THE BBC AND THE ARTS IN THE NATIONS AND REGIONS: IMPARTIALITY - AND EQUALITY?

David Anderson, Director General of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales

Introduction

I am a passionate supporter of a publicly-funded BBC. Along with the NHS, social care and the state education system, I regard it as one of the four vital pillars of public service on these islands - evidence that democracy works.

I was born in Northern Ireland, grew up in the industrial Midlands of England, and went to university in Scotland. For the last four years I have worked in Wales. I have lived in every nation of the United Kingdom.

If I ask questions, and challenge practice, it is because I want the BBC to survive and thrive at the centre of public life. It is a beacon of truths in a world of commercial interests. It provides a public space for debate that is vital for our democracy.

The culture of any nation or region is an ecosystem, made up of a number of mutually dependent parts. As well as arts and cultural institutions, these also include the print and broadcast media, public and private funders, the education sector, the tourism industry and - last but not least - creative industries and individual professionals.

Also essential to all of this is the wider community, whose informed support and creative participation is the lifeblood of all cultural activity. A creative economy depends upon a creative society.

The nations and regions of the United Kingdom outside London - with the exception, arguably, of the central belt in Scotland - do not have all the elements, as described above, that they need to ensure a thriving arts ecosystem.

Wales, for example, has very strong resources of talent and great national arts and cultural institutions. Recent reports by Dai Smith, Chair of the Arts Council of Wales, on the positive role of the arts in education, and by Baroness Kay Andrews on the importance of cultural participation in overcoming the barriers created by poverty, have demonstrated the value of cultural education in Wales.

But Wales, like much of the rest of the United Kingdom, does not get fair media coverage of its arts. Nor do we have the coverage from the UK media that the quality of our arts deserves. This lack of recognition and publicity from the UK print and broadcasting media - with the credibility that comes with it - in turn makes it still harder for us to attract the public and private funding that we so badly need, to enable us to invest in our programmes and, for example, to provide match funding for Lottery bids.

Many of the key decisions that determine support for the arts are made by publicly funded organisations based in London, such as the BBC and Visit Britain. They appear to have little knowledge or understanding of what is happening in the rest of the United Kingdom, and especially the devolved nations.

The Arts in England

Research by Arts and Business in 2012[1] revealed that the great majority of funding in the whole of the UK for the arts - over 80% of that from by private donors, over 70% of that from corporations, and over 60% of that from trusts and foundations - went to London institutions.

In 2013, an independent report, Rebalancing Our Cultural Capital[2], revealed that Londoners benefitted from £69 per head of cultural spending by DCMS and Arts Council England from its public funding, compared with an average of just £4.50 in the rest of England. This year, the same authors published The Place Report[3], on Arts Lottery funding of communities across England. This found that institutions located in the City of Westminster alone had received £408 million from the Arts Lottery since 1995, but its citizens had contributed just £14.5 million. This is in addition to the £80 million per annum these arts institutions receive from DCMS, and the £450 million per annum DCMS gives to national museums in England, almost all of which are located in London.

At the same time the 33 areas of lowest participation in England, representing 6 million people, received just £288 million over the last 20 years from the Arts Lottery. Yet, just five organisations in London within a mile of each other - the National Theatre, the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, the South Bank Centre and Sadlers Wells - alone have received more from the Arts Lottery (at £315 million) than these 33 low participation areas in England.

The local authority area with the poorest return from the Arts Lottery is County Durham, who players have contributed £34 million, while receiving just £12 million.

In the United Kingdom we retain the highly centralised 19th century, semi-colonial model that the arts should be concentrated in central London, and that funding London is synonymous with serving the English regions and nations. For Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in particular, this undermines the principles of devolution of culture, embedded in law. It is a constitutional tension that remains unresolved.

All the evidence shows that concentration of power and funding in London is, in policy terms, a failure. Participation levels in the arts in London are, if anything, slightly lower than in the rest of England, despite this richness of funding. London-based public institutions such as the British Museum, and private arts institutions such as the Royal Academy and Glyndebourne, do not in any substantial or effective way serve England, still less the United Kingdom. Nor, culturally, are they capable of doing so.

The Arts Council England's initial response to the two independent reports was to say that the data was wrong. Nothing they have published since has changed the fundamental truth of the reports' analysis. We provide public funding of the arts to correct the inequalities of the market, not to deepen it. Yet re-enforcing inequality is what Arts Council England (ACE), and the Arts Lottery England have been doing for over two decades and more. This is public policy failure on a heroic scale.

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[1] http://artsandbusiness.bitc.org.uk/research/latest-private-investment-culture-survey-201112

[2] http://www.theroccreport.co.uk/

[3] http://www.theplacereport.co.uk/

Funding of arts organisations in England needs root and branch reform, not tinkering, as ACE proposes. ACE promises that, if Arts Lottery funding stays healthy, it will bring access to the arts "as close to home as possible for everyone". In fact, income to the Arts Lottery is currently falling.

The media and social justice

Is there a connection between rising poverty and social division in the UK, and the policies and practices of the arts and media?

Last month, the Open Society Foundations (OSF) published a report on perceptions of working class communities in Higher Blackley in Manchester[4] that they are represented in the media as "feckless, lazy scroungers". It found similar patterns in other parts of Europe. White working-class people are often depicted as poor, unsocialised and sometimes violent, says the OSF.

The report draws on Nancy Fraser's concept of misrecognition, which she identifies as cultural/symbolic injustice that is rooted in social patterns of representation, cultural domination and non-recognition. In other words, misrepresentation of the white working classes in the media is not simply poor journalism that does not reflect communities accurately, but rather it is all part of the unequal society and reproduces this inequality.

The Manchester researchers argue that members of the white working class are largely excluded from jobs in the media, and the stereotypes perpetuated there strengthen the perception of the poor deserving their poverty. This perception in itself, the researchers say, affects public policy because decisions are based on the idea that people's circumstances are the result of their own poor choices, such as poor diet and irresponsible management of personal finances.

In Higher Blackley, on the other hand, participants complained of researchers being "all born with a silver spoon in their mouth", and said working class people had little opportunity to correct damaging stereotypes of themselves.

Melvyn Bragg has recently spoken out on the same issue. "I'm not a fan of the working class being mocked, including by some of our famous writers … even by those who came from it," he said in an interview with the Radio Times in June 2014. "All this 'it's grim oop North' sort of stuff. Well, it was a joke once, but we've got to the stage where the working class has been turned into a cliche and it deserves a lot better." Bragg didn't name the "famous writers" in the interview, but said that, even if working-class characters were presented as intelligent and educated, this was seen as extraordinary.

He added that his own working class childhood, as the son of a publican in the north-west, had a library for books and the radio for drama: "We listened to a lot of drama, adaptations of books, comedy. There was a real love of music expressed in choirs, because you didn't have the instruments except your voice. We lived in a very cultured environment."

And last year, Tony Garnett (who directed 'Cathy Come Home') claimed, in the Guardian on 12 April 2013, that realistic dramas about social conditions of working class people of

[4] http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/white-working-class-communities-manchester

the kind he made would no longer be funded by the BBC, even though the bleak social realism he depicted is as relevant now as it was in the early years of his career.

The Corporation, he said, has little interest in poor people unless they are the subject of sneering. In an interview ahead of a retrospective of his work at the BFI in London, the producer, director and writer said: "You can watch the whole of the BBC output, and - forgetting the clichés in soaps - poor people do not exist. Where occasionally they do, they are smirked at or derided as chavs."

"People outside the south-east, one or two boroughs in west London and Westminster, virtually don't exist either. It's as though the BBC only recruits 'Alisons' and 'Jeremys' from the Home Counties who only make culture that appeals to them, but who occasionally go to remote regions of the planet like Doncaster as visiting anthropologists, either to be amused by or shocked by the behaviour of the tribe there."

"The move to Salford was a small but useful gesture, but . . . They are patronising, if they are not ignoring, most of the people of this country."

He also criticised the scale of funding of "big volume shows and soaps: it's as though there are no individual chefs any more. There is just junk food and, what junk food does to people's bodies, junk culture does to people's minds and sensibilities. I'm not saying abolish all those shows, but look at the emphasis."

The critics may have a case, but there are exceptions. Since Tony Garnett spoke last year, the BBC has broadcast the first series of Happy Valley, set in working class communities in West Yorkshire, to great critical acclaim. There are other examples, such as Ruth Jones' Stella, set in the Welsh valleys and funded by Sky.

There is - well, let's be realistic, there might be - an emerging political consensus in England that there should be some change of policy in response to the inequalities of arts funding and participation.

The new English Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Sajid Javid, said in his first speech after taking up the post that the social exclusivity of the cultural sector was unacceptable and that he wanted the industry to apply its creativity to "capturing new audiences and nurturing new talents".

And speaking recently at the Roundhouse, Labour's Deputy Leader and Shadow Secretary for Culture, Media and Sport in England, Harriet Harman, has said that unless the national museums reach more children, from a wider demographic, their funding should be cut.

Research demonstrates, she said, that taking part in arts activities develops social skills as well as educational performance, and gives young people wider social networks, and yet under the Coalition in England, participation by children in the arts in schools had been reduced by a third. Harriet Harman said that there would be a clear commitment by a Labour government to a universal cultural entitlement for every child.

I have heard some suggest that the solution to funding inequity is for London national institutions to do more touring. This is as futile as carrying candles around an ever darkening landscape. If they are to survive as cultural centres, the English regions need funding that

they themselves control, that expresses their own cultural perspectives and that supports their own creative development - not funding controlled and spent largely in London.

There is a challenge in all this for the BBC as our national broadcaster. As funding for the arts from diverse public and private sources becomes increasingly concentrated in one small area of England's capital city, and (as research by the Sutton Trust has shown) those employed in senior positions in broadcasting are recruited increasingly from men and women with privileged backgrounds, and the narrow circle of support for the arts shrinks ever closer to central London, will the BBC's coverage shrink with it? And can this coverage now truly be described as impartial, as the BBC's Charter requires?

Or will the BBC actively seek out and support talent beyond the floating world of London finance, giving the nations and regions the many creative, cultural and economic benefits that a more inclusive coverage can bring?

This is a key issue for our democracy, and for the BBC's definition of impartiality. What will it do now that impartiality - expressed as commitment to quality according to a particular London definition - so clearly conflicts with impartiality expressed as equity and social justice?

The Arts in Wales

Since taking up my post in Wales as Director General of Amgueddfa Cymru, I have seen how different the arts are here.

There is a much greater sense that culture in the broadest definition is a communal resource and belongs to everyone. There is still a cultural memory of the miners' institutes and the tradition of working class self-education. Top down arts does not work well. It is not how culture happens in Wales. The arts have a much broader base.

This is evident in attendances at museums. At Amgueddfa Cymru 28% of visitors to our seven sites across South, West and North Wales are from social classes C2DE. At a typical London national museum such as the National Gallery the figure is approximately a third of this at around 10%.

In all my years of working in museums I have never known a cultural institution as loved by a broad spectrum of the population as St Fagans National History Museum. But there is excellence as well as inclusion in Wales.

The National Theatre Wales, under John McGrath, is one example. The Little Dogs, based on a Dylan Thomas short story and starring Sian Phillips, and Praxis Makes Perfect, an immersive gig based on the life of the Italian millionaire communist publisher Feltrinelli, are two of the most powerful, moving and radical productions I have seen in my life.

And a leading private patron of the arts has reportedly described David Pountney's Welsh National Opera (WNO) staging of Lohengrin as the best opera production she has ever seen in the UK. I agree.

The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, housed in an extraordinary new building with a world class auditorium, has hosted a succession of major global events including

the international exhibition of theatre design and the international harp festival (again both firsts in the UK).

And then there are the languages and arts of Wales itself, a truly dual-language nation. I had no idea, in all the years I lived in England, of the existence of these extensive worlds of literature and performance, expressed through the Welsh language, as well as through English and other languages in Wales.

These are the cultures of a nation and its people living only a few hours away from London, that few in England have any awareness or concept of. In many different ways, the richness of talent in Wales is almost invisible in the UK beyond Wales's borders.

Why? It is not an issue of quality. The problem appears to be that it is . . . from Wales.

BBC coverage of the arts in Wales

The BBC is a hugely important part of the arts ecosystem in Wales. It is to be congratulated for its Roath Lock investment in Cardiff. Like similar developments in, for example, Salford and Glasgow, a Centre of Excellence for drama has given a massive boost to the creative economy in Wales by moving production of dramas such as Casualty to Cardiff, and providing a purpose-built home for dramas developed in Wales such as the reinvented Dr Who by Swansea born Russell T. Davies and Neath born Julie Gardiner.

The new BBC studios have made Cardiff a hub for related creative industries, which Wales very badly needs. As almost everywhere else in the UK, its creative talent has been gradually sucked into London. However, I would argue that almost no one notices that these programmes are made in Wales, and little, if any, of the content is about Wales.

BBC Network does cover some elements of arts in Wales. It broadcast a documentary on National Theatre Wales' The Passion, filmed on location at Port Talbot. Otherwise there is very little coverage of theatre in Wales.

Cardiff is a BBC Centre of Excellence in the UK for music, with a resident BBC orchestra. The biennial Cardiff Singer of the World competition, the BBC Young Musician competition, the Leeds International Piano competition, and Choir of the Year, among many other concerts and events, are broadcast or managed from Cardiff. I understand that the Young Dancer of the World competition will be added to this list in future.

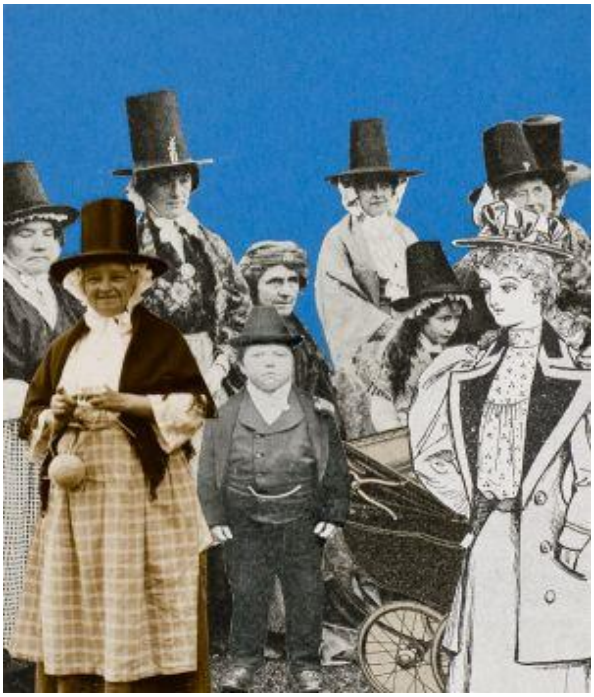
There is a 30 minute programme each year from the Eisteddfod on the BBC Network, but otherwise no coverage of the event in Wales in English, except on the news. Years ago, BBC Network news used to include in their bulletin across the UK who had won the Crown and Chair at the National Eisteddfod every year. It seems a shame that this no longer happens.

Within Wales, there is a weekly radio show devoted to the arts, and there is one arts review of the year, broadcast normally around Christmas time on BBC Wales. BBC Wales also does one programme each year from the Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod. Amongst big art series on BBC Wales was one by Kim Howells which was broadcast a few years ago.

Otherwise, there appears to be no space in the present mix of programmes on BBC Wales for reviews and shorter magazine items. Subjects need to be worth a full documentary, as Karl Jenkins at 70 was, if they are to be covered; smaller stories are left out completely. As a consequence, Wales lacks a critical culture for its arts in the broadcast media.

BBC Wales has also been very successful in making observational documentaries. Some of these, such as Police 24, Weatherman Walking, The Country Midwives (set in Cardiganshire) and X Ray, have done well on BBC Wales, but not more widely. Others, such as Rhod Gilbert's Work Experience and The Call Centre, have been network successes as well.

BBC Network has signed a three year partnership contract with the Hay Festival (along with Glyndebourne and a range of London institutions). But despite its success as an event, the appeal of Hay for Network may be that its content is particularly of interest to a London audience.



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And the BBC does not cover the newer and more interesting festivals in Wales - such as the Green Man Festival, Festival No 6, the Brecon Jazz Festival and the Beyond the Borders Storytelling Festival - where more young emerging talent, from Wales and internationally - is to be found. When Womex came to Cardiff in 2013, only the second time it has ever come to the United Kingdom, it was ignored by the BBC outside of Wales apart from Radio 3.

A key issue seems to be that there are only two BBC Centres of Excellence for the arts in the UK, in London and Glasgow. There is a weekly arts programme on BBC Radio Wales. But there is almost no coverage beyond Wales (and little enough within it) of anything new in the arts in Wales: of popular culture - for example, what Welsh actors are doing, who is up and coming; of Welsh film; of the explosion of Welsh drama other than the annual arts review of the year; or of contemporary Welsh art. Without an arts Centre of Excellence in Wales, the broadcasting of Welsh arts lacks the shape and direction that curation would bring.

Huw Edwards and Eddie Butler have both presented strong historical series on the history of Wales. Of these only Huw Edwards' recent The Story of Wales has been shown on Network. The culture and history of Wales itself is, then, almost invisible on the BBC, whether within Wales or across the UK. How can Wales have a voice, when - unlike Scotland and London - its languages, culture and history does not have equity of voice within the organisation of the BBC. Northern Ireland and many English regions might say the same. Our culture IS our voice.

And cultural life across the UK is impoverished by its lack of the different perspectives that come with the Welsh language, which is almost never heard on the BBC network. This crucial dimension of the public and cultural life of Wales is separated from the rest of the UK. Wales is represented by the BBC in London not as a dual language nation, but (quite

wrongly) as a nation where the languages exist entirely separately, as if in a kind of cultural apartheid. 'Hinterland', which was jointly funded by S4C, BBC Wales and BBC4, was the exception that proved the rule. Ironically, it was in a niche, foreign language noir genre, with a subtext of 'strange and not us'.

The vagaries of the BBC funding system also sometimes mitigates against wider exposure of Welsh culture. But they can also sometimes work in favour of Wales. The BBC's network coverage of the hundredth anniversary this year of Dylan Thomas's birth has been huge success. I was at Laugharne Castle for the recording of the special outside broadcast edition of The Verb during an extraordinarily successful weekend of Dylan Thomas coverage at the Laugharne Festival.

But against this was the apparent slowness of BBC Network TV to commit to a programme around Amgueddfa Cymru's exhibition of Peter Blake's extraordinary body 160 works, created over 30 years, illustrating Under Milk Wood. It is hard to believe that, if this exhibition had been shown at the V&A or the Tate in London, rather than Wales, it would have been regarded so cautiously. Was this because BBC Network is incentivised to not fund co-productions with BBC Wales in advance of production but rather wait to hear of their success? Whose responsibility is it to fund high quality productions such as Owen Sheers' film Dylan Thomas: a Poet's Guide? BBC Network should support BBC Wales from the outset to ensure it is at least considered for broadcast across the UK.

Tania Bruguera 'Tatlin's Whisper' Artes Mundi 5 2012. Photo Courtesy of Wales news Service

Let's compare the London media's coverage of Artes Mundi and the Turner Prize. Artes Mundi is a biennial international contemporary art competition on the theme of the human condition, with a first prize worth £40,000, the largest art prize in the UK and one of the most significant in the world. The Turner Prize you know.

In 2012 the Turner Prize and Artes Mundi opened within a few days of each other. Many independent observers acknowledged that Artes Mundi was a far more significant show than the Turner Prize, which has become tired and has lost its power to shock.

Yet, so far as I am aware, Artes Mundi has never in its 12 years of life had coverage on BBC Network. In this, the BBC was typical of the London media as a whole. We could get international arts correspondents to come from all over the globe. But we could not get the BBC arts journalists in London to travel for just two hours over to Cardiff, to see it, let alone cover it. This does not appear to be the result an impartial judgment of the quality of the exhibition.

Is this because the BBC lacks a truly international arts perspective? I cannot believe that. Is it because the Tate's PR machine is so powerful and its networks with the BBC in London are so close? One hopes that cannot be true. Then what is it?

The BBC's coverage of the 2014 Turner Prize has already begun, including a long piece on the Today Programme, months before it opens. It will be interesting to see how much coverage the 2014 Artes Mundi receives.

It often seems to those of us working in the arts outside London that 'quality' and 'excellence' are defined by a London sensibility and cultural assumptions, and that arts events across the rest of the UK are supported if - like the Hay Festival - they predominantly present a world with which London is familiar. The world may be diverse and international but it may only be seen through a London cultural prism, with all its assumptions and values.

It is for this reason that some film-makers in Wales have come to believe that there is no point in pitching to London arts programme makers, and put their films directly onto their own websites.

The world is more various than we think.

The BBC is aware of the problem of inequity of its coverage. In 2007, only 7.8% of BBC Network news stories about the arts related to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. By 2009/10 this had risen to 14%[5], but it is understood that the percentage has subsequently fallen again since then.

Tony Hall's vision for arts development at the BBC

Over recent months, Tony Hall has made clear his commitment to the arts, saying, "I am really keen to put the arts up there on the BBC's agenda". This is very welcome, particularly if it is to support arts developed in the nations and regions outside London.

The details issued by the BBC of its future UK partner institutions, and the members of its new group of UK creative leaders, suggest they will be very London-dominated. Perhaps the full lists will reassure us.

When Tony Hall delivered a speech at the Pierhead Building in Cardiff on 1 April this year, he was refreshingly frank, acknowledging that "aspects of Welsh life are not sufficiently captured by the BBC's television output" and that despite "BBC Wales' very real success,

[5] Four Nations Impartiality Review Follow-up: An analysis of reporting devolution' – Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, Cardiff University – March 2010: http://cardiff.ac.uk/jomec/research/researchgroups/journalismstudies/fundedprojects/followupaccuracyandimpartiality.html

we must acknowledge that English language programming from and for Wales has been in decline for almost a decade".

He added that "comedy, entertainment and culture are not sufficiently captured through our English language television output".

One of his parting questions was as follows:

“Just imagine for a moment Wales without the BBC.

“Where would a nation find its voice in both its languages, where would it be able to explore its identity, its geography, its people? How would a nation come together to share its common heritage? Or debate its shared challenges? Or celebrate its national successes?”

We must be honest here, and acknowledge - without diminishing the BBC's value - that Wales did all this before the BBC came into being. Also that it is BBC Wales, in many ways despite, rather than supported, by Network BBC, that makes this contribution today.

The Welsh Assembly's Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler, has challenged the BBC and other UK media outlets on what she believes to be the democratic deficit in the media's reporting of public policy approaches in Wales to Welsh audiences and, one might add, to UK audiences as well.

Identity and Culture

I was saddened by how relatively little coverage there was earlier this year on the death of Richard Hoggart. He was, with Raymond Williams, one of the greatest of our writers and thinkers on culture of this last century. He still has much to say to us today.

Ours is a deeply unequal society, and getting more so.

The research of the Sutton Trust reveals how hard it is for children and young people living in poverty, and with parents who did not themselves succeed in education, to get to Russell Group Universities, and to achieve senior positions in journalism, politics, and the judiciary. Our professions are dominated by people from private schools and Oxbridge.

It is hardly surprising, then, that these are the cultural norms that dominate in the British establishment, including the media, including the BBC. This is not the fault of the individuals concerned. But the challenge for the BBC as an organisation is to transcend this cultural bias in every aspect of its work.

Under the Devolution settlement, culture was devolved, with the exception of regulation and funding of broadcasting, which remains under the control of the English Department of a Culture, Media and Sport. Devolution has proved to be a dynamic and unstable process. Public opinion in Scotland and Wales has moved massively since 1997 towards a greater sense of separate identity.

Even if it wins the vote on Scottish independence, London has failed to hold on to the hearts and minds of a substantial minority of its citizens in the second largest nation in the Union. By offering no credible alternative to address the sources of discontent, it has lost the intellectual and cultural argument. A recent article in the Guardian examined how the BBC was reporting on the referendum, and stated that even a no vote should challenge the BBC to ‘examine afresh how successfully it relates to constituent parts of the UK – and whether a more flexible, less monolithic notion of the future of the corporation ought to be embraced.’

The director Sir Richard Eyre, who around the time of Devolution in the 1990s was a governor of the BBC, has put it more strongly. Quoted in the same Guardian article, he recalled, "[The DG] John Birt's thesis was that the BBC was a crucial binding agent in making Great Britain great. My view - I'd lived in Scotland for six years - was that it was the opposite. I think it's incredibly divisive and you only have to spend a bit of time in Scotland to realise that the BBC is regarded as English broadcasting and those feelings run very, very deep".

For all its great qualities, and the scale of public support I doubt if, in some limited but important ways, the impartiality of the BBC today is of a kind that the people of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would create for themselves, given a free choice. And identity through arts and culture is a clear example of that.

For all the very welcome distribution of production to Salford, Cardiff and elsewhere, the BBC Network has not kept pace with the speed of the cultural shifts in the English regions and devolved nations. Culturally, it still feels very old English, very London. Why is the BBC so determined to hang on to John Birt's false sense of Great Britishness, so alienating to a growing minority of its viewers and listeners?

The political debates and intellectual discourses that I hear daily in Wales scarcely ever appear on the BBC Network. London is the 'we' of the BBC. The 'your region' of the BBC is, it seems, the rest of us. And London, in the English regions as well as the nations, is no longer a shiny brand. After the Crash, through which the wealthier parts of London appeared to pass unscathed, and with ever increasing wealth and power, public opinion has begun to change. To many, the London political, economic and cultural establishments appear to have become a floating world, out of touch with realities in the rest of the United Kingdom.

The risk for the BBC, in its coverage of arts and culture, is that it will be seen to be part of the problem. Those who live outside London and the South East can legitimately ask: do you any more truly reflect our values, our experiences and our political aspirations? This question of culture and values is, potentially, a far bigger question than where a programme is recorded. And it is one the BBC seems to be struggling to grasp.

Solutions

First, let's say that Wales and other nations and regions need to be better at pitching to the BBC. There is self-censorship, a belief that they won't commission it so why bother? But inevitably, commissioners commission what they know and who they know. So, in addition, I suggest that the BBC might:

i) Establish Centres of Excellence for the arts in Wales and Northern Ireland. I believe this is our right, not an option, following the Devolution settlement.

ii) Create mechanisms that empower BBC Wales and BBC Northern Ireland to commission far more arts programming, for their nations and the Network. The present arrangements are not fair and unless the BBC can reform itself then quotas are needed.

iii) Create devolved governance bodies through the BBC Trust for Wales (as proposed by the Silk Commission), Scotland and Northern Ireland. Again, this should be our right.

iv) Develop separate Charter Agreements for the devolved nations, as extensions of the overall BBC Charter, and alongside this, mechanisms for greater accountability for the English regions. If the Arts Lottery can be completely devolved, then this is the least that could be done for broadcasting.

v) Make a clearer separation between BBC England and BBC Network. Following Devolution, England is one of the four devolved nations, and should be treated as such.

vi) Give teeth to impartiality. It cannot be a justification for reinforcing inequality – geographical, educational, economic, political, and class. Is the BBC impartial to social injustice? Is the BBC impartial to the barriers to employment in journalism?

vii) Recognise that speakers of Welsh and other minority languages have a right to be heard in their own first language on UK Network media.

viii) Consistently monitor and publish data on the BBC's performance in achieving impartiality in its coverage of the nations and English regions, including coverage of the arts to ensure informed policy-making and public accountability and debate.

ix) Change the organisational culture that creates barriers to the more diverse and representative content we all need.

x) Our nation's share of the BBC Network budget should be devolved to Wales in full.

Tony Hall asked us to imagine a Wales without the BBC. It is a fair question and deserves an answer.

Tony Hall's question, by implication, asked us to accept the status quo or imagine nothing. We don't want 'nothing', but not do we want the status quo. We want 'different'.

It is hard to imagine a Wales without the BBC. But we can all imagine a Wales – and other nations and regions of the United Kingdom - with a BBC that is not dominated by London, and that better reflects the diversity of our arts and culture, our values and our debates.

In response I also ask you to imagine a BBC without Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland as well as the regions of England. We have existed long before the BBC was created, and it is the BBC that is diminished when its vision of culture and the arts is not sufficiently diverse and inclusive, which it certainly is not at the moment.

How would the BBC find its voice without Dylan Thomas, but also without Dafydd ap Gwilym, Caradog Pritchard and RS Thomas? The languages, arts and cultures of the Celtic nations, as well as those of recent migrants, are worlds of thought and experience, beyond words and images, that are profoundly different, and can enrich us all.

As T S Eliot said of the poetry of Hugh McDiarmid, "Many things can be expressed in Scots that cannot be expressed in English." The same applies equally to the Celtic languages, and the world languages in Britain today.

Without the BBC in our nations and regions, there was still music at the farm of the White Rock (David Owen, John Ceiriog Hughes).

Without the BBC "the soul will still exceed its circumstances" and there will still be many places across the UK where "no glass was ever raised to toast the Queen" (Seamus Heaney).

Without the BBC, the legacy of the past will still "culminate inexorably" (RS Thomas).

Yes, and with - or without - the BBC still "we will sit on that couch watching mind-numbing, spirit-crushing game shows" (Irvine Welsh).

It is - if I may say this - sometimes possible for broadcasters to forget the cultural importance of geography and place. To imagine that cultural content, like the products of neo-liberal capitalism, is weightless and can be produced anywhere (but preferably London).

Without us - we who are outside London - not just the BBC but democracy itself will suffer, if we continue down the road we are on. The nations and regions of the UK need the BBC to give us equality and parity of respect, and to free us to represent ourselves, in our own places and across the nations within the UK and abroad. We want to commission London, not London commission us. Why do we accept such inequity without protest?

By freeing us, the BBC will itself be made free.

As Hugh McDiarmid said, "you cannot light a match on a crumbling wall".

Let's build a new and more solid one.

David Anderson, July 2014