

**International Symposium
Groupe de Recherches et d'Études sur la Radio (GRER)**

November 16, 17 and 18 2017 – Bordeaux (France)

***Radio in the Public Service
Issues, Statutes, Missions, and Programs***

CALL FOR PAPERS

The concept of public service is ancient. Its roots extend to the creation of States out of old monarchical regimes. As a general rule, the concept derives from certain basic principles, such as:

- Equality of access to guaranteed services (in the case of radio, reception, but which can also be understood to include the right of expression).
- Free services, or services provided at modest or reasonable cost.
- A non-commercial purpose of the services in question (or at least an understanding that generating a profit is not the primary motivation of the service).

To these one might also add:

- The idea of reliable and continuous service across space and time with the goal of promoting unity and equality of distribution for all (in radio's case, assuring complete coverage of a territory).
- The principles of mutability, in the sense of constant adaptation to better serve listener needs.
- The principles of neutrality or fairness, and even more so, in certain countries, of secularism which should guarantee equal treatment for all by respecting freedom of conscience and freedom of opinion.
- Often, public ownership of the structures, or failing that, their public oversight and, in a substantial way their public financing.
- Frequently, too, the concept of public media service, both in legal and programmatic services, is attached to the missions of education, information, and diversion, to which can be added a function of aiding the population or individuals.
- Eventually, ultimately, the democratic management of these services with the participation of radio professionals, speakers, and possibly, listeners.

Thus the notion of "radio in the public service" and the **issues** linked to it refer to different dimensions. It can concern a specific **statute** or policy; the **mission** assigned to the media, or that which one has the right to expect; or special **programs** qualified as such because of their intentions, their destined audiences, and their effects.

STATUS

Institutionally, the status of public radio service has its roots in the history of modern communication. From royal postal services to the telegraph, recurring principles and use patterns have characterized the variants of electronic communications, including radio. Originally, British radio (the BBC of 1927) served as an example of "radio in the public service" for the many countries that rejected the model of the United States based on private enterprise. Adopted before or after World War II, and often justified in response to the latter U.S. model, this organizational structure went into effect and was adopted by numerous countries, which in turn inspired still others to imitate it (notably during decolonization or in the logic of blocs). But oftentimes the monopoly model encounters limits in state appropriations and as a service of governments or regimes. Public broadcasting and state broadcasting can thus become confused.

Largely dissolved through deregulation at the end of the 20th century, public service radio institutions did not disappear entirely, but continued with varying fortunes to occupy a place in the face of private competition in the various media landscapes. For whatever reason, after having long gone unchallenged, the legitimacy of public service radio is now no longer secure. Sometimes likened to a public project now judged anachronistic, these radio institutions are attacked in the name of rationality or economic ideologies that seek hegemony here, as well as there.

The complete suppression of programs; of public service channels (Canada, Greece, Eastern Europe, etc.), especially international services; the cancellation of broadcast methods (Radio France's long waves); the difficulty of establishing stations in regions where they do not already exist or are few (Latin America), are among the manifestations of the retrenchment of public broadcast services, their difficult current existence and the threats that continually weigh upon them.

The GRER symposium wishes to ask questions about the relevance, the legitimacy, and, therefore, the sustainability of the institutional structures of public service broadcasting. These issues and their implications can be taken up by drawing from their histories, their present realities, and by exploring a range of their possible futures.

MISSIONS

The notions of public service and of the services rendered to the public do not rest alone in considerations of structures, statutes, or institutions. They correspond to the intentions and the efficiency measures, which from then on can be claimed by other radio sectors, such as the third sector of radio and the commercial sector. The state--the public power--can delegate the public service mission to those other than itself.

One may think that the intrinsic logic of the audience for private broadcasting rests fundamentally on the satisfaction of listeners' expectations, both in entertainment, as well as news and information, and even in education or cultural programs. Private actors themselves advance the argument of their market-based contribution to media pluralism to justify their existence in the service of society.

The rationale of radio associations (sometimes also called 'community' radio stations) declares the benefit that such not-for-profit services provide comes from their ability to permit access to speech to all, often on the basis of serving specific sectors of the population (social or cultural groups, particular geographic areas).

Such assigned, proclaimed, and summoned missions can be critically explored. Paper proposals may cover assignment schemes (terms of reference, agreements, commitments). Declarations of intent and proclamations claiming the notion of public service can be evaluated from the point of view of self-justifying and promotional discourse in competitive situations. The question of their effectiveness can also be tested against the prism of reality.

PROGRAMS

It is through the programs that the missions and intentions of the stations materialize. From this point of view, the programs reveal in fact the manner in which each medium considers its services to the public. At the end of the day, even if all programs can be considered as services rendered to listeners, usually those considered as belonging to the service category are: information, education, culture, counseling, free broadcasting, and programs for children and youth. It is often noted that certain types of programs (documentaries, fiction, radio plays) are found mainly on public service radio stations, as their specifications and mission require it.

The organizers of the symposium wish to encourage submission of papers, witness accounts, and monographs presenting in an analytical and not merely descriptive manner, programs produced for audiences within the full range of public service broadcasting from whichever radio sector they happen to emanate. In this sense, comparative studies are encouraged (from one station or sector to another, from one region or country to another).

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

If you wish to participate and present at this symposium, you are invited to submit, **by April 15th, 2017 (deadline)** a proposal in French, English or Spanish. During the colloquium, papers may be presented in French, English or Spanish. If the paper is delivered in English or Spanish, it must be accompanied by a visual presentation (PowerPoint or similar) in French reporting the main points of the talk. Likewise, if your presentation is in French, please provide a visual presentation in English or Spanish. You must send your proposals in a Word (.doc) file by email, with "GRER 2017 Symposium - Communication Proposal" in the subject header.

The proposal must include: a title (and subtitle), an abstract, 5 to 7 keywords and indication of its inclusion in one or more of the themes of the call. Papers may run to 5 000 characters at the most and must include a problematic, hypothesis (or hypotheses) and bibliographic citations. The title, subtitle and summary will be translated into French if not furnished as such. Personal information (surname, first name, home institution, status, postal and electronic address, telephone) must be included on the cover page. Proposals may be sent to the following two e-mail addresses:

grer.mail@club-internet.fr / jjcheval@msha.fr

An acknowledgment of receipt of your submission will be furnished by email. The organizing and scientific committees of the symposium will carry out review of submissions. Proposals accepted will be subject to revision requests. The responses (acceptances, rejections, requests for modifications) will be sent to authors in June 2017. At the end of the symposium, a selection of the final communications, received and presented, will be published in an edition of the GRER *RadioMorphoses* electronic journal (<http://www.radiomorphoses.fr/>) in 2018. Toward this goal, the reading committee according to the rules common to scientific journals will conduct a double blind review.

GRER (Groupe de Recherches et d'Études sur la Radio)



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