

Researching Public Service Broadcasting

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Abstract:

The chapter provides an overview and a critical discussion of research on public service broadcasting. We identify and discuss four strands of research. First, policy studies: analyses of the changing conditions for public service broadcasting in the wake of increased competition, new technologies, privatization and globalization. Second, the related strand of institutional studies: studies of how traditional public service companies have responded and adapted to changing circumstances. Third, a strand focusing more explicitly on the role of public service in social and democratic life of modern nation-states. Fourth, and more tentatively, an emerging strand of post-modern approaches, critical of the modernist stance of the public service and democracy studies, and more explicitly inspired by the transformative potentials of new communication technologies.

The chapter in turn discusses these four strands of research, concentrating on the merits and limitations of each one. Throughout, we draw particularly on literature from Scandinavia, the UK and German-speaking countries, but also include key works from other countries with distinct public service broadcasting traditions. The discussion leads us to point to remaining tensions, and suggest directions for further research.

Citation:

Moe, Hallvard and Trine Syvertsen (2009) "Researching Public Service Broadcasting" pp. 398-412 in K. Wahl-Jorgensen and T. Hanitzsch (eds) *Handbook of Journalism Studies*. New York, London: Routledge.