Debating the Future of Public Service Media – An Online Citizens' Assembly

Summary of Diversity-Related Discussions

November 2020

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Executive summary

In this report, we describe how participants in the Online Citizens' Assembly on the future of public service media viewed diversity as a policy value, the performance of public service broadcasters in relation to diversity, and the barriers to achieving diversity. In the main body of the report, we focus on the richness of the discussions and provide multiple quotes to illustrate the points made. This executive summary provides a more concise overview of the points being made in the discussions, which should help readers navigate the detail in the main sections.

The approach we took to engaging participants in these discussions was based on their role as citizens rather than consumers. We wanted them to reflect on future of public service broadcasting not only in terms of their individual preferences, but also from a collective perspective, in terms of its value to society, and in the context of public service broadcasting's public policy remit. As the following quote illustrates, our participants really valued the opportunity to act as citizens. They felt that their perspectives were important, noted that such opportunities were few and far between and considered how their discussions might indicate a much richer conversation to be had, across a wider public domain.

> **P1G2:** I mean, how much does this sort of thing take place? I mean, this is quite, it's very useful discussion, isn't it and debate, and it's nothing that I've been involved in before. So this is really fascinating. And I wonder how much input people do have in discussing what we're discussing and how much that does really inform because we're a very, very small group, aren't we? So how much else could there be?

Their opinions about diversity in public service broadcasting are offered in this context. It is worth noting that the discussions took place shortly after the murder of George Floyd in the United States (May 2020), and the consequent high profile of the Black Lives Matter movement globally and in the UK. However, as the following report shows, participants discussed diversity in very broad, but also UK-specific terms, suggesting that their opinions and concerns are no flash-in-the-plan in response to a horrific media event, but are based on a broader understanding of the value of diversity to contemporary society.

Diversity was clearly an important theme and value for the participants in the citizens' assembly. The term was not pre-defined for participants, which meant it was articulated in different ways. Diversity was associated most often with the protected characteristics, such as ethnicity, disability, gender, race, and sexual orientation. But it also covered other aspects of difference that mean groups are disadvantaged or under-represented, such as class, health, and region.

The discussions revealed how diversity is related to many other aspects of both public service delivery and audience engagement with PSBs. Rather than being an 'add-on' to the broad PSB remit of inform, educate, and entertain, participants' comments suggest that diversity is fundamental to being able to deliver on all three of these areas.

Diversity was connected to opportunities for PSBs to broadcast content that could educate audiences about different lives and experiences within the UK (for example, those of marginalised communities or different areas of the UK), as well as different communities and cultures across the world. Educating audiences was thus implicitly associated with broadening their perspectives of their own society as well as the broader global environment. Related to education, diversity on-screen was seen as an important way to normalise difference and fight stigma. For this to happen, diversity needed to be embedded across all types of programming, and not just treated as a 'niche' interest.

Some participants wanted to see more diversity on-screen because they felt it would better reflect British identity and the true nature of contemporary British society – although one participant felt that diversity was a disturbance to mainstream viewing and should be kept as a niche interest. Associating diversity with British identity did not mean that there was agreement about what being 'British' meant – but participants did agree that representing a range of ways of being British, through diversity, was important.

As well as diversity on-screen, participants emphasised the importance of diversity off-screen, in PSB institutions and in production industries. Diversity in creative roles was seen as a way to ensure that there would be more, and more authentic, representations of diversity on-screen. Importantly, being transparent about efforts to increase diversity, and progress made, was crucial to both building trust in PSBs, as well as for encouraging diverse applicants in the long term.

The participants were measured and cautious in their view of how successfully diversity is currently represented in public service media. They pointed out that the mere presence of diverse groups on-screen was not viewed as sufficient to achieving the kind of diversity that would enable the positive outcomes they described. Participants pointed out that when diversity is instrumentalised as a way to appeal to a market, or positioned as a niche rather than a mainstream interest, its value was more limited. For example, while niche programming was one way of ensuring diversity was included on-screen, it also made it more difficult to reach a wider audience, and so opportunities to for informing and educating were missed. In mainstream programming, there was a danger of 'diverse' identities being persistently represented in stereotypical ways, which did little to fight stigma or challenge preconceptions. And when diversity was simply a mechanism for branding, it was perceived to be inconsistent, short-term and opportunistic, rather than representing a more deep-seated change.

Overall, the participant discussions summarised in this report show that diversity is perceived by them to be indispensable to realising the public policy remit of public service broadcasting. Aside from generating powerful, high-quality and entertaining content, diversity enables public service broadcasters to inform and educate audiences about differences in society at a local, national and global level, reducing stigma and expanding audience horizons. These kinds of outcome were highly valued by the vast majority of our participants, who were enthusiastic both in pointing out not only barriers to achieving them, but also opportunities for improvement.

Part 1: Diversity and why it matters

A number of participants across our groups stressed the importance of seeing a more diverse range of groups on screen. As one participant from Group 5 summed up:

> **P3G5:** We mentioned it the other day— representation of other communities. You know, I'm tired of seeing middle class educated English people on TV. I want to see, you know - EastEnders is all right - I mean, you see some of the working class - But, no, I want to see different communities.

Various aspects of diversity were mentioned as significant by participants in the citizens' forum. Diversity was associated with protected characteristics, such as age, ethnicity, disability, gender, race, and sexuality, as well as other aspects of difference that might mean groups are not well represented, such as class, health, and region. The following conversation in group 4 illustrates the range of perspectives being considered:

> **P4G4:** There's a lot of talk about diversity and part of me says, 'Well, hang on a minute. This is reality of the population,' you know?
>
> **P2G4:** Diversity can be age as well, though.
>
> **P1G4:** There's also different factors, yeah.
>
> **P2G4:** And, and different sort of backgrounds, socio-economic status, that kind of thing. You know, I know I know it. A lot of people think diversity gender, like the gender thing, but why not, you know, mix it up other ways, many other ways, in fact, so…
>
> **P1G4:** Yeah, I think that class needs to be considered.
>
> **P2G4:** Very much so, actually.
>
> **P3G4:** I think definitely, yeah.
>
> **P2G4:** Especially after Brexit.

Participants complicated the simplistic idea that the 'presence' of different groups equated to achieving diversity of identities on-screen. Diversity is not only about who is seen, but *how* they are seen. Participants noted how different groups are not always portrayed positively. Stereotypes may dominate, particularly in the mainstream, and such representations may be harmful:

> **P3G8:** I think, for instance, the Afro- Caribbean part of it is always either drug-related or violence-related. I think you never see programs where it's going through the culture, you know? West African culture or West Indies culture, East African culture—It's always the bad side, I think.

P1G8: Or when that positive side does get portrayed it gets sort of put into the sort of lesser seen parts. Like it will be, sort of be something that ends up on BBC Four or something like that.

Diversity is not always authentically portrayed, and can be 'westernized', as this participant points out:

P5G8: [T]he food that I see on TV is not genuine Indian food. It's what, the kind of stuff that you would see in a restaurant. It's not the stuff that my grandmother would have made or, like, what my family in India would make. So it's always a westernized approach I always feel with the food part.

The mere presence of different groups in some programming can seem inauthentic and 'tokenistic':

P2G7. It feels, in some cases, very obvious and token. It feels like it's ingenuine and it's just for the sake of it, which diminishes the quality of the shows when it's obvious.

P1G4: I think I saw a trailer for a BBC program that was set kind of in the rural North of England and I was thinking like, 'Okay, yeah, this is like, a white community, all the characters are a certain way.' And towards the end, like they had a black character. And it's like, that just seems like they've put it in for the sake of having that representation.

Relatedly, some participants argued that it mattered *where* diverse identities were seen, and that diversity in high-profile on-screen locations was important:

P2G4: The point about diversify, diversifying their programs to sort of accommodate the changes in the population—Again, going back to what I said earlier about understanding the audience, I suppose it's not… Actually just thinking about it, it's clear that they're doing that but some stuff is sort of in the background and iPlayer and it's not at the forefront when you might expect it to be, so then that's probably an issue. They need to look not just at what programs they're creating, it's how they're, they're showcasing that work.

P2G8: I think one of the big, certainly one of the big issues now is who's, who's on the platform, you know? People of color are not well represented as, you know, kind of public personalities, broadcasters and I think that's part of diversity, of course, it's not just who's voice is heard but who is… who is reporting this. And I think that's a massive gap in pretty much all public broadcasters in many countries. It's who, who was there as the person reporting on or covering a certain topic or, or issue. Diversity is important from that perspective.

When on-screen diversity is represented well, participants described the value it can have. As well as being entertaining, it can also inform and educate audiences by exposing them to new experiences:

> **P1G7:** […] So just to go back to the like, an example of like, I May Destroy You was very focused on things like such as like, like sexual assaults and those sorts of traumas I didn't think comfortable to watch at all, but I think it was, it's an, it was in the discomfort that the education was and the […] the actual value of the show was.

> **P1G2:** I quite like the fact that I've got my sort of my step, habit tool programs that I watch, but there's quite a wide range of other things available to me as well. I really like the balance of that, um, I like finding new things but also having more things that I am used to

As these comments suggest, diversity can be potentially challenging and discomforting. However, diversity has the capacity to raise awareness and challenge stigmas, which is something our participants clearly value when reflecting back on their media use:

> **P4G7:** So I guess I vote, like, say, see people with, like, more, like, disabilities more on TV— being more reflective. It can be diversity in terms of say different accents, as well like— Just basically more fair representation of communities in the UK. And basically that, I vote, like, to fight stigmas, […] And you'll fight that by showing the difference more, in terms of the representation.

> **P6G7:** So I remember, about 10 years ago, there was a CBBC presenter and she only had one arm. And she faced a terrible backlash, saying that she's frightening the children and she shouldn't, she shouldn't show—That she shouldn't be on children's programs and stuff, that she's scare, that she's scaring the children and stuff. And it wasn't really, it wasn't the case. I mean, there were just parents not used to seeing someone different. And that helped, like I guess, fight stigma, because the BBC stayed strong. They said, we're not getting rid of her, you know, she's staying on and she's—I think she worked there for about five years or something. So eventually, like, she won people's trust, if you like, or helped fight the stigma.

> **P3G5:** Yeah, so anyway, I remember in the 80s, I think it was, there was an episode in EastEnders—Actually a storyline in EastEnders about AIDS. And that was difficult to watch as a family because it was, you know, kind of a taboo subject at that time. It's good that they're showing all these things but, I mean, you know—And it's good that it's not just in like, you know, like a, you know, an educational sense. It's in a soap or it's in a drama.

Participants stressed the importance of diversity off-screen as well as on on-screen. Diversity behind the scenes was important for some participants as a way of showing people from minoritized groups that they can be part of the industry:

P4G7 But I guess it's similar to [P5G7]'s point about if there's not enough people that behind the scenes and being reflective, it feels very, it feels like a difficult thing to, to sort of get into. Because there's not enough in it already. I mean, it's like a vicious sort of cycle where if you don't see anyone there, you don't want to go there, in a way. Or you feel, you know, you'll be out of place if you if you try to apply them or something.

For some, behind-the-scenes industries were simply another site where diversity should be present. But participant discussions also connected diversity on-screen with the presence of diversity off-screen. In other words, ensuring diverse staff in production meant that diversity on screen was more likely to occur, especially better representations of diversity, particularly when a wider range of groups were involved in more creative roles as directors and writers:

P5G7: I think it's also important to have, make sure that they're kind of employing people behind the scenes who also diverse. So not just in front of the screens but make sure the directors and the writers and I think quite often, I hear that actually, you know, behind the scenes in most of these stories there aren't, there isn't enough diversity.

P3G1: Years ago, majority of the writing was done by mainly, the mainly… population was white, so the majority was white. And you had stuff like, Love Thy Neighbor, [unintelligible], Mind Your Language, and they had to kind of work with the cast who was ethnic then. Now about 40-50 years later, we've got through the years, people of ethnic origin who actually writing their own scripts and producing their own programs so you get more authenticity now with more of the programming. And they've been brought up here so they've got the British learning and their own ethnic views. And the programs are becoming more authentic now. Like, you look back at stuff like Mind Your Language, and compare that to some stuff now and you can see the difference.

P3G4: The reason why it's become tokenistic is because they've never really, you know, in the past, let Black or Asian talent flourish. So that's why, you know, all of a sudden, they realize, … even for instance, you know, there's a debate show, it discusses multiculturalism and discusses, you know, the ethnic communities around the UK. But they interestingly found out that the whole production team alongside the presenter were all white. We wouldn't have, we wouldn't need to have this silly tokenistic line if the, you know, the BBC from the onset said, 'Look, you're a very talented person. Let's get you on board.'

Finally, diversity was also recognized as an important feature of improving the management, culture, and effective governance of broadcasting organizations. As one participant argues:

P5G5: And I think increasing diversity would increase sort of social mobility, um, within the institution and decrease like nepotism and that would tackle the culture of like protecting sort of the old boys and the institution, um, which is how we get

situations like Jimmy Savile and, like, pay inequality. Because there's so much just people protecting each other and, like, people being grandfathered in and stuff like that. So diversity would also like help to solve the problem in the first place.

Being transparent about how genuine accessibility and diversity is fostered by PSBs was viewed by some participants as an important part of broadcasters gaining the trust of the diverse public it serves:

> **P4G7.** That's all part of, I think, a public broadcaster in terms of you see the production side and the business side, if you like, and also you see, like, the actual content, in terms of transparency. How did they select actors? What, how did they interview people for jobs and is there like a quota system, for instance, or is it—I think, there's something called is it open, open selection or something? […] Positive discrimination, maybe, I think its called. Okay? So that all would come under, like transparency and trust, because I guess, half the, half the battle in a way of trust is not knowing what's going on. So if you don't know what's going on behind the scenes, then you're less likely to trust it, the public broadcasting. […] So I think as you start to fix those things with accessibility and diversity, then slowly more trust will be gained.

> **P1G5:** Yeah, make it easy for people to track those kind of processes, […] for example, we talked about, you know, diversity inclusion. I think the reports that are on the BBC website are pretty much outdated. So I wanted to see more around, you know, what they could - could they promise in a way that could, could even be regulated in a way, saying, you know, making it accessible for people to understand, you know, using applications or whatever they are, so that they would know. Instantly easier to find, more transparency kind of thing.

> **P5G4:** I think perhaps, regulators need to get involved with trying to sort of increase diversity and inclusion. And so I think there are some steps you can take would be perhaps trying to get broadcasters to provide their kind of data on the different kinds of diversity metrics and working with diversity panels.

In the absence of transparency about diversity in these industries, on-screen diversity was taken by some participants as a tentative indicator of how diverse a public service broadcaster might be more generally.

Part 2: Diversity and the public service broadcasters

Diversity of content was understood to be an important part of the public service remit to appeal to a broad audience, as this conversation in group 2 illustrates.

> **P5G2:** it caters to like every… every sort of group, I guess. There's a wide range of people that it can cater towards.

> **P6G2:** ultimately, your show, any show that BBC produces should be diverse in its range of views, anyway, I think. I don't think, I'm sure they do very slightly, but I don't think they have a set out with an agenda to kind of turn someone one way or another. So most, for the most part, most of their like interviews or documentaries are objective. So you are getting a range of perspectives, I believe

> **P5G2:** I think it should have kind of an educational role, and be different from other stations and providers in that they also offer like new things and new programs and new perspective for people, perspectives to people. So that's moving away from the personalization and that sort of thing, to being more, um, diverse, I guess.

There is a general recognition that PSBs are trying to improve in relation to diversity and are more conscious of their representations than in the past, even if they are not succeeding in achieving diversity adequately:

> **P3G7:** I think that public service is trying. I don't think it really aligns with what I think diversity should look like, but I guess it's a work in progress.

> **P7G1:** And I think when it comes to representation of different cultures and people, I think it's quite clear that it has, it has improved over the years but I'm not sure to go as far as saying it is… The contents that I watched now is well, on the BBC, for example, is diverse. But, I mean, it is better than say, […] maybe 10 years ago

In some of these discussions, diversity was positioned as 'niche interests', as well as being a part of a more risk-oriented or cutting-edge brand identity. The market demand for diversity is at the forefront of these kinds of discussions, alongside the usefulness of diverse content as a means of identifying (with) different channels. Levels of diversity are not expected to be the same across all channels – and diversity in public service broadcasting is understood as something that is distributed across providers, rather than being specific to one or two.

> **P4G8:** Channel 4 puts more, um, minority interest programming on, whereas for me ITV One is, has a broader base, has a broad a demographic as possible. Um, and some of the shows on Channel 4 tend to be a bit more sort of cutting, cutting edge. And then, um, but there again with the BBC then its audience is sort of segmented with BBC One just going for the broader demographic, BBC Two slightly more niche interests, BBC Four the, uh. highbrow music, highbrow culture, um, our literature, history, um, and then BBC Three which is now just purely digital, um, the more… younger demographic and also, um, the sort of slightly extreme minority, as in sort of the particular, very particular religious groups

Because some PSB channels are more associated with these kinds of challenging content than others, they are also associated with opportunities to learn about non-mainstream perspectives and broaden understanding. These outcomes were less associated with what participants sometimes described as 'mainstream' BBC channels.

> **P2G2:** I was kind of glad of the opportunity to see those things—To kind of just see stuff I wouldn't normally see on issues that weren't necessarily issues I would experience in my life. And I felt like, rightly or wrongly, I felt like that was a Channel 4 thing, rather than a BBC thing. I felt like BBC was trying to cater to the majority, more than Channel 4, which was trying to sort of poke and provoke people into thinking about different things. So I think there is a definitely a really important purpose for them to show everyone things they might not necessarily see and I enjoy that—But from an entertainment point of view and from just thinking about society point of view.

Addressing diversity in response to markets and audience demand could lead to its instrumentalization. Some participants noted how diversity can be used to appear 'ground-breaking' or grab attention as a way of building a profile for broadcasters, but is not always dealt with in a sustained way. The following conversation echoes the suspicion of tokenism that was noted above:

> **P2G7.** It comes, I think it comes across as ground-breaking because it was new and novel. It was this one thing that they got attention for perhaps, and has it—I don't know about Channel 4 but it doesn't seem to be something that consistently lasts. It seems to be a kind of one off, grab people in as an idea, as a hook that just sounds and it's this... there hasn't been a great increase in representation for minorities such as that. […]

> **P1G7**. […] So for example, we had like Mental Health Week or Black History Month and these things are sort of short term... things to recognize different types of people. But it might be nicer if it were something that was ongoing, so maybe on a soap there was somebody who had mental health issues throughout, it wasn't just a focus week, or there wasn't a Black family that came for a period of time—They were on it for a longer time. Just, and then perhaps just seeing that diversity throughout—in the news, behind the scenes—if it was something else consistent it wouldn't be... So, for example, [P4G7] said with the lady with the one arm—Had it been something that was consist, consistently on TV it wouldn't be seen as so different. So if it was shown in all aspects, so if even if it was the weather lady, seen everywhere.[…]

Niche programming, catering to specific audiences, also had other limitations. As the following exchange in Group 8 illustrates, participants pointed out that within niche areas there can be a *lack of* diversity, which means a loss of education opportunities.

P4G8: Even on BBC Four, when you have the sort of late night music programs, there's lots of American music and different strands of British pop but I haven't seen, I dunno, Ethiopian jazz or, or just some of the sort of different or Indonesian gamelan playing or some of the other musical traditions I'd actually be really interested to see. And then, like, even with the food culture we'll occasionally get sort of different strands of Indian food but I've never seen a program on West African food. And I would like to see one because when I, you know, join into eating the street food, so—'

[...]

P3G8 Yeah, the nearest, the nearest we get, I'll say, maybe the actual travel programs, for instance, Simon Reeve, he will go through the whole of Africa, and then you'll see a bit of the culture. That's the nearest we get to see, I think.

Some participants felt that niche programming could lead to inaccessibility, or poor accessibility – which ultimately reduces both inclusivity and the range of diverse identities that can be seen on-screen, and suggested to participants that diversity was a lower priority for broadcasters because it was not included in mainstream programming. At the same time, opportunities for introducing new content to a wider audience, educating and informing them about different perspectives and reducing stigma, are potentially missed.

P5G8: I'm Indian and so something that my parents do look out for are if we ever see the odd Bollywood show on your mainstream channels and I was just saying, like, my experiences, like, growing up with my parents you'd always, you would see them if, maybe once in a blue moon on something like Channel 4, but they'd always be at weird times like at three in the morning so on the odd occasion where they do show maybe something diverse in popular culture or film, *it's never on the times where you would expect most people to be watching TV, like after dinner in the afternoon or something. So I find that's actually quite a shame*.'

P6G2: I find BBC 3 has—BBC 3, iPlayer—have a very broad offering of informative television shows. They've got quite a lengthy catalogue. So if you had a go and—Even like now they've got a documentary on, you know, Britain after George Floyd, you know, and that's just a documentary which has come out relatively soon. I'm sure it's, you know, presenting opinions and perspectives from different people. [...] So yeah, I find they do have very kind of informative TV shows—*But you've got to look for them, I suppose. They're not broadcast on BBC 1, not regularly anyway.*

P4G2: The thing to, to build diversity would be to just have them in generic programs, things that wouldn't necessarily focus on that ethnic group. So normally, if there's an ethnic group in a program, it will revolve around that ethnic group and their sort of differences—Kind of you see them as an alien to the rest of the community in a way. *If it's homogenized in a way, such that it's just normal to see them there, then then that idea of the alienation wouldn't… might not be so relevant.*

P3G5: I think the BBC's—I mean, okay, maybe not to focus just on BBC but—Okay, well, that's, let's start out with BBC. I mean, they do have a lot of diverse, *a lot of diversity, but, you know, a lot of that diversity is served on things like BBC 3, which is miles away*. You know, there was a great documentary on on the LGBT communities on BBC, BBC 3—It's online. Why isn't it on BBC 1? Not primetime? It's like, all of a sudden, you know, all these kind of like, you know, stuffy middle class people don't want to see, you know, gay kisses, or they don't want to see Black people or they want to see this or that. So the BBC could say, yeah, we are giving LGBT people 100 hours this month. It's all on BBC 3. Five people watch it. So yeah, I mean, you know, I don't know how its measured. I mean, I'm sure [INST1] can probably...

P5G5: Like [P3G5] pointed out, that it gets—*All the diverse stuff just seems to get relegated to BBC 3 which is becoming offensive in itself. It's like, it's like demotion.*

Part 3: Diversity and 'British' identity

In one group, there was a discussion about how diversity related to British identity, which was also recognised as part of a public service broadcast media – even if not everyone agreed with the idea of a 'British' identity. One participant suggested that even the idea of communicating a British identity was an outdated and challenging public service objective.

> **P4G4:** So one of the questions if you're going to be a public service broadcaster, there is a question of how do you represent the different perspectives and how you bring them forward. I also think there's a challenge with the, you know, multicultural Britain, that—How do you respect those different, how do you respect the different cultures while in a way being consistent with this idea of British culture? Because I'm not sure that there is British culture anymore and I'm not sure that it can be created the way that might have been, you know, envisaged 100 years ago.

On the other hand, some participants felt diversity is improving and increased diversity is what makes PSB 'British' – and this generated a complex discussion, worth quoting at length.

> **P2G2:** I think, I think the content is, is increasingly more British. It is increasingly more diverse and representative.

> **P6G2:** [It] is very difficult to I guess, you know, espouse the claim that we represent, like Britain —From, from whose perspective do you represent Britain? […] To be honest, I don't know who creates content, but are they reflective of modern-day Britain? Probably not. So yeah. I just find that very interesting with what's been going on lately. I think that we have very, very different, like, you know, different experiences, so essentially, an increase in diversity I can't like, you know, argue. But whether it's representative, I would say, it's not, in my opinion.

> **P2G2:** I think that the in terms of public service broadcasting British values, you know, they're very British, so long as what you mean by British cricket and Songs of Praise and tea and cake—That kind of thing. I think there's, they're perhaps playing catch up a little bit. Especially so on the BBC. I think there's this this a nice, cuddly safety around the Antiques Roadshow. It doesn't really challenge anyone, does it?

> **P6G2:** The trouble is you don't want to come in and say, 'those shows must go,' because those are still, you know, bastions of British culture, you know? Things like, things like Roadshow and, and that —I, my, my, my grandma from Jamaica loved all those very, you know, British, […] your wartime solider kind of stuff, you know. How much of that reflects our identity now? Not so much, I suppose. But, you know, it's, it's still part of the, I don't want to say historic British identity, but yeah. Essentially, I agree with what you're saying, [P2G2], it's a... I don't know, British is a tough one for me. It's just like, I have a very, I've had a different, I guess we've all had a different experience—There's no one Britain, you know, in my opinion, so the people who write the shows can, but you know, I said before, they probably are of a very similar demographic, and they probably all do have a very similar, you know, perception of

what Britain is. And that will be communicated, you know, via the content they put out and if someone is also from that demographic, then they will nod and say, yes, this is British, this is what we…You know, whereas if someone who isn't from the background or demographic might not agree, necessarily, that's what Britain represents. So, yeah, it's just—Yeah. It's very subjective, very subjective.

[...]

P4G2: But as you've seen with time go on, you know, there's far more accents represented, there's far more presenters from a variety of different ethnicities, you know, on Breakfast there's Naga Munchetty, and all these other kinds of people that are coming on. BBC 3, for example, shows a lot of sort of ethnically, sort of, orientated television, you know, with, with a lot of, a lot of these questions on documentaries on British values, as well. So I think that there are some sort of areas of the BBC—perhaps not on BBC 1—but, but on their online systems and whatnot. There are certain areas which have more of these pushy, sort of edgy kind of television.

Representing localities and regions was viewed as an important aspect of diversity and seen as something that purely commercial media were less likely to provide. In a globalized media market, where media companies seek global audiences and may not find it profitable to serve localities and regions, the policy requirement that the PSBs focus on the local and regional remains important and valued:

P2G7. Correct me if I'm wrong, but there are local and regional varieties of that maybe that would be something that the public broadcasters could use to their advantages. Everything's become so globalized. Sometimes it's nice just to see on a platform something more local to your county, to your region. Because there is BBC London, BBC [unintelligible], to the best of my knowledge, there are regional programming, and not that it's used anymore but it might be nice to actually— What is the news? How is things affecting the area I live and what I do? Rather than just the global world service that they seem to be expanding into, actually scaling it back and [unitelligible] it's the news that affects you in your community and that would allow it to target more representative and diverse for the area. It would be able to get representation because it is on a local level

P5G7. I think maybe there's an opportunity for, like [P2G7] said, more local content as well because maybe that's something that other, you know, Netflix can't necessarily provide local content to me

The attempt to appeal to a global audience might also limit diversity. Stereotypical notions of Britishness, as displayed, for example, in period dramas, might sell well abroad, but they limit opportunities for more diverse actors in the UK and do not represent Britain adequately:

P5G5: Because by virtue of our past being so popular on TV, we're excluding how, how we don't look like how we didn't in period dramas anymore and that takes,

takes opportunities away from people who might be immigrants, so or second or third or fourth generation immigrants.

P1G5: I think they've got key brands, like if, let's say, we talked about, you know, things in London, let's say, you know, like things that are more sort of local, that might, that might not be as attractive, because that that's the stereotype that we gave, you know, you know, that's how people see British is, unfortunately. So I think that might create a bit of a tension, really, you know, like, in terms of changing how people would see that because, you know, they're selling the Queen, they're selling like, the UK is very, you know, like posh. But is that real? Not really, so....

Exceptions were noted. For example, Micheala Coel's *I May Destroy You* provides a different, non-stereotypical representation of Britain, and one participant described how its global success had made them 'feel really proud'.

P5G5*:* Micheala Coel's I May Destroy You, though it was, I think, partnership of the BBC and HBO—everyone keeps referring to it as HBO but I think that's just because that international—but it's become like such a cultural moment and I spend a lot of time on the Internet and the Internet sort of dominated a lot by American voices and hearing them all talk about I May Destroy You which is so British, and it just made me feel really proud.

Part 4: Barriers to achieving diversity

A lack of diversity within the management of organizations and an unfavourable culture were viewed as potential barriers to diversity. Those responsible for running public service broadcasters are perceived as representing a particular demographic. They are, as one participant put it, 'very staid and very middle agey. Men in suits' (P4G5). The culture of some PSBs was described as 'conservative' (P4G5), and it was felt that diversity was not yet fully 'embedded' in the organizational culture, as another participant described: 'I think it's [diversity] not really embedded. I think it's getting there, but it's just not kind of embedded in the, in the culture of broadcasting' (P5G7).

Some participants argued that the PSBs 'can only be as diverse as their viewers allow'. The BBC, for example, is seen as having an older audience who may be resistant to diversity and change.

> **P6G7:** I think similar to what [P5G7] said, I just, I think, based on the viewers of that channel, they, they can only be as diverse as their viewers allow. [...] Channel 4 has a much younger audience so they're able to do, for example, if they have Hollyoaks, they're more, they're, they're able to do more LGBTQ things whereas BBC may have that elder generation who may not want to see that, so may get more complaints if they were to produce a lot more of that content. So it kind of varies dependent on who watches.

This position was exemplified by an exchange between participants in group 2, where one participant felt strongly that there was too much diversity, alienating the 'mainstream' viewer, obscuring their voices and drawing excessive attention to minority perspectives.

> **P3G2:** whilst I agree about diversity, I think there's an over-enthusiasm which is alienating vast swathes of population and I don't quite get that. Or maybe they are not bothered about alienating the vast majority of people in this country. So that's one serious point. And the diversity issue should be dealt with, as it is through Channel 4, for example, and one or two the other channels, but not this overemphasis on it. Should be a small 'd' not a big 'd' in capital... [...] it's really this over-emphasis and over-enthusiasm, about, you know, sort of, diversity and it is alienating vast, I think vast numbers, similar to the Brexit issue, the way that the BBC carried on, throughout with that, we had three or four years of, you know, project fear, if you like, and they, they wouldn't let it go and they're still struggling to let that particular issue go. But they're kind of championing in this utopian kind of diverse, etc. whilst they are alienating the vast bulk of their audience, I would think. [...] I agree with treating people fairly and equally, etc, etc. but sometimes when things are rammed down people's throats, it then becomes a little bit unpalatable. And it's likely to cause more resentment than it does cause good and positive thinking. So [it] just needs to be toned down a bit, I think. [...] let sort of the other channels, like Channel 4, deal with diversity, perhaps. [It is] more about standards and quality shows and about the quality, quality of the programming and presenters, etc., as opposed to having this sort of continual commotion of diversity.

In one group, diversity was discussed as being demographically representative, but the participants also recognised that this approach could be problematic.

> **P3G1:** I don't quite know how you deal with that given UK has become more and more diverse over time so how do you manage to make sure that you don't miss out something, for example? You know, again, there's only so many hours in the day and there's only so much programming you can provide.

Participants reflected on how opportunities for diverse actors might be limited in the UK and how the global market can present an additional problem for retaining talent, including diverse talent and content, because of the power of global behemoths such as Netflix and Amazon.

> **P3G5:** Idris, Idris Elba, for example, is a great example. He appeared in Luther, but he only appeared on Luther after he went to America to appear in The Wire. And now he's big in the UK. Yeah, no, I agree that's, that's a good point. I agree with 100%.

> **P3G7:** There's many factors or many things that it's [PSB] fighting against. I mean, like even if we talk about Fleabag, the writer Fleabag she will get poached by Netflix or Amazon, and BBC won't be able to compete with that. So even as they are trying they are fighting a losing battle.