

Chapter 5

The Rise (and Fall?) of the Television Age

Just as there are serious concerns about the future of newspapers, so many believe that in recent decades traditional standards of television news and public affairs have come under threat from technological and economic developments. The critical factors transforming broadcasting include the proliferation of channels on terrestrial, cable, satellite, digital and now broadband services, fragmenting the mass audience; the crisis of identity and funding facing public service television, which once enjoyed a monopoly throughout most of Europe, following the rise of myriad commercial competitors; and lastly the more recent technological convergence with the digitization and compression of images, sounds and data which has produced a new multimedia environment breaking down the traditional boundaries between telecommunications, the audiovisual industries and computers.

These trends have affected all OECD countries to different degrees although their impact and timing has been strongly mediated by the existing communications landscape. In the Thatcherite 1980s, deregulation and privatization had the most profound influence on public service broadcasters throughout Western Europe¹. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the transition to democracy in the early 1990s produced an even more radical jolt to public television in Central and Eastern Europe². Meanwhile in the United States the long-standing rule of the three major networks experienced an equivalent coup d'etat, cut down in the 1980s by myriad competitors on cable and satellite³. Despite the longstanding contrasts between the commercially dominant major networks in the United States and public television in Europe, in recent years both have faced a strikingly similar multiplication of outlets and fragmentation of television audiences, raising new concerns about the standards of programming.

As a result of the new multi-channel television environment there is apprehension that both the amount and the quality of news coverage of public affairs have diminished, so that many countries are experiencing the rise of what has been termed 'tabloid TV', 'soft news' or 'infotainment', headlining human interest and gaudy sensationalism rather than government affairs and public policymaking. The rise of the Internet since the mid-1990s, and cross-media convergence as traditional newspapers and television become easily available via the web, adds another layer of complexity to this process. Previously separate telecommunication, computer and audiovisual technologies, with different modes of distribution and regulatory environments, are rapidly converging and thereby transforming the nature of the news media⁴.

To evaluate whether these concerns are justified, this chapter focuses upon three issues with important implications for the role of the electronic media in representative democracies: First, given that most television systems have moved towards a 'mixed model', combining elements of commercial and public service broadcasting, *do major structural differences continue to differentiate broadcasting systems in OECD countries today?* Secondly, *has there been a widespread decline in public service broadcasting of news and current affairs*, as some fear, following greater competition from commercial channels? Thirdly, given the fragmentation of channels and programs that have become available in recent decades, *does television news continue to reach a mass audience* or only certain sectors of society like the well educated and politically interested? Based on this analysis, the following chapter goes on to consider whether use of the Internet seems set to supplement, or replace, older forms of TV broadcasting.

Structural Differences in Broadcasting Systems

Given patterns of transatlantic convergence in recent years, do structural differences continue to distinguish television in the US and Europe? From the 1920s until the early 1980s a public service monopoly characterized all broadcasting systems in Europe, with the significant exceptions of the British duopoly system (with the heavily regulated but commercial ITV established in 1955) and Luxembourg (established from the start as a commercial service)⁵. In 1980 Western Europe had 36 public and only three commercial terrestrial channels (see Table 5.1). Public television also predominated in Japan, (NHK), as well as in Canada (CBC) and Australia (ABC). Public regulation of broadcasting originated with licensing of radio stations introduced to avoid chaotic overcrowding of the analog airwaves, given technical scarcity of frequencies. Initially conceived as state monopolies, like the provision of railroads, telephones or electricity, television was seen as part of the public goods the state must provide. In Europe financial regulation of radio, and then television, usually fell under the influence of traditional postal, telegraph and telephony authorities. At least until the early 1980s the traditional characteristics of public service television included six main features⁶:

- ?? an emphasis on an ethic of *comprehensive access* making the same services freely available to everyone;
- ?? *comprehensive coverage* catering to all tastes and interests, including everything from drama and news to sports and education;
- ?? *pluralistic diversity* including programming for linguistic, ethnic, cultural or political minorities;
- ?? *cultural vocation* catering to the national community with local arts;
- ?? *non-commercialism* meaning universality of payment, often through license fees; and lastly,
- ?? *political independence* from government, although the latter differs between systems⁷.

Three primary types of regulatory authority existed. Some public broadcasting organizations are governed by independent *public corporations*, or *quangos*, like the British Broadcasting Corporation. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting in the United States also fits this model as a non-profit agency, which distributes a modest government subsidy to help fund PBS and National Public Radio, along with private and corporate donors.

In *corporatist* systems an independent body, representing the major social and political sectors in civil society, regulates public broadcasting, such as in Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. For example German public broadcasting corporations are governed by independent broadcasting councils at *lander* level whose members are selected from groups such as political parties, business and labour organizations, churches, farmers, sports bodies, women's groups, and so on. Parties have a strong influence, and television executives and sometimes journalists are selected along proportional party lines⁸.

Lastly in *state-dependent* systems, public broadcasting organizations were initially tied fairly closely to the government, as in Greece, Italy and France, although throughout Europe public broadcasters have become increasingly autonomous over the years. In France, for example,

Radiodiffusion-Television de France (RTF) was established as a state monopoly in 1945 and was closely supervised by the government via the Ministry of Information. The medium was only freed from direct government influence after reforms that started with the events of May 1968, although controversy about the role of the appropriate regulatory body of French public broadcasting continued until recent years⁹. In Greece, the electronic media served as a propaganda tool during non-democratic periods. More recent attempts to separate the public media from direct government control have proved problematic although the growth of independent private channels in the 1990s has created more overall political balance on Greek television¹⁰.

As late as the 1970s, there remained a captive television audience in Europe; viewers in most countries had only one or two public channels. The deregulation of the television industry and the expansion of commercial channels, eroding the public service monopoly, occurred fairly rapidly during the 1980s in Western Europe, followed by Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s¹¹. If we just compare terrestrial channels (excluding satellite and cable) in the 17 European countries listed in Table 5.1 from 1980 to 1997 the number of public channels rose from 36 to 46 (a significant expansion). But during the same period the number of commercial channels surged from 3 to 59, to become the dominant type. By 1997 the only European countries left with pure public service television on terrestrial channels were Austria, Ireland and Switzerland, due to some initial financial difficulties in establishing viable commercial stations more than public policy restrictions.

[Table 5.1 about here]

Cable and satellite stations have expanded rapidly. The market share for subscription television (such as cable or satellite services, and direct pay TV) has increased at double the rate for television paid for by a universal license fee or advertising¹². As shown in Table 5.2, by 1997 half of all households in OECD countries had cable or satellite TV, although the proportion varies substantially from the most intensively cabled smaller urbanized countries like the Netherlands and Belgium, with over 90 percent penetration, down to a quarter or less of all households in Southern European nations. The predominance of public service monopolies has been broken in every country and the major challenge facing public service television today concerns its function and role in a multi-channel environment, when these stations have lost their traditional hold over the captive audience. There is widespread concern that public broadcasters face a crisis of identity, finance and organization, which may have particularly serious consequences for the informational role of television in democracy¹³.

[Table 5.2 about here on separate page]

Yet Table 5.2 demonstrates that, despite the deluge of commercial alternatives, the public channels remain popular; on average across all OECD states public channels maintain a 42% share of the television audience. This varies substantially, however, by country. Public television RAI1 and TVE1 remain market leaders in Italy and Spain, while NRK in Norway and SVT in Sweden had most of the best rated shows in their countries. In contrast public TV has a far smaller share in some other societies such as PBS (3%) in the United States and NHK (18%) in Japan¹⁴. Today OECD states can be classified into three major types: those that remain predominately *public* systems (based on an audience share of public channels of 60% and above), *mixed* systems (with a public share of 40-59%) and predominately *private* systems (with a public share of less than 40%). Where we have comparable data, today only three OECD nations can be categorized as predominately

public (Austria, Denmark and Hungary), eleven represent mixed systems, while ten can be classified as predominately private systems. Although these have seen convergence over the years, nevertheless broadcasting systems continue to bear the distinct imprint of their origins with radio in the 1920s, as can be seen by contrasting case studies of the continuing public service model exemplified by Sweden, the mixed model which has existed for many decades in Britain, and the commercial model as developed in the United States.

The Public Service Model of Broadcasting: Sweden

The Swedish Broadcasting Corporation was established in 1956 as the national radio and television monopoly. The corporation was reorganized in 1979 and again in 1992 so that today there are three separate and autonomous state-owned corporations, operating radio, television and educational broadcasting services. Sveriges Television operates two national TV networks, SVT1 and TVT2. Sveriges Radio runs four national public services, each with a distinct profile focusing respectively on talk and news, classical music, minority and educational services, youth-oriented music and information, and regional stations and network programmes for an older audience. Parliament decides the annual level of the license fee paid by every household with a television set and allocated to all services. Advertising is not allowed on any public services although they can also raise some revenues through sales of programmes and technical services, as well as sponsorship. The Swedish Broadcasting Corporation includes representatives from various mass organizations, such as churches, consumer groups, and unions, and civic associations, as well as publisher organizations, representing a corporatist cross-section of Swedish civic society¹⁵.

Until recently commercial television was prevented by the Radio Act, which banned advertising. The first two channels to break the public monopoly were TV3 and Filmnet, both established via satellite in 1987. These were quickly followed in 1989 by the American-owned Kanal 5, and in 1990 by TV4, the only licensed terrestrial commercial channel in Sweden. By 1997 Swedish viewers could therefore access two public and one commercial terrestrial channel, while satellite and cable added another six channels paid by advertising and four paid by subscription. The Swedish model is therefore one, typical of Scandinavian countries, with a monopoly of public television until the late 1980s. The ethos of public service broadcasting remains widely accepted, meaning the provision of comprehensive programming, with considerable emphasis on the provision of news and current affairs, as well as a mix of entertainment, culture and education. The last decade has seen a radical shake up in the broadcasting environment in Sweden, with the rise of a range of commercial alternatives, although public television continues to be well supported. The continued popularity of public television is shown by the fact that in the mid-1990s SVT1 and SVT2 maintained an average daily share of around half the audience. Almost two-thirds of the public feels that the license fee is good value for money (at 1476 Skr or \$XX per year in 1996), and 40% are against advertising, with these proportions slightly strengthening in recent years¹⁶.

The Mixed Model of Broadcasting: Britain

The BBC exemplifies the mixed or 'dual' model, characterized by a long history of combining public and commercial television within a carefully regulated environment¹⁷. In Britain, encouraged by the radio manufacturing industry, the Post Office established the British Broadcasting Company in

1922 as a commercial cooperative, wholly funded by the broadcast license fee payable by all citizens who owned radio sets. In 1927 the private monopoly was transformed into a public corporation, as the British Broadcasting Corporation, granted a Royal Charter, which ensured the principle of its freedom from political dependence on direct parliamentary control. From the start, Lord Reith's classic definition of the core responsibility of the BBC was to 'entertain, inform and educate' the nation, as a public service mediating between parliament and the people, an ethos widely adopted in other European countries. Although the predominance of public television has been eroded over the years, these core principles continue to be reflected in the ethos and standards guiding public television. The Director General of the BBC reports to the Board of Governors, appointed as an independent body, and the level of the license fee is reviewed by Parliament at regular intervals. The BBC enjoyed a monopoly of broadcasting and as a result regulations held broadcasters accountable to ensure the quality and diversity of programming, including the universality of service provision throughout the British Isles. The first regular public television service was started with the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1936, to a restricted audience. Service was suspended during the war only to resume (with exactly the program it was transmitting when it left the air) in 1946.

Commercial competition was introduced relatively early in Britain. Independent Television (ITV subsequently termed Channel 3) was established in 1955 as a federal system of companies each serving different regional areas within a framework regulated by successive bodies, currently the Independent Television Commission¹⁸. The ITC allocates franchises for a ten year term according to the 'public interest', including programming standards such as high quality, diversity, original productions, news, regional productions, equal opportunities, provision for the disabled, and provision of party political broadcasts¹⁹. ITC also regulates the content, amount and placing of advertisements that can be broadcast. The organization monitors standards and complaints, and can impose penalties on broadcasting companies ranging from warnings to fines and the revocation of the license. ITV companies aimed for a popular audience but also competed with the high journalistic and cultural standards established by the BBC.

This dual system was expanded in 1964 with the establishment of BBC2, a second public service channel originally designed for minority quality programming, followed by Channel 4 in 1992, a second commercial channel also designed to cater for minorities, and Channel 5 in 1997, the latter reaching a limited audience. Therefore the British system subsidized the BBC wholly from the annual license fee paid by all owners of television sets and allowed ITV companies to finance their operations from advertising. Channel 4 received an annual subscription paid by the ITV companies, who then sold the advertising for the channel. As a result of these arrangements, instead of a free market, competition for advertising revenue was strictly limited. The system was designed to ensure a range of quality and popular programming on public and commercial channels. Ratings remained one important source of rivalry, as much for status as for revenues, but the financial viability of each channel did not depend wholly upon their audience share. Cable and satellite services have been picking up subscriptions in recent years, especially Sky TV, but despite availability less than one third of households subscribe and average audience ratings are well down on this figure. Despite some recent changes, mainly due to the evening line-up on ITV following the abandonment of *News at Ten*, the BBC continues to hold an average audience share of about 43%.

The Commercial Model of Broadcasting: the United States

The history of broadcasting in the US and Latin America took a different route to Europe, with significant consequences for its subsequent development²⁰. Regular radio broadcasting started in the United States with commercial companies in the early 1920, as in Britain, but local stations were funded within a few years by paid ads. Local radio stations had trouble filling all their airtime so they joined together to share programming. The market became dominated by the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and the American Broadcasting System (ABC), sending programs sponsored or produced by advertisers to their affiliated stations all over the country. The main regulatory body to allocate frequencies of the airwaves is the Federal Communication Commission (FCC), created in 1934. The work of the FCC concerns limiting concentration, and laying down some loose guidelines for programming and contents, but it remains very weak compared with equivalent European bodies like the British ITC. Commercial television built on this network-affiliate structure, with the first regular service offered in the late 1940s. Given increased costs, multiple advertisers began paying for programs and the networks took over responsibility for their contents. Initially the networks provided only 15 minutes of news per day, in a straight bulletin format, but this expanded in the late 1950s to 30 minutes, inclusive of commercials. The move was prompted as a way of saving face for the reputation of the networks, badly damaged by revelations about dishonest and rigged quiz shows. The three major networks air news at the same slot in the early evening, leaving local stations and cable to broadcast news at other times. Facing increasing competition from cable and satellite, the audience for network news has steadily plummeted; reaching 90% of the audience watching TV at that hour in the 1960s down to less than half by 1999. Today the United States has about 11,000 radio stations, four national terrestrial television networks, twenty national radio networks, 1,000 local television stations and 6000 cable television systems²¹.

In the United States educational television was started with some pioneer stations just after the war, but public broadcasting per se was only established on a widespread basis after the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, as what one account termed 'the under funded afterthought'²², by which stage the dominant ethos of American broadcasting had already been established. Federal, state and local government funds 47 percent of the PBS budget, the rest being provided by viewers (23%), corporate sponsors (15%), and foundations (6%). PBS programming is distributed to more than 350 affiliates. Unlike in Europe, PBS was established to fill a particular education and cultural function, such as children's programs, music concerts and scientific documentaries, rather than providing a comprehensive service covering the complete gamut of programs designed for the mass audience. Given this remit, not surprisingly, although widely available across the country, PBS is watched by a limited audience of around 3 percent of all viewers, although the popularity of National Public Radio has been growing in recent years, and in the 1998 Pew survey 15% of Americans reported regularly listening to NPR.

Cable services started to penetrate in the mid-1960s but it was only in the 1980s that increased competition from cable and satellite saw a sharp erosion in the three major network's share of the audience, which plummeted in combined Nielsen ratings from 61% in 1958 to 26% in 1998. Today over two-thirds of American homes have cable or satellite access, well above the European average. The expansion in competition has led to a host of channels with niche marketing, from those specializing only in travel programmes to

weather, religion, sport, home shopping or court TV. The multi-channel environment has caused a revolution in American news habits. The 1998 Pew survey of 'regular' use of the news media shows that the most common activities, which engage about two-thirds of the American public, continues to be reading a daily newspaper (68%) and watching the local evening TV news (64%), and the majority (52%) also regularly catch radio news sometime during the day²³. In contrast, network news has suffered a dramatic hemorrhage of its audience; in 1998 only 38% of Americans said they were 'regular' viewers. The fragmentation of cable and satellite stations has produced a Balkanization of the television audience²⁴. To some extent this simply reflects the dispersion of the network audience, as people may now find MSNBC or CNBC or CNN on cable more convenient for their schedules than early evening network news. But this phenomenon has caused alarm-bells to ring within the major networks²⁵.

The Impact on News and Current Affairs

Therefore the structure of the television industry in the 1990s has moved towards greater transatlantic convergence over the years but nevertheless, in a path-dependent model, broadcasting systems today continue to bear the imprint of traditions established by radio in the 1920s, with marked contrasts in the role of public and commercial television in Sweden, Britain and the United States. What are the consequences of changes in the structure of the television industry for the availability and contents of news coverage of politics and public affairs? There is a general consensus that the fragmentation of the airwaves from the growth of channels has had profound consequences for broadcasting, although there is little agreement about whether these developments have proved positive or negative for the diversity of program choices offered to the public.

Proponents argue that the traditional ethos of public service broadcasting ensured a wide range of programming including news, current affairs, documentaries, chat shows, drama, games, children's programming, soap operas, music, culture and sports. In most European countries until recently few channels were available, as in Sweden, but precisely because of this monopoly public service broadcasting was regulated to ensure that it provided comprehensive programming. There is widespread concern that the expansion of new channels on cable and satellite has reduced the quality of broadcasting, because of the emphasis of commercialization on low-cost productions, US imports, and repeats. The expansion in the number of broadcasters has produced a surge in demand for programmes, driving up costs. The vacuum on the airwaves has often been met by available low-budget, low quality off-the-shelf entertainment, with minimum production values, exemplified by imported soaps and sit-coms in Europe, telenovelas and game shows in Latin America, and talk shows and tired repeats in the US. In 1998, for example, the individual program attracting the single highest audience share that year in each country included *Jurassic Park* in Panama, *Miss Universe 98* in Venezuela, *Father Ted* in Ireland, *Friends* in Australia, and *Donald Duck* in Sweden. If we compare the audience share for the top ten programs in 1998 World Cup soccer was included throughout most of Europe and Latin America. One third of the programs in the top ten lists were soap operas, while half the films ranked in this list were American movies²⁶.

The major producers of television shows, including the three major US networks and public broadcasters in Europe, are able to reap the rewards from sales of programming to other channels, but they also face rising production costs, an erosion of their base audience, and therefore threats to either advertising revenues or the level of their license fees. This may produce a

'leveling down' of broadcasting so that even the public channels abandon serious programming on public affairs. The common fear is that more television may have expanded consumer choice in theory but reduced the actual diversity of contents in practice, the well-known phenomenon of 100 channels and still nothing on TV²⁷. As Weymouth and Lamizet encapsulate these fears: "*A possible and ironic danger for the receivers and users of information in Western Europe is that, in spite of the massive increase of capital investment, and the equally extraordinary multiplication of media outlets, they may well end up with a reduced choice of programme type, as well as with a lower quality of information.*"²⁸

This general process may have had particularly serious consequences in downsizing news divisions for two reasons; first commercial companies may have abandoned anything more than headline coverage of news and current affairs in favour of mass-appeal entertainment. Indirectly, this may have increased the pressures on public service broadcasters to compete for their share of the audience by also going down-market and reducing the amount and quality of public affairs coverage. This may have produced a shift from an informational function of television, essential to the democratic needs of the people, towards 'infotainment' and the development of tabloid television. Fears have been expressed by the eroding market share of American network television news, faced with multi-channel competition from cable and satellite stations, which may have increased the amount of soft news focusing on human interest²⁹. Of course there is also nothing particularly novel in the observation that television news blends information with entertainment; in the 1970s commentators like Ed Diamond and David Altheide deplored the way that American news programmes emphasized style over substance and used excessive hype to maintain ratings³⁰. But in the last decade critics charge that trends in the economics of television news production and the chase for ratings have exacerbated this tendency, so that entertainment values have come to predominate on mainstream channels³¹.

Yet has the new environment produced a sharp down-market shift towards tabloid television evident in many countries, as popular accounts claim, or has it instead produced a diversification of available programming? After all, the growth of new satellite and cable channels includes those devoted to news and current affairs, such as *Sky TV*, the *BBC World Service* and *CNN International*, as well as channels devoted to documentaries about the natural world, history and the arts. Compared with previous decades, televising national and local legislatures on channels like C-SPAN in the US and the Parliamentary Channel in Britain allows the public to see the work of their representatives at first hand. So has the new broadcasting environment reinforced the distinctive mandate of public service television, or has it forced these channels to abandon news for more popular fare?

One way to examine the evidence for this issue is to compare the contents of public service broadcasting in 1971, before the rise of commercial competition in most European countries, in contrast to programming in the mid-1990s. We can use two indicators. The average amount of time devoted to broadcasting different categories of programs, like news or entertainment, indicates the *availability* of this type of coverage for the audience. This addresses the question, if people want to watch news, is it less, or more, widely available on public service channels today? In contrast the *proportion* of time devoted to different types of programmes indicates the priorities of the schedulers, and how much news or entertainment people would see if they watched only public service television. Arguably the latter measure is less significant for the function of public service broadcasting in a democracy, since, as argued in chapter 2, what is most important is

providing the public with extensive coverage of public affairs. If there has been an erosion of the quality of broadcasting in the public service sector we would expect to find a reduction in the amount and proportion of hours devoted to their 'informational' function, notably the provision of news, current affairs and documentaries, as well as in educational and cultural programming (like music, arts and drama) and, in contrast, a rise in the amount and proportion of time devoted to popular entertainment and advertising.

[Table 5.3 about here]

If we compare the contents of public service broadcasting, shown in Table 5.3, it is clear that the total number of hours devoted to news and current affairs programmes has expanded substantially during the last twenty-five years, in part because of the greater number of public service channels available. In the twenty OECD countries where we have consistent UNESCO data the results show that the average number of hours per week of news broadcasting on public service television rose in fifteen states, most notably in Italy, Poland and Turkey, while the hours were cut in five (Belgium, France, Norway, Spain and Sweden). Overall the change from 1971 to 1996 in OECD countries meant that the amount of time news and current affairs were broadcast almost tripled, from 1168 to 3042 hours. This is a massive increase, making far more television news available to the audience. At the same time, there was an even greater rise in the average time devoted to entertainment, which quadrupled during the same period from 1,505 to 6,020 hours. This expansion was a uniform pattern across all the OECD countries, but it was especially marked on Italian, Portuguese and Turkish public TV. Overall the growth in the number of public service channels, and the total hours per day they broadcast, facilitated an expansion in the amount of both news and entertainment available, rather than only feeding the public more popular soaps, variety shows and sit coms, as some fear.

[Table 5.4 about here]

If we analyze the *proportion* of time devoted to news on public television in the countries for which we have comparable data the picture looks slightly different (see Table 5.4). In 1996 news and current affairs absorbed on average one quarter of all the output broadcast on public service television, as opposed to entertainment (47%), culture (10%), education (8%) and advertisements (2%). News and current affairs was particularly prominent on public television in Germany, the UK and Finland, with a greater entertainment balance in France and Belgium. The proportion seems to have dropped most significantly in some of the Scandinavian countries and France, which suggests that public TV has changed its balance of coverage most in these nations.

Whether the content of news coverage has also changed in terms of subject matter or style remains a matter where we have a wealth of speculation but little systematic evidence. As discussed in Chapter 4, 'tabloidization' or 'soft news' refers to both stories and formats, and these separate dimensions are often confused. Changing the length or typical presentation of news stories, for example, may be completely unrelated to changes in their contents. Comparative analysis of the stories shown on television news remains limited, with the exception of a study of public service news in eight countries by Heinderyckx³². Systematic time-series data comparing the contents of news in OECD nations is unavailable. The separate country studies in Europe that are available provide an ambiguous picture of trends. One recent review of the available literature concluded that, contrary to expectations, news and current affairs programmes on public

channels have not moved outside of prime time to compete with popular entertainment on commercial channels³³. Moreover when commercial channels were first established they tended to marginalize political news but this is no longer the case; for example, in Germany Barbara Pfetsch found that both commercial and public channels have increased their political information since the mid-1980s: "*Our findings show that the similarities in the appearance of politics on television in 1993 in public and commercial news is the result of an alignment on two levels: private channels caught up with public channels regarding the contents of political information, while public channels caught up with commercial stations in their presentation formats. Eventually these programme strategies will lead to a pretty similar portrayal of politics in television news.*"³⁴.

Some studies in Belgium, Sweden and Denmark³⁵ have reported greater sensationalism and 'soft' news in television news on commercial channels compared with public television, although it remains to be seen whether this is changing political coverage as part of a longer-term trend in Europe. It is also unclear whether it is commercialization per se which has produced a significant 'tabloidization' in mainstream TV news bulletins. In Britain, for example, most contemporary observers believed that the introduction of commercial competition from ITN news in the mid-1950s improved the pace, presentation and quality of the rather staid BBC broadcasts at the time³⁶. By 1997, campaign coverage on the flagship evening programmes, the BBC *9 O'clock News* and ITV *News at Ten*, was very similar in terms of the proportion of the evening news devoted to the election (about half of each programme), the range of issue v. campaign stories, and positive v. negative balance towards each major party³⁷. A study classifying the topics of stories on the main evening news programmes on British television during a six month period in the late 1990s found that BBC1's *9 O'clock News* showed a higher proportion of 'hard' news stories about international affairs and policy issues than ITN's *News at Ten*, but the commercial Channel 4's *7 O'clock News* showed the highest proportion of any channel, and the lowest human interest/entertainment/sports news³⁸. Rather than a clear-cut public service-commercial division, television news in Britain has diversified into separate market segments reaching different audiences.

A glance at the schedules suggests that what does seem to have occurred in many countries is increased diversification of news formats or styles, with the expansion of vox-pop discussion programmes, 24-hour repetitive rolling news, brief hourly news headline bulletins, and infotainment 'talking heads' magazines, as well as a faster pace of traditional news coverage. None of these formats are actually novel, indeed some of these programmes like discussion programmes in front of a live audience are among the most venerable in broadcasting, but all have become more widely available, probably because these types of programmes are relatively cheap to produce.

One of the distinguishing features of 'hard' news is the focus on international coverage. To compare differences between private and public television sectors more systematically we can examine how European television covered the politics of the European Union, drawing on content analysis of three key events: the Turin Inter-Governmental Conference (29-30 March 1996), the Florence Council (20-22 June 1996) and the Dublin Council II (13-14 December 1996). During these events *Monitoring Euromedia* analyzed coverage of the EU and its policies in all regular news and current affairs programs on 73 television stations in total, almost equally divided between commercial (36) and public service (37) channels. (Full details of the methodology can be found in the book's Technical Appendix.) Overall during these events *Monitoring Euromedia* found 1,012 stories referring to the European Union and

its policies across all 15 EU member states. The content analysis data have been summed across all three special events to increase the reliability of the results.

[Figure 5.1 about here]

The results in Figure 5.1 confirm a major difference in European coverage by sector: public service television news showed 626 stories about the EU, almost twice as many as commercial stations (386). But at the same time there was considerable variation within each sector. Public television's predominance was produced in large part by a few major channels, notably Germany's ZDF, Italy's RAI³⁹, Finland's TV1, Austria's ORF2, Britain's BBC1, and Germany's ARD, in that order. At the same time, some of the commercial channels also devoted considerable coverage to the events, surpassing many public stations, notably Finland's MTV3, the UK's ITV and France's LCI. If we can generalize from these results, they suggest that public service television does devote more attention to international news, nevertheless the proliferation of public and private channels has produced considerable differentiation across the airwaves. Some public channels, notably those with a stronger cultural or arts orientation, provided relatively little coverage of EU politics while at the same time the private channels which were news-oriented gave considerable priority to coverage of Community affairs. This implies that news coverage does vary by sector, but the difference is one of degree rather than kind.

The End of the Mass Audience for Television News?

Another major concern about the growth of the multichannel environment is that television news will become a minority interest, producing a growing divide between the information haves and have-nots. Those who are already interested in politics will be able to find out more about events, through the growth of 24-hour rolling news channels like *Sky News*, *BBC World* and *CNN International*, although at the same time those who are uninterested may simply tune out from public life. Russell Neuman has suggested that we may be experiencing the 'end of the mass audience' as we move towards niche markets or 'narrowcasting' in the new multi-channel and multi-media environment⁴⁰.

Despite these fears some news and current affairs programs still rank in the top lists of most popular broadcasts with a high audience share year after year. This includes *19 heures* and *Journal televisé* in South Belgium, *TV Uutiset Ja* in Finland, *20 heures* in France, *Heute* and *Tagesschau* in Germany, the *9 O'Clock News* in Ireland, *Kveldsnytt* in Norway, *Tagesschau* and *Schweiz Aktuell* in German Switzerland, and *60 Minutes* in the US. All of these air on public service television, with the exception of *20 heures* in France, *19 heures* in Belgium and *60 minutes* in the US⁴¹. The mainstream news can therefore still routinely attract a large audience, in Europe and America, as well as large spikes in the event of dramatic breaking news.

We can examine the social profile of European viewers who regularly watch television news in the late 1990s, compared with newspaper, to see whether demographic factors predict the audience for television news. Regression models based on the Spring 1999 Eurobarometer allow us to examine the effects of education, socio-economic status, income, gender, age, left-right ideology, region, and nationality on regular use of television news.

The results can be compared with the social profile of newspaper users presented in Table 4.3.

The model in Table 5.5, reporting standardized beta coefficients, shows that demographic factors explain little variance in patterns of watching television news. The strongest social predictor is age, with older generations far more likely to watch, a phenomenon that previous studies have found to be associated with general patterns of leisure time⁴². In addition, those who regularly read a newspaper or listen to the radio news are more likely to tune in. The regional divide over newspaper use observed in Chapter 4 was reversed; people in Southern Europe proved more likely to watch TV news than those in the North. Some of the national variables remain significant, even after controlling for major region, suggesting that broadcasting systems and cultural habits continue to play a role in predicting viewing habits. The overall pattern suggests that while newspaper users had a clear social bias in favour of the more affluent middle class, with the exception of the appeal to older viewers, those who saw TV news proved to be a far more representative cross-section of European society.

[Table 5.6 about here]

If we turn to trends over time we can monitor the background of viewers in the smaller group of countries (France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy) included in EU surveys in 1970⁴³, 1980 and 1999. This period was selected to allow comparison of television use in 1970 when public service television predominated in Europe, compared with the late-1990s, after commercial channels had made major inroads into the mass audience. If the fragmentation of stations and the commercialization of television has produced widening disparities between the type of publics who tune in, and tune out, from the news this should be evident in this comparison. Similar regression models were run as before.

We have already observed in Table 4.5 that the regular audience for TV news (who watch everyday) expanded during the last three decades from half to three-quarters of all Europeans. Not surprisingly, the results in Table 5.6 show that the social profile of who watches the news has widened over the same period. Age has always been the strongest indicators of use of TV news, there is no trend showing a strengthening of the age gap. Most importantly, this suggests a life cycle rather than a generational effect in television habits. The most plausible reason is that older people usually turn to more sedentary television viewing as they have more leisure time and less active hobbies. Despite MTV, movie channels, and similar alternatives, younger viewers are as likely to watch TV news now as they were in the 1970s. The other coefficients show no widening social gap in who watches TV news, if anything the reverse pattern: the gender gap and income gap evident in 1970 had disappeared by 1980. Use of TV news continues to be strongly associated with reading newspapers and listening to radio news, suggesting a self-selecting mechanism at work, and there is a slight strengthening of this relationship since the 1970s. More people are therefore using multiple sources of news, supplementing newspapers with TV. There are also some important shifts at national level, for example fewer people than average used TV news in Italy in the 1970s but this pattern sharply reversed by the mid-1990s. Overall the social profile of users provides no support for the idea that television news is moving into a specialized niche audience, as some fear, rather than continuing to reach a mainstream mass audience in Europe. And television news continues to reach the parts of the European public that newspapers fail to reach.

[Table 5.6 about here]

The Implications of Structural Changes

Based on this discussion we can conclude that despite gradual convergence over the years, major structural differences continue to distinguish broadcasting systems in OECD societies. Reading the newspaper, watching television, and even surfing the Internet, is likely to prove a different experience depending upon the communications environment in countries like Sweden, Britain and the United States. Public service television, once enjoying a monopoly in many countries, has moved into a multi-channel world but it retains a considerable share of the audience and has expanded news and current affairs broadcasting. Television news is far more easily available than in previous decades and it continues to appeal to a broad cross-section of the public, more so than newspapers or the Internet. As discussed in the next chapter, use of the net has grown by leaps and bounds in the last few years but outside of Scandinavia and the United States access remains restricted, although this seems likely to change within the next decade. The overall findings tend to reinforce the conclusions of the previous chapter, namely that post-industrialized societies have experienced the emergence of what can be termed 'post-modern communications', characterized by greater diversification and multiplication of news sources, which have led towards a richer and more pluralistic news environment.

The diversification of news sources is a widely observed phenomenon, notably the breakdown of public service television monopolies throughout Europe, and the end of the predominance of the major networks in the US, due to the proliferation of rival services on cable, satellite, digital and now broadband Internet. Many deplore these developments, fearing that new technology serves to make older forms of communication redundant, if the total amount of mass communication in a society is a zero sum game. There is widespread angst in the journalism profession that tried and trusted forms of authority are toppling, new ones are not taking their place, and familiar institutions like network TV in the US or public television in Europe are in a state of flux. Technological and economic change has produced a climate of uncertainty about the future of old media like newspapers and television.

Yet in almost every case we find that new media like the Internet tend to supplement, rather than replace, the old media of newspapers and television. There may be some trade-offs, for example television surged in the 1950s during a decade of declining box-office sales at the movies. Some media replace older technologies, such as vinyl records with CDs. Nevertheless, this chapter demonstrates that the predominant trend during the twentieth century has been one of an expanding range of news media outlets, so that now we commonly tend to read newspapers as we also listen to radio news in the background, or we catch the CNN headlines online as we also surf the net. In short, in post-industrial societies the evidence we have examined shows that more sources of news are available at the end of the twentieth century than ever before, news consumption has increased, and the audience has broadened.

Most accept that there has been a diversification of news sources. Nevertheless, there remains widespread concern that the general trend has been towards a down-market popularization and homogenization of news standards. This process is believed to have led towards a gradual reduction in quality journalism, replaced by the tabloid press and tabloid TV. Yet rather than moving in a single direction, it seems more plausible to suggest that there has been greater diversification in levels and formats of news. So

at one end of the spectrum there has been an expanding popular audience in the US for such chat shows as Oprah, Jerry Springer and Howard Stern, with their emphasis on the sensational, celebrities and personal, along with 'soft news' on news magazines and local news. Yet at the same time more political information has also become available at the 'quality' end of the market, with serious coverage of international affairs from such sources as C-SPAN, CNN and National Public Radio. In Europe, cable and satellite carry music videos, porn and violent action movies to a broader audience than ever before, but they also facilitate services such as the *BBC World Service*, *Sky News* and the *Discovery Channel*, as well as stations devoted to parliamentary or public affairs coverage. And the Internet offers an even wider diversity of contents, formats and outlets.

Legitimate concerns remain about the development of niche markets, if this exacerbates the division between the information-rich and the information-poor. In the 1970s the predominance of network news in the US and the evening news on European public broadcasting channels was designed to reach a mainstream middlebrow audience. There was often a 'captive' audience, because of the limited number of channels. In the 1990s, in contrast, the pattern of diverse news outlets designed at a variety of popular and serious levels seems likely to cater to the diverse needs of different groups of the public. Some people may prefer to immerse themselves in public affairs, other opt to catch two-minutes of radio news headlines on the hour every hour between the pressures of shopping, work and children. Some readers want serious broadsheet papers while others opt for tabloids. Some surf channels while others surf the net. At least in Europe, the mainstream middlebrow evening news programs reaches more people, and a broader cross-section of the public, than in the 1970s. If we accept the assumption that political learning is facilitated, or even driven, by prior interest, then the plurality of outlets and levels can be regarded as largely healthy for democracy. Before we explore the impact of the use of television on party campaigns, we must first turn to understand the phenomenon of the Internet and its possible consequences for traditional news media and the political system.

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (New York: Norton Press, Fall 2000)

Table 5.1: The Number of National Terrestrial Television Channels, Europe and US 1980 -97

Country	Public Channels	Commercial Channels	Public Channels	C
	1980	1980	1997	
Austria	2	0	2	
Belgium	4	0	4	
Denmark	1	0	3	
Finland	2	0	2	
France	3	0	3	
Germany	3	0	5	
Greece	2	0	3	
Ireland	2	0	2	
Italy	3	0	3	
Luxembourg	0	4	0	
Netherlands	2	0	3	
Norway	1	0	2	
Portugal	2	0	2	
Spain	2	0	3	
Sweden	2	0	2	
Switzerland	3	0	4	
UK	2	1	2	
US	1	3	1	
Total Number	37	8	46	
Total Percentage	82%	18%	44%	

Source: Denis McQuail and Karen Siune. *Media Policy: Convergence, Concentration and Commerce*. London: Sage.

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (New York: Norton Press, Fall 2000)

Table 5.2: Television Indicators OECD Countries, mid-1990s

Country	TV Sets per 1000	TV Sets per 1000, 1996	Viewing times per person (min.) 1998	Audience shares of Public Channels 1997	Dominant Type	Audience share of the leading channel % 1997	% TV Households with Cable or Satellite, 1997	Year regular TV broadcasts began	Broadcasting Frequency Index 1997
Australia	109	554	194					1956	1
Austria	27	518	142	61.5	Public	ORF2	37.1	75	1956
Belgium	68	463	182	25.9	Private			92	1959
Canada		714	192						1952
Czech Rep	58	534	205	34.3	Private	Nova	53.5	32	
Denmark	119	592	162	67.0	Public	ETV	39.7	69	1954
Finland	21	605	150	47.0	Mixed	MTV3	42.0	46	1956
France	41	591	193	45.3	Mixed	TF1	34.4	20	
Germany	83	564	188	41.1	Mixed	RTL	16.1	84	1952
Greece		238	219	8.2	Private	ANT1	22.9	0	
Hungary	10	438	235	62.8	Public	MTV1	45.5	58	
Iceland		354		43.0	Mixed	Sj	43.0	30	
Ireland	17	411	194	53.0	Mixed	RTE1	37.0	43	1961
Italy	43	524	216	48.9	Mixed	RAI1	23.0	5	1954
Japan	73	684	252	26.0	Private	NHK	26.0	26	1953
Korea, S.	0	337	165						
Luxembourg	23	387				RTL	58.3	88	
Mexico	19		255						
Netherlands		514	162	36.0	Private	RTL4	21.3	99	1953
NZ	1	521	170						
Norway	13	460	151	43.2	Mixed	NRK1	40.8	57	1957

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (N Press, Fall 2000)

Poland	14	337	208	53.7	Mixed	Polsat	31.0	48	
Portugal	5	336	157	39.7	Private	SIC	48.1	23	
Spain	8	406	211	51.9	Mixed	TVE1	25.8	10	1956
Sweden	156	499	144	48.6	Mixed	SVT2	27.8	64	1956
Switzerland	24	443	159	31.9	Private	SF1/TS R1	27.0	91	1958
Turkey	0	333	235	3.0	Private	Kanal D	19.0	11	1972
UK	211	516	228	42.8	Mixed	ITV	33.5	31	1936
US	412	805	238		Private			72	1950
G7	32	628	214	41	Mixed		27	39	
EU15	4	478	183	45	Mixed		33	50	
OECD Total	8	480	181	42	Mixed		34	49	

Sources:

TV Sets per 1000 *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1998* (Paris, UNESCO)

Households with Cable or Satellite Television 98 IP Deutschland (www.ip-deutschland.de)

Audience share of the public channels *Television 98* IP Deutschland (www.ip-deutschland.de)

Classification of Predominant Public-Private TV based on the audience share of the public channels: 0-39%= Private dominant, 40-59%=Mixed, 60-100%=Public dominant.

Year regular TV broadcasts began. Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi and Pippa Norris. 1996. *Comparing Democratic Broadcasting Freedom*. Derived from Leonard R. Sussman (ed). *Press Freedom 1997*. Freedom House. (www.freedomhouse.org)
Broadcasting freedom was scaled on the basis of press freedom of laws and practices, political influence over influence over media content and actual violations of press freedom. The Freedom House score out of 60 was correct where 0= lowest and 100 = highest broadcasting freedom. Broadcasting freedom scale was then categorized where 60 through 79 = partly free and 80+ = free.

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (N Press, Fall 2000)

Table 5.3 Change in the Amount of News and Entertainment Broadcast on Public Television, 1971-96

<i>Country</i>	<i>Change in the Numbers of Hours of News and Current Affairs Broadcasting 1971-96</i>	<i>Change in the Number of Hours of Entertainment Broadcasting 1971-96</i>
Australia	+931	+42
Austria	+2489	+5105
Belgium	-507	+2321
Czech Rep	+2648	+5848
Denmark	+21	+1391
Finland	+1051	+2474
France	-464	+6448
Greece	+2709	+5324
Hungary	+3412	+2296
Ireland	+592	+4655
Italy	+7300	+12945
Korea, S.	+2751	+5195
Netherlands	+963	+2243
Norway	-115	+1342
Poland	+4195	+3698
Portugal	+2634	+12051
Spain	-238	+2469
Sweden	-1069	+992
Switzerland	+4251	+8315
Turkey	+7259	+14699
<i>EU15</i>	<i>+1290</i>	<i>+4868</i>
<i>OECD Total</i>	<i>+2041</i>	<i>+4992</i>

Note: For the full range of categories see Table 5.4.

Source: Calculated from *UNESCO Statistical Yearbooks* (Paris, UNESCO) 1971-1998.

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (New York: Russell Sage Press, Fall 2000)

Table 5.4: Changes in the Proportion of News Coverage in Public Service Broadcasting, 1971 -1996

Country	Total hours	Total Hours	News +current affairs %	News +current affairs Change %	Entertainment %	Ents change %	Educ %	Educ Change %	Culture %	Culture Change %
	1971	1996	1996	1971-96	1996	1971-96	1996	1971-96	1996	1971-96
Australia	4,186	6,280	25	9	47	-22	22	20	3	
Austria	4,394	13,779	28	-4	44	22	3	-8	7	-11
Belgium	5,174	5,597	19	-11	53	40	5	-14	6	-3
Canada	3,151	.								
Czech Rep	3,120	15,336	27	-23	39	32	4	-8	17	10
Denmark	1,976	2,956	25	-11	54	43	2	-2	13	-10
Finland	2,756	7,228	30	-11	48	10	7	-	8	3
France	7,982	17,923	13	-22	47	21	1	-20	25	13
Germany	.	6,024	36		56				4	
Greece	1,898	11,187	27	6	56	2	4	4	4	-4
Hungary	2,964	11,559	34	14	30	-10	7	-9	7	-2
Ireland	2,860	9,528	14	-12	60	22	6	-8	4	2
Italy	5,720	31,860	28	-1	43	25	5		16	11
Japan	1,523	.								
Korea, S.	4,316	18,596	20	-5	37	-3	18	17	9	-
Luxembourg	.	838	43		26		3		10	
Netherlands	4,514	8,578	27	-3	46	8	6	-2	12	9
NZ	3,380	.								
Norway	2,002	3,518	24	-24	52	27	3	-3	8	5
Poland	4,186	15,944	33	5	35	-11	11	-5	8	
Portugal	3,332	21,374	14	-1	61	26	17	11		-
Spain	5,997	7,661	21	-9	63	23	3	2	5	-10
Sweden	4,691	6,668	7	-26	48		10	10	27	27

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (New York: Norton Press, Fall 2000)

Switzerland	8,948	31,827	16	4	40	-9	1	-4	7	-11
Turkey	780	32,684	22	-5	45	7	18	6	10	-5
UK	10,296	21,144	37		33		6		25	
US	.	6500	19		36		29		16	
G7		18602	26		26		49		14	
EU15		10800	24		24		51		11	
OECD Total		13042	25		47		8		10	

Source: Calculated from *UNESCO Statistical Yearbooks* (Paris, UNESCO) 1971-1998.

US Public Television from *PTV Programming Survey* Washington DC: Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Data for Britain for network (not regional) television estimated from the BBC Annual Report 1997/98.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/info/report98>.

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (N Press, Fall 2000)

Table 5.5: Predictors of Use of Television News, EU-15 1999

	<i>Predictors of Watching TV News</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Operationalization</i>	<i>EBV</i>
DEMOGRAPHICS				
Education	-.03	*	Age finished full-time education	D8
Gender	.02	*	Male (1) Female (0)	D10
Age	.15	**	In years	D11
Left-Right Ideology	.03	*	10 point scale: From left (1) to right (10)	D1r
Socio-economic status	.01		Manual (0)/Non-manual HoH	C4
Household Income	.02		Harmonized income scale	D29
USE OF OTHER MEDIA				
Newspaper Use	.22	**	5-point scale	
Radio News Use	.11	**	5-point scale	
Online	.01		No (0)/ Yes (1)	
REGION				
Northern Europe	-.05		Denmark, Finland and Sweden	
Southern Europe	.07	*	Italy, Greece, Portugal, Spain	
NATION				
Austria	-.06	**		
Belgium	-.01			
Denmark	.02			
Finland	.04			
France	-.05	*		
Germany	-.03			
Greece	.11	**		
Ireland	.01			
Italy	.07	**		

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Netherlands	.02	
Portugal	.01	
Spain	.03	
Sweden	-.06 *	
UK	.01	
Constant	3.65	
R2	.12	
N.	16179	

Notes: The table reports the standardized beta coefficients predicting use of the news media based on ordinary regression models. The dependent variables include a 5 point scale measuring frequency of use of television news 'and 1 = 'never use'. Sig. P. **>.01 *>.05

The West European region and the UK are excluded from the categories.

Sources: EuroBarometer 50.1 Mar-Apr 1999.

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (New York: Russell Sage Press, Fall 2000)

Table 5.6: Models Predicting Viewership of TV News in 1970, 1980 and 1999, EU5

	Predictors of TV News Viewership 1970	Sig.	Predictors of TV News Viewership 1980	Sig.	Predictors of TV News Viewership 1999	Sig.	Operational: Scale
DEMOGRAPHICS							
Education	-.07	**	-.03	**	-.03		Age finished full-time (0) to 16 (1)
Gender	.04	**	.01	*	.00		Male (1) Female (0)
Age	.16	**	.09	**	.14	**	In years
Left-Right Ideology	-.01		.05	**	.04	*	Scale: From left (1) to right (5)
Socio-economic status	.01		-.05	**	.01		Manual (0)/Non-Manual (1)
Household Income	.08	**	.01	**	.01		Harmonized income scale
USE OF OTHER MEDIA							
Newspaper Use	.13	**	.21	**	.21	**	5-point scale
Radio News Use	.01		.16	**	.08	**	5-point scale
NATION							
Belgium	-.13	**	-.02	*	.01		
France	-.11	**	-.06	**	-.04	*	
Italy	-.18	**	.15	**	.12	**	
Netherlands	.01		-.03	*	.05	*	
Constant	3.3		3.25		3.65		
R²	.08		.12		.11		
N.	8567		8827		6218		

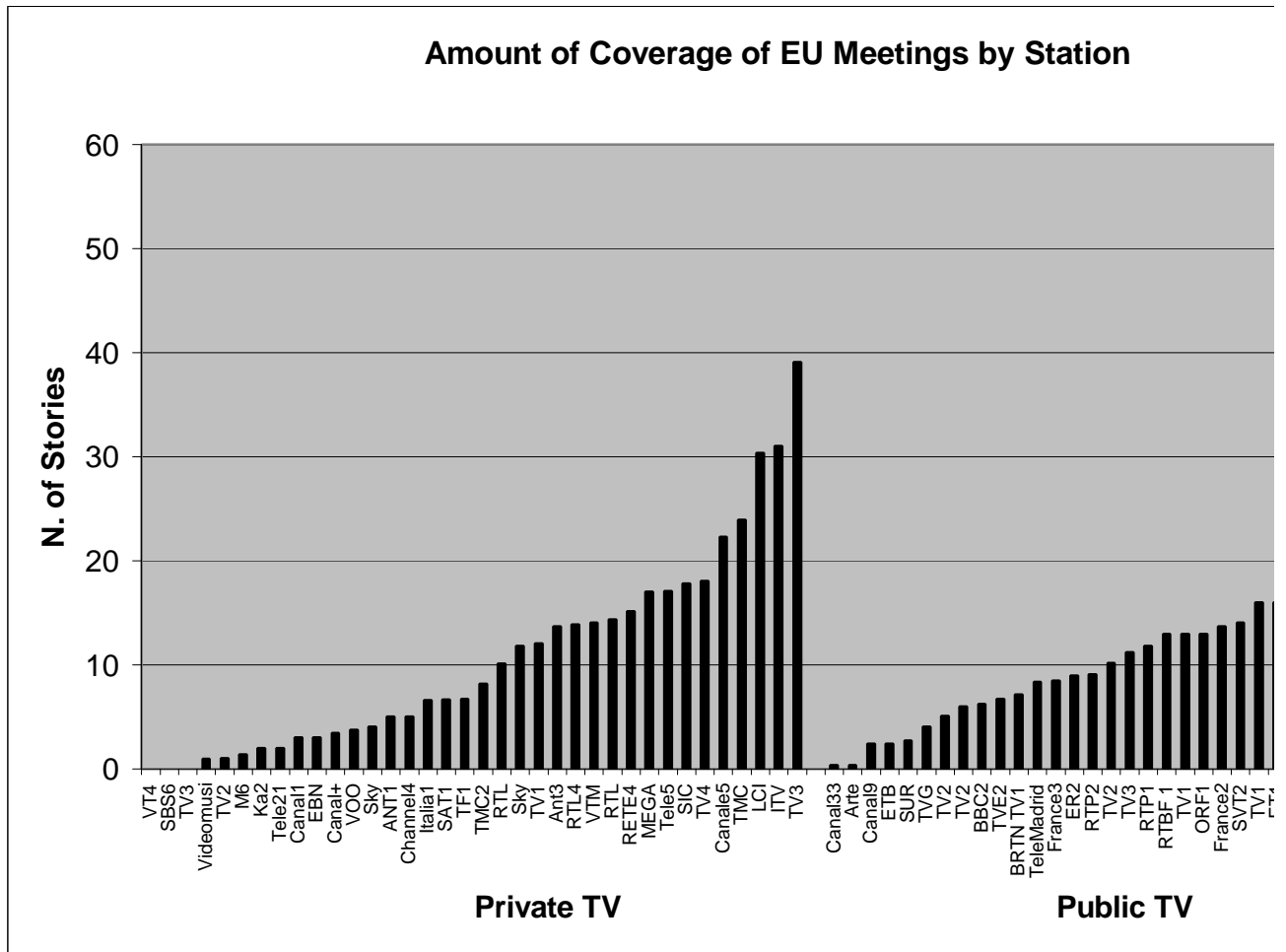
Notes: The table reports the standardized beta coefficients predicting frequency of reading newspapers based on regression models. The dependent variables are the 5 point scales measuring frequency of use of newspaper and radio news = 'everyday use' and 1 = 'never use'. Sig. P. **>.01 *>.05

The German dummy variable is excluded as a predictor in these models.

Source: European Community Study 1970; EuroBarometer 13.0 April 1980 weighted for EU6; EuroBarometer 50.1 April 1999 weighted for EU6.

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (N
Press, Fall 2000)

Figure 5.1

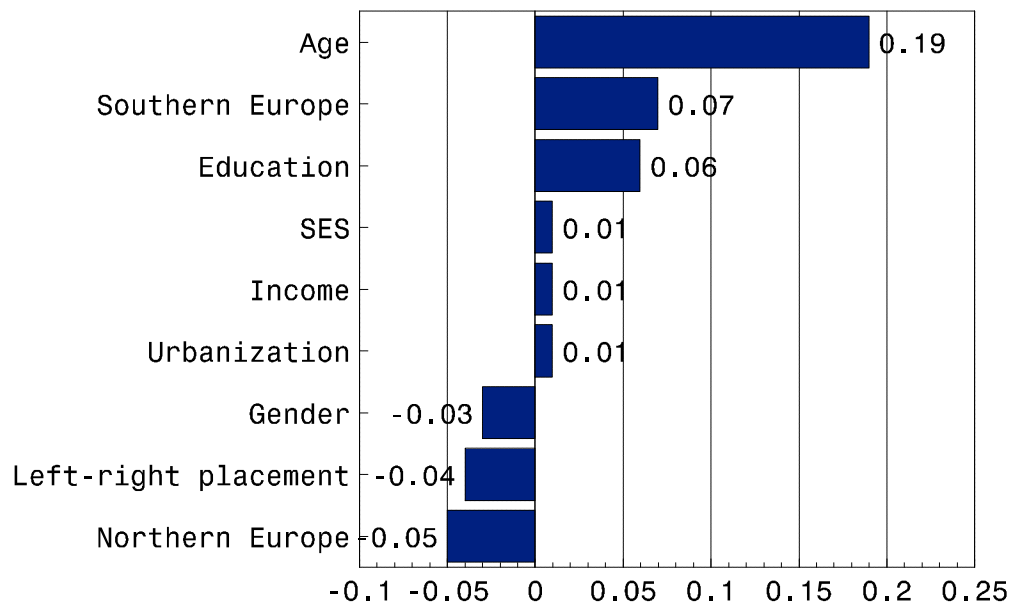


Note: Average number of stories per channel covering the Turin IGC Conference, Florence Council II.

Source: Calculated from *Monitoring Euromedia*, 1995-97, Brussels: European Commission.

Figure 5.2

Predicting Viewership of TV News



Note: Regression analysis standardized beta coefficients using a 5-point scale of frequency of use of TV News as the dependent variable. Source: Eurobarometer 1996.

¹ Yves Achille and Jacques Ibanez Bueno. 1994. *Les televisions publiques en quete d'avenir*. Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble.

² Patrick O'Neill. 1998. *Post-Communism and the Media in Eastern Europe*. London: Frank Cass.

³ Penn Kimball. 1994. *Downsizing The News: Network Cutbacks in the Nation's Capital*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

⁴ For a discussion of these global developments see UNESCO. 1998. *World Communication Report: The Media and the Challenge of the new technologies*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

⁵ It is worth noting that Finland had a commercial channel in 1959 but this subsequently became absorbed into the public system, while Italy went commercial from 1976 onwards. There are various accounts of recent developments in European broadcasting. For a country-by-country overview see Bernt Stubbe Ostergaard. 1997. *The Media in Western Europe*. London: Sage; Anthony Smith. 1979. Ed. *Television and Political Life*. London: Macmillan; Anthony Smith. 1980. *Newspapers and Democracy: International Essays on a Changing Medium*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press; Philip T. Rosen. 1988. *International Handbook of Broadcasting Systems*. New York: Greenwood Press; Roger Wallis and Stanley Baran. 1991. *The Known World of Broadcast News*. London: Routledge; Peter J. Humphreys. 1996. *Mass Media and Media Policy in Western Europe*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Lynne Schafer Gross. 1995. *The International World of Electronic Media*. New York: McGraw Hill; James Coleman and Brigitte Rollet. 1997. *Television in Europe*. Exeter: Intellect; Kay Richardson and Ulrike H. Meinhof. 1999. *Worlds in Common? Television Discourse in a Changing Europe*. London: Routledge; Karen Siune and W. Truetschler. Eds. 1992. *Dynamics of Media Politics: Broadcasting and Electronic Media in Western Europe*. London: Sage.

⁶ Jay Blumler. 1992. *Television and the Public Interest: Vulnerable Values in West European Broadcasting*. London: Sage. Chapter 2. See also the discussion in Michael Tracey. 1998. *The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 2.

⁷ Dave Atkinson and Marc Raboy. 1997. *Public Service Broadcasting: The Challenges of the 21st Century*. Paris: UNESCO; Eli Noam. 1991. *Television in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Serge Robillard. 1995. *Television in Europe: Regulatory Bodies, Status, Functions and Powers in 35 European Countries*. London: John Libby.

⁸ Hans J. Kleinsteuber. 1997. 'Federal Republic of Germany.' In *The Media in Western Europe* edited by Bernt Stubbe Ostergaard. London: Sage.

⁹ Bernard Lamizet. 1996. 'The Media in France'. In *Markets & Myths: Forces for Change in the European Media*, edited by Tony Weymouth and Bernard Lamizet. London: Longman; Michael Palmer and Claude Sorbets. 1997. 'France.' In *The Media in Western Europe* edited by Bernt Stubbe Ostergaard. London: Sage.

¹⁰ See Panayote Elias Dimitras. 1997. 'Greece'. In *The Media in Western Europe* edited by Bernt Stubbe Ostergaard. London: Sage.

¹¹ Patrick O'Neill. 1998. *Post-Communism and the Media in Eastern Europe*. London: Frank Cass.

¹² *European Key Facts: Television 98*. IP.

¹³ Yves Achille and Jacques Ibanez Bueno. 1994. *Les television publiques en quete d'avenir*. Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble.

¹⁴ Mediametrie. 1999. *One Television Year in the World. 1998*. Paris: Mediametrie.

¹⁵ Stig Hadenius. 1992. 'Vulnerable Values in a Changing Political and Media System: The Case of Sweden.'. In Jay G. Blumler (ed). *Television and the Public Interest*. London: Sage.

¹⁶ Karl Erik Gustafsson and Olof Hulten. 1996. 'Sweden'. In *The Media in Western Europe* edited by Bernt Stubbe Ostergaard. London: Sage.

¹⁷ Asa Briggs. 1985. *The BBC: The First Fifty Years*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Geoffrey Cox. 1983. *See It Happen: The Making of ITN*. London: The Bodley Head Ltd.

¹⁸ This body was originally called the Independent Television Authority and then the Independent Broadcasting Authority. The ITC came into being in 1990.

¹⁹ Independent Television Commission. *Factfile 1997*. London: ITC.

²⁰ S.W. Head, C.H. Stirling and L.B. Schofield. Eds. 1994. *Broadcasting in America: A Survey of Electronic Media*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

²¹ See *Statistical Yearbook of the United States*. 1998. Washington, DC: XXXX

²² For a discussion see William Baker and George Dessart. 1998. *Down the Tube*. New York: Basic Books.

²³ The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. *Media Consumption Survey 24 April-11 May 1998*. N. 3002.

²⁴ Richard Davis and Diane Owen. 1998. *New Media and American Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P.136

²⁵ Penn Kimball. 1994. *Downsizing The News: Network Cutbacks in the Nation's Capital*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

²⁶ Mediametrie. 1999. *One Television Year in the World. 1998*. Paris: Mediametrie.

²⁷ Tod Gitlin. 1983. *Inside Prime Time*. New York: Pantheon; Lance W. Bennett. 1996. *News: The Politics of Illusion*. New York: Longman. P.15-23

²⁸ Tony Weymouth and Bernard Lamizet. Eds. 1996. *Markets & Myths: Forces for Change in the European Media*. London: Longman. P.214.

²⁹ David K. Scott and Robert H. Gobeze. 199X. 'Hard News/Soft News Content of the National Broadcast Networks, 1972-1987.' *Journalism Quarterly*. 69(2): 406-412.

³⁰ Ed Diamond. 1982. *Sign Off: The Last Days of Television*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press; David L. Altheide. 1976. *Creating Reality: How TV News Distorts Events*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage; David L. Altheide. 1985. *Media Power*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

³¹ See, for example, Neil Postman. 1985. *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. London: Methuen; Neil Gabler. 1998. *Life the Movie*. New York: Alfred Knopf; James McCartney. 1997. 'News Lite.' *American Journalism Review*. June:18-25.

³² Heinderyckx

³³ Kees Brant and Karen Siune. 1998. 'Politization in decline?' In Denis McQuail and Karen Siune. Eds. *Media Policy: Convergence, Concentration and Commerce*. London: Sage.

³⁴ Barbara Pfetsch. 1996. 'Convergence through Privatization? Changing Media Environments and Televised Politics in Germany.' *European Journal of Communication*. 11(4): 427-51.

³⁵ L. Canninga. 1994. 'Een vergelijkende analyse van de nieuwscultuur in de buitenlandse berichtgeving op BRTN, VTM, NOS en RTL.' *Media and Maatschappij*. 4(1); H. Hvitfelt. 1994 'The Commercialization of the Evening news: Changes in Narrative Techniques in Swedish TV news'. *The Nordicom Review*. 2: 33-41; A. Powers, H. Kristjansdottir and H. Sutton. 1994. 'Competition in Danish Television News.' *The Journal of Media Economics*. 7(4): 21-30.

³⁶ Asa Briggs. 1985. *The BBC: The First Fifty Years*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Geoffrey Cox. 1983. *See It Happen: The Making of ITN*. London: The Bodley Head Ltd.

³⁷ Pippa Norris et al. 1999. *On Message: Communicating the Campaign*. London: Sage. Chapter 2. If anything, the BBC produced the most negative coverage of the government, not commercial TV news. The abandonment of ITN's flagship *News at Ten* in 1999 may, however, change the amount of coverage on commercial channels in subsequent elections.

³⁸ McLachlan, Shelley. 1999. 'Who's Afraid of the News Bunny? The Changing Face of the Television Evening News Broadcast.' *Information and Democracy Research Project: Working Paper No.3*. Loughborough, Loughborough University.

³⁹ All the Italian public television stations gave considerable attention to these events, probably because of the location of the Turin and Florence meetings.

⁴⁰ Russell Neuman. 1991. *The Future of the Mass Audience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴¹ Mediametrie. 1999. *One Television Year in the World: 1998*. Paris: Mediametrie.

⁴² See Pippa Norris, John Curtice, David Sanders, Margaret Scammell and Holli Semetko. 1999. *On Message: Communicating the Campaign*. London: Sage.

⁴³ The 1970 data is from the European Community Study, the precursor to the Eurobarometer series.