papathanassopoulos 1990, Collins 1990b, Bergens Tidende 8.12.88, Aftenposten 5.12.88).

Despite the differences between commercial operators such as SES and 'official' ones like Eutelsat, they did have, in the same way as the manufacturers of broadcasting equipment, a common interest in a liberalisation of the broadcasting regulations. Since the satellite operators derived their revenue from leasing transponders to television companies, it was crucial that all regulatory obstacles to receiving the signals were removed. As SES stated in its 1989 report, the Astra company 'believes that it has a role to play in putting together the most attractive package of channels so that more people want to install reception equipment', but few people would want to install equipment if they were legally prohibited from receiving the signals.

In addition the cable industries were in favour of a liberalisation of the broadcasting regulations. In contrast to the situation in the US, European cable developments in the 1970s had been closely regulated by the PTTs, and progress in terms of cabled households was slow. When the first regular pan-European satellite channels began broadcasting in 1982, only 13% of British homes were connected to cable systems and these were mostly narrowband systems which could only carry the four existing channels (Hunt 1982 para. 52). The figure was higher in Norway where around one quarter of all homes were connected, but since these were the homes in the most densely populated areas, it was not expected that progress elsewhere would be very rapid (NOU 1983:3: 93, NRK Annual Report 1983).

The new media developments, however, seemed to promise new growth for the cable companies. Based on the US experience, which showed a large unmet demand for entertainment via cable, both satellite-to-cable transmissions and different kinds of pay-television seemed to offer new possibilities for raising the profits on the European market. Thus, both in Britain and Norway, the cable companies intensified their pressure on the policy-makers for the permission to transmit a wider range of services from the late 1970s onwards. The optimism was great, as the Cable Television Association in Britain describes it rather heroically in a 1990 retrospective comment:

'From this bleak beginning a number of intrepid entrepreneurs with a pioneering spirit decided to persevere with the development of an industry which looked capable over time of bringing substantial returns'

(Cable Television Association 1990, see also Murdock 1984, Negrine 1985, Gramstad 1988).

Before long, the companies in both Britain and Norway could note an improvement in their situation as a result of their lobbying. In Norway, seven cable companies managed to obtain a licence for retransmitting the signals from the OTS satellite in December 1981, and the same year in Britain pilot schemes for pay-television were authorised in seven locations. This was, as we shall see, followed by a further liberalisation of the regulation concerning both cable and satellite later in the decade. When

the 1980s came to an end, three satellites beamed the offerings of 33 channels, at least half of them funded by advertising, into Western Europe.

## 8.2. The software interests

Like the hardware industries, the programme producers and suppliers comprise a diverse set of actors. In this section, five such industries are examined, and as we shall see, these have partly conflicting and partly similar interests. The first group of actors to be discussed here is the US film studios and syndicates, who have long ago diversified into television. This is followed by a discussion of the right holders and owners of major events (particularly sports events), and the so-called 'independent' producers who deliver programmes to the television companies. The two last groups of actors to be discussed are the traditional media industries: the press and in Britain also the privately owned ITV-companies, and the domestic artistic and cultural interests in the two countries.

The US film studios and film and television syndicates were from the beginning among those interests most unequivocally in favour of an expansion of television in Europe. More television channels would mean more imports and less revenue per channel would mean that the programmes would have to be cheap, and in this situation, US producers and syndicates were those who had the most to gain. As Jacobowitz (1986) has noted, the golden rule of international television is that an increase in the number of channels without a parallel increase in the production capacity, equals 'Americanization'. Thus, the US television industry was well aware, as it had been since television first began expanding globally, that an expansion of distribution channels in Europe would most likely result in a massive increase in the importation of US programming.

Many have explored the reasons for the US competitive advantage in the global trade of television programming. Hoskins and McFayden (1988) and Hoskins and Mirus (1988) argue that one of the main reasons is the size of the US home market. The US enjoys a unique combination of a large population with a common language on the one hand and a high per capita income on the other, which makes it the biggest single television market in the world both in terms of revenues and the number of sets. Due to this favourable position the US television industry can recuperate much of the initial cost of a film or a series on the domestic market, and thus compete favourably in terms of prices overseas. An added advantage is that the US market is unusually insular and intolerant of foreign programming, whereas US programming is extremely popular abroad. Hoskins and McFayden (1988) and Hoskins and Mirus (1988) argue that this popularity is due to the fact that US television is based around 'lowest common denominator' entertainment programmes of the escapist/fantasy variety which are not provided in large amounts anywhere else. Additionally, the polyglot nature of the US audience makes it the one national audience which best represents the features of the global television public.

There are also industrial reasons for the US advantage, however. Among them is the large production volumes in the US television industry (currently more than 250 000 hours of programming a year), which means that sizeable stocks are available for export at all times, and the well established foreign distribution system based on the early Hollywood experience. The large film studios have long ago diversified into television, and the industry has a long experience of producing programming for sale overseas (Renaud and Litman 1985, Hoskins and McFayden 1988, Hoskins and Mirus 1988).

Taken together, these factors indicated that the US film and television industry stood to gain tremendously from an expansion of television in Europe. The pioneer satellite services, such as Sky Channel, relied heavily on old and worn US reruns to attract cable subscribers and advertisers, and the volume of imports grew rapidly. By 1988 Hollywood film and TV sales in Europe showed a fivefold increase over 1980 (Newsweek 9.10.1989). This growth in exports was extremely important to the US television industry which at the same time was facing massive problems on the domestic market. The fragmentation of the audience which followed in the wake of the 'cable revolution' and the increase in production costs had led to a substantial loss of profits. Cable coverage in the US continued to increase from 29% of all homes in 1980 to 58% in 1990, and in the same period the network share of the audience declined from 83% to 62% (Broadcast 27.7.1991).

Thus, the US television industry depended more and more on its sales to other countries. As we shall see later, however, many European actors did not look favourably at the rapid increase in US imports, and various initiatives were taken, both on the European and national levels, to halt the 'flow' of US

programming. The US film and television responded to these measures by intensifying their lobbying of European policy-makers, an effort which peaked in the late 1980s with protests from the Motion Picture Association of America against EEC import restrictions, and a complaint to GATT from the US Trade Representative against the 'unlawful trade barrier' put up by the Council of Europe (Newsweek 9.10.1989, Time 18.7.1988, Mortensen 1990b).

Before concluding on the US film and television industry, it is important to point out that the 'logic' of the US operators in this field was not only to provide programmes for the new channels. It was also assumed that once 'popular' US-style television had become available in Europe, demands would proliferate for more such programming to be shown on the terrestrial channels. This would again lead to a higher level of competition for US material and thereby to higher prices.

The second group of software interests to be discussed here, the owners of major events, were also in favour of an increase in the number of television outlets. Among the more important of these interests were the owners of sporting events, and since live sport was a cheap and popular programme category and one of the few which travelled well across national boundaries, these actors had good reasons to believe that sales and prices would increase if competitive restrictions were removed. These restrictions were particularly strict in Britain where protection against one company being able to monopolise sporting events was granted under the 1980 Broadcasting Act. Events such as the Cup Final, the Derby and Wimbledon could not be sold exclusively to any one channel, and the BBC and ITV were also given priority over cable and satellite in acquiring the rights to televise these events. Since the two corporations cooperated between themselves, there was in fact no competition, and the only option open to owners who were dissatisfied was not to sell at all.

With the prospect of more competing channels, however, the sports interests put pressure on policy-makers to remove the restrictions. In their memoranda to the Home Affairs Committee (1988), the Football Association (owner of the FA Cup Final) claimed that the protection against monopolisation was no more than 'an antiquated, unnecessary and unfair restriction', and that it was not in the interests of the viewers to have 'access to a commodity at less than its real value'.

The Norwegian sports associations also began lobbying for a less restricted television environment from the beginning of the 1980s. In 1983 and 1984 they put forward proposals suggesting that they themselves should, in cooperation with other organisations, be allowed to establish and control a second terrestrial television channel in Norway (Norwegian Sports Association, Federation of Municipal Cinemas, Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions 1984, see also Gundersen 1984), and this proposal was later repeated in their comment to the 'TV2'-inquiry (Norwegian Sports Association 1985). If it had been accepted, this proposal would have given the owners of the sports events a tremendous business advantage compared with other interests.

The third group of actors to be examined here are the so-called 'independent' producers. This group has, over the last decade, grown to become one of the more important pressure groups on the national level of broadcasting policy-making. In Britain the 'independent' sector manifested itself as early as the mid-1970s, when they lobbied the Annan committee ferociously in favour of a more 'open' broadcasting structure. After Channel Four was set up with a specific brief to support smaller production companies, the proportion of 'independently' produced programmes in Britain rose enormously: In the first six years of its existence Channel Four contributed towards the financing of some one hundred low and medium budget feature films, for example (Channel Four 1988, para. 64).

The example of Channel Four greatly inspired 'independents' in other countries, including Norway. In contrast to Britain, the number of television production companies was limited in Norway since there were no outlets specifically designed to purchase their programmes, but here again the 'independent' lobby grew from the early 1980s onwards. Various film, television and video companies began pressing for a new television channel to be established as a 'publisher' in the same way as Channel Four (Media Vision 1985, Norwegian Association of Film- and Video Producers and Association of Feature Film Producers 1985).

Like the film studios and the right holders, the 'independent' producers were in favour of an expansion of the television market, as this would increase the demand for programmes. Regarding a more general deregulation or privatisation of the broadcasting market, however, the 'independents' were

less enthusiastic. A system whereby many poor channels would compete for revenue and audiences would leave little money to pay for the type of original programming which the 'independents' would most like to produce. As the Independent Programme Producers' Association (IPPA) in Britain argued in its memo to the 1988 Home Affairs Committee: 'Deregulation is not the solution. To maintain the standards and achievements of UK television, the high levels of investment in production must be maintained'.

In Norway the 'independents' also argued in favour of upholding the level of investments in broadcasting. Since Norway is a small country, there exists an even greater risk that the resources might be spread too thinly, and to avoid this, the 'independents' argued for more public money to be used on television. In their comments to the 1985 'TV2'-inquiry, the 'independent' sector argued in favour of the establishment of a new television channel owned in part by the state, and for the setting up of a publicly-funded production fund for the commissioning of independent productions (Media Vision 1985, Norwegian Association of Film- and Video Producers and Association of Feature Film Producers 1985, Norwegian Film 1985).

Contrary to many other business and industrial interests, the 'independents' in both countries were in favour of preserving the public corporations. This support was qualified by the condition that these would purchase more from external sources, however, and since the early 1980s 'independents' both in Britain and Norway intensified their pressure on the corporations to achieve this aim. In Britain, the argument that Channel Four had managed to radically reduce programme costs without sacrificing programme standards, was used to campaign for 25 per cent quota of 'independent' productions on the ITV and the BBC (see Independent Programme Producers' Association 1988). In Norway, no specific percentage was mentioned, but here the film, television and video producers argued strongly in favour of a larger share of 'independent' productions on NRK television (Media Vision 1985, Norwegian Association of Film- and Video Producers and Association of Feature Film Producers 1985).

The fourth set of interests to be examined here, the traditional media and television companies, were also strongly ambivalent to a deregulation of television. Among these interests, the actions of the press and the publishers were particularly interesting. As we have seen previously, the newspapers and publishers were, to begin with, quite sceptical of radio and television and specifically opposed to them carrying advertisements, and this scepticism was still present in the 1980s. In Britain, the Newspaper Society stated in their memo to the 1988 Home Affairs Committee that television advertising should remain restricted, and that the specific advertising limits should only be set after 'full consultation with press and other media bodies'. In Norway, the Press Federation (1985) stated similarly that while it supported the establishment of a second television channel, it would prefer it to be publicly funded (see also the Association of Conservative Newspapers 1985).

Such defensive views were not representative of the larger and more important publishing houses, however. Their response to the new possibilities opening up within television was to diversify into the business themselves. In Britain (and in many other countries), one of the most active operators in this field was Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, owner of The Times, The Sun, The Sunday Times, News of the World and Today, as well as several magazines. Murdoch's Enterprises had tried already in 1971 to acquire a British television station, the then new London Weekend Television franchise, but was forced by the Independent Television Authority to relinquish the deal. Later, in 1986, a consortium in which Murdoch had a 20% stake applied for the British DBS-franchise, but this time his interests lost out to the British Satellite Broadcasting consortium (BSB). All was not lost, however: After a period of intense competition BSB merged in 1990 with Sky Channel, the once pan-European satellite service in which Murdoch had gained a 65% controlling interest almost a decade earlier (Østergaard 1986, Mortensen 1990b, Giersing 1984, Sepstrup 1985, Murdock 1984, Tydeman and Kelm 1986, Independent 7.11.90).

Furthermore Murdoch's archrival, Robert Maxwell's Communications Corporations, which through Pergamon Holdings Ltd., already controlled the Mirror and the People newspapers, diversified into television. Throughout the 1980s he acquired interests in the rock video-channel MTV and the movie channel Premiere as well as Central Television, Border television and Maxwell Cable. Despite catastrophic debts he continued to acquire new media interests until his death in November 1991. A third publishing group, Pearson, owner of the Financial Times and Penguin Books, also diversified into

television through the acquisition of a stake in the BSB satellite service, and after the service merged with Sky Channel, Pearson remained one of the major interests (Negrine and Papathanassopoulos 1990, Broadcast 12.10.90, Guardian 3.11.90, Time 18.7.1988).

In Norway, publishing houses became involved in broadcasting as soon as the possibilities began to open up in the early 1980s. As Knapskog (1988) has demonstrated, as many as one hundred and thirty different newspapers made one or more attempts to get involved in local radio or television, and although some were unsuccessful, many acquired stakes in cable networks or production companies. Among the more aggressive operators was the Schibsted company, owner of the two most-selling newspapers in Norway, and Dagbladet, the third largest paper. In 1983 these two companies attempted a parallel take-over which would, if it had been successful, have resulted in them sharing control over the whole of the Oslo cable network, but in the end they only succeeded in a more limited buy-out. Both companies remained active in the cable and broadcasting field throughout the 1980s, however, and the same pattern was present in other parts of the country where large regional newspapers got involved both in cable networks and local broadcasting (Werner et.al. 1984, Mathiesen 1984, Knapskog 1988).

Hardly any of these early investments turned out to be successful in commercial terms, because the 'opening up' of the Norwegian broadcasting market took longer than the optimists had predicted. When the franchise for the second television channel was advertised in early 1991, however, the large publishing houses were among the most prominent applicants. The franchise was, in the end, awarded to a consortium within which the Schibsted company and the Danish publishing house Gutenberghus were among the dominant interests. The presence of the latter illustrates the extent to which publishing houses based in other Scandinavian countries have increased their presence in Norway. Both the Danish Gutenberghus and the Swedish Bonnier Company have diversified to the extent that they are now involved with a whole range of media activities: newspapers, magazines, books, television and radio production, video and film libraries and electronics (Aftenposten 31.3.1989).

This trend towards cross-media ownership and control has many implications for broadcasting. One of the most problematic aspects is that it has become increasingly difficult to disentangle the ideological views of the newspapers from the financial interests of their owners. Particularly in Britain, but also in Norway, the press debate about broadcasting in the 1980s in periods resembled more a series of campaigns than regular journalism. In Britain, the Murdoch newspapers were particularly active in lobbying for radical changes in the broadcasting policy, and they also loudly propagated the virtues of Sky Channel and debased the efforts of the BBC, ITV and BSB (before it merged with Sky Channel) (O'Malley 1988, see also Financial Times 28.4.1989 reporting on a European Institute of the Media Report). In Norway a similar, although less explicit, tendency has been apparent both in the main tabloids and in the dominant regional newspapers, and it is likely that in this context, the newspaper campaigns have contributed much in the way of an opening for a re-regulation of broadcasting.

The existing television companies responded to the changes in the broadcasting framework with a combination of offensive and defensive strategies in the same way as the publishers. In addition to the BBC and NRK, whose responses are discussed later, the ITV-companies and Channel Four are the most relevant actors here. The ITV-companies have traditionally opposed the wide powers of the IBA to determine programme schedules and control advertising, but faced with the prospect of a more 'light touch' regulatory structure they preferred the traditional system (and thereby also their traditional privileges) to continue. As they stated in their comment to the 1988 White Paper: 'too much of the valued old', should not be thrown out, 'before viewers have had the opportunity to sample the new' (see also memo from the Independent Television Association to the Home Affairs Committee 1988).

The individual ITV-companies also shared this cautious attitude. Granada television, the longest serving of the ITV-companies and the only one remaining of the initial franchise-holders, stated in its comment, that despite the ITV-system being a rare breed of commercial and non-competitive practices, there was no doubt that 'the system worked', in terms of 'the programmes delivered to the nations screens'. Television South West (TSW), similarly stated that it wished the traditional public broadcasting structure to continue and also that public service obligations should be extended to new entrants. 'It is important that this applies so far as practical to all broadcasts receivable in Britain', they argued, 'if those who do not subscribe to public service principles are not to obtain an unreasonable

commercial advantage'. The opposition to change was also shared by Channel Four, who feared that the channels special remit to serve 'unserved audiences' would be threatened if the regulatory regime was liberalised (Channel Four Press Release 1989).

Despite these negative attitudes, however, many television companies sought to exploit the new opportunities in much the same way as the publishers. Many of the ITV companies were already part of large industrial conglomerates who could not afford to stand by and watch new business opportunities pass. In some cases the companies got specifically involved in ventures which could, in the long term, threaten their own position. The best example is probably the three ITV-companies Thames Television, Television South West and Ulster Television which all acquired stakes in the Astra satellite venture (Société Européenne des Satellites 1989).

Among the many other software interests who stood to gain or lose from a re-regulation of broadcasting, only one more group of actors will be mentioned here: the domestic artistic interests (authors, composers, musicians etc.). Like the press, these actors had only reluctantly accepted the presence of radio and television in the first place, but having done so they were primarily concerned to protect and expand their labour market. Thus in principle, they were also in favour of the establishment of more broadcasting outlets. Faced with the possibility of a more liberal broadcasting market and the likelihood of increased (US) imports, however, these interests became more explicitly defensive. Using predominantly cultural rather than economic arguments (about the threats to national culture and identity), both in Britain and Norway these actors began lobbying in favour of stricter national production quotas. In Norway, organisations representing musicians, writers, artists and composers all argued in their memos to the 1985 'TV2'-inquiry that the national culture was about to be eroded and that a new terrestrial television service should be set up with a quota of at least 50% Norwegian-produced programming (Norwegian Association of Musicians 1985, Norwegian Society of Authors 1985, Norwegian Council of Artists 1985, Norwegian Association of Composers 1985). Many also stressed the need for more public funding to become available within television, as a way of extending the domestic production base.

In Britain, such arguments were less prominent among the artistic interests, who after all would find themselves just as often on the exporting side of the 'cultural imperialism'-equation. However arguments in favour of upholding and extending the quota-system were also put forward here. In its comment to the 1988 White Paper, the Writers Guild, for example, argued that quotas should be imposed on a restructured ITV-system so that the channel would 'include a fair proportion of original British drama and comedy in order to maintain our national culture and identity in the face of the increasing tide of foreign imports'.

### 8.3. The advertising interests

The advertising lobby consists of two distinct groups of actors: the advertising practitioners, who work in the advertising agencies or act as 'media buyers', and the general business and industrial interests, whose main aim is to promote and sell their goods and services. Whereas the first of these groups of actors is relatively insignificant, the second represents huge resources and has a substantial bargaining power both nationally and globally. Since advertising acts as a support service, a 'lubricator', for the sale of goods and services more generally, the interests of the advertisers have always been difficult for policy-makers to ignore, and as the post-war consumer markets developed, the advertising lobby grew to become one of the most significant pressure groups in broadcasting. Both in Britain and Norway this group of actors did, as we have seen, press for access to the airwaves on many occasions. In Britain, the advertising interests played a key role both in the establishment of commercial television in 1954 and commercial radio in the 1970s, whereas in Norway, their attempts at reintroducing broadcast adverts in the decades following the second world war were unsuccessful. They continued to lobby the policy-makers, however, and this lobbying intensified as the television medium became more widespread. Television was always the preferred outlet for the advertisers because they considered it the medium with the most impact, and since it was also the medium with the largest untapped potential, there was nothing the advertising interests wanted more than to gain access to it.

Both in Britain and Norway, the changes in the framework for broadcasting policy-making in the 1980s, made for increased pressure from these interests. Despite the fact that the British television system

was already among the most heavily commercialised public broadcasting systems in Europe (McQuail 1986), it was, in the view of the advertisers, still too restricted and lacking in competition. Thus despite the differences between the British and Norwegian broadcasting situations, the advertising lobby had largely similar interests in both contexts: They wanted more channels to be made available for advertising, and they wanted the restrictions on commercial air-time (time limits and quotas, bans on specific products etc.) to be removed or liberalised (see for example Norwegian Association of Advertising Agencies 1985 and Incorporated Society of British Advertisers 1985).

The pressure for more channels on which to advertise increased in both countries from the early 1980s onwards. In Britain, the advertisers intensified their attack on the monopoly system of television advertising which they claimed had made the ITV-companies complacent, and which had led to a situation where 'viewers are dissatisfied and advertisers are having to pay excessive costs which are very harmful to British industry' (cited from Incorporated Society of British Advertisers (supp. memo) 1988, see also Incorporated Society of British Advertisers 1985, Peacock 1986 para 15). A similar argument linking presumed viewer dissatisfaction, concern for the national industry and the so-called 'excessive' costs of advertising, was also put forward in Norway (see for example the Norwegian Association of Advertising Agencies 1985). In the wake of the increased availability of commercial pan-European television channels in the early 1980s, however, arguments about unfair competition became more dominant. The fact that foreign advertisement-funded channels could be received in Norway, the advertisers claimed, benefitted foreign manufacturers at the cost of domestic and local ones, who could not use satellite advertising on an economically sound basis.

This argument, which was also supported by general industrial and trade union interests, further implied that this had a negative influence on the national industry. It was also argued that the trend, involving an increasing amount of the national advertising revenue leaving the country, would make it almost impossible to establish a national advertising-funded television channel (see for example Norwegian Association of Advertising Agencies 1985, Federation of Norwegian Commercial Associations 1985, Norwegian Marketing Federation 1985, Confederation of Norwegian Industry 1985, Association of Advertisers in Norway 1985, Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions 1985, Confederation of Vocational Unions 1985, Bates A/B 1983, 1985,).

Similar 'unfair-competition'-arguments have been put forward in all countries experiencing television spill-over from countries with more liberal advertising regulations. In an analysis of the Danish case in the early 1980s, however, Sepstrup (1985) concluded that only a very small range of products and manufacturers were competitively disadvantaged by the presence of foreign advertising and that there was little evidence for the view that the 'lack' of domestic television advertising outlets were damaging to national industry. The fact that this argument was often repeated in countries with no national television advertising such as Norway, should thus more be seen as an indication of the growing power of the advertising lobby, rather than a substantiation of the argument itself.

The advertising lobbies in both countries also demanded a liberalisation of the advertising restrictions, and 'warned' the policy-makers that unless conditions favourable to the advertisers were adopted in the planning of new channels, there would not be sufficient revenue to finance such channels. If conditions were favourable, however, there would be plenty of revenue available to fund not only new channels, but also to secure the continued existence of media already dependent on advertising. 'Favourable conditions' in this sense meant that there would be no limitations on the ratio of time devoted to commercials, no restrictions on the interruption of programmes, no bans on specific products, and no restrictions on sponsorship (see for example Advertising Association 1988, Incorporated Society of British Advertisers 1988, Association of Media Independents 1989, Peacock 1986 app. G, Norwegian Association of Advertising Agencies 1985, Norwegian Marketing Federation 1985, Association of Advertisers in Norway 1985).

So far, we have seen how the advertising interests in both countries took the opportunity presented by the changes in the broadcasting constraints to demand a liberalisation of the strict regulatory regimes. Like many of the other industrial interests, however, the advertisers were also ambivalent to a complete deregulation of broadcasting. A situation whereby many channels would put out a similar mixture of 'lowest common denominator' programming would merely lead to fragmentation of the audience, and it might also frighten away the viewers with the most substantial spending power. In addition, it would increase the 'zapping' between channels, a phenomena which was already causing

substantial problems for advertisers. Along with the development of the VCR which made it possible to avoid the adverts altogether, the widespread practice of changing channels during advertising breaks which had followed the dissemination of the remote control switch, profoundly threatened the impact of television advertising.

As Sepstrup (1986) has pointed out, advertisers and schedulers tried a number of measures to counter these threats. These included shorter advertising breaks and/or shorter adverts, new programme structures, new placing in programmes, split-screen advertising and less 'advertising-like' adverts. In addition, there was a shift toward various types of sponsorship, ranging from the type where the advertisers only paid for credits at the end of the programme, to full advertiser involvement in the programmes' production, and channels for advertising and selling only. These developments were, by the early 1980s, already widespread in the US, but in Europe the strict regulations and the resistance from broadcasters made it difficult to employ sponsorship. However, the advertising interests began lobbying for the restrictions on 'integrative solutions' to be lifted (see for example memoranda from IBM United Kingdom Ltd. to the 1988 Home Affairs Committee).

In contrast to the situation in the US, the British and Norwegian broadcasters had other untried options, of which the most attractive was to get access to the traditional public broadcasting channels. The main reason why this was so attractive was that it would grant the advertisers immediate access to an enormous audience which they otherwise might have problems reaching. In Britain, the BBC audience had, despite the similarities between the BBC and ITV output, substantially higher average spending power, and this made the BBC audience more attractive than ITV's. As Kenneth Miles, Director of the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers stated in an interview in the late 1980s, the ITV-audience had increasingly lost their appeal because it had 'gone down market and up the geriatric scale' (cited from Hood and O'Leary 1990: 197, see also Incorporated Society of British Advertisers 1985, 1988). In Norway, access to the NRK was even more attractive to advertisers, since this would have practically handed them the whole audience on a plate. In the early 1980s the NRK was still totally dominant on the Norwegian television scene, and the advertising interests found this a very attractive target, if only access could be negotiated (see for example Bates 1983, 1985, Federation of Norwegian Commercial Associations 1985, Norwegian Marketing Federation 1985, Confederation of Norwegian Industry 1985).

Both in Britain and Norway, the advertising interests put strong pressures on the policy-makers throughout the 1980s in order to remove the ban on advertising within the public corporations. In Britain, the most intense period of lobbying took place in 1984, and coincided with the tri-annual BBC licence fee settlement. In a climate where there was much speculation about the BBC's financial problems, the campaign received good press coverage, and contributed towards the establishment of the Peacock committee in 1985. In Norway the pressure from the advertisers peaked a few years before, and in 1982 an inquiry was appointed by the government to debate broadcasting advertising. In contrast to the British inquiry, however, this committee was not specifically concerned with the possibility of introducing advertising on the public service channel (NOU 1984:5).

The advertisers did not only press for access to the mass audience public service channels, however, they were also keen to establish specialist channels which could target high-spending market niches. As noted by the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers in their memoranda to the 1988 Home Affairs Committee, the advertising interests were in favour of channels targeting 'specific sectors of the population, including those in the younger and higher income groups', and this in turn pointed towards a higher degree of commercial exploitation of Channel Four. The channel's remit to cater for minority interests had already secured it a higher proportion of up-market viewers than the ITV, and these viewers could, the advertising interests argued, be exploited more successfully as 'selective advertising opportunities' if Channel Four was separated formally from ITV (Institute of Practitioners in Advertising 1988, 1989, see also Incorporated Society of British Advertisers 1988).

In Norway, the advertising lobby expressed interest in 'minority' channels corresponding to specific market niches (Norwegian Association of Advertising Agencies, 1985). In contrast to Britain, however, the Norwegian television market was too limited for such channels to be created within a national framework. The advertisers did, however, point to the possibility of exploiting more selective audiences within the public broadcasting framework.

So far, the interests of the advertising lobbies in each national context has been identified, but these interests can also be identified internationally. In Europe, the advertising interests were tempted by the potentials for pan-European television from the beginning of the 1980s, and began to discuss the possibilities for a genuinely European advertising market. For such a market to be realised, however, national restrictions would have to be removed, and advertising interests such as the European Advertising Tripartite began lobbying the European Commission and other European bodies in favour of standardisation and liberalisation across national frontiers (Petersen et al 1986, Negrine and Papathanassopoulos 1990). As we shall see in the next chapter, this coincided with other developments which in turn led these bodies to take on a more active role within broadcasting and television.

#### 8.4. General developments within the media industries

So far, different business and industrial interests in broadcasting and television have been discussed according to their separate 'logics'. We have seen how these interests pursued both similar and contrasting paths within the changing framework for broadcasting policy-making in the 1980s, and how they all put pressure on the legislators to achieve their aims. To fully understand the impact of these interests, however, it is not sufficient to treat them as separate groups of actors. In conclusion, I will therefore discuss some of the more general trends which have been crucial for the transformation of the media industries as a whole.

The first important development within the media industries which has taken place over the last decades, is the tendency towards diversification and cross-media ownership. This is not a new trend, but its nature has changed and it has become far more important recently. Whereas diversification before 1970 occurred mainly within the framework of 'neighbouring media' such as publishing and journalism; (radio and records, and television and film) the dominant trend in later decades has been that media interests have moved into sectors where they did not previously have economic concerns.

In addition to being a defensive move from businesses believing their profits to be threatened, the aim of cross-media diversification was to exploit the potential for economies of scale built into large media operations. Particularly in the early 1980s, there was a great belief in the potentials for 'synergy' between different media sectors, i.e. that strengths in more than one sector could be exploited for multi-media operations. Since media commodities are not destroyed by the act of consumption, they can, in principle, be recycled and repackaged many times at a minimum of additional costs. A feature film, for example, can have at least four 'lives' in each national market (as cinema film, video, pay-TV and television), and the same was believed to be true with journalistic products (Locksley 1989, Dyson and Humphreys 1988, Knapskog 1988, Mosco and Wasco 1984, Flichy 1984, Tydeman and Kelm 1986, Hamelink 1989, Negrine and Papathanassopoulos 1990, Murdock 1990)

The second important development was the trend towards conglomeration, whereby media companies became a part of large industrial conglomerates. This happened partly through the previously mentioned trend whereby external service and industrial corporations entered the information or entertainment sector, and partly through the diversification of communication conglomerates into other sectors. Whatever the direction of these processes, the implication was an increased industrialisation of television production. The broadcasting companies increasingly became just one branch of a large corporation, and were judged by their financial and industrial performances in the same way as the other branches. Many of these conglomerates also manufactured products and services which they wanted the broadcasting companies to promote, either via advertising or, more covertly, through editorial coverage.

The trend towards conglomeration thus led to an increased convergence between software, hardware and advertising interests. On the global level, one of the most striking examples of this was the case of the Japanese electronics giant Sony purchasing the US television network CBS in 1991. The same trend was also seen in the case of the Astra satellite venture where three ITV-companies owned shares, and in the involvement of publishers in cable networks. In Norway, the best illustrations of these processes in the 1980s were the activities of two industrial conglomerates: the Orkla Borregaard empire and the Kinnevik Corporation. Orkla was originally a cash-rich mining company which in the 1980s diversified into a well of other activities, and by the end of the decade it had a controlling interest in a series of newspapers, cable and pay-television companies, a large magazine and book

publishing house, and a 'local' commercial television station with aspirations for national coverage (Aftenposten 31.3.89). The Swedish Kinnevik corporation, whose interests include paper, mobile telephones, radio-paging, steel, the car industry and magazine publishing, controlled by the late 1980s the Scandinavian commercial television channel ScanSat/TV3, two television production companies, a local commercial television station in Bergen and a substantial interest in the Astra satellite (Dagbladet 22.5.90, 4.9.90 Bergens Tidende 14.9.90, 23.10.90, Guardian 8.8.88, Aftenposten 31.3.89).

The third important development within the industry was the trend towards internationalisation, which coincided with the general trend towards a more 'global' and 'flexible' form of capitalism. The new distribution technologies made it relatively easy to create an international television station, and there was also a tendency towards increased transnationalisation of ownership; paralleling the general trend whereby multinational corporations were becoming increasingly 'globalised' or 'polycentric'. As Negrine and Papathanassopoulos (1990) point out, the trend towards transnationalisation of ownership had, for many years, been apparent within the newspaper publishing, film, music and advertising sectors, and the increasing liberalisation of capital restrictions in the 1980s broke down the remaining barriers to internationalisation within television. Throughout the decade, a handful of increasingly powerful transnational conglomerates began to emerge within the media and information sectors. What was prefigurative about these corporations was not simply their scale and reach, but also the fact that they aspired to be state-less, 'de-centred' corporations; striving for world-scale advantages through an involvement in many different markets. This in turn implied that the level of the nation-state became less important, and that locally-based industries and corporations increasingly acted only as supplicants or sub-contractors for the multinationals (Robins 1989).

Among the more prominent of these conglomerates within the areas of broadcasting, was Rupert Murdoch's dynasty which, by the end of the decade, spanned activities on four continents: Europe, Asia, US and Australia. So did the operations of Berlusconi, the 'king' of the European media moguls whose communication empire also included activities in Eastern Europe, South America and North Africa. In the Scandinavian countries there was an increasing presence of transnational media tycoons, however, predominantly through their ownership of transnational satellite channels. As previously mentioned, however, Scandinavia's own large communications conglomerates have themselves diversified across national boundaries, creating a layer of regional transnational companies beneath the global media empires (Negrine and Papathanassopoulos 1990, Tydeman & Kelm 1986, Broadcast 12.10. 1990, Dyson and Humphreys 1988, Nordisk medienyt 1/91).

The developments described above adds up to one final trend, which is the concentration of ownership. A decreasing number of companies control an increasing share of the communications market, and as the competition within each sector increases, it becomes more and more difficult for the smaller companies to survive. Hamelink (1989) has argued that in order to uphold a transnational operation, revenues amounting to around 15% of the world market is necessary, and this implies that there is room for only six large companies in each sector. It is difficult to say whether or not these estimates are correct, but the current trend seems at least partly to confirm them. As Negrine and Papathanassopoulos (1990:5) has pointed out, six major firms are already dominant across the globe within the advertising sector, and in the music industry, six firms account for three quarters of all sales.

Parallel to the developments towards concentration, the media sector as a whole has continued to grow. Hamelink estimated in 1988 that the totality of industrial production and distribution of information, and information technology, amounted to a world market of 1200 billion dollars annually, which was roughly 10% of the worlds industrial outputs. Of this, the media sector alone amounted to around 300 billion dollars, approximately the same as the market for international automobile sales (Hamelink 1988). Again within this market, Locksley (1989:7) has estimated the television sector in Europe alone to be worth £ 10 billion in 1988.

These developments imply that throughout the 1980s, a few transnational companies came to control increasingly large segments of the (growing) broadcasting market. The largest of these companies span activities on several continents and across different media sectors: hardware as well as software, different kinds of media and all stages of media production and distribution. It is these interests which the various political and cultural actors examined in the next chapters have found themselves up against in the 'new media environment'.

## CHAPTER 9: GOVERNMENT INTERESTS AND POLICY-INITIATIVES

As we have seen, the changes in the framework for broadcasting policy-making led to a situation where a wide range of business and industrial interests took steps to become more involved in broadcasting and television. Due to the strict regulatory regime which had been reaffirmed as late as 1980 in both countries, however, these interests were not able to fully exploit the new possibilities. Consequently, various business and industrial actors put pressure on the policy-makers to implement regulatory changes, and even if there were differences between the business interests regarding what kinds of regulatory changes they considered to be the most pressing, it is possible to identify at least three aspects where there was a concerted pressure for 'reform' from the beginning of the 1980s. Firstly, there was a demand for the barriers to entry and competition to be lowered so that previously excluded business interests would be allowed to exploit the new distribution possibilities and establish new services. Secondly, there was a pressure for the 'obstacles' to commercialisation and contracting-out to be removed within the existing public corporations so that advertisers and 'independent' producers would be allowed access on a greater scale than before. Finally, there was a general pressure against the traditional 'public interest'-based broadcasting regulation and in favour of a broadcasting structure where industrial and commercial concerns played a more dominant role.

The transformation of the broadcasting constraints and the subsequent pressures from various business and industrial interests forced national governments all over Europe to rethink their broadcasting policies. This does not mean, however, that the governments were passive victims whose actions were totally dictated by powerful business interests. On the contrary, many governments openly welcomed the changes and were themselves instrumental in bringing about a transformation of the broadcasting sector. Both in Britain and Norway, the economic liberalist governments which came to power around the turn of the decade played important parts here. In Britain, the Thatcher government, which came to power in 1979, saw broadcasting as one of the areas where it was paramount to 'roll back the frontiers of the state', and initiated wide-ranging changes in the area of television. In Norway, the Willoch Government which came to power in 1981 remained only for a short time, but its broadcasting policies, which represented a radical break with previous eras, turned out to be difficult to reverse.

The alliances between governments and business interests in this respect were particularly visible in the first half of the 1980s, when a number of regulatory changes were rushed through in both countries without public or parliamentary debates. This was justified on the grounds that the 'new broadcasting situation' did not permit lengthy deliberations. As Negrine (1985a:115) comments on early 1980s British cable policy, the government 'short-circuited the policy making process and the public debate on the grounds that the pace of change did not permit lengthy discussions'. Similarly in Norway, the Conservative Government initiated a number of changes in a wide variety of areas, consulting neither parliament nor the bodies already appointed to discuss media policy.

The situation whereby the parliaments and the political and cultural elites had to struggle in order to slow down the governments sufficiently to allow time for a public debate, was unprecedented within the frameworks of both Norwegian and British policy-making. Gradually, however, the pace began to slow down a little in both countries. This was partly due to the fact that the issues under consideration were complicated, and partly to the fact that a number of conflicting interests began to emerge. The conflicts between the different business and industrial actors corresponded with conflicts within the public and political spheres, and by the middle of the decade opportunities were again provided for the public - as citizens, to express their views.

In Norway, more than two hundred groups and actors responded to the 1985 report from the inquiry appointed by the government to discuss the question of a second television channel (TV2) (NOU 1985:11). At this point Norwegian broadcasting policy had reached a stage where it was relatively open-ended, and the 'TV2-inquiry' itself presented a series of different media-policy scenarios which the public could respond to. In Britain, it was not until three years later that an opportunity was provided for the general public to express their views on broadcasting policy. More than 3000

individuals and groups responded to the proposals outlined in the 1988 Broadcasting White Paper, a document which was described by government representatives as 'a White Paper with green edges'.

In this chapter, the aim is to identify and discuss the interests and actions of the governments in the two countries in the period leading up to the presentation of the 1985 'TV2'-report in Norway and the 1988 White Paper in Britain. The chapter begins with a summary of the challenges presented to the policy-makers by the transformations of the technological and economic constraints and the actions of the business interests. This is followed by a discussion of the ideas and policy-initiatives of the governments in the two countries. In conclusion of the chapter, the intergovernmental policy-initiatives which emerged in the 1980s are examined.

The discussion in this chapter provides the necessary background for the examination of the views of the public as citizens in chapter ten. In that chapter, I also discuss to what degree the actions and views of the various publics managed to change and modify the proposals put forward by the governments and the industrial interests.

The analysis in the present chapter is based predominantly on primary sources. These include all government white papers, bills and reports from government-appointed committees concerned with television from the early 1980s onwards, and other documents outlining government policy. Furthermore, they include the broadcasting regulations produced by the Council of Europe and the European Community (see Introduction to part III and Appendix A for details).

### 9.1. Challenges to governments and policy-makers in the 1980s

As we have seen, the development of new communication technologies and pressures from business and industrial interests were not new to the 1980s. Both when radio was first institutionalised and also when television was developed, there was pressure from business interests wanting to exploit the technologies for their own specific purposes, and on both occasions, regulatory compromises were established whereby the commercial and business interests were kept in check by more general social and cultural concerns. This was also the approach which was initially adopted in response to the new technological and economic developments, as seen, for example, in the early attempts to regulate cable and Direct Broadcasting Satellites (chapter seven). Gradually, however, it became apparent that the possibilities opening up from the early 1980s onwards would make it difficult to sustain the traditional regulatory framework.

One of the reasons for this development was that the convergence between different technologies eroded the boundaries between broadcasting and general industrial policy. Even if industrial concerns had always been important within broadcasting, social and cultural concerns had also played a dominant role, but as radio and television increasingly converged with other communication and information technologies with huge industrial potentials, it seemed impossible to prevent broadcasting from being examined in the same light. The erosion of traditional distinctions also created specific legislative difficulties. Separate legislation for telecommunication and broadcasting, and separate legislation for different types of satellites became absurd as the connections and similarities proliferated between the different technologies, and it soon became apparent that regulation within any one field might have adverse effects in others. For example, regulations within the field of cable affected not only the cable industry, but also the terrestrial channels; the satellite operators; the providers of teletext, office communication and interactive services; and finally the market for VCRs and satellite dishes.

The third reason why the new developments prompted new responses, was the nature of the business and industrial interests involved. As we have seen, the 1980s had brought a breed of investors to broadcasting who were not only large and powerful but who also had deep pockets. This meant that money could now be raised privately for purposes for which it had previously been difficult to find sufficient capital, and also that the new operators could sustain losses over a long period of time while waiting for things to move their way. Thus these developments ruled out the argument that the state would have to be involved for new communication infrastructures to be established, an argument which had been particularly important in Norway.

The fourth reason why a new approach was needed was that the new technologies had ended the possibility for national regulation and control. The new technologies were in themselves transnational, and they were increasingly controlled by transnational operators. All of a sudden it did not appear to be too complicated to create a genuinely transnational television station, and countries with liberal broadcasting regulations, such as Luxembourg, continued the tradition they had previously established in radio, of providing a home for entertainment-dominated trans-European services. Thus there was not only a pressure for change, but a pressure for international and intergovernmental action.

The fifth and final reason why it was difficult to sustain the traditional regulatory approach, was that the new developments promised greater 'control' and greater 'choice' to broadcasting consumers. This was strongly exploited by the business and industrial interests and their newspaper allies (see for example Milne 1989, O'Malley 1988, Leapman 1986), and created a difficult dilemma for the policy-makers. All attempts at restricting 'choice' were labelled repressive and authoritarian, and those who wanted to uphold the traditional regime for social and cultural reasons were put in a defensive position.

## 9.2. Political situations and government policy-initiatives

Both in Britain and Norway, the economic and political developments of the late 1970s brought conservative governments to power. In Britain, Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister with a significant 42-seat majority in the May 1979 election, and two years later in Norway, the Willoch government came to power as the first 'pure' (non-coalition) Conservative Government since 1928. This government was backed by an unprecedented popularity wave as the Conservative Party won almost 32% of the votes in the 1981 election. This was only five per cent less than the Labour Party, which for a generation had dominated Norwegian politics, and more than twice as much as the three parties in the 'centre' together.

Both in Britain and Norway these election victories were preceded by a shift to the right within the conservative parties. This shift went further in Britain than in Norway, but in both countries, the parties had promised that if elected, tax and public spending would be cut, the power of the state curtailed, and restrictions and regulations lifted in areas such as finance, housing and health care. These policies were influenced by individualist, monetarist, anti-state and anti-egalitarian beliefs, and the aim of both parties was to revitalise the economy of their respective countries by returning to a more aggressive form of capitalism.

In Britain, it took some time before these policies were applied full-scale to broadcasting. During Thatcher's first term in office, a more traditional and careful Home Office-approach to broadcasting prevailed. This was seen, for example, in the fact that a 1981 Home Office inquiry envisaged that Britain's first DBS-service should be run by the BBC, and in the area of cable, where change was initiated carefully with the authorization of so-called 'pilot schemes' in seven locations in 1981. When Thatcher returned for a second term after the 1983 election (where the Conservatives won a 144 seat majority despite gaining a slightly lower share of the vote), however, more liberalist policies began to dominate. This was largely due to the growing belief in information technology and the subsequent increase in the Department of Trade and Industry's influence over broadcasting matters.

At some point in the early 1980s, members of the Thatcher government became convinced that the solution to the economic crisis lay in an early transition to the 'information society' (Dunkley 1985, Negrine 1985a). This was based on the view that an 'information revolution' was just beyond the horizon, and if only Britain was quick enough, it would be able to spearhead this massive transformation process among the world of nations. Britain would not just be the country developing (and exporting) the necessary technology to get the process underway, it would also be the world's first 'wired society', a society bound together by a sophisticated broadband cable network offering a variety of broadcasting and telecommunication services to businesses and private households.

The idea was that the transfer to the information society would reform and revitalise all sectors of the economy, and create thousands of new jobs in the process. For this vision to become reality, however, massive investments were necessary. Compared for example with the low countries Britain could barely claim to have a cable system at all, and those that did exist were virtually all of the 'narrowband'

type, with space for only four television channels. So where was the money supposed to come from? The 'traditional' way for a country like Britain to acquire a new communication system was for the government to finance it from some kind of public charges and let the national PTT construct it, but influenced as it was by free-market beliefs, the government was unwilling to spend public money this way. Instead they proposed that private entrepreneurs should both provide the funding and construct the necessary infrastructure. In order to make this proposition attractive the operators were promised minimal content regulations: i.e. they would be allowed to provide entertainment services which were so attractive that the investors would be able to recoup their investments. If masses of extra entertainment were provided, the argument went, the customers would sign up in droves to be connected, and once the network was in place, other interactive telecommunication services could also be marketed and sold.

Following the 1982 Hunt Report (1982) and the 1983 Government White Paper on Cable (1983), the policy of the 'entertainment-led revolution' was adopted in the 1984 Cable and Broadcasting Act. The Act created a new 'lighter touch' regime for both cable and direct broadcasting by satellite, and this regime was further compounded in May 1985 when the government announced that anyone could receive the signals from communication satellites on payment of a small charge, which was later abolished altogether (Home Office 1988).

These developments coincided with another significant event: The setting up of the Peacock Committee to 'assess the effects of the introduction of advertising or sponsorship on the BBC's Home Services' (Peacock 1986, para. 1). The committee was primarily set up in response to the pressure from the advertising interests, but it was also widely believed that the government, suspicious as it was of public charges, favoured advertising on the BBC. Somewhat surprisingly in the circumstances, however, the Peacock committee rejected the suggestion that the BBC should take advertising, and chose instead to make a number of other controversial proposals. Under the banner of moving towards 'a sophisticated market system based on consumer sovereignty' (para. 592) it proposed that the BBC television service should be turned into a subscription service, that two of its radio services and the unoccupied night hours on both the BBC and the ITV television channels should be sold off, that the ITV franchises should be put out to competitive tender, that Channel Four should have the option of selling its own advertising time, and finally that both the BBC and the ITV should within ten years increase their quota of 'independent productions' to forty per cent (1986).

Before long, the first of Peacock's proposals was implemented, as the government instructed the BBC and the ITV-companies to increase their share of 'independent' productions to at least twenty five per cent of original material before the end of 1992. Although this was lower than the limit proposed by the committee, it represented a great victory for the 'independent' lobby. At this stage, however, the changes imposed on the broadcasting system were relatively limited, and it was not until Thatcher had returned for a third term in 1987 (this time with 102 seat lead), that the government embarked on a wholesale restructuring of the system. In its 1988 White Paper titled Broadcasting in the 1990s: Competition, Choice and Quality, the government proposed not only changes to the BBC, but also a radical 'shake up' of the commercial television sector.

The main argument in the 1988 White Paper was that the existing regulatory regime could no longer be sustained because of 'technological, international and other developments'. Change was also desirable, however, since 'only through change will the individual be able to exercise the much wider choice which will soon become possible' (para.1.2). The White Paper endorsed Peacock's view that the BBC-ITV duopoly had become too 'comfortable' and no longer served the consumers' best interests, and declared its intention to replace the traditional broadcasting regulation with a 'less heavy-handed' approach. As the White Paper declared: 'The government's aim is to open the doors so that individuals can choose for themselves from a much wider range of programmes and types of broadcasting' (para 1.2).

Among the proposals presented under this banner was the suggestion that the night hours on one of the BBC channels should be privatised (para 3.12). The government also stated its intention to 'encourage the progressive introduction of subscription on the BBC television services' with a view to eventually replacing the licence fee altogether (para 3.10). In regard to ITV it proposed to replace the existing structure with a system where franchises were awarded to the highest bidders after passing a 'quality threshold' (para.6.17), and it was proposed that programme requirements in the commercial

sector should be considerably relaxed. The obligation to provide both information, education and entertainment would be removed, and the only types of programming that would be required would be regional programming, and news and current affairs. The White Paper also proposed various ways of 'reforming' Channel Four, including suggestions that the Channel should be privatised or begin selling its own advertising (para 6.25).

In addition to these proposals, the White Paper indicated that it would further liberalise the regulations for DBS, and that the new 'light touch' regulatory body which was to replace the IBA and the Cable Authority - the Independent Television Commission (ITC) - would be empowered to award a number of local cable and MVDS franchises by competitive tender. The White paper also recommended a 'responsible introduction of sponsorship' on BBC services and a 'liberalisation' of the rules governing sponsorship in the commercial sector (para 3.18, 6.47). Finally, the White Paper stated that ownership regulations would be liberalised, the terrestrial UHF transmission network privatised, and that a fifth terrestrial channel established - also awarded by competitive tender.

These policies were typical products of the neo-liberalist thinking which prevailed in the Conservative Party under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, but other types of policy-initiatives were also put forward in Britain in the 1980s. These reflected the other main strand of ideology which informed Conservative Party thinking in the period: The neo-conservative belief in 'traditional values': 'firm' government, law and order, the family and traditional morality. Throughout the era of 'Thatcherism', new policies based on neo-conservative beliefs led to a restriction on civil liberties in Britain, indeed it can be argued, as Dworkin does (1988: 7), that the very concept of liberty was being 'challenged and corroded' by the Thatcher government. In 1984 a new Police and Criminal Evidence Act made it possible for the police to obtain a court order forcing newspapers and broadcasters to hand over unpublished confidential journalistic material, and this was followed by a number of other restrictive measures such as the 1986 Public Order Act, the 1989 Security Services Act and the 1990 Official Secrets Act. The last of these acts endorsed government secrecy and tightened up security in matters such as defence, intelligence, UK interests abroad, information of use to criminals and information dealing with the interception of communications (such as telephone tapping) (Lloyd 1988, Campbell 1988, 1989, Douzinas et.al 1988, Dworkin 1988, Hennessy 1988, Article 19 1991).

Within broadcasting and television, the neo-conservative values manifested themselves, firstly, in a concern with moral standards and the amount of sex and violence in the television output. In the mid-1980s a new Video Recordings Act introducing pre-publication censorship was passed (see for example Barker (ed.) 1984), and in May 1988, the Home Secretary announced the establishment of a new Broadcasting Standards Council (BSC) to 'monitor and report on the portrayal of violence and of sex, and standards of taste and decency, in television and radio programmes'. One year later, it was announced that this body would also have a leading role in 'monitoring the standards of programmes broadcast into the UK from abroad' (Broadcasting Standards Council 1989, 1990).

Secondly, the neo-conservative values manifested themselves as a concern with the portrayal of law and order on television and radio, and as an increase in the number of direct government interventions in broadcasting matters (see chapter thirteen). In 1986, the proposed community radio experiments were shelved due to fear that they would be dominated by 'subversive' elements (Bredin 1986), and in October 1988, the Home Secretary ordered the broadcasting authorities not to directly broadcast statements by members of a number of Northern Ireland organisations (Independent 18.10.89, Sunday Correspondent 15.10.89).

Many have pointed to the contradictions between these policies and the government's desire to introduce a 'less heavy handed' approach to information and culture (Osborne 1987, Hall and Jacques 1983, Lee 1987, Sparks 1990). In the 1988 White Paper, however, the Home Office refuse to acknowledge any such contradictions. In its comment to the so-called 'Sinn Fein-ban', for example, the White Paper simply states that: 'The national interest requires that such powers should be provided to the government, and for this reason it is proposed that they should be continued in any future broadcasting legislation' (para. 7.15).

As we shall see later, such repressive policies were not present in the Norwegian broadcasting environment of the 1980s. Regarding economic liberalist policies, however, the Norwegian Conservative Government of the early 1980s went every bit as far as their British counterpart. As

noted previously, the conservatives had, along with all the other parties in Norway, been firmly behind the monopoly and the strict broadcasting regulation throughout the post-war years, but when the new Broadcasting Act was debated in 1980, it became apparent that this stance was about to be replaced with a more liberal attitude. Although the other 'non-socialist' parties had also begun to reconsider their broadcasting policies and had agreed to support a government which would 'open up' for new entrants (Syvertsen 1987, Østbye 1988), the Conservative Party went further.

As in Britain, the changes within the Norwegian Conservative Party were partly related to the transformation of the broadcasting constraints and the business opportunities built into the new 'information society'. However as Østbye and Vaagland (1982) have pointed out, the change was also a product of a long-term shift from 'culture' to business' within the party. Whereas the Conservatives had traditionally supported the broadcasting monopoly on the grounds that it provided 'culture' and 'quality', the new enterprise faction which became dominant towards the end of the 1970s, was more inclined to view broadcasting in terms of anti-monopolistic and liberalist beliefs. As we have seen, a similar shift preceded the situation whereby the British Conservative Party turned their back on the monopoly in the 1950s.

The shift within the Conservative Party in Norway manifested itself clearly during the 1981 party conference, where it was proposed that the monopoly should be abolished and that new stations should be established locally, regionally and nationally. Less than three months after the Party had come to power in the 1981 General Election, it began to implement its new policies. Using para. 1.4. of the 1980 Broadcasting Act, which in 'exceptional circumstances' allowed other parties to carry out a broadcasting service, it authorised a wide range of operators (including newspapers, voluntary associations and cable companies) to set up local radio and television stations, and also to retransmit programmes via cable from Satellite Television Ltd (later Sky Channel). In its 1982 White Paper (St.m. 88 1981-82: 32-33), the government justified these policies retrospectively by referring to the threat to Norwegian culture and language resulting from the changes in the media situation and the influx of foreign programming. To counter these threats, the White Paper argued, it was necessary to achieve 'greater diversity and plurality in the Norwegian output'. Like its British counterpart, the Government also saw change to be desirable, since this would create more competition and 'choice' in broadcasting. Competition was necessary to improve quality and productivity, it was stated, whereas increased choice would enable viewers to 'develop a more critical and selective attitude towards the media'. Even if the public, given more choice, would thereby choose only 'low quality' programmes, this would not be a sufficient reason for restricting choice, because: 'Good taste and quality cannot be promoted through restrictions, but only through positive measures'.

At this early stage, the new media policies were only labelled 'experiments', since parliament had not yet been involved, but gradually the new structures were made more permanent. Following a series of government-appointed inquiries (NOU 1982:33, NOU 1982:34, NOU 1984:25); all which were asked to report speedily and instructed not to propose anything that would require public funds, regulations within the areas of local radio, cable television and broadcasting advertising were permanently liberalised. In 1984, the Broadcasting Act was changed so that television programmes from neighbouring countries could be transmitted via cable and satellite all over the country (Ot.prop. 80 1984-85), in 1987 a new 'narrowcasting' Act was passed, making it legal for local radio and television to transmit sponsored programmes and allowing advertising on community radio (Ot.prop. nr. 47 1986-87), and in 1988 the new Cable Act removed the licensing system for satellite retransmissions altogether, making it free for all to establish commercial television services as long as they were distributed via satellite (Ot.prop. 53 1987-88).

By that time, however, the 'pure' Conservative government had been gone for a long time. After only one and a half years in power it had been transformed into a centre-right coalition government (consisting of the Conservative, Agrarian and Christian Democratic Parties), and two years later this coalition lost its majority in the 1985 general election. It continued to rule as a minority until it fell in the autumn of 1986, however, when it was replaced by a Labour Government. From then on, the parliamentary situation became even more unstable. The Labour Government remained in power until after the 1989 election when it was replaced again by a centre-right coalition government, which again was replaced after a year by a new minority Labour Government supported by the Socialists Left Party and the parties in the 'centre'.

As these developments indicate, the Conservative Party in Norway gradually lost influence throughout the 1980s: In 1990 their support was only half of what it had been in 1981. Despite the fact that the 'pure' Conservative Government of the early 1980s was short-lived and that the Conservatives never had a parliamentary majority, their policies continued to set the framework for broadcasting policy-making throughout the decade. In the early 1980s it was only the right-wing Progressive Party which fully supported the Conservative Government's media policy, and by the time the coalition government lost their majority in 1985, a parliamentary majority was still resistant to changes on the scale which the Conservative Government had proposed (Omkring NRK 1985). Nevertheless, the measures instigated by the 1981-1983 Conservative government were not halted by the opposition parties when they were given the opportunity to do so.

The main reason why this did not happen was simply that once commercial television had been permitted in the shape of Sky Channel, there was no way back. From then on, the business and industrial interests as well as the main newspapers made the most of the 'choice' and the 'unfair-competition' arguments, claiming on the one hand that it was unfair that 'so few' had access to the foreign channels, and on the other that it was unfair that Norwegian advertising interests were not allowed to exploit the Norwegian media market commercially when 'almost everybody' could watch foreign advertisements on the transnational channels. Despite the apparent contradiction between these two arguments they were frequently used together to combat the 'antiquated' and 'outdated' broadcasting regulation, a combat which culminated in the celebrated case of ScanSat's TV3-channel in 1987-88.

In late 1987, the Labour Government's Minister of Culture denied permission to cable operators who had applied to retransmit the commercial channel TV3 which was due to begin broadcasting to Scandinavia on 31. December. The justification given was that commercial television was still prohibited in Norway, and although pan-European channels could be received, the ban on advertising directed specifically towards Norwegian customers, still stood (Bakke 1987). This raised a storm in the Norwegian press, and many newspapers, aided by large ScanSat adverts proclaiming their presence to be the most exciting event in Norway since the introduction of television, claimed that the decision was meaningless, unfair, and a product of an impossible and outdated policy. Shortly afterwards, TV3 broke the news that it would transfer to the Astra satellite as soon as it was established in orbit, thereby making it impossible to restrict access for customers with a satellite dish, and with that piece of information the government gave in and reversed its decision (see Dokument 8:9 1987-88, Innst. S 129 1987-88).

Despite their inability to reverse the process of re-regulation, in the last half of the decade the Labour Government did manage to slow down the pace of change, and also to modify (at least for the time being) some of the Conservative's original proposals. Nowhere else was this as apparent as in the case of the second television channel. The proposal to establish a second terrestrial television channel in Norway was among those put forward by the Conservative government in 1981, and two years later the 'TV2'-inquiry was set up by the centre-right coalition government to discuss various possibilities and alternatives (NOU 1985:11). The inquiry in turn outlined three alternatives for how the new channel should be organised, of which the first was that the new channel should be managed by the NRK. The two last alternatives both implied some sort of private ownership solution under public control, and of these alternatives, the inquiry recommended a model whereby the channel would be organised as a regional network linked together by a central unit. This unit would only produce news and current affairs programming and was to be located outside the capital (NOU 1985:11).

By the time the inquiry was finished, however, the parliamentary situation had changed, and a long period of deadlock followed. The parties in the centre and on the left remained opposed to television advertising and wanted the NRK to have control over the second channel, whereas the parties on the right wanted a private solution. In April 1988, a proposal put forward by the Labour Government that the NRK should take adverts in order to fund the new channel, was rejected (St.meld. 44, 1987-88), and it was not until 1990 that a solution was found which attracted the sufficient amount of support across the political spectrum (Ot. prop 55, 1989-90). Prior to this, however, there had been a lengthy round of public debate, of which some of the main perspectives are discussed in the next chapter.

So far, we have seen that the Norwegian Conservatives went even further than their British counterparts in terms of broadcasting liberalisation in the 1980s, but what about the more repressive aspects of the British Government's policy? Did they have a parallel in Norway?

The answer to this question is clearly no, in contrast to what happened in Britain, the policies of the Norwegian Conservative Government in the early 1980s were astonishingly liberal. Permission to establish radio and television stations was granted liberally to parties and groups from all sides of the political and cultural spectrum, and the Conservatives consistently voted against measures to change the rather tame Video Registration Act into a prepublication censorship act (see for example S.tid. 1987/88: 2488-95). There was also a political consensus behind the decision to grant the NRK more autonomy in administrative and financial matters through transforming it from a state-owned into a public corporation in 1988 (see chapter eleven).

As we have seen in this chapter, Conservative governments both in Britain and Norway saw the changes in the broadcasting constraints and the pressures from the industrial interests as a welcome opportunity to pursue their own aims in terms of a more market-regulated broadcasting structure. Thus, these two governments at least were willing partners to what happened in the 1980s, and should not be seen as victims in the hands of the business interests. For other governments such as the Norwegian Labour governments in the latter half of the 1980s, there is, however, a different story. Whereas these governments managed to slow down the process of liberalisation and commercialisation, and also to modify some of the proposals, they were not able to reverse or halt the process altogether. This was, as we shall see in the next chapter, a destiny they shared with other public and parliamentary interests in the two countries. Before turning to the public debates, however, it is necessary to examine one more aspect of the government policy-initiatives of the 1980s: The initiatives made on the inter-governmental level.

### 9.3. Intergovernmental policy-initiatives

As we have seen, there were many aspects of the new media environment which required inter-governmental action. The technologies themselves were transnational and thereby almost impossible to regulate in the country of reception, and the new services were increasingly controlled by large multinational conglomerates whose activities were difficult to monitor and regulate in one national context. In addition, many different actors (Governments, the transnational operators, the European industries, and a variety of cultural and media interests), pressed for some sort of cooperation and standardisation on the European level. These groups and actors had different interests, however, and this in turn meant that arriving at common regulations and rules was a difficult process. For example, the international advertising interests wanted the common rules to be as liberal as possible so that access could be granted without problems across national boundaries, while governments wished to establish common regulations in order to regain some of their lost control over broadcasting developments.

Therefore, despite the fact that most interested parties agreed on the desirability of establishing joint regulations, it took many years before agreements were reached. During this period many different conflicts were played out, and the disagreements even included the question of which organisation was the appropriate for these efforts: The Council of Europe or the European Community. Both Britain and Norway preferred the Council of Europe, Norway because it was not an EEC member, and Britain because the Council of Europe had a more 'flexible' approach (Home Office 1988, para 41). In contrast to the EEC, whose Directives require member states to change their national regulation, members of the CoE are free to decide whether or not they want to ratify the organisation's Conventions.

Despite these differences, there were important similarities between the processes whereby agreements were reached in the two organisations, and the end results also bore similarities.

The involvement of the European Economic Community in broadcasting dates back to 1982 when the European Parliament asked the Commission to look into the legal problems involved in transfrontier television. The Commission's initial response was a 1983 report dealing with the possibilities for creating an European Television channel, followed in 1984 by the Green paper Television without Frontiers (European Commission 1984). In this document, the Commission argued that broadcasting

was an economic activity like any other, and consequently, measures should be taken to include it in the efforts to establish a common market for goods and services. Despite being widely criticised (see for example Wedell 1985, Petersen et.al. 1986, Garnham 1989, European Communities Economic and Social Committee 1985), the proposal was accepted, and a Draft Directive on Broadcasting across Frontiers was published in April 1986. Several years of debate followed, before a final version of the Directive was agreed upon in October 1989 (European Commission 1989); this decreed that by October 1991 all member states should have changed their national laws so as to comply with the provisions in the Directive.

In contrast to the EEC, whose involvement in broadcasting is based predominantly on economic considerations, the Council of Europe's involvement is based on the European Convention on Human Rights which guarantees the right to receive and impart information and ideas across national frontiers (Article 10(1)). In 1984 the European Committee of Ministers reached an agreement on a set of recommendations for advertising and satellite broadcasting, and two years later this was followed by a decision to establish a Convention on transfrontier television. This Convention was finalised in March 1989, and has been signed by both Britain and Norway.

Despite the difference in legal status between the two documents there are important similarities between them. Both aim to facilitate transfrontier television by stating minimum conditions that all stations have to comply with if they want access across national boundaries. Two of the more important of these conditions are that all transfrontier services should have a 'home country', and that no country should apply more liberal regulations than those set out in the documents (Convention art. 4-5, Directive art. 2-3).

Among the more controversial of the 'minimum regulations' were the restrictions on advertising. Both the Convention (Art. 12) and the Directive (Art. 18) declare the maximum amount of advertising to be 15% pr. day and 20% in any one hour, and both documents also contain restrictions concerning the placement of advertising within programmes and a list of products which cannot be advertised. Consumer protection regulations including standards for taste and decency, provisions for 'Right-of-reply', and regulations protecting minors, both generally and in terms of advertising, were also included. Finally, both the Directive and the Convention aim to defend the European software industries by imposing European production quotas on all television stations. Both documents state that 'where practicable' a 'majority proportion' of the transmission time in any television channel should be reserved for European works (Directive art. 4, Convention art. 10).

The aim to facilitate European productions is also seen in a series of more positive measures introduced by these and other organisations, including the Nordic Council. So far, the EEC has initiated the most extensive programmes in this area. Their efforts include the establishment of a central programme investment fund, the encouragement of Europe-wide distribution and co-financing arrangements and support for dubbing and subtitling (Garnham 1989, The European Institute of the Media 1988, Nordisk medienyt 2/90, Mortensen 1990b).

## **CHAPTER 10: CITIZENS' VIEWS AND PERSPECTIVES**

In the previous chapters, the economic and state interests in broadcasting from the early 1980s onwards were examined. We have seen how different business interests pressed for a liberalisation of broadcasting both in Britain and Norway, and how governments, partly in response to these pressures and partly on their own accounts, initiated far-reaching plans for the restructuring of the two countries' broadcasting systems. In this chapter, we come to an examination of the views and perspectives of the public acting as citizens. The aim of the examination is, firstly, to identify the dominant ideological perspectives present in the broadcasting debates of the 1980s in the two countries. Secondly, the aim is to examine the more specific themes and concerns expressed by the various groups of citizens who submitted comments or took part in the political debates. Finally, the aim is to examine the responses of various groups and actors to the specific policies initiated by the two national governments. New broadcasting legislation was finalised both in Britain and Norway in 1990, and the discussion here focuses on to what degree the actual regulations - the end products so to speak - were influenced or modified by the citizens' responses.

This chapter only deals with the responses of the groups and interests taking part in the public and political debates about broadcasting in the 1980s. The responses of the public as consumers to the new possibilities opening up within broadcasting are not discussed here, but are included, in the form of audience research and data on the take-up and popularity of new services, in the next part. This kind of data plays an important part in the broadcasting debate in both countries, and is by many taken as the one and only valid indicator of the publics' preferences. Although consumer behaviour is important, it does not provide the whole picture. Since broadcasting is a highly imperfect market it is virtually impossible to determine the precise demand for different services, and since it is also a strong political and cultural force, it is necessary to consult other indicators as well. Thus the views of the groups and actors taking part in the public debate provide an important counter-point both to the economic indicators, and to the industrial and government interests which are discussed in the two previous chapters.

The range of views present in the public sphere are also important indicators of the current legitimacy of the traditional public broadcasting corporations. Although the submissions and comments from the various interests only state their support or lack of support for these institutions indirectly, the range of perspectives present in the debate are among the very real forces which the broadcasters must respond to in their struggle to sustain their public support base.

The analysis in this chapter is based predominantly on primary sources indicating the views and perspectives of the public acting as citizens. Firstly, the most relevant reports from the parliamentary committees in both countries: The 1988 Home Affairs Committee Report in Britain and the two publications discussing the establishment of the second terrestrial television channel in Norway (Innst.S 187 1988-89 and Innst.O 2 1990-91). Secondly, there are the reports from the parliamentary debates in the two countries concerning the new broadcasting legislation which emerged in the late 1980s. In the British case I have selected the proceedings from the second reading in each of the two houses (HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 cols. 40-122, HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol. 519 cols. 1220-357), whereas in Norway the debates included are the two concerned with the establishment of the second television channel (O. tid 22.10.1990: 5-56 and S. tid. 1990-91: 677-99).

The third and most voluminous source upon which the analysis in this chapter is based, are comments from various interested parties, groups and organisations in response to the proposed changes in the broadcasting legislation in the two countries. In the British case, the analysis is based on a selection of responses to the 1988 White paper (all received by the Home Office in 1989), obtained through writing to various bodies and asking for a copy of their submissions, supplemented with the most central memoranda from various bodies to the 1988 Home Affairs Committee (all printed in Home Affairs Committee 1988b). The comments and memoranda were selected in order to achieve representations from a wide set of interests, and in order to obtain comments from the same type of categories as those present in the Norwegian material. In the Norwegian case, the analysis is based on the complete set of public responses to the 1985 inquiry into the question of a second television channel (the 'TV2'-inquiry), for the most part received by the Department of Culture in 1985. In contrast to Britain where the Official Secrets Act and generally restrictive practice prevents such comments from being made available to the public, access to the material in the Norwegian case, was granted by the Ministry of Culture (see Appendix A for further details).

### 10.1. General ideological and philosophical positions

Both in Britain and Norway, the new broadcasting situation and the government policy-initiatives described in the previous chapter, generated vast amounts of public criticism and debate. As has been already pointed out, I have analysed only a proportion of this material, but this alone (the submissions, reports and debates) runs to several hundred pages. After a preliminary reading of this material, I was left with a large number of contradictory views on how broadcasting should be regulated and which were the most important concerns. Prior to a discussion of these specific concerns, however, it is important to identify the more general ideological and philosophical positions underlying the vast amount of submissions.

As in previous debates, there were two main positions present in the discussion about broadcasting in the 1980s in the two countries. The first position was the consumer-sovereignty perspective, based on the view that television is, in principle, no different from any other commodity. Those who based their

views on this perspective were generally opposed to anything else than a minimalistic regulation of broadcasting, and argued instead that broadcasting structures should, as far as possible, be determined by market mechanisms. So far this has been difficult to achieve due to the scarcity of frequencies, but those committed to a consumer sovereignty perspective believed that this situation would soon be reversed. Furthermore, they believed that with an increasing number of channels the exercise of choice by the viewers would be sufficient to ensure the range and quality of the services, and that there was no longer any point in restricting cross-ownership, since the sheer number of channels would safeguard that a wide range of perspectives were presented. This view also presupposes that a large number of channels will make it economical for some to appeal also to minority interests and taste cultures, and that regulation aimed at protecting such groups would therefore become unnecessary.

Against this view, a fundamentally different, and in many ways more traditional ideological perspective was present, based on what we may term a citizens view of broadcasting. This position claimed that far from being perceived as a commodity, broadcasting and television should be viewed as strong socialising forces which had to be strictly regulated in order to protect the public interest. As the number of channels increased and people were spending more time in front of their television screens, it was argued, the role of television as a vehicle for social, political and cultural communication was becoming more, not less important. Furthermore, since market-regulated television would only provide entertainment and other forms of popular programming, a transfer to a market system of broadcasting would restrict rather than widen choice.

Thus, to secure the continuity of a sophisticated audience and an active and informed body of citizens, it was seen to be necessary to uphold the regulation protecting valuable forms of programming and particularly vulnerable consumer categories. Among those committed to such a 'citizens view' of broadcasting there was also ample support for the traditional public broadcasting principles and obligations: universality, diversity and balance, and a concern for national identity and culture.

The consumer sovereignty perspective and the citizen's view of broadcasting are familiar positions from previous conflicts over broadcasting, and the disagreements between them date back to the establishment of radio in the inter-war period. In a new broadcasting situation with less severe economic and technological constraints, however, the difference between them has become more apparent. Since the policy-makers now have a clearer choice regarding whether or not they should let the number of television channels proliferate and whether or not restrictions on content and ownership should be liberalised, the ideological principles have assumed new importance as the perspectives by which different solutions are legitimised.

Many have claimed, however, that these two positions are not at all 'fundamental' or 'ideological', but merely perspectives utilised in order to defend vested interests. Reciprocal accusations that the opposing side was only arguing ideologically to conceal their real interests, was an important facet of the broadcasting debates of the 1980s in both countries. Indeed, there is much truth in this; the consumer sovereignty perspective was frequently put forward as a way of legitimising the interests of business and industry, and the citizen's view of broadcasting was used to defend the existing public corporations. Despite this instrumental use, however, the two perspectives are in fact ideological positions in their own right, closely connected with general philosophical positions on culture, society and the role of the market in determining social relations and social communication.

In Britain, the consumer sovereignty perspective of the 1980s was most coherently expressed in a series of publications from right wing think-tanks and research institutes such as the Adam Smith Institute and the Institute of Economic Affairs (see for example Adam Smith Institute 1984, Veljanovski (ed.) 1989). Their views in turn inspired the Peacock committee and also the government in its attempt to create a 'less heavy-handed approach' to broadcasting. Despite having such a powerful support base, this perspective still did not have a widespread backing from the groups and actors taking part in political debate. Among the submissions from different interests which I have examined, there is only Sky Channel (1989), W.H. Smith (1988) and a few other industrial interests who base their arguments on a consumer sovereignty position.

The same was the case in the parliamentary debates, where such views were only expressed by the most eager free-marketeers. Among these were Ms. Edwina Currie who claimed that 'there is no

doubt that the kind of controls that were appropriate in the 1950s and 1960s are no longer appropriate', and that broadcasting should move towards 'something much closer to the print media in which there is a much wider variety and a bigger range of choice' (HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 cols. 102-103).

In Norway, the consumer sovereignty perspective was expressed even less often. Among the responses to the TV2-inquiry, only the Norwegian Bankers' Association put forward a fully fledged consumer sovereignty perspective, stating that new television channels should be treated 'like any other service and be paid for by those who wish to use it'. This implied, the Association continued, that the channel should be organised so that the 'demands of the viewers' determined the programme content, rather than some 'pre-defined political or cultural aims'. Finally, it stated that 'full commercial freedom' should reign in broadcasting as in the case of the print media.

In the parliamentary debate, similar perspectives were only put forward by the representatives of the far-right Progressive Party. They argued fiercely against imposing regulations on commercial broadcasters and in favour of a free-for-all broadcasting structure, proposing to change the Broadcasting Act so that the frequencies could be sold off to the highest bidder (O.tid. 1990: 53).

Against these consumer sovereignty perspectives stood a broad coalition in both countries, claiming that television was far too important to be left to the market-place. In Britain, this included the majority of those speaking in the parliamentary debates in the two houses: all Labour and Liberal representatives and many 'old-style' Conservatives. It was also the position underlying the report from the Home Affairs Committee, which stated that 'the new technology allows for a much greater number of services, but at the heart of the matter is the quality and range of services provided' (1988 para. 5). Finally, it was the position underlying most of the submissions I have examined. Statements like 'far from more necessarily meaning better, the experience of extreme deregulation tends to show that more will mean worse' (Scottish Film Council 1989) and 'technological advances must occur, but not at the expense of good quality programmes in favour of American style television' (Townswomen's Guilds 1989), had widespread support from others.

In Norway, opposition to the consumer sovereignty perspective were expressed from all parties in parliament apart from the Progressive Party. The opening speaker in the TV2-debate, a representative from the Agrarian Party, claimed that it was 'not at all right to let market forces alone determine developments within the cultural sector' (O.tid 1990: 7), and this was echoed by a representative from the Christian Democrats who stated that 'the demands of the viewers should never be allowed to dictate our views on quality' (O.tid. 1990: 25). Similar views were also put forward in an overwhelming majority of the responses, some of them strongly endorsing the traditional paternalism. The Norwegian Society of Authors, for example, claimed that 'here it does not at all matter what the majority of the viewers prefer'. Opposition to the consumer sovereignty perspectives was also expressed by Conservative Party representatives, even if some of them did put forward views more akin to the 'progressives' (see for example Ellefsen in O.tid. 1990: 11).

The fact that most of the groups and actors taking part in the political debate based their views on what I have termed a 'citizen's view' of broadcasting, could be taken to indicate the presence of an alliance in support of the existing type of broadcasting regulation among the citizens active in the public sphere. While such an alliance was definitely present on a superficial level, however, it was fraught with contradictions below the surface. Different groups and organisations supported different aspects of the traditional structure, a fact which also indicate that they differed in their view of the virtues and shortcomings of the traditional public broadcasting institutions.

In the following analysis, the different concerns and perspectives put forward in the political debates in the two countries, are discussed. Since the policy-initiatives which prompted these comments varied between the two countries, the nature of the responses were, of course, also different. Since the aim here is to elicit general concerns and types of arguments, however, these differences are not very significant. It is nevertheless important to point out, that the views presented below are not mutually exclusive; many groups and actors chose to stress several of the concerns presented here in their arguments for a broadcasting system regulated in the public interest.

## 10.2. Dominant perspectives: 'Quality' and 'National culture'

The views and perspectives put forward most frequently by different groups and actors vary between the two countries. In Britain, the concern for quality is expressed most frequently, whereas in Norway the dominant concern is for the protection of the national culture and identity.

The 'quality'-argument was a dominant one in the British broadcasting debate in the sense that it was mentioned by a wide variety of different interests, but it was also dominant in the sense that it was expressed in a common-sensual way: It was rarely explicitly defined and it was assumed that its meaning was clear. As the Earl of Glasgow stated in the debate in the House of Lords: 'Everyone knows more or less what is meant by quality programmes but we all have subjective views when we get down to specifics' (HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol. 519 col. 1250).

Among the 'subjective views' put forward in the debate was that quality television equalled the presence of documentaries (see for example HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 col. 62 and cols. 69-70) and 'serious drama, opera and ballet [and] programmes about the arts' (Theatre Advisory Council 1989). Others argued that the concept of quality included 'exiting, dangerous or risky experimentation' (HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 col. 62) and 'a commitment to the commissioning of new work' (Arts Council 1989). Some contributors also distanced themselves from traditional definition of quality as 'high culture' through statements such as 'I believe there is good and bad rock music' (HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 col. 62), and by expressing a concern for 'not simply a balance between serious and popular programming, but the basic integrity of programmes that are good of their kind' (Voice of the Listener 1989, see also PSB Campaign (ACCT/BETA) 1989). Only a few argued that quality equalled 'a pursuit of excellence in subject matter and style', meaning programmes which were 'not necessarily going to attract wide audiences on first viewing' (Arts Council 1989 and Personal Managers Association 1989).

Most interests did not attempt any definition of 'quality', however, but implied instead that quality equalled expensive programmes and that deregulation would - by spreading the resources too thinly - almost certainly destroy it. The result would be an increase in cheap and therefore low quality programming, vividly described in terms such as 'tranquil pap' (HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 col. 62), 'sleazy, narrowly aimed material' (HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 col. 77), 'second rate sitcoms, game shows and home-grown or imported soaps' (National Council of Women 1989), 'routine, trivial or cheaply put together' and 'undemanding and intended as a popular time filler' (HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol. 519 col. 1250).

In contrast to Britain, the term 'quality' held little currency in the Norwegian broadcasting debate. Among those submitting responses, only a handful used the term 'quality' at all, and even fewer were concerned with the pursuit of 'excellence' or high culture (one of the few exceptions were the Norwegian Society of Authors 1985). There were few references in the parliamentary debate either, and when it was referred to, it was generally linked with the concern for the national culture, which was by far the most frequently expressed perspective in the discussions about broadcasting in Norway in the period discussed here. In the 1990 parliamentary debate about 'TV2', the opening speaker stated that the main purpose of setting up a new channel was that this should act as 'a Norwegian alternative to the mounting tide of foreign commercial programmes' (O.tid. 1990: 7), and this was supported by speakers from almost all other parties, many expressing a strong sense of urgency (see for example O.tid. 1990: 22,30,38,39,45).

The concern for Norwegian culture and identity was also expressed by almost all of the responses from different bodies, the only variation being whether the influx of foreign channels was described in terms of a 'flood', 'wave', 'storm' or 'tide'. Whereas the most fatalistic claimed that Norway was already more or less 'drowned' by the 'commercialised foreign entertainment industry' ('New Norwegian' Language Association 1985, see also Norwegian Association of Musicians 1985, Norwegian Society of Authors 1985, Museum Council of Norway 1985, Bishop of Agder 1985), others saw the situation to be less serious. Nevertheless, there was an almost total consensus that it was urgently necessary to 'apply a counter-pressure to the pressures from outside' (The Theatre Council 1985).

Many stressed that the concern for national culture was particularly important in Norway because of its small and peripheral nature. As stated by the chairman of the parliamentary committee responsible for broadcasting: 'a small country with four million inhabitants and a small linguistic community is forced,

because nobody else will do it, to not only defend, but also to strengthen, its culture and language' (O.tid. 1990: 22).

Thus, concern for national culture in Norway occupied the same place as the concern for 'quality' in Britain, and the parallel did not stop there. Like the 'quality'-argument, the 'national culture'-perspective was used to legitimise a wide range of concerns, and it was also more frequently defined in terms of financial and industrial factors than in terms of content. The most frequent definition of the 'national culture' in the Norwegian broadcasting debate was 'television programmes produced in Norway'.

Despite the overwhelming support for this perspective in the Norwegian context, there were some dissenting voices as to whether or not a new television channel could save the national culture. The Norwegian Association of Cinema Managers (1985) argued that a new channel would be more likely to contribute to, rather than prevent, internationalisation, since the channel would probably more than double the amount of imported programming available on terrestrial television, whereas others argued more specifically that television did not represent 'real culture', but only a passive 'consumer culture' (Song and Music Council of Norway 1985, see also Church Council of Norway 1985, Bjugn Municipal Council 1985). Finally, a few groups and actors claimed that the assumed contradiction between 'Norwegian' and 'foreign' culture was altogether false. The Norwegian Association of Composers (1985) argued that 'the real contradiction lies on a different level, namely between the international cultural industry and quality culture produced by creative and qualified artists', and the Norwegian Council of Artists (1985) echoed this by stating that it would only be beneficial to increase the amount of domestically produced programmes if this led to an increase in the amount of good quality programmes.

In contrast to Norway, there was little open concern for the national culture in the British material. However there were a few references to 'Australian cultural imperialism' (HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 col. 72), the danger of programmes being 'dumped' on the European market (Campaign for Quality Television 1989), and the 'mid-atlantic' style resulting from the increase in Anglo-American and other forms of co-production (Writers Guild 1989 and Campaign for Quality Television 1989). As we have seen in the statements presented above, the concern for national culture in Norway and quality in Britain overlap to a certain extent. In both countries, most contributors do not distinguish between 'good broadcasting' and broadcasting produced by their own broadcasting systems.

Whereas this is expressed (rather modestly) in Norway as a concern for the national production base, however, it comes out in Britain as an almost overwhelming pride in the virtues of the British broadcasting system. The statement made by Baroness Blackstone in the debate in the House of Lords (HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol. 519 col. 1246) is representative of these sentiments. She stated that:

'In many spheres of life regrettably Britain's record is inferior to that of comparable countries. In striking contrast, our record in broadcasting shines as a bright beacon of success amid a sea of many failures'.

This was echoed by statements describing British television as 'one of the world's most successful broadcasting industries' (National Union of Journalists 1989) and 'a truly great success' (Writers Guild 1989). Pride was not only expressed in the system as a whole, it extended down to specific details. 'The quality of science programmes produced through the UK system is generally accepted as second to none', states the Committee for the Public Understanding of Science (COPUS 1989), whereas the Personal Managers Association (1989) claims that British television dramatists are 'widely regarded as more skilled and sophisticated than in any other country'. In the debate in the House of Lords it was claimed that one of the 'jewels in the British broadcasting crown' was the 'competition for excellence between two marvellous television news services' (HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol. 519 col. 1234), and not even in technical matters could other countries, in the view of the contributors, compare favourable with Britain. 'Our high technical quality', states the British Kinematograph, Sound and Television Society (1989), 'is the envy of the world'.

As already mentioned, both nationalistic and 'quality' arguments were used in both countries to defend industrial and economic interests. Here, as in many other matters, it is difficult to draw the line between 'economic' and 'cultural' concerns, since the concepts are rarely defined in terms of content.

This does not necessarily mean that the 'cultural' arguments are only a front for industrial concerns. It also reflects a general reluctance to define important values too clearly and specifically in the fear that this would restrict the broadcasters and limit experimentation and innovation. As stated by the Methodist Church in England (1989), the best guarantee for good broadcasting is that 'creative people be given space to do their best work'.

### 10.3. Democracy and pluralism of information

Both in Britain and Norway, many were concerned with the role of broadcasting in the democratic process. As argued by the British Trade Union Congress (1989): 'The role of the media as a source of information and education ... is crucial to the health of our democracy'. Many were worried, however, about the future of television news and current affairs. In particular, concerns were expressed about the danger of news monopolies: Since most people now rely on television for most of their information about the surrounding world, it was argued, news monopolisation could, in the long run, be detrimental to the democratic process.

Both in Britain and Norway, two specific concerns were voiced under this banner. Firstly, the view that there should be alternatives to the news service provided by the BBC and the NRK. In Britain, many feared that television deregulation and the commercialisation of the ITV-network and their news service, Independent Television News (ITN), would put an end to the competition between the two 'marvellous television news services' (HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol. 519 col. 1234) and have the result that 'the only true national and international news service in the country [would] rest in the hands of the BBC' (HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol. 519 col. 1244). To prevent this from happening and the public being deprived of 'extremely important information' (National Union of Journalists 1989), many expressed support for the view that the commercial services should be required to carry news and current affairs programmes during main viewing periods.

In Norway, this concern evolved differently, reflecting the fact that the NRK still practically had a monopoly within television news. Centre and right-wing interests in particular, but also other social and cultural actors, demanded that this situation be brought to an end, and that a second television channel with a professional and alternative news service, should be set up. As argued by the opening speaker in the 'TV2'-debate in parliament: 'It is of great value that we now will get the news presented from more sides and angles' (O.tid. 1990: 6, see also Innst. O nr. 2 1989-90, Federation of Norwegian Commercial Associations 1985, Norwegian Public Relations Association 1985, Norwegian Society of Viewers and Listeners 1985, The Norwegian Press Federation 1985, University of Bergen 1985).

The second issue to be raised in connection with the role of television in the democratic process, was the issue of cross-ownership and the links between television and the print media. In the British debate, strong opposition was voiced against the government proposal to liberalise regulations on mergers and take-overs, and many were concerned that the television system should not fall into the hands of large communication conglomerates. As the Home Affairs Committee stated in its 1988 report: 'It is an important democratic safeguard that no one should be able to control more than one major means of public information' (para. 42). This was echoed by the National Union of Journalists (1989) who stated that 'stringent limits on concentration of ownership should be embodied in the legislation' and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (1989) who feared that news concentration might lead to increased sensationalism, commenting: 'We are concerned that the transmission of the news should fall into the hands of a few people, and that it become packaged into a form of show business' (see also Trade Union Congress 1989, Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom 1989).

In Norway, concerns were also expressed about the proliferation of cross-ownership and concentration, but in contrast to Britain, where newspapers were predominantly perceived as a threat to broadcasting, in the sense that 'private companies who have brought us the low standards of the tabloid press' (PSB Campaign (ACCT/BETA) 1989) might come to be dominant, newspapers in Norway were still to some extent seen as protected species within the media scene. Concerns were expressed that the introduction of television advertising would take revenue away from the press and lead to a 'demolition' of the (still relatively diverse) Norwegian press structure (O.tid 1990: 28, see also Association of Norwegian Newspaper Editors 1985, Norwegian Press Federation 1985, Norwegian Union of Journalists 1985, Norwegian Newspaper Publishers Association 1985, Department of Press Research 1985, Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions 1985). In line with this perspective, the

Norwegian Union of Journalists (1985) argued, in contrast to their British counterpart, against legislation preventing cross-ownership. Instead, they claimed, newspaper participation in a new television channel was the only way to secure professionalism, high standards and 'independent journalism'.

Others, however, were concerned to prevent cross-ownership, seeing it as a threat to diversity. Cultural and consumer interests and political representatives on the left argued that it was far better to retain the public news monopoly than to allow increasingly concentrated press interests, and possibly large transnational conglomerates, to dominate with the field of news production (see for example The Norwegian Society of Authors of Non-Fiction 1985, Norwegian Arts Council 1985, Norwegian Consumer Council 1985).

#### 10.4. Regionalism and regional programming

In the Norwegian debate, regionalist concerns were almost as prominent as the concerns for the national culture, and many contributors also shared the view that regionalism and nationalism were two sides of the same coin; i.e. that the 'real' and 'authentic' Norwegian culture is that of the regions and local communities. Thus, there were widespread demands for a strong regional element to be built into both the NRK and the new terrestrial channel. As stated by a representative from the Labour Party in the parliamentary debate: 'It is important to have a television channel which can portray the variations from one end of the country to another' (O.tid. 1990: 47). This view was supported by representatives from most other parties, and also by many of the comments from various groups and actors.

The concern with protecting regional interests was also seen in the fierce and prolonged debate over where the second television channel should be headquartered. This was probably the single most controversial broadcasting issue in Norway in the 1980s, and the controversy is amply reflected both in the responses and the political debates. Among the responses, there were more than one hundred submissions from local and country councils, and of these almost every one suggested the nearest big city as the home for the new channel. The controversy was so fierce that a separate debate had to be staged in parliament in order to decide the location of the new channel (S.tid. 1990-91: 677-99).

In the British debate, many were concerned about local and regional programming, and argued that these should be secured through legislation. In contrast to Norway where this concern was shared by interests across the cultural and political spectrum, regionalism (or more correctly nationalism) was in the British example mainly argued from Welsh and Scottish interests. The Scottish Film Council (1989), for example, stated that 'broadcasting in Scotland has performed a specific and positive function as a custodian and a developer of our national culture', and the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (1989) claimed that it is 'important that the statutory minimum for local programming is set at least as high as best current practice' (see also Convention of Scottish Local Authorities 1989, Campaign for Quality Television in Wales 1989).

Regionalist concerns were also manifest in the proposal that the new Channel Five should be 'based on a network of local stations' (Home Affairs Committee 1988 para. 174), and the proposal to establish a fifth channel also sparked off a brief location debate in the British context. In the House of Commons, the MP for Leicester East suggested that the channel should be located in Leicester 'which lies modestly in the heart of England' (HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 col. 106), whereas Scottish interests would rather see it based in Scotland (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities 1989, Scottish Council for Development and Industry 1989, Bishop's Conference of Scotland 1989).

More important than regionalism in the British debate, however, was the concern with securing access for people all over the country to national television channels. Both in the debate itself and in the responses, opposition was voiced against privatisation of the transmission network, and concerns were also expressed about the networking arrangements within the reformed Channel 3 system. Many argued that networking arrangements could not be left to the commercial decisions by the operators, and that legislation should secure that the existing cross-subsidy system which guaranteed all regions a full service, was upheld (see for example Campaign for Quality Television 1989, National Council of Women 1989, Townswomen's Guilds 1989, IBA 1989, Trade Union Congress 1989).

In Norway, there was also strong support for universalism, almost to the point where it was taken for granted that the new television channel should provide national coverage. In terms of the content of the new channel, the demands for local and regional programmes were far louder than the demands for national ones. Only a few voices, largely belonging to Oslo-based cultural or academic interests, expressed concern that taking regionalisation too far could lead to resources being spread too thinly and the cultural and artistic milieu being fragmented. In a country with only four million inhabitants, it was argued, it is important to pool resources to secure everybody access to adequate national broadcasting services. Concern was also expressed that regionalisation could undermine national cohesion and national identity in a culture which 'to begin with is marginal within an international context' (Faculty of Arts, University of Oslo 1985, see also Department of Press Research 1985, Norwegian Association of Film Workers 1985, Norwegian Association of Musicians 1985, Theatre Council of Norway 1985, Federation of Professional Associations in Norway 1985).

As has already become apparent, the contradictions within the regionalist perspective are similar to those within nationalism, and like the concern for 'the national culture', the concern for 'local culture' is often nothing more than a concern for regional industry and economic development. As claimed in the debate in the House of Commons in a statement which is representative of regional interests in both countries: 'There must be no brass plates on temporary warehouses. We want regional production facilities' (HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 col. 87).

#### 10.5. Sex, violence and moral standards

As we have seen, concern with the portrayal of sex, violence and moral standards figured prominently in the approach of Thatcher's Governments' to broadcasting. In the public and parliamentary debates, however, such concerns were not widespread. Only a few interests, such as the National Viewers and Listeners Association (NVALA 1989) chaired by Mary Whitehouse, expressed support for the Broadcasting Standards Council and wanted to see it established on a statutory footing (see also London Churches Broadcasting Group 1989, Mothers Union 1989, Presbyterian Church in Ireland 1989). These interests would also have liked to grant the Council the power to preview programmes, and 'warned' that the measures taken might not be sufficient to combat the influx of pornographic material from abroad.

Some of these interests, particularly the NVALA, were also concerned with Channel Four, whose remit, they claimed, posed a risk to standards and traditional values. Many more, however, were concerned to secure the channel's remit, and also to defend other programmes which pushed 'against the boundary of taste' (Writers Guild 1989). This concern is also shared by religious groups and actors. For example, the Methodist Church in England (1989) stated that:

'Broadcasting is immensely influential in bringing new ideas to the public... This function is of clear value in social and political controversy, in moral debate and aesthetic experiment. ... It needs to be carefully protected from the tendency to conformity that is common to the State, to commercial interests and often to the Church'.

This was again echoed by the Writers Guild (1989) which stated that: 'A dramatist's work needs on occasion to be provocative in order to highlight important principles'.

These and similar views led many to oppose the establishment of the Broadcasting Standards Council. In the parliamentary debates the Council, was among other things, referred to as 'otiose' (HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol. 519 col. 1230) and 'a wholly unnecessary quango' (HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 col. 92), whereas in several of the responses it was seen to open up 'a new era of negative censorship' (cited from Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom 1989). Others argued that the focus of the 'standards' legislation was wrong altogether; that it was far more important to 'ensure a balanced programme output' (National Council of Women 1989) or to promote positive values such as 'thoughtfulness, integrity and charity' (Library Association 1989), than to restrict the amount of sex and violence. The fear that the Council would end up acting 'on behalf of particular pressure groups and special interests', was also expressed, and led in turn the Home Affairs Committee stressing that it was important that its role be based on 'properly researched findings' (1988 para 116-117).

Finally, many commented on the contradictions between neo-liberalism and repressive paternalism inherent in the government policy. As it was expressed by a representative in the House of Commons debate (Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 col. 81):

'We hear of the light touch, but they do not want the light touch when it comes to matters moral. They have Lord Rees-Mogg free to pursue his masturbatory fantasies across the screen, pursuing the nipple count or the coitus coefficient. There is no light touch there. They want a heavy hand - the sweaty heavy hand'.

In response such comments, even Lord Rees Mogg, the Chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Council, stated that he regarded British broadcasting in general as being 'conscientious, responsible and in need of defence rather than censure' (HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol. 519 col. 1293).

In Norway, concern with moral standards manifested itself mainly in a demand from religious interests that new television channels should be asked to operate within an agreed set of 'ethical principles' (Council of Dissenting Churches in Norway 1985, Oslo Catholic Church 1985, Christian Broadcasting Theme 1985). Also note that in this context, a few contributors did not see this as sufficient to maintain standards, and demanded tighter regulations. The Bishop of Nord-Hålogaland (1985) claimed that the principle of self-regulation had not been sufficient to keep 'the disintegrating and destructive forces in check', and that this had resulted in a broadcasting situation where 'chastity and dignity are being sacrificed on the altar of unbridled lust'.

#### 10.6. Protection of the interests of vulnerable groups

As pointed out above, most groups and actors trusted the broadcasters to make adequate decisions concerning the portrayal of sex and violence on television. This does not mean that they trusted them to make the right decisions concerning programming for minorities and other groups believed to be particularly vulnerable, however. On the contrary, many interests in both countries argued that only way to protect groups such as children and young people; the old, poor, sick and handicapped; women; and linguistic and ethnic minorities, was through strict(er) regulation.

Among these groups, the interests of children and young people were believed to be particularly at risk. Both in Britain and Norway, at least four different concerns were expressed for this group. There was, firstly, the view that children were particularly vulnerable to the influence of television, and that special safeguards were necessary in order to ensure that they were not harmed. As argued in the Norwegian parliamentary debate, children 'cannot distinguish between reality and fiction [and] they have problems distinguishing between objective information and indoctrination' (O. tid. 1990: 44). This was echoed in the British House of Commons debate where it was argued that: 'Small children and children up to their early teens do not have sufficient experience to be automatically choosy about the quality of the material they watch' (HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 col. 77).

Secondly, concerns were expressed over the future of children's programmes, which were believed by many, in both countries, to be particularly threatened in the new media environment. The British Action for Children's Television (1989) argued that the only way to avoid a situation where 'bland programmes designed for an international 'family audience' will replace the relatively costly but varied and challenging material now on offer to children', was to put pressure on the commercial stations to implement a quota for British made children's programmes (see also Campaign for Quality Television 1989, British Film Institute 1989, Arts Council 1989, Writers Guild 1989). In Norway, this concern was even more firmly linked with the 'need' to protect national culture and identity. If Norwegian children's programmes were not protected by law they might well disappear altogether, it was argued (O.tid. 1990: 35), whereas others claimed that children in Norway would know more about Anglo-American culture and history than their own in a few years (Norwegian Cultural History Museums 1985).

Thirdly, there were concerns with the commercial exploitation of children. Such concerns were mainly directed at advertising, but objections were also voiced against the animated toy-based 'programme-commercials' which had become more common in the 1980s. Whereas in Britain most interests adopted the view that advertising directed at children could not be prevented if there were to be children's programmes in the commercial sector (see for example British Action for Children's Television 1989), there was in Norway a strong opposition against allowing advertising for children in

any form. As expressed by a representative in the parliamentary debate, advertising directed at children should be banned because children, in contrast to adults, 'are not in the same way able to distinguish between editorial and commercial messages' (O.tid. 1990: 43, see also Norwegian Association of Cinema Managers 1985, The Children's Ombudsman 1985, Church Council of Norway 1985, The Norwegian Children and Youth Council 1985, Confederation of Vocational Unions 1985, Oslo Catholic Church 1985).

Finally, fears were expressed in both countries that an increase in the number of television channels would 'adversely affect the quality of family life', and thus make life even more difficult for the young (National Council of Women 1989, Mothers Union 1989, see also the Norwegian submissions from Church Council of Norway 1985, The Children's Ombudsman 1985, Bjugn Municipal Council 1985).

Concerns were also expressed for the old, sick, poor and handicapped whom, it was argued, were particularly dependent on television for company and enjoyment. Indeed, as it was expressed by the Methodist Church in England (1989), television had, for millions of people, 'replaced the ties of local community as the mode through which they belong to society at large'. Whereas this perspective was only argued in a general way in the Norwegian debate, in Britain it was put forward as a range of more specific concerns. Firstly, it was argued that deregulation and a transfer towards pay-television, would lead to a system whereby those unable to pay were left with 'a residue of poor quality programmes interspersed with large segments of advertising for products and services which they cannot afford' (United Reformed Church 1989, see also National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders 1989).

Secondly, fears were expressed that programmes aimed specifically at disadvantaged groups could disappear in a more deregulated environment. As stated by the Broadcasting Consortium (1989), television offered 'unique opportunities' for voluntary and statutory organisations to 'encourage self-help and individual responsibility', and the British Medical Association feared that health information would be unavailable to social classes C2DE and to ethnic minorities if the commercial channels were not required to provide it (see also Age Concern 1989, National Council for Voluntary Organisations 1989, Volunteer Centre UK 1989, Community Service Volunteers 1989).

Thirdly, it was argued that television programming in general should be modified to cater for various disadvantaged groups. The Association of Charity Officers (1989), for example, argued that 'meeting the needs of handicapped, deaf and blind people should be a positive programme requirement', whereas Age Concern (1989) claimed that it was important to secure 'natural history, documentary and current affairs programmes' because these were the programmes which old people, as heavy consumers of television, preferred to watch. Finally, women's interests both in Britain and Norway demanded programme schedules better suited to women's needs (National Council of Women (UK) 1989, The Norwegian Council for Equality Between the Sexes 1985, The Norwegian Ombudsman for Equality Between the Sexes 1985).

The third main type of interest which was described as particularly vulnerable were the linguistic and ethnic minorities, and again, a variety of concerns were expressed, ranging from the role of television in promoting understanding and tolerance between different national and linguistic groups, to the need for language education on mainstream television channels. The dominant concern in both countries, however, was with the provision of programming in minority languages. In Britain, the Gaelic language was seen to be particularly threatened by deregulation. An Comunn Gaidhealach (1989), for example, argued that Gaelic programming would disappear altogether if there was no statutory requirement to provide it, and this would threaten the very survival of the language (see also the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities 1989, Scottish Film Council 1989, Scottish Art Council 1989). Similar concerns were expressed by Sami interests in Norway (Norwegian Sami Council 1985, Norwegian Sami Society 1985). Thus in both cases it was argued that a national rather than a local service was necessary, since neither the Gaelic nor the Sami community was concentrated in one area.

Concerns were also put forward in regard to the Welsh language in Britain and the 'nynorsk' language in Norway. Welsh interests were eager to protect the Welsh television channel S4C (Campaign for Broadcasting Quality in Wales 1989), whereas the 'new Norwegian' interests in Norway demanded that the 25% quota 'imposed' on the NRK should be extended also to new television channels (Norwegian Language Council 1985, Society for One Norwegian Language 1985, Norwegian

Broadcasting Circle 1985, 'New Norwegian' Language Association 1985). In contrast to other minority demands which were largely ignored by those not concerned, the demand for a quota of 'new Norwegian' was controversial. Interest on the other side of the Norwegian language conflict strongly expressed their distaste for this kind of 'linguistic dictatorship' (Norwegian Society of Viewers and Listeners, Conservative 'Book Norwegian' Language Society 1985, Norwegian Academy of Language and Literature 1985)

Finally, concerns were expressed in both countries over the provision of programming in immigrant languages. In this case, however, there were more concern with the provision on the radio than on television.

#### 10.7. Protection of vulnerable types of programming

As we have seen, many different interests were concerned that a more liberal and commercialised broadcasting environment might lead to a less diverse output, and among the programme categories believed to be particularly at risk in both countries were news and current affairs programmes, regional and local programmes, children's programmes, programming catering for ethnic and/or linguistic minorities, and programmes providing important information for disadvantaged social groups. Concerns were also expressed for other types of programmes, particularly educational programmes, religious programmes and 'serious' art and cultural programmes.

Both in Britain and Norway, many contributors worried that the educational role of television would be further diminished in the new broadcasting environment. In the comments and the political debates it was argued that particular measures were necessary to secure schools programmes and adult education broadcasting, but the concern for educational television went further than to the specific educational programmes. Many interests stated that, the whole output, not just these programmes should strive to be educational in orientation.

In Britain, the Home Affairs Committee (1988 para. 91) stated on a general level that 'we wish to retain the public information and education role of television and the diverse nature of its programmes', whereas other interests put forward more specific concerns. The British Refugee Council (1989) stated that 'television has a vital role to play in raising people's awareness of the particular problems facing developing countries', whereas the Third World and Environment Broadcasting Project (1989) stated that 'TV has enormous power to raise awareness, influence attitudes and stir people to action on international issues'. Concerns were also expressed for health education programmes (British Medical Association 1989), basic science education (Committee on the Public Understanding of Science 1989), and social action broadcasting (The Bishop's Conference of Scotland 1989, Age Concern 1989, MENCAP 1989, Association of Charity Officers 1989, National Council of Women 1989, Community Service Volunteers 1989, Volunteer Centre UK 1989).

Consumer education programming was also raised as an issue. The British Medical Association (1989), for example, feared that deregulation might 'open the floodgates to sponsorship by companies whose harmful products are prohibited from pre-paid advertisements or strictly regulated', whereas the Committee on the Public Understanding of Science (1989) found it hard to accept that, for example, a series on nuclear energy could, in the future, be sponsored by the nuclear industry.

Similar comments were voiced in Norway, although mostly by educational, informational and academic interests. The main concerns here were that television should provide space for various kinds of information of use to the public (Library Council of Norway 1985, Norwegian Library Inspection 1985, Forum for Public Sector Information Workers 1985, Norwegian Public Relations Association 1985, Norwegian Consumer Council 1985), and that television and broadcasting should take on a higher educational programme profile (Norwegian Distance Learning 1985, Department of Sociology, University of Oslo 1985, University of Bergen 1985, Library Council of Norway 1985).

In addition to the concern for educational programming, fears were raised in both countries that religious programmes would be marginalised in a more commercial broadcasting environment. As pointed out by the United Reformed Church (1989) and London Churches Broadcasting Group (1989) in Britain, religious programmes were particularly vulnerable because their audiences were made up largely of over 50's and women. It was argued that since these groups are not in the high disposable

income brackets they are unattractive to advertisers no matter how large they may be, and it would therefore be little incentive to provide this kind of programming in the commercial sector if the companies were not required to do so (see also Methodist Churches in England and Ireland 1989, Bishop's Conference of Scotland 1989, General Synod of the Church of England 1989, British Council of Churches 1989, HC Official report 18.12.1989 vol. 164 col. 68).

Similar concerns were brought up in Norway where the Christian Broadcasting Theme (1985) argued that programming on the new television channel should reflect what they described to be the 'strong christian cultural tradition' in Norway. This view was supported by the Bishops and the representatives from the Christian Democratic Party in parliament (O.tid 1990: 26), all claiming that the new television channels should be required to provide substantial amounts of religious programming (Bishop of Agder 1985, see also Bishops of Nord-Hålogaland, Tunsberg, Sør-Hålogaland and Borg, all 1985).

Finally, artistic interests in both countries were concerned about the provision of serious music, art and cultural programmes in main viewing periods. Since these concerns were closely linked with those discussed in sections 8.2 and 10.2, however, I will not go into further details here.

Many of the types of broadcast output discussed in this chapter are commonly labelled 'minority programming', but this label was widely disliked. Many groups and actors went to great lengths to demonstrate that they did not represent minorities. For example, the British Action for Children's Television (1989) claimed that children should not be considered a minority since children were 'the whole population of the country at one stage of life', whereas others cited audience research (particularly the measurement known as 'programme reach') to demonstrate that what appeared to be 'minority programming' was, over a period of time, watched by majorities. As argued, for example, by the Bishop of Liverpool in the House of Lords debate (HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol. 519 col. 1318-19): 'religious broadcasting is not a minority interest. Recent IBA research has shown that 60 per cent of all viewers of ITV watch at least one religious programme every month' (see also the Norwegian Bishop of Agder 1985).

The reason why the question of 'minorities' versus 'majorities' is important, is of course because of the scheduling. Few interests seems to support the idea of 'target channels' or 'target programming', where the output is divided up to fit with neatly defined market niches. As the United Reformed Church (1989) stated in the case of religious programmes; 'religious matters should form part of a much wider canvas and not be relegated either to a ghetto station or a ghetto slot at some anti-social hour on a general station'. This was echoed by educational and social action groups who stated that regulation was necessary to prevent programmes of an educational and awareness-raising nature from being 'relegated to peripheral viewing and listening times' where it would only reach the most dedicated (Society of Education Officers 1989).

#### 10.8. Negative alliances and legislative changes

As we have seen in this chapter, a wide range of different views and perspectives on broadcasting were put forward by the groups and actors taking part in the debate about how broadcasting should be organised in the two countries. Different actors and interests supported certain aspects of the broadcasting system while being critical of others, and in many ways the broadcasting debates of the 1980s resembled those of the 1970s. The public sphere continued to be fragmented, and this in turn posed problems for the broadcasting corporations. Despite the similarities between the 1970s and the 1980s broadcasting debates, the transformation of the constraints and the pressures from the industrial interests had brought about some important changes. Most important of these was the fact that many of the interests which previously had been strongly critical of the public broadcasting structures, gradually began to defend the traditional regime. This was particularly important in Britain where the Thatcher governments' programme for a radical restructuring of the broadcasting sector, made many critics realise that the system would not necessarily survive by its own means. Among those who gradually came aground to defending the traditional structure were radical broadcasting researchers such as Nicholas Garnham. In a book published in 1978 Garnham wrote the following about the British broadcasting system (:16):

'What in fact we have is a system in which two powerful institutions responsible not to the public but to the real, though hidden, pressures of the power elite, government, big

business and the cultural establishment, manipulate the public in the interest of that power elite and socialise the individual broadcaster so that he collaborates in this process almost unconsciously.

Eight years later, the situation had changed, and in 1986 Garnham wrote that (:53):

'The necessary defence and expansion of the public sphere as an integral part of a democratic society requires us to re-evaluate the public service mode of public communication and, while being necessarily critical of its concrete historical actualization, defend it and build upon the potential of its rational core in the face of the existing and growing threats to its continued existence.'

(See also the Home Affairs Committee's examination of members of the Broadcasting Research Unit in 1988b: 241-51).

In Norway, there was less controversy over broadcasting in the 1970s, and even if the situation heated up considerably in the 1980s, it remained less polarised than in Britain. However, within this context, the transformation of the broadcasting constraints and the subsequent shift towards a more liberal broadcasting regime, made some interests, who had not previously involved themselves in the debates about broadcasting, rally to the defence of the existing systems. Thus, on a general level, it is possible to speak of a new alliance emerging in both countries in defence of the traditional broadcasting regulations towards the end of the 1980s. In neither country was this a positive alliance based on what the different groups and actors were in favour of, however, but an alliance based on what they were opposed to; and that was the development towards an 'American-style' television system and a broadcasting policy which catered more for business and industrial interests than social and cultural ones.

In both countries, these alliances managed to influence and modify the proposals put forward by the business interests and the conservative governments. In Britain, there was massive opposition to many of the proposals put forward in the of the 1988 White Paper. Among the responses that I have examined, a large majority were critical both of the proposed changes to the BBC and the changes within the commercial sector. In regard to the BBC there was a virtually unanimous opposition both to privatising its night hours and turning it into a subscription service, and many interests also agreed with the Home Affairs Committee (1988 para 36) that it would be 'unrealistic and inappropriate' to propose major changes to its organisation before the Charter expired in 1996. Regarding the commercial sector, many commentators opposed both the auction principle and the new 'light-touch' regulatory regime.

This opposition led to many of the proposals of the White Paper being changed and amended. When the Broadcasting Bill was published in 1989 almost all the proposals regarding the BBC which had been put forward in the White Paper had been put aside, and some of the changes concerning the ITV/Channel Four system were also diluted. The opposition to the new legislation persisted, and during the proceedings in the two houses of parliament more than 500 amendments were considered (HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol. 519 col. 1221). The Home Office Minister himself, Earl Ferrers acknowledged the opposition when he stated in the House of Lords on June 5, 1990 that the Bill was 'now much better and more generally acceptable than it was when it was first introduced ... and ... it is indeed considerably better than people feared it would be after the publication of the White Paper' (HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol. 519 col. 1221). Despite these reassuring words, however, the new broadcasting legislation continued to be surrounded by controversy until it received Royal Assent in late 1990.

In Norway, things happened differently. Due to the unstable parliamentary situation of the 1980s, no government was able to impose major changes in the broadcasting legislation without support from other political parties, and as has been pointed out, in the mid-1980s there was no agreement as to how important issues such as the second television channel should be solved. Among those commenting on the proposal from the 'TV2-inquiry', for example, roughly half of those in favour of a new channel wanted the NRK to be in charge of it, whereas the other half wanted some sort of private solution. There were also fierce conflicts over whether or not advertising should be permitted. As the availability of foreign commercial channels increased, however, a consensus began to emerge. Anti-

commercial interests gradually lessened their opposition to adverts, whereas those who were in favour of a private channel became more willing to compromise so that a decision could be made. Thus, after a decade of debate and discussion, a proposal able to gain the necessary public and political support emerged in the spring of 1990 (Ot.prop. 55 1989-90), and in the autumn the same year, the new Broadcasting Act passed through parliament.

Space does not permit me to describe the details of these acts, but in conclusion I will summarise some of the more important changes and discuss whose interests were favoured by the new legislation. Both in Britain and Norway few explicit changes were made to the traditional public broadcasters, the BBC and the NRK. Both corporations survived the 1980s without being either wholly or partly privatised, both managed to keep their licence fee to themselves, and neither were asked to take adverts. This can, in both cases be seen as a result of the opposition of the social and cultural interests to broadcasting commercialisation, and an indication of the continued presence of what I have termed a 'citizen's view' of broadcasting. The opposition of the cultural and social interests were also visible in the regulation of the commercial services. In Britain, the proposal to replace the ITV system with a system where franchises were to be awarded to the highest bidder was modified by a clause in the 1990 act which stated that if the quality of a service proposed by another applicant was 'exceptionally high', a franchise could be awarded to an applicant which had not submitted the highest bid (Clause 17). Changes were also made with regard to the so-called 'quality threshold' which the applicants had to pass in order to have their bids considered. Whereas the Broadcasting Bill had proposed only that a 'sufficient amount' of time should be given to news and current affairs and regional programming (clause 16(2)), the act required that provisions were also made for children's and religious programming (Clause 16(2)).

In Norway, the influence of the social and cultural interests was seen in the fact that the new television channel was quite strictly regulated in terms of ownership and advertising, and also in terms of content. The channel was explicitly labelled 'public service broadcasting', and this was in turn defined as a requirement to broadcast 'programmes of interest and relevance for large as well as small groups of viewers'. It was also required that before the end of the first ten year franchise period, at least 50% of its programmes should be produced in Norway. Furthermore, the channel was required to establish their own 'professional' television news department, and to commission some of its programming from NRK regional offices (Ot. prop. 55 1989-90: 9-10). The channel was also required to locate its headquarters in the city of Bergen, a proposal which was not very popular with the largely Oslo-based broadcasting industry.

Apart from these measures, however, the changes in the broadcasting legislation which was adopted in the two countries in 1990, largely favoured industrial and business interests. In Britain, advertising competition was introduced with the separation of Channel Four from the ITV-network (section 23), and in Norway the advertisers got access to a national terrestrial television channel. In both countries, the television systems were expanded through a combination of liberalising and facilitating measures: restrictions concerning satellite and cable channels were liberalised and provisions were made to establish new terrestrial channels ('TV2' in Norway and Channel 5 in Britain). Finally, major concessions were made in both countries regarding 'independent productions'. In Britain the requirement that both the BBC and the commercial channels should commission a minimum 25% of its programming from 'independent producers' was made law (Section 16, 186), whereas in Norway the second television channel was set up as 'publisher' with a brief to commission almost all its programming from 'independent producers'.

[Trine Syvertsens hjemmeside](#)

## PART FOUR: PUBLIC TELEVISION IN BRITAIN AND NORWAY IN THE 1980S AND EARLY 1990S: IMPLICATIONS AND RESPONSES

In part three, the general changes in the media environment in Britain and Norway in the 1980s and early 1990s, were discussed. In this part, we proceed to an examination of the more specific challenges and problems facing the two broadcasting corporations, the BBC and the NRK, in this period. How did the changes in the media environment affect these corporations and how did they respond to the new challenges? In what way did these responses lead to a redefinition or reorientation of public service broadcasting in the two countries?

Particularly for the BBC, but also for the NRK, the 1980s and early 1990s were difficult and challenging years. This is amply reflected in the corporations' annual reports. In the case of the BBC, the reports are littered with phrases such as 'one of the most difficult situations the BBC has ever had to face' (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1984), 'a year of unusual difficulty for the Corporation' (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1985), 'a degree of scrutiny, both public and internal, rarely matched in its existence' (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1986), '[a year when] the BBC was facing some of the most radical challenges in its history' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1986/1987), and 'a year of significant change for the BBC and for the whole broadcasting industry' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90). In Norway, the challenges were less profound, but also here one can find phrases such as 'an historic year in Norwegian broadcasting' (NRK Annual Report 1983), 'a year when the mass media environment was constantly changing' (NRK Annual Report 1984), 'a year which saw considerable changes in the Norwegian media situation' (NRK Annual Report 1985), and a year when the NRK 'embarked upon a process of change' (NRK 1987-88).

As we shall see in the following three chapters, the challenges and changes were not due to one single development, but to a combination of forces which - both explicitly and implicitly - influenced the corporations' positions in the social and cultural life of their respective countries. The discussion begins in chapter eleven where the implications for the corporations' control structures, are examined. As we shall see, the new media environment did not lead to major changes in the formal relationships between the states and the corporations in the period. Neither the BBC nor the NRK were sold off or privatised, and compared with the changes in the commercial network in Britain, the changes concerning the BBC were relatively minimal. On the administrative and informal levels, however, there were more substantial changes. In Norway, the most important of these were linked with the transformation of the NRK from a state-owned to a 'public' corporation in 1988, whereas in Britain they were connected with the Conservative government's unprecedented attempts to exploit direct state power over broadcasting.

In chapter twelve, the implications for the corporations' privileges, are examined. There was a significant increase in the number of television competitors in the period, and although there were major differences between the two countries in terms of the take-up of new services, both corporations were, by the early 1990s, facing a very different competitive environment than they had done a decade earlier. At the same time, as has already been indicated, the corporations were facing substantial problems legitimising their privileged positions. Although the legitimacy of both corporations among many groups and actors improved towards the end of the 1980s, this was not sufficient to grant the corporations an income throughout the decade which would be enough to compensate for the saturation of the colour television market and the spiralling broadcasting inflation. Thus the broad picture is that the privileges of the corporations became further undermined in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Despite this development, the expectations levelled at the corporations were not diminished. Both in Britain and Norway, parliaments and governments stressed on many occasions that even if the surroundings of the corporations had changed, both the BBC and the NRK were expected to fulfil the same obligations as before. As we shall see in chapter thirteen, the corporations were still expected to provide a universal service, to provide programmes for all tastes and interests, and to serve the national interest in broadcasting. In some cases these expectations were made even more explicit than before.

Thus the situation facing the public broadcasting corporations in the 1980s and 1990s was one of uncertainty and change. Both the BBC and the NRK had gone from being 'the sole national instrument of broadcasting' to being one among many different channels, and although they both still enjoyed a special (and to some extent, dominant) position, the pressures on the corporations had increased significantly. At one level they were expected to compete with the new channels and sustain their dominant positions, while at another they were supposed to fulfil 'public service' obligations which other channels could not or would not fulfil. Furthermore, these conflicting expectations were played out against a backdrop of increasing costs and decreasing revenue.

How then did the corporations respond to these challenges? To what degree did they attempt to maintain their positions as the national instruments of broadcasting in their respective countries, and how did they respond to the worsening of their financial situations? Furthermore, how did they interpret their obligations, and how did they legitimise these interpretations? Finally, what were the implications of all this for their traditional duties in terms of universality, diversity, impartiality and programming in the national interest?

When analysing the strategies developed by the broadcasting corporations in the last decade, it is important to note that changes within large organisations may occur for many different reasons, and should not be seen purely as 'responses' or 'adaptions' to challenges from external constituencies. For example, as Jacobsen (1992) has demonstrated in the case of the NRK, a broadcasting corporation may well have a persistent 'reform tradition', whereby similar measures are initiated again and again throughout the corporation's history. Problems of productivity and efficiency; of competition and cooperation; of flexibility versus stability in the work patterns, are as old as the corporations themselves, and the fact that the corporations have acted on these problems in the last decades should not be taken to mean that they have not countered them in previous eras. Having said this, however, it is important to point out that these problems have achieved more prominence over the last decade as a result of the more general transformation of the broadcasting environments. Thus the measures developed in order to deal with internal organisational problems in the last decade, may well be seen as part of the more general survival strategies employed by the corporations in order to overcome the multi-faceted crises they are currently experiencing.

As will be demonstrated in the next three chapters, the presence of such a crisis in both countries made the corporations' ambitions in terms of survival even more 'naked' than before. Under pressure from various interests the corporations shed even more of their previously distinctive characteristics, without managing to create new identities which could distinguish them clearly from their competitors. The strategies they adopted to remain 'on top' of the broadcasting developments were in many ways indistinguishable from those of commercial businesses whose position in the market are threatened. Like any other business they responded to the increased pressures by trying to 'sell' and 'market' their 'products' better, at the same time as they designed strategies to cut costs and 'rationalise' their systems of production.

This did not imply that increased 'commercialism' was their only answer to the new challenges, however. Due to their structural positions and their close links with the state and the public sphere, they could not base their survival solely on the support of the broadcasting consumers. On the contrary, they had to remain sensitive to the wishes of parliaments, governments and the perspectives expressed in the public debate, and, as we have seen, many of the voices heard in this debate were still, in one way or another, committed to 'traditional' values. Indeed, many of the strategies devised by the broadcasting corporations in order to survive financially and attract high ratings were in turn criticised, either because they were seen to make the corporations too similar to their commercial competitors, or because they were seen as unfair exploitations of the PSB privileges in order to gain commercial advantages.

Consequently, the corporations had to continue to balance different concerns against each other. On the one hand they had to worry about surviving in the marketplace, while on the other they had to concern themselves with legitimising their privileges - versus the consumers, the citizens, and the state. Finally, this had to be done in a way which did not alienate any other group of actors, and which left the corporations enough distinctive characteristics to justify their 'special positions' in the broadcasting environments of their respective countries.

#### Part IV: Sources:

In the three chapters which follows, the emphasis is mainly on organisational, administrative and financial challenges and strategies, but some information on general changes within scheduling and programming is also included. The analysis is based predominantly on primary sources, but information from journals, newspapers and trade papers has also been important. Among the primary sources, two types have been examined systematically in both contexts. Firstly, the political documents concerned with television in the 1980s and early 1990s: government white papers and bills, reports from government-appointed and parliamentary committees, and reports from the deliberations in the two parliaments. In the British case the documents consulted are the Peacock report (1986), the Home Office Memorandum to the Home Affairs Committee (1988b: 1-9), the report from the Home Affairs Committee itself (1988a), the 1988 Government White Paper, the 1989 Broadcasting Bill and the 1990 Broadcasting Act. In the Norwegian case, the documents consulted are the report from the Government-appointed committee on TV2 (NOU 1985:11), the 1985 and 1988 Government White Papers (St.meld. nr.84 1984/85 and St. meld. 44 1987/88), the two bills (Ot.prop. nr. 31 1986-87 and Ot.prop. nr. 55 1989-90), and the two reports from the parliamentary committees connected with these (Innst. S 187 1988-89 and Innst.O. 2 1989-90).

While many of these documents were examined in part III in an attempt to elicit general changes, challenges and perspectives, the aim here is to identify the specific implications of the new media environment for the BBC and the NRK. Information from these sources has also been supplemented with various information regarding the corporations competitive and financial situation in the 1980s and early 1990s. In the Norwegian case, I have consulted budget documents to establish licence fee developments and various other sources to establish audience data and information on competitors and costs. In Britain, this type of information is, for the most part, available in the BBC annual reports (see below), but I have also consulted trade journals and other occasional sources in order to get a full picture.

The analysis of the corporations' responses to the new media situation is based predominantly on documents produced by the corporations themselves, which is the second type of source which has been examined systematically in both countries. These documents are, firstly, the annual reports which I have examined for the period between 1981 to 1991. In both countries the formats of these reports changed in the middle of the decade. In the BBC's case I have examined five issues of BBC Annual Reports and Handbook: 1983 (covers April 1981-March 82), 1984 (1982/83), 1985 (1983/84), 1986 (1984/85), 1987 (1985/86) and five BBC Annual Reports and Accounts published in a new format: 1986/87, 1987/88, 1988/89, 1989/90, 1990/91. In the NRK's case I have first examined five NRK Annual Reports: 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985. Then the format was changed, and from 1986 a series of publications entitled NRK Facts and Figures were published, covering the years 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990. From 1987 onwards these volumes were accompanied by a shorter report to parliament, emphasising plans and priorities for the next three to five years. These were entitled: NRK 1987-88, NRK 1988-90, NRK 1989-91, and NRK 1990-92.

Both in Britain and Norway, I have supplemented the information derived from the annual reports with information from other documents emerging from the two corporations in the 1980s and 1990s. These are the corporations' responses to Government-appointed committees and White papers, and more general policy and planning documents. In the case of the BBC, the responses which I have consulted are the BBC response to the Hunt Inquiry (1982), the BBC response to the Peacock committee (1986), the BBC response to Home Affairs committee (1988) and the BBC response to White paper (1989a). The three most relevant strategy documents, which are also the ones that I have examined, are 'Priorities for the future' (1986), 'BBC the next five years' (1988) and 'Funding the future' (1990). In the case of the NRK the most important submissions are the NRK response to the TV2-committee (1985), whereas the most important policy and planning documents are 'NRK in a new media situation' (1982a), 'NRK Pay-TV' (1983), 'A more autonomous NRK' (1984), 'NRK towards 2000' (1987) and 'NRK: Future, obligations, policies' (1987). From 1987 onwards policies and strategies are outlined in the reports to Parliament (see above).

Submissions to public inquiries and policy and planning documents do not only provide information about actual corporate priorities and concerns, they also reveal how the public broadcasters interpret the surrounding political climates. The key points chosen and the values stressed in these documents

indicate whose interests and perspectives the institutions feel they have to take into account, and whose they can safely ignore in their struggle for survival.

## CHAPTER 11:

### THE CONTROL STRUCTURE: IMPLICATIONS AND RESPONSES

As has been pointed out previously, parliaments and governments in the two countries exercised formal control over the corporations in four different ways. Firstly, the authorities had formal control over the radio spectrum and thereby the corporations' (and other companies') licences to broadcast. Secondly, they appointed the controllers of the corporations. Thirdly, in both countries they held extensive control over the corporations' finances. Finally they held a measure of control over content. In this chapter I examine the changes within these four elements in the 1980s and early 1990s.

As we have already seen, the 1980s and early 1990s was a period of extensive media policy-making. Both in Britain and Norway governments and parliaments demonstrated a willingness to use legislative measures within the field of broadcasting to achieve industrial and cultural goals, and rather than being a process of deregulation, the 1980s and early 1990s were characterised by increased regulation of the broadcasting sector. Since many of the new legislative measures were more detailed and less flexible than before, these developments did, to some extent, change the nature of the relationship between policy-makers and broadcasters. The policy-makers became more openly involved with broadcasting, at the same time that there was an increase in the number of legislative bodies and institutions to which the broadcasters had to respond. A telling example of this is that the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) in Britain was succeeded by no less than three bodies: the Independent Television Commission, the Radio Authority and National Transcommunications Ltd.

Despite these developments on a general level, there were very few changes in the BBC's and the NRK's formal control structures. The general patterns of control and power remained largely the same, and the only really significant change took place in Norway where the NRK was converted from a state-owned into a 'public' corporation in 1988. This move granted the corporation more financial and administrative autonomy, and made it more similar to the BBC in terms of its institutional characteristics. The BBC, for its part, only experienced minor changes in its control structure in the period. These changes, however, did in turn make its control structure more similar to that of the NRK.

On the informal level, however, there were more profound changes in the patterns of control, particularly in Britain where the Conservative governments in the period demonstrated a greater willingness than previous governments to exercise their political influence over the broadcasters. As we shall see, this not only had implications for the appointment of controllers and the corporation's finances, but also for content. The Conservative governments under Margaret Thatcher were more eager than previous Governments both to criticise the BBC and to conduct overt interventions into broadcasting - whether over charges of 'bias', security, patriotism or law and order. Opinions differ, however, as to whether this signified a genuinely new era in the relationship between the broadcasters and the authorities, or whether it was only a change of style.

Some contributors argue that that was what the Thatcher era was predominantly about; 'bringing conflicts between politicians and broadcasters out in the open' (Trethowan 1984: 181), or 'casting aside the traditional covert relations with the BBC Board of Governors' (Lee 1987:67). Other go further, however, and argue that the political criticisms only make sense if 'seen as part of a general attack on public service broadcasting promoted by multinational companies and the new right' (O'Malley 1988:19) or in Duncan Campbell's words (1988: 18), 'the Conservative government's irritation with the state-owned media corporation has moved from sniping and bitchiness - always a ruling party's attitude to the BBC - to a new steely determination to mould the BBC into being the voice of Government alone'.

What is clear, however, is that the relationship between the BBC and the government became more openly hostile in the period when Margaret Thatcher was prime minister. It remains to be seen

whether or not this situation will continue under John Major, and whether or not the 1980s was an exceptional period or signified the beginning of a new era in terms of the relations between broadcasters and governments.

### 11.1. Control over the licence to broadcast

As has been pointed out previously, the most fundamental aspect of the control structure was that the state, as the 'administrator' or 'owner' of the radio spectrum, retained the right to issue and revoke broadcasting licences. In the period discussed here this arrangement continued, and, as we have seen, governments in both countries used their right to licence new services. In the Norwegian case these new services were first licensed on an experimental basis, but in November 1987 the NRK monopoly was also formally abolished (Ot.prop. nr. 47 1986/87). This brought the NRK into line with the BBC, whose monopoly had been revoked several decades before.

Apart from the fact that new services were permitted to go on air and thereby making the corporations' licences less exclusive, there were no important changes in the legislative documents issued to the BBC and the NRK. In Norway, the idea of revoking the NRK licence to broadcast or removing some of its services was not even discussed, whereas in Britain, as we have seen, more fundamental changes were proposed. Nevertheless, the BBC's licence to broadcast remained unchanged in the period discussed here. This was partly a result of the massive opposition to the changes proposed, but it was also connected with the structural characteristics of the BBC. As we have seen, the BBC was regulated through a Royal Charter, and the Charter which had been granted in 1981 was not to expire until 1996. Although it was possible for the government to have made changes to the BBC's structure within this period, it would have been difficult to legitimise. No similar limitation applied to the NRK (or for that matter the ITV/Channel Four system), which continued to be regulated through Acts of Parliament.

In Norway, the Broadcasting Act was changed on a number of counts when the NRK was converted from a state-owned to a 'public' corporation in 1987. The initiative behind these changes had originated within the conservative government of the early 1980s, which, as part of its 'new media policy' and its campaign against state bureaucracy, had suggested that the NRK should be granted a more autonomous position. The NRK responded in 1984 with a proposal for administrative reform, without, however, proposing that they should cease to be a state-owned corporation altogether (NRK 1984). Three years later, this was, in fact, precisely the decision taken, when a Labour Government proposal to make the NRK a 'self-owned' corporation from March 1988, gained the acceptance of all political parties (Ot.prop. nr. 31 1986-87). Due to the similarities with the BBC's structure, the 'new' NRK will, in the following, be referred to as a 'public' corporation.

According to the government proposal, the main reason for this change was that it was 'principally very important that a broadcasting corporation of the NRK's character is ... as independent as possible from political authorities'. In addition, the proposal stated that greater autonomy was important from the perspective of 'efficient management and flexibility' (Ot.prop. nr. 31 1986-87: 7). Despite these declarations, however, the allocative control patterns remained the same in many ways. Apart from the changes in the formal ownership of the NRK, the most important changes were, as we shall see below, that the Board was granted more control over the operational allocation of the NRK resources and the appointment of staff.

### 11.2. Appointment of controllers

In both countries, the composition of the governing bodies and the system of appointing them, remained unchanged in the period 1980s and early 1990s. On a more administrative level, however, the NRK Board was granted more power over appointments and the allocation of staff. Although the NRK had, in principle, been free to appoint most categories of staff and also to determine the number of people that were to be employed in the different services, the most important of these decisions had in fact been taken by parliament. Nevertheless, from 1986 all such limitations were removed in anticipation of the change in the NRK structure, and the NRK Board became free to appoint all categories of staff, apart from the DG, who was still to be directly appointed by Government (Ot.prop. nr. 31 1986-87).

Even though if these changes did not change the ultimate control over broadcasting, they granted the NRK more autonomy over its internal affairs. This was in contrast to the British situation, where the government in the 1980s used its power over appointment in order to gain more direct political control over broadcasting. The main charge against the British governments in this period was that they had introduced a new practice of appointing Governors on the basis of their political sympathies. Critics argued that in addition to appointing Governors who were outspoken Tories and outright enemies of the BBC - such as Lord Rees-Mogg, the former editor of The Times who was appointed vice-chairman in 1981 - the Thatcher Government made sure that also the 'non-Tory' Governors held very right wing attitudes (see for example Madge 1989, Milne 1988, O'Malley 1988, Lee 1987, Etziony-Halevy 1987). Indeed, by the mid-1980s the criticism of the Governments 'politicisation' of the Board was so widespread that the appointment in 1986 of the ex-Labour minister Joel Barnett to succeed Rees Mogg as vice-chairman, was widely interpreted as a move to calm things down. This conciliatory attitude did not prevail, however, and when the chairman Stuart Young died in August the same year, it was another former employee of The Times, Marmaduke Hussey, who was appointed to be his successor.

According to the critics, this practice of appointments was one of the main causes of the gap which opened up between the BBC Board of Governors and the Board of Management from the early 1980s onwards. This gap, which manifested itself profoundly in the 'Real Lives'-affair (see below and chapter 13) eventually led to the forced resignation of the Director-General Alasdair Milne in January 1987, only a few months after Hussey's appointment.

Despite the fact that the Governors nominated by the Conservative government were overwhelmingly conservative sympathizers, and that many of them were clearly no friends of the BBC, their actions were not necessarily motivated by political concerns alone. Leapman (1987:29) argues that the main reason why the Governors decided to assert themselves against the management was not primarily because they believed the broadcasters to be too left-wing, but because they believed the BBC to be in the need of an organisational shake up. Nevertheless, the appointment of people who were outspoken critics of the BBC to be in charge of the corporation, contributed much towards bringing the feeling of crisis into the very heart of the institution.

In the position as Director-General, Alasdair Milne was succeeded by his deputy Michael Checkland, who, as an accountant, offered a brand of thinking more acceptable to the Governors (O'Malley 1988, Madge 1989). Shortly after, John Birt was brought in from London Weekend Television as deputy DG with a special brief to re-appraise and supervise BBC journalism, and the two top management jobs were changed into fixed-term (five-year) contracts in order to encourage 'greater mobility and flexibility amongst senior staff' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1986/87).

As a result of these changes, the gap between the Governors and the broadcasters became less explicit - as stated pointedly by the annual report 1989/90: 'The Board of Governors and Board of Management work harmoniously together' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90). Later, the new regime was permitted to continue into the 1990s. In 1990 the chairman and deputy chairman had their periods extended for five and two years respectively, and in the summer of 1991 it was decided that Michael Checkland should continue as DG for another 18 months before being succeeded by his deputy John Birt.

In Norway the period saw increased controversy over appointments, and as usual in this country, it was the appointment of the Director-General which was the most controversial. Here, however the controversy did not develop because of a new trend of political appointments. Instead it was because the 'established practice' of appointing DGs on the basis of their social democratic sympathies became more controversial.

Over the years, all but one of the NRK DGs had been Labour Party sympathizers, and this system of appointments had previously led to critique and debate. In the new parliamentary situation with constantly changing governments, however, this practice was considered less and less acceptable by non-Labour interests. There had already been some controversy in 1981, when the ex-Labour minister Bjartmar Gjerde succeeded Torolf Elster as Director-General, but this seems insignificant in comparison to the debate which evolved over the appointment of his successor Einar Førde in 1988, during a brief period of Labour Government. Like his predecessor, Einar Førde was an ex-labour

minister, but he was also the person who had been responsible for the appointment of Gjerde in 1981. This led to criticism of the Labour Party 'dynasty' and its long-term grip on the leadership of the NRK, and it also led to a series of (unsuccessful) proposals to change the Broadcasting Act. Among the changes proposed were that the Board should be appointed by Parliament rather than Government and that the DG in turn should be appointed by the Board (see for example Dokument 8:47 1987-88, Dokument 8:1 1988-89, Dokument 8:4 1988-89, Innst. S. 52 1988-89, S.tid. 1988-89 1854-901).

The way these proposals were presented, however, leaves one with the impression that it was not so much the principle of taking political sympathies into account which was at stake here, but the fact that the Labour party had the opportunity to control yet another of these appointments. The opposition parties, which for the first time in the 1980s, had been able to exert an independent influence over broadcasting developments, felt 'cheated' when the opportunity to appoint a DG was lost for another eight years.

In Norway there were also major changes in the management in the period discussed here. This was partly a case of one generation succeeding another. In 1987, the Director of Television resigned after almost thirty years in the same position. His successor, however, lasted only a few years, reflecting the higher pressure and the increasingly competitive environment characterising the NRK in the new broadcasting era.

### 11.3. Financial control

In both countries allocative financial control continued to reside with government and parliament and the system whereby the state determined the size of the licence fee (and in Norway also the duty on sets) continued, but there were some minor changes in the formal financial arrangements. In the case of the BBC, the most significant change was that the responsibility for collecting the licence fee was, in line with the recommendations of the Peacock committee (1986 para 628), transferred from the Post Office to the BBC when the new broadcasting Act was passed in 1990. This change was welcomed by the BBC who saw it as an opportunity to spend less on collection and introduce more flexibility into the system of payments. A system of quarterly payments, they stated, would also make it easier to legitimise the licence fee, since it would 'put into perspective the £15 or so the licence fee costs a quarter with the £10 or so a month which a satellite service will charge' (BBC Annual Report and Account 1987/88, see also BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91).

In Norway, the changes were more substantial. When the NRK was converted into a 'public' corporation in 1988, the Board obtained for the first time the power to determine the corporations' budget, and also to determine salaries and working conditions (Ot.prop. nr. 31 1986-87). This was an important change, since it allowed for far more efficient and flexible management of the corporation. It did not imply any change in the allocative control of the corporations resources, however; parliament and government continued, as in Britain, to exercise ultimate control. As we shall see in the next chapter, the authorities in both countries continued to use their power to determine the size of the licence fee very consciously in the period discussed here.

The authorities also continued to use their financial control over the corporations to achieve general industrial policy goals. Within the BBC, this was most apparent in the case of their DBS project where the Home Office decided that the corporation had to opt for expensive UK technology instead of using cheaper technology which was already available, and in the instructions to the BBC to commission 25% of its programming from 'independent' sources. Within the NRK, the best example of such general control is probably the parliamentary decision to move the NRK licence fee collection office, against the wishes of the corporation, to a town further north in Norway which had been badly hit by unemployment (St. meld. nr. 44 1987-88).

Thus in both countries, the authorities continued to exercise a high level of financial control over the corporations. Indeed it is possible to argue that the administrative reforms introduced in the period were not so much aimed at lessening state control, as a withdrawal of state responsibility for the broadcasting corporations in a more complex broadcasting environment.

### 11.4. Control over content

In neither country were there any major changes in the formal framework guiding the corporations' editorial autonomy in the period. Indeed, the principles of editorial autonomy was officially reaffirmed in both countries. In its memo to the Home Affairs Committee, the Home Office (1988:1) declared that one of the 'central principle' of public broadcasting in the UK was that the broadcasting authorities should be 'free of Government intervention' in their day to day affairs and in the content of their programmes', and in the case of the NRK, as has already been pointed out, one of the main justifications for making it a 'public' corporation was that it should be 'as independent as possible from political authorities' (Ot.prop. nr. 31 1986-87: 7).

On a more general level, however, the changes were more comprehensive, particularly in Britain where many new Acts were passed restricting public access to information and the exercise of civil rights. The new climate was also seen in the fact that the Broadcasting Standards Council was set up to monitor 'taste and standards' in all broadcasting organisations, and in the inclusion in the 1990 Broadcasting Act of a set of clauses regarding 'impartiality' (see section 11.3.2 below). The BBC, along with other media institutions, protested vigorously against all these measures, defending the editorial autonomy of the broadcasters and claiming that the proliferation of bodies to which they had to respond would lead to a 'confusion' in the minds of the public as to who was really in control (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1988/89, 1989/90, 1990/91). Whether or not 'the public' had any such awareness previously is not clear, but the corporation apparently judged the principle of 'self-government' to be crucial to its legitimacy among the citizens critical of the close connections between the broadcasters and the state.

Of even greater significance than these general limitations, however, was the Home Secretary's order to the broadcasting authorities in 1988 banning the direct transmission of statements by members of a series of organisations in Northern Ireland. The ban was laid down with reference to clause 13(4) in the Licence which, as we have seen, had been invoked on several occasions in the previous decades. This was the first time, however, that it was directed at specific subjects or named organisations, and by being applied so closely to the form and content of programmes, it clearly altered the established relationship between the government and the broadcasters. As the BBC itself pointed out, the ban not only created problems for the coverage of daily news and local elections in Northern Ireland, it also made it necessary to 'filter' historical and schools programmes before re-screening (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90).

Finally, the increased control over content was seen in the many instances in the period when the government or the Conservative Party made overt attempts to influence programming. Some of these instances are discussed in section 11.3.2 and 11.3.3. below.

These developments had no parallel in Norway where the governments of the 1980s were more liberal, but in this context the authorities control over content did, in one respect become, more explicit than before. The principles set down for the transformation of the NRK into a 'public' corporation, for the first time imposed an explicit obligation on the corporations to broadcast 25% of its programming in the 'New Norwegian' language (NRK Regulations 1988 para.6).

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Before concluding on the changes in the patterns of control in the two countries in the 1980s and 1990s, it is important to point out that the structural characteristics of the two corporations became more similar in this period. Firstly, and most importantly, the reorganisation of the NRK as a 'public' corporation granted the NRK Board many of the same powers as those enjoyed by the BBC Governors, such as the power to determine the corporation's budget and the power to appoint and determine different categories of staff. In this case, the structure of the BBC was not brought in as an argument in either the NRK's, or the Government's proposal for change (NRK 1984, Ot.prop. nr. 31 1986-87), but two years later the British example was vigorously held up by those proposing to change the Broadcasting Act in 1989, in the aftermath of the controversial appointment of (yet another) Labour politician as DG (S.tid. 1988-89: 1854-901). The attempt to adopt a structure where the DG was appointed by the Board was unsuccessful, however: the NRK DG continued, as we have seen, to be appointed directly by Government.

Regarding other elements of the broadcasting structure, the two corporations' positions and situations became more similar in the period discussed here. In Norway, the NRK's monopoly was abolished and a commercial national television channel established, a similar process to the one which had taken place in Britain in 1954. In Britain, the process of appointments became more politicised, bringing it into line with 'established Norwegian practice'. Finally, the new system of licence fee collection adopted in Britain was the same as the one adopted in Norway in 1948, and the system of fixed-term appointments for senior management was similar to the one introduced in Norway in 1980.

## CHAPTER 12:

### THE PRIVILEGES: IMPLICATIONS AND RESPONSES

As has been demonstrated in a previous chapter, the 'public service'-identities of the BBC and the NRK were, from the beginning, based upon two important privileges. Firstly, there was the absence of competition which granted the corporations special positions as 'the national instruments of broadcasting' in their respective countries, a position which, to some extent, was upheld after the monopoly had been changed into a duopoly in Britain in the 1950s. Secondly, there was the secure and independent source of revenue in the shape of the licence fee (and in Norway also the duty on sets), which, even if this was subject to some erosion, still gave the corporations a formidable advantage compared with other media.

In this chapter, the implications of the 'new media environment' for these privileges, are discussed. I begin by examining the changes in the competitive situation for the two corporations in the 1980s and early 1990s, and discuss the strategies they employed to remain 'the national instruments of broadcasting' in their respective countries. Then I turn to the changing financial fortunes of the institutions and examine the licence fee settlements and the developments within broadcasting inflation and costs. As we shall see, the expansion of the media sector led to an increase in the competition facing the corporations, at the same time as the declining value of the licence fees and the pressures on costs created a situation where it became increasingly difficult for them to fight back.

The BBC and the NRK responded to this situation in many different ways, but both corporations put more efforts into legitimising the licence fee and their claims to the whole of it. At the same time, they tried to exploit other sources of funds, to rationalise their systems of production, and to save money through reorganisations and more efficient management. These measures made the BBC in particular, but also the NRK to some extent, appear to be in a 'leaner' and more efficient state by the early 1990s, a factor which can account for their improved status in some quarters. The new strategies of pulling the corporations closer into the marketplace created new problems, however, leading to criticism that the corporations were either becoming too 'commercialised', or that they were exploiting their PSB privileges unfairly in order to gain commercial advantages.

#### 12.1. From monopoly and duopoly to a multi-channel environment

As a result of the developments within the broadcasting constraints and the legislative changes that followed, the 1980s became a period of unprecedented media expansion. In the course of only three years, between 1983 and 1986, the number of television channels in Western Europe doubled (Dyson and Humphreys 1988), and by 1991, most viewers both in Britain and Norway could, if they had the money to spare, receive more than twenty different television channels. Most of these were commercial entertainment or target channels aimed at the general European audience, but there were also new channels aimed at the national (in Norway also the Scandinavian) publics.

Despite the fact that the same channels or types of channels were available in both countries, however, there were important differences in the take-up of the services, and thereby also in the competitive situation facing the two corporations. The most profound difference could be seen with regard to cable and satellite services. In Britain, as late as 1989 cable could be found only in 2% of British homes, while just 2% had their own satellite dish (Barwise and Ehrenberg 1988, Gunter 1989). In Norway, in contrast, the percentage of homes with access to cable and satellite services grew

steadily from 1983 onwards, and had reached 45% by 1991. Among these most households had access via cable, only 3-4% had their own satellite dish (Høst 1991, NRK 1990-92).

These differences in take-up are first and foremost a reflection of the already existing differences between the two countries' broadcasting systems. By 1983, Britain already had a four channel system with a high proportion of popular entertainment, while in Norway there was clearly a demand for 'more television' and more entertainment than the one NRK channel could provide. Britain also had the highest average daily viewing by adults in Western Europe with more than three and a half hours per day, whereas in Norway, with less than two hours and the lowest average daily viewing in Western Europe, there was more scope for growth (Dunkley 1985, Tydeman and Kelm 1986, Barwise and Ehrenberg 1988, Østbye 1982, NRK 1982a). There was also a difference in infrastructure. In Britain, the idea of the 'entertainment-led' revolution had failed almost completely; despite many attempts by the cable industry at attracting investments, the number of cabled households increased only slowly. In Norway, in contrast, cable systems had been established on a large scale in the 1970s as a way of receiving Swedish television, and even if access was strongly disposed in favour of central and eastern areas of the country, the existing networks provided the new services with a base from which to expand.

The take-up of cable and satellite was also linked with the level of VCR ownership. Britain had a very high take-up of VCR prior to the influx of new cable and satellite channels; as early as 1985 a VCR could be found in 38% of British households and by 1990 this figure had almost doubled (1989: 70%) (Gunter 1989). In Norway, the take-up of VCR was comparatively much lower when competition began on a massive scale. In 1985 a VCR could be found in 18% of Norwegian homes, increasing to 50% in 1991 (Central Bureau of Statistics 1991). A final factor was that in Britain there were already two channels taking advertising, which meant that new channels would have to compete for revenue with those already established. In Norway, in contrast, television advertising was permitted for the first time in the 1980s. Thus, it was a free-for-all market where no one was disadvantaged by a late entry.

Thus so far the cable and satellite channels have made a greater impact in Norway than in Britain, but in Britain these services might become more important competitors in the future. It is only recently that the Broadcasting Audience Research Bureau (BARB) has measured cable and satellite audiences, but their figures indicate that the popularity of these services are growing. Throughout the first months of 1992 'other channels' attracted a share of between four and five per cent of the viewing. Even more important from the BBC's point of view, however, is the competition from the new terrestrial channels. This competition intensified considerably in the early 1980s with the establishment of Channel Four. Before this channel was introduced, the BBC had with its two channels performed well against ITV's one, and could, without much difficulty command a 50% share of the total audience (see for example BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1984). After the establishment of the fourth channel, however, the BBC's share of audiences dropped to around 40% (Leapman 1986:40). This 'ratings crisis' led to rescheduling and revamping of the BBC's services, and gradually it regained its position in the ratings. In 1984/85 its share was back up to 45%, increasing to 47% in 1985/86, and 48% in 1986/87. For the rest of the decade its share of the audience varied between 48% and 49% (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1986 - Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91).

With the revamping of main ITV channel however, it is likely that the BBC's competitive situation will change again. When the new franchise holders for the ITV channel were announced in October 1991, it became clear that the 'shake-up' of the broadcasting sector had been less radical than many of the 'quality'-campaigners had feared and many neo-liberalists had hoped (see for example Independent 17.10.91, TV World December 1991). Even if many of the 'old' companies remain within the system, however, the liberalisation of the regulations makes it difficult to predict how the new network will develop. As stated by the government (Mr. David Mellor) during the debate on the Broadcasting Act, the revamped network was supposed to be 'a notch below public service broadcasting' (HL 5.6.90 col 1233), and whatever happens, it is likely that the BBC will be facing a channel which is competing more aggressively for the mass audience than the 'old' ITV did. In addition, it is likely that Channel Four will compete more aggressively for the young and up-coming audiences as the channel begins to sell its own advertising in 1992.

There will also be a further increase in the number of new competitors. In 1994 the fifth channel, organised either as a network of city stations or as a single channel, is meant to become available to

70% of the population (see Broadcast 22.3., 28.3.1991), and the government has also declared its intention to establish a sixth channel some time in the future. This implies that even if the take-up of satellite and cable services continue to be slow, the BBC with its two channels will gradually occupy a more marginal position. Over the last year or so there has been clear signs to indicate that its overall share of audiences is declining. In 1991 BBC1's share of the weekly audience slipped from 37 per cent to 31 per cent, regularly some 10-11 percentage points behind ITV (Independent 16.11.91), and during the first two months of 1992, the two BBC channels never obtained more than a 43% share of the audience on a weekly basis. Thus, the BBC is now back to the situation of 1984, a situation which then was described as a 'ratings crisis' (Broadcast 19.4 1991, 24.5 1991, 6.3. 1992)

In Norway, terrestrial television in the shape of the new TV2, is likely to become the NRK's greatest competitor. Until this channel has a fully developed service some time in 1993, however, it is the Norwegian channel 'TV-Norge' and the Scandinavian 'TV3' which represent the greatest challenge to the NRK. TV-Norge is a 'local' television channel which, via satellite and cable networking, is trying to expand nationally, whereas TV3 is the ScanSat channel which became available in 1988 and which moved to Astra in 1989. Both channels are low-budget commercial entertainment channels with little production of their own apart from game shows, news headlines and studio-based magazine programmes.

After these channels came on the air the NRK's share of overall viewing declined from 89% in 1988 (NRK 1987-88) to 82% in 1990 (Høst 1991). It is also a case of the viewing having become more concentrated, however: While 20-22% of the multi-channel population watch TV3 and TV-Norge on an average day, only a few per cent watch the 'foreign' entertainment channels (Høst 1991). This indicates, as others have pointed out (see Dyson and Humphreys 1988, Collins 1990a), that language barriers are still significant in Europe. Although many Scandinavians know English well, they prefer programming in their 'own language' - even if it is only in the shape of subtitled US feature films.

Language is not the only decisive factor, however. Local television has not been a success in Norway, and channels such as the up-market pan-Scandinavian TV4 has also been a failure in terms of audiences. Viewing of Swedish Television has also declined significantly since the early 1980s. This indicates that what most Norwegian viewers look for in the new channels is an increased supply of the type of light entertainment which so far has been 'undersupplied' on both the Norwegian and Swedish public service channels. This is confirmed by surveys which show that viewing of non-NRK channels is closely linked with particularly popular individual programmes such as US series and home-produced quiz shows, whereas most other programmes have very few viewers (Solvang 1991, Høst 1991).

As in Britain, it is difficult to predict how the new developments within terrestrial television will affect the existing competitive situation. So far, the NRK is doing quite well against its competitors in terms of audience figures: it is still by far the dominant channel among those who have access to alternative channels (Høst 1991). It is likely, however, that the TV2, which is planning to begin broadcasting in September 1992, will take viewers both from the commercial channels and the NRK. The new franchise holders, a consortium of newspaper and industrial interests which were awarded the franchise in August 1991, have so far indicated little in the way of programming, but since the TV2 is a commercial channel it is likely that it will put on a more prominent entertainment profile than the NRK.

Before concluding on the competitive situation for the two corporations, it is important to point out that the competition from VCR is not very significant in any of the two countries. VCR has established itself as an accessory to the television set, but the watching of non-broadcast programmes is still fairly marginal compared with the watching of 'ordinary' or recorded broadcast television (Gunter and Svennevig 1988, Høst 1991, Barwise and Ehrenberg 1988).

So far, we have seen that at least in terms of audience shares, the BBC and the NRK managed to hold out well against the first wave of 'new' competition in the 1980s. The high ratings were not handed to the corporations on a plate, however; both the BBC and the NRK fought a continuous battle all through the 1980s to retain a majority shares of their respective audiences. As we shall see in the next chapter this was reflected both in the programme priorities and the scheduling of the two corporations, but these were not the only areas affected by the desire to remain dominant. Both the BBC and the NRK expanded their output with almost 30% in the period discussed here. In Britain this was done primarily by expanding morning and day-time programming: Breakfast-TV came in 1983 and

in 1986 an all-day service was started on BBC1, whereas in Norway, where the output was far more limited to begin with, the strategy adopted was to expand weekend and early afternoon programming (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983 - BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91, NRK Annual Report 1982 - NRK 1990-92).

The strategy of filling 'silent hours' has its clear limitations, however. After a certain number of hours are filled the costs of a continuing expansion become too high compared to the number of people who will actually be watching, and even if the advent of VCR has made day-time and night-time broadcasting a more viable prospect, it is still, after a certain limit is reached, more cost-efficient to establish a parallel service. The 'need' for more transmission time was not the only reason why the two corporations from the beginning of the 1980s, began investigating the possibilities for setting up new channels. Another strong impetus was the financial pressure stemming from the saturation of the colour television market which led the corporations once again, as they had done twice in the past, to look for innovations which would justify higher licence fees and carry them through another decade's expansion. There was also the overriding impetus of the new technologies themselves. Led by the strong belief that if they did not exploit the new technologies someone else would, both the NRK and the BBC put forward plans for new television services in the early 1980s.

The BBC's plans were based on two of the five DBS channels which had been allocated to Britain in 1977, and which the BBC, as the only serious bidder, was awarded in March 1982. According to the original plan, one channel was to be a subscription channel based on major feature films, while the second was titled 'Window on the World' (later renamed 'a more general service'). After only a few years of planning, however, it became apparent that it was too costly for the BBC to proceed alone, and from May 1984 a joint venture was established with the IBA and five non-broadcasting commercial companies. Even this could not save the project, however, and after the restrictions on the transmission from low-powered satellites were removed in 1985, the consortium concluded that 'on the terms set by Government and within the current broadcasting environment, DBS was not a commercial proposition' (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1986, see also BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983-1985).

In addition to the fact that the project was never adequately planned and costed, the failure of the DBS service was also due to the government requirement that new and expensive British technology should be used instead of the European system which was already available (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1984). This demonstrates how governmental attempts to use broadcasting for national industrial policy purposes may backfire - at least as long as they provide no financial backing.

The NRK's plans for new channels were even more hurriedly put together. As late as 1982 the NRK stated in a report that establishing a second television channel in Norway - either by satellite or terrestrially - was 'not realistic' (NRK 1982a:13), but only a year later it put forward a proposal for a subscription channel based on spare capacity on the low-powered ECS 2 satellite which was used by the Norwegian PTT (NRK 1983). This proposal, which would have led to a substantial increase in the amount of imported entertainment on Norwegian screens, attracted little enthusiasm and much outright criticism, however (see for example Thorsen 1983), and the NRK switched its attention to a more traditional solution. In 1985 it presented its proposal for a new terrestrial channel to the 'TV2-committee', a proposal which stated that within a six year period, the NRK could have a fully established licence-fee funded second channel in operation, reaching 95% of population (NRK 1985a).

Both the BBC and the NRK justified their proposals for new channels by emphasising that, as 'national instruments of broadcasting' it was not only 'natural' that they should be in the forefront of the new technologies, it was also their 'duty' to contribute towards the development of new services. As the BBC stated in its 1985 Annual Report and Handbook, 'we would be failing the nation if we did not build on the strength of the BBC to develop new and improved services to the public'. Similarly, the NRK's proposal for a subscription channel stated that even if the channel was to transmit mainly imported entertainment, it was important that the NRK was in control since only the NRK would base such an operation on the interests of the Norwegian viewers (NRK 1983). The NRK's TV2 proposal went even further, stating that a second channel was a necessary condition for the NRK's ability to 'fulfil the obligations facing a public television service' (NRK 1985a,b, see also Gjerde 1985). Despite the fact that this argument gained a lot of support, parliament decided, as we have seen, to endorse a private

solution. Thus, both the BBC and the NRK failed in their attempts to establish new national television channels in their respective countries in the 1980s.

In the case of the BBC, the failure of the DBS project contributed along with other factors to the generally hostile climate which the BBC experienced in 1984/85. As already pointed out, the corporation was subject to a wholesale attack both from the press and the government, and it had to move quickly from any thought of expansion to a defence of the services it was already operating. This included attempts to convince its critics that it was not trying to get its hands on every new development, as it stated in its evidence to the Peacock committee: 'we would rebut the charge that we are intent on being 'in on everything' and are therefore hell-bent on a policy of unremitting expansion' (BBC 1986 para 6.15). This 'realistic' approach whereby the BBC accepted that its current remit was a 'sufficient contribution to broadcasting' was later welcomed by the Home Affairs Committee (1988a para. 94), and by the White Paper which stated that the 'special role' for the BBC did not imply that it should 'involve itself in every aspect of broadcasting' (BBC 1989a para 3.2).

In Norway, the NRK was not 'punished' in the same way for its expansive strategy, and even if the number of competitors had been allowed to proliferate there was widespread support for the view that the NRK should remain the 'national instrument of broadcasting'. The proposal making the NRK a public corporation in 1987 stated that the NRK 'will still be the dominant broadcasting corporation in this country' [my emphasis] (Ot.prop. nr. 31 1986-87: 7), and the proposal establishing the 'TV2' stated similarly that 'it is a condition ... that the framework within which the NRK operates ... shall not be made more difficult' (Ot.prop. nr. 55 1989-90:8). Nevertheless, as has been noted previously, it is difficult to see how the NRK can remain 'dominant' in the long term, since the brief of the 'TV2' is, after all, to become 'a real and serious alternative' to the NRK (Ot.prop. nr. 55 1989-90:5). The NRK has not given up its ambition to establish a second channel; in one of its later policy documents, it states that it will bring the issue back on the agenda in a few years time (NRK 1990-92).

## 12.2. Strategies for financial survival

The 1980s and early 1990s was a period of unprecedented financial difficulty for the two corporations, as they increasingly had to face the twin problems of spiralling costs and decreasing revenue. If we look firstly at the costs, it had long been the case that the costs of making television programmes were running a couple of percentage points ahead of the general inflation. This is due to the fact that broadcasting, as a creative industry is highly labour intensive, and that labour costs rise faster than prices generally (Collins et.al 1988), but the situation also deteriorated with increased competition. As the number of new channels proliferated throughout the 1980s, the PSB channels increasingly had to compete with commercial companies for the most attractive programmes, the latest available technologies and the best staff, prices on all these commodities soared.

In the case of the BBC, one calculation shows that television expenditure between 1978/79 and 1984/85 rose at an average annual rate of 5.58 % more than the RPI (Collins et al. 1988: 37, see also Nossiter 1986: 42), and in Norway a 1982 planning document quoted a similar figure for the NRK: In only one year, the document stated, overall prices had risen at a rate of 5% more than the general inflation (NRK 1982a: 21 see also Brosveet 1988).

Within the field of programming, the rising costs were felt particularly strongly in the areas of sport and feature films. These categories of programming had traditionally been considered cheap and popular time-fillers for the PSB channels, but as we have seen, these were also the areas where the owners and right holders had lobbied most ferociously for the barriers to competition to be removed. In Britain, the clause preventing one company from gaining exclusive access to the most popular sporting events (such as the Cup Final, the Derby and the Wimbledon) was removed in the 1990 Broadcasting Act, and even if the operators were still not permitted to show these on a pay-per-view basis, there was no longer any protection against them being available exclusively on a cable or satellite channel (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90, see also Home Affairs Committee 1988a para. 186, 187). Even before the new Act began to have an impact, however, the increased competition over sporting events led to loss of contracts: For example, the final of the Benson and Hedges Cricket competition which until the summer of 1990 was a regular part of the BBC sporting calendar, was in 1991 available only to satellite viewers (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91). It is likely that this will, in the coming

years, lead to a situation whereby much sports coverage will be inaccessible to people in the lower income brackets, who can neither afford match prices nor new media subscriptions.

In contrast to Britain, in Norway in the 1980s there were no regulations concerning sports coverage, and as the decade progressed, the NRK had to bargain harder to secure the most important deals. In this process, cooperation through the EBU became more important for securing access to events which the NRK, as one of the smallest public broadcasters in Europe, would not have been able to obtain on the open market. Despite cooperation, the NRK increasingly lost out to its competitors. One of the more celebrated cases was that of the Ice Hockey World Championship in Stockholm in May 1989, which the commercial TV3 managed to 'snatch' from under the NRK's nose. In 1989 the NRK (and the EBU) also lost Wimbledon to private companies (NRK Annual Report 1985, NRK Facts and Figures 1986 - 1989).

As a result of the continuing financial problems the NRK had to limit sports coverage to the most important events, but these events in turn became much more expensive. The NRK Olympics budget, for example, increased by 74% between 1984 and 1988 (NRK 1987-88), while other events in the period suffered from inflation of up to 500% (NRK 1990-92).

The market for films and series also became more competitive as a result of the increased number of stations that were in the bidding. In Britain the average price of syndicated programming doubled between 1981 and 1986 (ITV 1989, para 4.18), and although no specific figures have been made available, the situation was probably no better in Norway. The NRK, which compared with the BBC depended more heavily on bought-in programming, found itself from the beginning of the 1980s in a situation where it had to face increasing competition from the VCR-market for the distribution rights to both old and new films and series - and later the competition further intensified with the emergence of the commercial Scandinavian channels. As the decade progressed, pre-selling, co-productions and 'package deals' also became more common, making it even more difficult for a small station to get favourable deals (NRK Annual Report 1981 - NRK 1987-88).

In addition to the problems concerning programming, the two corporations also had problems with the recruitment and retention of staff. This was particularly a problem in Britain, where the huge income difference between the BBC and the commercial sector led to a growing gap between the enumeration of BBC and ITV employees, but also in Norway, many left the broadcasting corporation to obtain higher salaries elsewhere. This was particularly the case in the press and the private information sector, but from autumn 1991 the new TV2 also began recruiting top NRK personnel. Throughout the decade, strikes and pay-disputes in both countries also gave evidence of the discontent felt by employees over their level of payment. In Britain, the 1989/90 season saw a particularly bitter pay dispute (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90), while in Norway the NRK's first pay negotiations under a financially more autonomous regime in 1990, culminated in a strike among the journalists and programme producers lasting almost four weeks (NRK 1990-92).

The costs of all other commodities and services also rose in the period and both corporations increasingly felt the need for financial compensation, but such compensation was difficult to obtain. The licence fee had already, for many years, been falling behind the rate of inflation, and as the market for colour television became increasingly saturated in the 1980s, the financial situation worsened. In Britain 74% of the television licences were colour licences in 1981, rising to 92% by 1991 (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1987, BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91), and in Norway the proportion rose from 75% in 1981 to 98% in 1991 (NRK Annual Report 1980-85, NRK 1990-92). This situation implied that as the decade progressed, substantial increases in the licence fee were necessary just to keep up with the general inflation.

Parliaments and governments in both countries were, however, reluctant to raise the licence fee, and the situation worsened throughout the period discussed here. In 1981 the BBC asked for a colour licence fee rise from £34 to £50 and was granted £46, a sum which made it possible to maintain all services and even restore some of the cuts previously made, but when the fee was up for debate again in 1985 the climate was more hostile. The BBC was only granted £12 rise compared with the £19 it had asked for. The situation was still to get worse, however. In 1988 the government accepted Peacock's recommendation that the licence fee should be pegged to RPI instead of being negotiated in terms of the services provided, but since they did not at the same time adjust the starting point for

the calculation of the fee, the BBC ended up with a reduction of its real income each year by some 2%. The government was still not convinced that they had applied a sufficient 'financial squeeze', however, and in 1991 they decided to set the licence fee at £77, which was 3% less than the general rate of inflation (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983 - BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91).

In Norway the situation for the broadcasters was (relatively speaking) better than in Britain, but also here the political parties, and particularly the Conservatives, were reluctant to raise the licence fee. In the periods when there were Conservative or centre-right coalition governments, the licence fee was set at a level which implied that the NRK's income was only slightly above the rate of inflation, while under Labour governments the NRK generally obtained around 1% real growth (see Budsj.innst. S. nr.12 1981-82 - 1990/91, NRK 1990-92). The NRK also got less than it asked for and far less than it considered 'necessary' however, having based its plans for the 1980s on an annual growth of 1.5% in addition to RPI-adjustments (see NRK 1982a and NRK 1987a).

In actual currency, the NRK colour licence fee rose from NOK 690 in 1982 to NOK 1195 in 1991, an increase of approximately £42 in British currency (see Budsj.innst.S 12 1981-82 - 1990-91, NRK 1990-92). This was an increase of £11 more than the increase in the BBC's fee in the same period, and thus the difference between the licence fees in the two countries widened. In 1991, the colour fee in Britain was £28 lower than in Norway, while it had only been £17 lower in 1982, and these comparisons do not even include the duty on sets, which despite declining from a 20% proportion of the revenue in 1980 to an 11.5% proportion in 1990 still added substantial sums to the NRK revenue (NRK Annual Report 1980 - NRK 1990-92). Having said this, however, it is necessary to point out that the BBC obtained far more money than the NRK from the licence fee. The actual costs of broadcasting do not decrease or increase according to the audience figures, and since the UK has far more licence payers than Norway, the BBC does not need to charge as much as the NRK.

Nevertheless, from a comparative perspective, Norwegian viewers continued to pay far more than the British viewers for a much less extensive service - the total number of hours broadcast on BBC network television was four times the number of hours transmitted by the NRK. Despite this, the higher NRK fee in Norway was still regarded as a more acceptable charge than the BBC fee in Britain. Although the support for licence-fee funding improved in Britain from the low point in 1986, when the Peacock Report suggested that the BBC should be turned into a subscription channel, the licence fee may still be abolished when the BBC Charter comes up for renewal in 1996. As the 1988 White Paper states, the government 'looks forward to the eventual replacement of the licence fee' (1988 para. 3.10)

In Norway, there were no similar threats to the licence fee in the period; none of the parliamentary or government proposals in the 1980s or 1990s mention the possibility of abolishing or replacing it, but there were other threats. In the mid-1980s it was discussed whether or not the licence fee (and also the duty on sets) should be used to fund other services, in particular the second television channel (NOU 1985:11, NRK 1985b) and community radio (NOU 1982:33). This suggestion highlights an interesting dilemma for the original corporations. Since it is obvious that the licence fee is, at least to some degree, an unpopular tax, it is tempting for the corporations to evade responsibility for it by stressing that it is after all a tax on the ability to receive all terrestrial broadcasting. If this view becomes too prevalent, however, it might, as has already been demonstrated in the Norwegian case, lead to a debate over whether the fee should be used to fund other services. In Norway, it is not unlikely that the fee in a few years time might be used to supplement TV2 income, and in Britain a similar debate could well develop in the case of Channel Four. As we shall see below, to avoid such a situation from developing, the corporations have in both countries, taken it upon themselves to mould perception of the licence fee as a source of revenue for their services only.

So far, the legitimacy of the licence fee among politicians and governments has been examined. When it comes to the actual support for the fee among consumers, however, the situation is more difficult to assess. This is particularly true for Norway, where there has been less public debate about the fee, and where few attempts have been made to elicit the views of the consumers. In Britain, there have been a number of surveys intended to elicit the viewers' attitudes to different forms of broadcast funding (see for example Home Office 1985, Barnett 1987, Morrison 1986, Ehrenberg and Mills 1990), but these are difficult to interpret since they come up with different results. It has been estimated, however, that around 7% of the British viewers do not in fact pay the licence fee, and if this figure is

correct, it means that the licence fee evaders by far outnumber those not paying the poll tax (Barwise and Ehrenberg 1988, Brown 1991). In Norway, there are signs that the number of evaders are rising: For the first time ever, the number of licence payers in Norway declined in 1989 (NRK Facts and Figures 1989).

Whether these figures are due to active resistance, high levels of unemployment or just to the fact that it is easy to avoid paying the fee, is not clear. What is clear, however, is that there are in both countries a certain amount of opposition to the licence fee system, and that this opposition is likely to intensify further if the number of 'free' commercial channels increases. For the corporations, it is therefore of paramount importance to secure the legitimacy of the licence fee and justify their claim to the whole of it, and this is an aspect into which both the BBC and the NRK have put much effort over the past decade.

Although the BBC started before the NRK, the strategies employed by the corporations in order to legitimise the fee, were broadly similar in both countries. The common element was that the corporations put more effort into demonstrating that they cared about their public, and began appealing more directly to their different constituencies. In regard to the consumers their main strategy was to demonstrate that the licence fee was good value for money, and they also tried to get them more directly involved by appealing to them as 'shareholders', or 'licence-payers'. Regarding the public acting as citizens they tried to demonstrate that they were 'open' and self-critical and willing to let their policies and programmes be influenced by social and cultural demands. Finally, versus the external and rival economic interests they tried to appear more welcoming and generous in order to convince these actors that it was also in their interests that the corporations should have a sound financial base.

In the 1970s, the broadcasting corporations had already begun to appeal directly to the consumers as a way of minimising the number of evaders and strengthening the acceptability of the fee: In 1979 the BBC launched the slogan 'It's Your BBC', in an attempt to make the public more concerned about its financial problems (Madge 1989). These campaigns changed character and became more intense as the financial situation worsened, however. In the case of the BBC, the period between 1984 and 1986 again became a turning point, as the increased criticism forced the corporation to take a more active approach to its public perception. For the first time in 1984/85, the corporation's annual report contained a chapter entitled 'BBC and its audiences', and here it stated that 'As a public service broadcasting organisation, the BBC has a formal obligation to be responsive to the audiences it serves and accountable to the public who pay the licence' (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1986). Shortly afterwards, the BBC launched an advertising campaign in national and regional newspapers, and this was later followed by a television promotion trailer about the value for money represented by the licence fee (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1987, BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1986/87). This 'value for money'-argument was based on a comparison between the daily costs of the BBC's services and the costs of other media, and of course the BBC - with its compulsory licence fee - came out on top. As the corporation stated in its 1988/89 Annual Report and Accounts, 'the BBC's audiences get very good value from their licence fee - two national TV-networks, four radio networks, regional TV and radio, 35 local radio stations - all for 17p a day'.

These efforts were still limited, however, compared with the 'See for Yourself'-project which the BBC started in 1988. This project, which the BBC described as 'a shareholders report', centred around an annual television report to the nation of the BBC's activities in the preceding year, supplemented with more thematic radio and television programmes, phone-ins and written material (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1987/88). This 'flagship of accountability', which the BBC claimed was 'undertaken in the conviction that licence-payers have the right to know more about how the BBC spends the licence fee' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1988/1989), was in turn exploited for all it was worth in responses and submissions to government (see for example BBC 1989a para 9.6.).

In Norway, the mid-1980s also saw a turning point in the relations between the broadcasters and the public. In the 1984 Annual Report the NRK singled out 'contact with the public' as a special area which it claimed would become more important in the years to come, and the Report also stated that there was, within the corporation, a 'growing urge and willingness to obtain feedback from ... the audience' (NRK Annual Report 1984). A few years later, in 1986, the NRK ran its biggest licence fee campaign ever, a campaign which ensured a larger increase in the number of new licence payers than in any of the preceding eighteen years (NRK Facts and Figures 1986). At about the same time the NRK also

began exploiting the 'value for money' argument: For NOK 2.50 a day compared with NOK 4.00 for a national newspaper, the NRK bragged, the licence payer got one television channel, two radio channels and regional broadcasts (NRK 1987-88, NRK 1991). Finally, in 1990/91, the NRK for the first time launched an advertising campaign in the press and on rival radio and television channels. The aim of this campaign was, according to the NRK (1990-92), to 'clarify the NRK's profile as a public service broadcaster' in a situation of increased media competition. The lay-out of the campaign was partly based on the precedent set by the BBC; as stated by the Chairman of the NRK Board after a visit to the BBC in 1990: 'The BBC has developed a conscious public accountability strategy. ... In a situation of increased competition, the NRK must learn from these experiences and develop better communication with its audience' (Aftenposten 5.4.90).

As the competition intensified, both the BBC and the NRK also began branding their services and activities more vigorously. This included a 'brushing-up' of the corporations' physical image, new logos and colours, and increased marketing both on- and off-screen. Market research in the UK had shown that less than half the population could name all the service available to them on the BBC (BBC Annual Report and Account 1988/89), and in both countries the corporations were keen to identify the services in the minds of the public in order to make them appreciate what they got in return for their licence fees. The BBC expressed it even more strongly in its 1990/91 report: 'We live in the age of branded products. The BBC brand is a world leader' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91).

The strategies discussed so far were designed to improve the corporations' legitimacy in regard to the public as consumers of broadcasting, but the corporations also developed strategies aimed at appealing more directly to the public as citizens, i.e. as political and cultural beings with well-founded views worth listening to. As we have seen, both the BBC and the NRK had been accused of arrogance and insularity, and both responded with measures aimed at proving the critics wrong and demonstrating that the corporations were in fact 'open' and self-critical. Among the 'oldest' of these measures were the public meetings which gave individuals and groups of citizens an opportunity to voice their concerns. In the case of the BBC the public meetings began in late 1970s and continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Like the licence fee campaigns they were conducted under the motto 'It's your BBC', and they were usually chaired by well known television personalities - thereby exploiting to the full the BBC's celebrity potential. The meetings, which the BBC itself described as a 'genuine and effective exercise' in public accountability (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1987), also took on more 'difficult' issues. In an attempt to improve communication with various 'minority' publics, special meetings were held with representatives of ethnic minorities, teenagers, disabled people and the elderly. As part of this strategy the BBC also gave its Advisory Council a facelift in 1984/85. Seventeen new members were appointed, including younger men and women, trade unionists and members of ethnic minorities, non-graduates and people from provincial universities (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1984 - 1987, BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1986/87 - 1990/91, see also Madge 1989).

In the case of the NRK, the meetings began in the 1981 under the heading 'On speaking terms with the NRK'. The aim of this exercise was, according to the 1981 Annual Report, to 'reduce the distance between the institution and its public', but despite these good intentions, the meetings ground to a halt after 1985 and did not return until 1991. No reason was given for this in the 1986 annual report; instead the emphasis was shifted to more selective measures. The most important of these was the 1986 experiment whereby the ten largest trade and voluntary associations in the country were given the opportunity to produce half-hour long programmes on Sunday mornings, but there was also increased emphasis on meetings held with 'key institutions and organisations' in an attempt to 'clarify the NRK's total position in Norwegian cultural and social life' (NRK Annual Report 1985, NRK Facts and Figures 1986-1990).

Both corporations also arranged 'open days', providing opportunities for the public to 'mingle with the stars' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1987/88, NRK 1990-92), and tried to demonstrate their sensitivity in many other ways. For example, both the BBC and the NRK reviewed their producers guidelines in the period discussed here (BBC 1989b, NRK 1982b, NRK 1990). These revisions were, of course, made necessary by the profound changes in the broadcasting environments in the two countries, but they were also done in order to demonstrate the sensitivity of the corporations towards a wide range of causes. The new 'Producer Guidelines' issued by the BBC in 1989 provides a particularly telling example of the corporation's efforts to convince its critics that it intended to behave 'responsibly'. The Guidelines covered 125 different subjects under 23 different headings, and laid

down policies for everything from the use of seatbelts in driving scenes to the coverage of terrorist attacks. Although they were described by the Director-General as an 'accessible summary of editorial wisdom' and 'intended primarily for internal use', it was also stated that the Guidelines represented 'a clear public statement of the editorial principles which underpin the BBC's contract with its licence-payers' (BBC Annual Report and Account 1988/89, see also NRK 1989-91).

Finally, both corporations increased their lobbying of the political establishment. The continuous flow of policy initiatives which were put forward required not only an increase in the usual business of 'winning and dining'; it also meant that senior management had to spend much time and effort on working out their responses to the various government-appointed committees. This included the commissioning of research, the results of which were fed into the public debate. One of the most visible of all these public relations exercises, was the transformation of the annual reports themselves. Until the mid-1980s, both the BBC's and the NRK's reports were greyish, poorly edited and descriptive publications, seemingly aimed more at representing the detailed inner life of the corporations than appealing to external interests. In the course of a very few years, however, they were transformed into delicate, glossy, and carefully edited reports clearly distinguishing between descriptions, plans and priorities. They were also presented much earlier in the year (BBC Annual reports and Accounts 1986/87, NRK 1987-88).

In addition to appealing to the public as consumers and citizens, the two corporations also tried to appear more welcoming towards external and rival business interests, and in particular towards 'independent producers'. In the BBC's response to the Peacock Committee (BBC 1986 para 6.5) it stated that 'independent producers will be given greater opportunities', and after the 25% quota had been introduced it tried to appear even more welcoming. In its 1990/91 Annual Report and Accounts it claimed that even if the costs of commissioning were greater than the costs of in-house production, 'The BBC accepts this as the price of change'. Critics have claimed, however, that what the BBC is doing is precisely to use the increase in 'independent' programming as a way of saving money, and furthermore that the BBC is moving too slowly to be able to fulfil the government target by 1993 (see for example Broadcast 21.6.1991). Judging by the number of hours commissioned so far there seem to be some truth in this criticism: In 1990/91 only 480 hours were produced by 'independents' and this was less than 4% of network programming (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91).

Also the NRK tried to appear more welcoming towards external producers, particularly in its proposal for a second television channel where it stated that one of its main aims was to 'stimulate and develop production milieus outside the NRK' (NRK 1985a,b). In 1988 it also stated that increasing the proportion of external productions on the NRK channel was one of its main priorities (NRK 1987-88); Two years later it declared that money had been ear-marked specifically for buying-in from external producers (NRK 1989-91). Due to the fact that the NRK lump all 'Norwegian productions', including feature films, together in one statistical category, it is difficult to judge whether this commitment has been followed up. It is interesting to note, however, that while the proportion of programming in this category rose from 1.5% in 1981 to 3.1% in 1988, it declined to 2.1% in 1989, which was the very year that increasing the amount of externally produced programming had become a 'priority' (NRK Annual report 1981 - NRK 1990-92).

In addition to putting more effort into legitimising their claims to the licence fee, the corporations also tried exploiting other sources of funding more vigorously. Apart from being a way of increasing their income, this was also a way of responding positively to demands from parliaments and governments. In Britain, both the Peacock Report (1986), the Home Affairs committee (1988a, para 153-61) and the 1988 White Paper 'asked' the BBC to do more to exploit other sources of revenue, and in 1991 the government declared that it would only return to the RPI-based formula for the licence fee in the coming years if the BBC exploited its alternative sources of revenue more vigorously (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91, see also Broadcast 1.2.91, Observer 13.1.91, Guardian 15.1.91). The same argument was also put forwards by the parliamentary committees in Norway (see for example Budsj.innst.S 12 1984-85: 50-2, Budsj.innst.S 12 1985-86: 56-8).

In terms of actual commercial opportunities, however, the BBC was of course in a very different position from the NRK. The BBC had for many years, been a dominant player on the global television market, and in the period discussed here, many of their commercial activities were significantly expanded. A crucial element in this expansion was the BBC's own commercial company, BBC

Enterprises, which could trace its roots back to 1960 when a Television Enterprises Section was set up to handle sales and product merchandising from popular shows. In 1979, the section was reorganised as a limited company with an independent board of directors, and a more aggressive and competitive pricing policy was adopted. While this excluded some of the former Third World customers, it was successful in commercial terms as annual turnover showed a fourfold increase in five years (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983-85, see also Murdock 1984, Wade 1985). Then in 1986, BBC's other major trading division, BBC Publications, was incorporated into BBC Enterprises and shortly afterwards the administration of the co-productions department was also transferred to the company. According to the 1987 Annual Report and Handbook, the aim of this consolidation was 'to achieve more effective sales co-ordination as well as economies of scale', and to position the company to 'meet the commercial challenges posed by developing technologies ... in a more effective way'. At the same time it was announced that the aim was to double turnover and profits over the next five years, and this target was reached one year ahead of schedule in 1989/90 (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1987/1988 - 1990/91).

These moves established BBC Enterprises as a leading multi-media publisher at home and as Britain's principal exporter and co-producer abroad, and its activities range from the sale of video cassettes and microcomputers, to merchandising, designer sports wear, education and training courses, interactive video and information processing and sales. It is, however, in the areas of magazine and book publishing and television sales that most of the money is made. Magazine and book publishing alone accounted for some 60% of annual turnover between 1986 and 1991, whereas Television Sales accounted for around one quarter (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1986/87-1990/91).

These general figures masks the major changes within the sectors, however, particularly within the area of magazines. In 1991 the prestigious BBC journal, The Listener, ceased circulation after 62 years, and at the same time, the BBC's listings magazine and Britain's largest circulation weekly, Radio Times, faced an uncertain future after its 7-day listings monopoly was abolished in the 1990 Broadcasting Act. As the general magazines were facing difficulties, however, a series of new specialist magazines linked with BBC shows were bringing in substantial profits. The first of these magazines, BBC Wildlife was launched in 1983, and throughout the decade it was followed by a series of other publications aiming at special and profitable markets such as fashion, food, sports and youth culture. In 1989, the BBC also began acquiring interests in competing publishing companies, as part of a strategic decision to venture further into the books and magazine market (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983 - BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91).

Within the sector of Television Sales there were also major changes in the period discussed here, as pre-sales, joint ventures, sponsorship and barter increased their importance. The Television Sales Division also expanded within the areas of archive material (including the sale of footage for use in TV-commercials), distribution rights for programmes made by other broadcasters, and the trading of formats. Nevertheless, straight sales remained the main source of revenue. BBC Enterprises is in fact the world's largest exporter of programmes: Every year it sells more than 12 000 hours of programming to more than 100 countries (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983 - BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91).

The two most important television markets in the world are Europe and the US, and in both markets BBC Enterprises began competing more aggressively from the early 1980s onwards. In the US, BBC programmes were, before 1980, mainly shown on the Public Broadcasting network, but in an attempt to exploit the expansion of the US cable scene, Enterprises began searching for new outlets. After an unsuccessful spell with the Rockefeller-based Entertainment-channel which closed after nine months, in 1984 Enterprises entered into a partnership with the Entertainment Cable Network. The BBC has also increased its supply of programmes to other cable channels, and has remained the largest single supplier to the PBS-sector (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983 - BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91).

Despite a 'growing acceptance' of foreign programming in the US, however, the US market remains difficult for European producers (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1988/89), and the European market has been more promising. As the number of commercial stations proliferated throughout the 1980s, BBC Enterprises joined the US syndicates and other UK sources in the race to supply the new

broadcasters with programming. Compared with its competitors, of which many maintain significantly lower prices, BBC Enterprises marketing philosophy relies heavily on the perceived 'quality' of its products, and by 1991 had struck deals with new broadcasters in more than ten countries. From 1984 onwards, the BBC also concluded a series of deals with cable operators for a simultaneous relay of the BBC services to European networks, and in 1989 this service was - in a slightly modified form - relaunched as BBC TV Europe. Enterprises had even wider ambitions, however, and in March 1991 the service was relaunched again, this time as BBC World Service Television. Since then, much effort has been put into spreading it around the globe, but although many Eastern European countries have been added to the list of subscribers, the BBC's plans for a 'TV-version of the World Service', is still some time off (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983 - BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91).

In addition to all these activities BBC Enterprises has also made a considerable effort to exploit the subscription market, since this is a source of revenue which is close to the heart of the government, but so far these experiments have not been very successful. In 1988, a company called British Medical Television began transmitting programmes in encoded form to remotely-activated video recorders during the night hours, but the company went into receivership after only two years. More recently, the BBC's plans for a series of new subscription services under the name 'BBC Select' has been postponed due to the recession, and at this point the future of these services looks uncertain (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1988/89 - 1990/91)

BBC Enterprises occupies a paradoxical position within the BBC, as its main aim, in contrast with the rest of the corporation, is to make a profit. As stated by its manager in 1985, profit was 'not a dirty word' within the division: 'We don't get muddled in all this public service business about doing things for the good of the soul. Quite unashamedly we do it for money' (cited from Wade 1985: 50). Not surprisingly, the prevalence of such attitudes along with the fact that BBC Enterprises only uses its funds to support programmes which are likely to sell abroad, have led to criticisms that the BBC's editorial decisions are influenced by 'commercial' considerations (Schlesinger 1986, Wade 1985, Murdock 1984, 1989). In response to this, the BBC has claimed that 'as Enterprises is established under the supervision of radio and television presentation staff, the BBC's editorial standards are not compromised by its commercial objectives' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90). The fact remains, however, that the Enterprise division, as a major co-producer of programmes, does have some influence over which programmes are made.

As noted previously, the new approach to business which BBC Enterprises adopted in the early 1980s, alienated many of its Third World customers with whom the BBC had had an almost 'paternal' relationship in previous decades. Gradually, however, PSB companies in rich countries also began to feel the pinch. In a recent policy-document, the NRK describes the changing relationship between the Scandinavian public broadcasters and the BBC in the following manner (NRK 1989-91: 40):

'The Scandinavian countries have for many years been among the BBC's most faithful customers. During the last years, however, BBC Enterprises has been modernised and reorganised, and profit-maximisation has become the overriding aim in all departments. Previously, BBC Enterprises would say to the Scandinavian broadcasters that the public broadcasting corporations should stick together and cooperate with each other. That is now a thing of the past'.

The BBC's venture into an increasing number of spin-off markets has not only led to charges of 'commercialism', however. The corporation has also increasingly been accused of using its privileges unfairly to compete with commercial companies, and these companies in turn have done what they could do to remove the BBC's privileges. A major case in point was the seven-day listings monopoly which was terminated in the 1991 Broadcasting Bill, and in 1991 the BBC was referred the Monopolies and Merger Commission after an inquiry into the standards of cross-media promotion concluded that the trailing of BBC magazines on BBC television was to the disadvantage of other publishers. On the European level the BBC's and other EBU members' cooperation with News International in the operation of the satellite channel Eurosport led to similar problems. After complaints from the rival channel Screensport, the European Commission ruled in 1991 that Eurosport's ownership structure was in breach of EC competition law (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91, see also Broadcast 22.2.1991, WH Smith 1988).

The NRK is also a member of the EBU and one of the corporations involved in the Eurosport venture, but in contrast with the BBC, it is an insignificant player on the global television market. Nevertheless, it has also attempted to attract new revenue through exploiting the spin-off effects of its programming in the period discussed here. After more effort was put into the promotion and marketing of its programmes in other countries, NRK sales increased from 23 programmes in 1981 to a high point of 103 in 1987 (these figures only include sales to non-Nordic countries, as programmes within the Nordic areas are usually exchanged through 'Nordvisjon'). In the same period the NRK also increased its sale of material from its archives, particularly to the large television stations in the US, West Germany and the UK which use the material as footage in their coverage of Norwegian affairs (NRK Annual Report 1981 - NRK Facts and Figures 1990).

Despite the fact that the NRK sells programmes across the whole range of output, like other broadcasters, it is also trying to establish its own niches in the market. One such area where the NRK has done comparatively well is comedy programmes, particularly those which have won awards at the Montreux festival where the NRK is the second most successful broadcaster. There is also a trend towards the NRK specialising in typical 'Norwegian' programmes such as Ibsen plays, and programmes about Thor Heyerdahl and Viking ship expeditions. Such 'Norwegian' themes constitute a niche for the NRK on the global market in the same way as Shakespeare plays, natural history and drama about the last days of the Raj in India constitute niches for the BBC. In the wake of the 1987 Brundtland report the NRK also began marketing itself as a producer of environmental programmes, and in 1989 two documentaries about the global warming and the ozone layer were the NRK's most-selling programmes abroad (NRK Facts and Figures 1989).

The NRK has also been trying to establish itself on the national VCR market from the early 1980s (see for example NRK 1982a). Due to disagreements over copyrights, however, these efforts came to nothing until 1991, when the NRK in cooperation with a commercial distribution company, launched a video commemorating the late King Olav V (NRK 1990-92). A similar niche was exploited by BBC Enterprises when it launched its video label in 1981 with the Royal Wedding as its first hit (BBC Annual Reports and Account 1983). More recently, the NRK has increased its involvement in the markets for records and tapes, children's toys (merchandising), and the publishing market. Regarding the latter, however, the NRK's commercial operations suffered a serious setback when a major financial scandal was unveiled in its listings magazine in 1988 (NRK Facts and Figures 1988). After it was revealed that the management of the magazine had falsified its accounts for four years, 90% of the NRK's shares in the magazine was sold to a private publisher (NRK Facts and Figures 1989).

The story about the NRK listings magazine, which revealed a serious lack of business sense and financial control within the corporation, is another illustration of the pitfalls facing the corporations as they move further into the marketplace. As has already been pointed out, both the BBC and the NRK have so far failed in their attempts to establish subscription channels, and despite the overall success of BBC Enterprises, it has also experienced many failures. One particular case was its involvement in 'Super Channel' which was launched as a 'Best of British' service for Western Europe in January 1987, but which failed to attract the support of European advertisers and was sold to the Italian Marcucci group in November 1988 (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1986/1987, Scanorama July/August 1990). Many ventures have also brought in less money than expected, and despite the strong emphasis on spin-off effects, the corporations have not made as much money as expected from their commercial activities. Throughout the 1980s BBC Enterprises never brought in more than two per cent of the annual revenue (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983 - BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91), while the target announced by the corporation is three per cent (BBC 1988a). In the case of the NRK the revenue from commercial activities is not specified, but an approximate figure given by the corporation for 1990 was 1.3% (NRK 1990-92).

While this is, in both cases, marginal money compared with the income derived from public fees, it is still considered by the corporations to be an important source of revenue in the current situation (see for example the examination of BBC's Michael Checkland in Home Affairs Committee 1988b: 34 and NRK 1987b:20). The same is the case with two other sources of revenue which are playing an increasingly important role both within the BBC and the NRK: co-productions and sponsorship.

Throughout the 1980s, co-productions became an established part of the broadcasting scene. In the case of the BBC the amount of revenue derived from co-productions increased from £5 M in 1981/82

to a record of £30 M in 1989/90 (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983 - BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91), and from 1986 onwards the annual reports stressed that co-production funds were 'vital' for 'most major drama and documentary series, single drama films and many other individual programmes' (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1986). The proliferation of co-funding arrangements, particularly with US broadcasters, also gave rise to controversy, however. Even though deals were made more regularly with broadcasters in Australasia, Asia and Europe, the US still accounted for almost 50% of all co-productions in 1990/91, and according to the critics, this led to a definite 'mid-Atlantic' slant in many programmes. The BBC responded to these claims in a rather arrogant way, stating that whatever the funding arrangements, production and editorial standards of all programmes would always remain those of the BBC (see for example BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1986).

In Norway there was a proliferation of co-funding arrangements in the 1980s, but here most deals were struck between the NRK and other Nordic broadcasters. Under the auspices of the 'Nordvisjon' network much effort went into securing increased Nordic cooperation in this field, and these efforts were successful in the sense that the NRK's involvement in Nordic co-productions increased from around forty hours in 1981 to between sixty and seventy in the latter half of the 1980s. Attempts were also made to establish co-production deals with broadcasters in other countries in the same period. So far, however, these efforts have been limited to prestigious individual productions and series, such as the documentary series about the oil-industry which was co-produced with Grampian TV in the early 1980s, and the natural history programmes co-produced with the BBC (NRK Annual Report 1983 - NRK Facts and Figures 1990). It is a fact, however, that without co-funding arrangements, these and similar productions would not have been made.

The 1980s also saw an increasing adaption between television on the one hand, and film and theatre on the other. In Britain, the first BBC film was released for cinema viewing in 1989 (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90), while in Norway the amount of joint ventures increased as a result of the establishment of a common production fund for film and television in 1988 (NRK 1987-88). In Norway, money was also set aside for increased television adaption of live plays, operas and ballets, in an attempt to exploit already subsidised productions more fully (NRK 1988-90).

In addition to all the different forms of enterprise and co-funding arrangements discussed so far, both the BBC and the NRK have in the last few years been more willing to embrace sponsorship of programmes and events. Indirect advertising in various forms had for a long time been an integrated part of sporting events, but even if the broadcasters gradually gave up their resistance in this area, there was much opposition to sponsorship being extended to other forms of programming. In Britain, the BBC expressed scepticism towards increased sponsorship in its response to the Peacock committee (BBC 1986), and shortly afterwards a new voluntary code was adopted aiming to keep sponsorship 'to the lowest practicable level' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1986/87). In Norway, similarly, a restrictive code was laid down when the Programme Guidelines were revised in 1982 (NRK 1982b para. 14).

Under the twin pressures from advertisers wanting more liberal regulations and broadcasters wanting more funds, this restrictive attitude began to break down in both countries. In Britain, the BBC DG Michael Checkland declared in 1988 that the BBC was planning to become 'more generous in our sponsorship credits' (Home Affairs Committee 1988b: 38), and shortly afterwards the 1988 White Paper recommended 'less restrictive arrangements for the broadcast coverage of sponsored events' on the BBC (para. 3.18, see also para 6.47 and 1990 Broadcasting Act Section 9). The BBC responded to this development by restructuring its programme sales operation so as to better exploit the possibilities for sponsorship and barter (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1988/1989). Compared with the British commercial companies, however, the BBC is still expressly prohibited from broadcasting sponsored programmes (1981 Licence and Agreement para 12), and its official policy is that sponsorship should not be used as a way of supporting 'general programme making' (BBC 1989a para 9.4, see also BBC 1989b section 18, Broadcast 14.6.91, 21.6.91). As has been pointed out, however, it is almost impossible to draw the line between the permitted forms: sponsored events, pre-selling, co-productions and co-funding, and the prohibited form of 'sponsored programmes' (see for example Home Affairs committee 1988b: 37-39).

Compared with the BBC's policy, the NRK is even less restrictive. In 1987 the NRK began discussing the possibility of 'updating' its sponsorship regulations (Omkring NRK 1987:30), and three years later

the ban was replaced with a code concerning how and when programmes could be sponsored. The new regulations stated that while brand-names and logos should as a rule not be inserted, on-screen credits were permitted as long as the NRK's 'control and integrity' was 'fully contained' (NRK 1990 para 11). Despite the careful wording of these regulations, however, they opened the floodgates to sponsorship within the NRK. Deals were made not only within the fields of sport and entertainment, but also within news and current affairs, and before long the management appeared to have lost control over the various arrangements in force. As brand-names and logos openly began to appear on-screen, criticism from the public increased however (see for example *Dagbladet* 9.1.90, 23.11.90, *Klassekampen* 9.11.91, *Journalisten* 22.11.91), and in late 1991 the critics were joined by the Minister of Culture. She warned the NRK that the 'explosive increase in sponsored programmes' could lead to a decline in support for the licence fee among viewers and politicians (cited from *Journalisten* 22.11.91). The NRK DG responded by declaring that the NRK would 'clean up its act within news and current affairs', but that a restrictive attitude on sponsorship was no longer possible to uphold (cited from VG 28.11.91).

So far, we have seen that both the BBC and the NRK responded to the worsening financial situation by polishing their legitimisation strategies and exploiting other sources of revenue. Although these strategies were important, however, they did not bring in sufficient revenue to fund the expansion which had been deemed necessary in the new competitive situation. Consequently, the corporations also had to come up with strategies which would enable resources to be shifted from support areas into programming. As stated by the BBC; 'Any money not spent on programmes is, in a sense, a dead weight in the boat' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91), and by the NRK: '[The aim is] to give the institution a more explicit profile as a producer of programmes' (NRK 1988-90).

Shifting resources into programming and improving efficiency and productivity was, not only important from the financial point of view. It was also necessary in order to sustain the legitimacy of the corporations' privileges. As we have seen, the claims that the corporations were wasteful and inefficient were not new, but as the financial situation worsened, these claims became more difficult to ignore. In Britain, the Peacock report (1986) claimed that both the BBC and the commercial network suffered from cost and efficiency problems arising from what it called the 'comfortable duopoly', and this view was supported by the Home Affairs Committee which stated that it was 'incumbent on the BBC to seek to keep its costs under control' (1988a para. 150). By the time the White Paper was published, the BBC was complimented for having striven for increased efficiency and shifted resources into programme improvements, but according to the paper there was still 'scope for further progress' (para 3.3). In the case of the NRK, the 1985 White paper stated that the corporation would only be guaranteed greater financial autonomy on the condition that it demonstrated 'better management and resource economies' (St.meld. nr. 84 1984-85: 37-38), and the need to make the institution 'more efficient and flexible' was also stressed in the proposal converting the NRK into a 'public' corporation (Ot.prop. nr. 31 1986-87: 8). In later political debates, representatives for the main parties stressed the need for increased efficiency and productivity (see for example Ot.tid. 1990: 159 and Innst. S. nr. 187 1988-1989: 3).

In response to this combination of political and financial pressures, both corporations came up with new ways of shifting funds from support areas into programme making. In the case of the BBC, the turning point came with the 1985 licence fee settlement, which was so much lower than the BBC had expected that it was obvious that the corporation could not get by through mere 'savings'. The BBC's initial response was the Priorities for the Future review whose proposals were endorsed by the Board of governors in July 1985, but over the next few years, the new and 'realistic' regime with Hussey and Barnett on the governing side and Checkland and Birt on the management side, initiated an even more 'fundamental examination' of the way in which the BBC conducted its business (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1987/88). In 1988 the BBC Five year plan was put forward, dedicated entirely to increased efficiency and productivity (BBC 1988), and this was followed by more radical proposals in the 1990 Funding the Future review. Towards the end of the period discussed here, radical proposals concerning the corporation's business strategy and its use of facilities were also put forward (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91. Broadcast 15.11.91).

The quest for improved efficiency and productivity also took a new turn within the NRK from the mid-1980s onwards. Here the turning point came with a financial crisis in 1986 which led to severe cuts in programme budgets and the cancellation of a prestigious drama production which was already well on its way (NRK Facts and Figures 1987). At the same time, the discussion about a more autonomous

position for the NRK put pressure on the corporation to demonstrate that it was able to manage its resources more efficiently, and in 1987, the management took the first steps towards internal reform. The reforms were initially based on the assumption that the NRK would soon return to a pre-crisis situation of annual growth in programme budgets (NRK 1987a,b), but before long a more 'realistic' tune became visible here too. In 1988, an NRK policy proposal declared for the first time that the aim was to make 'more and better programmes with the same resources' (my emphasis) (NRK 1988a), and over the next five years, a series of organisational reforms were initiated in order to reach this aim (see NRK 1987-88, NRK 1988-90, NRK 1989-91, NRK 1990-92).

The strategies implemented by the two corporations converged on a number of points. Both the BBC and the NRK began turning to the market-place for support services where these could be obtained more cheaply, and although the BBC went much further than the NRK, in both corporations there was a move towards contracting out and increasing the proportion of posts in the programme departments filled by contracted, rather than permanent, staff. In the case of the BBC this led to a loss of nearly two thousand jobs as employment in the Home Services declined from more than 25 400 in 1986 to below 24 000 in 1991, and in the wake of the implementation of the 25% 'independent programming' quota and the 1991 licence fee settlement, plans for losing several thousand more jobs before the charter comes up for renewal in 1996, have been presented (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983 - BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91, see also Broadcast 18.1.91, 15.3.91, 26.4.91, 12.7.91, 2.8.91, Evening Standard 13.3.1992).

Although the NRK has also tried to shake off responsibility for many support services (see for example NRK Facts and Figures 1987, NRK 1987a), no jobs have so far been lost. Instead around 400 new jobs have been created since 1981, bringing the total number of employees up to around 2700 in 1991 (NRK Annual Report 1981 - NRK 1990-92). Since most of these jobs were allocated either to the second radio channel (which is headquartered outside the capital) or the regional offices, this increase has not been very controversial. As pointed out previously, the NRK has been subject to a ban on new jobs in the capital since the 1970s, and although this has caused problems in terms of a low staff turnover (see Bull 1981, Middelthun 1981), it has taken the edge off some of the criticism of the NRK's centralising and bureaucratic tendencies. More recently, however, the NRK has indicated that its employment is also about to peak, and that the aim is to reduce the overall number of jobs (NRK Annual Report 1981 - NRK 1990-92).

Parallel to the move towards contracting-out, in both countries there was pressure on in-house units to reduce costs to the same level. To achieve this aim, both corporations took steps to introduce market-like relations in their internal affairs. In Norway, the aim was first and foremost to create a system whereby the real costs of all services could be identified and the departments could be charged according to their own use of resources, and in 1989 the different NRK services were reorganised as output directorates with responsibility for their own budgets in (NRK 1988b, NRK 1988-90, 1989-91). Similar measures were also introduced within the BBC, but here the management went even further. In July 1991, plans were unveiled to create a fully competitive 'internal market' within the corporation, meaning that editors should have full control over programme budgets and be allowed to shop around for support services from wherever they could get the best deal. At the same time it was announced that the aim was to cut BBC production capacity by forty percent by 1993 (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91, see also Guardian 7.11.91).

In addition to these measures, both corporations also took steps to strengthen their planning and management functions and to break down organisational barriers. This included more clearly defined remits for each department or directorate, more flexible units, and a move towards 'bi-media-journalism'. This latter development, which brought radio and television staff closer together, was particularly profound in Britain. In 1987, the BBC news and current affairs departments serving network radio and television were brought together in a huge directorate of 1700 people working in specialist units across the boundaries of radio and television, and similar (controversial) reorganisations aimed at achieving economies of scale, were also made in the regional structure. In the 1970s and early 1980s the BBC's regional structure in England had been based on eight regional centres and three TV Network production centres, but in 1985 this was reduced to five regional centres. Further reorganisations were made in 1990 when the number of regional centres were reduced to four, and as part of the 1991 'Funding the Future' review, plans were unveiled to reduce the number to three (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1986/87 - 1990/91, Guardian 7.11.91).

Within the NRK, the regional offices were brought together under single management, and efforts were made to promote closer cooperation between radio and television (NRK Facts and Figures 1987, NRK 1987-88). In this context, however, the most profound reorganisations took place within the television service itself. In fact, the whole structure of television was revised twice between 1987 and 1991, and both times new units were created and new management employed. In 1987, two new divisions were established, one for factual and one for fictional programming, but this still left most of the departmental structure (which had been in existence since the beginning of television) intact (NRK 1987-88). Three years later, however, a more profound reorganisation took place as the Television service was divided into four divisions for drama, culture, actuality and 'general' output (NRK 1989-91).

These reorganisations created many conflicts, and it is doubtful whether they have led to greater flexibility in the work patterns. Indeed, Jacobsen (1992) concludes his study of the NRK reform process by stating that the reorganisations were primarily geared towards demonstrating that the NRK was 'doing something' to combat bureaucracy and increase productivity, and that there were few improvements in the actual administrative structure. These strategies should therefore be seen primarily as symbolic measures geared towards improving the corporations' acceptability among their critics.

In this chapter, we have seen that both the BBC and the NRK are behaving more and more like 'any other business' whose market has become more competitive, and this is also reflected in the more recent attempts to implement 'competitive' pay structures in both corporations, whereby salary decisions will be linked more directly to market forces and individual performances (BBC 1990, BBC Annual Report and Account 1989/90, 1990/91, NRK Facts and Figures 1988, 1989, 1990). Above all, however, this tendency can be seen in the way in which the corporations now discuss themselves. In the beginning of the reform process, the BBC declared that its aim was to be seen as 'a modern £ 1,000 million company adapting to competition as other companies in this country have had to do' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1986/1987), and the NRK similarly stated that its image was to be that of a 'modern and vital media company' (UkeOmkring 1988/1). With the term 'company' other forms of business-speak has also entered the minds of managers: Words like 'products', 'brand-leaders', 'customers' and 'share-holders' are now regularly used to describe programmes and audiences.

## CHAPTER 13:

### THE OBLIGATIONS: IMPLICATIONS AND RESPONSES

As has been demonstrated in part two of this study, the expectations originally levelled at the public broadcasting corporations were closely linked with their positions as 'national instruments of broadcasting'. The obligation to provide a universal service, to provide diverse and balanced programming, and to act in the national interest, were all justified with reference to the substantial privileges held by the corporations, and these privileges were in turn seen as important for the corporations' abilities to fulfil the expectations levelled at them. As we have seen, however, the positions of these corporations had become much less privileged since the obligations were first defined, and in this chapter I examine to what extent this led to a redefinition of the corporations' obligations in the 1980s and early 1990s. This also includes the questions of how the BBC and the NRK interpreted the expectations levelled at them in the new media situation, and how they legitimised these interpretations versus various external interests.

If we begin by considering the range of views and perspectives present in the broadcasting debates in the two countries (discussed in chapter ten), it becomes apparent that the expectations levelled at the corporations from the public acting as citizens, had not significantly altered in the 'new media situation'. Although many groups and interests recognised that the corporations were under great pressure to conform to market standards, they continued to expect them to respond to a wide range of tastes, views and perspectives, and to base their programme policies on cultural and social, rather than commercial, considerations. The same can also be said for those who held the ultimate control over the corporations, i.e. the parliaments and governments in the two countries. In Britain, the Home Affairs Committee (1988 para 24) stated that 'a BBC funded by the licence fee would be expected to

fulfil those public service obligations that it already meets', while in Norway the parliamentary committee also stressed that after the restructuring, the NRK would be expected to 'base its operations on the principle of public service broadcasting' (St.meld.13 1988-89:3, see also Ot.prop. 31 1986-87).

Despite the widespread agreement in both countries that the corporations should continue to be 'public service broadcasters', there was little consensus as to what this meant in terms of specific organisational priorities or programmes policies. As we have seen, the corporations' obligations had originally been expressed rather vaguely as norms, ideas and expectations, and in neither country there were a generally accepted, explicit definition of public service broadcasting which transcended historical and institutional developments. In Britain this was acknowledged by the Peacock Report, which stated that there was 'no simple dictionary definition' of public service broadcasting, and that there were 'as many interpretations of the concept of Public Service as contributors to the debate' (Peacock 1986, para. 30, 575). Few other interests were willing to leave it at that, however, and responded instead to the lack of consensus by creating their own definitions of 'public service broadcasting'.

In Britain, the Home Office, in its memo to the Home Affairs committee (Home office 1988) defined 'public service broadcasting' as a 'system' based on no less than seventeen different elements belonging to three different categories, and this 'definition' was later endorsed by the Home Affairs Committee (1988a para 15). The elements and categories were as follows:

Central principles: broadcasting is a national asset which should be used for the national good rather than for the benefit of particular interest groups; responsibility should lie with broadcasting authorities appointed as the 'trustees for the national interest'; viewers in all parts of the country who pay the same licence fee should have access to the same service; the broadcasters should be free of Government intervention in their day-to-day programming.

Public service obligations: the service should inform and educate as well as entertain; high standards should be observed both in technical and other matters; programmes should cover a wide and balanced range of subject matter; there should be a wide distribution for programmes of merit; a proper proportion of the programmes should be of British (now EC) origin and performance; a suitable proportion of material should be calculated specially to appeal to the persons served by the station, including in languages other than English.

Consumer protection obligations: programmes should not offend against good taste and decency, incite crime or lead to disorder; special rules should apply to depictions of violence and other matters at times when large numbers of young children may be in the audience; sufficient time should be given to news and news features; controversial matters should be presented with due accuracy and impartiality; a series of minor provisions regarding editorialising, advertising, the value of gifts etc.

In an historical perspective, the most striking feature of this 'definition' is the absence of traditional Reithian notions of uplift and enlightenment. Instead there is a strong emphasis on 'consumer protection', an emphasis which clearly reflects the neo-liberalist ideology of the Thatcher Government at the time. Even if this ideology is present, however, the 'definition' is still based on what I have previously termed a 'citizens view' of broadcasting. The cultural and social obligations of the broadcasters are stressed in a major way, and there is no indication that the authorities are lessening their expectations. Indeed, it can be argued that the expectations are, if anything, more extensive and explicit than before.

In Norway, the concept of 'public service broadcasting' was rarely used before the 1980s, and as late as 1985, the Conservative Government White Paper did not distinguish between concepts such as 'public service', 'broadcasting' and 'the NRK' (St.meld. nr. 84 1985/85). Two years later, however, the proposal converting the NRK into a 'public' corporation stated that 'the NRK, as a public service broadcaster, has particular cultural and social duties and should maintain high technical standards' [my emphasis]. Further 'public service obligations' were also listed, including the obligation of the NRK to continue its 'independent, critical and investigative treatment of social affairs and to treat social issues in a balanced and impartial way', and 'the responsibility for transmitting broadcasting services to the whole country' (Ot.prp. nr. 31 1986-87: 7-8). It was also stated on this and other occasions that

as a public service broadcaster, the NRK was expected to 'play a part in defending the Norwegian cultural identity' (St.meld.nr. 13, 1988-89:3, see also St.meld.44 1987/88).

Neither these definitions contained any explicit references to traditional notions of enlightenment and uplift, but as with the British one cited above, they stressed the social and cultural obligations of the broadcasters. Thus according to the definitions presented in both countries, the corporations were still - as public service broadcasters - obliged to provide a universal service, a diverse and balanced programme output and to serve the national interest. It is important to note, however, that in neither country the authorities' definition of 'public service broadcasting' were exclusive to the original institutions. In Britain, the Home Office definition explicitly included both Channel Four and ITV (para 44), and the Home Affairs Committee (1988a para 25) also accepted British Satellite Broadcasting's description of itself as a public service broadcaster, whereas in Norway it was explicitly stated that the 'TV2' was to be a public service corporation (Ot.prp. nr. 55, 1989/90). Thus, to identify the specific role which the BBC and the NRK were expected to play in the new media situation, it is necessary to move beyond general definitions of 'public service' and to examine also more specific expectations in the form of criticisms, complaints, 'suggestions', ideas and attempts at programme redirection.

### 13.1. A universal service

As demonstrated above, parliaments and governments both in Norway and Britain continued to expect the corporations to provide a universal service, and in both countries, the corporations responded by reaffirming their commitment to this principle. In Britain, the BBC stressed in its 1983 Annual Report and Handbook that 'The BBC has always been dedicated to the principle of universality, and this commitment to the service of the totality of our audience remains absolute', and similar statements were repeated later in the decade (BBC 1986, 1988, 1989a). In Norway, the NRK used the principle of universality to distinguish itself from its commercial competitors: Commercial services, it claimed, were only interested in making profit, whereas for the NRK, the principle of universality would always be the most important (NRK 1982a, NRK Annual report 1984 see also, NRK 1987-88, NRK 1987a,b).

In line with their commitment to universality, both the BBC and the NRK extended their television transmission networks, and by 1991 they covered 99.3% (BBC) and 99.7% (NRK) of the populations in their respective countries (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91, NRK 1989-91, 1990-92). If we examine the conduct of the corporations in other areas, however, it becomes apparent that their commitment to universality was not absolute. In the early 1980s, as we have seen, both corporations took steps to introduce subscription services, which would, if they had been realised, have created a two-tiered system of broadcasting where much attractive programming would be available only to those customers paying a higher fee (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983, NRK 1983). In this context it is important to remember that the original obligations towards universality included not just provision for people in all parts of the country, but also the principle of equal payment and a licence fee which 'everybody' could afford. It remains to be seen what impact the subscription services planned to start on the BBC in 1992 will have in this respect, but according to current planning, subscribers will have to pay up to £100 a week to receive a scrambled channel (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91, Broadcast 15.2.91).

### 13.2. A 'balanced' output

The obligation towards balanced programming originally contained two elements: a diverse programme output covering all tastes and interests, and a commitment towards presenting controversial issues and news in an impartial way. Both these obligations were reaffirmed in the new media situation: Despite the fact that the original corporations were no longer monopolies (or one half of a duopoly), they were still expected to respond to the full range of tastes and interests in society, and obliged to treat controversial matters with accuracy and impartiality. As we have seen in previous chapters, however, these obligations had, over the years, posed major problems for the broadcasters, and these problems did not become any smaller in the new media situation.

If we begin by examining the first of these obligations, the duty to provide a diverse and balanced programme output, the main problem for the broadcasters was, as before, to balance the considerations for the public as citizens with the consideration for them as consumers. As demonstrated in previous chapters, both corporations had, prior to the 1980s, come a long way

towards popularising their programme outputs, and the BBC had clearly entered into a ratings war with ITV with the aim of 'winning' a majority share of the audience. The problem of what emphasis to give to audience maximisation and ratings became even more pertinent as the number of competitors increased, and this was particularly the case in Norway where the situation changed from a monopoly to a multi-channel environment in but a few years. But to what extent was it considered legitimate for the public corporations to compete with commercial companies for the highest possible ratings? Precisely what did the authorities say about the balance between providing programming particularly valuable to society, and the need to for the corporations to retain their general hold over the television audience?

In Britain, both the Home Affairs Committee and the 1988 White Paper discussed these questions without indicating any clear priorities. On the one hand, they pointed to the BBC's duty to provide 'a reference point in an uncertain television environment against which all television channels can be judged' (Home Affairs committee 1988a para. 164), to continue to 'expand their output to meet the needs of minority interests' (Home Affairs Committee 1988a para. 34), and to provide 'demanding programmes of the kind which ... even a fully developed broadcasting market might fail to do' (White Paper 1988 para 3.2). On the other, they obliged the BBC to be 'responsive to viewer choice' (Home Affairs Committee 1988a para 164) and stated their expectation that both the BBC and the ITV-network 'should be able to sustain much of their hold over the television audience' (Home Affairs Committee 1988a para 52).

In Norway, parliaments and governments also discussed these issues without indicating any absolute preferences. In 1985, the conservative coalition government stated explicitly in its White Paper (St.meld. nr. 84 1984/85: 37) that the NRK's cultural and social obligations were 'more important than high ratings', but it added that these obligations should not prevent the corporations from 'drawing large audiences for good quality programmes or programmes which cover more specialised issues'. Later, the document proposing that the NRK should become a 'public' corporation stated that it should provide programmes 'of interest for both large and small groups of viewers' (Ot.prp. nr. 31 1986-87:8).

Thus neither in Britain nor in Norway did the authorities carve out new and distinct roles for the corporations to play in the new media environments. But what about the corporations themselves? What strategies did they adopt in order to distinguish themselves from their competitors and justify their claims to special privileges in a situation where many different broadcasters (several of them labelled 'public service') competed on many different levels?

In the following analysis, the responses of the corporations to the expectations regarding diverse programming, are examined on two levels. Firstly, there is the level of corporate identity or 'image': How did the BBC and the NRK interpret the obligations towards diversity on a general policy-level, and what values did they emphasise in order to distinguish themselves from their competitors? Secondly, there is the level of programming: Which areas of programming were given priority in the new situations, and in what way were these areas connected with the corporations' self-constructed identities as public service broadcasters?

In Britain, it was the debate about the licence fee in the mid-1980s which first prompted the BBC to clarify its programme obligations in the period discussed here, and in its response to the Peacock Report it pointed to a number of 'vital principles' which it claimed distinguished public service broadcasting from other forms (BBC 1986). These included the claim that public service broadcasters had stimulated and satisfied 'latent interests in the viewer and listener' (para. 1.3) and had 'sought to heighten public awareness' (para.1.6), both principles which harked back to old Reithian notions of uplift and enlightenment. A few years later, however, such references were largely absent from the BBC's policy documents. In its memo to the Home Affairs Committee in 1988, the BBC defined its 'core business' simply as that of providing a 'national service offering a breadth of programming of high standard in the most cost-effective way' (BBC 1988 para 6), and in a further attempt to play down its tradition of 'high-brow' paternalism, the BBC Chairman stated in the 1990/91 Annual Report that:

'Of course, the BBC must take the lead in contemporary thought and expression, but it must remember that it owes its existence to the involuntary subscription of the nation. That privileged position is now much better understood'.

The BBC also took pains to point out that it could not devote itself only to those areas of output which the commercial broadcasters were most likely to neglect, but would provide the 'widest range' of programmes 'right across the full range of licence-payers' tastes, interests and enthusiasms' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90). In line with this policy of serving the totality of the audience, the corporation reaffirmed its commitment to audience maximisation, or more precisely: to the principle of getting a 50% share of the audience which, since the 1960s, had been deeply ingrained in its corporate identity (see for example Burns 1977, Nossiter 1986). Although this principle was rarely made explicit in the corporation's policy documents, there are many indications that it received increased attention in the period discussed here.

One such indication is the increased sophistication of its audience measurements. In 1980, the Broadcasting Audiences Research Bureau (BARB) was established as a joint BBC-ITV limited company, and in 1984 this company replaced the household meters upon which its measurements were based with the more elaborate 'people meters' with push-buttons for each person in the household (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1985, see also Ang 1991). A few years later, the corporation stated in its Annual Report that its producers increasingly looked to audience research for assistance at the planning stage of the productions in order to better target important audience segments (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1987). Towards the end of the 1980s, audience measurements also began to figure more prominently in the way the corporation talked about itself. The BBC had, for several decades, published audience-data as an appendix to its annual report, but from 1990 detailed comments on the results (including explanations for the BBC's 'failure' to attract a majority proportion) occupied a central place in the BBC's review of the year's performance (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91).

As has been demonstrated, the BBC retained its commitment to audience maximisation in the period discussed here, and also to providing a 'broad' and 'varied' range of programmes. While this gave the corporation much leeway in terms of adapting its output to the new competitive environment, it did not provide it with a very distinctive identity as a 'public service' broadcaster, or as a broadcaster enjoying special privileges. This posed problems for the corporation which, not surprisingly, tried to fill the gap by referring to the 'quality' of its output. As we have seen, the concern for 'quality' was a dominant one in the British broadcasting debates of the 1980s, and the BBC responded by stating its intention to 'remain the bench-mark of British television and radio production against whom all others must be judged' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90). Or, as the BBC's Chairman observed in the 1990/91 Annual Report, the BBC's survival 'depends solely on the quality of our products and how far they are distinctive from their commercial competitors'.

Like most other actors and institutions, however, the BBC did not make clear the standards by which they intended to 'beat' their competitors in this respect, or define the concept of 'quality' very precisely. Statements such as 'the BBC has no intention of chasing the competition downmarket' (BBC Annual Report and Account 1988/89), could be seen to indicate that the BBC's definition of 'quality' corresponded with whatever was favoured by the 'upmarket' segments of the audience. On other occasions, however, it stated that 'quality' was a value which applied to all categories of output: opera as well as comedy - sport as well as classic drama (BBC Annual Report and Account 1988/89 - 1990/91).

In Norway, the situation was different than in Britain in the sense that the NRK had never before faced competition on the national level. Thus it had never before been pressurised into specifying a corporate identity in order to distinguish itself from other broadcasters. Faced with an evolving multi-channel environment from the early 1980s, however, the NRK experienced the need to 'clarify its obligations and possibilities and let this influence its programming' (NRK 1982a: 10). These efforts began with the 1982 policy document NRK in a new media situation, which defined the NRK's main role as being that of fulfilling 'cultural and national obligations which other stations do not or cannot fulfil' (1982a:6). This included the duty to 'offer good alternatives to the bad', to be 'a vigilant critic of the imperfect, the impure and the hurtful which is offered to the public' (:10), and to defend what was 'particular and distinctive' against the 'homogenising and standardising influence' of the transnational television industry (:14). As an example of the latter, the document cited imported entertainment, which despite being 'glamorous' was often 'standardising, vulgarising and unchallenging' (NRK 1982a: 19).

References were also made to the importance of defending the 'national culture', but this was given less prominence than the NRK's role as a guardian of taste and standards. As the competitive situation intensified from 1985 onwards, however, the nationalist discourse became more dominant also in the NRK's policy documents (see section 13.3 below). At the same time, paternalist statements like the ones above were almost completely replaced with a commitment towards 'variety' and 'diversity'. The turning point for this latter development came in 1987, when the NRK, in a letter to the Ministry of Culture, made the following comments about its obligations to the public under the heading of 'diversity' (NRK 1987b: 10):

'The NRK shall present a diverse output, and a variety of formats, themes, views and attitudes. ... The NRK shall transmit a variety of Norwegian programmes and a selection of the best productions from the whole world. ... The programmes shall be varied in terms of participants both geographically and in terms of age and gender. ... Programmes can be aimed both at large and more limited audiences, but for each programme the aim is to make it attractive to as many as possible, while jeopardising neither quality nor accuracy'.

In addition to indicating a move towards a more value-relativist attitude, the last sentence here points to the increased importance which the NRK attached to audience maximisation. Previous reports had made references to the need to attract large audiences, for example the 1982 report stated that one of the NRK's aims was to offer programmes which were 'interesting enough to be preferred by people who have a choice' (NRK 1982a: 10-11). While the main focus at that stage was still on making better programmes, audience maximisation became, from 1987 onwards, a value in its own right. For the first time ever, the 1987 Annual Report stated that it was the NRK's aim to command 'a majority proportion of the public's viewing time' [my emphasis] (NRK Facts and Figures 1987, see also NRK 1987a,b).

The development towards audience maximisation was a subtle one, but not subtle enough to avoid criticism (see for example Apenes 1987, Skjervheim 1987). Before long, however, this principle had become an integrated part of the corporation's identity, and it began to put increased priority on its audience research. As was pointed out in chapter five, audience research within the NRK goes back to 1967, but by the early 1980s the corporations still only carried out surveys every second or third year, usually covering a two week period. From 1985, however, such surveys were carried out three times a year, and from 1989, the corporation began moving towards a system of continuous measurements. By 1992 this had reached a level where the reach, ratings, share and appreciation of different channels are measured for more than thirty weeks per year, and where the corporations had begun to utilise 'people meters' (NRK 1990-92, see also Solvang 1991, Høst 1991).

The emphasis on audience maximisation is also seen in the new and deliberate attention to schedule building. In the early 1980s the NRK could still fill whole days with 'serious' and demanding programmes alone, but as competition proliferated, this practice began to change. In a 1987 policy-document the corporation stated that 'the most important feature of the prime time output should be that it appeals to a large majority of the audience' (NRK 1987a: 17), and a few years later the principle was laid down that each day's prime time should contain at least one programme 'primarily designed to entertain'. At the same time, it was also stated that the schedule should be composed so as to avoid fluctuations in the number of viewers (NRK 1989-91).

The development towards more deliberate schedule building was parallel to the process which took place in the BBC in the wake of the establishment of ITV, and changing the schedules remained one of the BBC's main responses to drops in its ratings (see for example Dunkley 1985). Owing to the fact that it had two channels at its disposal and that there was a long prime time to fill every day, the corporation could still fit in sizeable chunks of serious and demanding programming. In Norway, it was more difficult to build a schedule based on audience maximisation while simultaneously providing a diverse programme output, because the NRK controlled only one channel and the overall time spent on watching television was much lower than in Britain. The NRK responded to this problem by trying to expand its prime time and make its early evening programmes more attractive. In 1988, the early evening news programme was extended and pushed forward in an attempt to create a second prime time in the early evening, and in March 1992 the main evening news broadcast was also pushed forward. In the same period the NRK had also begun to reschedule well established programmes with

high ratings in an attempt to prevent the competitors from getting a hold on the audience at any one time.

Thus, in the course of a very few years also the NRK had adopted many of the competitive features traditionally associated with commercial broadcasting systems. As elsewhere, however, this left the corporation with an identity problem: How was it now to distinguish itself from its competitors? The NRK's answer to this problem was first and foremost to distinguish itself as a national broadcaster, both in terms of its universality (see above) and as a producer of Norwegian programmes (see below), but like the BBC it also began to use the concept of 'quality' more consciously in its marketing. Typical in this respect is the comment by the DG Bjartmar Gjerde in his opening address in the 1985 Annual Report: 'Henceforth as hitherto, quality will remain the NRK hallmark in the accelerating competition mainly from foreign countries' [English in original], and the statement 'as a public service broadcaster, the NRK has accepted the obligation to transmit programmes of high quality' (NRK 1989-91). As in the case of the BBC, however, nowhere is the concept of quality clearly defined, and the contexts within which it is used range from technical matters, to the question of professionalism, to the ability of programmes to involve and engage the viewers (see for example NRK 1987-88, NRK 1989-91).

So far, the responses of the two corporations have been examined on a general level: the level of corporate identity or 'image'. We have seen how the BBC and the NRK tried to reconcile their need for flexibility and their commitment to audience maximisation with a corporate identity which could clearly distinguish them from their competitors, and how this led them to embrace vague, but positive, terms, such as 'quality' and 'diversity'. But what about their actual priorities in terms of programming? Did the corporations put priority on providing the type of programming neglected by the commercial channels, or did they prioritise the same type of programmes as their competitors?

When it comes to determining priorities between different categories of programming, all broadcasting corporations are constrained by the three main factors. Firstly, and most importantly, there is the question of costs. If we begin by looking at the area of fiction and entertainment, there are important differences in this respect: According to BBC figures, home-produced drama is by far the most expensive category, costing more than eleven times as much as sport and purchased programming and three times as much as light entertainment. The differences are not so profound on the side of factual programming, but documentaries, features and current affairs still cost almost twice as much as news (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90, 1990/91, see also Schlesinger 1986, Nossiter 1986).

The second important factor is popularity. Although there are some variations from country to country, the general pattern is that home produced light entertainment and light drama are the most popular categories, followed by imported (US) films and series, news, sport and general information programmes (see for example Barwise and Ehrenberg 1988, Lund and Rolland 1988, Høst 1991).

The third important factor is what we may term the legitimacy factor. If costs and popularity were the only two factors, as indeed is the case for many low-budget commercial television stations, the output would consist mainly of light entertainment, films, sport and cheaply-produced news and information programmes. As has been demonstrated above, however, the BBC and the NRK were (still) expected to provide a wider range of programming than the commercial broadcasters, including programmes considered to be particularly valuable from a cultural or social point of view. In an historical perspective, this has included programme categories such as in-depth public affairs programmes; features and documentaries; education; arts and music; children's programmes and plays (see for example Williams 1975: 84). As the factors of costs and popularity were assuming more importance, however, some of these types of programming could easily become marginalised. The BBC's own research on the costs and audience delivery of different programme strands show that while features, documentaries and education programmes all cost similar sums to make as light entertainment, the latter category generated on average three times as many viewers as features and documentaries - and six to eight times as many viewers as education programmes (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90:71).

Nevertheless, the corporations could not afford to eliminate such programmes altogether, as they were crucial to legitimising what remained of their privileged positions. Thus, both the BBC and the NRK responded with a mixed strategy whereby, on the one hand, they made an effort to secure their

popular bases, while on the other they reinforced their commitment to some of the programme categories which they considered crucial for their identities as 'public service' broadcasters. These categories varied between the two countries, but news and current affairs received special attention within both corporations, apparently because it was the one individual type of programming which was considered the most crucial for retaining the identities of the corporations as public broadcasters. As the BBC observed in its 1986/87 Annual Report and Accounts: 'whatever lies ahead, the BBC will always be judged in large measure by the quality of its news and current affairs output'. A similar view was also prevalent within the NRK, which had the added advantage throughout the 1980s of operating the only fully developed national television news service in the country. Thus, an emphasis on news and current affairs was an obvious choice for the NRK in terms of distinguishing itself from its competitors.

In Britain, BBC's factual output was comprehensively restructured in the latter half of the 1980. At that time, news and current affairs was widely recognised as facing a crisis both of direction and confidence, and although the restructuring was controversial and difficult, the service regained some of its lost authority and began to score higher in the ratings (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90, 1990/91, see also Sparks 1990, Dyson and Humphreys 1988, Nossiter 1986). A similar development also took place in Norway, where the NRK news and current affairs expanded significantly throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Both weekday and weekend news services were extended, and in 1988, the NRK got its first regular current affairs magazine. The new 'actuality' programmes were also successful here in the ratings; indeed they accounted for much of the NRK's success in retaining its high viewing figures (NRK Annual report 1981, NRK 1990-92, see also Syvertsen 1992, Høst 1991).

Apart from news and current affairs, the two corporations singled out somewhat different types of programming as special priorities in the new situation. The BBC, in its response to the White Paper, pointed to 'news, current affairs and documentaries, features, music, the arts and serious drama' as categories which were 'central' to its 'cornerstone remit' (BBC 1989a para 5.2), and among these it was probably art programmes which received the most attention. Arts coverage was significantly extended when 'The Late Show' began on BBC 2 in 1989, and in its 1988/89 Annual Report the corporation pointed to arts, along with news and current affairs as 'two major elements of public service broadcasting'. The NRK, for its part, identified in its 1987 policy documents four 'crucial areas' where its television service felt responsible for being 'different - and better' than its competitors. These were news and information; programmes for children and youth; Norwegian drama and entertainment; and regional television (NRK 1987a:15, see also NRK 1987b: 12). As in Britain, these categories reflected the dominant views and perspectives which had been put forward in the broadcasting debate. In Norway, as we have seen, there was much emphasis on the protection of the young against the influence of the foreign channels and also on the protection and development of 'regional' and 'national' cultural forms.

In addition to prioritising the types of programming discussed so far, both corporations also took steps to protect their popularity among the mass audiences. In Britain, one of the programmes developed by the BBC to win back its viewers after the 1984/85 ratings crisis was the twice-weekly soap opera 'Eastenders' which along with the talk show, 'Wogan', occupied the seven o'clock spot. Popular drama and entertainment also became a higher priority from 1990, when the BBC again began to lag seriously behind ITV in the ratings. As part of the rounds of franchises renewals, the ITV-contractors had put high priority on mass-appeal domestic drama in its prime time (see for example Independent 16.11.91, Broadcast 12.4.91, 19.4.91, 24.5.91), and as the BBC DG commented in the 1989/90 Annual Report and Accounts, it was becoming necessary to 'protect the popular base of BBC television by putting more money into comedy and drama, where, despite its calibre, the number of productions is too low'. In Norway, home-produced drama and entertainment were among the four areas which the NRK put forward as its main priorities from 1987 onwards, and although much effort was put into increasing the proportion of home produced drama, it was light entertainment which received the most attention: Altogether, light entertainment increased its proportion of the output from 4.1% in 1987 to 6.7% in 1991 (NRK Facts and Figures 1987, NRK 1990-92). To begin with, most of the emphasis was on the Saturday night programmes, and although this was, in the early 1990s, still described as the 'foundation wall' of the television entertainment output (NRK 1990-92), more effort has, over the last two years, been put into improving the light entertainment output on weekdays (NRK 1989-91, 1990-92).

Both the BBC and the NRK increased their amount of films and series. On BBC1 the category 'British and Foreign feature films and series' increased its proportion of the output from 16% in 1981/82 to 25% in 1990/91 (on BBC2 from 16% to 23%), and within the NRK the proportion of films shown increased by almost 24% in 1987 when the corporation began transmitting late night films on Saturdays (NRK Facts and Figures 1987). More profound in Norway, however, was the change in the type of entertainment series. In 1983, the NRK for the first time transmitted a classic US soap opera, Dynasty, succeeded in 1984 by Falcon Crest. This event represented a watershed in Norwegian television entertainment, in the sense that the NRK had broken yet another barrier in its quest for programming which could draw high ratings (Gripsrud 1988, Bastiansen 1991c).

Finally, both the NRK and the BBC put an increasing amount of money into sport in order to retain the most important contracts (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/90, NRK 1988-90, 1989-91). Additionally, the NRK had to prioritise the expansion of its own facilities for sports coverage, as it is to be the host broadcaster for the 1994 winter olympics in Lillehammer (NRK 1988-90).

As we have seen, both the BBC and the NRK adopted a mixed strategy in response to the new challenges of the 1980s and 1990s: On the one hand, they took steps to protect their ratings through an emphasis on popular drama and entertainment, while on the other they heightened the profile of a few areas which they considered to be crucial to their identities as 'public broadcasters'. As previously noted, these areas corresponded to a large extent with the dominant concerns put forward in the broadcasting debates in the two countries, and they were also, to some degree, favoured by the factors of costs and popularity. But what about other traditional 'public service' areas which were not favoured by these factors? A case in point is educational programmes, whose days on television could well be numbered: In Britain, a BBC task force has discussed the possibility of hiving off the Open University and downloading the schools' television onto video recorders (Observer 28.4.91), and in the NRK it has been proposed that the corporations should shake off the responsibility of the schools programmes altogether (Tidssignalet 12.09.91). While this has not so far become a reality in either country, the fact that educational programmes were neither included in the BBC's list of programmes which were central to its 'cornerstone remit', nor in the list of areas where the NRK felt responsible for being better than its competitors, does not indicate a very promising future for this category of programming.

So far, the different programme categories prioritised by the two corporations have been discussed one by one. But what about the total output? How did the composition of programming on the BBC and NRK television channels change throughout the 1980s?

In chapter six, I made a comparison between the output of BBC, ITV and NRK in the early 1980s. The survey was based on the annual statistics provided by the corporations themselves and followed the pattern laid down by Williams (1975). The comparison was based on a simple distinction between two main categories of programming: 'Type A' which comprised the types of programming which historically have been most crucial to a 'public service' remit and 'Type B' which included programmes which, in principle, could have been provided by market-based television services. In my particular comparison 'Type A' programming included: news and public affairs; features, documentaries and art; and children's, religious and educational programmes whereas 'Type B' programming included music; feature films; sport; and drama (and in the Norwegian case also 'mixed' programming and 'other' programming).

For the year 1980/81 I found that **52%** of BBC1's schedule consisted of 'Type A' programming whereas the comparative figure for the BBC2 was **54%**. For the NRK the corresponding figure for the year 1980 was **55%**. A decade later the picture had changed somewhat. For the year 1990/91 **48%** of BBC1's and **55%** of BBC2 schedule consisted of 'Type A' programming whereas the corresponding figure for the NRK in 1990 was **51%**.

It is important to stress that these figures should be treated with caution since they are based on data and categories established by the corporations themselves, and also because they do not distinguish between prime-time and off-peak programming. A full analysis would also have to take into account the changes in programme content and form. Bearing this in mind, however, it is interesting to note that the overall proportion of 'Type A' programming has declined over the last decade on both BBC1 and NRK, and that the proportion on BBC1 has drawn much closer to the figure found for the ITV-

network in 1980/81 (46%). Another point worth noting is that, according to the available data, the two BBC channels have become more distinctive. While BBC1 has become even more of a mass audience channel, the proportion of typical 'public service' programmes has increased slightly on BBC2.

In this section, we have seen how the obligation to provide socially and culturally valuable programming became more difficult to fulfil in the 1980s and early 1990s. The same was the case with the second element of the obligation towards 'balanced programming': the requirement that the corporations should treat controversial matters in an 'impartial' way. In this case, however, it was not so much the changing media environments which created problems as the changing political situations in the two countries; even if the formal relationships between the corporations and their external constituencies remained largely the same, the political swing to the right made it necessary for both the BBC and the NRK to re-evaluate their policies of impartiality. In this respect, the problems for the broadcasters were more serious in Britain. As argued by George Wedell in 1968 (:76), the concept of impartiality in British broadcasting was closely linked with the bipartisan nature of British politics; the fact that the party in power was likely to find itself in opposition next time had prevented many governments from exercising comprehensive control over broadcasting content. From 1979 onwards, however, the bi-partisan pattern was undermined as the Conservatives won three elections in a row and began to expect to be treated differently than in the past.

When a more 'respectful' treatment failed to materialise, a sustained attack on the BBC for its allegedly left-wing views followed. Although there was nothing new about such complaints, they took on a far more sinister tone in the Thatcher era: On several occasions senior Conservative politicians and Cabinet Ministers complained that the BBC was taking a too left-wing stance on matters relating to government policy, and at the Conservative party annual conference, criticising the BBC for its left-wing bias became a ritual in its own right. This pattern continued after John Major became Prime Minister, only a few months after he had praised the BBC for its Gulf coverage (see below), he condemned it for its 'biased reporting' of health issues (Sunday Times 13.10.91). The accusations also surfaced in the debate on the Broadcasting Bill; in the House of Lords, the BBC's current affairs coverage was characterised by right-wing peers as a 'marxist party-political' and as 'party-political broadcasting on behalf of the Labour party' (HL Official Report 5.6.1990 vol 519 cols. 1278-284, see also cols. 1299-302 and col. 1261).

The long reign of Conservative rule also created more indirect problems for the BBC in the sense that the governments in the period adopted a particularly confrontational approach towards social dissent. Events like the inner-city riots and the miners' strike were treated by the Government as 'law and order'-problems, and this in turn made them difficult to cover in a politically 'balanced' way. The coverage of both the riots and the strike led to many accusations of 'bias', and the same was the case with the coverage of foreign affairs, defence, social policy, education and the poll tax. As we shall see below, there was also a series of conflicts concerning the interpretation of the 'national interest' and national security, particularly in the case of Northern Ireland.

It is difficult to say to what extent the complaints about biased reporting influenced programming; indeed, if we examine how the corporation responded to specific complaints, their strategies were not very different from those of the past. For example, after it had been severely criticised by the Chairman of the Conservative Party for its reporting of the 1986 US attack on Tripoli from UK soil, it commissioned an 'independent study' to examine the coverage (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1986/87), and in connection with the miners' strike and several incidents of criticism of biased election coverage, it defended itself by referring to the fact that it was attacked from all sides. As a BBC Director expressed it at a public meeting, the fact that the BBC was accused equally of left and right bias 'probably meant it was doing a good job in remaining neutral' (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1987). In the case of the programme 'Maggie's Militant Tendency', which created a major row in the early 1980s, it even chose to give a full apology after having settled a costly libel claim (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1985 and BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1986/87).

The corporation also responded on a more general level. In the mid-1980s, as we have seen, it completely restructured its news and current affairs operation, and in 1990, it issued new Factual Guidelines to accompany the revised 'Producers Guidelines' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts

1989/90, BBC 1989b). It also used much space in its annual reports to demonstrate its concern with impartiality. In 1989 it observed that (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1988/89:

'The BBC must win the trust of every licence payer. All must believe that the BBC is open and responsible to their particular views and concerns, and that it is not in the pocket of any narrow sectional or political grouping'.

The BBC was not the only broadcaster to be accused of left-wing bias, however, both Channel Four and ITV were attacked on several occasions and threatened that if they did not 'put their houses in order', stricter rules would be imposed from the outside. Following the unusually hostile attack on the BBC for its coverage of Libya in 1986, the Conservative Party set up a media policy and monitoring unit advocating that each programme should be 'internally balanced' (Lee 1987:79), and after pressure from right wing peers, the Government decided to introduce an amendment to this effect during the last stages of the Broadcasting Bill. Although the principle of individually balanced programmes did not gain sufficient support, the Act did, in the end, contain a set of clauses requiring the ITC to draw up a code on impartiality (Broadcasting Act 1990 section 6). These clauses were not formally to apply to BBC, but the Home Secretary made it clear that the BBC would be invited to take cognizance of them. Along with other broadcasters the BBC lobbied against the impartiality amendment and argued that this was not an appropriate policy, since 'impartiality was an approach, not a formula', but after the amendment had been watered down, the BBC corporation declared the provisions to be 'more workable' and 'consistent with current best practice' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91)

Before concluding on the BBC's difficulties regarding 'impartiality' and 'balanced programming', it is worth noting that the emergence of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) as a significant third force in national politics in the early 1980s, created problems for the corporation. The SDP set out to occupy the 'middle ground' between the two parties, thereby making the BBC's position as a 'balancing force' in British politics, more vulnerable. There was also the specific problem of how the new party should be represented. As the BBC reported in its 1986 Annual Report, there seemed to be 'no single statistical formula capable of reflecting the emergence of a significant third force in national politics ... which would win general acceptance' (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1986, see also BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983).

In Norway, the relationship between the NRK and the political sphere had for decades reflected the dominant position of the Labour Party, and despite the fact that the NRK had developed formulas to protect itself against accusations of bias from all sides, it had always been aware that the relationship with the social democrats needed to be particularly well looked after. In the 1980s and early 1990s, however, the governments began to change with astonishing frequency, and for the first time since 1928, the conservatives were able to form a government on their own. Thus, for the first time ever, the NRK was facing a government which explicitly wanted to limit the corporations' dominant position in the political landscape, and which for some years had believed themselves to be unfairly treated by the corporation.

For the NRK, this implied that it had to become more 'flexible' in its relationships with parliament and government, and also that it had to appeal more openly to a wider variety of interests instead of using its traditional (and covert) channels of influence. In terms of complaints about 'bias', however, the situation did not, to begin with, change very much. The NRK was routinely accused of bias in connection with its coverage of election campaigns, and also in connection with its reporting of some foreign affairs issues, and it defended itself in the same manners as before. After the corporation was strongly criticised for its coverage of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 it defended itself by 'demonstrating' that its coverage corresponded with the 'facts' (NRK Annual Report 1982), and in following criticisms that its election coverage was biased, it usually commissioned an 'independent study' to examine the reports (see for example NRK Annual Report 1985, Hellerud and Riis 1985).

Towards the end of the decade, however, the situation became more difficult for the corporations. As noted in chapter eleven, the appointment of the ex-Labour Minister Einar Førde as DG in 1988 led to an outcry among Conservative interests, and the problems intensified after Førde personally appointed a deputy who was also a Labour Party sympathiser in 1989. By that time, the Conservative Party had lost much of the electoral support which it had enjoyed in the beginning of the decade, but this loss had, to some extent, been offset by the increasing support for the right-wing Progressive

Party which was outright hostile towards the NRK. From 1986 onwards, the leader of this party consequently substituted the N in NRK with an A for 'Arbeiderpartiet' (the Labour Party), thus labelling the corporation: The Labour Party's Broadcasting Corporation (ARK), and this abbreviation was soon in common usage among right-wingers.

As previously noted, the Progressive Party and individual members of the Conservative Party expressed their opposition to the appointment of the DG and the deputy DG by trying to change the Broadcasting Act, and although these attempts were unsuccessful, centrally placed people within the corporation began to worry openly about the ARK-label (Henriksen and Olsen 1991). The Producers Guidelines' were revised once again, and demonstrative measures were taken in order to prove that the corporation was not run by the Labour Party. Among the more celebrated ones was the appointment of Egil Sundar, an ex-editor of the largest Conservative newspaper in Norway and one of the corporations' most out-spoken critics, to run its news and current affairs operations in 1990. The fact that he had to leave this position in March 1991, allegedly due to 'cooperation problems', indicates that this was probably not a very well-planned move, and one which may backfire badly in terms of the corporation's legitimacy in right-wing circles.

It is significant that none of the controversies over 'bias' and 'impartiality' in the 1980s and 1990s involved formal government intervention. However, the ever present power of governments and parliaments to sanction or forbid a raise in the licence fee in an era of high broadcasting inflation, left the corporations in vulnerable positions. Even if it can not be proved that the corporations did not present certain views or perspectives which they would otherwise have done, it is likely that the financial problems made the broadcasters more acutely aware of the need to stay on 'harmonious' terms with those who determined their level of funding.

### 13.3. In the 'national interest'

The obligation to serve the national interest originally had two components. Firstly, there was the expectation that the broadcasters would refrain from transmitting anything which could threaten the social order or national security. Secondly, and more positively, there was the expectation that the broadcasters would help to strengthen national identity and national culture. As previously mentioned, none of these obligations were set out in formal or legal terms in either country, and this situation continued throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Nevertheless, the expectations that the corporations would fulfil these obligations continued to permeate the broadcasting debates, and in both countries this was a reference point for much of the criticism which was levelled against the corporations. In line with the general political climates in the two countries, it was the first - and negative - element of the obligation to serve the 'national interest' which generated most problems for the BBC, whereas the expectations that the broadcasters should help to strengthen national culture and identity was most strongly stressed in Norway.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Britain was involved in several armed conflicts both at home and overseas, and this created many situations where it was difficult for the broadcasters to define 'the national interest' in a way which was above criticism. One of the most severe conflicts was the Falklands/Malvinas war in 1982, which, according to the 1983 BBC Annual Report and Handbook, 'laid upon the BBC a greater burden of responsibility than at any time since Suez'. During the conflict there was enormous pressure on the media to help boost public morale; particularly after Britain had begun to suffer war losses, the BBC was strongly criticised for its coverage. Throughout the conflict, the BBC received more than 13 000 letters, and many of those writing argued that it was the BBC's duty to present a picture of an united nation and avoid criticism of the government. Later, the Prime Minister herself joined the critics. In the House of Commons she stated, among other things: 'It is our pride that we have no censorship ... But we expect the case for freedom to be put by those who are responsible for doing so' (cited from Murdock 1984, see also Milne 1989, Negrine 1989).

The attacks on the broadcasters did not go unanswered, as the BBC described it: 'Opinions continued throughout the crisis to be divided between those who thought that the BBC should act as a morale-boosting, propaganda agency, and those who considered it more important than ever that it should maintain its traditional objectivity' (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1984). Nevertheless, as many has pointed out, it was far more difficult to find the 'middle ground' in this situation than, for instance, during the Suez crisis. At that time there existed a strong political and national opposition to the

actions taken by the government, whereas, in the case of the Falklands conflict, the BBC's very loyalty to the national interest was called into question.

The BBC's response to the criticisms of its Falklands coverage was, on the one hand, to declare its patriotism: As the DG commented retrospectively in his statement in the 1983 Annual report: 'When the nation is forced by the act of an aggressor to take military action in its interests, there is no question of the BBC being neutral ... Nor has the BBC or its staff ever been short of patriotism'. On the other, however, the corporation tried to retain a certain degree of detachment from the conflict. Such balancing acts did little to improve the Prime Minister's attitude towards the BBC; she remained hostile to the corporation as long as she was in power, but conflicts also erupted between the BBC and other ministers. The most serious of these were, as before, related to the civil war in Northern Ireland where the BBC, despite the cautious attitude it had adopted in the 1970s, ran into problems with the government on many occasions.

In 1979/80 the BBC filmed the IRA in action in Carrickmore in Northern Ireland, and although the film was never shown, the incident led to angry outbursts from the Prime Minister demanding that the broadcasters should 'put their house in order' (cited from Negrine 1989: 130). Later the BBC was criticised for its coverage of the hunger strike which led to the death of the MP Bobby Sands, and other IRA operations such as the London Christmas bombs in 1983, and the bombing of the Conservative conference in Brighton in 1984/85 (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983-1986). More serious than any of these incidents, however, was the 'Real Lives' affair in July and August 1985, when the Home Secretary Leon Brittan wrote to the BBC Governors asking them not to broadcast an already listed programme featuring a Sinn Fein representative and a hard-line loyalist in Northern Ireland. The Home Secretary's action followed press reports that the programme gave publicity to a terrorist, and happened shortly after the Prime Minister herself had given a speech urging that terrorists should be denied 'the oxygen of publicity'.

Although it was clearly within his powers to do so, the Home Secretary did not ban the programme from being broadcast. Instead he stressed that he was writing in his capacity as the minister concerned with security and not as the minister responsible for broadcasting matters. Due to the 'unique circumstances', however, the Board of Governors decided to depart from their usual convention and preview the programme, and having done so, they decided to 'postpone' it with the justification that the referral process had not been followed properly. The Board of Management was strongly opposed to the verdict, and on the day the programme should have been broadcast, BBC and ITV journalists went on an unprecedented one day strike to protest against the government's pressures on broadcasting (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1987).

The controversial programme was later transmitted with some minor changes, but the incident left lasting marks in the form of a crisis of confidence between the BBC staff and its governors, and between the BBC and the government. After several rounds of peace-making, the Home Secretary gave what the corporations described as 'a categorical assurance ... that it was not the government's wish then, nor would it be at any time in the future, to censor or apply improper pressure to the BBC' (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1987, see also Lee 1987, Milne 1989, Negrine 1989, Carter 1988). Shortly afterwards, however, the Home Secretary imposed the so-called 'Sinn Fein-ban', which, as previously mentioned, severely limited the BBC (and other broadcasters') coverage of Northern Ireland - despite the presence of journalistic loopholes.

In addition to these incidents, the BBC also ran into problems over national security in the period discussed here. In 1986/87, acting on suspicion that one programme ('the Zircon Affair') in a planned series about the 'Secret Society' might reveal a breach of the Official Secrets Act, Special Branch police searched BBC Scotland's offices and confiscated material relating to the whole series. Furthermore, in 1987/88, a radio series about the accountability of the secret services ('My country right or wrong?') was postponed after the Government obtained an injunction preventing the opening programme, and thereby in effect the whole series, from being broadcast (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1986/87, 1987/88).

In both these cases, the BBC protested against the action taken by the government. In the first case, the Chairman wrote 'strong letters of protest' to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland, and in the end, four out of six programmes were broadcast in April 1987. In the case of the

'My Country Right or Wrong' series the injunction was eventually lifted, and the banned programme was broadcast six months later. Nevertheless, the BBC still remained 'deeply worried' by this affair. As it wrote in its 1987/88 Annual Report:

'Not only did the Government's action call into question the value of the voluntary D-notice system, which is generally thought to have worked satisfactorily hitherto, but its success in gaining access, albeit by legal procedures, to the content of programmes in advance of transmission amounted to exercising a power of prior restraint. By this means the Government was able, in effect, to censor the series' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1987/88).

Despite the fact that the BBC asserted its right to broadcast controversial programmes, however, there is evidence to indicate that the BBC was becoming more careful in its coverage of matters regarding national security. The fifth programme in the 'Secret Society' series ('Cabinet') was held back for 'editorial reasons', and remained untransmitted until it was remade as part of a 'banned' season on Channel Four in 1991. In the wake of the trouble caused by this series, the BBC initiated a 'close scrutiny' of its journalism, editorial responsibility and procedures (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1987).

Towards the end of the period discussed here, the BBC's status seem to have improved in government circles. This was due both to the actions taken by the BBC to avoid further controversy, and to political and personnel changes. During the Gulf War the new Prime Minister, John Major, refused to be drawn in when Tory backbenchers criticised the broadcasters for lack of patriotism, labelling the BBC the 'Baghdad Broadcasting Corporation' for having reported Iraqi views throughout the conflict. Instead, he praised the BBC in the House of Commons for its 'remarkable reporting' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91).

In contrast to Britain, Norway was not directly involved in any military conflicts in the period discussed here, and the relationship between the NRK and the government over matters of secrecy, security and the national interest, remained stable. Regarding the positive aspect of the duty to serve the national interests (the expectation that the broadcasters would help to strengthen national identity and national culture) however, there were more profound developments: As was previously demonstrated, the concern for the protection of the 'national culture' was one of the dominant themes of the Norwegian broadcasting debate of the 1980s, and from the beginning of the decade the NRK responded by declaring its own commitment to this cause.

This was already evident in the 1982 policy document, where the NRK stated that one of its main duties in the new media situation was 'to ensure that what is Norwegian - and Nordic - is not drowned in the flow from outside' (NRK 1982a:10). As the 1980s progressed and the NRK's traditional paternalism began to wane, nationalist arguments assumed an even more important role as the main values by which the NRK distinguished itself from its competitors. The turning point came in 1985, which was the year when the NRK encountered real competition in the field of television and also the 25th anniversary of the NRK's own television service. According to the DG, these events led the NRK to 'undertake a thorough discussion of the NRK's future role, how we can - and should - do it' (NRK Annual Report 1985), and what they seem to have decided was that the NRK should distinguish itself more clearly as a national broadcasting service. This 'national' profile was particularly evident in the NRK's submission to the 'TV2'-committee, which began with a lengthy overview over the 'threats' to Norwegian culture and national identity as a 'background' for the NRK's own proposal (NRK 1985b). It was also evident in the further policy documents which the NRK put out in the 1980s. For example, in its 1988 report to parliament (NRK 1987-88) the corporation stated that:

'A strong national broadcasting institution is necessary for anchoring the Norwegian cultural tradition and providing it with opportunities for growth. But the NRK is more than a transmitter of culture. Radio and television has a part to play in the creation of culture, and with their abilities to reach and link together the population at large, the NRK is possibly the single most important cultural institution in Norway'.

In Britain, 'cultural defence'-arguments played no prominent role in the BBC's attempts to distinguish itself from other broadcasters. Nevertheless, in the DG's statement in the 1990/91 Annual Report, it

was claimed that it was important to keep a 'critical and creative production mass' if British television was not to be 'swamped by the output of emerging conglomerates formed by alliances of US programme-makers and Japanese manufacturers'. This in turn points to the fact that the qualitative interpretation of the obligation to strengthen the national culture (by imposing a sense of discrimination among the audience and emphasising 'national' rather than 'regional' or 'international' cultural forms) was even further replaced by a quantitative and industrial interpretation, focusing on the need to sustain a national production base.

Within this framework, the main emphasis was on establishing quotas for home-produced programming, and on the obligation to support nationally based performers and creators. As the financial situation worsened for the corporations, however, these measures became also more difficult to fulfil. Since imports were cheaper than home-produced programming and also cheaper than using national performers and creators, strict quota-arrangements were not desirable from the corporations' point of view, and there were also, as we have seen, consistent pressures on national policy-makers and broadcasting corporations to allow more imports.

In Britain, the BBC had, since the 1950s, voluntarily limited itself to fourteen per cent imported programming, which was the amount specified in statute for commercial television. This does not mean that 86% of the programming was actually produced in Britain, as there were many exemptions to the quota. Material of 'particular cultural value' had always been exempted, and the same was true for material from other Commonwealth countries. From 1978, the 86% could also include imports from other EC countries, and in October 1984, the quota was raised by 1.5 percent to allow more Commonwealth material (Collins 1990a: 155).

These exemptions and changes were minimal, however, compared to what happened after the new Broadcasting Act had become law in 1990. In accordance with the new act the Independent Television Commission began to work on the specific regulations for the Channel 3 licences, and in November the same year they issued a set of draft guidelines for franchise applications. In contrast to the existing 84.5% quota, these guidelines specified a 75% quota for programming of 'European origin'. Despite the fact that this implied a major liberalisation, the US Embassy and other US interests complained that this quota was against the GATT agreement, and threatened, as they had previously done on the European level, to take action against the UK government. As a result of this intervention the proposed quota was changed, and in the final version of the regulations, the requirement was that 'the majority of hours of programming' [my emphasis] should be of European origin (Independent Television Commission 1991 para. 107). This liberalisation, which brought the UK quota down to the minimum level specified by the European Community and the Council of Europe, was described by the London office of the Motion Picture Industry of America as 'a step in the right direction' (cited from Broadcast 3.5.1991).

Since the regulations established for the commercial channels set standards for the industry as a whole, it is likely that the BBC's 'self-imposed' quota will also be relaxed. To what extent this will happen is not easy to predict; at the moment it is difficult enough to determine whether or not the BBC stuck to its self-imposed quota before the regulations were liberalised. Estimates from the first half of the 1980s calculated BBC imports to be around 15%, of which 1% came from other European countries, 1% from non-Western countries and 13% from US (Pragnell 1985: 25, Varis 1985), whereas for the year 1989/90, the trade journal Broadcast (3.5.91) calculated that approximately 27% of BBC material came from non-EC countries (see also Mills 1985, Schelsinger 1986). There still exists no consistent system of classification, and the BBC itself has continued to lump together 'British and foreign feature films and series' in a single category in its statistics. As previously mentioned, however, the proportion of the output belonging to this category has increased significantly over the last decade, and this may indicate that the proportion of imports is growing.

In Norway, the NRK has never been expected to produce more than fifty per cent of its television programming, and in 1991 the same quota was formally set for the new 'TV2'-channel. Many doubted that it was possible for the new channel to fulfil this quota, however, and in order not to appear unrealistic, the policy-makers allowed the franchise holders to move gradually towards this aim over a ten year period. The NRK, for its part, generally managed to fulfil its quota in the period discussed here: Throughout the 1980s the general rule was that the corporation produced slightly more than fifty per cent of its own programming. A further ten per cent (approximately) came from other Norwegian or

Nordic sources, whereas slightly less than forty per cent came from other countries (NRK Annual Report 1981 - NRK Facts and Figures 1990). Within this latter category, however, there are indications that the UK's position as the leading source country is being replaced with a pattern whereby a more equal amount of UK and US programmes are being imported (see Brosveet 1988 and EBU statistics cited in NRK Facts and Figures 1990).

The NRK itself reports increasing problems with the imports situation, especially in the period from 1989 onwards (see for example NRK 1989-91). During this period, the international market for programme trade has become more and more competitive, and the distributors are no longer interested in selling small quantities of programming. The general rule now appears to be that contracts are signed only regarding whole packages of programming, and these packages generally contain a series of feature films (of varying quality) as well as one or more television series. Pre-selling has also become more important in the sense that in order to land down a contract, the buyer has to guarantee that it is going to buy a certain amount of programming in the future.

This situation has created major problems for the Scandinavian public broadcasting corporations. Even if they have cooperated with each other, they have had to watch their main commercial competitor, TV3, carry away several lucrative contracts. In the NRK's case the problem is compounded by the fact that the channel has so little time at its disposal, it is frequently impossible to buy the large quantities which the distributors require and which a commercial channel basing its schedule on bought-in entertainment, is able to purchase.

In 1989/90 a joint buying agreement was signed between the public broadcasters in Scandinavia, granting them a first option deal on BBC programming (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1989/1990). This deal was important to the NRK, which has always seen it as its duty to present the most celebrated international programmes and series to the Norwegian audience. As stated by the Features and Documentaries Department in its 1984 report, for example, much effort had gone into 'granting the audience access to the most renowned programmes produced in other countries' (NRK Annual Report 1984). However, as the corporation notes in its 1990 report to parliament, it will have to spend more money on its bought-in programmes in the coming years, if it is to sustain this ambition (NRK 1989-91).

As we have seen, however, the NRK was committed to distinguishing itself as a national broadcaster, and as such, it launched plans for strengthening the amount of home-produced programming (NRK 1989-91). Furthermore, following the cancellation of a major series based on Ibsen's Peer Gynt due to overspending in 1987, plans were made to increase the proportion of Norwegian drama (NRK Facts and Figures 1988), and the corporation also made an effort to increase programming in the minority language 'new Norwegian', which throughout the 1980s seldom amounted to more than twenty per cent of the output (despite the self-imposed, and later formally imposed, 25% quota). More important than any of these measures, however, was the development of regional television services. In contrast to the BBC, which for many years had had well developed regional television services, there were hardly any television facilities in the NRK regional offices before 1980. As we have seen, however, regionalism was one of the dominant concerns put forward in the Norwegian broadcasting debates of the 1980s, and the NRK responded with making the development of regional television services one of its main priorities. By 1991 this had reached a level where four (out of 17) regional offices were broadcasting a short daily news magazine before the main NRK evening news, and in response to an initiative from the NRK, the corporation was granted a substantial increase in the licence fee in order to develop similar services in other regions (NRK 1990-92, see also St.meld nr. 44 1987-88, Innst.S. nr. 187 1988/89, Innst.O nr. 2 1989-90).

The establishment of television facilities at the regional offices also meant that these could increase their production for the network, and some regional centres were also given special responsibility for certain types of programming. In statistical terms, the proportion of NRK network television produced in the regions increased from 1% in 1980 to 5% in 1990 (NRK Annual report 1981 - NRK Facts and Figures 1990). This was far less than in Britain, however, where the proportion of the network output produced in the regions increased from 18% in 1985/86 to 35% in 1990/91, as a result of a conscious policy to save money and exploit the regional production facilities more efficiently (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1983 - BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91).

Both the BBC and the NRK continued their traditions of cultural patronage in the period discussed here, but in line with their attempts to move towards more market-based systems, they also tried to shake off some of their traditional responsibilities. In Britain, the BBC in the period withdrew from many activities for which it had previously taken responsibility as the 'national instrument of broadcasting', and it is also likely that the new system of contracting out will shift resources from innovative in-house and commissioned programming, towards less expensive and 'safer' programme categories (National Campaign for the Arts 1989). A March 1992 'leak' from one of the BBC's newly appointed 'task forces' revealed that the corporation was discussing the possibility of ending the £11 million-a-year funding of five in-house symphony orchestras (Broadcast 6.3.1992). The NRK, for its part, has primarily tried to rid itself of the responsibility for the national symphony orchestras, one third of whose expenses they have been covering since 1969. The price paid to keep these orchestras alive was far too high, according to the corporation, which would rather have preferred to pay for whatever material it used (NRK 1987-88).

Before concluding this chapter, it is interesting to note that whatever the changes of the 1980s and 1990s, the corporations continued to act as 'national' broadcasters whenever they had an opportunity to do so. In the British case, the 1981 Royal Wedding in particular was lavishly covered by television, according to BBC research this mega-event was watched by 39 M people in Britain (25 million of them on BBC television), and by another one billion (almost a quarter of the world's population) in seventy-two countries around the world. The importance of such events for the corporations are well illustrated by the BBC's own comments, as it proclaimed in its 1983 Annual Report and Handbook, it had

'never felt itself a more integral part of the life of the nation it exists to serve than on the day of the Royal Wedding in July 1981. Television and radio, it seems to us, played their part to perfection in making this an unforgettable day of national happiness in which all the people of these islands could feel themselves to be personal participants'.

In Norway, the coverage of the death of King Olav V and the inauguration of King Harald and Queen Sonja in 1991, provided a similar opportunity for the NRK to reaffirm its position as the centre of the nation's attention. The coverage of the death of King Olav V assumed particular importance in this respect, since it happened less than twenty four hours after the commencement of the Gulf War. The death of a popular king at a time of international crisis provided the NRK with a unique opportunity for contrasting national and international images (Østerud 1992), and for acting out its role as the one and only 'national instrument of broadcasting' one last time before the second television channel comes on the air.

[Trine Syvertsens hjemmeside](#)

# PART FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

## CHAPTER 14:

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study has addressed the question of how broadcasting systems are established, and how they develop and change. The focus has been on the establishment and development of public service television in Britain and Norway, but since television was implemented into an already existing structure, I have also examined its roots in the radio era. The analysis has combined two different approaches: broadcasting policy studies and historical analysis, and has been based mainly on documentary sources. The study has focused on three main questions:

1. What is the relationship between general social forces and the establishment and development of broadcasting systems? Which are the most important constraints, and in what way do these limit the possibilities open to social actors? Which actors and interests are the most important in determining broadcasting structures?
2. What were the original characteristics of the public service broadcasting corporations, the BBC and the NRK, and how have these characteristics developed and changed? What are the options open to such institutions when it comes to adapting to changes in their environments?
3. In what way have the important social changes in this century impacted both on the relationship between the social forces and interests, and the positions and structural characteristics of the broadcasting corporations?

In order to provide some answers to these questions, I have examined the development of the Norwegian and British broadcasting structures at three crucial conjunctures: The establishment of the corporations in the inter-war period, the introduction and development of television, and the major changes in the 1980s and early 1990s. This examination has brought forward much information regarding the interactions between constraints, forces and interests in each country during the different 'historic moments', but I see little reason to recapitulate this information here. Instead, I will take the opportunity to conclude with regard to the more general questions which this study has addressed.

In section 14.1 below I focus on the general relationship between social and institutional change within the area of broadcasting, and discuss to what degree the empirical analysis carried out in this study has strengthened or modified my original argument. Furthermore, I discuss the problems of generalisation: To what degree can national experiences be generalised, and to what degree can the approach developed in this study be used for analysing other types of institutions and broadcasting structures in other countries?

In the second section, I present my conclusions regarding how the situations and positions of the public broadcasting corporations, the BBC and the NRK, have been transformed over time. In this section, I also assess the possibilities open to these corporations in the future.

#### 14.1. Broadcasting and social change: Structures, actions and ideological perspectives

The present study started out with two main aims: To establish a general framework for how broadcasting structures develop and change in liberal capitalist societies, and to analyse, more specifically, the changing positions of the public broadcasting corporations, the BBC and the NRK. Regarding the first of these aims, I started out in chapter two with a general argument concerning the relationships between social and institutional change within the area of communication and broadcasting, and this argument was subsequently used as a theoretical framework for a sociological and historical analysis of the development of broadcasting structures in Britain and Norway.

Although the initial argument was primarily based on analyses of broadcasting developments in Britain and Norway, my intention was that it should also be general enough to be applicable to analyses of other types of institutional change, and analyses of broadcasting developments in other countries. Before turning to the more specific problems connected with generalising across institutions and national contexts, however, it is necessary to recapitulate the main 'building blocks' of the original argument, and discuss to what degree these have been modified or confirmed by the results of the empirical analyses.

The original argument was based on three fundamental assumptions: Firstly, that it was necessary to combine both structural and agency-oriented perspectives, since the limited focus of traditional policy-analysis could not on its own grasp complex processes of social and institutional change. Secondly, that decisions regarding the establishment and development of broadcasting systems were rarely consensual, and that within the framework of the structural constraints, different actors had a different degree of influence over the decision-making process. Thirdly, that although both the structural constraints and the alliances between different actors might appear to be stable during specific decision-making processes, both were liable to change over time and thereby create an imbalance in the forces supporting the institutional structures.

The first assumption, that structural constraints determine the range of options open to the social actors, has been strengthened by the empirical analyses carried out in this study. Although the nature of the structural limitations has varied from period to period and from country to country, the options open to the social actors have on all occasions analysed, been determined by a complex set of technological, economic and social constraints. It is important to emphasise, however, that the analysis has demonstrated that structural constraints should not be seen purely as limitations, on the contrary, both the technological, economic and social structures also act as enablers; defining new possibilities and opening up new options. Within each historical period and each decision-making process there are always a range of options which are not exploited, and these in turn present a constant reservoir of possibilities for actors who are dissatisfied with the existing structures.

Thus, identifying the range of options open to social actors in a given historical and social context, is not only important for analysing events which have taken place in the past. If the debates about media policy and the actions of the broadcasters are to

be qualified, and the criticism directed against these actors effective, it is important that the prevailing structural constraints are perceived correctly. In the current situation, for example, it is only by analysing the actual technological, social and economic limitations that it is possible to get away from moralistic and common-sensical judgements of the actions carried out by policy-makers and broadcasting corporations, and begin to explore the real range of (hitherto un-explored) possibilities within the field of broadcasting and television. As has been demonstrated in this study, there are always a range of possibilities which the more dominant interests are unwilling to explore, and most of these are also left unexplored by the cultural and social actors.

This brings us to the second main assumption of the initial argument, which concerns the roles played by social actors in the establishment and development of broadcasting structures. The main element in this assumption was that decisions (and also 'non-decisions') in the field of broadcasting and television are rarely consensual, and that within the limits of the structural constraints, different actors have a different degree of influence over how broadcasting is organised. This assumption also has been strengthened by the empirical analyses carried out here: On none of the occasions analysed in any of the two countries has there been a complete agreement among the social actors as to which institutional form was the most appropriate for broadcasting. Instead, a series of negative alliances have been identified, whereby a certain organisational form has been accepted by a variety of different actors as the least objectionable alternative in the circumstances.

The composition of these alliances and their ideological make-up have varied from one historical conjuncture to another, and so has also the degree of reluctance felt by the different actors. In other words, some alliances have been more negative than others; when the corporations were established, for example, the overall sentiments among the dominant actors seem to have been more positive in Britain than in Norway. What has been demonstrated in this study, however, is that the loss of support for the original public broadcasting structures has not been a unilinear development in either country, on the contrary, different negative alliances have succeeded each other, and support for various arrangements have fluctuated. Having said this, it is important to point out that the transformation of the original structural constraints have created new options, which in turn has led many categories of actors to withdraw their endorsement of the original broadcasting arrangements and begin to see other institutional forms as less objectionable. There is always a risk that this may happen with the actors involved in negative alliances, who, after all, are primarily concerned to strengthen their own interests.

As has been demonstrated in this study, the concept of a negative alliance is useful for analysing both why broadcasting structures change, and why they do not. The identification of different negative alliances in the two countries which have been done in this study, have helped to explain why the original broadcasting arrangements survived for a long time in both countries, and why they were eventually modified and changed. The concept is also useful for analysing future institutional possibilities within the media sector, as it highlights the fact that a certain institutional structure need not necessarily have widespread positive support as long as a sufficient range of actors and interests perceive it to be less objectionable to the other possible models. In other words, an institutional arrangement can survive for a

long time even though it is subject to far-reaching criticisms and frequent attacks from a variety of different angles.

What is said so far, however, does not mean that all social actors have the same degree of influence over the development of broadcasting structures. Governments and industrial interests are the most important actors in the field of broadcasting, and if the industry and the state are endorsing the same type of institutional arrangements, the broadcasting structures are likely to evolve without much public controversy and debate. As has been demonstrated in the present study, this has not been an unusual situation throughout the history of British and Norwegian broadcasting: Neither in the case of the establishment of the BBC, nor in any of the cases where television was implemented into the monopoly structures, nor in the case of the regulatory changes in the early 1980s, were the decisions regarding organisational forms influenced to any large degree by other actors than the government and the industrial interests. The only exception was the broadcasting organisations themselves, which, from their establishment and during the years of monopoly, should be perceived as dominant actors in the broadcasting arena in the two countries.

On other occasions, however, there has been a higher degree of conflict and controversy. Conflicts have erupted both between governments and the industrial actors, and within the two realms. In Norway, one of the major conflicts over broadcasting in the 1930s took place within the state itself, between the Department of Church and Education and the Department of Trade, and a similar conflict has been played out in Britain in the 1980s between the Home Office and the Department of Trade and Industry. There has also been conflict within the sphere of business in both countries; over how the economic and industrial potentials of broadcasting should be realised, and who should benefit. Historically, the conflicts between advertisers (wanting more outlets) and newspapers (wanting to protect their revenue), and between national and transnational operators have been the most prominent, but with the transformation of the structural constraints, a series of new conflicts have erupted between different business and industrial interests. While actors such as the satellite and cable operators, the US film and television syndicates, and the large industrial and media conglomerates, have pressed for a general deregulation of the broadcasting market, the so-called 'independent' producers and many advertising interests have primarily wanted the traditional institutions to 'open up' to external business interests. Yet others have preferred the traditional institutional arrangements to continue.

I have argued that the more substantial the conflicts between the main actors, the more likely it is that the struggle will be fought out in public and involve a wider set of actors and interests, and this argument seems to have been confirmed by the occasions analysed in this study. The empirical analysis carried out here of the broadcasting debates in Britain and Norway in the 1980s, demonstrates particularly well that a presence of fierce conflicts over policy may lead many actors who have not previously done so, to involve themselves in the debate. In Norway, more than two hundred comments were received by the government in response to the 1985 report from the inquiry appointed to discuss the question of a second television channel, whereas in Britain, more than 3000 individuals and groups responded to the proposals outlined in the 1988 Broadcasting White Paper. There were also extensive

debates in the press and the parliaments in the two countries, involving an even wider range of actors. Thus, it is fair to say that what I have termed an historic moment evolved in both countries, whereby the changes in the broadcasting constraints and the initial actions by some groups of interests, led many others to involve themselves in what they saw as an opportunity to strengthen their own positions within the field of broadcasting.

As has been demonstrated on these occasions, negative alliances opposed to the development towards an 'American-style' television system constituted themselves in both countries, and these in turn managed to modify the most far-reaching proposals which had been put forward by governments and the dominant industrial interests. From this it is possible to conclude that social and cultural actors do have a part to play in the development of broadcasting structures, and may even be the ones to make the final choices between different alternatives or 'models'. As has been demonstrated, however, the changes in the broadcasting legislation which were adopted in the two countries in 1990 largely favoured industrial and business interests, and the actors emphasising predominantly social and cultural arguments did not have sufficient autonomy to make decisions which went contrary to these interests.

The third assumption of the original argument was that although both the structural constraints and the alliances between different actors may appear to be stable during specific decision-making processes, both are liable to change over time and create an imbalance in the composition of social forces supporting various institutional arrangements. This assumption has also been amply confirmed in this study. As has been demonstrated, the public broadcasting structures in Britain and Norway were products of specific 'fits' between certain constraints, forces and interests in the inter-war period, but in the time that has passed since, these have fallen apart. First, and most important, the nature of the constraints have changed: Technological developments have made an increasing number of distribution channels become available, economic developments have made broadcasting and culture more desirable as investment objects, and the balance between the public acting as citizens and the public acting as consumers, has shifted towards the latter. This in turn has meant that the original technological and economic justification for the strict broadcasting regulations has vanished, and that traditional institutional arrangements can only be justified on social and cultural grounds.

Granted that the original broadcasting compromises in the two countries were based on negative rather than positive alliances, such a change was bound to make the original arrangements more vulnerable. Furthermore, since the original public broadcasting structures represented deviations from the 'normal' capitalist mode of production, it was inevitable that the changes outlined above would lead to a pressure in favour of a more market-regulated structure. Having said this, however, it is important to point out that such changes do not happen automatically; establishing new alliances takes time, and there is a lot of risk-taking involved for actors which take on powerful and stable institutional arrangements which have existed for decades.

Within the framework of this analysis, the concept of historic moments have been useful for analysing processes of both social and institutional change. For long

periods of time, structures and institutions may appear to evolve slowly and gradually - as was, for example, the case with the NRK broadcasting monopoly in the post-war years - then suddenly a train is set in motion and changes begin to take place with great speed. There are different reasons why such processes of change begin; sometimes they are prompted by specific events (such as the establishment of an inquiry into broadcasting), but the general rule is that a series of different pressures and challenges are necessary to set the train in motion. What is important, however, is that while the general pattern in broadcasting has been that the 'moments' of innovation and major change have been interspersed by long periods of stability, we seem to have reached a point where the intervals between different 'historic moments' is becoming shorter and shorter. This is a situation which is likely to continue, as it seems very unlikely that the constraints and interests again will reach an equilibrium of the type which characterised the broadcasting situation in the inter-war period.

The analyses which have been carried out in this study, amply confirm the view that it is necessary to apply a wide historical and sociological perspective in order to understand processes of social and institutional change in the area of broadcasting. The transformations which have taken place in this sector over the last century have been momentous and complex, and cannot be understood by examining only one country, one point in time, or one set of structural constraints or social actors. This does not mean that the changes taking place within broadcasting are unique, on the contrary, there are reasons to believe that a similar approach to the one established here can also act as a starting point for analyses of other types of institutional and social change. The changes taking place nowadays within sectors such as education, health and other forms of communication and culture have much in common with the changes taking place within broadcasting, and there are reasons to believe that the same types of 'negative alliances' and 'historic moments' can be identified within these areas. After all, very few of the forces, interests and processes of historical change examined in this study are specific to broadcasting, and the conflicts which have been identified are all part of much larger and more general conflicts and struggles over capital, knowledge, culture and ideology.

Thus, there are reasons to believe that the approach established in this study can also be used as a starting point for analyses of other types of institutions in Britain and Norway. But what about the similarities and differences between different broadcasting systems? To what degree are the Norwegian and British experiences comparable, and to what degree is it possible to use the experiences of these countries to establish a more general theory about how broadcasting systems develop and change in a wider range of countries?

In this study, the establishment and development of broadcasting structures have been examined largely within the context of the nation state. I have pointed to how the options open to social actors have been limited in each setting, how the constellations and alliances between the social actors have varied, and finally how the actual broadcasting structures which emerged in the two countries have had both similar and different characteristics. As has been demonstrated, factors such as the different positions of the two countries in the global broadcasting market, geographical and demographic factors, the political balance of forces, and different cultural and social histories have implied that both the constraints, interests and

dominant ideological perspectives have varied between the two contexts. Despite these differences, I have found a sufficient range of general patterns to justify treating the broadcasting developments in the two countries within the same framework. The price paid for this is of course an absence of detail and a higher degree of abstraction than is usually found in individual case studies, but I do not see that this has violated the historical specificities of any of the two contexts. On the contrary; the comparative methodology employed here has made it possible to penetrate deeper into some developments than is usually done, by producing a series of questions regarding why certain events did not happen as well as why they did.

This also implies that the theoretical approach established here could be seen as useful in terms of outlining elements of a more general approach to how broadcasting structures develop and change in liberal capitalist societies. By establishing the factors which were common to two different societies, as well as identifying the reasons why they sometimes arrived at different solutions to similar problems, a framework has been established which in turn could be used to analyse similar developments in other countries. To what degree valid comparisons can be made between different national systems is of course an empirical question, but the only way which we can actually get close to answering such questions is by conducting real comparative studies, i.e. by analysing different national experiences within the same framework. This is of course much more difficult than doing 'multi-country' studies whereby different contributors each analyse countries they know well, and the 'comparative' element is taken care of in an introductory chapter. Contributors who have edited multi-country studies of the new broadcasting situation in the last decade have all come to the conclusion that while things are 'very different' in different countries, there is everywhere the presence of 'a complex of technological, economic, ideological and political forces pushing more or less in the same direction' (the cited passages are from Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's introduction to case studies of France, Germany and Italy (1989:2-3)), but the challenge to the researcher is of course to go beyond that and identify more precisely both the common forces, and the specific historical and national differences.

In the present study, a wide range of similarities and differences between the two cases have been identified. What is even more important, however, is that it has been demonstrated that the broadcasting structures in the two countries have become more similar over the last decade. Although there will certainly continue to be important national differences between the broadcasting systems in different countries, these developments support the view that the forces and interests in this sector are becoming more general and transnational. The presence of transnational forces and interests is no novelty within the area of broadcasting; the radio technology has never known national boundaries, and both the industrial and political regulation of broadcasting have always taken place against a backdrop of transnational developments. Nevertheless, the last decade has seen an important shift in the balance between the national and the transnational level as all the forces involved in broadcasting have assumed a more transnational character.

In this study we have seen how new technologies were developed which transcended national boundaries, and made it virtually impossible to regulate television services in the country of reception. The business and industrial operators have also become more transnational, and the picture has grown increasingly

complicated lately as Japanese, Australian and European capital has bought into Hollywood, while US interests have become more involved in the European media. Finally, the political regulation of broadcasting has to a large extent been moved from the national to the transnational level. This latter process is a subtle one, formally the nation-state still plays a significant role in the formation of broadcasting policy, and their powers have not to any large degree been circumvented by the establishment of joint European regulations which, after all, only establish minimum regulations. Nevertheless, in an increasingly international environment it is difficult to avoid a situation whereby the more liberal countries are setting the standards both for the transnational legislation and the regulations in individual countries. Once a standard has been set internationally which deviates from national regulations it gives rise to endless arguments about 'censorship', 'unfair competition' and 'unacceptable trade barriers', which sooner or later culminate in the national regulations being brought into line with the transnational ones. In Britain the most telling example is the one whereby the imports quota for the ITV-system was changed from 15.5% to 50% almost overnight, and in Norway an even more striking example was the one whereby the Norwegian ban on alcohol advertising was recently lifted for foreign satellite channels, in order to avoid 'censoring' the news channel CNN. Thus, although national governments have, in principle, a large degree of autonomy, it is difficult to uphold national regulations which are far stricter than the general and transnational ones.

#### 14.2. Public broadcasting corporations: Survival, legitimacy and change

In addition to analysing general social and institutional changes within the area of broadcasting, this study has also aimed to arrive at more specific conclusions regarding the transformation of the situations and positions of the public broadcasting corporations, the BBC and the NRK. In this section, I present the results of the present study in terms of how these institutions have developed and changed over time, and discuss whether or not the strategies they have employed are likely to ensure survival and prosperity in the years to come.

As we have seen, the original structural characteristics of the public broadcasting corporations were products of the interactions between different social forces and interests in the period when they were established. Due to a combination of technical and economic constraints the institutions were set up as monopolies, and due to a combination of constraints and a specific alliance of interests, their main source of funding became the licence fee. Together, these characteristics implied that the corporations were granted immensely privileged positions in the national life of their respective countries; they were without competitors on the national level, and they were granted an income almost independent of demand. However, the corporations were not granted such formidable privileges without any restraints; in both countries elaborate control structures were established so that the political elites could ensure that the privileges were used in a responsible way. Furthermore, the presence of extensive privileges gave rise to a series of hopes and expectations among the various 'publics' regarding what the corporations could achieve. While few of these expectations were laid down as explicit regulations or formal duties, they did in effect amount to a series of obligations which the broadcasters were expected to fulfil.

Thus, from the beginning, the privileges and obligations were closely connected. The fact that the corporations held formidable privileges heightened and sharpened the expectations of the various 'publics', whereas from the broadcasters point of view, the presence of the privileges were necessary conditions for their ability to fulfil the expectations levelled at them. Furthermore, the relationship between the privileges and the obligations was crucial for the legitimacy of the corporations: If the expectations were not fulfilled, or more precisely; if the various 'publics' did not accept the corporations' interpretations of their obligations, the justification for the privileges were in danger of becoming undermined.

The organisation of broadcasting in the form of public corporations represented from the beginning a deviation from the capitalist mode of production, and although the welfare states expanded in the post-war years, this mode was not fundamentally altered in either country. On the contrary, as the population at large became more affluent and television became a more dominant medium, business and industrial interests began to press for more competition and greater possibilities for profit-making; and gradually this began to undermine the corporations' privileges. This development happened at different speeds in the two countries, but by the early 1980s both corporations had lost their protection against competition and were experiencing increasing financial difficulties. The licence fee was becoming a potential source of public discontent, and the saturation of the television markets and the high inflation within the broadcasting sector was making the situation worse.

The undermining of the privileges had two important implications for the corporations. Firstly, they were pulled more closely into the market-place; although neither the BBC nor the NRK are taking adverts in its overt form, they are engaged in many other commercial activities and trade on a variety of markets. Secondly, the relationships between the PSB-institutions and parliaments and governments have become more politicised: As the gap between costs and revenue increases, the corporations have had to appeal more frequently to the authorities for an increase in the fee.

Parallel to these developments, important social and cultural changes among the population at large began to make it more difficult for the corporations to fulfil their obligations. As the population fragmented into an ever increasing number of groups, interests, taste-cultures and 'publics', it became more difficult to provide an output which both appealed to the population as a unified nation and to each and every sub-culture, and as the relationships between the corporations and the parliaments and governments became more politicised, the duty to provide an 'impartial' and thorough coverage of social and economic affairs became more difficult to balance against the obligation to serve the national interest. Since it is impossible to establish a once-and-for-all formula for political 'balance' or cultural 'diversity', the corporations' legitimacy have from the beginning depended upon their ability to find the right 'balancing point' vis a vis their various 'publics'.

In the British case, Smith (1973: 281) has argued that the original legitimacy of public broadcasting reflected the success of a certain culture in finding 'some kind of valid relationship with the mass audience, the society at large', and that this relationship came under strain when the contours of society ceased to follow the contours around which the broadcasting institutions had been built (see also Negrine 1985b, Garnham 1983). Other observers have argued that because the corporations have been

repressive and elitist, or in Murdock's (1989: 53) phrase: 'the playground of the intelligentsia', they have never been able to establish a real intercommunication with the audience (see also Ang 1991). While the latter of these positions ignores the degree to which the legitimacy of the corporations have fluctuated, both are right in emphasising that the increasing opposition against a common standard for what is valid cultural and educational goals has made it difficult for the corporations to provide a service aimed at the whole of the population. Despite this situation, however, and despite the fact that the privileges of the corporations have become undermined, the expectations levelled at the corporations seem to be relatively constant. Both the BBC and the NRK are still expected to provide a universal service, to provide programmes for all tastes and interests, and to serve the national interest, and in some cases these obligations have even been made more explicit than before.

Before going on to discuss how the corporations have experienced this situation, it is important to point out that while there were major developments in the relationships between privileges and obligations in the period discussed in this study, the fundamental elements of the control structures have stayed the same in both countries. This in turn demonstrates how important it is to go beyond formal characteristics when exploring the development of broadcasting systems. For the purposes of this study, the analytical concepts of privileges and obligations have been particularly useful; in addition to pointing out the complexities built into the relationships between the broadcasting corporations and their external constituencies, these concepts have provided a dynamic framework for analysing how these relationships have evolved historically. It has also made it possible to determine more specifically the central elements of the crisis experienced by these corporations: Firstly, that the privileges of the corporations have been undermined. Secondly, that the expectations levelled at them have remained constant. And finally, that the major social changes in the post-war years have made it increasingly difficult for the corporations to design strategies which can both fulfil the expectations levelled at them and secure financial and organisational survival in the long term.

The presence of such a crisis in both countries has made the corporations' main ambition, that of survival, more naked than before, and new strategies have been developed to deal with both the loss of legitimacy and the financial problems. Regarding the financial situation, this study has demonstrated that the corporations have moved further into the commercial market-place over the last decade; there is more sponsorship, more (indirect) advertising, more buying-in from external sources, more commercial activities, and more adherence to ratings and other forms of audience research. Nevertheless, the corporations' need for social legitimacy have implied that commercialisation could not be the only answer to their problems; indeed, the analysis carried out here has demonstrated that both corporations have employed a dual strategy: On the one hand they have attempted to improve their financial balances and adapt to market-standards, whereas on the other they have strengthened their commitment to some of the areas which they believed were crucial to their legitimacy as 'public service' broadcasters. One of the more obvious of these areas is their continuing adherence to the principle of a universal service, but they have also reinforced their commitments to those values and types of programming which corresponded most closely with the dominant social and cultural concerns voiced in the broadcasting debates in the two countries.

In the short term, these dual strategies have been successful in the sense that they have secured the corporations a continued monopoly over the licence fee revenue, and strengthened their legitimacy among some of their most ardent enemies. As has been demonstrated, there is in both countries the continuing presence of an alliance in favour of a socially and culturally based broadcasting system. These alliances will not necessarily support all the strategies employed by the BBC and the NRK, however, on the contrary, many actors are extremely critical of the corporations' adoption of competitive and commercial strategies. Since the BBC and the NRK command the most substantial privileges of all the broadcasting organisations in their respective countries, more will always be expected of them than of other channels, and it is sufficient that they from time to time lose the comparisons against other channels in order to create the impression that they do not fulfil their social and cultural obligations. Indeed, it can be argued that although the corporations dual strategies have, in the short run, proved successful, they might, in the long run, lead to a dual crisis of legitimacy whereby the corporations are criticised for 'doing nothing properly': Neither do they present the most popular programmes, nor do they fulfil their special social and cultural obligations.

In Britain, the huge outcry over the BBC transmission of the Australian series The Thorn Birds in 1984, powerfully illustrates this dilemma. The series was meant to compete with the series: The Jewel in the Crown on ITV, but while the latter was domestically produced and received favourable reviews, the first was, according to the BBC's own account, 'much criticised for wooden stereotyping of many characters, for thin writing and implausible melodrama and for its placing in the schedules'. The BBC defended its decision to transmit the series on the grounds that it drew enormous audiences who, according to letters received by the corporation, 'hugely enjoyed every episode' (BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1985), but it was nonetheless used in the debate as an indication that the BBC had lost out to the commercial channel as a provider of important and prestigious national programmes. Some commentators have even suggested that the BBC's screening of the Thorn Birds might have been the exact provocation which led the Thatcher Government to establish the Peacock committee to discuss advertising on the BBC (Collins 1990a: 160, see also Leapman 1987): Why should the BBC be protected from market pressures if it was only showing 'Australian rubbish' anyway?

The NRK has also been increasingly criticised for being too commercial in the latter years. After the strong presence of neo-liberalist arguments in the beginning of the decade, the tables began to turn, and in the 1985 parliamentary debate the NRK was strongly criticised from all sides of the political spectrum for having adapted to quickly and massively to the standards of its commercial competitors (see, for example, St.tid. 1985: 2363-64). Towards the end of the decade, these sentiments became more prominent in both countries. In the 1989 debate about broadcasting in the House of Commons in Britain, for example, the BBC was accused of being the 'most commercial' broadcasting organisation in the country (HC Official Report 18.12.1989 col. 103, see also HL Official Report 5.6.90 col. 1290). In Norway, the condemnation of the 'commercialisation' of the NRK peaked in a March 1992 parliamentary debate, where the corporation was explicitly threatened with licence-fee cuts and stricter political regulation if it did not take its social and cultural obligations more seriously (Vårt land 13.3.92).

Thus, in society at large, there seems to be little agreement as to what are the specific roles which the public broadcasting corporations are supposed to play in the coming decades. Indeed, it seems to be impossible to even establish a definition of public broadcasting in either country which can command widespread support. This presents enormous challenges to the broadcasters, who, after all, have to carve out a new identity for themselves in the new media situation. This is not an easy task, indeed, there are reasons to believe that the external disagreements as to what public broadcasting is and should be, are paralleled by even more profound identity crises within the two corporations.

Evidence of these crises is ample in both countries. In Britain, the BBC in 1991 appointed fifteen different 'task forces' with the brief to consider 'its role and purpose over the next decade and to formulate its proposals for charter renewal', and according to the 1990/91 Annual Report, the result of this exercise may well be 'in effect a redefinition of the BBC's function' (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1990/91). In Norway, 'clarifying' the aims and goals of the organisation was one of the main tasks deemed necessary as part of the processes of organisational reform, as the changes in the media situation had left many of the corporations' staff 'confused' as to what roles they were to play. As stated in the NRK's 1988 plan for organisational reform (NRK 1988a: 12):

'Despite the presence of documents outlining the fundamental goals and aims of the NRK, many within the corporations feel these to be vague and obscure, and feel that they do not give any guidance in their everyday work. For example, a surprising number of people claim that the NRK does not have a specific programme-policy. Thus, there is a great need for a concrete and specific discussion about aims and goals throughout the whole organisation'.

Three years later, however, there seemed to have been little improvement in this situation. In September 1991, a leader in the NRK internal newspaper stated that 'there is a great insecurity among the employees and middle-management as to what are the NRK's overriding aims' (Tidssignalet 12.9.1991).

If it is true that the era when the corporations can do 'everything' is coming to an end, however, the corporations will have to make decisions as to what should be their distinctive contribution in a multi-channel environment. Only by demonstrating that they are fulfilling important aims and goals which would otherwise be eradicated, is it likely that they will be able to defend what remains of their privileges, and avoid a reduction in the licence fee. But how can the corporations be distinctive without violating their obligations to provide a varied service for the whole population? What sort of niches can the corporations carve out for themselves which are wide enough to satisfy the audience at large, while still being distinctive enough to avoid appearing too similar to their competitors?

If we presume that the expectations levelled at the corporations will not be significantly altered in the coming decades, there are certain parameters which cannot be ignored. Firstly, the corporations will have to continue to provide a universal service, available to the whole population at the same price. Secondly, the corporations cannot become too specialist or elitist, they will have to continue to

appeal to all groups and interests in the population at large, although not necessarily at the same time. Thirdly, the corporations will have to continue to present a mixed and 'balanced' output, i.e. to transmit both information and entertainment, and to fulfil important national functions. In other words, whatever the corporations elect to do, there will still be national and international news, current affairs, arts and culture, sports, entertainment, films and series, and programmes for different age groups.

Within these constraints, however, there are still several possibilities for the corporations to develop more distinctive services. In conclusion I will suggest two, each based on one of the original obligations. Firstly, there is the possibility that the corporations might become more distinctive through placing even more emphasis on variety and diversity; instead of aiming to be 'everything to everybody', their aim could be to widen the choice available to the viewers at any one time. This would imply that they saw their roles more explicitly as that of supplementing the commercial channels, and that their weekly or bi-weekly reach was seen as far more important than their shares of the national audience. This should not be taken to mean that the corporations should provide only 'narrow' or 'serious' programmes. On the contrary, they would still have to serve the whole population in their respective countries, but they would serve them less as members of a unified 'audience' and more as members of specific (though frequently overlapping) cultural and political groups and subcultures. In other words, the corporations could go further along the path of 'targeting' specific audiences, putting priority on those 'publics' which were less well served by the commercial channels.

The second alternative takes the obligation of the corporations to serve the national interest, as its starting point. Within such a framework, the national (and possibly the regional) aspects of the service would be emphasised, and rather than importing, for example, a popular US service which would anyway be transmitted on one of the commercial channels, the corporations would spend the money on domestic productions. Such an alternative would not necessarily mean that there would be no imports, but that priority should be on developing and sustaining a national television culture across the widest possible range of genres and programme categories.

In contrast to the first alternative, a distinctive service based on the obligation to serve the national interest, would address the public less as members of specific subcultures, and more as members of a common, national audience. This does not mean that all programmes should be bland and appeal to everyone, on the contrary, there are many reasons to discuss and problematise various national experiences, and also to highlight the various 'nations within the nation'. The rationale behind such an alternative, however, would be that it is meaningless that the corporations should use their (limited) resources on buying in many types of programmes which would be shown anyway. Such an alternative is particularly interesting in the Norwegian context, where it would mean that the NRK would put less emphasis on expanding the total hours of programming, and would focus instead on presenting 'a national alternative' during the hours when people were actually watching television.

While these (and other possible alternatives) would certainly widen the choice of programmes available to the viewers, they would not necessarily secure the corporations a rosy and prosperous future. The corporations have many powerful enemies in the current media situation, and there are good reasons to believe that

they may not be able to defend their remaining privileges (and particularly their funding arrangements) for very many years. Nevertheless, survival at any price should not be seen as an aim, even if this will always be at the bottom line of the corporations' actions. For the public at large, institutional arrangements are, after all, only means to achieve wider cultural and social goals, and not ends in themselves.

## Primary source material, documents and references

### APPENDIX A: PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIAL

#### 1. General comments

As the availability of material varies from country to country, the analyses presented here are to some extent based on different sources in the two cases. This is not generally a problem, since the analysis is problem-oriented, rather than source-oriented. Nevertheless, in order to make sure that the comparisons are valid across national contexts, certain types of primary source material have been selected for systematic analyses in both countries:

Firstly, official publications on broadcasting have been examined in connection with the three crucial 'historical moments' discussed in this study: the establishment of the public broadcasting corporations, the introduction of television into the same structure, and the upheavals in the 1980s and 1990s.

Secondly, comments and submissions from different actors and interests in response to government policy-initiatives in the 1980s, has been examined in both countries.

Thirdly, a systematic study of material from the broadcasting institutions themselves (annual reports and publicly available policy documents), have been carried out for the 1981-1991 period.

Even if this material has been selected because it is comparable across national contexts, political and cultural differences still complicate the analysis. This is less of a problem with the third type of source: material from the broadcasting corporations themselves, which is functionally equivalent across the two countries. Regarding the first two types of material, however, both which are integrated elements of the political decision-making process, there are important differences between the two contexts which in turn have implications for the interpretation of the sources.

In Britain, where there is a bi-partisan and non-participatory parliamentary tradition, the most important official documents within broadcasting are those produced by the Government and Government-appointed committees. Partly as a result of the electoral system, there are usually majority Governments, and Parliament is not a place where policies are made. The non-participatory tradition of the British Parliament is also seen in the fact that the annual reports of the broadcasting

corporations are not debated in Parliament, indeed the BBC has until recently reported when the House was not in session. Thus, it is not usually Parliament who, in practice, has exercised public accountability. This task has been carried out by the Board of Governors and the Government-appointed committees who have been appointed to review the broadcasting services prior to all renewals of the BBC's charter apart from one (third Charter 1947).

As Wedell (1968:78) has pointed out, this system came into being more by accident than by design, but having done so it has generated much material of interest to researchers. The reports are valuable by themselves because they present a comprehensive review of the existing services, but even more important is the fact that they synthesise the 'mood' of the time by reviewing the criticisms and complaints against broadcasting from the various 'publics' active in the debate. Individuals, groups and organisations have been invited to produce comments and evidence to the committee members, and submissions have thereby been generated based on what the different actors themselves want to point out. The Annan committee, for example, used adverts and press releases to invite the public to submit comments, and the committee wrote also to 400 organisations and asked them to comment. Finally, they held twenty five days of hearings where many of those who had previously written were invited to present oral evidence (Annan 1977, para. 1.3, 1.4).

In the 1980s this tradition was broken, and major changes were introduced within the field of broadcasting without a committee reviewing of the totality of the services. This also meant that the submissions from various interests and organisations changed character. Submissions still arrived in large numbers and still addressed a variety of issues, but they were now geared more specifically towards commenting upon the government proposals.

In Norway, government-appointed committees have also been important for determining broadcasting structures, but even if the committees have met with different interests and have been targets for lobbyists, the public has, as a rule, not been invited to comment until after the reports have been finished. Furthermore, comments have only been invited from a limited range of interests, although others can of course also submit comments. Nevertheless, the system implies that the committee reports and the submissions from various groups and interests, provide less information than what has been the case in Britain. In contrast to the latter case, however, parliamentary debates are crucial sources with respect to the legitimacy of, and challenges to, Norwegian broadcasting. The PR-based electoral system implies that there are seldom majority Governments (apart from the exceptional period of Labour governments in the early post-war decades), and this implies that parliament is an important arena for policy-formation.

The electoral system also favours a large number of parties, and this in turn means that many perspectives and views of the type which in Britain surface only in the reports of the broadcasting committees, emerge in the Norwegian parliamentary debates. All MP's in Norway are permanently assigned to a working committee, and it is in these committees that the major differences are sorted

out and presented - a fact which implies that the committee reports are important sources. Finally, the Norwegian Parliament always debate the NRK annual report and accounts, and it is also Parliament that decides upon the licence fee (in contrast to Britain where the fee is settled in negotiations between the Government and the BBC). This generates further material of interest to the researcher.

## 2. Overview over the primary source material

The primary source material is, for the most part, arranged by year of publication, and is divided into eight categories:

- A. Official Publications: Britain
- B. Official Publications: Norway
- C. Submissions from various groups and interests: Britain
- D. Submissions from various groups and interests: Norway
- E. BBC Publications
- F. NRK Publications
- G. European publications
- H. Journals, newspapers and magazines

### **A. Official Publications: Britain**

British parliamentary debates are printed in the House of Commons (HC) Official Reports and the House of Lords (HL) Official Reports.

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Crawford Report (1926) Report of the Broadcasting Committee (Cmnd. 2599).

Government White Paper (1926) Wireless Broadcasting (Drafts of what became the 1927 Royal Charter and the Licence and Agreement) (Cmnd. 2756).

Selsdon Report (1935) Report of the Television Committee (Cmnd. 4793).

Ullswater Report (1935) Report of the Broadcasting Committee (Cmnd. 5091).

Beveridge Report (1950) Report of the Broadcasting Committee (Cmnd. 8116).

Pilkington Report (1962) Report of the Broadcasting Committee (Cmnd. 1753).

Annan Report (1977) Report of the Broadcasting Committee (Cmnd. 6753).

Independent Broadcasting Authority Act (Broadcasting Act 1980).

IBA Annual Report and Accounts 1980/81.

1981 BBC Charter and Licence and Agreement (printed as an appendix to BBC Annual Reports and Accounts).

Hunt Report (1982) Report of the Inquiry into Cable Expansion and Broadcasting Policy (Cmnd. 8679).

White Paper (1983) The Development of Cable systems and Services (Cmnd. 8866).

Home office (1985) Financing the BBC - A Survey of Public Opinion. NOP Market Research Ltd.

Peacock Report (1986) Report of the Committee on Financing the BBC (Cmnd. 9824).

White Paper (1988) Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality (Cmnd. 517).

Home Affairs Committee (1988a) The Future of Broadcasting. Vol.1: Report together with the proceedings of the Committee. 262-I.

Home Affairs Committee (1988b) The Future of Broadcasting. Vol.2: Minutes of Evidence and Appendices. 262-II.

Department of Trade and Industry (1988) 'Memorandum', in Home Affairs Committee (1988b) The Future of Broadcasting. vol. 2: Minutes of Evidence and Appendices.

Home Office (1988) 'Memorandum', pp. 1-9 in Home Affairs Committee (1988b) The Future of Broadcasting. vol. 2: Minutes of Evidence and Appendices.

Home Office (1989) Broadcasting Bill. Bill 9, 50/3.

Broadcasting Standards Council (1989) Annual Report 1988-89 and Code of Practice.

Broadcasting Standards Council (1990) Annual Report 1989-90.

Broadcasting Act 1990.

Independent Television Commission (1991) Invitation to Apply for Regional Channel 3 Licences.

## **B. Official Publications: Norway**

Norwegian parliamentary debates are printed in the Stortingsforhandlinger (referred to as S.tid., O.tid., and L.tid. in the text). There are also some references to the annual debates in the parliamentary committees about the NRK budget, referred to in the texts as Budsj.innst.S. 12, 1981-82 - 1990/91.

Norwegian official statistics are printed in the annual publications from the Central Bureau of Statistics, referred to in the texts as such.

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St.prop. 70, 1930 Om ordning av og landsplan for kringkastingen i Norge.

Vigstad Report (1931) Forslag til ordning av kringkastingen i Norge. Appendix to St. prop. 69, 1932.

St.prop. 69, 1932 Om ordning av og landsplan for kringkastingen i Norge.

Innst.S. 1, 1933 Om ordning av og landsplan for kringkastingen i Norge.

Ot.prop. 74, 1933 Om utferdigelse av en lov om kringkasting.

1933 Broadcasting Act (Lov om kringkasting av 24. juni 1933 nr. 13).

Kgl. res. 10.11.1939 Regler om statsmyndighetenes bruk av Norsk Rikskringkasting til sending av meldinger etter para. 9 i Lov om kringkasting av 24. juni 1933.

Innst.S. 334, 1952 Om tekniske prøvesendinger for fjernsyn.

Bratholm Report (1967). Innstilling I: Innstilling om omfanget av Norsk rikskringkastings enerett.

Bratholm Report (1968) Innstilling 2: Innstilling om reklame i radio og fjernsyn.

NOU 1972:25 Norsk Rikskringkasting - Organisasjon og ansettelsesvilkår (Dæhlin Report I).

St.meld. 80, 1973/74 Om Norsk rikskringkastings økonomiske stilling 1975-85.

NOU 1975:7 Kringkastingslov (Dæhlin Report II).

Ot.prop. 67, 1978/79 Om lov om kringkasting.

Innst.O. 57, 1979/80 Om lov om kringkasting.

1980 Broadcasting Act (Lov om kringkasting av 13. juni 1980 nr. 36.

St.meld. 88, 1981/82 Om medieutvikling og nye kringkastingsformer.

NOU 1982:33 Nærradio.

NOU 1982:34 Kabelfjernsyn.

NOU 1983:3 Massemedier og mediepolitikk.

NOU 1984:5 Kringkastingsreklame.

NOU 1984:25 Nabolandsjernsyn i kabel.

Ot.prop. 80, 1984/85 Om nabolandsjernsyn i kabel.

St.meld. 84, 1984/85 Om ny mediepolitikk.

NOU 1985:11 TV2.

Ot.prop. 47, 1986/87 Lov om nærkringkasting.

Ot.prop. 31, 1986/87 Friere stilling for Norsk Rikskringkasting.

St.meld. 44, 1987/88 Om utviding av fjernsynstilbudet i Norge.

Ot.prp. 53, 1987/88 Lov om kabelsendinger.

Dokument 8:9, 1987/88 Om godkjenning av konsesjonssøknad fra Scansat/TV3.

Dokument 8:47, 1987/88 Om endringer av ordningen for utnevning av ny kringkastingssjef.

NRK Regulations (1988) (Vedtekter for stiftelsen NRK).

Innst.S 129, 1987-88 Om godkjenning av konsesjonssøknad fra Scansat/TV3.

Innst.S 187, 1988-89 Friere stilling for NRK.

Innst.S 52, 1988-89 Om utnevning av Einar Førde til kringkastingssjef.

St.meld. 13, 1988-89 Om verksemda i Norsk Rikskringkasting.

Ot.prop. 55, 1989/90 TV2. Lov om reklame i kringkasting m.v.

Innst.O 2, 1989/90 TV2. Lov om reklame i kringkasting m.v..

### **C. Submissions from various groups and interests: Britain**

Initially, my ambition was to examine the perspectives and views of the following categories of interests in both countries.

-Media industries (hardware and software production), press, advertising

-Broadcasting regulatory bodies, councils

-Media and broadcasting campaigns, viewers associations

-Authors, publishers, journalists

-Music, stage and drama, art and culture

-Sports associations

-Educational, media research and education

-Religious bodies and associations

-Voluntary associations, campaigns, charities and self-help

-Consumer bodies, ombudsmen

-Trade unions, business and industrial confederations

-Regional and local authorities, regional and linguistic minority interests

In the British case, the material received by the Home Office in response to the 1988 Broadcasting White Paper, seemed well suited to my purposes. However, the Home Office refused access to the material, and the fact that there were more than 3000 comments altogether, made it impossible to analyse them in their totality (even if they were to be obtained from the commentators themselves). It was therefore necessary to find a different solution. In the end I decided to write to a series of the interests who, according to the Home Office, had responded to the White Paper, and ask them for a copy of their comment.

Of the 3000 commentators, approximately 350 were named by the Home Office. Those excluded were individual members of the public, individual MPs, local branches of national organisations, local authorities, and various academic and educational interests. Since all these interests are represented at the national level, however, this posed no major problem.

From the 350 groups and actors, I wrote to 110 asking for a copy of their submission. The recipients were not selected to obtain a representative sample of all views, but in order to sample the views of actors belonging to the different categories listed above. The emphasis was on the views of representative organisations rather than individual agents or businesses. One recipient wrote and said that it was not their policy to make their responses public, whereas sixty-five commentators, from all the above-mentioned categories apart from 'Sports associations' responded positively.

In addition to these responses, I decided to include the most central memoranda collected by the Home affairs committee in 1988 (printed in Home Affairs Committee (1988b) The Future of broadcasting. Vol.2: Minutes of Evidence and Appendices). Together, this material cover the same categories of interests as the Norwegian material (see below).

Broadcasting White Paper: Selected and analysed comments (all 1989 and referred to in the texts as such), in alphabetical order:

AGE CONCERN

AN COMUNN GAIDHEALACH

ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN

ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL COMPOSERS

ASSOCIATION OF MEDIA INDEPENDENTS

ASSOCIATION OF CHARITY OFFICERS

BBC EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTING COUNCIL

BISHOP OF MANCHESTER

BISHOP OF COVENTRY

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE (BFI)

BRITISH ACTION FOR CHILDRENS TELEVISION (BACTV)

BRITISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

BRITISH SATELLITE BROADCASTING (BSB)

BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION (BBC)

BRITISH UNIVERSITIES FILM AND VIDEO COUNCIL

BRITISH KINEMATHOGRAPH SOUND & TELEVISION SOCIETY (BKSTS)

BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (BMA)

BROADCASTING STANDARDS COUNCIL (BSC)

BROADCASTING CONSORTIUM (REPRESENTS 40 NATIONAL VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS)

BROADCASTING COMPLAINTS COMMISSION (BCC)

CABLE TELEVISION ASSOCIATION (CTA)

CAMPAIGN FOR QUALITY TELEVISION

CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM (CPBF) (REPRESENTS 24 TRADE UNIONS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS)

CATHOLIC CHURCH OF SCOTLAND AND CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF SCOTLAND

CHANNEL FOUR

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

CHURCH OF ENGLAND - GENERAL SYNOD

COMMITTEE FOR THE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF SCIENCE (COPUS)

COMMUNITY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS (CSV)

COMPOSERS GUILD OF GREAT BRITAIN

CONVENTION OF SCOTTISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES (COSLA)

EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

GRANADA TELEVISION

IBA EDUCATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

INDEPENDENT TELEVISION ASSOCIATION (ITV)

INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING AUTHORITY (IBA)

INSTITUTE OF PRACTITIONERS IN ADVERTISING

LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

LONDON CHURCHES BROADCASTING GROUP

METHODIST CHURCH OF IRELAND

MOTHERS UNION

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS (NVCO) (REPRESENTATIVE BODY FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS AND CHARITIES IN ENGLAND, 600 NATIONAL BODIES AFFILIATED)

NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS

NATIONAL VIEWERS AND LISTENERS ASSOCIATION (NVALA)

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE ARTS

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN IN GREAT BRITAIN

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF THE BLIND AND DISABLED

NATIONAL ASS. FOR THE CARE AND RESETTLEMENT OF OFFENDERS

OFFICE OF FAIR TRADING

PERFORMING RIGHTS SOCIETY

PERSONAL MANAGERS ASSOCIATION LTD.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING CAMPAIGN (BROADCASTING AND ENTERTAINMENT  
TRADES ALLIANCE (BETA) AND ASSOCIATION OF CINEMAOGRAPHIC AND TELEVISION  
TECHNICANS (ACCT))

ROYAL SOCIETY OF MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND ADULTS (MENCAP)

ROYAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF

ROYAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND

SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SCOTTISH CHURCHES BROADCASTING GROUP

SCOTTISH FILM COUNCIL (SFC)

SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL

SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INDUSTRY

SKY CHANNEL

SOCIETY OF AUTHORS

SOCIETY OF EDUCATION OFFICERS

TELEVISION SOUTH WEST

THEATRE ADVISORY COUNCIL

THIRD WORLD AND ENVIRONMENT BROADCASTING IN THE 90'S PROJECT (REPRESENTS  
OVER FIFTY THIRD WORLD AND ENVIRONMENT AGENCIES)

TOWNSWOMEN GUILDS

TRADES UNION CONGRESS (TUC)

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

VOICE OF THE LISTENER (VOL)

VOLUNTEER CENTRE UK

WRITERS GUILD OF GREAT BRITAIN

Memoranda and supplementary memoranda selected from the Home Affairs Committee material (all 1988 and referred to in the text as such), in alphabetical order:

ADVERTISING ASSOCIATION

ANTIFERRENCE LTD.

ASSOCIATION OF CINEMATOGRAPH, TELEVISION AND ALLIED TECHNICIANS

BRITISH DIRECT TELEVISION

BRITISH SATELLITE BROADCASTING (BSB)

BRITISH TELECOM

BROADCASTING RESEARCH UNIT (BRU)

CABLE AUTHORITY

CINEMATOGRAPH EXHIBITORS' ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

CONFEDERATION OF AERIAL INDUSTRIES

FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

G. E. C. PLESSEY TELECOMMUNICATIONS

IBM UNITED KINGDOM LTD.

INCORPORATED SOCIETY OF BRITISH ADVERTISERS

INDEPENDENT PROGRAMME PRODUCERS' ASSOCIATION (IPPA)

OPEN UNIVERSITY

RANK ORGANISATION

SAT UK. BROADCASTING LTD.

THAMES TELEVISION

TIME OUT

VIDEO PERFORMANCE LTD.

VOLUNTEER CENTER UK

W. H. SMITH TELEVISION

#### **D. Submissions from various groups and interests: Norway**

In Norway, around two hundred comments were received in response to the publication of the report from the 'TV2'-committee in 1985. All this material, apart from comments from other state departments, is publicly available and I have examined it in its totality in the archives of the Ministry of Culture in Oslo. The translations below are mostly done by me, apart from a few 'official ones' obtained from the organisations themselves.

Comments to the 'TV2'-inquiry (all 1985 and referred to in the text as such), in alphabetical order:

ASSOCIATION OF NORWEGIAN NEWSPAPER EDITORS = NORSK REDAKTØRFORENING

ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATIVE NEWSPAPERS = HØYREPRESENS SAMARBEIDSUTVALG.

ASSOCIATION OF NORWEGIAN FILM AND VIDEO PRODUCERS = NORSKE FILM- OG VIDEOGRAMPRODUSENTER FORENING

ASSOCIATION OF FEATURE FILM PRODUCERS = SPILLEFILMPRODUSENTERNES FELLESUTVALG

ASSOCIATION OF NORWEGIAN FILM BUREAUS = NORSKE FILMBYRÅERS FORENING

ASSOCIATION OF ADVERTISERS IN NORWAY = ANNONSØRFORENINGEN

ASSOCIATION OF 'INDEPENDENT' BROADCASTING COMPANIES IN NORWAY = NORSKE  
FJERNSYNSSKAPERS LANDSFORBUND

ASSOCIATION OF NORWEGIAN DRAMATISTS = NORSKE DRAMATIKERES FORBUND

ASSOCIATION OF FEATURE FILM PRODUCERS = SPILLEFILMPRODUSENTENES  
FELLESUTVALG

ASSOCIATION OF NORWEGIAN THEATRES = DE NORSKE TEATRES FORENING

ASSOCIATION FOR MEDIA EDUCATION = LANDSLAGET FOR MEDIEUNDERVISNING

BISHOP OF AGDER = AGDER BISPESTOL

BISHOP OF NORD-HÅLOGALAND = NORD-HÅLOGALAND BISPESTOL

BISHOP OF SØR-HÅLOGALAND = SØR-HÅLOGALAND BISPESTOL

BISHOP OF BORG = BORG BISPESTOL

BISHOP OF TUNSBURG = TUNSBURG BISPESTOL

BJUGN MUNICIPAL COUNCIL = BJUGN KOMMUNE (KULTURSTYRET).

CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN = BARNEOMBUDET

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN HORDALAND = KRF I HORDALAND

CHURCH COUNCIL OF NORWAY = KIRKERÅDET

CONFEDERATION OF NORWEGIAN INDUSTRY = NORGES INDUSTRIFORBUND

CONFEDERATION OF VOCATIONAL UNIONS = YRKESORGANISASJONENES  
SENTRALFORBUND

CONSERVATIVE 'BOOK NORWEGIAN' LANGUAGE SOCIETY = RIKSMÅLSFORBUNDET

CONSERVATIVE PARTY IN HORDALAND = HØYRE I HORDALAND

COPYRIGHTS COUNCIL = DET SAKKYNDIGE RÅD FOR ÅNDSVERKER

COUNCIL OF DISSENTING CHURCHES IN NORWAY = NORGES FRIKIRKERÅD

CULTURAL COUNCIL OF NORTHERN NORWAY = NORD NORSK KULTURRÅD

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF OSLO = INSTITUTT FOR SOSIOLOGI,  
UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

DEPARTMENT OF PRESS RESEARCH = INSTITUTT FOR PRESSEFORSKNING

EDUCATIONAL FILM COUNCIL = STATENS SKOLEFILMNEMD

FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF OSLO = HF-FAKULTETET, UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

FEDERATION OF NORWEGIAN COMMERCIAL ASSOCIATIONS = NORGES HANDELSSTANDS  
FORBUND

FEDERATION OF MUNICIPAL CINEMAS = KOMMUNALE KINOMATOGRAFERS LANDSFORBUND

FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN NORWAY = AKADEMIKERNES  
FELLESORGANISASJON

FORUM FOR PUBLIC SECTOR INFORMATION WORKERS = FORUM FOR OFFENTLIG  
INFORMASJONSMEDARBEIDERE

LABOUR PARTY IN BERGEN = ARBEIDERPARTIET I BERGEN

LABOUR PARTY IN TROMS = TROMS ARBEIDERPARTI

LIBRARY COUNCIL OF NORWAY = STATENS BIBLIOTEKRÅD,

MEDIA VISION = MEDIA VISION

MUSEUM COUNCIL OF NORWAY = STATENS MUSEUMSRÅD

'NEW NORWEGIAN' LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION = NOREGS MÅLLAG

NORPAS (A NEWS AGENCY) = NORPAS

NORWEGIAN ACADEMY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE = DET NORSKE AKADEMI FOR  
SPROG OG LITTERATUR

NORWEGIAN FILM = NORSK FILM

NORWEGIAN OMBUDSMAN FOR EQUALITY BETWEEN THE SEXES = LIKESTILLINGSOMBUDET

NORWEGIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION = INFORMASJONSFORENINGEN

NORWEGIAN COUNCIL FOR EQUALITY BETWEEN THE SEXES = LIKESTILLINGSRÅDET

NORWEGIAN DISTANCE LEARNING = NORSK FJERNUNDERVISNING

NORWEGIAN SOCIETY OF VIEWERS AND LISTENERS = NORSK LYTTER- OG SEERFORENING  
FOR RADIO OG TELEVISJON

NORWEGIAN LIBRARY INSPECTION = STATENS BIBLIOTEKSTILSYN

NORWEGIAN CONSUMER COUNCIL = FORBRUKERRÅDET

NORWEGIAN TEACHERS UNION = NORSK LÆRERLAG

NORWEGIAN BANKERS' ASSOCIATION = DEN NORSKE BANKFORENING

NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE COUNCIL = NORSK SPRÅKKRÅD

NORWEGIAN SAMI COUNCIL = NORSKE SAMERÅD

NORWEGIAN CONSUMER COUNCIL = FORBRUKERRÅDET

NORWEGIAN ARTS COUNCIL = NORSK KULTURRÅD

NORWEGIAN CULTURAL HISTORY MUSEUMS = NORSKE KUNST- OG KULTUHISTORISKE  
MUSEER

NORWEGIAN SOCIETY OF AUTHORS OF NON-FICTION = NORSK FAGLITTERÆR  
FORFATTERFORENING

NORWEGIAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH COUNCIL = STATENS BARNE- OG UNGDOMSRÅD

NORWEGIAN COOPERATIVE UNION AND WHOLESALE SOCIETY = NORGES KOOPERATIVE  
LANDSFORENING

NORWEGIAN FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS = LANDSORGANISASJONEN I NORGE (LO)

NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF COMPOSERS = NORSK KOMPONISFORENING

NORWEGIAN UNION OF ACTORS = NORSK SKUESPILLERFORBUND

NORWEGIAN FEDERATION OF CULTURAL SECTOR EMPLOYEES = LANDSFORENING FOR  
OFFENTLIG ANSATTE I KULTURSEKTOREN

NORWEGIAN NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION = NORSKE AVISERS LANDSFORBUND

NORWEGIAN BROADCASTING CIRCLE = KRINGKASTINGSRINGEN

NORWEGIAN COUNCIL OF ARTISTS = NORGES KUNSTNERRÅD

NORWEGIAN UNION OF PHOTOGRAPHERS = NORGES FOTOGRAFFORBUND

NORWEGIAN BALLET UNION = NORSK BALLETTFORBUND

NORWEGIAN MARKETING FEDERATION = NORGES MARKEDSFORBUND

NORWEGIAN SOCIETY OF AUTHORS = DEN NORSKE FORFATTERFORENING

NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR FILM STUDIES = STATENS STUDIESENTER FOR FILM

NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF MEDIA RESEARCHERS = NORSK MEDIEFORSKERLAG

NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF CINEMA MANAGERS = NORSKE KINOSJEFERS FORBUND

NORWEGIAN SPORTS ASSOCIATION = NORGES IDRETTSFORBUND

NORWEGIAN SOCIETY OF YOUTH LITERATURE = UNGDOMSLITTERATURENS  
FORFATTERLAG

NORWEGIAN UNION OF JOURNALISTS = NORSK JOURNALISTLAG

NORWEGIAN MUSIC COUNCIL = STATENS MUSIKKRÅD

NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF TRANSLATORS = NORSK OVERSETTERFORENING

NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF FILM- AND VIDEO PRODUCERS = NORSKE FILM OG  
VIDEOGRAMPRODUSENTERS FORENING

NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF = NORGES DØVEFORBUND

NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF FILM WORKERS = NORSK FILMFORMBUND

NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSICIANS = NORSK MUSIKERFORBUND

NORWEGIAN SAMI SOCIETY = NORSKE SAMERS RIKSFORBUND

NORWEGIAN JAZZFEDERATION = NORSK JAZZFORBUND

NORWEGIAN PRESS FEDERATION = NORSK PRESSEFORBUND

NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF ADVERTISING AGENCIES = REGISTRERTE  
REKLAMEBYRÅERS FORENING

OSLO CATHOLIC CHURCH = OSLO KATOLSKE BISPEDØMME

SOCIETY FOR ONE NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE = LANDSLAGET FOR SPRÅKLIG SAMLING

SONG AND MUSIC COUNCIL OF NORWAY = NORGES SANG OG MUSIKKRÅD

SONG AND MUSIC COUNCIL IN THE COUNTY OF NORDLAND = NORDLAND SANG OG  
MUSIKKRÅD

STATENS INFORMASJONSTJENESTE = STATE INFORMATION BUREAU

THEATRE COUNCIL OF NORWAY = TEATERRÅDET

TONO = NORWEGIAN PERFORMING RIGHTS SOCIETY

UNION OF LOCAL COUNCILS = NORSKE KOMMUNERS SENTRALFORBUND

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN = UNIVERSITETET I BERGEN

UNIVERSITY OF TRONDHEIM = UNIVERSITETET I TRONDHEIM

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO = UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

8 LOCAL TELEVISION STATIONS

16 COUNTY COUNCILS = 16 FYLKER

92 MUNICIPAL COUNCILS LOCAL BOROUGHES = 92 KOMMUNER

## **E. BBC Publications**

BBC Annual Reports:

BBC Annual Report and Handbook): 1927 - 1987

BBC Annual Report and Accounts: 1986/87 - 1990/91

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BBC (1971) Principles and Practice in News and Current Affairs.

BBC (1982) Guide to the BBC (appendix to BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1982)

BBC (1982) The Cable Debate. The BBC's Reaction to the Hunt Report (press release/summary only).

BBC (1985) Priorities for the future (summary/press release only).

BBC (1986) Main Evidence (Evidence to the Peacock Enquiry).

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BBC (1988b) BBC the Next Five Years (Summary/press release only).

BBC (1989a) Broadcasting in the Nineties. The BBC's Response to the White Paper on the Future of Broadcasting.

BBC (1989b) Producers Guidelines.

BBC (1990) Funding the future (summary/press release only).

## **F. NRK Publications**

NRK Annual Report (NRK Årbok): 1934 - 1985.

NRK Facts and Figures (NRK Tall og Fakta): 1986 - 1990.

NRK Reports to Parliament: NRK 1987-88, NRK 1988-90, NRK 1989-91, NRK 1990-92.

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NRK Annual Report (1934) Melding om programtjenesten i Norsk Rikskringkasting 1.7.33-30.6.34.  
Appendix to St.prop. nr. 1 1935 (kap. 1114).

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NRK (1982a) Norsk rikskringkasting i en ny mediesituasjon.

NRK (1982b) Programregler med kommentarer.

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NRK (1985b) NOU 1985:11 - Høringsuttalelse.

NRK (1987a) NRK mot år 2000.

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NRK (1990) Programregler med kommentarer.

NRK (1991) Fakta om NRK.

## **G. European publications**

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European Communities Economic and Social Committee (1985) Opinion on the Green Paper on the Establishment of the Common Market for Broadcasting Especially by Satellite and Cable. CES (85) 776.

European Commission (1989) Rådets direktiv om samordning af visse love og administrative bestemmelser i medlemsstaterne vedrørende udøvelse av tv-radiospredningsvirksomhed. (89/552/EØF). De Europæiske Fælleskabers Tidende, nr. L 298/23.

Council of Europe (1989) European Convention on Transfrontier Television. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

## **H. Journals, newspapers and magazines**

I have referred to the following journals, newspapers and magazines in the text.

### General publications:

Aftenposten, Oslo

Bergens Tidende, Bergen

Dagbladet, Oslo

Evening Standard, London

Financial Times, London

Guardian, London and Manchester

Independent, London

Journalisten, Oslo

Klassekampen, Oslo

Newsweek, Washington

Nytt fra Norge, Oslo

Observer, London

Scanorama, Stockholm

Sunday Times, London

Sunday Correspondent, London

VG, Oslo

Media and broadcasting:

Broadcast, London (International Thomson Business Publishing)

Listener, London (BBC)

Nordisk Medienyt, København (Nordisk Ministerråd)

Omkring NRK, Oslo (NRK)

Programbladet, Oslo

Tidssignalet, Oslo (NRK)

Uke-Omkring, Oslo (NRK)

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