

RIPE@DIALOGUE. A WEBINAR SERIES ON UNIVERSALISM AND PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN, SEPTEMBER 9, 16, AND 23, 2020

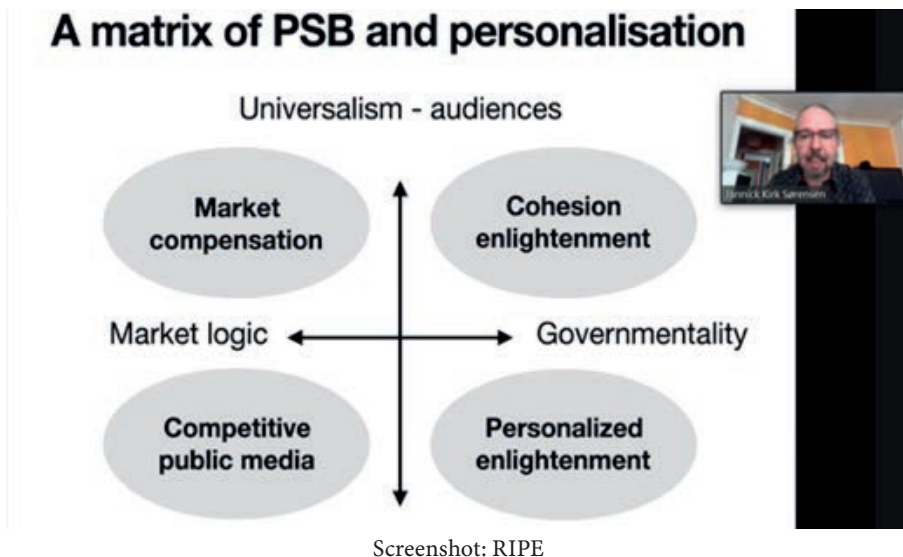
The three-part webinar series, entitled RIPE@Dialogues, was dedicated to discussing the issue of the need to revitalize the universalism mission by re-envisioning its conceptual and practical dimensions. RIPE@Dialogues were hosted online by the International Association of Public Media Researchers (IAMPR) and co-curated by Nordicom at the University of Gothenburg. The seminars were organized with the support of the CORDI Research Consortium, University of Helsinki, and Tampere University.

The first session took place on September 9th 2020, and was focused on fundamentals – it addressed the foundations of universalism and their translation to current contexts. At the beginning of the session, a few words of introduction were spoken by Lizzie Jackson (London South Bank University), who is the President of the International Association of Public Media Researchers. Afterward, Barbara Thomaß (Ruhr-University Bochum) gave a presentation on the history of universalism and PSM, as well as modern statehood. She claimed that universalism emerged as an intellectual reality to promote the idea of equality and, although the concept becomes more and more inclusive, in practice there are more exclusions. Later on Peter Goodwin (University of Westminster) argued that in the current, digital age, the PSB concept evolves into PSM, which also signifies that the content (no longer limited geographically) is delivered through all possible platforms, and this situation poses new opportunities and challenges. During the discussion dedicated to the fundamentals section, the case of tension between the presumed universality of rights and the individuals granted those rights was raised. There were also comments on the challenge to change the basis of universalism, as currently it is not just based on European ideals but is a global concept.

The following session, addressing the practical aspects of PSM organizations and the challenge of universalism, occurred on September 16th 2020. Hilde Van den Bulck (Drexel University) with Karen Donders (Free University of Brussels-VUB) presented the first example using their research of the universality of PSM and preschool audiences in Flanders. The main conclusion is that there is a broader trend where public broadcasters while trying to maintain their position in the highly competitive environment, relinquish the principle of universality, which in turn is being gradually eroded. Next, the webinar

attendees had the opportunity to listen to a speech given by Julie Mønter Lassen (University of Copenhagen), who presented the example of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation. She focused on the multi-channel strategy and the issue of audience fragmentation and said that PSM can be valuable only while being used by the people, so it is crucial to curate the content in a way that the public knows about its variety. The discussion devoted to PSM's practical aspects contained many interesting cases, such as the case of a "too successful" PSM raised by Gregory F. Lowe (Northwestern University in Qatar) or the issue of public support addressed by Philip Savage (McMaster University). Moreover, Roberto Suárez Candel (European Broadcasting Union) noted that the discussion highlighted the case of how *ex-ante* regulation kills innovation.

Figure 1. Jannick Kirk Sørensen's presentation during Session 3 of RIPE@Dialogue.



The third and final session, addressing the (near) futures of universalism, such as datafication, took place on September 23rd 2020. Firstly, Jannick Kirk Sørensen (Aalborg University) gave a presentation on personalized Universalism in the Age of Algorithms. Starting with the tension between the public and private media, he introduced the concept of „personalized enlightenment”, describing an editorially curated recommendation system, (which takes into account the PSM values) of the content of high relevance to individual citizens. Next was a speech by Michał Głowacki (University of Warsaw) who with Lizzie Jackson conducted research on creative media clusters. The presentation focused on the differences in organizational cultures between high tech companies and PSM, which have often been described as „fortresses”, which believe they have done enough regarding adaptation to the new media environment. During the

discussion, it was noted that there is often an assumption that PSM organizations are unified. However it was stressed that the organizations, despite their similar structures, do vary greatly, and there are even internal antagonisms, sometimes even between specific divisions or departments, resulting in resistance to change due to competition over resources. The case of PSM's dialogue and interaction with society were also discussed.

The webinar series pointed out the crucial challenges that PSM are currently facing. It also provided the chance to share and discuss best practices regarding PSM organizations and their attempts to adapt to the modern, digital environment. Both organizers, speakers, and debaters agreed that this was a great opportunity for the reflection on universalism and PSM.

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