

Communicating European Citizenship

London, 22 March 2010

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Communicating the EU to its Citizens and
the Civil Power of News

Paper to be presented at UACES 'Communicating European Citizenship'

22 March 2010

Professor Jackie Harrison
Department of Journalism Studies
University of Sheffield
Sheffield S1 3NJ
Email: j.harrison@sheffield.ac.uk

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Introduction

There has been much discussion of the relationship between the news media and the civil character of the EU with a good deal of it focussing on the barriers which combine to prevent the effective communication of the EU to its citizens. Correspondingly we are also told of a European affective deficit whereby EU citizens see the EU institutions as politically remote, lacking salience and socially and culturally inhospitable. At the same time, encouraged by economic and single market concerns, as well as the desire to extend particular nationally based interests, we have witnessed the development and growth of pan-European multi-platformed communicative channels as new national and global corporate news providers develop new communicative spaces and niches to reach varied and ever more European publics.¹ While nationally based news providers and the international commercial world increasingly see the EU as a common media market, the EU has for itself adopted a fragmented and inconsistent approach toward both understanding the mediated nature of civil society within the EU, and significantly the civil power of the news, in relation to influencing the possible development of EU civil society. Indeed the EU institutions' invocation of increased civil engagement in connection with the establishment of an EU communicative space can only be described as desultory. EU communication policy misunderstand the way in which the news media operate as a specific communication institution within civil society. In this paper I argue that in order for the EU to facilitate the growth of a European civil society it needs to consider (again) the plausibility of supporting

¹ With regard to television Chalaby (2005pp159-167) identifies four types of cross border television operating in the EU. These are: ethnic channels – defined as 'addressing an audience of migrants with a common linguistic and cultural background'; multi-territory channels – which follow a country by country development plan'; pan-European Channels – which are committed to the idea of cross-border feed servicing the region and pan-European networks – who follow the practice of localisation by 'keeping a unique feed and adapting it to several markets. Bruggerman and Schulz-Foberg (in Wessler et al 2008 Ch V: 78-94) also suggest a fourfold typology for European cross border television. Respectively these are: National media with a transnational mission; International Media 'characterised by some form of co-operation between media organisations from two or more countries'; Pan-regional media 'transnational media which addresses a specific world region' and Global media 'which target a broad transnational region'. Interestingly, however these channels are ultimately defined they are a mixture of niche and universalistic service and private and public enterprise.

an independent pan-European public service news provider² Such a service would need to be one which is self conscious of the civil power of news and, following Schudson (1995: 33), understands news to be a public resource which is there for when people are ready to take political [and civil] action', whether 'anyone is listening or not'.

The EU News Media Ecology

Currently the EU news media ecology can be regarded as having two main species: first a nationally based news media which, it is argued, barely has anything like a consistent European dimension and second, a European wide news media which, it is argued, mainly serves a multi-lingual European cosmopolitan elite. As such this ecology can be understood accordingly:-

Until the fall of the Santer Commission EU policymakers could broadly be described as either indifferent to, or underestimating the power of the news media to represent the EU negatively – as remote and undemocratic with unelected and unaccountable officials (Anderson and Price 2008; Meyer 2009). After the resignation of the Santer Commission, an event which itself highlighted the poor relationship between the Commission and journalism (Meyer 2009), the EU 'discovered' the importance of communications and set about trying to harness the news media to help foster, amongst other things, an active European citizenship; a rational deliberative public sphere; political engagement ranging from the wired town hall to an open European Parliament and the introduction of a constitution. Indeed from the appointment of Margot Wallström³ in 2004 EU communication policy documents have tended to assume that the news media at both the member state level and the European level can act as a civil force helping to pull together disparate parts of the EU into a common understanding under the banner of a tolerant pluralism.

However at the member state level longitudinal studies of nationally based media systems show that 'national journalists will continue to serve mainly national (or local) publics'

² While it may seem contrary to suggest the establishment of a public service broadcasting institution when other public service broadcasters are under threat from a variety of forces, it is not unprecedented. See for example the establishment of the Jamaica Public Broadcasting Corporation (PBCJ), in 2006. The PBCJ was established by statute in 2002 as a system for public service broadcasting, offering public education, information and entertainment, to be funded by private companies and civic organisations.

³ At the time of writing Wallström is Vice-President of the European Commission, Inter-institutional Relations and Communications Strategy

(Trenz 2008: 9). Wessler et al (2008) demonstrate empirically that various nationally based news media have since 1982 only displayed a very slight increase in segmented Europeanization in two ways. First, whereby national public spheres show a concern for common issues in speaking to each other, and second, where the terms of collective European identification are used by nationally based media. Even though the Commission has tried to professionalise its engagement with journalists and tried to build an effective working relationship with them, there continues to be a limited 'Europeanisation' of national European correspondents (Baisnee 2002, Raeymaeckers et al 2007 Statham 2008). Overall though the view that member states' news agendas and content are 'nationally, culturally and linguistically determined' (Rooke 2009: 16) appears to remain the case. At the European transnational level Schlesinger (2003:17) notes: 'Inasmuch as a media-sustained, *supranational* communicative space is emerging because of EU integration, this is class-inflected and predominantly the domain of political and economic elites, not that of a wider European public.' An elite transnational space served he suggests, (and later supported by Eriksen 2005), by the likes of: EuroNews ARTE, BBC World, Le Monde Diplomatique, The Economist, The Financial Times, International Herald Tribune, et al. In short, there is a cosmopolitan elite served by an international elite news media.

Thus it seems that neither member state news media, nor a European wide news media, 'foster' anything like the list of desirable inclusive outcomes that were supposed to be achieved by an EU communication policy working harmoniously and successfully with news organisations.

Further obstacles to the development of a civilly inspired EU news media ecology can be identified. The Commission's assumed position of neutrality and history of contested legitimacy means that it is cautious at both the member state and European level about becoming involved in news debates with regard to European policy. At the political level Meyer (2009) argues that EU political actors are not incentivised to seek publicity since they regard it as not being particularly relevant to them for keeping public office, also such actors are unlikely to want to reveal that much of what they actually do, since it is to shape legislation through negotiation and compromise. The European Parliament has been judged to be worse than the Commission in communicating with the media due to the complex

nature of its decision making process and the length of time it often takes to reach a decision and is not likely to change in any significant way in the near future (Anderson and McLeod 2004). The near invisibility of EU politicians makes attempts to make the EU more transparent and relevant more difficult. Indeed, as Schlesinger points out, 'the principle space of political communication has commonly been equated with the territorial limits of a national community and even though the EU's policy making is a major constitutive part of member states' domestic political agendas, legal and economic frameworks it is 'still seen as an external local of decision making' (2007: 416).

Invoking Civil Society

The Commission's (2006: 5) White Paper on a European Communication Policy focused on creating a 'citizens centred communication' involving a wide range of partners: 'national public authorities, civil society, and the European Union institutions' required to work together to develop Europe's place in the public sphere. From the start the EU's invocation of civil society is problematic. In practice the policy process often only involves certain sections of civil society – usually the large well resourced professionalized NGOs, interested elites or "'institutional' not 'civil society' voices'" (Statham 2008: 406). As Moravcsik (2008: 179) observed of the consultation process of the proposed European Constitution '[w]hen testimony from civil society was requested, professors showed up. When a conference of European youth was called would-be Eurocrats attended.' The problem is that EU communication policy constantly sees 'civil society' in reductionist terms regarding it as little more than a group of insider organisations. The risk of which, as Alexander (2006) argues, is that those groups that have insider status are able to generate a civil identity, establish boundaries and pollute and exclude other groups, thereby narrowing and constraining wider civil engagement. From such boundary maintenance non-civil distortions can arise. For Alexander (2006) these non-civil distortions take different forms, but include religious intolerance, gender misogyny, the arrogance of expert knowledge, secrecy, political oligarchy and racial and ethnic hatreds. In other words boundary maintenance risks ossifying into a form of official civil rectitude and while such rectitude is usually and inextricably linked to historically defined national and cultural identities it is, as Alexander (2006: 552) observes, 'possible, indeed, for the imagining and the organising of civil society to go beyond the territory of the nation state.' With this possibility in mind, a nascent or

developing EU civil society needs to be understood in terms of the dynamic at the heart of all civil societies, namely that the promise of social cohesion must involve and face those narratives which can be as repressive as they can be liberating and which seek to legitimate both inclusion as well as exclusion. In metaphysical terms the spirit of civil society is 'restless' (Alexander 2006: 553) and civility will co-exist with un-civility and the need for, as Alexander puts it 'civil repair.' In other words civil rectitude needs to be constantly challenged and the invocation of civil society be as broad as possible. And while it is premature to speak of an extant European civil society replete with the problems of civil repair, it is still the case that the way that EU communication policy invokes and envisages civil society is too narrow and fails to understand that '[f]or most members of civil society, and even for members of its institutional elites, the news is the only source of firsthand experience they will ever have about their fellow citizens, about their motives... the kind of relationships they form and the nature of the institutions they might potentially create' (Alexander 2006: 80). A point that it is worth pointing out has its antecedents in thinkers as diverse as De Tocqueville, J.S. Mill, Max Weber, Robert E Park, and C.W. Mills. In short, civil society is complexly mediated by the news (amongst other forms of factual media) and in not understanding the significance of this EU communication policy remains ineffectual, if 'an active EU citizenry' is genuinely one of its aims (and even if such activity is critical and challenging about what constitutes the boundaries of civil society).

A new type of pan-European market for news and other forms of factual media is emerging and media conglomerates such as Bertelsmann, Pearson, Vivendi, Hachette, TimeWarner AOL, News Corporation, Disney and global media internet players, Microsoft, Google, Yahoo, social networking sites and global news organisations such as Russia Today, CCTV from Beijing, NDTV from Dehli, Bloomberg and CNBC, iCNN, BBC World, Al-Jazeera English, EuroNews (multilingual), France 24 (English, French and Arabic) recognise this and are beginning to establish themselves. However, what is missing in this array of news organisations is an independent pan-European public service news provider. Namely an organisation that understands its own European wide civil role and has at its mission engaging with individuals and groups (however constituted) that see themselves as other than exclusively nationally located and circumscribed in what they do and care about, and one that would inhabit a communicative relational space that serves citizens, who in

Sandel's (2005, 34) words, 'can abide the ambiguity associated with sovereignty, who can think and act as multiply situated selves. The civic virtue distinctive to our time is the capacity to negotiate our way among the sometimes overlapping and sometimes conflicting obligations that claim us, and to live with tensions to which multiple loyalties give rise.' More concretely it is as Schlesinger (2007: 423) suggests 'time to revise assumptions about the capacity of elite media, or public service broadcasting, to operate collectively across member states as instruments of enlightenment.' In short it is time to revise our assumptions about public service communication and its capacity to be European and play its role in the communication of the EU to its citizens. Indeed, as Seaton (2008: 10) asks as '[a]udiences fragment, ownership consolidates and technology converges. Who then represents the public interest or the need for citizens to be informed?'

The Background to an Independent Pan-European Public Service News Provider

Seaton's question deserves an answer. The literature that considers (and empirically tests) whether there is something that can be conceived of as an EU public space typically concludes that there exists 'a rather weak transnational public space that has evolved around policymaking actors in the EU institutions' (Schlesinger 2007: 424), but not yet a public space that either meets the requirements of a Kantian or Habermasian conceived public sphere(s) of rational and deliberative actors, or from my point of view, a space that engages with European wide civil groups and mass publics in their diversity.

To achieve such engagement EU policymakers need to recognise that public knowledge and shared ways of knowing disseminated by the news media must be decoupled from the normative assumptions made by the EU institutions, in particular the Commission, about the media's potential to foster public opinion and a common EU identity. This requires that the power of the news to confer 'public legitimacy' (Schudson 1995: 19) upon events and issues needs to be reconsidered in the context of the complex and myriad dimensions of the European civil sphere. In short, issues of citizenship and civil engagement must not be forced, nor can they be sanitized into a communicative public space conceived of as purely formal rational discourse, where civil actors consist only of insider organisations. The civil power of the news needs to be seen as something which provides a resource which may assume some common interests, but more importantly creates the assumption of scrutiny

and accountability and creates a symbolic world which 'becomes the property of all of us ...whether anyone is listening or not' (Schudson 1995: 33). Alternatively expressed, the current focus by EU institutions on engineering public debate and public will formation through mediated communication, that is trying to use the news media to 'create' or manipulate into being a political community or collective identity has ignored the possibility of facilitating an independent EU public service news provider which genuinely seeks foremost to enable shared public knowledge about the EU and open up the possibility of contestation with regard to the EU project.

Where EU policymakers have been effective is in harnessing the economic power of the media through the creation of a Single European Market (SEM) for media industries. The drive for an SEM has in effect built a common European communicative space which has been developed via the Television without Frontiers Directive (TWFD) and more recently the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMS). Accompanying this and extending this space has been the creation of an EU information space. This is based on the convergence of telecoms, online and media and is recognised in the Framework Directive 2002, i2010 and the Lisbon Agenda all of which set out to make the EU an information-led highly competitive creative media market. The paradox of which is that a range of Treaties and official documents now support a common European media market which is controlled by EU legislative procedures and influence (Harrison and Woods 2007). Rooke (2009) suggest that the Europeanisation of media policy and commercial choices since the 1980s are challenging the idea of the inevitability of fragmented publics and 'its potential for the integration of its peoples is tantalising and attractive in both business and political terms'. Step by step the EU has had to move towards 'a more integrated approach in relation to ... wider dissemination of ideas, information and knowledge' (Rooke 2009: 9) and Robins (2008: 110) observes that 'contemporary developments in media industries and cultures are crucial for contemporary Europe. If public service broadcasting was central to the institutions of national cultures and communities, we may argue that the new broadcasting culture must be central to the imagination of the new Europe that is coming into existence.' Which we could take to mean that future pan-European media services should be inclusive of cultural and political diversity, rather than is driven only by SEM integrationist aims.

Despite the integration and harmonisation of the European media marketplace, the Commission noted in its review of its success and failures in communicating with EU citizens that one of the factors currently constraining a citizens' debate on the EU is the very limited coverage of EU information in audiovisual media. Less than ten percent of broadcast time on EU matters is found in national news, and yet, according the Commission's (2008) citation of 'a recent Eurobarometer survey on audiovisual communication, 64% of people are interested in news about the EU', from which follows the Commission's (2008: 4) solutions to meet this need:

1. To make available to media professionals a greater quantity of information about EU affairs – this is supported by Europe by Satellite (EbS), The EU Audiovisual Library and The EU Events Calendar.
2. To develop and improve the EU's communication policy of creating networks of TV channels while respecting full editorial independence – this is supported by the European Radio Network (EURANET), a proposed European TV Network (2009-2010) and EuroNews.
3. To increase the production and dissemination (on EU platforms) of high quality edited audiovisual reports and explanatory video news releases (VNRs) – this is supported by greater video production, improved video and audio on demand, improved guidelines of EU audiovisual products and the use of promotional activities (which includes attendance at media fairs, distributing updated material, seminars for journalists and enabling Commission staff to engage in open debate).

The Commission hopes that these measures 'should aim at supplying information in a form that is attractive to users, promotes active European citizenship and contributes to the development of the European public sphere' (Commission 2008: 3). Namely, the Commission hopes it can interest national and transnational journalists in EU affairs by making information more accessible and media friendly, as well as ensuring that EU affairs are broadcast via transnational broadcasters that they regard as specifically having an EU news agenda.

The measures suggested by the Commission, can be seen as an extension and development of the EU's evolving communications policy from 2001 onwards (as the EU increasingly relied upon the potential of new technological developments to address the civil and political communications deficit) and when assembled together are seen by the Commission as a means to foster citizen participation in the EU project. From this point of view alone the measures are perfectly consistent with the Commission's aim of attempting to supply explanatory information about itself and its workings and thereby facilitate greater public understanding and engagement and, have recently been summarised by the Commission (2008: 11) as being, 'to increase coverage of EU affairs and thus help people to engage in a properly informed and democratic debate on EU policies'. But once past this entirely laudable high level aim is there any reason to suggest that the latest strategy and suite of channels, services and initiatives associated with it will succeed? The civil aims of current EU communication policy fall down because of the incongruence between their intent and how they are practically mediated. There are many examples of this policy incongruence: the use of the Internet with regard to facilitating and stimulating public dialogue (Michailidou 2007a 2007b and 2008); the effectiveness of public consultation exercises (Moravcsik 2008 177-8); the PRINCE initiative which funds communications with the European general public, but operates according to unrealistic expectations and which fails to 'reach much beyond those that are already knowledgeable about EU policies' (Brüggemann et al 2006: 2) and the low participation figures for 'Debate Europe,' which were only 40,000 as of April 2008. However I shall confine myself to a much more relevant example: EuroNews.

The Failure of Euronews

What follows is a description of EuroNews taken from a variety of official sources, including EuroNews itself.⁴ EuroNews was created, in 1993, by European public broadcasters and was a reaction to a dominant American inspired transnational news perspective of the EU (Rooke 2009). It broadcasts its programs 24/7, in eight languages simultaneously (English,

⁴ Taken from a combination of <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/about/index.cfm?sitelang=en§ion=about&page=euronews>, Commission, Communication on Communicating Europe through audiovisual media. SEC (2008)506/2 <http://www.euronews.net/en/the-station/> PETV distribution data Europe at

<http://www.euronews.net/en/the-station/>

<http://www.euronews.net/en/the-station/>

<http://www.euronews.net/ru/services-ue/>

<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/about/index.cfm?sitelang=en§ion=about&page=euronews> and <http://www.euronews.net/ru/services-ue/>

French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese Russian and Arabic) to more than 251 million households in 139 countries worldwide via cable, digital satellite and terrestrial channels and is currently trying to extend its distribution via multi-media platforms including IPTV, digital media and digital terrestrial TV. Its global reach has nearly doubled in the last five years and it now covers Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Americas and Asia. EuroNews has the greatest reach of any international news channel in Europe, broadcasting to 171 million European households (compared with 135 million households for CNN International, 89 million households for BBC world news and 75 million households for CNBC). According to the results of the EMS-C-EMS study (July 2008) which measures the media consumption of 46 million 'up-market viewers' in Western and Eastern Europe, 17.6 percent of 'affluent and influential individuals' watch EuroNews every week.

Currently the channel is owned by a consortium of European and North-African public broadcasters and is in part funded by a Commission contribution to the operating costs, amounting to €10.8 million a year. This funding has allowed EuroNews to 'extend its broadcasting and to develop its commentary and analysis programming beyond the regular news coverage' Commission (2008b: 9). EuroNews programmes are also available to other broadcasters via the EBU exchange platform and can also be re-used by the Commission if the material is copyright-free. The Editorial Charter EuroNews has agreed with the EU requires that EuroNews is a 'European channel of continuous information' which aims to present international information from a European point of view. Reciprocally the EU guarantees the editorial freedom of EuroNews only requiring that it provides news programmes which:

1. Aim at selecting, checking and disseminating information about the EU;
2. Support and reflect EU cultural diversity;
3. Contain comprehensive, authoritative and impartial coverage of news and current affairs in the EU and throughout the world when having an EU dimension, as well as of informed debates at regional, national and EU levels;
4. Contain background and explanatory programmes;

5. Contain programmes which focus on the impact of EU policies, decisions and actions on the lives of EU citizens and reflect the concerns of both regional and national audiences.

EuroNews is regarded by the Commission as the only pan-European news channel and, the only multilingual TV operator, whose aims correspond to a public service mission. This mission is served by four different programme strands:

1. News Brief (each day, the main points on the European agenda),
2. News Perspective (explanation and didactic presentation, of the main news, providing elements to understand them),
3. In Depth (debates, interviews, magazines, etc.),
4. Direct (live broadcasting of EU events, such as European Councils, plenary sessions of the EP, press conferences, etc.).

The Commission judges EuroNews to be a public service broadcasting success due to its reach, extensive coverage of European issues and the analytic and 'in depth' nature of its content (2008: 9).

However, Bruggerman and Schulz-Foberg (2008:87) in their own detailed analysis of EuroNews make the following observation:

It was intended to present news and European culture in order to encourage a better appreciation of Europe's uniqueness and cultural wealth. In stark contrast to these ambitions, however, Euronews merely filters images and newsreels from associated European and Mediterranean channels as well as two global agencies, dubs them in seven European languages and broadcasts them simultaneously in all European countries. EuroNews does not produce any original material of its own (Bruggerman and Schulz-Foberg 2008: 87).

Consequently, the rhetoric surrounding EuroNews sits awkwardly with what the service is judged to be actually doing. Neither the Editorial Charter's emphasis on accuracy and

impartiality, nor the Commission's endorsement of 'commentary and analysis' (2008: 9) can be said to be particularly well served by a service that only commissions material and does not produce any original material. Such a lack of news integrity is nowhere more apparent than in the case of the EuroNews programme entitled 'No Comment,' where images are simply presented without any explanation. The point of this is, according to (Bruggerman and Schulz-Foberg 2008: 87), to draw upon a 'common visual understanding throughout Europe ... to overcome the multilingual fragmentation of the pan-European audience.' It is difficult, however, not to see that this is an example of an editorial policy that requires absolutely no editorial perspective whatsoever and where the manifest use of silence is at best artful and at worst evasive. Overall EuroNews is more akin to a news aggregator, a service that simply 'fact strips' from a variety of news sources and repackages news content without interpretation or analysis, or more tellingly is a service without a public news journalism purpose and is one that does not want to engender discord or contestation from different member states about its coverage. Problematically its main sources for international images consist of two large news agencies, Associated Press Television News (USA) and Reuters (UK) and national PSB partners that exchange images within the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Reliance on such material undermines the idea of EuroNews as a channel which covers world news from a European perspective, given the limitations placed upon its ability to develop its own news agenda and public service ethos and identity. Ultimately, the intention to mediate the complexities of civil society in the EU context is not well served by EuroNews and it is highly improbable that EuroNews could play any part in fostering EU civil society engagements beyond elite audiences.

As it stands the EU's communication strategy is a one way top down institutional and centralized operation implemented by the Commission. Even where dialogue or two-way communication between institutions and 'active citizens' is emphasised as being an important part of deliberation, it is not made clear either what there is to talk about or how such deliberation is ultimately to be conducted on a regular basis. The result is that too often the active citizen sounds like someone with only a vote to cast, a web address to write to, or a leaflet (web page) to read. In short, communicative activity is restricted to little more than a dimension of 'thin' formal political citizenship and is certainly not conducive to enabling civil debate or contestation. Indeed it appears as if what is lacking, or has been

rejected within current EU communication policy in practice, is mediation of the width of concerns traditionally associated with public service broadcasting, in which there is embedded a philosophical concern to engage all citizens. And here is the crux of the problem; thus far the EU's communication policy consistently displays a fundamental incongruence between its stated civil aims, and the way they have so far been implemented in practice. The missing link is engagement with EU citizens in their diversity and who often remain distrustful of both the EU political process and of other member states.

PSB as a model for an Independent Pan-European Public Service News Provider

One of the too frequently overlooked positive sides to the nation state is the way national identity is often fostered in a civil and un-coerced way (Calhoun 2007) and one means of fostering this identity has been through the civil role of the factual mass media in general and more specifically across the nation states of modern Europe by public service news providers. A point that was recently reinforced by Curran et al (2009), whose empirical study revealed that PSB gives greater attention to public affairs and international news and, thereby fosters greater knowledge in these areas than the market model. For Curran et al (2009:22) 'PSB is important because it devotes our attention to public affairs and international news, fosters greater knowledge in these areas than the market model, encourages higher levels of news consumption and contributes to a smaller within-nation knowledge gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged' and they conclude that 'media provision of public information does matter, and continued deregulation of the broadcast media is likely, on balance, to lead to lower levels of civic knowledge'. Alexander (2006: 80) phrases it accordingly. '... media power depend on reputation, ability to represent the public to itself, belief by the public that they are reporting on the world not constructing it, describing the factual world objectively rather than representing it in artistic or moral terms, emphasising speed, accuracy, neutrality, news presents itself as homologous with the real world'.

However, today public service news provision is under attack across Europe. These attacks utilise or combine political and/or commercial pressures and/or legal sanctions on editorial independence (Albania, Croatia, France, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Macedonia, Poland,

Slovakia, et al⁵) added to which there is increasing concern over the EU's failure to impose its own guidelines on PSB on some member and candidate states. The incidence of violence against news journalists is rising and the Council of Europe is at the time of writing seeking to establish monitoring systems that track harassment of news organisations and journalists,⁶ and trust in journalism is declining.

Onora O'Neil (2002) observes 'well placed trust grows out of active inquiry rather than blind acceptance.' In news journalism Collins (2009:74) suggests two sources of trustworthiness, first 'user review' and second 'supply side authority.' To which we can add that in the contemporary news media the BBC remains amongst the most trusted provider of news as well as the most trusted gatekeeper or guide to other information, a reputation built upon a set of public service editorial and news values. As such the BBC offers an insight into what an independent pan-European public news service provider might look like and what its news service provision might undertake.

Following such a PSB model immediately points to the fact that an independent pan-European public service news provider should be editorially free from political interference, not afraid to be criticised by its audiences, be publicly financed and operationally autonomous from the Commission by being anchored in a democratic and supervisory process linked to the European Parliament. My concern now is to try to expand upon this view with regard to the legal and organisational circumstances surrounding such an institution.

First, it should be noted that the legal basis of such an institution is not provided for by the EU's Treaties, but is derived from the same set of documents and instruments as the EU's own communication policy and information society policy as well as being implicit in EU broadcasting law and policy (Harrison and Woods 2000, 2007). These documents and instruments are: the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 11 (right to information and freedom of expression, freedom and diversity of the media), Article 41 (right to be heard and right of access to documents relating to oneself) Article 42 (right of

⁵ Open Society Initiative Report, Television Across Europe

⁶ CFOM <http://www.cfom.org.uk/>

access to the documents of the institutions of the EU), Article 44 (right of petition) and reference to Article 308 of the EC treaty (which covers actions for which there is no current legal basis).

Second, the organisational features of an independent pan-European public service news provider can be derived from a mixture of extant EU policy and commitments and obligations and Council of Europe guidelines. The basic service provision of an independent pan-European public service news provider would be to provide an interactive multi-platform rolling 24/7 multilingual public news channel. The channel's public service remit should be as straightforward as 'to promote and stimulate broader democratic, social and cultural interest in EU affairs'. In order to achieve this, the channel should cover all aspects of European news as well as cover world news from a European perspective; it could also provide an opt-out news programme for national broadcasters in the same way that regional news is often broadcast after the national news. It should combine rolling news with appointment programmes, documentaries and investigative programmes, use user generated content, open source journalism and deploy partnerships models of researching news events such as crowd sourcing and network journalism. The channel would in such a way report, explain and comment on all aspects of the work of the decision making bodies of the EU as well as report, explain and comment on the nature of these decisions (sometimes in partnership with so-called citizen journalists) in order to facilitate debate with regard to their local impact and European significance. In short the channel should facilitate civil contestation. There should also be a relationship between news, comment and debate, the balance of which would need to be fairly maintained. Such a provider should also be adequately equipped and financed and the rules governing its funding should be based on the principle that the EU maintain, and where necessary, establish an appropriate, secure and transparent funding framework which guarantees the means necessary to accomplish its public service remit and independence from vested interests. Ensuring all of this would be down to a supervisory board. The Council of Europe points the way to the constitution of a supervisory board, namely that members should be appointed in an open and pluralistic manner; represent collectively the interests of (in this case) the EU in general; may not receive any mandate or take any instructions from any person or body other than the one which appointed them, subject to any contrary provisions prescribed by

law in exceptional cases; may not be dismissed, suspended or replaced during their term of office by any person or body other than the one which appointed them, except where the supervisory board has duly certified that they are incapable of or have been prevented from exercising their functions; may not, directly or indirectly, exercise functions, receive payment or hold interests in enterprises or other organisations in media or media-related sectors where this would lead to a conflict of interest with their functions within the supervisory body. Rules on the payment of members of the supervisory board should be defined in a clear and open manner.⁷ Finally, any such supervisory board would be directly linked to the European Parliament (EP) in the form of an oversight relationship. This oversight relationship would be to ensure that the public service remit of an independent pan-European public service news provider was followed and to further ensure that adequate funding was supplied in order to meet this obligation.

To conclude, I do not want to exaggerate the civil role of the news and publicly inspired news journalism, nor do I wish to diminish its civil influence either. It seems reasonable to suggest that the news and public news journalism have the capacity to be a mode of influence and sentiment which can engender through civil contestation, the development of, and over time, change within civil society. This is because the news and public news journalism help to develop and sustain the boundaries of civil society. In other words the news and publicly inspired news journalism have their civil power in and through the way they stand for public scrutiny and the formation of public opinion, play a part in civil contestation and critically relate to other non-civil spheres. For Weber the civil power of public news journalism was exemplified in press criticism of the abuses of authority and office during and after WW1. For Mills it was in the form of critique which provides the basis for discussion in the community of publics and which stands antithetical to the homogeneity of a bland mass media and mass society. For Inglis (2002: 376) it is found in the way public news journalism acts as a 'peoples' witness' providing testimony which satisfies 'our unassuageable hunger to know what on earth is going on'. For Alexander it is civil contestation and civil repair. The challenge, according to Fraser, is that '... the problem of publicity's efficacy in a post-Westphalian world is doubly complicated... The challenge,

⁷ Adapted from: Council of Europe Recommendation No R (96) 10 1996 on the guarantee of the independence of PSB and Committee of Ministers Declaration on the guarantee of the independence of PSB (2006).

accordingly, is twofold: on the one, hand, to create new, transnational public powers; on the other, to make them accountable to new, transnational public spheres' (2007: 23). This is a necessity that sits uncomfortably with the EU's communicative achievements so far and, without independent pan-European public news service provision, there is little hope of the EU's stated civil aspirations being met

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