

Monika Djerf-Pierre & Mats Ekström, *A history of Swedish Broadcasting - Communicative ethos, genres and institutional change* (Göteborg: Nordicom, 2013)

As explained in the book's foreword, it draws on a large scale research programme that has been underway since 1993 and is the basis of a large body of empirical studies that have been published in the last decade or two. This book builds on selected parts of these extensive studies and is supposed to give insight into the development of this form of media through description and analysis of some formative features and trajectories of Swedish broadcasting.

Although one might think by glancing over the titles and the subject matter of the 16 chapters of the book that its content was a somewhat disjointed collection of essays by different authors, such an assumption would be a serious mistake. In fact the book is carefully structured and each chapter fits like a piece in a puzzle into the overall picture that the book draws up. In that respect the introductory chapter by the editors, Ekström and Djerf-Pierre, is extremely important, drawing up the framework and creating the connections needed to tie the different chapters together into a coherent whole. Similarly the "Reflections" at the end of the book by Paddy Scannel draw together the different threads and create a focus on the role of Swedish broadcasting in broadening, deepening and in fact creating the shared experiences of a general public. "Pea soup, pancakes and *The Children's Letter Box* on Thursdays, Ingemar Stenmark and Bjorn Borg at the height of their powers, the Nobel Prize ceremony, a royal wedding, New Year's Eve and *Dinner for One* - these and much more besides are trace-marks of the shared and sharable experience of what being Swedish has meant and continues to mean in the output of national radio and television" (Scannel, p. 365). Thus the structure of the book is solid and the editors succeed in creating a comprehensive work with an inner logic.

The main part of the book, in between the Introduction and the Reflections at the end, is divided into five distinct parts or themes. Each theme is important for the analysis and description of the Swedish broadcasting history. The first part is labelled "*Innovations: Technologies for Broadcast Communication*". Here the topic concerns early introduction of radio and television and different stages in the historical development all the way up to the distribution technology of the satellite. The second theme is focused on the audience perspective and is titled "*Audience Orientation and the Communicative Ethos of Public Broadcasting*". Here the subject matter relates to technologies of audience-making, on the one hand, and children's public service programmes on the other. The third theme deals with

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the people that work in the broadcasting field and is entitled "*Media professionals: occupational strategies, norms and practices*". In this section the focus is on the recruitment of media professionals and the different patterns that emerge in different periods. Furthermore, important changes in the conception of the role of journalists in Sweden are discussed. This includes the advent of independent and more adversarial journalism as well as the transformation and shaping of the broadcast media of the field of political communication. The fourth major theme dealt with in the book is called "*Development of broadcast genres*". In particular chapters in this section deal with sports reporting, documentaries, entertainment and the creation of a new genre, environmental reporting. All these occupy an important post in the development of broadcasting and the relationship between broadcasting and the audiences. The fifth and final theme discussed in a section of the book is "*Institutional changes: the example of news and current affairs*". Here an institutional approach is suggested to examine the "mezzo-level in between the individual media organizations and the society at large". In both chapters under this theme the spotlight is put on the development of news and current affairs. Four definite stages of "journalistic regimes" are identified in Sweden up to 2005, where the determining factor is the conceived role of journalism. The first being the role of the "public educator" that develops into an "information purveyor", who in turn became the "watchdog and pedagogue" in the mid-1960s and ends up as the "interpreting ombudsman" around 1985 and up to the first decade of this century. Also this section looks at the impact of deregulation and increased market competition on the concept and idea of Public Service Broadcasting (PBS) in Sweden and suggests that the PBS has indeed been more influential on commercial broadcasting than vice versa.

All in all the book gives an interesting and enlightening overview of Swedish broadcast history and answers many important questions. Some of these questions deal with details and even technical matters that are important at some stage of broadcasting history. Other questions deal with bigger issues of continuity and change and the links to other media and institutions as well as society in general. It can be difficult to pick and choose what to include in a comprehensive work like the history of Swedish broadcasting, but the mixture provided in the book works well and meets its overall purpose. This is a volume of about 379 pages and the publishers and editors probably faced the question whether they had not reached the optimal size limit. Therefore it might not be realistic to suggest that one theme or chapter could have been added that might have made this contribution even more interesting for present-day discussion. The impact of digitalization - with social media and online viewing habits - on all spheres of Swedish broadcasting and indeed broadcasting everywhere is an

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interesting question that is left practically unaddressed. To be sure, this is a historical work, not necessarily dealing with the problems of the present. Still, it is through history that lessons can be learned about the present and the future and in the book extensive analyses are presented on the impact of technological change on broadcasting and the forms of public communication. Even a short elaborative chapter under the last “Reflections” on the lessons of history and the future of broadcast might, in this reviewer’s opinion, have been an “icing on the cake”.

The book as an artefact is flawless. The font is well readable and so is the layout in general. The appendix on the history of the Swedish Foundation of Broadcast Media is interesting and so is the nice cover picture of a man and a woman listening to the radio, from an oil painting by Axel Sjöberg in 1935.

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