

Renewing a penniless – but tremendously creative – old institution: ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the BBC!

by

■ Catherine Smadja-Froguel ■

Former Head of Special projects, BBC

Overview

The fact that it is sometimes referred to by its nickname 'Auntie' shows the extent to which the BBC has become an institution in the United Kingdom: 91 % of the British population has access to it. It is an old institution which is preparing to celebrate its centenary. At a time when the concept of state-owned broadcasting is being questioned, it has had its own share of budget cutbacks and staff reductions. It is an old, penniless institution which is regularly called into question. Yet, the BBC is recognised throughout the world as a model of excellence and creativity, covering a very large spectrum ranging from promoting musical talent to the production of critically acclaimed wildlife documentaries. It also shows a programme about cars which has served as a gold standard for forty years, and has successfully managed the shift towards modern TV series. The BBC is a surprising paradox which cares about several factors. These include its history (which has kept the BBC strong in spite of criticism); the relationship it has built with its audience; and its tendency to take risks, for continuous improvement and for the provision of a public service.

Report by Sophie Jacolin • Translation by Rachel Marlin

The 'Association des Amis de l'École de Paris du management' organises discussions and distributes the minutes, these are the sole property of their authors. The Association can also distribute the comments arising from these documents.

Seminar organised thanks to the sponsors of the École de Paris du management:

Algoé¹ • Carewan¹ • Chaire Futurs de l'industrie et du travail • Chaire Mines urbaines • Danone • EDF • Else & Bang • ENGIE • Executive Master – École polytechnique • Fabernovel • Groupe BPCE • Groupe OCP • GRTgaz • IdVectoR² • IPAG Business School • L'Oréal • La Fabrique de l'industrie • MINES ParisTech • RATP • Syndicat des entreprises de l'économie numérique et des technologies nouvelles³ • université Mohammed VI Polytechnique • UIMM • Ylios¹

1. for the Business Life seminar / 2. for the Technological Resources and Innovation seminar/ 3. for the Digital Transformations seminar

The BBC started a hundred years ago, and is now present in almost all households throughout the United Kingdom: this familiarity has earned it its affectionate nickname of ‘Auntie’. Neither age nor the drastic budgetary restrictions it has suffered have affected its creativity. Where has it found the resources to ‘bounce back’ and renew itself? Some of the reasons for the Beeb’s (as it is also known) creative longevity are due to various factors, such as its independence from the government and advertisers, comprehensive analyses of its audiences, its reasonable use of exclusively public funding, in-house collaborations and pooling of resources, control of its own productions, and technological innovation.

I joined the BBC after I started my career in France. I first worked for the French Finance ministry and then for Catherine Trautmann who was the French Culture minister at the time. Following this, I was seconded to the audio-visual directorate of the British Ministry for Culture and Communications, and was put in charge of distribution strategy and then ‘Special projects’ at the BBC. This gave me the opportunity to examine this venerable institution from the inside, and to see how it differed from the French state audio-visual sector.

One hundred years of innovation and organic growth

A protective status

The BBC has been a pioneer in audio-visual technologies since it began. The innovations of its engineers have presented opportunities to test new programmes. Its story began in 1920 when John Reith created the 2LO radio transmitter which broadcast for 45 minutes every day. Very soon afterwards, the first magazine which listed programme times, ‘Radio Times’, was published. It still exists today. From 1924, the 2LO transmitter officially gave the time and became the standard for all the clocks in the country, especially those in train stations.

In 1927, with by-elections looming, the government realised that radio was the ideal means of making its voice heard. The UK parliament moved quickly to protect its independence, and voted to create the British Broadcasting Corporation by Royal Charter. Since this time, this status has preserved the BBC to a greater or lesser extent from government pressure. Over the years, the Beeb has become an essential link in British political life, and it is constantly aware of the need for impartiality and independence.

A list of inventions

The BBC was the first communications company to make a live radio broadcast by a head of state when in 1932 King George V broadcast his Christmas Message. Four years later, BBC Television was officially launched, broadcasting for one hour each day. The BBC’s first television outside broadcast (OB) took place in 1937, with the coronation of King George VI.

After 1937, the BBC started developing its own means of production which became a crucial factor in its existence. Numerous innovations followed: the launch of a broadcast in Arabic in 1938 which heralded the beginnings of the widely broadcast BBC World Service; the creation of a record company (1940); the first broadcast made by women for women (1946); the first television news broadcast and retransmission of the Olympic Games due to the BBC’s OB trucks (1948); the first live weather programme and the creation of an in-house team of meteorologists; the first simultaneous satellite broadcast for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (1953); and the launch of the well-known children’s programme, ‘Blue Peter’ in 1958 which is still running today.

In 1970, the BBC launched the Open University channel in order to help to contribute to the education of its fellow citizens. The courses on offer range from completing a philosophy degree, to learning to read and mending a tap. Today, the Open University still plays a key role in the continuing education of the British

population. In 1982, the BBC gave all 11-year-old schoolchildren a personal computer which it had invented, and the Open University gave them lessons in computer coding.

Technology developed by the BBC in the 1990s launched digital broadcasting in the UK. Half of the DAB (Digital Audio Broadcasting) patents belong to the BBC, but the BBC gave them to manufacturers free of charge. In 2006, it worked with NHK, the Japanese public television company, to perfect Super HiVision technology.

In order to reach out to and be in touch with the entire population, the BBC wants to reflect the diversity of the country and connect with every person on an individual level. In some cases, if one wants to be understood, it would be best to have a Scottish accent on Scottish television! For this reason, the BBC created branches in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Their services are just as comprehensive as those in London. Some of their programmes are broadcast during slots for regional programmes whereas others are broadcast simultaneously throughout the country. There is also a channel in Gaelic (BBC Alba in Scotland) and a Welsh-speaking channel (S4C, which initially was independent but was taken over by the BBC following a request by the government). The BBC transfers programmes to the Irish channel, TG4, which broadcasts in Gaelic in Northern Ireland.

In 2008, television channels in Arabic and Persian were launched. At this time, the British government thought it was necessary to relay independent news to Iran and other Arab countries. The BBC is nonetheless completely independent in its choice of content for these programmes.

Among work currently in progress, the BBC is developing a system which would allow the British public to protect its personal information on line. This is clearly nothing to do with radio or television, but, because it is present in the digital sector, the BBC considers that it should provide the British public with this service.

Growing and getting closer to its audiences

The BBC did not become a global media company overnight. It evolved through time, growing organically and attempting to maintain closer connections with the British population. Today, its activities include radio, television, external audio-visual broadcasting, on line services, archiving, R&D, training, production and distribution.

From its experience over the years, the BBC has developed two key strengths: the trust it has been given by its fellow citizens, and its ability to reach out to diverse audiences. Today, the BBC exists in 91 % of British homes, and no fewer than 88 % of young people use 'Bitesize', its free on line study support resource, for exam revision. On April Fool's Day, when its star wildlife presenter David Attenborough broadcast a documentary showing flocks of penguins migrating towards the Tropics, everyone believed him! Even the TV news channel Sky News! This exemplifies the level of trust the British public has in the BBC!

Complex governance which guarantees independence

Even though the BBC has followed various models of governance, they have all preserved the institution's independence. This independence is based on four tenets: a charter which frees it from political power; a transparent selection process when appointing its directors; freedom in day-to-day management; and, finally, no advertising.

Independence at all costs

BBC journalists are free to make their editorial choices, including their own hierarchy. They are the first ones to criticise the BBC, as shown recently by the case they filed against the BBC for employee gender discrimination.

The government does not get involved either in the functioning of the BBC or its programmes. Of course, it can report the bias of a programme, and would do so by filing a complaint to OFCOM (the telecommunication regulator) like any member of the public or body. The BBC never sends any of its executive committee's files to the government. It has a charter, public service tasks, objectives and a budget, and is free to organise itself

as it sees fit. If the results of its missions are not convincing, the board may choose not to renew the directors at the end of their terms.

This does not mean to say that relations between the BBC and the government are always non-controversial. Matters came to a climax in 2003 when a journalist, citing a reliable source, denied the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the presence of which had been the pretext for going to war against Saddam Hussein. The source in question – David Kelly, a Ministry of Defence official – was not cited, but the information revealed was sufficiently precise that he felt threatened and committed suicide. The affair caused a huge scandal, and the BBC was accused of interfering in international affairs. The Director General resigned, not because he made public the information questioning the politics of the then Prime Minister Tony Blair, but because David Kelly committed suicide.

Balanced governance

The BBC board is in charge of formulating strategy and protecting the public's interests, thereby occupying a role between that of a supervisory board and a management board. It consists of ten non-executive members including a Chairman, four representatives from each nation of the UK (Scotland, England, Wales, and Northern Ireland), and five independent individuals co-opted by the board's nominations committee. There are four other executive board members, including the Director General (DG) of the BBC (appointed by the board of directors, the DG ensures the group's editorial direction), and three operational managers appointed by the board on recommendations made by the Director General. Currently, these are the director for news and current affairs, the managing director of BBC Studios, and the director of nations and regions.

The appointment of board members is transparent and in keeping with the usual procedure regarding recruitment for British civil servants. A call for candidates is published and the application forms are examined by a selection committee which consists of a member of the public appointments commission, two civil servants (in this case, from the Ministry for Culture and Communications), and two independent individuals chosen by the appropriate ministry. The definition of the job description and necessary profile is established in conjunction with the BBC. The BBC sends a presentation folder to the shortlisted candidates who all receive the same information. This recruitment process is in contrast to that at France Télévisions where even a candidate applying for the position of president of France Télévisions has no means of knowing the company's exact accounts: how can one possibly develop a strategic project in such conditions?

The candidate selected by the committee is then summoned to a cultural affairs commission in the House of Commons. The commission writes a report and submits a recommendation for appointment to the Queen.

A global media company with cross-functional organisation

The BBC has continued to redesign its operations as it has grown and diversified. Today, its organisation reflects perfectly the global media company which it has become. Former radio, television, and digital sector directors have now become content directors, news and current affairs directors or in charge of international programmes, working across all the media channels. BBC staff have been consulted about obstacles they have faced on a daily basis, and the tools which could make their work easier and encourage creativity. Working in silos (whereby staff are discouraged from sharing information across divisions) used to exist at the BBC. This method hampered innovation and confined employees to a routine. It has since been abolished. It is an advantage for journalists who have always been in the radio sector to work with specialists in the television or the social media sector. They can exchange work practices and have a better understanding of how the public receives news and information. People can learn from each other and all the employees are obliged to move between departments.

At the same time, the BBC enlisted help from consultants to review the size of its support functions department, and assess, for example, the number of human resources officers necessary to manage a certain number of people.

Over the past twelve years, because it has pooled its services and changed its support functions, the BBC has reduced the cost structure in its budget from 12 % to 5 %. The fact that the BBC is financed with public money forces it to seek cost-effective solutions and be transparent. Incidentally, the salaries of its employees are available to the public.

The strength of the news factory

The BBC would not be what it is today without its powerful news service, the largest in the world, bringing together 2,000 journalists and 250 correspondents in 50 offices abroad. The fact that its resources are shared in a pooled organisation creates an impressively efficient system, and one where it can still enjoy keen editorial rigour. The BBC would rather be the second news organisation to announce a piece of breaking news rather than the first to report a scoop, for fear of making a mistake. This is in contrast to Sky News which is always looking for a scoop.

All BBC journalists work together in the same editorial room, regardless of media or speciality (radio, television, digital, national or international news, etc.). They share their subject matter and lend each other a helping hand. For example, if a news story breaks in the Crimea, the Ukrainian specialist and his Russian colleague can consult each other and take part in the television news programme from the studio next door. All resources which are produced are shared by everyone: images or interviews can immediately be shared throughout the BBC community by means of the in-house news access system. More often than not, just one journalist covers an event and collects the news necessary for the radio, television and digital departments so that each media does not have to send its own team. This clearly reduces costs.

Giving the public value for money

The BBC is obsessed about how it can produce a better service for the British public. It is constantly asking itself this question, and the general public, those in the front line, let the BBC know. All BBC's strategic projects are reviewed within the BBC and by outsiders, including the public. The projects are then modified accordingly and made public. Appraisals are made every year. This choice and ability to consult the British population is one of the reasons why the BBC is so appreciated by the general public: sometimes as many as 600,000 people fill out their questionnaires! Needless to say, the BBC does not seek the government's opinion about its strategy.

Its own commercial revenues

The production studio which the BBC founded when it started, BBC Studios, has considerable commercial revenues. It produces content for both the parent company and for others (including private TV channels in the UK like ITV). It invests in independent producers and sells its programmes both in the UK and abroad. The BBC makes £243 million from the sales made from its content because, unlike France Télévisions, it owns the content rights. This makes a huge difference.

The key advantage of BBC Studios is that it is involved in the early stages of production of programme creation, and therefore it can advise the BBC on its programme orientation. In other words, it can advise the BBC about whether a content is appropriate for a specific geographical location or partner, or whether another programme is 'too British' and would be more commercial if it broadened its horizons.

This is not to suggest that BBC Studios is the BBC's official producer. For example, if the BBC director of content had a new TV series project, she would invite pitches from various producers, including BBC Studios. BBC Studios would only be chosen if it had the best pitch. Because there is no guarantee that BBC Studios will be chosen every time by the BBC, it has to demonstrate tremendous creativity. Lastly, the fact that BBC Studios has recently been able to produce programmes for third parties will mean that the BBC should be able to hold on to its talented employees: if they have the opportunity to take part in a diverse range of projects, beyond the realms of public service, then they will be less tempted to look outside the BBC.

No advertising = freedom!

The cost of the UK and French audio-visual licence fees is similar, and the conditions for taxpayers are the same. Therefore, the BBC and the French national audio-visual sector have almost the same financial resources. The latter, however, is fragmented and this makes it less efficient.

British public television is the primary beneficiary (55 %) of the British licence fee, followed by radio (17 %), external audio-visual broadcasting (10 %), and the digital sector (9 %). The public programme budget is £1.2 billion: £870 million for BBC One and £325 million for BBC Two. France Télévisions' programme budget is much less!

The absence of advertising is the best way to guarantee creativity at the BBC, because it gives the BBC tremendous independence economically, and enables it to take risks, enjoy a certain degree of freedom, and to be innovative. The challenge is not to reach out to a target which interests advertisers, but to focus on a specific audience with whom one wants to create a relationship, such as young adults (for example, by the creation of top sporting programmes) or teenagers (with educational programmes), gourmets, or golfers. In order to appeal to each of these audiences, one has to surprise and captivate them, and respond intelligently to their needs. In other words, one must innovate. This innovation is not limited to a few key programmes, but is true across the board, from children's programmes to religious broadcasts: a case in point is a programme which deals with Islam in a very original way.

Even though the BBC has no advertising public, it still carries out an extremely detailed qualitative analysis of its audience, unlike that which exists in France. The results of this analysis directly benefit subsequent programme development. Conclusions of research carried out about audiences and the exploration of new technological opportunities made by the in-house R&D team, help refine programme content. This then sets in motion a virtuous, creative circle which never loses sight of the BBC's most important catchphrase: serving the British public, in one way or another.

Discussion



A speaker: *How did a Frenchwoman like you manage to gain access to such an important position in the BBC?*

Catherine Smadja-Froguel: Having worked for a British ministry, I knew one of the directors at the BBC, and she offered me a job. The fact that I was French was of no importance: the BBC employs many different nationalities. At first, I was in charge of distribution strategy, and afterwards I managed the 'Special projects' department. Special projects are either projects which are expedited by the Director General or ones which are not faring as well as expected. During my time there, they covered a wide range of topics. For example, I had to conduct a study about how to broadcast BBC channels in terrestrial high-definition mode, while at the same time I had to give our main rivals this same opportunity. In a completely different vein, I orchestrated another project to reorganise support functions. The objectives were very clear: I had to find £450 million; transfer 1,500 people to the BBC Manchester site; and reduce the number of senior managers by 80, but increase the diversity of those remaining.

The advantages of pooling resources

Speaker: *How does the BBC manage to maintain such a high level of quality, in contrast to its French counterpart which has the same resources?*

C. S.-F.: It is true that the BBC and France Télévisions have identical resources, but they use their resources differently. The BBC was able to reorganise its structure and pool many of its functions thereby making substantial savings. By contrast, the units at France Télévisions still operate separately and therefore overheads are increased. Additionally, French broadcasters are obliged by law to contribute to the production of audio-visual works, and for this reason they have to work with independent producers: sometimes it may be more costly for broadcasters to work with independents than to produce their own 'home-made' content. Finally, and most importantly, the BBC owns the rights to its programmes and therefore is able to sell them. Apart from revenue sales from BBC Studios (£243 million), the latter invests directly in its programmes and knows how to make cost-saving co-productions. This is why David Attenborough's wildlife documentaries cost the BBC nothing: they are entirely coproduced and pre-purchased.

Speaker: *Is there a person who formally manages to divide up the content of different BBC channels, so that each one has its own style, audience, costs and way of dealing with risk?*

C. S.-F.: Yes. A single person makes these decisions. As a result, there is no competition or overlaps between the channels. Each channel corresponds to a description and has a precise project: BBC One appeals to wide audiences, whereas BBC Four is more intellectual. BBC Three targets young people whereas BBC Two juggles between risk-taking and showing reruns. The tone and language are very different at BBC One, BBC Three, BBC Radio 4 and even BBC Radio 1Xtra, a radio dedicated to urban music. Before the reorganisation, the channels were more similar. Their differentiation became more marked when money became more limited. During the leaner times, the easy solution would have been to reduce the budget for content, but the BBC did not give in to this temptation, and instead focussed its investments on the production of innovative programmes and ones which had a strong message. This is the BBC's strength. When money is short, it has to figure out the best way to use it!

Speaker: *Does the pooling of journalistic activities result in the standardisation of how news is handled?*

C. S.-F.: When a journalist covers a subject, he (or she) may be asked to carry out interviews which may interest both young CBBC (Children's BBC channel) viewers as well as scholars who watch BBC Four. His report is available to all his colleagues via the in-house news access system, and teams from each channel or radio re-process this content in their own way using their own interpretation or perspective. Also, journalists write down their appointments with experts on a calendar which is accessible to everyone: if colleagues are interested, they can schedule an additional interview around the planned interview. Working together is a crucial quality and BBC employees are expected to collaborate. It is part of the evaluation criteria, like ensuring diversity.

Speaker: *In order to renew its breeding ground of talent, the BBC must recruit talented people, and necessarily let go of others. How do the trade unions react to this? What was their reaction following the reorganisation which resulted in cutting all the support function positions?*

C. S.-F.: The most recently recruited BBC employees follow a formalised progression plan which lays out their future positions in the company. Some will be working for the BBC for a short time before leaving to work for other companies, whereas others will stay longer at the BBC. The job market is more fluid now, and movement between jobs is understood and quite well accepted. As far as the other employees are concerned, British trade unions no longer have the same power as they once did, but they still exist at the BBC. I did not feel that they were deliberately difficult apart from when there was the precise subject of refunding journalists' costs. Strikes at the BBC are rare. Ordinarily strikes are announced several weeks in advance, as if they were a request for negotiation, and more often than not, an agreement is found in the interim.

Audience analysis and creativity

Speaker: *The BBC analyses audience figures extremely precisely. How does it manage to transform this audience analysis into creativity? There are other networks which are equally obsessed with their audience results, but they are not as creative.*

C. S.-F.: Because the BBC is not under any pressure from advertisers, it does not need to worry about advertising targets, and therefore it can concentrate on audience groups and its service to provide them with good programmes. The BBC does not talk about ‘an’ audience but ‘audiences’, and it analyses them in the most minute detail. For example, it knows the characteristics of the 10% of the British population who use the BBC the most (from the elderly to young sports fans), as well as the 10% which use it the least. The French are amazed by the accuracy and precision of these analyses and are also stunned to learn that these analyses are public! The BBC is constantly trying to adapt its services to specific populations, and research is carried out about an audience before any programme is launched. It is particularly important to the BBC to find programmes, topics, a way or a means of handling a subject which will appeal to populations which use the BBC the least.

Speaker: *Does the BBC ever cancel programmes which are not popular enough, or does it keep them scheduled in the hope that the audience will grow with time?*

C. S.-F.: Imagine that the comedy department wants to launch a programme whose appeal is uncertain. The content department directs it towards the media where it assumes the programme is most likely to be successful. This may be a television channel (such as BBC Three, BBC Four) or the Internet. If it has good audience figures, the programme will be transferred to BBC One; if it is less popular, to BBC Two. The ability to juggle between the two channels enables the BBC to test out the programme, especially because the audience figure is not the sole, decisive criterion. Innovations are also subject to pilots and tests, so it is extremely rare that the BBC cancels an innovation for reasons related to an audience.

Speaker: *What management parameters does the Director General follow most meticulously: costs, audience figures, or social media reactions?*

C. S.-F.: The Director General is obsessed with the fact that the BBC should maintain the objectives it set itself and respect its commitments. Every month, the board examines a series of indicators which of course include audience figures, but also chart the progress of important projects, such as the redesign of the iPlayer, real estate projects, the establishment of mini-studios in small towns to interview local people more easily, and so on.

Speaker: *The BBC launches projects which are outside its usual areas of activity, such as the creation of a system to protect personal information. How do these sorts of ideas emerge?*

C. S.-F.: As a result of the licence fee, the BBC has the largest address book in the UK, and goes to great pains to protect it. Therefore, it makes sense that the BBC’s R&D team was given the task of devising a protection system for personal information on line. This team has a great many ideas which are ‘outside the box’. It is the only team which is relatively isolated from the others. Until recently, the team members were based in a small castle in the countryside where they had put down all sorts of cables in the basement in order to carry out experiments. BBC head office decided to move their operations closer to London, but made sure no comforts were spared. A great deal of effort is made to take good care of this team! Losing them is not an option.

When digital transformations took place, all our channels lacked frequencies. I asked this R&D team to find a technical solution to enable the transmission of more data on the same frequency. The team had worked on this subject five years earlier, but was able to ‘reactivate’ its ideas. The team took just three to four months to find a solution and at very little expense. It perfected a system which then enabled the BBC to negotiate an agreement with ITV and Channel 4, bringing in revenues of nearly £150 million over a period of fifteen years.

An unequalled treasure?

Speaker: *How do you explain the BBC’s surprisingly long-lasting success?*

C. S.-F.: The Royal Charter guarantees the stability of the rules governing the BBC. Furthermore, the BBC is bound to the government by a contract which can only be changed if both sides agree: a decision cannot be imposed, it must be negotiated. This is in contrast to France where the government shamelessly decided to dissolve the ORTF (*Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française*: the French national public broadcasting organisation), and even sold the leading public service channel, the equivalent of BBC One! We should be more surprised by what happens in France than what happens in the UK!

Speaker: *The BBC's tone is in contrast with that of the tabloids which are a British speciality. How do these extremes coexist?*

C. S.-F.: All journalists and producers who work for the BBC have to sign an editorial and ethical charter which is extremely precise and practical. For example, it outlines how one should interview a child or a victim, under what conditions one can ring on someone's door, what one is allowed to film, and so on. Incidentally, the BBC Academy offers training sessions to inform professionals from the entire audio-visual sector about such aspects. The BBC is recognised universally for its serious-minded attitude. This attitude contrasts sharply with the 'gutter press' which exploits this difference, indulging in every sort of excess. Furthermore, it is able to do so because, unlike television, the press is not regulated in the UK. ITN and ITV follow rules which are very close to those of the BBC, and Sky News does not behave like the tabloids.

Speaker: *Who are the BBC's rivals in the UK?*

C. S.-F.: Social media and mobile telephones. The way in which we use our leisure time has changed. Today, young people, in particular, would find it incongruous to sit down in front of a television screen and watch a single programme.

As far as radio is concerned, the BBC largely dominates the UK market thanks to its quality. There are few, popular private radio stations in the UK. Often, for financial reasons, they do little more than just play music and broadcast talk shows, without innovating. They were the first victims when the Internet appeared. As far as television is concerned, the BBC is subject to healthy competition from ITV and Channel 4, a publicly-owned channel which is not licence-funded and is financed by advertising.

Speaker: *Does the BBC's management, which presumably embodies the elite, appear to be open to disruptive ideas and new opinions?*

C. S.-F.: The constant challenge for the BBC is to move out of its comfort zone and to find new talent so that it does not grind to a halt and become paralysed. The former content director once revealed to me that this was his main concern, and it was much more important than financial problems. In addition, talent ought to reflect all aspects of British society. The first time a Muslim was appointed head of religion and ethics at the BBC, there were a few shockwaves! And yet, BBC One's flagship news programme, BBC News at Six, has been presented for the past thirty years by George Alagiah, a journalist born in Sri Lanka. The BBC regularly recruits young people from ethnic minorities in order to reach out to certain populations, but it does not fall foul of creating specific channels for specific minorities.

Particular attention is also paid to the diversity of the presenters of BBC children's channels (in terms of their sex, age, ethnic origin, handicap), particularly because the law sets specific figures for this so that all social categories are represented.

Finally, the BBC is open to new artistic voices especially in the music sector. Local radio stations promise that they will listen to any tracks which musicians send in. If they like the music, BBC Music Introducing helps the musicians to improve it and broadcast it or even produce a record. This was how the singer Adele was spotted before she became a global success.

Speaker: *Some people forecast that television will inevitably die. Will the BBC escape this fate?*

C. S.-F.: We will always use the Internet and we will always watch screens – but perhaps not television screens. The public will always want to watch the evening news or its favourite TV series or get a thrill from watching a football match. It will always be possible to attract audiences thanks to high-quality content, by choosing the most relevant media each time. The BBC has the advantage of controlling the spread of the content it produces. It has to find the most direct means to make this content available to everyone, ideally without having to use an intermediary, like YouTube, for example. There is a future for content producer-broadcasters as a variety of channels are opening up in these fields. The BBC will only die if someone kills it.

■ Presentation of the speaker ■

Catherine Smadja-Froguel: media regulations expert. Following studies in economics, finance, law and management, she worked in various ministries in France and in the UK, before becoming head of special projects at the BBC. She is an impassioned defender of the freedom of expression and the right to information, and sees these two factors as the mechanism behind sustainable development and human empowerment. She campaigns for a powerful, independent and innovative audio-visual public service.

Translation by Rachel Marlin (rjmarlin@gmail.com)
