

The BBC, PUBLIC SERVICE, and CHARITY APPEALS

LUCY SPEED

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Abstract

This study will attempt to investigate the relationship between the BBC, its public service remit, and the UK's charity sector through the use of in-depth examples of past alliances which have been formed between the BBC and individual charities. It will consider whether charitable giving is justifiable in terms of the concept of public service broadcasting as well as the means by which the BBC makes decisions regarding which individual appeals it should provide support for. It also aims to portray an outline of the criticisms and problems of such relationships, and the difficulty in applying strict public service principles to something widely regarded as for the 'common good'.

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Contents

Introduction	5
Literature Review	7
<i>Public Service Broadcasting</i>	7
<i>The BBC as a Public Service Broadcaster</i>	10
<i>Charity Appeals and the Media</i>	12
Policy Review	15
Methodology	17
Case Studies	19
<i>Comic Relief</i>	19
<i>Make Poverty History</i>	23
<i>DEC Gaza Appeal</i>	27
Discussions and Conclusions	33
Bibliography	39

Introduction

"The BBC is committed to informing its audiences about a wide range of charities so that they can increase awareness about the work they do and raise much needed funds so that they can continue helping those who are in need." - Mark Thompson, former Director-General of the BBC (BBC 2013a)

It would hardly be deemed controversial to assert that the BBC is one of the most, if not the most, highly regarded broadcasting institutions in the world. Its reputation as a public service provider of both exceptional news reporting and outstanding television broadcasting of all genres has retained its reputation as a respectable and trustworthy broadcaster for nearly a century. Within this broad spectrum of programming and content, the BBC has dedicated a significant amount of its air-time to the supporting of charity appeals, with the first broadcast appeal on the BBC for an individual charity taking place as early as 1923 (BBC 2013a). 'Charity appeals' in this context refers to a wide range of definitions: individual, single-cause charities, large-scale campaigns, as well as unpredictable wide-scale disasters and relief efforts. The medium of television is still considered as the most powerful and influential medium, and in conjunction with the BBC's reputable ability to 'command instant recognition and respect around the world' (Currie & Siner 1999. P.73), there is no guessing as to why BBC support is sought after by charities. Pressure groups and charity campaigners are known to 'envy the BBC's trusted position in Britain, and naturally turn to it as the surest standard-bearer for their latest cause' (BBC Trust 2007, p.59), and the BBC is therefore inundated by requests from charities and movements of all genres to support their cause. There is however, nothing within the BBC's public service remit which clearly states that the BBC has a responsibility to provide aid for those in need, or to even give up its reputable platform for the utilising of a worthy cause. There are however elements within its remit which could suggest that involvement with charities would be beneficiary in its upholding of its overall rationale, for example, 'the use of terms such as 'public service' or 'audience need' suggests that there is a sense of social purpose that underlies the BBC's activities (Le Grand & New 1999, p.113). Furthermore, the BBC's well known mantra to 'educate,

inform and entertain' does not appear to undermine or contradict the adoption of charity appeals within BBC programming, therefore the initial aim of this study is to infer the extent to which the BBC's charitable efforts can be justified within its public service remit and purposes.

This investigation will also attempt to discover the means by which the BBC come to decisions over which causes deserve their support, and how significantly their role as a 'public service broadcaster' plays in this decision. Due to charity appeals not constituting the same definition to that of the majority of the BBC's remaining output, the application of its public service purposes are not as easily applied as a means of editorial guidelines as they would be to news or scheduled programming. As a result, the criteria used to determine 'which charities and which causes should be given the benefits of what is effectively a free source of advertising' is not easily definable, and each decision appears to be taken individually (Franks & Seaton 2009, p.16). Therefore through an examination of the decision making processes involved in previous wide-scale charity events which the BBC has been involved with in the past, comparisons will be attempted to be made between the reasoning for each.

As a result of digitization, convergence and deregulation, the state of the British media has changed radically over the last twenty years, thus putting added pressure and critique upon the concept of public service broadcasting. The BBC's public service remit has also been put through significant changes since its advent in order to make its purpose more applicable to a multi-dimensional broadcasting field, of which is being increasingly dominated by commercially funded channels. Therefore there has been much dispute, mainly on behalf of privately owned media representatives, that public service broadcasting has little relevance within society anymore, and therefore the BBC's justification of its decisions through its public service remit is often heavily scrutinized. And the BBC's involvement with charity appeals appears to have become a popular point of criticism. This study will therefore also highlight the problems which tend to occur as a repercussion of the forming of these relationships in terms of the conception of the BBC as a 'public service broadcaster'.

Literature Review

Public Service Broadcasting

One of the key reasons into why investigating whether charitable giving is justifiable in terms of providing a public service, is that the term itself; 'public service broadcasting' does not have a statutory understanding across institutions. The term is one which was formulated in the United Kingdom by the Sykes Committee in 1923 with the advent of radio broadcasting, which decided that 'broadcasting should be a 'public utility' and that the airwaves were 'public property'' (Born 2004, p.27), and that therefore broadcasting's overall contribution to society should be an overtly beneficial one, providing the population with a 'service' on a number of levels. The idea of protecting the airwaves from private and governmental interests was derived from a wariness of the implementation of commercial broadcasting in the United States, whereby commercial radio had quickly become an institutionalised function in society and was having detrimental effects upon the content produced as a result of advertiser influence. The British authorities were stringent in their understanding of how they wanted broadcasting to be conceived within the population, and they held strongly their belief of its 'immense potency as a means of social, cultural and ultimately political influence and power' (Burns 1977, p.34).

Public Service broadcasting's leading ambassador was Sir John Reith, the BBC's first Director-General. He implemented a very strict public service model on which to govern the newly formulated 'British Broadcasting Company' (it changed to 'corporation' several years later), now known internationally as the 'BBC'. It was a model which was then widely imitated by much of Europe and eventually further, and was heralded as 'an ideal model for other countries to follow' (McGuigan 2006, p.101). In the years that followed, and in the commissioning of British television channels which were to be funded through commercial means, the government were still able to recognise the benefits of broadcasting being forced to adhere to certain requirements for the benefit of the public, and to this day, the UK has four television channels which are defined as 'public

service broadcasters', which broadly follow the conception of public service broadcasting in its original form. In the twenty-first century as a result of this firmly held decision, broadcasting in Europe is still viewed very differently to the US, where the premise of broadcasting is ultimately conceived as far more influential than another element within the vast communication-spectrum now available, and it is also viewed as 'a centripetal, societally integrative force' (Blumler 1992, p.11), meaning that in many countries, content within programming is still heavily regulated in accordance to these principles.

Public service broadcasting fundamentally differs to commercially financed broadcasting because it has a set of requirements to fulfil in order to retain this title. The wider implications of a public service remit which is commonly understood by public service broadcasters across Europe are that it should provide 'the whole of society with information, culture, education and entertainment' which should as a result enhance 'social, political and cultural citizenship and promotes social cohesion' (Council of Europe 2004, cited in Grummell 2004, p.269). Therefore, in relating the concept of public service to charity appeals, it could easily be conceived that the notion of broadcasters supporting charitable causes would be compatible with this definition. However, despite the term still retaining authority with many broadcasters today, these original premises have, to some extent been forced to be re-understood periodically in accordance to the technological advances that have occurred throughout the twenty-first century and which have consequently radically changed the concept of broadcasting and the 'mass media'. Due to the extensive policy reports which have been published in response to these changes in order to justify the implementation of public service broadcasting, the term itself has thus forth been questioned over its 'elusive' definition, therefore undermining its definitive requirement within society as it was once conceptualised (Scannell & Cardiff 1991, p.4).

Furthermore, since these prominent technological developments, scholars have extensively disputed the necessity of public service broadcasting in Britain, and especially in recent years, there have been calls for its disestablishment. Public service broadcasters, particularly the commercially funded,

in order to justify their role as a 'public service broadcaster' while attempting to compete against non-PSB, have 'been confronted with the dilemma of how to attract large audiences without undermining their self-legitimacy' (Enli 2008, p.108). This has inevitably caused further dispute over the unworthiness of public service media; the license fee funding of the BBC being the main victim of discussion, with James Murdoch, son of global media mogul Rupert arguing that; 'rather than concentrating on areas where the market is not delivering, the BBC seeks to compete head-on for audiences with commercial providers to try and shore up support – or more accurately dampen opposition – to a compulsory licence fee' (Murdoch 2009, p. 15). In regards to the charitable efforts of public service broadcasters, the decisions made regarding not only which appeals should be given air time, but also the means by which they are presented, opens up a new subject of debate concerning the potential utilising of such appeals as a means of standing out within an increasingly commercialised market. The argument concerning the future of public service broadcasting is extensive and on-going, which creates a vast spectrum of concerns in regards to its offerings within society as opposed to a fully commercialised market. However it is a consideration worth noting in this context, because ultimately, it is the public service broadcasters of the UK who have involved themselves extensively with charitable efforts, proving that it is a conception which can be directly applied to the notion of providing a public service as opposed to a defining function of the concept of just 'broadcasting'.

The BBC as a Public Service Broadcaster

The BBC has been selected as the focus of this investigation because its public service remit is considerably stricter in terms of its defining attributes to that of the other terrestrial UK channels. In its conception, the BBC was ensured of being unaffected by private and political interests through its operation under a series of Royal Charters, which 'ensure that its powers derive not from the Government or even from Parliament, but from the Monarch, thus placing it in a different and more exalted position than that of other public sector corporations such as nationalized industries' (Cave

1996, p.20). Whilst other public service channels are governed primarily by the Broadcasting regulator OFCOM, the BBC is also required to maintain its agreements with the Royal Charter as well as being governed by the independent ruling of the BBC Trust, which will autonomously scrutinize decisions made by BBC executives. The BBC's original public service remit was to 'be universal both in consisting of a comprehensive diet of information, education and entertainment created to the highest possible standard, and in being targeted at everybody in the nation who wished to listen, irrespective of their status or location' (Crisell 2006, p.19). It is these three renowned public service values of 'inform, entertain and educate', formulated by Sir John Reith the first director-general at the BBC, which are still today upheld as the foundations for the BBC's public service remit.

In regards to arguments in opposition to the BBC as a public service broadcaster retaining its funding against a digitized, deregulated media landscape, the fully institutionalised understanding of the BBC's purpose would suppose that it is nevertheless required to keep up with these changes in order to sustain its position as the most highly thought of broadcaster in the world. Lord Reith, had he still been Director-General in the twenty-first century would no doubt maintain that 'public broadcasting is not about technology' but rather 'it is about an idea, which happens to employ a technology, of how one creates and feeds a society and its culture' (Tracey 1998, p.16), and therefore it could be insinuated that the public service remit which was so enforced in the beginning should not necessarily have had to have changed. Reith appeared to know and understand the potential of television from its outset, and in coining its main parameters: 'inform educate and entertain', he was not just attempting to satisfy audiences; he also had genuine concern about the power of the medium and felt strongly that it should be regulated and utilised in the best possible way. He wrote in his chapters entitled *Broadcast Over Britain* (1924): 'till the advent of this universal and extraordinary cheap medium of communication a very large proportion of the people were shut off from first-hand knowledge of the events which make history' (cited in Briggs & Burke 2009, p.200). This statement could have provided the platform from which the BBC's decisions to collaborate with

charities has been built; it is only right that we should learn about events which are affecting other cultures and should be made aware suffering along with our potential to provide aid, and it is the BBC which offers the most obvious medium for this to occur.

It could be inferred that due to the broad definitions used within this 'Reithian trio', it should not be difficult to interpret a universal-BBC definition of precisely the type of programming which would constitute 'public service broadcasting', and therefore questioning whether the BBC's involvement with a charity appeal is justifiable in terms of its public service remit should be relatively determined. Furthermore, according to the BBC's current 'mission and values' listings on its website, it is understood that its 'mission' is to; 'enrich people's lives with programmes and services that inform, educate and entertain', and its 'vision' is stated as 'to be the most creative organisation in the world' (BBC 2013b) therefore providing a wider context for how these remits should be implemented. For example, in regards to charity relations, it could be assumed that in achieving the BBC's mission to 'enrich people's lives', that broadcasting information about those who are in need and require public aid by supporting a charitable cause, could contribute to its accomplishment. In addition, Currie and Siner's (1999) interpretation of the three remits broadly involve 'a commitment to the cultural life of the country, reflecting the lives and concerns of local and national audiences, marking events of national significance, reflecting and supporting the cultural diversity of multi-racial Britain...' (p.75); an interpretation which also appears to resonate successfully with the BBC as a platform for raising awareness of charity appeals, particularly those which would affect the entire country. However, as will be revealed, the BBC's public service remit is nonetheless still a concept which can be widely interpreted, and the BBC's decisions regarding whether or not to provide support for a charity appeal constitutes a particularly difficult, and controversial area of elucidation. There are implications surrounding charity appeals in particular which have the potential to upset the BBC's broader public service mission, including the reputation it has gained internationally.

However, the most risk-ridden concern of the BBC in devoting itself to a Charity appeals is their likelihood to undermine the BBC's highly regarded mission of 'impartiality', arguably its most important premise. The BBC portrays clearly within its 'mission and values' statement, that; 'trust is the foundation of the BBC: we are independent, impartial and honest' (BBC 2013b) revealing its prioritised place within its presentation to the public. Thomas and Hindman (2012) argued that impartiality is 'woven into the corporation's organizational fabric' and as a public service remit in itself, is 'an organizational norm that took root in the earliest days of the corporation's history and remains to this day' (p.575). It is this principle upon which the BBC makes decisions which are thereafter commonly regarded as controversial, as it is a premise which requires the most subjective interpretation. This is especially disconcerting when it comes to determining the prospect of impartiality in regards to charity appeals, as those appeals involving human suffering, when not the result of a natural disaster, are usually bound up within other issues of which the BBC under different circumstances would consciously avoid appearing to have an opinion on.

Charity appeals and the Media

Just as with any other industry, the intensification of the mass media over the last century has changed the way non-governmental organisations operate, and for the most part, the media has become essential for charities to raise awareness of their causes. There has however been concern over the ethical implications of this relationship, regarding the exploitation of both those requiring aid and of the receptive audience being subjected to these 'calls for help'. These concerns tend to focus on the humanitarian causes with which charity appeals have been concerned. A common conception is that 'where there is no camera, there is no humanitarian intervention' (Cate 2002, cited in Franks 2010, p.75), suggesting perhaps that the media has, to some extent become a vehicle to be more than just a mediator of information, it is also used as a means of persuasion. Furthermore, charities, especially those requiring aid fast, know that; 'advertising is expensive, so when the media cover a disaster, the free publicity for organisations interviewed or filmed is of

immeasurable worth' (Terry 2002, p.203). This has special resonance with the BBC due to its reputation as being a trusted and respected broadcaster, meaning that to gain the BBC's support, a charity will know that its conception within the public's eyes would be regarded highly. As a result, there are issues which would have to be carefully considered by the BBC in making decisions over which charities to support and how its support could be justified in terms of its public service remit. There has been much written concerning the utilisation of the media by charitable relief agencies to gain momentum in pursuing their political agenda, for example, De Waal (1997) argues that the 'saviour' is the foreign relief agency, which is formed as a result of 'the relationship between relief agency and media and the donating public' (p.83), so the political motives behind charity appeals need to be taken into explicit consideration when considering BBC support, because the BBC holds very dear its stance at being impartial in relation to politics.

In addition, it has been argued that due to continuous charity appeals aired by the media, that a response by the public is only governed by 'vague principles: it is driven by an emotive concern for the poor' (De Waal 1997, p.134). There is an insinuation that the public are not always totally aware of the issue they are donating to, and are effectively being manipulated through the use of emotive images to feel the desire to help the cause; 'the public are surprisingly prepared to donate with only the vaguest idea of what the money will be used for and with only limited accountability' (Franks 2010, p.80). In accordance with its 'service to the public', it would be assumed that the BBC would put the concerns of its audience first, and in broadcasting videos which have been created for the sole purpose of appealing to our compassionate side, one would infer that the BBC should protect us from potential manipulation at the hands of campaigners.

Aside from utilising the media to create advertisements and PR schemes, the media have also provided charities with a platform of celebrity culture, which in recent years appears to have proved to be an unrivalled endorser of appeals, so much so that charity involvement has largely become 'practically part of the contemporary job description and a hallmark of the established star' (Littler

2008, p.238). Therefore, an interesting consideration would be whether the BBC takes into account 'celebrity presence' and endorsement of appeals in its decisions to hand over its airwaves, as when assessing the likelihood of being a positive contributor to the cause, this may be a contributing factor. Furthermore, whilst 'the mechanism of celebrity has become increasingly important in international development as celebrities are called upon to play "expert" roles' (Richey & Ponte 2011, p.26), there is also an argument that charity appeals are being employed by those in the public eye as a means of self-promotion (Kapoor 2013, p.19). Therefore if this argument has been proven through previous similar events, then the potential strive for 'self-promotion' as opposed to acting in the interest of the public would be classed as an explicitly contradictory statement to the main premise of public service broadcasting. Despite the cynicism of this view, it is still a justified factor which needs considering by the BBC in assessing its role as a public service broadcaster in coming to decisions over which causes to support.

Policy Review

Before examining individual cases in which the BBC has had to make difficult choices regarding how to proceed with charity appeals and support, it is first necessary to outline the current policies in place which would govern these decisions. The current BBC website (BBC 2013b) states 'six public purposes' on behalf of the Royal Charter and Agreement, and I am going to highlight the ones which could be deemed as relevant to its relationship with charities and which may be under dispute as to the extent of their relevance.

The website firstly notes that the BBC aims to 'sustain citizenship and civil society' under which it maintains that it will 'display the core values of truth and accuracy, and impartiality'. The term 'impartiality' is particularly pertinent here, as to some it is regarded as the most important part of the BBC's remit. Furthermore, the concept of 'truth' in this context is relevant in relation to charity appeals because the BBC will have to make sure it reveals its true intentions through broadcasting such appeals, as well as to truthfully depict the situation at hand. According to the BBC Trust, the BBC is also encouraged to inform people of 'major issues of today' (cited in BBC 2013b), and allow us as citizens to engage with them; an engagement which could be constituted through a desire to donate to such causes.

The BBC's second public purpose is the 'promotion of education and learning', which has particular relevance to charity appeals due to the BBC aiming to 'raise awareness' of charities as opposed to explicitly supporting its cause. It could be assumed that the broadcasting of charity appeals by the BBC will educate audiences of other cultures and situations through explanations of particular worldly issues. Furthermore, the BBC Trust notes that 'the BBC should engage audiences in output that brings benefits to the UK as a whole' (cited in BBC 2013b), which could infer charity appeals which are beneficiary to people within the UK, and which the BBC may assume to be considered part of their role.

The third purpose of 'stimulating creativity and cultural excellence' is relevant to the adoption of charity appeals because through drawing public attention to those in need, the BBC is 'covering a wide range of cultural activities' and is opening the public's eyes to other cultures. This is also relevant in the fifth of the purposes, which is; 'bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK', as charity appeals not only 'provide high-quality coverage of global issues', but also 'provides output that increases all UK audiences' knowledge of other societies from around the world and their concerns'. However, the purposes also state that in international broadcasting, the BBC should 'serve all audiences and ensure a breadth of perspective', which is a statement which could prove difficult to uphold through charity appeals.

The BBC has also set itself three specific purposes which it hopes to achieve through its broadcasting of charity appeals (BBC 2013a); 'to provide information to our audiences about a wide range of charities which need their support' (1.1), 'to encourage members of the public to give to charitable causes' (1.2), and 'to give charities the opportunity to raise money and raise public awareness about their work' (1.3). The BBC has therefore recognised its role in the promotion of charity appeals in regards to its overall public service remit, and recognises its role as being a mediator between charity sector and the public. It would hereby be assumed, that in the cases listed within this study, that these purposes are successfully adhered to through these relationships.

Methodology

The primary method chosen to carry out this investigation is an assessment of case studies of past charity involvements with the BBC. Despite the method of case studies sometimes being 'considered less rigorous and less systematic than other forms of research' (Berg 2009, p.317), it is evidentially the most useful means of exploration for this particular study. The aim of this investigation is to discover how the BBC comes to the decisions regarding its individual charity involvements, therefore a reasonable way to realize this would be to exemplify and assess previous decisions it has come to. The use of case studies for this investigation allows for a concise depiction of the contexts of decisions made by the BBC surrounding the three appeals chosen for analysis in this study.

The BBC cooperates with a wide range of charitable causes across its many platforms, including what it refers to as its 'corporate charities' that are run in their entirety within the corporation, and its regional and national monthly appeals through local radio stations. 'The fewer cases investigated, the more information can be collected about each of them' (Hammersley and Gomm 2000, p.2) therefore justifying the choice to closely depict three events as opposed to attempt to provide a cross-section analysis of all the BBC's charitable involvements. This study will focus upon long-running appeals which were, and still are, widely recognised as having relations with the BBC; Comic Relief, Make Poverty History, and the DEC Gaza appeal. These case studies are particularly relevant to this investigation due to their initial independence from the BBC, meaning that the BBC would not have had definitive editorial control over the content and therefore audiences' perception of the relationship. In order to gain perspective of those involved in the relationship between the BBC and those charities it is involved with, I also conducted a series of interviews with relevant employees of both the BBC and the charities referred to. Interviews are successful methods because they 'enable researchers to obtain information that they cannot gain by observation alone' (Berger 2000, p.111), and through these interviews I was able to gain a powerful insight into the context of the events. I was in a position to not only gather information which could not have been uncovered through any

other means, but I also learnt of individual opinions of BBC and charity appeals which in some cases contradicted the outcome of the BBC's decisions, adding significantly to my interpretation of the dilemmas internalised at the BBC in making and justifying their decisions.

Case Studies

Comic Relief

The first case study to be investigated is an examination into the BBC's long-standing relationship with the charity 'Comic Relief'. Comic Relief is an independent, registered charity which is a completely separate corporation to the BBC despite having been collaborating for twenty-five years. Since its advent, Comic Relief's yearly campaigns 'Red Nose Day' and the subsequent 'Sport Relief' have become embedded within British culture and the pivotal day of the campaign each year in mid-March is almost perceived as a national holiday. As a consequence of its high profile within the UK at the hands of the BBC, Comic Relief is currently one of the highest grossing charities in the world, with their total fundraising efforts reaching 800 million pounds. The BBC's relationship with this charity is a unique one, and no other charitable organisation has the same access to such an expansive airwaves or access to the public. However, in many ways Comic Relief is treated no differently to any other outside party would be in regards to securing BBC support; the prime positioning of Comic Relief within the yearly BBC scheduling is not secured indefinitely, and every initiative of the charity still has to be pitched to the BBC as if they are a completely autonomous organisation. Furthermore, as Charlotte Rowlands, an employee at Comic Relief told me, all employees of Comic Relief are trained on BBC editorial values, and "have to have a really good understanding of what the BBC will and will not accept" in order to be able to generate content of the highest relevance to BBC policies. This is perhaps suggesting that the BBC is not overly confident in the value they receive and will continually receive through this partnership. It is clear however, that both parties benefit sufficiently from the relationship; the BBC receive a night of exclusive, prime time television content, and Comic Relief receive yearly fundraising success rates. However, the precise public service remits which could be justifiably realised through this relationship are what will now be assessed further.

The official Comic Relief website states that ‘what makes the relationship between the BBC and Comic Relief so strong is our shared goal to create positive change through the power of entertainment’ (Comic Relief 2013). This statement immediately constitutes one third of the BBC’s original remit of to ‘inform, educate and entertain’ and upon reflection of the viewing figures produced by the night-long telethon, it could be inferred that this value is particularly well upheld and therefore could be assumed that this is the reasoning behind the BBC’s decision making in allying itself with one particular charity. However, the means by which Comic Relief has become such a key character within the BBC’s agenda was not necessarily as a result of a direct decision to have a charity so tightly bound within the BBC’s programming from its outset, and its success at coinciding with so many of the BBC’s values and aims has arguably occurred by chance as a result of the campaign’s expansion and increasing success over the years. Peter Bennett-Jones, the Chairman of Comic Relief, clearly recognises the benefits the charity provides the BBC in their mission to successfully fulfil their public service remit, and believes that they do not quite recognise the positive attributes this close-knit relationship brings to them as a broadcaster.

The interviewee firstly points out the means by which Comic Relief has the potential, and does so successfully, to utilise every media platform facilitated by the BBC through the stretching of the campaign across the majority of its services. For example, Comic Relief’s ‘mini-campaigns’ are often adopted within BBC radio services, including the use of regional stations to engage with audiences on a local level but within a national movement; a stance which would usually be difficult to achieve. Furthermore, Comic Relief has also been successfully wound into the BBC’s online and marketing environments, enabling them to reach out to groups within the population which are inaccessible through other means. Therefore, Comic Relief possesses a particularly unique quality, whereby the BBC is provided with an alternative, yet specific engagement with their audience which keeps them interested. Furthermore, through the engagement of every medium, whereby every type of audience within the British population can be catered for and involved within the campaign, Comic

Relief provides them with a value which cannot be sustained through many other BBC visions. This resonates effectively with the BBC's aim to cater to all demographics, age groups and diversities, all within one sweep of a campaign. For example, the adoption of Comic Relief within CBBC programming, right through to its involvement within community radio targeted at the older generation, satisfies the BBC's aim to cater to all types of license fee payers. Therefore Comic Relief has such a unique relationship with the BBC because it has many an advantage over any other 'non-profit causes that do not appeal to the corporation's target market' (Littler 2008, p.234) in the dispersive way that Comic Relief does.

An area of the relationship the BBC has with Comic Relief of which perhaps causes the BBC considerable anxiety in terms of upholding its public service values is Comic Relief's other corporate partners which it maintains alongside its core relationship with the BBC. An example would be Comic Relief's relationship with superstore Sainsbury's who exclusively stock the infamous red noses among a range of other Comic Relief branded products. This relationship has enabled them to eradicate costs of manufacturing merchandise, meaning that they are able to fulfil their aim of spending every pound of the money raised upon charitable causes, and the use of corporate partners is essential in order for them to be able to keep this promise. Comic Relief would therefore ideally be keen to give on-air credit to Sainsbury's to thank them for their contribution among all their other sponsors, who themselves would also be hoping for coverage in return. However, as previously noted, Comic Relief are required to uphold the BBC's editorial policies within all of its activity, thus putting them in a difficult position of compromise. Peter Bennett-Jones, in speaking of this contentious situation, explained how over the years as the charity's status and relationship with the BBC has been amplified, that the BBC have become increasingly 'nervous about their association with commercial brands' at the hands of Comic Relief. Their pride in having no involvement with commercial ventures is highly regarded within its service to the public, as they believe that to involve itself with the endorsement of commercial entities would 'weaken the BBC's ability to

pursue its public service broadcast remit and to give poorer value for the license fee' (Currie & Siner 1999, p.74). However the debatable issue then arises over what constitutes commercial endorsement rather than support or sponsorship; which Comic Relief would maintain their corporate partners are, whilst the BBC would override these tensions through refusal to appear as a supporting partner themselves. They instead ensure that 'a clear rationale for these commercial activities is established' (Currie & Siner 1999, p.79) in order to justify their involvement with commercial companies such as Sainsbury's to the public to avoid their irrational fear accusations of endorsement, despite the motive being purely charitable.

It could be considered that the BBC puts so much effort into its relationship with Comic Relief in particular, not just because the way it can satisfy a lot of its public service values, but also in the way that it can be utilised as a means of competing with other broadcasters; for ratings as well as reputation. Comic Relief provides them with the perfect platform to create exclusive programming through dedication to a campaign which commercial broadcasters would be unable to do themselves, thus immediately reputing the BBC as 'caring' whilst achieving perhaps unnoticed commendation and attention from audiences it may not usually attract. As Charlotte Rowlands explained to me, there is no money exchanged between the two parties, and the agreement is based upon the benefits each party receive through the collaboration. However there is arguably a third party within this particular relationship; the comedians and celebrities who are the fundamental component of the charity's success. The interviewee notes of the 'cycle of publicity' which is involved, whereby the BBC gain exclusive access to a wide range of reputable talents, who, through their involvement, gain publicity for themselves, which in turn benefits Comic Relief who are aware of the power of celebrity endorsement of a charitable cause; thus raising intangible amounts of money as a result. This could lead to an argument that charitable efforts utilised by the BBC are not chosen exclusively on their level of aid or in comparison to their fulfilment of public service values, but that there are other factors involved, namely being valued by the public above other channels as

a result of the event's star appeal. It could be questioned therefore, whether the BBC would have the same eagerness to cooperate if the presence of such a cross-section of celebrity attributes was not part of the deal, therefore questioning the use of charity appeals in relation to its public service remit.

Both of the Comic Relief representatives that I interviewed recognised the way that Comic Relief is 'intrinsically tied' to the BBC, and could not imagine it having such success without the support of the BBC; 'without the BBC, Comic Relief would simply not have achieved half of what it has' (Comic Relief 2013). It could be concluded that Comic Relief contains elements which fulfil the need to inform and educate, all through the form of entertainment; successfully pursuing each of the 'Reithian trio'. McGuigan (1998) argues how Comic Relief is able to successfully 'illustrate how the channelling of emotions through the mediation of mass communication in an international public sphere is not always and necessarily misplaced' (p.104), as issues such as widespread poverty, which are required to be approached with care can be hard to implement successfully within society. Therefore Comic Relief can be seen ultimately as a positive attribute to the BBC in terms of provisioning its public service remits.

Make Poverty History

The case study for Comic Relief is used as a means of portraying the positive way in which a charitable relationship with the BBC has succeeded in justifying itself in terms of public service broadcasting. However I will now move on to an analysis of the implementation of the BBC's charitable Comic Relief efforts of 2005 which were heavily over shadowed by the year-long campaign 'Make Poverty History'. The campaign was again the brain child of Richard Curtis, a very influential figure within the BBC, and who pitched the original idea and successfully got the BBC on side with Comic Relief. It could have been assumed, therefore, that the BBC would have been keen to be involved due to their trust in Curtis to provide them with successful initiatives which coincide well with the BBC's agenda.

Upon interviewing the chairman of Comic Relief about the regulations placed upon the charity by the BBC, he made specific reference to the year 2005 as 'getting into the most argie bargie' with the BBC in terms of restricted content. 2005 was the year in which the Make Poverty History campaign was under way, and Comic Relief embarked upon a partial partnership with the campaign for one year only, whereby Comic Relief was one of the 'several non-profit organisations and charities spearheaded by Oxfam' (Gopal 2006, p.81) forming a coalition campaign. The BBC was involved in the year-long campaign's activities in other areas as well due to its heavy implementation within many areas of the media across the year in order to gain as much coverage as possible. The 'argie bargie' which Bennett-Jones refers to would have occurred as a result of the motives of the campaign; which were essentially entirely political. The aim of the campaign was to act as a means of persuasion against the politicians of the G8 summit, which in 2005 was held in Edinburgh, and the campaign aimed to put 'pressure on the government to achieve three clear and simple economic goals' (Nash 2008, p.168) within the principle of alleviating third world debt. It was well asserted that this campaign was different to its predecessors, as its objective was not to persuade publics to donate their own money as individuals, but for the 'restructuring of international institutions and socio-economic relations' (Nash 2008, p.169). Therefore, in terms of the BBC's relationship with charitable companies, this one is a unique case, and could arguably satisfy, or, displease a particular set of its public service values.

The main point of conflicting opinions was in the broadcasting of the pivotal day of the campaign; the Live 8 concert in central London for which the BBC held the broadcasting rights for. As Stephen Wittle was quoted as asking; 'who could be against broadcasting this formidable array of musical talent, united in a desire to make poverty history?' (cited in BBC Trust 2007, p.60), therefore highlighting the BBC's desire to be involved in the broadcasting of the event, especially considering it is the type of event which involves the entire nation. However, the BBC had to also be sure to adhere to its editorial guidelines, which state that; 'if our social action programmes or campaigns

coincide with a government campaign or lobbying initiative it is important that we retain an arm's length position' (BBC 2013c, 4.4.22); especially when such 'lobbying initiative' is also viewed by some as using the BBC as merely a marketing platform whereby the corporation becomes just another of its 'corporate sponsors', a title the BBC would prefer to avoid.

The controversial issue of this campaign is evident in the campaign's slogan; 'justice not charity', which instantly calls into reference and poses the question of the BBC's position on 'justice' as opposed to its relationship with charities. The BBC holds very dear its isolation from any political engagements; therefore through actively endorsing a particularly politically-minded attitude through its support of the Make Poverty History campaign, it is arguably breaching this remit. Furthermore, the BBC's guidelines clearly state that it must 'ensure that our output does not embrace the agenda of any particular campaign groups and that we treat groups objectively' (BBC 2013c, 4.4.22). Richard Curtis, however, maintained that this case study should be defined as a 'movement' as opposed to a 'campaign', implying that the policies applicable to the endorsement of campaigns are sceptical in this case (BBC Trust 2007, p.56). These contrasting interpretations of the event therefore led to the commissioning of a BBC Trust document entitled '*From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel: safe guarding impartiality in the 21st century*' in which they outlined the ways in which the BBC was perhaps undermining its dedication to impartiality through its involvement with Make Poverty History, despite being seemingly involved with 'a classic case of a 'common good' campaign' (p. 55).

The BBC would maintain that the boundaries set for the content it broadcast in support of the Make Poverty History were completely legitimate, they effectively chose to approach the alleviation of poverty as more prominently a political issue as opposed to a humanitarian one, and therefore restricted its output in terms of what they deemed to be violating its policies. The consequences of this, to Peter Bennett-Jones' dismay, were that "any messaging about what everybody was there for was not allowed to be transmitted, which was absolutely ridiculous". It appears that the BBC were willing to make a stance against particular elements of the campaign, for example their refusal to

show the commercial supporting the campaign in which celebrities clicked their fingers to signify a child dying, and yet were still willing to 'document the campaign' throughout the year, which makes its decision making process rather difficult to follow. There was much criticism over this decision at the time, and some critics compared the event to the Comic Relief telethon, when similar appeal videos are annually broadcast without question. The decision seems particularly paradoxical when one imagines the Comic Relief campaign being broadcast but with no on-air references to the reasons behind the comedy and celebrity appearances; it would merely be an entertainment show.

Following the event, the BBC was also criticised for favouring a particular economical agenda, with the *Daily Telegraph* noting that by supporting the effort to raise money for the famine-struck populations of Africa, the BBC 'took sides with those who insist that the only way to improve the condition of Africa is to send more aid to the continent, a position which is hotly contested by many economics and even by some aid workers' (*Daily Telegraph* 2009, cited in Thomas & Hindman 2012, p.579), which categorically contradicts the BBC's remit of not appearing to take sides over a particular issue. It could be considered that the BBC ignored the possibility of this becoming an issue, and were instead focussed on their perceived role as being the 'natural' broadcasting company to take the lead in such a nationally implemented event. Furthermore, in recognising that the broadcasting of the 'Live Aid' concert in 1985 provided them with incredibly high viewing figures, another perception of the BBC's motives could be that this was also a convincing factor in coming to its decisions. The BBC's knowledge of the appreciation of the audience in broadcasting the events, and the positive reflection it would have upon their reputation as providing the public with access to such events, suggests that that in determining which charities to support, it is not only its public service remits which are considered, but also ways in which it will impact the BBC as a broadcaster. One opinion of a member of the public of the BBC's decision was that they 'had become so determined to show it was doing good in the world, in particular Africa, that it abandoned any pretence of 'balance' on such issues' (Horbury 2012), meaning that in cases such as these, it is

common for the BBC's remits to contradict one another, resulting in prioritising being necessary by decision makers.

Despite the criticism surrounding the Make Poverty History campaign and the BBC's involvement in it, it nevertheless succeeded in spreading the word about third world problems; 'it bought tens of thousands of young people to at least minimal awareness of 'Third World debt' and so-called free trade as issues' despite the fact that the success 'relied on a discursive enactment of concern accompanied by an insistent and comforting disavowal of material implication' (Gopal 2006, p.97). Therefore the BBC is successfully adhering to its remit of education if not other remits.

DEC Gaza Crisis Appeal

The third area of interest within this study, is slightly different to the other two cases in that I will not be assessing the extent to which a BBC charity appeal fits into its public service remit, but instead scrutinising a case which the BBC actively refused to be involved, and through this refusal caused the BBC to be faced with particular controversy and criticism. The decision making process will be interesting as a comparison to the other cases looked at, and should give more of an insight into how the BBC positions itself, and considers itself as a means to promote charitable giving in comparison to its upholding of its public service remit. This case study is obviously going to be a lot more contentious than the others as a result of the politics in the middle-east; the region itself is a very controversial topic to be covered within the media within any context. And since 'impartiality' is considered the most important premise to be held by the BBC in terms of its provisioning of a democratic public sphere and to separate it from its commercial broadcaster competitors, the decision upon whether to air this appeal would have had to have been treated by the BBC with extreme caution.

Before creating a Disasters Emergency Committee appeal in response to an event or crisis overseas, there are certain criteria which have to be met. For example the DEC agencies must be able to

provide assistive and humanitarian assistance on a scale to justify a national appeal, and they must have to generate the necessary amount of media coverage to create public awareness. In coming to a decision over whether to air an appeal put forward by the DEC, the BBC also has its own set of criteria which it will consider before agreeing to promote a cause, whereby 'both DEC agencies and the BBC will need to assure themselves separately that all three criteria have been satisfied for any individual emergency before it can be considered for broadcast appeal' (BBC 2013a). On the grounds of not pursuing this case, Director General of the BBC at the time Mark Thompson, who had the final word on the decision, wrote a blog article explaining how and why the decision was made to withhold support of the appeal, in which he explained that part of his reasoning was that he was unsure whether the criteria of whether the DEC would be able to be 'successfully delivered on the ground' (Thompson 2009). However, he went on to explain that the decision was primarily made in response to BBC editorial policy and guidelines as opposed to emergency principles, notably its concern at breaching impartiality; there were concerns over 'whether airing the appeal would adversely affect public perception of the impartiality of the BBC' (BBC Trust 2009, p.3). Upon interviewing an employee of the BBC Charity Appeals committee, she told me that "impartiality is always going to be at the heart of the BBC in everything that it does and being impartial in anything that it does is a key principle", and she explained how in deciding upon the broadcasting of an emergency appeal, especially one which is the consequence of a war situation as opposed to a natural, unavoidable disaster, that "impartiality is certainly a judgement that the BBC will always take when looking at a DEC appeal".

The case is involved in much more controversy than will be assessed here; there will not be too much detail in relation to other arguments concerning the BBC's involvement with the on-going war in Israel and Palestine. There have been articles written concerning the BBC's relationship to the nations and how they are covered in its programming, which on the news will be reported very specifically so as to not appear one sided. For example, Richardson and Bakho (2009) conducted a

critical discourse analysis into the BBC's television journalism surrounding the topic, and it was found that the BBC take its impartiality remit very seriously with regards to this area of news and has even 'created two high-ranking positions specifically to monitor Middle East coverage and designed a teaching module for its Middle East journalists to ensure that they are aware of its "overarching values"' (p.614). However, with the case of the DEC appeal, the BBC were being asked to broadcast an appeal which was singularly being used to raise money to send to those in need in the Gaza strip and southern Israel following a sudden surge in violence and casualties in 2009. In a press release regarding the appeal for aid, the Disasters Emergency Committee described the crisis as 'so huge that British aid agencies were compelled to act' (DEC 2009) and to provide short term-aid. The press release, which would have been presented to the BBC also made a point to note that 'DEC aid agencies were non-political' and Brendan Gormley, chief executive of the DEC was quoted as saying: 'we work on the basis of humanitarian need and there is an urgent need in Gaza today. Political solutions are for others to resolve, but what is of major concern to us all is that many innocent people have been affected by the situation – and it is them that we seek to help' (DEC 2009). So, upon reflection of this statement, it might be assumed that the BBC would feel a certain responsibility, in representing the public, to feel a requirement to support the cause. Despite it not explicitly saying within its published public service remit that the BBC has a responsibility to help others, it is well known that John Reith, aside from his public service 'trio', also 'conceived of broadcasting, 'in terms of high moral responsibility'' (Briggs 1961 cited in Crisell 2006, p.19).

In the months following the decision, the BBC Trust (2007) compiled a document assessing the decision of the Director-General not to air the appeal, finding that 'it was in this case impossible to separate the political causes of the dispute from its humanitarian consequences. By its very nature the appeal would should only one aspect of an ongoing and controversial news situation' (p.4) and therefore found the decision favourable. However, the BBC, in this particular case, chose to prioritise its vision of impartiality over supporting a humanitarian appeal, which as a result caused much

outrage by press and public alike, and the decision drew special attention due to the fact that its public service competitors (ITV and Channel 4) both chose to go ahead and broadcast the appeal. The criticism came in many forms, and I would maintain this was largely due to differing interpretations of the premise of impartiality. For example, Thomas and Hindman (2012), who conducted a study into newspaper reaction to the decision not to air the appeal, found that a common criticism among journalists was that 'most (though not all) responses defied the convention that impartiality is the pinnacle of journalistic attainment and argued that it is secondary to concern and compassion for the afflicted and dispossessed' (p.583), and ultimately constructed 'an image of an organisation that is woefully inadequate at performing its public service mission' (p.584). In response to this claim, Franks and Seaton (2009), who responded to the decision with an article titled 'Is saving the world journalism's job' argued against this and said of the BBC's impartiality remit; 'if the output is tainted by association with apparently partisan appeals, then the associated journalism is undermined. Impartiality is rather like virginity. It cannot be recovered.' (p.13-14). Furthermore, Mark Thompson responded to views of the inhumanity of the BBC in not cooperating: 'the BBC as a whole takes its responsibility to report the human consequences of situations like Gaza very seriously and I believe our record in doing it with compassion as well as objectivity is unrivalled', furthermore, he ends his blog with a message to the public that 'it is important to remember that our decision does not prevent the DEC continuing with their appeal for donations and people are able to contribute should they choose to' (2009) therefore suggesting that it is solely based upon the very principle of the remit.

This case study is interesting because 'the decision divided BBC newsrooms' (Franks & Seaton 2009, p.15), and Peter Bennett Jones was one who believed that the BBC made the wrong choice, despite 'respecting the BBC's determinism to uphold its broad policy'. He also drew concern to the idea that since the Director- General has the responsibility of making final charitable decisions, that despite him arguably being 'professionally more resistant to the whim of populist pressures' (Franks &

Seaton 2009, p.19), there must to a certain degree be subjectivity regarding an interpretation of the significance of impartiality for the BBC, which was interpreted by critics as Thompson being pro-Israeli. 'For communication scholars, the norm of impartiality implies detachment and impassive distance, which is incompatible with a world where borders are becoming diffuse, economics tie nations together, and the actions of one nation can have far-reaching consequences beyond its immediate neighbours' (Thomas & Hindman 2012, p.575). Mark Thompson, in explaining his decision in terms of the importance of upholding impartiality in an interview a year later, he was quotes as saying: "If you wanted to criticise us you would say we are becoming increasingly tough-minded about the concept of impartiality. In a sense we are becoming more explicit." He justified his decision as "a post-Hutton change in the organisation. Impartiality is going up and up the agenda" (Macintyre 2010, *New Statesman*). On reflection of this obstinate positioning of impartiality, Thompson could be commended for therefore adhering to another public service remit so fundamentally 'rather than simply following public tastes' (Born 2004, p.27).

The *Seesaw to Wagon wheel* BBC Trust document also states that in the revised version of impartiality, the BBC should not be involved with one-sided campaigns, even if they are deemed 'humanitarianism, or seem to be of universal appeal' (BBC Trust 2007, p.79); 'the BBC is not here to provide a free ride for any campaign, however worthwhile' (p.79) , so despite having been made clear by the DEC that the Gaza appeal was not 'one-sided', Mark Thompson has evidently incorporated this revised policy into his decision. It could be argued, therefore, that since Make Poverty History, the BBC's charitable activities now have to be very specifically correlated to the public service remit than they were before. Furthermore, since the term 'impartial' has seemingly now been attributed to being 'a distinctive quality that is to be constantly assigned to the BBC by its audience' as opposed to not just 'an enshrined ethos or a journalistic protocol' (BBC Trust, 2007; Petley, 2009; Seaton, 2007, cited in Englebert & McCurdy 2012, p.184) therefore suggesting that the BBC's international reputation has become more of an aim to be achieved; 'far from being imposed

on the BBC, impartiality has been conceived by the BBC...it is the foundation of its reputation around the world' (BBC Trust 2007, p.28).

Englebert and McCurdy (2011) also argue that upon justifying its DEC decision, the BBC 'capitalised on its institutionally loose but bounded view of impartiality, which afforded the rhetorical flexibility to argue so decisively against airing the appeal' (p.199), implying that the interpretation of impartiality is edited according to the views of those making the decision and how to utilise it within each situation. Therefore making it difficult to come to any conclusion regarding how the BBC chooses which charities fulfil its public service remit successfully.

Discussions and Conclusions

I will now attempt to bring together some discussion points which can be drawn from the contexts and findings of the individual differences in the decisions present within the three case studies.

The first question of the investigation was to determine whether supporting charitable causes as a premise in itself could be justified in terms of the BBC's public service remit. And upon reflection of the BBC's over-arching principles which have governed the decisions of the BBC from its outset; 'to inform, educate and entertain', it would be fair to conclude, that even when considering some of the BBC's more controversial charity involvements, that this 'Reithian trio' is upheld. The concept of 'informing' its audience could be considered justified through providing information of charity initiatives and of the work of non-governmental organisations in their entirety. Through adopting charitable initiatives within its content, the BBC is immediately raising awareness of issues around the world and in the UK which the public may not have been subjected to otherwise. This concept can also be reflected within the remit of 'education', which is the one element of the 'trio' which could arguably 'hold back' the BBC in terms of competing against its commercial competitors. Charity collaborations, as exemplified within the case studies, as well as raising awareness of those we have the potential to help, can also be viewed as powerful tools in educating the public of customs and values which may be beyond their cultural perimeters. The provision of educational material within programming may be seen as a disadvantage in terms of gaining viewers as a result of the influx of non-stimulating and passive entertainment shows which the BBC is required to compete against. Therefore the BBC's knowledge that the implementation of charity appeals within its content can be used as a means of redeeming the fulfilment of its education remit; especially one which incorporates a wide demographic audience, could perhaps be inferred as a considerably influential factor in its decision making and willingness to cooperate.

The BBC are also required to adhere to the third remit of 'entertainment' within its programming, and this remit is essential in order 'to hold their audience shares against commercial broadcasters

and hence maintain public and political support for their funding' (Brown 1996, p.6). This remit is evidently satisfied through the BBC's wide-scale national appeals such as Comic Relief and Live 8, and it is arguably the entertainment value of these events which makes them so successful and creates such a buzz within the public. What is particularly interesting about the way each of the values has significant resonance within charity appeals, is that it is rare that the BBC is able to create programming which can equally satisfy each of these remits through one means. This appears to be especially true within the digital age, whereby broadcasting as an industry is arguably being utilised primarily as a means of making money as opposed to serving an audience. This increased amount of content constituting 'entertainment' was 'criticized by central observers for creating a misbalance in the co-called 'Reithian trinity' of information, education and entertainment' (Enli 2008, p.106). The adoption of charity appeals, then, could be viewed as a way of the BBC re-establishing this balance. Furthermore, it could also be inferred that despite the Reithian trio being considered as more of a 'discretionary formula' (Burns 1977, p.40) as a result of the changing definitions of public service broadcasting in the twenty-first century, that in fact these three values do still form the basis for the other purposes outlined by the BBC and still retain their role as being the foundations upon which the nature of the BBC is built on.

This leads me onto an analysis of the second part of my research question; looking into *how* the BBC chooses the charities it selects. It firstly could be a fair assumption that on reflection of the cases discussed, that the BBC has not necessarily ever come to the conclusion that being involved with charity appeals is a mandatory part of its public service remit. From my findings it could be understood that in regards to wide-scale appeals as opposed to its monthly individual support for regional charities on smaller scales, that there is not a systematic decision making process set in stone. The decision over which charities to support is instead based upon who they are approached by, and it could be conceived that the success of these 'approaches' is determined by how appealing the relationship which would be created appears to be on a number of levels. For example, with the

example of the Make Poverty History campaign, it could be reasoned that the profile of the event within the media spectrum could have been a deciding factor. The BBC, as a the 'British broadcaster' has retained the perception within the public and of itself that it should have the responsibility for the broadcasting of live, national events of which 'would have the effect of "making the nation as one man"' (John Reith cited in Born 2004, p.28). In this way, Make Poverty History's international live concerts could be compared to national sporting or royal events, which would also bring the nation together, and Scannell and Cardiff (1991) conceived of a 'national culture' which is created as a result of these events, and the BBC may feel it is part of their role to be a part of this.

It could also be argued that in assessing the 'appeal' of a large-scale campaign that the presence of celebrity endorsement may also be a significant component. This could be argued merely by considering the influence Richard Curtis had on the BBC, in pitching the concepts of both Comic Relief and Make Poverty History; both of which have enhanced the BBC's reputation. It could be conceived that the BBC were aware of Curtis' reputation as being a trusted and respected figure within the institution as well as society, which therefore suggests that it also recognises the significance of celebrity culture within its audience, and could be utilising this influence as another means of competing for viewing figures against commercial broadcasters. However, this advantage the BBC has over non-public service broadcasters as being the obvious choice for campaigners in gaining widespread recognition, consequently leads to cost-free BBC promotion and national appeal, which could be deemed as unfair to private broadcasting companies. James Murdoch, for example, controversially stated that the BBC has an 'inability to distinguish between what is good for it, and what is good for the country' (Murdoch 2009, p.15), as he construes that through implementing content which is unattainable by commercial broadcasters due to the BBC's untouchable reputation and funding, that they are making competition impossible and thus are affecting the whole industry. The BBC as a public service broadcaster has always upheld the view that 'it can best serve the nation when it remains distanced from any particular commitment to any particular power structure inside

the nation' (Tracey 1998, p.31). Therefore, in making decisions over whether or not to support a charitable campaign, the views of any political party or authority groups should not be a determining factor. However, it could be construed, and was argued by Peter Bennett Jones, that if all parties are in agreement of a cause, then the BBC should have less concern over its implementation of support as well. Peter seemed to have significant frustration at the BBC in not endorsing the Make Poverty History campaign in its entirety, as he argued that the "three main party leaders said they had no problem with this movement and that they endorsed it" and therefore found it difficult to comprehend the BBC's justification for not doing so as well. However, Scannell (1990) argued that 'to defend the public interest may mean challenging the government of the day' (p.24), which is evidently what the BBC did in refusing to air the Gaza appeal and to retain scepticism over the motives of the Make Poverty History campaign, and could be viewed as admirable of the BBC's considering it is the government who provide them with the authority to broadcast (Scannell 1990, p.24). Furthermore, as the BBC Trust notes: 'In any event, the BBC should be wary of political consensus: it may conceal intellectual laziness, and quite often turns out to be wrong' (p.59-60), which therefore justified the BBC's provisioning of its public service values ahead of any other variables. The *Seesaw to Wagonwheel* BBC Trust document also noted how 'when there seems to be consensus, impartiality may therefore seem redundant. Yet this is often where it is urgently needed' (p.54), which denotes the importance of the upholding of impartial content within the BBC, of which I will now go on to discuss.

It is evident through the findings within each of my case studies that despite the BBC's involvement with charities being accepted as part of its public service remit, that the premise of impartiality remains, and is likely to continue, as a difficult conception to define and to apply consistently to every decision made by the BBC. The requirement for the sustaining of impartiality still remains mandatory in the broadcasting of charity appeals despite them being relatively different to other BBC content, and the BBC Trust maintains that 'the principles are the same: only the application may

be different' (p.47). The provisioning of the term within the BBC's public service remit is arguably becoming more and more applicable to its overall purpose in correlation to the increasing commercialisation of the media. This can be demonstrated through its intensification of relevance within BBC charity appeals. For example the BBC Trust document highlights the coverage by the BBC of the 'Free Nelson Mandela' concert in 1988, in which the BBC willingly broadcasted freely 'without mediation in the supposed interest of impartiality' (p.59), and therefore did not construe the political implications of its decision as detrimentally significant. It can also be seen how the BBC's interpretation of the term was re-evaluated in the time between the two decisions concerning its implication in the Make Poverty History campaign and in broadcasting the DEC Gaza appeal. Franks and Seaton (2009) suggest that it was the controversy caused as a result of its 'lured' involvement with the Make Poverty History campaign which prompted them to consider the term so explicitly in its refusal to broadcast the DEC appeal, whereby they now have to make sure that it 'exercises fastidious judgement' concerning the term in its decision making. This newly adapted principality of 'impartiality' seems to have been firmly put in place in the BBC's decision making about charities, because the BBC has since refused to even be involved in causes deemed 'for the common good' such as those on matters such as climate change (BBC Trust, 2007).

Peter Bennett Jones however, maintains that the BBC's interpretation of the term impartiality is what will always be a point of controversy and criticism by those on the outside within all areas of its output. He pointed out that despite the theories of impartiality being constantly updated in order to provide a universal definition, the perceived impartiality of a charitable cause is always going to be dependent upon individual interpretations. This view is coherent with Englebert and McCurdy's (2011) conception that impartiality in public service broadcasting has 'semantic plasticity', whereby its definition can be moulded in accordance to the situation, they argue that 'BBC executives do not articulate a coherent and consistent view of impartiality' (p.198), which is perhaps evidential in Mark Thompson's resolving decision of the Gaza appeal. However it is also conceived that the use of

this 'semantic plasticity' is what is to allow the BBC to 'shield itself from the fallout of a tough and controversial decision' (p.199), suggesting that the concept of impartiality is potentially used as a means of diverting attention from its other, potentially more commercially driven motives which could also be influencing its decisions.

Within each of my interviews, I posed the following question to the interviewees: "If the BBC was not involved in any charitable activity, do you think that it would therefore be going *against* its public service remit?". The response I received from Sally Flatman, who is employed as a charity appeals advisor, was: "I think it's just part of what the BBC has always done, it goes back as far as the BBC goes back". Considering that Sally operates directly within this environment and is an active contributor to such decisions, and the fact that even she, as an employee of the BBC recognises the relationship between the BBC and charity appeals as 'tradition', as opposed to a mandatory task, suggests that charities are perhaps not always conceived as something which needs to be dealt with in the same way as other programming. If this is the case, then perhaps it should just be accepted that the value of helping others is a premise to be upheld by all; especially within a corporation which is held so authoritatively by the public. This leads me on to discuss Peter Bennett-Jones' view of the BBC. He was unabashed to express his opinions on how he believes the BBC should change its organisational set up in order to avoid conflicting interests being present in decisions such as these. He maintains that "the BBC would be better served if it divided itself down the middle and was the BBC news with one set of rules and governance, and then BBC programming and entertainment which has a set of rules which are appropriate for an entertainment organisation". I would further this argument by considering that an even further divide might be considered for the broadcasting of charities, especially if they are willing to keep re-establishing its definition of public service, and as Daley (2009) argues, who is to say that it is the function of the BBC 'to make decisions about the appropriate use of donation to a charitable appeal'? (cited in Thomas & Hindman 2012, p.12).

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