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9. The politics of a multicultural mission: Finland's YLE in a changing society

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Introduction

Ramadan fell in August in 2010, which was not that easy for those Muslims who happen to live in the Nordic countries. Daylight began at 6:00 a.m. and lasted until 9:00 p.m. This was a newsworthy aspect of the religious festival, and in Finland, Ramadan was covered on the front page of the nationwide newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (28 August 2010) and in the main newscast of the public service television news channel *Yleisradio* (YLE) TV1 (11 August 2010). Both media outlets ran the story from the perspective of Muslims living in the metropolitan Helsinki region. It is only recently that Finnish news began to cover Ramadan as a domestic event.¹ Before, if Ramadan was covered, it appeared in the foreign news section, or if it was treated as a domestic issue, the story was scheduled in a multicultural 'niche' programme such as *Basaari/Bazaar* (YLE, 1996–2008) (e.g. 11 October 2004).

The shift in the treatment of Ramadan reflects the *YLE Erityis – ja vähemmistöryhmien palvelustrategia/YLE Policy on Services for Minorities and Special Groups* (YLE 2005b), which guided the company towards the mainstreaming of cultural diversity across all programming during 2006–2010. The aim of this policy

was both to reach minorities – ethnic, national and disabled minorities – and to tell stories about culturally diverse Finland for mainstream audiences. In 2008, the multicultural *Basaari* programme ended, and the editorial office that trained and supported media practitioners of minority backgrounds was closed. The decision manifests as a turning point in the implication of the minority policy (YLE 2005b). The company shifted from a multiculturally oriented media policy to a cultural diversity policy that highlights mainstreaming diversity across all programming and the production of cross-cultural entertainment programmes. Ethnic minority journalists no longer have the support of the *Basaari* editorial department but are on the market ‘as any other journalist’, as Ismo Silvo, a manager at YLE, puts it in an interview that I had with him just before *Basaari* ended (Silvo 2008).

The minority policy (YLE 2005b) lasted only five years as a transition from the period of *Basaari* to the current situation where YLE does not have a specific policy for ethnic minorities but applies the more general principles set by YLE law and general strategy documents. The analysis of programming after *Basaari*, between 2009 and 2013, shows that YLE highlights cross-cultural formats that construct media personalities, make comedy out of group identities and invite audience participation in multiple media platforms. The only exception is the Russian-speaking minority which, contrary to the general policy of mainstreaming diversity, receives stronger services in the minority language, Russian. YLE justifies extending the news service in Russian not only on the grounds of providing a minority service but also as a means to balance the news flow from neighbouring Russia with ‘credible news from a Finnish perspective’ (YLE News 2013).

This chapter analyses policy documents, websites and other textual materials and interviews with YLE policy makers and programme makers to examine why,

when and how policy that recognizes immigrant and ethnic minorities has developed and changed in Finland. Furthermore, I analyse how the policy shifts connect to the demands set by both commercialization and democratic principles that influence PSM policies today. Particularly, the analysis is contextualized in the current politicization and polarization of immigration and integration topics. The policy changed from multiculturalism to cultural diversity at a time when nationalist populism began to take root in Finland and a general Europe-wide ‘crisis of multiculturalism’ discourse began to shape policies elsewhere in the region. Through policy-making, YLE aimed to carefully balance its public position between the nationalist sentiments and its responsibility to serve, as its slogan says, ‘the whole people’, including ethnic minorities. Yet in a country that has relatively recently shifted from a country of emigration to that of immigration, the imagined ‘wholeness’ of the people is undergoing redefinition.

Diversity in Finland

Finland has a tradition of diversity policy in the form of bilingualism, and YLE has developed sensitivity to linguistic diversity issues since its foundation in 1926. The second official language group, the Swedish-speaking minority has traditionally gained relatively strong resources and positions within the public service broadcasting company YLE. The Swedish-language media in Finland forms an institutionally complete media system (Moring and Husband 2007), and therefore, it cannot be seen as minority media in the same sense as media catering to ethnic minorities, including the so-called national minorities of the Roma and Sami, which have been subject to discrimination and marginalization in several ways throughout history (for more about multilingualism in Finland, see Latomäki and Nuolijärvi 2005).

Only since the early 1990s, the number of migrants to Finland has grown, but it still is one of the smallest in the European Union. Only about 3 per cent of the population has a foreign nationality, and 4.4 per cent has a ‘migrant background’.² However, in some areas, namely in the metropolitan region, the numbers are higher than elsewhere in Finland. In the capital, Helsinki, 9.2 per cent of the population and 12.2 per cent of children up to 15 years old have a mother tongue other than the official national languages of Finnish, Swedish or Sami (City of Helsinki, City of Espoo and City of Vantaa 2010: 9–11).³

In Finland, the anti-immigration sentiments have become more organized only recently. The populist (True) Finns Party⁴ has had a series of successes from the municipal elections of 2008 and the European parliamentary elections of 2009 to the parliamentary elections of 2011, when the party increased its number of seats from the previous 5 (2007) to 39 (2011). It became the third-largest party and the main opposition party. The Finns Party has roots in the more traditional populist protests against modernization and the European Union rather than in right-wing populism. However, the anti-immigration group inside the party is visible and active and has gained a foothold in its organization and political agenda, particularly after the parliamentary elections of 2011. In addition, the other larger parties – the Social Democrats, the Coalition Party and the Centre Party – are divided when it comes to immigration issues.

Since the elections of 2008, the Internet has turned out to be a popular and influential space where anti-immigration arguments are debated and developed. In 2008, an online debate forum, *Homma-forum*,⁵ launched the concept of *maahanmuuttokriittinen* (literally, immigration criticism) to argue that sentiments against immigration were not racism, but a realistic social critique. Some of the main

issues championed by these populist movements are ‘direct civic democracy’, as they call it, and critique of the current immigration politics in Finland.⁶ This framing of ‘immigration criticism’ turned out to be successful, and the position of ‘realism’ gained support, also amongst many in the mainstream parties and media. The discursive space in Finland shifted from a politically correct silence to politicization of the immigration topics after 2008 (e.g. Keskinen, Rastas and Tuori 2009; Horsti and Nikunen 2013).

Public service media in Finland

In the Nordic countries, some level of state intervention in the media market has been understood to be important for democracy (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 145), thus public service broadcasters are still important. For instance, in Finland, YLE television channels had a 42.2 per cent audience share in 2012 (Finnpanel 2012), and they have a reputation for quality and accuracy. However, increased competition and commercialism in the media landscape influenced the content, production and audience relations of PSM, even in Finland where economic discourse penetrated society in the 1980s and was strengthened in the economic recession of the early 1990s (Herkman 2005: 52–57). YLE develops its services across different media platforms, and as a response to digitalization, in 2013, the funding model shifted from a television licence fee to a public service media tax.

The organizational structure and YLE policy, which is bound by the Act on YLE, construct the environment where programming is produced. Parliament appoints the administrative council, and the company is state owned. YLE needs to be analysed as part of the European media system and as part of the national media system, where it has a unique institutional position as a publicly funded and supported media

company (Jääsaari 2007: 24). Media policies are crucial for managing the institution and explaining the need for it to the society. Through policy-making, PSM organizations balance their practice and programming and define their role, particularly when market pressure tends to overrule public interest (see Raboy 2003: 42).

Thus, at the beginning of the new millennium, YLE was influenced from several directions to voice out their strategy regarding minorities. First, immigration began to rise, and second, commercial imperatives strengthened while democratic principles needed to be sustained. Third, mushrooming of multicultural media policies across European public service media (see the other chapters in this volume) pressured the Finnish YLE to ‘internally put together thoughts and establish the line’ (Silvo 2008). The outcome was the *YLE Policy on Services for Minorities and Special Groups*. In the next section, I analyse empirically how the policies pertaining ethnic minorities are articulated in the YLE policy documents and in the interviews with producers and managers in 2005–08, a time period when the first minority policy document was created and adopted. In the concluding chapter, I discuss the later policy developments in this field.

Critical policy analysis

Critical policy analysis (e.g. Stevens 2003; McGuigan 2002; Bacchi 2009) treats policy as a culturally, socially and politically constructed problematization of an issue. The idea of ‘policy’ is critically scrutinized, and thus, this approach differs fundamentally from general policy research, which has the main aim of making more efficient policy. Reports, strategy papers, policy papers and websites are understood

as written institutionalized accounts. ‘An ethnography of texts’ (Ahmed et al. 2006) is compiled for the purposes of analysing a variety of texts and interviews with managers and producers. These interviews at YLE add to, interpret and sometimes critique the more official policy papers. I have collected policy briefs and papers, documents, training materials and websites of YLE that deal with ethnic minorities, immigration, multiculturalism or cultural diversity. (For a detailed list of research materials, see the reference list at the end.)

The interviews at YLE in the summer of 2008 took place right after the decision to end the multicultural ‘niche’ programme *Basaari* was announced. I interviewed five people who have contributed to or implemented minority policies at YLE (see the list of interviews in references). The interviews were transcribed and analysed using the methods of critical discourse analysis. One central figure in the multicultural programming, Seppo Seppälä, had already retired; and the former chief of cultural programming, who had a history of developing *Basaari*, Elina Paloheimo, and departmental manager Mauri Vakkilainen retired soon after the interviews. Project manager for Mundo (2004–2007) Marita Rainbird, who had been a key figure for *Basaari*, had a temporary contract, which was not renewed. Actually, only the director of strategy and planning, Ismo Silvo, continues to work for YLE. Thus, it comes as no surprise that while I was doing the interviews, the atmosphere amongst many at YLE was affected by puzzlement.

The ending of YLE’s *Basaari* programme connects with a generational shift in the organization as many of those who were first to sensitize their organization to gender and diversity issues in the 1980s and 1990s retired from their positions. Ms Paloheimo had proposed establishing a multicultural office for the YLE management, claiming that it would restore the organization’s competence and would make use of

the networks the *Basaari* office had created amongst minority communities. The management did not support this, and currently, there is no person appointed to take responsibility for cultural diversity within the institution. The issue of cultural diversity is ‘business as usual’ as Mauri Vakkilainen (2008) puts it in the interview.

Multiculturalism in YLE’s media policy

The YLE Act and EBU regulations (see Chapter 3 in this volume) guide the responsibilities YLE has for minorities in Finland. In the research interviews, the law is raised as an important motivation for creating the *YLE Policy on Services for Minorities and Special Groups*. (See also similar arguments in the case of Sweden in Christensen [2001: 92].) The YLE Act (YLE 2012) demands programming, in order of importance, in the Finnish and Swedish languages as well as in Sami, Romani and sign language and, ‘where applicable, in those of other language groups’. Thus, the act avoids commitments to programming in the languages of new migrants, yet it makes them possible, an opportunity that YLE took in 2013 when it extended Russian news programming to television. In addition, it also requires the development of civic skills across the population and the promotion of ‘tolerance and multiculturalism’ (YLE 2012). These ideals are in the line with the democratic corporatist tradition, which values high professional standards of conduct, commitment to a common public interest and autonomy from other social powers (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 145).

The case of *Basaari*

In the interviews, Elina Paloheimo, who was the manager of cultural programmes of YLE TV1 in the 1990s, recalls that YLE adapted ideas from other European PSM organizations:

When the number of immigrants began to rise, an idea was raised. Should we somehow understand this and should the public receive more knowledge? [...] I think I had seen funny and good programmes in the festivals and thought that we should be able to do something like that. (Paloheimo 2008)

Paloheimo and some other individual producers at YLE picked up the idea for an immigrant-specific programme slot from European examples such as *Mosaik/Mosaic* (SVT, 1987–2003) in Sweden. The *Basaari* programme began in 1996, and it was a product of multiculturalist-policy thinking that had taken root in European public service broadcasting collaborations (see Chapter 3). The programme had a two-dimensional goal. First, it aimed to offer services to minorities and, second, to disseminate stories of other cultures and the multicultural reality to the mainstream population.

YLE ended the *Basaari* programme and closed the editorial department at the end of 2008 after twelve years of programming. Audiences and television critics did not seem to care about the ending of the programme as there was no public debate about the issue. Maasilta, Simola and af Heurlin's (2008) survey amongst audiences of 'migrant background' demonstrates that the programme was not very important to them. Many television viewers of immigrant origins prefer a commercial channel to the public service channel when they watch Finnish television (Maasilta, Simola and af Heurlin 2008: 36, 45). However, *Basaari* should not be treated only as a

programme slot as it was, from the beginning, also an educational project and an editorial community that supported journalists and media students who were of minority backgrounds. An example of the educational function was a training programme, the Mundo Project, which was largely funded by the European Commission's European Social Fund's EQUAL programme in 2004–07. It offered a stepping stone for 24 students of minority backgrounds who completed the programme.

Ending *Basaari*, which was located in the Factual Programme Department in 2008, was in line with the policy directions taken by the EBU and by several leading European public service broadcasters such as the NPS, SVT and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (see chapters 2, 6 and 8 in this volume). The decision is also in line with the YLE minority policy that was in effect between 2006 and 2010 (YLE 2005b). The preliminary report to the policy paper requires YLE to increase 'a general visibility of minority groups'; offer more services in 'experiential, fiction and entertainment programmes'; and 'in YLE's brand/imago, strengthen the message that YLE serves special and minority groups and fosters dialogue' (YLE 2005a). The only exceptions to the new policy of mainstreaming diversity across all programming are the programmes in Sami, Romani, English, Russian and sign language. Russian speakers are the only immigrant group for which YLE provides online, radio and television programming in their own language (other than the English language). Russian speakers make the largest minority language group (after the second national language, Swedish) in Finland. However, this is not the sole reason for the deviation from the general policy of mainstreaming cultural diversity. Programming in Russian is also argued to be necessary because YLE assumes that Finnish Russians' close connections with Russia and the other Russian speakers in

Finland would hinder integration and increase biased information, a belief that is widely shared in Finnish society. Programming in a minority language is argued on the basis of integration. In 2008, manager Ismo Silvo argued,

YLE wants to provide YLE journalism in Russian because, could we say, the character of Russian speakers is to live amongst themselves. Their media behaviour grounds on Russian-language media in Russia. We see that it would be a good thing if the Finnish-language media would have a connection to the Russian-speaking minority living in Finland. (Silvo 2008)

This concern for the Russian minority's integration is not only present in YLE, but it is a wider understanding amongst Finnish media managers. The nationwide newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* maintained that a Russian-language newspaper produced in Finland deserves to be subsidized because supporting the 'integration of Russian speakers into Finland would be worthwhile' (Blåfield 2008). In 2013, the newspaper praised the launch of YLE television news in Russian, arguing that '[n]ews made with Western journalistic principles are a splendid way to strengthen the integration of a growing linguistic minority into the Finnish society. Providing quality news also in television will help us avoid misunderstanding and purposeful communication' (Anonymous editorial 2013). The issue referred to in the editorial is not only the integration of Russian immigrants in Finland but also the concerns over the ways in which the Russian media have covered child welfare practices and child custody disputes that involve Finnish authorities and Russian parents. The media conflict between the two countries on child welfare was particularly acute in 2012 and 2013, the time when YLE expanded its news production in Russian.

Missionary intervention and the market approach

The interest to minority policies at YLE developed in the 1990s from ideas of equality and human rights that those inspired by other European experiences promoted. Gender equality had been an issue in the 1980s, and ethnic minority equality grew out of this heritage. Gender equality has remained on the policy agenda, and it is measured in different ways every year. As the company was sensitized to one type of equality and ethics – gender – ethnic minority equality was a continuum to that debate in the late 1990s. In addition, the national minorities of the Sami and the Roma and the disabled raised their demands for identity recognition. Furthermore, bilingualism sensitized the company to issues of minority languages and cultures. However, whereas gender equality, bilingualism and services for the disabled have become institutionally recognized and are monitored as part of the company strategy, commitment to multiculturalism is vaguer, and to some extent, it rests on the individuals. Elina Paloheimo, now-retired Chief of Cultural Programming at YLE, has concerns over the success of the mainstreaming policy: ‘Things tend to change as long as there are at least a few people who stubbornly keep these issues on the table. Of course, I am scared now when I leave. I have been one of those thorns in the flesh’ (Paloheimo 2008).

Multiculturalism entangles with mission discourse as the following examples demonstrate. Department Chief Mauri Vakkilainen stresses personal interest in minority equality when he mentions a former director, Ann Sandelin, who influenced multicultural policy-making at the managerial level:

She was the director of Swedish-speaking programming, and thus, in a way, she had social experience of being in the minority [...] her cultural background, minority perspective was a

natural part of her thinking. There were her type of people in the management [...] those who naturally understood [multiculturalism] and who had a strategic eye for this. (Vakkilainen 2008)

Likewise, Marita Rainbird, who directed an EU-funded multicultural recruitment programme, Mundo, stresses individual involvement. There is a sense of an emotional and more profound meaning of equality and dedication that seems to drive her work:

Multiculturalism [...] has depended on the personal interest of one or two people. [...] I think the key to success is that the company can find people who have the soul of a human rights fighter, that you believe in the cause and work like crazy endlessly for that. If there is no one who believes in these issues [...]. (Rainbird 2008)

In this quote, I recognize that Rainbird is not only relying on the enthusiasm and mission of herself and people like her but also argues that this devotion energizes and inspires others in the organization. This is why she is so concerned about the future scenario (which has actually been realized) that there is no particular individual, that there is 'no one' left to fight for the cause. This focus on exceptionally brave individuals positions multiculturalism as a quality of an individual journalist, programme maker, producer or manager. Multiculturalism in this line of thought is understood as a mood or an attitude, and a wrong kind of attitude can be retrained, or people with the right attitude can be hired to work for the organization. There are several accounts in the media sector (e.g. Cottle 1998; Malik 2002; Hultén 2009) and in other sectors (Ahmed et al. 2006) of 'racial positioning' and the 'burden of representation', particularly when professionals of ethnic minority backgrounds are

positioned as diversity champions embodying diversity for the organization. Ahmed et al. (2006) consider an even distribution of diversity and responsibility across an organization very crucial for success and equality amongst professionals. However, they stress that it is not enough to say everyone is responsible as it typically ends up that no one is responsible. Committed individuals need strong support from the leadership and support from the internal structures and systems of the institution. This was not the case at YLE during the *Basaari* period. A quote from Marita Rainbird about her visit to the YLE management to introduce a European training kit called *A Diversity Toolkit* (FRA 2007) illustrates this well: ‘We went to see the management with Elina Paloheimo [producer of *Basaari* at the time] and presented the toolkit. I could see that everything we said went into one ear and came out from the other. It was shocking’ (Rainbird 2008).

When she experienced this in 2008, the mission-oriented understanding of multiculturalism had already become a burden in the minds of the YLE management. In the interview, Ismo Silvo argues that the effect of niche programmes is limited exactly because of their mission ethos: ‘Since this type of factual program [*Basaari*] serves only the believers – those who are tolerant already, understand and support the cause - it has no effect. The believers strengthen, but the sinners became more sinful’ (Silvo 2008).

As we can see, understanding multiculturalism as a mission appears both amongst the managers at YLE and the editors close to *Basaari*. However, the worth of the mission is valued differently: as a resource amongst the *Basaari* editors and as a politicized burden amongst the managers. Both sides understand multiculturalism as one social paradigm of thinking, and for the management, the multicultural mission discourse has become politicized along with the more general politicization of

immigration and integration topics in Finnish society. This politicization is not only a Finnish issue, but it also comes up amongst other European cultural diversity promoters. For instance, a diversity editor for the BBC, Elonka Soros, mentioned in a European workshop that the BBC would not publish the European training tool *A Diversity Toolkit* on its website because cultural diversity is a politically delicate issue.⁷ Furthermore, immigration and integration issues are not necessarily understood as important fields of competence. *A Diversity Toolkit* was also used at YLE as training material. However, implementing the training was not without suspicion amongst the news editors, as Elina Paloheimo (2008) explains, ‘It is clear that, particularly, news reporters are, well, quite a self-important and arrogant crowd. They are not easily advised.’

The strategy that led to the cancellation of *Basaari* on YLE distanced itself from a mission-oriented discourse that relied on enthusiastic individuals. Instead, it approached the issue more with a market-oriented policy, which is articulated differently at YLE compared to countries that have larger migrant communities – for instance, Sweden (Horsti and Hultén 2011). In terms of the audiences, YLE needs to fulfil its legal requirements and construct a progressive public image of equal and inclusive public service ‘for all’. However, it should not irritate those audiences that feel threatened by the recent social and demographic changes. This complex situation is articulated in the interview with Ismo Silvo (2008). First, he explains the concerns: ‘Yle cannot be that much ahead of Finnish society because it will hit back [...] the majority, the intolerant majority – that is, the intolerant majority hits back.’ Later in the interview, he reminds of the responsibilities to serve minorities: ‘The strategy is that we will increase multicultural programming as Finland becomes more multicultural. Like I said, a bit on the forefront. That is the responsibility.’

A visible difference on-screen was a crucial target of the minority policy (YLE 2005b). The company wanted audiences to see that YLE is fulfilling its legal and ethical requirements. The *Policy on Services for Minorities and Special Groups* highlighted that in its public image, YLE needed to ‘strengthen the message that YLE serves also special and minority groups and promotes dialogue between them and the general public’ (YLE 2005b). The policy document continues, ‘This increases the popularity of the public service amongst the eyes of the audiences’. The *Preliminary Report* (YLE 2005a) talks about recruitment and visibility of ‘diverse personnel’ on-screen. Yet there is a discrepancy between policy documents. The recruitment of media experts of diverse backgrounds is not mentioned in the heavier yearly human resources reports until, suddenly, the issue appeared once in the report of 2011:

Multicultural structure of the personnel is an added value for the YLE that promotes good client relations. In order to reach all Finns, we need men and women of diverse ages and from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds as programme and service makers. The goal is that in 2014, YLE personnel will be more diverse than it is today, reflect the surrounding Finnish society more than it does now. For instance, this means more recruitment of those who have an immigrant or disabled background. (YLE 2011b)

In the policy papers and in the interviews, there is no discussion about quotas or monitoring of cultural diversity. Recruitment and visibility of minorities is a sensitive issue for YLE as it does not wish to displease any major section of Finnish society. Opposition to these affirmative action types of policies is one of the targets of the anti-immigrant section of the (True) Finns Party.⁸ Niche funding, recruitment on the basis of ‘affirmative action’ and ‘immigrant slots’ are policies the nationalist-

populists would strongly oppose. Whereas the management at YLE seemed to be between these two fires, those close to *Basaari* were more confident that the audiences were open to diversity in content, recruitment and representation. However, as Ms Rainbird explains, they felt that the structural support in the organization was not adequate enough: ‘I am not in doubt that the audience would not be ready [for more diverse programming], but are they here [at YLE] ready for it? There are some people who have strong prejudices’ (Rainbird 2008).

The importance of minorities as audiences and media professionals still remains a future scenario in Finland. The idea of reaching relevant audiences and collaborators is mentioned only in the *Human Resources Report* of 2011 (YLE 2011b), yet the audience reports do not mention cultural diversity. The audience reports are based on quantitative monitoring such as panel surveys; methods that cannot capture ethnicity and cultural diversity. The managerial level at YLE assumes that once the number of immigrants grows and the new generation reaches adulthood, the current lack of media professionals from minority backgrounds gets ‘naturally’ solved. Ismo Silvo explains,

It is important to recruit people with an ethnic background, but it is easier said than done. This person needs to fulfil all the high professional criteria. Perhaps today we have such a time window that these types of people exist in Finland, perhaps even the second-generation immigrants or the first generation who arrived in Finland as children. Some have taken a university degree and speak Finnish better than me. We have seen these amongst those seeking for employment. We aim at getting that [the number of professionals with ethnic backgrounds] to a certain level. (Silvo 2008)

Conclusion

YLE has been sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity since its establishment in the 1920s in the form of bilingualism. In the 1980s, gender issues and the national Indigenous Sami minority's and the disabled interests groups' stronger identity politics paved the way for the claims of the new immigrant minorities in the 1990s. YLE is required by law to provide programming for the national minorities and for the Swedish speakers, but policies regarding other minority groups are less explicit. YLE recognized the new immigrant minorities, first through a multiculturalist policy, by setting up a niche programme, *Basaari*, and a specific editorial office. The transition phase from multiculturalism to a more general policy of mainstreaming cultural diversity across all programming emerged in the form of a specific policy for minorities (YLE 2005) during 2006–10. After these two explicit interventions, YLE now articulates its minority policy only at a very general level. Since 2005, discourse that considers multiculturalism as a mission has lost its attractiveness in Finnish PSM policy. This is a policy orientation that follows shifts in neighbouring Sweden and beyond in northern Europe. One development that has shaped policy in this direction is the increased commercialization and competition in the media environment.

Interventions such as assistance for journalists with a minority background and niche programming for and about minorities are difficult to articulate in market-oriented terms in a country that still has a relatively young history of international migration. Furthermore, the rapid rise of nationalist populism and a general Europe-wide 'crisis of multiculturalism' mentality have shaped the ways in which policies are articulated and implemented in PSM. The recent general policy documents like the *Annual Report* (Yle 2011a) and the *YLE of the people – YLE strategy* (YLE 2012) reflect a national discourse. The terms Finnish and Finnishness are repeated in

connection to culture, audience and citizenship. Cultural diversity is not mentioned in these texts at all (except for the one paragraph in the *Human Resources Report* [YLE 2011b]). The national framing also prevails in the YLE justification for expanded news service in Russian, a position that is echoed in privately owned national media like the *Helsingin Sanomat*. The dominance of Russian-language media use amongst the Russian minority has generated concerns in Finnish society, both in terms of (non)integration and (mis)framing.

Nevertheless, in the interviews for this study, the YLE policy makers foresee audiences from minority backgrounds as a future concern. In addition, in 2011, the YLE *Human Resources Report* for the first time publicly announced a goal to increase recruitment of media experts from minority backgrounds. In addition, the multiplatform media landscape opens up new types of opportunities for ethnic minorities. The new commercialized and digitalized media environment has generated programming that involves audience participation, media personalities and spreadable content. The most recent examples of YLE programming show that ethnic minorities have made it to the mainstream, particularly via social media. A Sami sketch comedy programme called *Njuoska bittut/Märät säpikkäät (The Wet Leg Warmers)* (Tarinatalo/YLE TV2, 2012–13) featuring two young Sami women, Suvi West and Anne Kirste Aikio, attracted attention in social media before the actual television programme began airing. Similarly, a radio talk show called *Ali ja Husu (Ali and Husu)* (YLE Puhe, 2013) hosted by Ali Jahangiri and Mohamed Abdirahim Hussein, both from refugee backgrounds, involves audience participation through social media.

These examples show how the new media and participatory formats open up spaces for minorities and marginalized voices. Yet the focus on media personalities individualizes minority politics, a process that reflects the current broader discursive

shift away from group-oriented multiculturalism. In addition, it gives the impression that anyone could participate on equal terms, omitting the inequalities that exist in Finnish society and media representations. Social media and participatory culture have also given space for polarization and anti-immigrant voices (Horsti and Nikunen 2013).

The *YLE of the people – YLE strategy* (YLE 2012) offers a promise for a more structural change that in principle could open up to more inclusive policy and practice regarding multiculturalism. This, however, is only an opportunity yet to be realized. The strategy orientation at YLE is to ‘fulfil promises to targeted audiences’ and to produce programming and projects with ‘partners’, ‘companies’ and ‘social actors’ (YLE 2012). These could mean collaboration with ethnic minorities and understanding culturally diverse audiences as ‘targeted audiences’. However, cultural diversity, multiculturalism or citizens of ethnic minority backgrounds are not specifically mentioned in these policy documents. What this omission means for YLE is yet to be seen.

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Notes

¹ Since 1990, the nationwide *Helsingin Sanomat* has reported on Ramadan as a domestic news event only occasionally, in 2001, 2007 and 2010. Ramadan has been a regular topic of the foreign news section of the newspaper. News items dealing with Ramadan were searched for on dates between 1 January 1990 and 7 September 2010. A similar archive is not available for YLE.

² Official statistics in Finland do not use race/ethnicity categories. Foreign nationality, country of birth and mother tongue are classified in the statistics. ‘Migrant background’ refers here to those who have a foreign nationality, have been born in another country, have a mother tongue other than Finnish, Swedish or Sami and those who have been born in Finland but have another mother tongue (Statistics Finland 2010).

³ The statistics use the concept of *vieraskieliset* (foreign language), which refers also to ‘strange’ or ‘alien’ in the Finnish language.

⁴ The party *Perussuomalaiset* changed its English name from True Finns to Finns in 2011.

⁵ <http://cms.hommaforum.org/>. Accessed 13 August 2010.

⁶ They argue that immigration politics is run by elites and that the majority of Finns would like tougher immigration and integration policies. This they prove with surveys and polls. According to their agenda, immigration and integration politics should be

decided by the people in direct voting, and new technology should be developed for this type of politics.

⁷ Elonka Soros, Diversity Editor, BBC, *Diversity Show*, ‘Diversity Toolkit: Working group discussion’, 6 November 2008, Hilversum. Notes of the workshop by Karina Horsti. The Diversity Toolkit for Factual Programmes in Public Service Television is an initiative of the European Broadcasting Union and the Fundamental Rights Agency that can be downloaded at http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/media/materials_trainings/diversity_toolkit_en.htm.

Accessed 28 June 2011.

⁸ For instance, a member of parliament, Mr Jussi Halla-aho strongly opposes any preferable treatment of ethnic minorities in his blog and in the address of the True Finns, a parliamentary group that uses multiculturalist discourse to argue against affirmative action: http://www.halla-aho.com/scripta/katsaus_julkilausuman_kirvoittamiin_kommentteihin.html.

Accessed 28 June 2011.