This dissertation is about the institution of public service television as it is enacted in Sweden at the beginning of the 21st century. Public service broadcasting – first radio, then TV – was introduced as a solution to the problems that arose at the beginning of the 20th century, namely how to control and organise the new broadcasting technology. Almost 100 years later public service TV is still around even though technological developments have made many of these problems obsolete. What problems is it perceived to solve in the media landscape of today?

This study investigates collaborative productions of public service TV programming that involve the Swedish public broadcaster SVT, commercial production companies and additional financers. The empirical material is generated through an extensive study of five collaboratively produced TV programmes. The theoretical inspiration for the study comes from institutional theory and recent developments of the concept institutional work. By conceptualizing public service TV as an institution, and by drawing on the old but often neglected understanding that institutions are “permanent” solutions to “permanent” problems, I propose that institutional work involves the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of problems that an institution is perceived to solve and the connecting of problems and solution.

This thesis adds to the knowledge of how actors can contribute to make institutions durable by engaging in practices that can destabilise and transform institutions so that institutions can function as solutions to new and different problems. By elaborating on these ideas, this study opens up the “black box” of institutional durability and discusses how institutional transformation may even be essential for institutional survival in the long run.
Making Public Service Television
A study of institutional work in collaborative TV production

MARIA NORBÄCK

This dissertation is about the institution of public service television as it is enacted in Sweden at the beginning of the 21st century. Public service broadcasting – first radio, then TV – was introduced as a solution to the problems that arose at the beginning of the 20th century, namely how to control and organise the new broadcasting technology. Almost 100 years later public service TV is still around even though technological developments have made many of these problems obsolete. What problems is it perceived to solve in the media landscape of today?

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Making Public Service Television

A study of institutional work in collaborative TV production

MARIA NORBÄCK
To Göran with love
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Göteborg, 17 November 2011

Maria Norbäck
Abstract

This dissertation is about the institution of public service television as it is enacted in Sweden at the beginning of the 21st century. Public service broadcasting – first radio, then television – was introduced as a solution to the problems that arose at the beginning of the 20th century, namely how to control and organise the new broadcasting technology. Almost 100 years later public service TV is still around. What problems is it perceived to solve in the media landscape of today? How do the people making public service TV programmes understand it in relation to their work?

This study investigates public service TV as it is enacted in collaborative productions of public service TV programming by the Swedish public broadcaster SVT, commercial production companies and additional financers. This is a setting that opens up for a negotiation of what public service TV is and should be, as well as which actors should have the right to produce it. The empirical material is generated through an extensive study of five collaboratively produced TV programmes involving mainly interviews, but also the study of media texts about public service TV, SVT and the collaborative productions of programmes, as well as field visits and observations.

The theoretical inspiration for this study comes from institutional theory, and the recent developments of the stream labelled institutional work. Within this theoretical framework scholars are interested in how actors can engage in practices that are aimed at “creating, maintaining and disrupting” institutions. This dissertation describes and interprets how the programme makers involved in the collaborative production of public service TV programmes do institutional work directed at maintaining, transforming and disrupting the public service TV institution and the institutional arrangements in the Swedish public service TV field. By acknowledging the “institutional work” of practices, this study shows how the practices the programme makers engage in when producing public service TV collaboratively have a bearing on the institutional arrangements within which they take place.

By drawing on the old but often neglected understanding that institutions are “permanent” solutions to “permanent” problems, I propose that institutional work involves the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of problems that an institution is perceived to solve and the connecting of problems and solution. This thesis adds to the knowledge of how actors can contribute to make institutions durable by engaging in practices that can destabilise and transform institutions so that institutions can function as solutions to new and different problems. By elaborating on these ideas, this study opens up the “black box” of institutional durability and discusses how institutional transformation may even be essential for institutional survival in the long run.
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I. TV, public service TV and SVT

When I grew up in Sweden in the 1980s, for me and those in my generation TV was equal to public service TV, which was equal to the public service broadcaster SVT, or as it was then called Sveriges Television (Sweden’s Television). If you watched TV you watched public service TV and you watched SVT, which were one and the same. TV was public service TV, which was SVT. This was during the last decade of the Swedish public service TV monopoly. At the end of the 80s, the first Swedish advertising funded channel was launched by satellite from London in order to bypass Swedish legislation. I was unaware that this was to be the beginning of the end of the monopoly days as I sat in front of the TV eagerly awaiting the children’s programmes to start. I can remember it to this day: first there was the test card, then five minutes before it started an image with a clock appeared, and my brother and I started counting down. And then it began: “Kom nu då! Vadå? Barnprogram på TV 2?” For a TV starved child in those days, for whom even the cartoon like episode in the weather forecast showing the times for sunrise and sunset was something fascinating, children’s programmes were the highlights of an ordinary day.

Three decades later, my little daughter has just discovered the joys of television. She however doesn’t have to wait in front of the TV for the children’s programmes to start: for her, a limitless supply of children’s content is available around the clock on the computer and the mobile phone, as well as on specialised children’s channels on TV. There have been dramatic changes since her mum was a child. TV in Sweden is no longer synonymous with public service TV and SVT. With the introduction of commercial TV, a growing Swedish market for the commercial production of TV programmes have been established over the past two decades. Still however, until now, public service TV in Sweden and the broadcaster SVT has been thought of as one and the same. This study takes place in a moment in time when this taken for granted connection slowly begins to be questioned. In the public debate about public service TV and SVT’s task as a public service TV broadcaster, producer and financer of Swedish public service TV programmes, voices are beginning to question whether everything that SVT does automatically equals public service TV. These voices are starting to whisper – in tune with the contemporary ideas of marketisation and liberalisation – that the taken for granted enactor of public service TV, SVT, and the current system may not be the best way to organise things (e.g Berge & Stegö Chilò, 2011; Bernitz 2011; Sziga, 2008). More public service TV programmes are being produced by producers external to SVT, in more market-type relations, financed not only by licence fee money but also by external funding, opening up the possibility for new actors to challenge, define and decide what public service TV should be. Even though the programmes

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1 Come on then! What? Children’s programme on TV2!
produced in collaborations with actors external to SVT are still in the minority compared with the amount of programmes produced in house at SVT, they nevertheless are becoming settings in which the nature of public service TV is discussed, and where taken-for-granted associations are questioned. These discussions are fuelled by the public debate about public service TV and also feedback into this debate.

Studying public service TV

This study plays out in the midst of these developments. For this dissertation, I have studied public service TV programme projects that are produced in collaboration between SVT and production companies, calling them collaborative productions. Through the actors involved, I have followed the programme projects from the initial ideas to the finished programmes, by interviewing the people engaged in making them: the commissioners, the project managers and producers, the contract negotiators, the financers, the editors, the scriptwriters, the web people and the salespeople. I have collected documents and all sorts of media coverage of public service in general and the collaborative production of public service TV in particular.

During the time in which I have been engaged with this dissertation, between 2006 and 2011, the discussion about public service has been heated. Politicians, policymakers, the cultural and economic elite, commercial media houses, public service broadcasters, TV production companies and grassroots licence fee payers, voters and viewers have been engaged in the debate over what public service TV should and should not be. The discussion has centred on the following questions: How should public service TV be financed? Should it cover a wide range of programmes of all genres or focus on narrower programming that is not supplied by the commercial market? Should SVT be allowed to compete with commercial actors on new platforms? Has SVT’s programming been commercialised and if so, is this a problem? What should be the role for public service TV in the future? (Asp, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011; Barkman, 2011; Brandel, 2008; Byström, 2011; Cederskog & Leffler, 2010;
I. TV, Public Service TV and SVT

Hamilton, 2008, 2011; Leijonborg, 2007; Roseberg, 2006; Scherman, 2008; Söderlund, 2006; Wiklund, 2007). While I have been working on this study, one governmental investigation about public service has been both initiated and concluded, and a new one has recently been initiated. The public debate has served as a backdrop for the programme makers whose work I have been studying, at the same time as their work has been feeding the debate about public service TV.

It is thus fair to say that public service TV is very much debated and under scrutiny in the contemporary media landscape. The monopoly days are long gone but public service TV and the Swedish public service broadcaster SVT is still a strong force to be reckoned with. This is rather fascinating when you think about it. Public service broadcasting was invented in the 1920s to solve a number of the problems that new radio technology gave rise to. Among these early problems were the scarcity of airwaves, which limited the number of radio broadcasters, the failure of the market to provide content for the benefit and education of society and citizenry, the Swedish newspaper companies’ fears of the new medium threatening their advertising bases and the obvious powers, both economic and political, which the new medium held. In Sweden, these problems were solved by the establishment of a national public service broadcaster, first for radio and then, when that technology came along, for TV. Today several of the problems that public service broadcasting once was put in place to solve are no longer relevant. Even so, public service TV in Sweden has survived the many technological, political, economic and ideological changes that have taken place during the past century (Bolin, 2004; Syvertsen, 1992, 1999, 2003).

Collaborative production of public service TV programmes

The specific setting in which this study takes place is five collaborative productions of public service TV programmes, where SVT produces programmes together with commercial production companies and financers. When I initiated this study, there was a growing debate about SVT’s increased reliance on production companies (as opposed to producing most of its own programmes in house as was traditionally carried out). As I started to become acquainted with this discussion, I realised that many people saw this

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4 These are just a few of the hundreds of articles about public service TV between 2006 and 2011 in the Swedish media. During the course of this study, I have collected about 10 kilos of articles from both daily newspapers as well as specialised media on the topic of public service, which have been used to give a deeper knowledge of the public service TV setting in chapter 3.

5 In chapter 3, there is a more detailed description of the history, ideology and development of public service broadcasting.
development as a threat to public service TV. One scenario was that collaborations with commercial production companies would initiate a process of the commercialisation of public service TV. Some voices questioned whether public service TV really could be produced in collaborative constellations involving actors from outside SVT. What would public service TV become when produced in such settings?

By studying programme productions where SVT commissioned programmes from production companies and produced them together, I have had the opportunity to study the production of public service TV in a setting where actors and practices external to SVT meet those internal to SVT. These meetings create interesting dynamics and set processes of negotiation concerning public service TV into motion. Since the debate as it was played out in the media dealt with what would happen to public service TV in collaborative productions, it seemed to me that a researcher interested in public service TV would find such settings very interesting. In a sense, in collaborative productions the political debate is materialised and put into practice.

The debate about the collaborative production of public service TV also brought up for discussion something that previously had been taken for granted: the connection between public service TV and the organisation SVT. That which for so long had been unquestioned – that SVT was the same thing as public service TV – suddenly became open to negotiation. Collaborative productions also put the spotlight on the TV landscape in Sweden and the differences in market power between the commissioning public service TV broadcaster and the (often) small production companies competing for the chance to produce programmes for SVT. This study of the collaborative production of public service TV plays out in the context of this discussion. The programme makers described here are not only making TV programmes to the best of their abilities. They are at the same time involved in an ongoing negotiation around what public service TV is and should be, as well as who should have the right to produce it. The current institutional arrangements (which will be more thoroughly discussed in chapter 3), where SVT is the taken-for-granted enactor of public service TV and has much power in determining what it should be, are subject to “institutional work” by the programme makers in this study. What “institutional work” entails I explain next.

**Institutions and institutional work**

I have always been fascinated with the world, which I see as chaotic and messy and **at the same time** frozen in routines and “this is how it's always been”. How can one make sense of this contradiction? How is order produced and reproduced? Early on in my doctoral studies, I came upon a book that gave me one of those rare “aha feelings” – so this is the way it works! The book was
Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s *The social construction of reality* from 1967. It deals with the question of how social order, once produced, is taken for granted and reified by us. As Berger and Luckmann (1967:22) state: “The reality of everyday life appears already objectified, that is, constituted by an order of objects that have been designated as objects before my appearance on the scene”. Berger and Luckmann have influenced the research strand within the studies of organisations called institutional theory. This is an approach to studying social phenomena where actors are seen to be embedded in a (relatively) stable institutional context, which at the same time as making action possible limits this action. Much research in the institutional tradition has focused on how institutional arrangements affect the actors, both individual and collectives, that inhabit them, and how institutions spread over time and place. Institutions from this perspective have been defined as “multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities and material resources that enable or impose limitations on the scope for human agency by creating legal, moral and cultural boundaries” (Scott, 2001:49). This study is informed by institutional theory and thus it treats the phenomenon of public service TV as an institution.

Traditionally within institutional theory, the durability of institutions has not been problematised nor evoked special interest. Since durability and permanence are used as core criteria when defining an institution (Zucker, 1977), this aspect has long been taken for granted by institutional scholars. Recently, however, the durability of institutions has also begun to receive researchers’ attention. The growing interest in how institutions change and how actors are involved in making change come about has also spurred an interest in how institutions are maintained and how durability is achieved. This renewed interest has spurred institutional researchers to explore the role of actors in creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions, and how actors can affect institutional arrangements (Battilana & D’Aunno, 2009; Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008; Zilber, 2002). The theoretical stream called institutional work that informs much of this study aims to understand the work needed to create new institutions, to maintain and uphold current institutions and to disrupt old institutions (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2009, 2011) and it is heavily influenced by the “practice turn” in organisational studies (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Giddens, 1984, 1993; Johnson, Langley, Melin, & Whittington, 2008; Miettinen, Samra-Fredricks, & Yanow, 2009; Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, & Von Savigny, 2001). Within this theoretical stream, researchers are urged to pay attention to the (micro) practices that make up those social structures we call institutions, and how the particular, ongoing, contextual and conflictual are vital to study if one wants to understand (macro) institutions.

The specific context of the collaborative production of public service TV ought to provide a setting in which institutional work – by the people working for SVT and production companies, as well as other actors interested in the
future of public service TV – is likely to take place, and hence a good place to study institutional work. In this study, I investigate how actors do institutional work on public service TV as enacted by SVT and the institutional arrangements that make up the Swedish public service TV field. By writing this dissertation, I want to add to our understanding of institutional work and the everyday efforts of actors to “cope with, keep up with, shore up, tear down, tinker with, transform, or create anew the institutional structures within which they live, work, and play, and which give them their roles, relationships, resources and routines” (Lawrence et al. 2011:53). This study thus aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge of how institutions, once put in place, are actively worked on and how actors change and transform existing institutions as well as how they make institutions durable. The point here is that institutions are not self-maintaining and “automatically” durable structures – something that traditionally has been taken for granted in institutional theory – but that it takes work to make institutions into the stable structures we perceive them to be. At the same time, it takes work to transform and change such stable structures. How the public service TV institution is made durable and how it is transformed (and how these two processes may be intertwined) are investigated in this study.

The purpose of the thesis and intended contributions

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and interpret collaborative TV programme production from an institutional perspective, conceptualising how programme makers do institutional work on public service TV.

In the study I have followed the work of people from SVT and commercial producers working for production companies. From the empirical study of their work of collaborating with each other in order to make public service TV programming, I interpret what these practices can do to the institutional context in which they are performed, and how this work is carried out. Inspired by the theoretical lens of institutional work, paired with the old idea that action becomes institutionalised in the first place because it is perceived to solve a collective problem (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), this dissertation opens up the “black box” of institutional durability. By reviving Berger and Luckmann’s idea that institutions are “permanent” solutions to “permanent” problems, and by elaborating on how actors work to connect solutions and problems, this thesis adds to the knowledge of how actors can contribute to make institutions durable by engaging in practices that can destabilise and transform institutions so that institutions can function as solutions to new and different problems. However, the dissertation also shows how actors can work to disassociate a
1. TV, Public Service TV and SVT

previously taken-for-granted enactor of an institution, in this case Swedish SVT, by questioning its functionality as an enactor of “true” public service TV.

This study illustrates how change in certain aspects of an institution may lead to the durability of other aspects, as well as how change in a shorter time period may lead to durability over a longer period of time. In this sense, change and durability can in fact be constitutive of each other. By interpreting the programme makers’ collaboration when producing public service TV from an institutional work perspective, this thesis sheds light on the contextual “micro” practices that make up a “macro” institution. This also means that the study goes beyond the dichotomy micro/macro to show how both these dimensions are necessary if we are to really understand institutions as they are enacted in a specific time and place.

Outline of the thesis

In chapter 2 I describe and discuss the theoretical framework that guides this study. The chapter begins by a description of some of the foundational concepts of institutional theory. Then I discuss the more interpretative stream of institutional theory, and the recent extension into institutional work; a theoretical stream which aims to refocus institutional analysis on the micro-foundations of institutions and on the practices of intentional actors as they work to maintain and transform the institutional arrangements in which they find themselves.

In chapter 3 public service TV in Sweden and its institutional arrangements is discussed. Here the history and ideology behind the public service TV institution is presented, as well as the sort of criticism levelled against it in order for the reader to gain an understanding of the context in which the study takes place and towards which the institutional work described later in the dissertation is directed. I also describe the Swedish public service TV broadcaster SVT and the other actors such as commercial broadcasters and production companies in the Swedish public service TV field as well as the current forms of collaborative production between SVT and production companies. The chapter ends with a summary of the relevant legislation governing the public service TV institution.

Chapter 4 contains a description of how I conducted the empirical study: how the study was designed, how I found the programmes studied, the people I interviewed and the empirical material it generated. Here are discussed such things as what interview material can “really say about the way things are”; implicit in this discussion are the epistemological assumptions that guide this study and me as a researcher. Described is also how I went about interpreting the empirical material and writing the empirical story.

Chapter 5 is an overview of the five collaborative TV programme productions and the programme makers involved. Here the productions are
described from the initial programme idea, through the preparations and filming to the final finished programme. Here you meet the programme makers involved, and learn what the programmes were about and the important events during the course of the productions.

Chapter 6–8 are thematic chapters including the five programme productions arranged according to three empirical themes, namely The Money: Negotiating the terms, The People: The makers of the programmes, and The Programmes: Evaluating the outcome. In chapter 6 the “monetary” aspects (in a broad sense) of producing collaborative public service programmes are dealt with, such as contracts, the division of rights to programmes, budgets, and financing. Here are introduced to the tensions that the collaborative production of public service TV programmes creates within the group of programme makers, the importance of independence and control for SVT and how this affects commercial producers. These tensions continue to play a role in chapter 7, which describes the people involved in the collaborations and their “organisational homes” either in the production market or as employees (and representatives) of SVT. In chapter 8, the outcomes of the programmes are discussed and the programme makers share their views of how to evaluate programmes and what a “real” public service TV programme should be like.

Hence, in chapters 6–8 I focus on the people making public service TV programmes and how their practices do things to the institution. This means that I focus more on the ongoing, contextual, practice, “micro” aspects of the institution than is usually done in traditional institutional studies. However, these aspects take place within the institutional arrangements of the public service TV field and are influenced by as well as influence those arrangements, which means that I aim for both “micro” and “macro” to be present at the same time, even if they are not in focus at the same time. This recursive relationship of actions and institutions are imprinted in the thesis in the following way: in the chapters 6–8 I deal mostly with the actors and their practices of collaborative public service TV production. In these chapters I thus stay on the “micro” level. In the chapters 9–11 (starting with chapter 9 and escalating) I relate these practices to the institution so that I end the dissertation focusing the (macro) institution of public service TV. In this sense I end the dissertation much as I started it, by putting the institution of public service TV in the spotlight.

Following this, in chapter 9 I interpret the empirical material presented in chapters 5–8 informed by the theoretical frame of institutional work. The chapter is structured around streams of practices in terms of their impact and “doing” of the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field. The three streams of practices are: 1) Work directed at maintaining the institutional arrangements where SVT is the main enactor of public service TV; 2) Work directed at transforming the institutional arrangements by extending the enactment of public service TV to collaborations between SVT and production
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companies; 3) Work directed at disrupting the institutional arrangements by questioning SVT’s legitimacy to enact public service TV.

In the chapter 10, which is called theoretical implications I present and discuss a reframed way of understanding institutional work. I call this the “solutions-looking-for-problems” idea, which I argue can help to further our understanding of how institutions are transformed and in this way are made durable.

In chapter 11 there is a discussion about the future of public service TV in Sweden, where the “solutions-looking-for-problems” idea frames a discussion about the outlook of the public service TV institution.
2. From institutions to institutional work

This chapter includes a description of the theory of institutions and the recent development of what has been labelled institutional work, inspired by the wider “practice turn” within the social sciences. In order to interpret the activities of the programme makers in this study, and their efforts of collaboratively producing public service TV programming, I have chosen to look at the phenomenon of public service TV as an institution. By using the institutional theory apparatus, the aim is to make an interpretation of the empirical material that is sensitive to both the societal embedding as well as to its micro foundations of people and their activities. The institutional framework can thus help to explain how actors are embedded in institutional arrangements and how the public service TV institution influences the programme makers at the same time as they influence the institution.

This chapter starts with an introduction of how institutions have been conceptualised; after that, some central concepts within institutional theory are described. This part of the chapter aims at giving a short introduction to institutional theory and the foundations of organisational institutionalism. The foundational concepts described here are important for understanding institutional theory. I then introduce a more interpretative perspective on institutionalism, in which I include the practice-inspired stream of institutional work. The chapter ends with some important issues in relation to the stream of institutional work as well as a discussion of some of its challenges.

What is an institution?

In all social settings, there are what institutional scholars call institutions, one definition of which is “multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities and material resources that enable or impose limitations on the scope for human agency by creating legal, moral and cultural boundaries” (Scott, 2001:49). Institutions make social life predictable and guide us through our daily lives by giving directions on what actions to take and not to take. Institutions thus not only limit our choices of action, something many institutionalists have focused on, but they are also the foundation that makes action possible as we go about our everyday activities. According to Powell and DiMaggio (1991:11), “Institutions do not just constrain options, they establish the very criteria by which people discover their preferences”. Institutions define the appropriate action to take in a situation and by doing so relieve people of mental work (Czarniawska, 2003) and “free the individual from the burden of
all those decisions” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967:53). Therefore, institutions work in both an impeding and facilitating fashion, since they provide guidelines and resources for acting as well as prohibitions and constraints on action.

So, how come certain actions become institutionalised in the first place? As two of the “founding fathers” of institutional theory, Berger and Luckmann (1967), point out and as Meyer (2006) elaborates on, action becomes institutionalised because it (in some respects and for some, usually powerful, actors) serves a societal purpose:

...societies institutionalize only important forms of action. The sociology of knowledge ties the construction and reproduction of institutions to their solving of recurrent societal problems. In Berger and Luckmann’s words: “The transmission of the meaning of an institution is based on the social recognition of that institution as a “permanent” solution of a “permanent” problem of this collectivity”. Institutions are challenged if they cease to be recognized as such. (Meyer, 2006:732-733)

Thus, institutions are social constructs and inform action by providing solutions to the problems identified within a collective of actors. By this follows that when institutions are no longer perceived as solutions to some reoccurring social problem, they become challenged. In regard to institutions, there is also an underlying notion of permanence to both problems and solutions.

So, what can be seen as an institution from this point of view? Well, Jepperson (1991:144) helps us understand what an institution is by providing a list of (North American) “things” commonly thought of as institutions:

Marriage, sexism, the contract, wage labour, the handshake, insurance, formal organizations, the army, academic tenure, presidency, the vacation, attending college, the corporation, the motel, the academic discipline, voting.

To this list I would like to add “public service TV”, the phenomenon in focus in this study that I have chosen to study and interpret with the help of the institutional theory framework.

Once you take a look at the list above, you realise that what can be described as an institution indeed seems to be a great many things – the things above are rather dissimilar at a first glance. However, they do share some important similarities. As Jepperson (1991:145) states: “All are variously “production systems” (Fararo and Skvoretz 1986) or “enabling structures” or social “programs” or performance scripts. Each of these metaphors connotes stable designs for chronically repeated activity sequences.”

In line with this argument, institutions as stable designs or durable social structures include a limitation on agency in relation to the actors involved.
2. From institutions to institutional work

According to Phillips and Malhotra (2008), the beauty of institutional theory is that it dismisses rational actor models of organisations and instead stresses the unreflective, the routine and the taken-for-granted nature of most human action. It also sees interest and actors as themselves constituted by institutions. This means that institutional theory can provide explanations of human action, which makes very little sense from other theoretical perspectives assuming rational action. Lawrence et al. (2009:2) agree and write:

> The institutional perspective has brought to organization theory a sophisticated understanding of symbols and language, of myths and ceremony, of decoupling, of the interplay of social and cognitive processes, of the impact of organizational fields, of the potential for individuals and groups to shape their environments, and of the processes through which those environments shape individual and collective behavior and belief.

It should be noted here that calling the diverse theoretical streams of institutionalism a “theory” is probably misleading, since it is really not at all a coherent theory in which all researchers interested in institutional phenomenon agree on a set of assumptions or ways of carrying out institutional research. As Czarniawska (2008b:770) states: “As it is, institutional theory is not a theory at all, but a framework, a vocabulary, a way of thinking about social life, which may take many paths”. What unites all institutional perspectives, as I understand it, ranging from institutional economics through sociology, political science to organisational studies is the starting point that economic assumptions about rational individual behaviour should be questioned. Apart from this, institutional research and researchers tend to look different. Even so, for the purpose of clarity and simplicity, I mimic other “theorists” within this framework/vocabulary/way of thinking and call it “institutional theory”.

Three pillars of institutions

Institutions have, as noted above, often been looked at from a stability point of view. Here, I explore how authors have elaborated on stability, before later in this chapter discussing how more recent streams within institutional theory are trying to incorporate into institutional analysis ideas of how institutions are (actively) made durable as well as how they change.

Scott (2001) outlines three elements from which institutions are composed, or in his words, the “types of ingredients that underlie institutional order” (Scott, 2008:428): cultural-cognitive, normative and regulative. These pillars, he argues, together with their associated activities and resources provide stability and meaning to social life. Scott argues that institutions can be found on multiple levels of jurisdictions, from the overall world system down to interpersonal relationships. Institutions are thus social structures that have
taken on a “rule-like” status. These rules do not have to be formal or even informal, they could also be taken for granted and/or unconscious, or just constitute what seems to be the appropriate ways to behave; “the logic of appropriateness” in the words of March and Olsen (1989).

Scott (2001) argues that the different streams of institutionalism have chosen to emphasise different aspects of these rule-like institutions: regulative/formal rules, moral/normative rules or taken-for-granted/cultural-cognitive rules. Hirsch (1997) and Hoffman (1999) argue that the three aspects of institutions outlined by Scott should be seen as interdependent of each other. When there is some development of one aspect of an institution, then it is to be expected that other aspects are also influenced by this. In the case of public service TV, it is fair to assume that changes in the regulatory framework influence both the normative and cultural-cognitive aspects of the institution and what it means to make public service TV. The three pillars of institutions all support and make up institutions but according to Scott (2001) they also have their own different mechanisms and underlying assumptions, which makes it a good idea to examine them separately. I therefore give a brief overview of them below.

The regulative pillar

Theorists associated to what Scott (2001) calls the regulative pillar are especially interested in the explicit regulatory processes of institutions. In a wide sense, one could say that all institutions are about constraining and regularising behaviour, but within this pillar interest is specifically on explicit regulative functions. These processes involve the establishment of rules, the inspection of conformity to these rules and the organisation of sanctions for right or wrong behaviour. In the context of public service broadcasting, several regulative mechanisms are in place to control public service broadcasters. At the EU level, there is legislation to regulate the origin of content broadcasted by European public service TV organisations. At a national level, the activities of SVT are formalised in the Broadcasting Charter issued by the government. Here is described how an organisation should conduct its business in terms of programme areas and the dissemination of information to the public. SVT gives accounts on how it has managed to achieve its tasks in its annual public service accounts. The Swedish Radio and TV Act is the legislation under which

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6 The focus on cognition and culture, as well as the conception of the institutional field as a unit of analysis, are claimed to be the major contribution of the new/neo-institutionalism to institutional theory beginning with Meyer and Rowan (1977) and Zucker (1977). However, the new institutionalism evolving after 1977, namely DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and onwards, has been criticised for being too focused on macro phenomena as well as underplaying power and agency in institutional life. Since more current streams within institutionalism are trying to make amends and incorporate agency and micro processes into studies of institutions, I skip the prefix “new” such as Hirsch (2008), and Hirsch and Lounsbury (1997) urge us to do, and call it institutionalism.
all organisations broadcasting from Sweden are subject as well as the Freedom of Speech Act. The Swedish Broadcasting Authority is the governing body put in place to police the conduct of broadcasters.

The controlling mechanisms can be highly formalised such as legislation, as described in the context of public service broadcasting in Sweden, but they can also be informal such as the mechanisms of shaming and shunning. Formal rules can be supported by a normative framework that supports the obedience of the rules from a normative standpoint. If we take the public service TV institution as an example, the laws and regulations governing the behaviour of public service broadcasters and their employees are also enforced by strong journalistic norms and values held within the public service TV field at large. This leads us to the next pillar, the normative one.

**The normative pillar**

Within the normative pillar, the focus on institutional aspects are “normative rules that introduce a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension into social life” Scott (2001:54). Norms and values are of great importance here. Norms can be explained as specifications of how things should be carried out. They thus provide guidelines on what kinds of actions to take (and not to take) in a certain setting. Values are those things that one should strive for, thus constituting what is desired and preferred. Values provide a measurement that actions or habits can be measured against to test whether they are desirable or not.

Norms and values are much connected to professions, which can be defined as “occupations based on advanced, or complex, or esoteric or arcane knowledge” (Macdonald, 1995:1). The interests of a profession are often represented by an association that works to protect the privileges and interests of the profession and its members. This is true for Swedish journalists whose interests are represented by professional associations such as Publicistklubben (The National Press Club) and Svenska Journalistförbundet (Swedish Journalist’s Union). These organisations also play an important role in controlling the conduct of members by excluding persons that have violated the norms and rules of the profession. They often also certify that only persons with the proper education and merits can obtain membership in their association (for example, publicists and PR professionals are usually not allowed membership in journalist associations).

**The cultural-cognitive pillar**

The third pillar within institutional theory is called “cultural-cognitive” because the internal interpretative processes are shaped by external cultural forces, which makes the concepts of cognition and culture intertwined (Scott, 2001). Within this pillar, theorists stress the importance of the cultural-cognitive elements of institutions and instead of the focus on norms and values are
interested in taken-for-granted scripts, rules and classifications as the basis of institutions. What these theorists highlight are the “shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made” (Scott 2001:57). In focus within this pillar are symbols, such as language and signs, and the way they shape our understanding of the world around us. The process of shaping meaning and understanding consists of an ongoing interaction. Meanings are maintained and transformed as we use them to make sense of our reality. Even though this process of shaping meaning is ongoing as we interact and live our lives, to us it seems as though reality is out there, objectified, and that we have nothing to do with the shaping of it. Berger and Luckmann (1967:20-22) address this-for-grantedness:

Commonsense contains innumerable pre- and quasi-scientific interpretations about everyday reality, which it takes for granted./.../
The reality of everyday life appears already objectified, that is, constituted by an order of objects that have been designated as objects before my appearance of the scene. The language used in everyday life continuously provides me with the necessary objectifications and posits the order within which these make sense and within which everyday life has meaning for me.

Compliance and “obedience” happen since institutionalised actions and schemes are the only actions possible. Other types of actions are unthinkable, not necessarily in the normative sense (as in the normative pillar) but also because the taken-for-grantedness of the actions is so strong that it would not occur to the actor that there could be another way to act (and if it did this would not make any sense). This indicates that our cognition is limited by what we know and the way our reality is constructed, and that who we are depends upon this reality. In the words of media scholar John Fiske (1992:49): “We are what we know, and what we do not know, we cannot be”.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue that “[i]nstitutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors. Put differently, any such typification is an institution” (1967:54). These writers state that not only is the world as we know it a social construction, but also that this construction is continuously ongoing:

... social order is a human product, or, more precisely, an ongoing human production. /.../ Both in its genesis (social order is the result of past human activity) and its existence in any instant of time (social order exists only and insofar as human activity continues to produce it) it is a human product. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967:52)

The “ongoingness” and constant need of the reification of the social construction of reality, and thus of institutions, is elaborated on later in this
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It is worth mentioning here, though, that this is a central idea of the founding writings on organisational institutionalism, even though it might have been forgotten along the way as institutional theory developed. However, as Czarniawska (2003:135) notes, Berger and Luckmann did not seem particularly interested in how reification takes place: “Here is one point on which contemporary research can go beyond Berger and Luckmann, for whom reification is still something that just happens. Reification requires work, and that work needs to be described”.

Berger and Luckmann have been strongly influenced by the work of both Alfred Schütz, the European phenomenologist, and American pragmatism. Their social constructionism is hence closely related to both symbolic interactionism and phenomenology (Czarniawska, 2003; R. E. Meyer, 2008). Their starting points are that when we socially construct our reality, we create order and habitualise actions that help us carry on with our daily lives: “The legitimation of the institutional order is also faced with the ongoing necessity of keeping chaos at bay. All social reality is precarious. All societies are constructions in the face of chaos” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967:103). Their basic understanding of social construction is thus that it is something we engage in out of necessity: we have to try to construct order out of chaos if we are to exist as social beings in a society. Here, the pragmatist heritage is clear: institutions help us go about our daily activities without having to reinvent the wheel. Czarniawska (2003:138) describes this:

... institutions were supposed to relieve [people] of mental work. There is no criticism or irony in this statement: little though people would like to have to cut their lawns with a scythe they would not want to have to rethink the whole development of modern hygiene each morning in order to decide whether to brush their teeth.

Scott (2001) elaborates on the distinction between the different aspects that constitute institutions. The regulative pillar can be characterised as the formal elements, whereas the normative and cultural/cognitive pillars relate to more informal and less tangible elements. However, in the framework introduced by Scott no visible actors are engaged in actions leading to the stabilising or destabilising of institutions. Professional norms are discussed at the level of the profession rather than the actions involving their members. Similarly, the cultural and cognitive elements originate in a theoretical context where actors and actions are at the centre. However, in organisational institutional analysis individual actors have often remained surprisingly absent as they were regarded as merely over-socialised “cultural dopes” (Garfinkel, 1967) trapped in taken-for-granted institutionalised webs. Later in this chapter, I discuss how recent streams within organisational institutionalism have tried to make amends and reintroduce actors and practices into institutional studies.
From this introduction of Scott’s three institutional pillars, I now move onto some of the main concepts within institutional theory in order to explain how they can be helpful when studying programme makers and public service TV.

**Important concepts in institutional theory: field, institutional logics and legitimacy**

Within institutional theory in organisational studies, a couple of concepts are part of the “institutional canon”, and these are foundational in the institutional framework: organisational field, institutional logics and legitimacy. They are described next.

**Organisational field**

According to Wooten and Hoffman (2008), the institutional theory term “organisational field” has become the accepted term for the constellation of actors that comprise this central organising unit. The difference between the organisational field concept and other constructs such as industry or sector is that it is not only constituted by firms engaged in the same activities. All actors relevant for life in the field are included: actors with similar and dissimilar organisations and purposes, entwined in webs both horizontally and vertically. DiMaggio and Powell (1983/1991:64-65) define organisational fields as: “those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumer, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products”. In this definition, they aim to include the “totality of relevant actors” that have a bearing on the field.

The field concept is inspired by Bourdieu’s (1990, 1993) notion of field where the activities of an actor in the political, economic and cultural arena are structured by their social networks and relations to other actors in that arena. Inherent in Bourdieu’s conception of field is the ongoing struggle of actors over positions in the field, and the use of political, symbolic, cultural and economic resources to gain access to more of these resources. This means that politics, agency and interests, both overt and less so, and conscious power plays as well as less calculated ones (Creed, DeJordy, & Lok, 2010) become central aspects of a field (Selznick, 1949). The fight over whatever field actors hold up as important and what their activities are all about is what makes up a field (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). In a similar vein, Meyer and Höllerer (2010) use the term “issue field” to refer to the phenomenon they are studying. Hoffman (1999:351-352) elaborates on this:
The notion that an organizational fields forms around a central issue – such as the protection of the natural environment – rather than a central technology or market introduced the idea that fields become centers of debates in which competing interest negotiate over issue interpretation. /../ A field is not formed around common technologies or common industries, but around issues that bring together various field constituents with disparate purposes. Not all constituents may realize an impact on the resulting debate, but they are often armed with opposing perspectives rather than with common rhetorics. The process may more resemble institutional war (White, 1992) than isomorphic dialogue.

This means that participants of a field do not necessarily have to have face-to-face contact in order to engage in the negotiation and construction of the same issues. From this follows that the sensemaking of the participants in the field (Weick, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005) is guided and influenced by what the members of the field hold important and how things should be carried out within it.

The organisational field concept has been important in institutional theory because it has been a basis for understanding how organisations within a field become more similar to each other: what DiMaggio and Powell (1983/1991) call “isomorphism”. From their understanding, there are isomorphic pressures on organisations to conform to a certain institutionalised structure or to adopt certain institutionalised recipes in order to achieve the legitimacy needed for organisations to survive. The majority of mainstream (US) institutional theorists have focused on this aspect and studied what has been known as diffusion: the spreading of certain institutionalised structures across a population of organisations within a field (Strang & Meyer, 1993). However, there is a growing insight that these studies because of their methods of generating data – often archival studies looking at macro phenomena over periods of several decades – might overestimate the level of isomorphism in organisational fields (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008; March, 2003). Because they take a macro view of the phenomenon (“the further away one stands, the more isomorphic it looks”), they fail to see the differences in how organisations deal with isomorphic pressures (Suddaby, 2010) and how actors “translate” and “edit” institutional recipes into their specific contexts (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; Sahlin-Andersson, 1996; Sevon, 1996). This “illusion of diffusion” has been addressed by more interpretative streams of institutionalism, which I will deal with further on in this chapter.

Wooten and Hoffman (2008) argue that the “organisational field” is one of the most important contributions of what has been called neo-institutional theory (Scott, 2001). In mainstream institutional theory, the individual agent, which is Bourdieu’s main interest, is often replaced with an organisational actor of some sort. However, as new interest in institutional entrepreneurship and
institutional work shows (more about this later) institutionalists have also started to reconnect with their social constructionist, ethnomethodological roots (Czarniawska, 2008b) to show renewed interest in the micro processes and practices that individual agents engage in within a larger social setting.

The field concept provides an analytical tool that can help explain how actors enact the environment at the same time as they are enacted upon by the very same environment. This gives it an “ongoing” quality compared with earlier concepts, such as environment or industry, which indicate that they are “out there” and more or less fixed. Important within the field construct is that it connotes an active structuration by all actors that are members of the field. Even so, Sahlin-Andersson (1996:74) find some of the uses of the organisational field concept problematic:

The problem with the field concept as it is used by, for example, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) is that it may give the impression that the field exists objectively, and thus that similarities and differences exist objectively. Instead … similarities, differences, and therefore organization fields are socially constructed and are constantly changing, in spite of the general impression of stability.

Where the boundaries of a field begin and end, which actors should be included and which should be left out is for the user of the concept to define. Sahlin-Andersson (1996:73–74) writes that “the field is an analytic construction and is demarcated by the eye of the observer. There are no set boundaries. The field could rather be defined as a reference system, shaping the participants’ attention structures and identities – what the participants view as important issues”. This means that my use of the concept public service TV field, which I discuss next, is more a product and outcome of this study than it is an a priori definition of the context of the study.

The public service TV field

In this study, I have chosen to denote the context in which it plays out “the public service TV field”, in which broadcasters (public service broadcasters and commercial), commercial TV production companies, regulatory bodies (Swedish and EU), programme makers, critics, opinion makers, viewers, voters, regional film pools and commercial financers are all participants. I use the field concept as a way of demarcating the “stage” on which I see this study playing out. Important in the field concept, as noted above, is the understanding that the field is ongoingly enacted by participants, which in this sense creates the environment that is imposed upon them. This means that the field, with its participants, positions and power distribution, is not set in stone but is subject to ongoing negotiation and social construction. I have chosen to call this the public service TV field and not, for example, the TV field (which would fail to
2. From institutions to institutional work

make clear that the central issue in the field is the issue of public service TV) or the media field (which would denote a much larger number of included actors).

In the public service TV field, actors such as SVT and its employees participate, as do commercial actors such as production companies and broadcasters. As indicated in the introduction, there is vibrant public debate about the future of public service TV, in which commercial broadcasters (as well as producers) are heavily involved. In line with the idea that a field is shaped around a central issue over which participants struggle, the issue of public service TV cannot be made sense of without including the commercial broadcasters that are competitors to SVT and the commercial producers that are involved in relationships with both the public service TV broadcaster and commercial channels. By calling it the public service TV field, the aim is to include the “totality of relevant actors” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983/1991), which has a bearing on the field. In light of this, it would make it unnecessarily messy to use the word media field, since the public service TV issue that the actors in this study are engaged in a battle over centres around audiovisual content broadcasted by SVT. To include actors from press, radio and new media would be to include those actors that are not immediately relevant to the issue of public service TV as it plays out in this study. (With the convergence of technology though as well as the development of the public service TV issue, in the future it may be less appropriate to make this demarcation.) However, in some places in this thesis I do use the word media landscape, which is a term often used in media studies (e.g. Gustafsson, 2005; Hadenius et al., 2008) to denote the whole media industry and its environment, including the legal, economic, technological and social aspects. I thus mean to differentiate between the use of the concept public service TV field (which is a theoretically laden concept within institutional theory) and media landscape. When calling something the media landscape, I talk about a much bigger context (including all mass and social media) and in more general terms.

Institutional logics

As Bourdieu reminds us, there is seldom just peace and quiet in a field. Actors are engaged in ongoing struggles over what things should be held important in the field, how things should be carried out and what the point of it all is. To understand this, institutional researchers use the concept “institutional logics”, defined by Thornton and Ocasio (2008:101) as: “the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality”. In some fields, one principal institutional logic rules the field, whereas in other fields several logics are present. Scott (2001:140) writes that “organizational fields differ in the extent of exclusiveness enjoyed by their dominant logics. Some fields are characterized by one central, relatively coherent set of beliefs, whereas
other fields contain either secondary logics that compete for adherents or multiple conflicting belief systems”.

For scholars interested in institutional analysis, the issue of competing institutional logics has been discussed and studied as “competing rationalities” (Townley, 2002), “institutional contradictions” (Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2009; Seo & Creed, 2002) and “institutional pluralism” (Jarzabkowski, Matthiesen, & Van de Ven, 2009; Kraatz & Block, 2008). What these concepts have in common is that they acknowledge the existence of multiple, often conflicting and contradictory institutional logics within an organisational field. Jarzabkowski et al. (2009:285) describe what they call institutional pluralism as “organizations operate in multiple institutional spheres, each of which provides different logics that play out in the organization as persistent and deep-rooted tensions”.

The public service TV field is a field in which competing logics at work. As in studies of organisational fields outside the media realm (see eg. Thornton, 2002; Townley, 2002) as well as inside the media realm (Raviola, 2010), there are a “cultural” logic and a “commercial” logic present. In fact, all the writings by Bourdieu on journalism and television focus on this conflict (Bourdieu, 1993, 1998). Institutional logics dictate criteria for appropriate action, and when there are competing logics there will be competing appropriate actions within the same field. For actors (individuals and organisations) existing in a field with competing logics, contradictory actions may all be appropriate since they are appropriate according to competing logics. Within SVT as well as in the production companies that produce both commercial and cultural programming, one finds both a commercial as well as a cultural logic. Raviola (2010:63) writes:

Organizations in fragmented and pluralistic fields cannot help but be fragmented and pluralistic. Both commercial and cultural desires co-exist in various forms within each organization. These elements may not have the same influence on organizing: One of them may prevail and dominate the organization, but this dominance is not permanent, it can change.

Within TV organisations (broadcasting and producing), tensions and conflicts are bound to happen between actors adhering to a predominantly commercial logic and actors working under a cultural logic. The output (products and services but also ideational aspects such as meaning, identity and ideology) of these organisations will be the result of negotiations among competing logics and actors, as well as negotiations with other actors within the organisational field. Furthermore, as Friedland and Alford (1991) remind us in their text *Bringing society back in*, organisational fields and their logics exist within a societal context, where *societal logics* are at play that set the rules for the field in which competing *field logics* play out, at the same time as the field logics add to and
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reproduce societal-level logics. The Swedish public service TV field is not only affected by the competing logics of commerce and culture, but it is set within a wider belief system where a regression of state ownership and public bureaucracy has given way to increasing neo-liberalism and marketisation (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Hultén, 1999; Spicer & Fleming, 2007).

It is in this context that we should understand the actions of the programme makers in this study and their collaborative work of producing public service TV programmes. In the public service TV field, there is an ongoing struggle where a cultural logic co-exists with a commercial logic, on which actors in the field can draw in the ongoing struggle over what public service TV should be and how it should be produced. However, higher level societal logics of marketisation and neo-liberalism also permeate the field. For organisations and individual actors to be seen as legitimate in the eyes of important stakeholders, they need to be well versed in the institutional logics at the field level as well as at a societal level.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy has been a core concept within institutional theory since Meyer and Rowan in 1977 suggested that organisations “dress up” in certain structures in order to live up to the myths of modern society and in return receive society’s blessing in the form of legitimacy. Scott (2001:45) defines legitimacy not as “a commodity to be possessed or exchanged but a condition reflecting cultural alignment, normative support, or consonance with relevant rules or laws”. Suchman (1995:574) writes that it is “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions”.

So, actors’ actions are perceived as legitimate if they are deemed as appropriate when evaluated against the beliefs in society about how such an individual or organisation is supposed to act. But what does then legitimacy mean for those actors whose actions are deemed as legitimate? Institutional theory proposes that such actors have the freedom and access to various resources to conduct their businesses in the way they see fit without having to explain their actions or having to answer uncomfortable questions. Especially important is legitimacy for such organisations that have several complex goals and whose outputs are difficult to measure (J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1977). A textbook example of such an organisation is public bureaucracy (even though one could argue that all contemporary organisations claim to have goals that extend profit maximisation and the efficient production of goods and services, and thus have difficult-to-measure outputs).

SVT is an illustrative example of an organisation with a complex set of goals and a difficult-to-measure output. It is an organisation that lives on public funding and whose board of directors is appointed by the political system. The organisation must produce “television in the service of the public”, take good
care of licence payers’ money, contribute to strengthening domestic TV and film production, take part in (and lead) the public debate over a well-functioning democracy and convey humanistic values. These goals are undoubtedly difficult to measure. So, how can SVT and its employees create the “manoeuvring space” needed for their daily activities? Institutional theory suggests that if the organisation were to dress up in the clothes deemed fashionable according to society’s institutional logics, its actions would be perceived as legitimate and it would be left alone to conduct its business in peace. In the contemporary public service TV field, appropriate actions are not only those that originate in a cultural logic, but increasingly also those that are dictated by a commercial logic. For SVT, it therefore seems inevitable to engage in activities that are applauded by neo-liberal and market forces in order to be able to carry on its current operations.

**Interpretative streams of institutionalism**

Much of the “mainstream” version of institutional theory has had an empirical foundation based on the macro studies of organisational fields with an universalistic claim on knowledge about institutions (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008; Czarniawska, 2008b). However, institutional theory is much more heterogeneous than that. For example, in Scandinavia a particular brand of institutional theory has flourished. This Scandinavian school of institutionalism is grounded in the approach to organisation research in general taken by many of the Scandinavian (as well as other) students of organisational life. Boxenbaum and Strandgaard Pedersen (2009:196) describe this as follows: “We see a general preference in Scandinavian organization studies for research objects that are situated, dynamic, unique, ambiguous, fragmented, and emergent (Kreiner, 2007) and for research that combines institutional theory with practice-oriented literature (e.g. Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996)”. These studies are often grounded in constructionist and interpretive understandings of the world and of knowledge, they are often qualitative and empirically thick, and they aim to understand organisational phenomena as contextual and embedded (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008).

This interpretative stream of institutionalism thus differs from the mainstream (often US) version in several ways. One of the more important contributions of the interpretative version of institutional theory is the questioning of the “diffusion idea” and isomorphism, i.e. that ideas and practices become diffused and institutionalised within an organisational field where organisations adopt them the way they are and “without question”. On this note, Meyer (2008:520-521) argues that:

> Many critics of the ‘standard version’ of organizational institutionalism, especially from Scandinavian institutionalism (eg.
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Czarniawska/Joerges 1996; Sahlin-Andersson 1996; Brunsson 1998) or from other interpretively inspired branches of institutional thinking (eg. Zilber 2002, 2006; Meyer 2003) have claimed that institutional theory devotes too much effort to analyzing the trajectories of macro-diffusion patterns while underestimating the meaning the spreading practices have in the originating as well as adopting context and the modifications – translations – they undergo in the course of their 'travels'.

The Scandinavian interpretative stream of institutionalism aims to escape the illusion of isomorphism and instead focus on the way ideas and practices are translated and edited by actors in a new context (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). This means that it seeks to understand institutions in action and the practice of institutions (institutionalisation) rather than institutions as nouns and existing “out there” for researchers to grasp sitting at their desks looking at historical records. This also means that interpretative institutionalists (Scandinavians and others) recognised early on that institutions are not (only) stable as elaborated by Scott (2001) and colleagues, but also transform and change. This insight has spurred a more recent discussion on how institutions come to be in the first place, how they are maintained and disrupted and how actors make this happen. Its proponents call this stream “institutional work”. My study aims to follow in the footsteps of these interpretative-minded scholars by trying to understand how actors within a specific context and at a certain point in time work with (and work on) the institution of public service TV.

Institutional work

Organisational institutionalism as portrayed by the new institutionalists was a framework that helped us understand the rigidity and stability of institutions in society and within organisational fields. Three of the early and now seminal works – Meyer and Rowan (1977), Zucker (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983/1991) – all focused on how institutions created persistence in actors’ activities and how institutions themselves became persistent and durable. Zucker (1977:83) opens her article with a quote in this direction: “The only idea common to all usages of the term ‘institution’ is that of some sort of establishment of relative permanence of a distinctly social sort”.

However, over the past two decades there has been growing interest in how institutions actually come to be (DiMaggio, 1988, 1991), how institutions change and become deinstitutionalised (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002; Holm, 1995; Leblebici, Salancik, Copay, & King, 1991; Kamal A. Munir, 2005; Oliver, 1991, 1992; Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2003; Seo & Creed, 2002)
and of the role of actors in these processes. Scholars interested in these things have studied what they call institutional entrepreneurship and institutional entrepreneurs (Garud, Hardy, & Maguire, 2007; Hardy & Maguire, 2008; Maguire, 2007; Maguire, Hardy, & Lawrence, 2004; K.A Munir & Phillips, 2005) where institutional entrepreneurship refers to the “activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who leverage resources to create new institutions or to transform existing ones” (Maguire, et al., 2004:657). Lately, this curiosity has also extended its focus not only to how institutions rise and fall, but also to how they are maintained, something that previously had been neglected within institutional theory (Jarzabkowski, et al., 2009; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006), probably because of the inherent assumption of institutions as being self-reproducing and permanent; permanency being a core element in many definitions of institutions. Lawrence and colleagues (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence, et al., 2009, 2011) refer to these change and maintenance practices as institutional work; a term they use to incorporate how actors are involved in creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions. In their words, institutional work is “the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (2006:215). This framework, these authors argue, can help us study the recursive relationship between institutions and actions, namely how institutions affect action at the same time as action affects institutions.

I make use of the term institutional work in this study since it also encompasses the activity of actively maintaining and upholding institutions. This aspect is largely missing from the institutional entrepreneurship concept as defined above. (However Hardy and Maguire (2008:198) do argue that “institutional entrepreneurs can also work to maintain or to disrupt and tear down institutions, although there is far less research in these areas as compared to studies of institution building and institutional change”). The institutional work concept also highlights not only the highly visible and dramatic institutional work efforts that much research on institutional entrepreneurship focuses, but also the work that is “nearly invisible and often mundane, as in the day-to-day adjustments, adaptations, and compromises of actors attempting to maintain institutional arrangements” (Lawrence, et al., 2009:1). It steers the focus away from only successful cases of institutional change and urges researchers to also study the daily work engaged in by individual and collective

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7 The stream of institutional work is in this sense a “return” to some of the things that “old” institutionalists were interested in, such as the focus on agency, politics and interests. However, if old institutionalists focused on what went on inside the organisation, the renewed interest incorporates “new” institutionalists’ focus on the organisational field.

8 Some institutionalists have problems with the use of the term “actor” since they argue that it connotes too heavily an understanding of individuals and organisations as rational, calculating and free of institutional constraints (J.W. Meyer, 1996). For example, Meyer et al. (1994) use the concept “social unit” to refer to individuals, organisations, states and others. I however see in the word actor not only a subject that can act, but also the connotation to actors in theatre and films, that may be free to act, but only within the limits of the script to which they are bound.
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actors, which may not lead to the desired outcomes. In this sense, the proponents of an institutional work perspective on agency also wish to escape the unfortunate overemphasis on the rational and “heroic” dimension of institutional entrepreneurs, which they argue has plagued studies of institutional entrepreneurship. By looking at institutional work in all its forms and not only that work that leads to change, one might get a more nuanced and truthful picture of the work behind institutional processes.

I now describe the three forms of institutional work as conceptualised by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), namely practices that aim at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions.

Doing institutional work9

Creating institutions

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) define, based on a number of empirical studies using an institutional framework, three broad categories of institutional work. These categories match the general life cycle of institutions as described by Scott (2001) and others: creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions. The first of these, creating institutions, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) argue has received the most attention by institutional researchers, especially so by researchers interested in institutional entrepreneurship. Here, has been studied how institutions come to be, and who is involved in this process. The authors divide the various forms of institutional creation into three broad sets of work. The first one is overtly political work in which actors reconstruct the rules, rights to property and boundaries that define rights to various material sources. Such forms of work they call “advocacy”, “vesting” and “defining”. The second form is work that reconfigures actors’ belief systems; such forms of work are called “constructing identities”, “changing normative associations” and “constructing normative networks. The third form of work is practices aimed at altering abstract categorisations and in that way shift boundaries of meaning. These forms of work Lawrence and Suddaby call “mimicry”, “theorising” and “educating”.

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) conclude that institutional work aimed at creating institutions can both lead to original and new institutions coming about and create institutionalised rules, practices and technologies that complement and parallel existing institutionalised arrangements. The actors involved in creating institutions can be both large established actors with central positions in the organisational field as well as smaller, less powerful and more marginal actors in the periphery of a field. The various forms of

9 If you want to read some empirical examples of creation, maintenance and disruption of institutions, in the appendix at the end of the thesis are illustrations of Lawrence and Suddaby’s forms of institutional work, taken from the context of this study.
institutional creation work that these actors choose to engage in are usually
different depending on which positions the actors are in, and what resources –
financially, discursive, coercive, legitimacy – are at their disposal.

**Maintaining institutions**

The new stream within institutional theory and its renewed interest in agency,
power, language, practices and meaning is also encouraging institutional
scholars to redirect their attention to one of the assumptions about institutions,
which so far has been surprisingly neglected, namely institutional persistence.
Scott (2001:122) declares:

> How institutions persist, once created, is an understudied phenomenon. Our current understanding of social structures is that their persistence is not to be taken for granted. It requires continuing effort – both “talking the talk” and “walking the talk” – if structures are not to erode or dissolve. The conventional term for persistence, inertia, seems on reflection to be too passive and nonproblematic to be an accurate aid to guide studies of this topic.

Even though most institutional theorists seem to take persistence for granted and regard inertia as the natural state of affairs, there are a few whose opinions differ. Zucker (1988) argues that entropy (the tendency of social systems to become disorganised and dissolve) rather than inertia is really the normal state of things. Theorists such as Giddens (1984) argue that stability needs to be actively maintained and that it cannot persist without ongoing “structuration”. He highlights “the extent to which the persistence of rules, norms, and beliefs requires actors to actively monitor ongoing social activities and continuously attend to maintaining the linkages with the wider social-cultural environment. Structure persists only to the extent that actors are able to continuously produce and reproduce it” (Scott, 2001:110).

The work of actors in maintaining institutions is the second category of institutional work that Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) distinguish. They argue that how institutions are maintained has attracted much less attention from institutional theorists than has how they are created and changed. From their understanding, even though the very idea of institution is closely related to the automatic mechanisms of social control that make institutions to a large extent reproduce themselves, very few institutions are so solid and have such powerful reproductive mechanisms that they need no ongoing maintenance work. Institutional maintenance work is thus about how institutions are reproduced and who are engaged in this work. Lawrence (2008) calls for studies that take seriously the “janitors and mechanics in institutional theory” – the actors whose work it is to maintain institutions.
2. From institutions to institutional work

Perhaps the most distinctive and fundamental element of an institutional approach to understanding organizations and organizational life is an understanding of behaviour and belief as conditioned by enduring structures, practices, rules, beliefs and norms. Institutionalized social elements are largely understood as robust, enduring phenomena which provide the context for action – the background against which local politics, negotiations, and choice occur. What is missing from this image is a recognition of the work done by actors in order to maintain institutions as such. (Lawrence, 2008:189 – 190)

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) argue that maintenance work generally aims at supporting, repairing and recreating the mechanisms that ensure compliance with institutionalised rules and logics. They categorise this form of work into two broad types: first is “enabling”, “policing” and “deterring”, which ensure compliance to the set in place rule systems. Second is “valourising/demonising”, “mythologising” and “embedding and routinising”, which is about practices that reproduce existing norms and beliefs.

Based on their investigation of empirical studies of institutional maintenance, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) conclude that maintenance work can be ordered on a continuum of “comprehensibility”. They further argue that enabling, policing and deterring work seem to be carried out by actors that are highly aware of what they are doing and of the purpose and the influence that their work has on the maintenance of the institution. Towards the other end of the continuum is work aimed at reproducing existing norms and beliefs: valourising/demonising, mythologising, embedding and routinising, in which the actors engaged seem less “aware” of the purpose of their practices and the eventual outcomes of these. The authors also conclude that maintenance work is something different to just stability or an absence of change; rather, institutional maintenance work requires considerable effort and often comes about as an effect of changes in the organisational field or in institutional pressures:

That is, in order to maintain institutions, actors must cope with the entrance of new members into the organization or the field, the evolution of the field in new and unexpected directions, and changes in pan-institutional factors such as technology and demographics. /.../ Understanding how institutions maintain themselves [or rather are maintained, my comment], thus, must focus on understanding how actors are able to effect processes of persistence and stability in the context of upheaval and change. (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006:234)

In the public service TV field at the time of this study, a number of changes were ongoing. Programme makers from the commercial realm of the field were
entering into collaborations with SVT programme makers with new forms of financing being introduced. Political ideas of marketisation, new regulations concerning the independent production of public service TV programming and new technology were transforming the field.

Disrupting institutions

Institutional theory with its associated concept of organisational fields proposes that there often are actors within fields whose interests are not served by the current arrangements, who when they have the opportunity to do so try to disrupt existing institutional arrangements (Wooten & Hoffman, 2008). This is in line with Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of fields where their very foundation is based on a premise of ongoing struggle and power play (even though it might not always be overt) (Bourdieu, 1990, 1993). As Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) conceptualise institutional work aimed at disrupting institutions, it involves attacking or undermining the mechanisms that lead members to comply with institutional arrangements. They found three sorts of institutional work: “disconnecting sanctions”, “disassociating moral foundations” and “undermining assumptions and beliefs”.

As in the case of the other forms of institutional work – creating and maintaining – disrupting institutions can also be carried out by both actors central to the field and well versed in the institutional rules as well as more peripheral actors. These actors are engaged in disrupting work that aims at “redefining, recategorizing, reconfiguring, abstracting, problematizing and, generally, manipulating the social and symbolic boundaries that constitute institutions” (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006:238). Social boundaries are borders that refer to locations of an economic, physical or political nature; symbolic boundaries are of moral, cultural and socio-economic kinds.

So far, I have described the notion of institutional work and its inspiration from practice-based studies, as well as Lawrence and Suddaby’s (2006) conceptualisation of three different forms of institutional work. I now turn to a couple of issues in relation to the ideas put forward within the institutional work literature.

Issues in relation to institutional work

In this last section of the theory chapter I will discuss a couple of issues which I argue become important in relation to the ideas of institutional work. The first issue centres on how the inspiration from practice-based studies has put agency in the forefront of institutional work analysis and on how to strike a balance between the extremes of the “hypermuscular entrepreneur” on one hand and the “cultural dope” on the other. Second, I elaborate on the importance of remembering that institutions as practices are still symbolic, in the sense that
practices become infused with meaning because they take place within a
symbolic system, and that this symbolic context should not be forgotten in an
institutional analysis. Third, I discuss how institutional durability has been
understood and conceptualised and how this can be connected to institutional
work, since inherent in institutional work is the idea that actors not only change
institutions but also actively work to maintain and thus stabilise them. Finally, I
end the chapter with a discussion of the question of unintended consequences
and intentionality as it is conceptualised in the institutional work literature, and
some concerns I have regarding this.

**Actors and agency**

The interest in institutional work – how both agency and structure, both
stability and change can be understood from an institutional perspective – is by
many of its supporters a movement that aims to reconnect institutional theory
with its social constructionist “micro processes” roots (Czarniawska, 2008b;
Garud, et al., 2007; Hardy & Maguire, 2008; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Zilber,
2008). It also aims to reintroduce agency, interests, power and meaning as
important concepts in the analysis of institutions (Lawrence, 2008; Zilber,
2008). By taking power and the everyday social construction of reality seriously,
it has also invited into institutionalism scholars interested in how language and
narrative action play a vital role in actors’ ongoing (re)construction and
maintenance of institutional arrangements.

Most prominent, however, is the renewed interest in the role of actors in
creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions and organisational fields. This
focus on action urges institutional theorists not only to study how institutions
influence actors and actions – which used to be the main interest in institutional
theory – but also to ask how actors and actions influence institutions. Much of
the inspiration for the interest in understanding the interrelationships between
agency and structure comes from research within the sociology of practice
(Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Giddens, 1984; Schatzki, 2005,
2006; Schatzki, et al., 2001) where the “duality of structure” (Giddens, 1984) is
in focus. This theoretical tradition sees practices as “embodied, materially
mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical
understanding” (Schatzki et al., 2001:2). Practices are organised human
activities that consist of three dimensions: “understanding of how to do things,
rules, and teleoafffective structure” (Schatzki, 2005:471). Rules are the explicit
guidelines that prescribe and instruct what is to be carried out or said, or how
things are to be. Teleoafffective structures are the range of goals, projects, uses
(of things) and emotions that are conceived of as acceptable or approved of for
those taking part in the practice. The sociology of practice, or the wider term of
practice-based studies, is also an inspiration for institutional work in the sense
that this stream of thought can help students of institutionalism reconceptualise
the often taken-for-granted notion of levels in organisational studies: micro
(what people say and do), meso (routines and organisations) and macro (institutions) (Miettinen, et al., 2009). Studying practices and “what doing the practices does” implies that practice and structure are constitutive of each other and must be studied as such.

Within an institutional work perspective, researchers aim to dig deeper into institutionalisation processes: they are not only interested in how institutions transform and trace the outcomes and effects of institutional change, they are also interested in “the work of actors as they attempt to shape those processes, as they work to create, maintain and disrupt institutions” (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006:219). According to Zilber (2008), institutional theory should thus study the local and particular, the conflictual and the ongoing, and be context sensitive. It should seek “to grasp not the universal laws that generate social practice, but the social practices that generate universal laws” (Dobbin quoted in Zilber, 2008:163). This stream’s focus on agency does not, however, imply that the concept of institutional work will take us back to the “rational actor model”, as argued by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006:219):

This does not mean that the study of institutional work is intended to move back to an understanding of actors as independent, autonomous agents capable of fully realizing their interests through strategic action; instead, a practice perspective highlights the creative and knowledgeable work of actors which may or may not achieve its desired ends and which interacts with existing social and technological structures in unintended an unexpected ways.

It is important to emphasise the last words here, unintended and unexpected, since institutional transformation is often such a complex social process that it ought to be impossible for actors, be it single individuals or organisational actors of various kinds, to control and oversee the outcomes of such a process. The embeddedness (Garud, et al., 2007; Holm, 1995; Seo & Creed, 2002) of institutional work ensures that this process will be filled with contradictory logics and multiple forces, which over time will lead to results that are hard to foresee for the actors involved in the institutional work. This is also what Hardy and Maguire (2008:213) point out when cautioning us against attributing too much individual and intentional agency to any institutional actor:

...there are dangers in the recent groundswell of interest in institutional entrepreneurship. While it responds to the recognized need for institutional theorists to move beyond the constraining effects of institutions and to put agency back into institutional analyses of organizations, there is a risk that the pendulum will swing too far in the other direction – celebrating heroic ‘entrepreneurs’ and great ‘leaders’ who bring about change intentionally, strategically and
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creatively – and in doing so, reify fields, actors and the process of change itself.

Powell and Colyvas (2008) also call for a middle ground between the hyper-muscularity of institutional entrepreneurship and the individuals trapped in institutions – “cultural dopes” in Garfinkel’s (1967) wording. “Rather than perspectives that either highlight habitual replication or savvy change agents, we stress that most micro-motives are fairly mundane, aimed at interpretations, alignment, and muddling through. And, as individuals and groups engage in such actions and resist others’ attempts as well, they may well transform logics and alter identities” (Powell & Colyvas, 2008:277).

Institutions as practices and symbolic systems

For institutional studies inspired by a sociology of practice follows an ontological assumption regarding the nature of institutions: they are located in the sets of practices in which people engage, rather than emerging from those practises and existing at some “other” (macro) level (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Democracy, for example, resides in politicians campaigning, journalists reporting on political matters and polling the opinions of voters, of citizens lining up at the voting stations and putting a piece of paper with the name of their candidates and parties in an envelope. At the same time, as Friedland and Alford (1991:249-250) note, institutions should be understood as symbolic systems as well as material practices:

The buying and selling of commodities is simultaneously a symbolic and an instrumental behavior. Similarly, love is concretized through forms of sexual interaction ranging from marriage to specific forms of courtship and sexual stimulation. Marriage or lovemaking are both symbolic and instrumental behaviours. Democracy is concretized through voting, which is both a way in which people ritually enact the symbolic system and a means by which they attempt to control those who rule them. Or God is concretized through prayer or other ritual behaviours in church. /.../ This does not mean that when one buys, makes love, votes, or prays that property, love, democracy or God really exists or really obtains as a result of those behaviours. It means that those behaviors make sense to those who enact the behaviour only in relation to those transrational symbolic systems and that those symbolic systems only make sense in terms of the behavior. To believe that “the people rule”, “a nation decides”, “love conquers all”, “the market is efficient”, is no more rational than to hold that “God watches over us all”.

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This means that in order to make sense of institutions and institutional practices, one must take into consideration the symbolic context in which they play out: the very context that makes these practices meaningful (Schütz, 1967) to the actors who engage in them. In this study, the practices of collaboratively making public service TV should be understood in a context where a cultural logic of public service TV and a commercial logic of advertising-funded TV co-exist. In the cultural logic lies ideas of informing and educating the citizenry and of giving them a varied diet of information, education and entertainment so that viewers can be well-functioning citizens in a democratic society. In this is implied that viewers do not always know what they need or want, and that it is the public service TV’s task to lead public taste. Much of what programme makers are doing in this study can only make sense within this symbolic system. Another competing logic is that of commercial TV, where the idea is to give the audience what it wants in order to give the advertisers – the customers – what they want. Here, viewers are thought of as ratings rather than as citizens, and the task of TV programmes is to feed the public appetite. In this study, these two logics are both present (albeit to varying degrees) for the programme makers entrusted with the task of making programmes for the public service TV broadcaster. It is within this symbolic system that the programme makers’ practices become meaningful to them, at the same time as this meaning is reified when they engage in practices of making collaborative public service TV.

The importance of the symbolic properties of institutions has been stressed by many institutional theorists, who have also argued that empirical studies focusing on the ideational aspects of institutional phenomena have largely been absent (Hasselbladh & Kallinikos, 2000; R. E. Meyer, 2008; Powell & Colyvas, 2008; Zilber, 2002). Powell and Colyvas (2008:277) state:

Institutions are reproduced through the everyday activities of individuals. Members of organizations engage in daily practices, discover puzzles or anomalies in their work, problematize these questions and develop answers to them by theorizing them. In turn, participants ascribe meaning to these theories and, in so doing, develop and reproduce taken-for-granted understandings.

Hence, institutions are not only symbolic systems or material practices – they are both. The notion that institutions reside in the practices people engage in when enacting these institutions does not mean that actions take place outside the institutional order within an organisational field. The whole point of institutions is that they provide the structure for action, and that any action taking place happens within this structure. Even though action is both possible and constantly ongoing, institutions provide the very basis for this action (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). However, and this is the point from the institutional work perspective, actors can, intentionally and otherwise, draw on the institutional rules in the work to create, maintain and disrupt the institutional
In order to understand how this work is carried out, we need to understand not only the practice part of institutions, but also the ideational aspect of institutions, which is constructed and reconstructed when people enact institutions. Friedland and Alford (1991:251) describe this as follows:

Institutions constrain not only the ends to which their behaviour should be directed, but the means by which those ends are achieved. They provide individuals with vocabularies of motives and with a sense of self. They generate not only that which is valued, but the rules by which it is calibrated and distributed. Institutions set the limits on the very nature of rationality, and by implication, of individuality. Nonetheless, individuals, groups, and organizations try to use institutional orders to their own advantage.

In some settings and under certain conditions, actors can work within their institutional arrangements and draw on institutional logics in their efforts at both changing their conditions and maintaining them. In effect, even from inside the “iron cage” of institutions prisoners can work on transforming and maintaining the cage, something that has been called the “paradox of embedded agency” (Battilana & D’Aunno, 2009; Seo & Creed, 2002). How this happens and the role of actors in this process is what the stream of institutional work aims at studying. However, even though there is much merit to the ideas of institutional work as put forward by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) and their followers, I find two issues somewhat problematic. These will be elaborated on at the end of this chapter. But first I look into what has been written about the conditions under which institutions become durable as well as under which conditions they become receptive to change.

**Durability of institutions and institutional work**

Institutions are defined in different ways by different authors, but most institutionalists seem to agree on at least this: that institutions are something relatively durable and stable, or as Zucker (1977:83) quoted Hughes, that they have a “relative permanence of a distinctly social sort”. As discussed earlier, the durability of institutions seems to have been taken for granted by institutionalists (Scott, 2001). Even so, some scholars have focused on how institutions become durable and on the role of actors in making institutions stable as well as changing them. Next, I discuss what these authors tell us about institutions and durability.

Clemens and Cook (1999) discuss how institutions endure and change. They argue that in order to come to a better understanding of how institutions become durable as well as how they change, one should disaggregate institutions into schemas and resources (which is similar to Giddens’ (1984)
ideas on structuration, where structure and agency are interlinked parts of any social structure). Schemas, in their argumentation, can differ in their mutability, namely how much leeway and agency they afford actors. Some institutions provide more freedom for actors to act within an institutional arrangement: for example, can conflicting institutional logics mean that there are several ways to act in a certain situation. “The presence of alternatives lessens the institutional determination of action while also facilitating innovation through recombination,” as Clemens and Cook (1999:448) argue. Schemas can also be infused with internal contradictions, since “[s]chemas and scripts for behaviour may be appropriate in one situation, yet dysfunctional in the new conditions brought about by following the script” (Clemens and Cook, 1999:449). There are also situations in which multiple institutions exist and create tensions for the actor. In settings where several institutions compete, or no institutional schema is well established, actions become less institutionalised and predictable. Clemens and Cook summarise their discussion by stating that institutional change will be most likely to happen in settings where actors perceive the rules and prescriptions to be optional, where there are a multitude of actors with different backgrounds (“social heterogeneity is high”) and where social networks are fragmented and cut across different fields (Rao, Morrill, & Zald, 2000). This means that institutional fields in which actors are not subject to a lot of other thoughts and ideas, and where actors are much alike each other, ought to be stable, and thus institutional reproduction more reliable. Clemens and Cook’s (1999) discussion is in line with those of Battilana et al. (2009) and Battilana and D’Aunno (2009), who conclude that enabling conditions for institutional change are field characteristics and an actor’s social positions in the organisational field (actors being organisational, collective and individual). Jolts or crisis in a field, such as regulatory, technical, political and economic changes, can make room for new actors and/or new ideas, and make old institutions seem obsolete. When it comes to the positions in a field, institutional studies (Leblebici et al., 1991; Clemens & Cook, 1999) show that actors that are most likely to engage in change efforts seem to be low status organisations in the periphery of a field. This is because they most often do not benefit from the current arrangements and have less to lose from deviating from the institutions (in the forms of sanctions and loss of legitimacy). Actors at the borders of organisational fields or those organisations, collectives and individuals that are embedded in multiple fields also seem more likely to engage in institutional work (Battilana & D’Aunno, 2009; Battilana, et al., 2009; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). In line with this reasoning, high status actors located in the centre of a field seem prone to work to preserve the status quo (Leblebici, et al., 1991). (However, as Greenwood and Suddaby (2006) show, change can be initiated from the centre of an organisational field by the elite if they are subject to contradictory institutional logics.) The active and ongoing work to maintain the institutional order (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), or in a sense to make institutions durable, has just recently been spurring interest in the
2. From institutions to institutional work

Institutional literature (Hirsch & Berriss, 2009; Quinn Tank & Washington, 2009; Zilber, 2009), something I discussed earlier in this chapter.

The political sociologists Streeck and Thelen (2005) discuss the literature on formal institutions and change, and argue that much of the institutional literature in the political science field is misleading in its writings on institutional durability. In fact, Streeck and Thelen (2005) argue that in many cases scholars have seen stability where in reality there has been a slow, gradual transformation of institutions that current theories have failed to grasp and explain. These authors argue that in order to understand how institutions seem stable “on the surface” when their workings are not, one must look into the specific context and particularities of the particular institution. If one wants to understand the mechanisms of institutional durability and change, one must move beyond the theoretical models that draw a sharp line between institutional stability and institutional change.

In chapter 10 of this thesis, I return to these ideas about institutional durability and transformation as interrelated when I discuss the theoretical implications of this study for institutional work. I end this chapter with a discussion of two somewhat problematic aspects of the institutional work perspective: the question of unintended consequences and intentionality.

The question of unintended consequences and intentionality in institutional work

When I became acquainted with the stream of institutional work, it seemed to address some of the problems that I (and many others) had with institutional theory up to that point. I appreciated the return to the social constructionist roots of institutional theory and the focus on actors’ practices as foundational of institutions. I also liked Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) call for studies of how institutions are maintained, something that had been more or less taken for granted within institutional theory. But even though much of what Lawrence and Suddaby argued in their conceptualisation of institutional work makes a lot of sense to me, I also have problems with some of it. My two main concerns are the a priori distinction between practices aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions and the question of the intentionality of institutional work.

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) argue that the three forms of institutional work are three distinct and inherently different sets of practices. For example, is the disruption of institutions something different to the creation of new ones, even though they do acknowledge that the development of new institutions certainly is an important way in which existing institutions are disrupted? In their 2009 book on institutional work, Lawrence et al. address some of the concerns that have been raised about the unintended consequences of institutional work, as well as the intentionality and degree of purposiveness of such work. They acknowledge that institutional work can, and probably often
will, have unintended consequences that the actors engaged in institutional
work can not foresee. “Institutional work aimed at creating institutions may
create institutions, but it might also fail to do so; it might affect unanticipated
institutions in unintended ways, including disrupting those institutions or
creating ones very different from those originally conceived of by the actors
involved” (Lawrence, et al., 2009:11). Nevertheless, they stick to their
conceptualisation of “creating, maintaining and disrupting” institutions as three
distinct practices with different activities connected to them – even though they
might result in unintended consequences. These authors’ main concern is the
focus on activities instead of accomplishments, which they argue will help remedy
some of the weaknesses that have plagued studies of institutional change so far.
“Because it points to the study of activities rather than accomplishment,
success as well as failure, acts of resistance and of transformation, the concept
of institutional work may contribute to a move away from a concentrated,
heroic, and successful conception of institutional agency” (Lawrence, et al.,
2009:11).

Lawrence et al. (2009) also problematise the conceptualisation of
institutional work as “purposive action”. Does institutional work always have to
be intentional? Surely, there are practices that in the long-term lead to
institutional change or maintenance but which are performed by actors with no
such intensions? They use the example of the speaking of the English language
in a predominantly English language country, since it serves to reproduce the
dominance of that language. Even though this in one sense could be construed
as institutional work, they argue that researchers interested in institutional work
would rather focus their attention on the institutional work in itself and not on
the outcomes of such practices. This will by definition, argue the authors, steer
interest towards the intentionality of those practices “both the degree to which
it is connected to the institutions in which it is embedded, and the degree to
which it is motivated to affect those same or other institutions” (Lawrence et
al., 2009:14). In their 2011 article, they continue to stress that students of
institutional work should focus on the work that involves “the myriad, day-to-
day equivocal instances of agency that, although aimed at effecting the
institutional order, represent a complex mélange of forms of agency –
successful and not, simultaneously radical and conservative, strategic and
emotional, full of compromises, and rife with unintended consequences”
(Lawrence, et al., 2011:52).

and Lawrence et al. (2011) discuss various forms of intentionality. These range
from a future-oriented, strategic sort of intentionality to more “practical” forms
of intentionality where actors when coping with immediate situations and even
out of habit within institutional arrangements work on these very arrangements.
All these forms of intentional agency should be of interest for studies of
institutional work, as also the less strategic and conscious forms of agency will
surely have a bearing on institutional arrangements. These authors argue that by
examining these more practical forms of institutional work, we can also get a better understanding of the complexities and full range of work aimed at institutions.

In this study, I have considered the issues related to the concept of institutional work discussed so far and incorporated what can be learned from this critique. Hence, it is informed by the framework of institutions and institutional work as described in this chapter. In chapter 9, I interpret the programme makers’ practices of making programmes together as being acts of institutional work and conceptualise what these streams of institutional work entail. In chapter 10, this discussion is connected to the idea that institutions are (institutionalised) solutions to collective problems and to how this idea can increase our understanding of institutional work. But first there is a presentation of the Swedish public service TV field, followed by a methods chapter (chapter 4) and chapters 5–8 that describe the empirical study of collaborative public service TV production.
3. Public service TV in Sweden

In this chapter the Swedish public service TV field and its institutional arrangements are described. This field provides a context and a setting for the empirical study of programme makers’ collaborative production of public service TV programmes. But it is not only a setting in which this study plays out. It is also part of the institutional structure that the programme makers’ institutional work are directed at, and as such it is an outcome of previous institutional work as well as a “target” that future institutional work can be directed at. So, when the programme makers talk about the work of producing collaborative public service TV, and tell stories about this, they do so within a certain institutional arrangement, at the same time as they engage in practices which can effect this very arrangement. The idea with this chapter is therefore to give an understanding of what the public service TV field in Sweden is like. This chapter thus provides a background and context for the rest of this dissertation.

The chapter starts with a historical overview of public service and its origins and ideology. Then the contemporary debate about public service TV in Sweden is discussed and the main critique of it is elaborated on. After this the Swedish public service TV broadcaster SVT is described as well as the Swedish commercial TV industry containing both broadcasters and production companies. I then describe collaborative production of public service TV programmes and the various reasons for why SVT is engaging in these forms of production. In the end of the chapter there is a brief overview of the regulations governing public service TV and SVT in Sweden.

The times they are a changing...

In the past couple of decades, public service TV in Europe has faced in-depth changes as a result of technological, deregulatory, political and social change processes. Many European public service broadcasters now find themselves in a new situation, with an ongoing transformation of the technology for the distribution and production of TV, increasing competition from commercial broadcasters and deregulation in favour of commercial media operators (Johannes Bardoe & d’Haenens, 2008; Jo Bardoe & Lowe, 2007; Hesmondhalgh, 2007). Even though public service TV has never been an unquestioned phenomenon, the past 20 years have seen growing criticism towards it as an idea and public service broadcasters (Johannes Bardoe & d’Haenens, 2008). Deregulation and liberalisation in other public services (such
as health care, post and telecommunications, public transport) as a result of a political turn towards neo-liberalism and marketisation (du Gay, 2004; March, 1995; Spicer & Fleming, 2007) has also put pressure on the production and distribution of television and radio (Picard, 2006; Syvertsen, 2003).

But before I go into the current state of public service TV in Sweden and the public service TV broadcaster SVT, I provide some background information about the history and ideology behind public service TV.

**Public service TV: History**

Since the beginning of radio broadcasting, and the extension into TV broadcasting, the field of broadcasting has been much more publicly controlled, in terms of both ownership and legislation, than have other media industries such as newspapers and film. According to Hesmondhalgh (2007:111), there are three broad reasons for this: an understanding of telecommunications as a public utility, an understanding of broadcasting as a limited, national resource and an understanding of broadcasting as powerful and therefore in need of control.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a new technology of telecommunication, such as telegraphs and telephones, were in most countries seen as something that the states ought to make available to all people. These new inventions were deemed important in the work of fostering a sense of national community and identity, as well as a means of economic development. When the technology to transmit radio developed, it became clear that it could be used for more purposes than just communicating one-to-one (as in the early days of military and amateur use). In many countries, such as Sweden, control of the radiowaves was put in the hands of a publicly owned and controlled organisation, which was given a monopoly on radio broadcasting. This solved the problem of spectrum scarcity (the limited number of frequencies on which one could transmit radio). The use of radio broadcasts as a mass medium instead of a one-to-one communication technology also made its social power evident, both in terms of its commercial potential (to advertise and promote commercial goods and services) and political potential (to promote ideas and ideologies). The public ownership and control of radio, and later TV, ensured the state control over this powerful technology. In Sweden, powerful actors also lobbied for a state broadcasting monopoly, such as the newspaper owners who did not want a commercial radio system since that would entail competition for advertising revenues (Björkegren, 2001; Engblom & Wormbs, 2007; Gatarski, 2008; Hadenius & Weibull, 1978; Hadenius, et al., 2008).

In Scandinavia, broadcasting systems were modelled on the UK public service idea, which meant:

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10 This was true in democratic nations as well as in dictatorships.
3. **Public service TV in Sweden**

...the organization of national radio broadcasters as civil society institutions that would maintain arm’s-length relationships with both the state and commercial business interests. The national organizational models vary somewhat in detail, but all Scandinavian broadcasters were inspired by the principles of the BBC of information and education and, to a lesser extent, entertainment – all with a marked national emphasis. (Lund & Edelvold Berg, 2009:20)

In this way, the guiding principles of public service in Sweden came to uphold a distance from both commercial and political interests and programmes with a focus on informational and educational content that would enhance and uphold a national identity (Findahl, 1999). What this entailed more specifically, and the ideology behind public service TV, is elaborated on next.

**Public service TV: Ideology**

“That there is no standard definition of the meaning of public service is an old truth in the field of media research,” writes Norwegian media professor Syvertsen in a special issue of the journal *Nordicom Review* devoted to public service broadcasting (Syvertsen, 1999:5). In light of this, it might seem paradoxical that the Swedish debate on public service TV and SVT constantly refers to such things as “public service values” and the “public service mission”. During 60 years of broadcasting history, no single understanding of public service has crystallised (Syvertsen, 1999; Zsiga, 2008). This does not mean, however, that the concept has stopped being used. On the contrary, it seems as though the increased competition in Nordic television markets in the 1990s has given the concept an even more central position (Bolin, 2004; Lindén, 2000). Sondergaard (1999) argues that the concept has always been used as a political weapon in order to legitimate (primarily)11 public service broadcasters’ operations. In Syvertsen’s (1999:5) words: “By attaching concrete and significant privileges to the status of “public service broadcaster” without specifying what they mean by the term, authorities have elicited a battle of rhetoric, the winners of which are awarded gilt-edged concessions, a share of licence fee revenues, and politicians’ blessing”.

Even so, many are the advocates of public service broadcasting who have summarised the main ideas behind this institution (Blumler, 1992; Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Nissen, 2006; Tracey, 1998) – ideas that to a great extent have guided the operations of SVT over the years. The key features of what is usually described as public service broadcasting, as enacted by the BBC and Scandinavian public service broadcasters, include (Hesmondhalgh, 2007):

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11 The Swedish “hybrid” channel TV4 did, however, also use the public service concept in its presentation of the channel as a “commercial public service”. Lately, however, it has abandoned that slogan and now call itself “a commercial quality channel” (Bolin, 2004).
• **Accountability to the public**, via political representatives and by other means that go beyond market forces and the power exercised by the public as the “customer”.

• **Public financing** by fees, where all profits must be fed back into the public service broadcasters’ operations.

• **Implications for content**, meaning rules regarding balance and impartiality in reporting, serving minority group interests, educational and informational programming,

• **Universal service**, in the sense of reaching all the population in a country by serving and reflecting all geographical regions of a country and of catering to all sociographic groups in order to promote a diversity of views and voices.

• **Address the audience as citizens** rather than as consumers. This entails providing a range of programmes of a mixed and pluralistic nature and assuming a responsibility for the “cultural wealth and diversity of a nation” as well as for “the health of the political process and for the quality of the public discourse generated within it” (Blumler, 1992:12).

Picard (2006:183) summarises the above points as: “The basic mission of public service broadcasters … is to serve the cultural, social, and political needs of their audiences, to provide a common universal service that helps foster national identity, and to create the means for the aspirations and concerns of citizens to be conveyed and acted upon in society”.

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3. Public service TV in Sweden

Those curious about how SVT defines public service can read the following on its web page:

**Public service – a democratic idea**

One of the thoughts behind the concept “public service” is that all citizens in a democratic country should have access to impartial and many-sided information in a number of different areas. SVT thus thinks of the audience not only as viewers but also as citizens of Sweden.

SVT shall mirror the surrounding world from many different perspectives. As a SVT viewer you shall be able to inform yourself about the events in the country and the world around so that you can form an opinion of your own. /.../

Public service as a concept first appeared in the USA but had its breakthrough in the UK in the 19th century. It quickly became popular in the whole of Europe and became the norm for radio and TV on this side of the Atlantic. In its country of origin, USA, commercial media instead became the norm. One has not in any country been able to translate “public service” to an all encompassing term, so we use the English expression.

Public service in Sweden started with radio. In 1956 came SVT, which now is television with five national channels and SVT Europe.

Public service in Sweden is financed by a TV fee. This is allocated between all the public service companies (SVT 60% (TV), SR 35% (Radio) and UR 5% (Educational programming)). In Sweden there are laws regulating public service: these are among others the Radio and TV Act, the Broadcasting Charter and the Freedom of Speech Act.

**Figure 3.1 The public service TV idea as presented by SVT on its web page**

**Public service TV: Critique**

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, public service TV has never been an uncriticized nor unproblematic institution, and as Bardoe and d’Haenens (2008) among others argue, the advent of commercial TV in Europe has made the critique both louder as well as added to the critical arguments against public service TV. In order to provide an overview of the kinds of criticisms levelled against public service TV in the Swedish context, I present a short overview of my understanding of the situation. In my view, three distinct criticisms can be mapped out according to two opposing poles: 1) cultural liberalism (low
culture) vs. cultural conservatism (high culture) and 2) economic (neo-)liberalism vs. economic conservatism.

The cultural and economic liberalist arguments against public service TV are of two major sorts (even though proponents often combine both arguments):

- The Market Distortion argument
- The Elitist and Controlling argument.

The Market Distortion argument is often used by those with an economic interest in commercial broadcasting, such as commercial broadcasters (and more recently media houses that wish to circumscribe public service broadcasters’ operations on new media platforms, such as the Internet and mobile) and their lobbying forces. The main argument is that the mandatory licence funding gives SVT an unfair competitive advantage in the marketplace and that these resources enable SVT to attract audiences that would otherwise use the commercial operators’ products and services. Proponents of the Market Distortion argument are often in favour of a public service TV that only provides the kind of programming not provided by market forces (e.g. highbrow cultural programmes as well as minority and children’s programming). Examples of Swedish proponents of this view are the industry organisation of Swedish newspapers, Tidningsutgivarna, and Jan Scherman, the CEO of the TV4 broadcasting group, SVT’s biggest commercial competitor.

The Elitist and Controlling argument criticises public service TV for its content aimed at elite groups (most visibly the cultural elite) and produced by the cultural elite (the programme makers and managers at SVT). This argumentation is based on what they see as an elitist and patriarchal view of the audience inherent in the public service mission, which is not about giving the audience what it wants, but rather what the elite programme makers think that the audience needs (“as if the audience is not competent enough to decide for themselves”). The advocates of the Elitist and Controlling argument often associate the cultural elite with a social/ist/left-wing political orientation, based on the idea that most cultural workers and journalists have a left-wing political ideology. This camp often portrays SVT as a propaganda instrument for left wing politics. Examples of proponents of this view is the book by Anders Borg, currently minister of finance in the Swedish right-wing government, called The theory of overprotection – a critique of the public service ideology (Förmynderiets teori – en kritik av public service ideologin), the neo-liberal think-tank Timbro and any random neo-liberal blogger in the blogosphere.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the cultural and economic conservative critique against public service TV can be summarised as:

- The Over-Populist argument
3. Public service TV in Sweden

Proponents of the Over-Populist argument think that public service TV has gone too far in the commercial and populist direction and tries too hard to imitate the conduct and programmes of commercial broadcasters. In their understanding, public service TV should aspire to educate and enlighten citizens without concern for audience ratings or stoop to the populist vulgarity of reality soaps or other commercial TV inventions. Their idea of public service TV can be compared with that of other high cultural genres such as opera and theatre, meaning that public service TV programmes should be of high cultural quality. Public service TV should in this view be a bastion against commercial interests, and the commercially viable (and hence low culture programmes) should be left to commercial broadcasters. In this respect, they share the views of the proponents of the Market Distortion argument, even though the ideology behind the same view differs. The French thinker, sociologist and cultural elitist Pierre Bourdieu, who has written an acidic critique of the television field, is a textbook example of the Over-Populist school of thought. Proponents of the Over-Populist argument are often older men with significant cultural capital and vocal opinions about “Culture”. Examples of Swedish proponents are the Dagens Nyheter (Sweden’s biggest daily newspaper) TV critic Johan Croneman, legendary SVT filmmaker Tom Alandh and any random left-wing intellectual wearing a black polo-neck sweater and horn-rimmed spectacles. However, it should be noted that right-wing cultural conservatives also fall into this category.

It is in this context of different interests and opinions about public service TV – all highly political – that this study takes place. I now continue to describe public service TV as it is enacted in contemporary Sweden by SVT, and SVT’s current practices of producing TV programmes with commercial production companies and financers. I first move on to give an overview of some of the most important actors in the Swedish public service TV field – those who broadcast and produce TV programmes. Here I briefly present SVT and the commercial broadcasters and production companies who operate in Sweden.

SVT

Television in Sweden was introduced in 1956, and it was constructed as a public service monopoly in line with the public service idea that already regulated the radio. A second TV channel was introduced in 1969 in order to stimulate internal competition and increase choice for viewers (Hadenius, et al., 2008). It was not until the beginning of the ‘90s that the Swedish public service TV broadcaster, SVT, came under competition in the form of other Swedish-speaking channels (Engblom & Wormbs, 2007). SVT’s long monopoly also meant that there was no external market for Swedish television production: as long as SVT were the only broadcaster, it produced nearly all domestic programmes in house.
SVT is financed by a licence fee, which in 2010 amounted to 400 million Euro (3.875 million SEK), and it employs about 2000 people (SVT, 2010). The licence fee is compulsory for all households and organisations in possession of a TV receiver (or similar technology). SVT broadcasts three main television channels: SVT1, a general channel with about a 23 per cent share of viewing time; SVT2, a channel focused on current affairs and cultural and factual programming with about a 7 per cent share of viewing time; and SVTB, a children’s channel with about a 3 per cent share of viewing time (MMS, 2010; SVT, 2008c). In addition, SVT has complementary services including online streaming where all programmes are available for 30 days after broadcast transmission and an interactive Internet site as well as niche TV channels devoted to current affairs, documentaries and news.

In yearly national polls on the public’s confidence in the media, SVT is ranked number one when it comes to confidence in the content of media: in the past decade, around 70 per cent said that they have very or fairly much confidence in SVT’s content. TV4 has numbers around 55 per cent, and the rest of the commercial channels come way below (S. Holmberg, Weibull, & Oscarsson, 2010). According to most Swedes, public service TV and SVT remains the same thing, which also reflects the reality of how public service TV has been, and still is, enacted in Sweden. SVT as the public service TV provider thus has a strong position as the legitimate provider of not only news but also all other sorts of programming. Also, the fact that 90 per cent of all households pay their licence fees, which is one of the highest percentages in Europe (Torén Björnling, 2010), indicates that the public service system and SVT has strong support among viewers and licence payers. Despite the debate – and increased scepticism – about public service TV among the political, cultural and economic elite, SVT and public service TV thus still seem to be supported by ordinary Swedes.

The Swedish commercial TV industry: broadcasting and production

SVT’s main commercial competitor is the TV4 group (owned by the Swedish media house Bonnier), with the main channel TV4 and an assortment of niche channels. TV4 has about a 27 per cent share of viewing time for all its channels combined (MMS, 2010) and a turnover of around 600 million Euro (six billion SEK) (TV4, 2010). TV4 and its niche channels are similar to SVT in the sense that they broadcast a wide range of programmes, such as news and current affairs, children’s programming and Swedish drama. In addition, TV4 also airs programmes in more commercial genres such as popular American comedy and drama series, reality shows and gameshows. Thus, it is more entertainment-oriented than is SVT. Within the TV4 group, almost all of its Swedish
programmes are bought from production companies, with the exception of news and current affairs, which is made by an internal editorial team (Hadenius, et al., 2008). The two other big commercial broadcasters in Sweden are the TV3 group (owned by Swedish media house MTG) and the Channel 5 group (a part of SBS broadcasting owned by German Pro Sieben) with its respective sister channels. These channels are mainly entertainment-oriented with drama and comedy series from the US, reality shows and gameshows targeting young advertiser-desired audiences. These channels buy all of their programming from external sources.

The Swedish market for TV production was formed in the early '90s when commercial channels were introduced in Sweden and demand for nationally produced content (outside SVT) was created. Today, the industry has an estimated turnover of 200–250 million Euro (2–2.5 billion SEK) (Sundin, 2011). The three biggest production companies in Sweden are the MTG-owned Strix, News Corp/Shine-owned Metronome and Italian De Agostino-owned Zodiak (Sundin, 2011). In addition to these big three, there are a handful of medium-sized companies and dozens of small specialised “lifestyle” production companies with only one or a couple of employees (“Film och TV producenterna,” 2011). During the past couple of years, Swedish-owned production companies have been bought by big international media conglomerates, a trend visible in the other Nordic nations (Sundin, 2011). The most important reason is that TV production has become an international and global business, with format12 trade and access to catalogues of formats becoming increasingly important (Humphreys, 2011; Moran & Malbon, 2006). In this global industry, it becomes advantageous to have access to international formats and license sales organisations, both when producing national editions of formats and when developing new formats.

The bigger and mid-sized production companies in Sweden produce programmes in most entertainment genres and include both productions of foreign ready-made formats and the development of original ideas that are later turned into formats. These companies tend to sell programmes to all Swedish channels, namely SVT as well as the commercial broadcasters. Some of them also produce feature films for cinema and TV and are specialised in drama productions; hence, they sell most of their productions to SVT and TV4, which in principle are the only Swedish broadcasters that can afford to buy Swedish drama. Smaller production companies are usually specialised in a certain genre and often make documentaries and programmes of a more journalistic and artistic kind than do the bigger production companies who are focused on entertainment programming. These “lifestyle” producers (Deuze, 2007) sell most of their programmes to SVT, and less occasionally to TV4, since these

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12 A TV format is a formalised programme idea where the specifics of the idea are clearly outlined. Once an idea is formatised, it can be bought and sold on the format market. Big Brother and Who wants to be a millionaire? are examples of successful formats sold internationally.
broadcasters, in comparison to their entertainment-focused competitors, have such programmes in their repertoires.

**Reasons for SVT’s collaborative production of programmes**

As the days of SVT’s monopoly are long gone, its competition with commercial broadcasters has increased, as has its reliance on external production companies for TV content. There are several reasons for SVT to engage in collaborative productions with external producers and financers. Some of these reasons are pressures from outside SVT, whereas others stem from inside the organisation.

One of the most important factors for SVT’s collaborations with external producers and financers is economic. Increasing financial pressure is partly the result of political resistance to increasing or even maintaining the amount of public funding for public service TV. It is also partly the result of escalating costs for content and talent. Resistance to increasing the licence fee is congruent with the wider ideological shift of neo-liberalism and marketisation in society as a whole (du Gay, 2004; Spicer & Fleming, 2007). The idea of publicly funded media has become increasingly questioned in recent years. Bardoel and d’Haenens (2008:340) argue that “as soon as public service broadcasting became the exception rather than the rule, its activities and funding, if not its very existence, began to be considered as a disturbance of ‘normal’ market relations”. Hesmondhalgh (2007:110) denotes the changes in European media and cultural policy from the 1980s onwards as “marketization”: “the permeation of market exchange as a social principle …, [which is] a long-term process taking place over many centuries, involving commodification, the increasing use of money as the basis of exchange and increasing division of labour”.

The proliferation of public service TV platforms (such as web, mobile, tablet) and channels accounts for why the volume of public service TV content required has grown rapidly at the same time as has competition from the commercial sector. This has fuelled increased prices for broadcast rights to sporting events, programme formats and media stars. The cost of new expertise in online environments and mobile platforms for design and operation should not be underestimated (Lowe, 2009). Therefore, financial strains have increasingly prompted SVT to look to the market for new ways to fund and produce content (Collin, 2005; Reimer, Larsson, & Nilsson, 2004).

Beyond the financial strains driving collaborative production, regulatory requirements are another significant influence. Within the EU and nationally among member states, there is a desire to strengthen the market for independent audiovisual production for both cultural and economic reasons. The EU has set a quota for broadcasters requiring that at least 10 per cent of
3. Public service TV in Sweden

transmission time (or 10 per cent of the programming budget) be for programmes of independent European origin, meaning producers unaffiliated with broadcasting companies (EU, 1997). Being the role model and trendsetter of European public service TV broadcasters, the BBC led the way when it began commissioning programmes from external commercial enterprises in the mid-1980s after a Thatcher governmental committee introduced a quota where 25 per cent of all content should be produced by producers external to the BBC (Hutton, O’Keeffe, & Turner, 2005; Küng-Shankleman, 2000; Peacock, 1986). SVT and its Nordic colleagues were pushed to this in the late 1990s consequent to updates related to the Television without Frontiers directive (EU, 1997). At this point, there was already a budding industry of independent producers in Nordic markets following the introduction of commercial broadcasting a few years earlier. This happened in Denmark and Finland in the late 1980s and in Norway and Sweden in the early 1990s (Engblom & Wormbs, 2007; Hadenius, et al., 2008).

There are also reasons internal to SVT that explain the increase in collaborative productions. Firstly, collaborative production provides flexibility to SVT’s operations. To have fewer staff employed and lower fixed costs in terms of techniques and various equipment gives the management leeway in the budgeting from year to year (Reimer, et al., 2004; SVT, 2008c). This is important because demand, supply and competition are cyclical. For example, a year with Olympic Games strains sports programming budgets. In such years, SVT might put less money into drama productions, a costly genre, whereas in other years quality drama can be prioritised. From an operational management perspective, the volatility of production cycles favours external production (Aris & Bughin, 2009). In addition, talent and expertise in professions such as directors, scriptwriters and stars who possess coveted skills often prefer to work freelance. If SVT wants these people to create for it, it must offer short-term deals since it seldom has the possibility to employ such people for extended periods (SVT, 2008c). Another vital reason for SVT to produce programmes in collaboration with external producers and co-financers is that it opens up for external financing. For SVT this means that it can produce programmes to broadcast on its channels without having to finance them fully. In addition, sourcing ideas and expertise from external companies can facilitate a greater diversity of views and voices in its programmes. For a company such as SVT where the average employee is around 50 years of age and has been with the company for 17 years (SVT, 2008b), the use of external producers is portrayed as a way to incorporate a wider variety of voices and social groups (SVT, 2008c). Collaborative productions are argued strategically important for providing a relevant and up-to-date offering of programmes, since programme ideas that are generated outside SVT can be produced rather than only ideas from within the organisation. Lastly, as this study elaborates on, another reason for the increased reliance on external production sources is the increased bargaining power enjoyed by SVT programme commissioners in such
relationships. There is a shift in power relations when ordering TV programmes from external producers as a demanding customer rather than ordering in house from colleagues and other bosses, which typically requires more compromises and, perhaps, also greater diplomacy skills (Hutton, et al., 2005).

Today, SVT thus finds itself in a new environment where it is expected to collaborate with external actors. This is not something that is carried out without friction, as a report by Reimer et al. (2004) shows. The authors of the report draw a picture of the situation in the mid-2000s, where the management of SVT looks favourably at increased external production (Reimer et al., 2004). However, some employees, and the unions in particular, are less happy about this increased reliance on external producers (von Platen, 2006). They are critical of many of SVT’s choices of partners and ask whether the public service broadcaster should really collaborate with big companies that are opponents to unions, and that to a large extent produce programmes for commercial channels – programmes that some SVT employees find are of dubious quality. Critics thus argue that external collaboration might open up the door to commercialisation. There is also a fear that the “public service spirit” will be lost when opportunities for interaction and connections with other public service employees decrease. Some also fear that the journalism practiced by external producers will be tamer and less controversial, since these producers will be dependent on the commissioner’s approval.

**Collaborative production at SVT**

SVT uses three classifications for its programmes that are not produced in house: acquisition, production layout and co-production (SVT, 2008a). An acquisition is when SVT buys something that has already been produced and that it had nothing to do with in the programme’s production phase. Most acquisitions are international productions, but examples of domestic acquisitions can be content that has already been produced for distribution elsewhere, such as some children’s programmes, documentaries and films. In a production layout, SVT places an order to a production company, which then produces the product according to the order. A co-production is when SVT together with one or more external actors finance and produce programmes together. In this study, I refer to production layouts and co-productions with the term collaborative productions since both production modes involve collaborations between SVT programme makers and external producers.

On an average day in 2008, SVT broadcast 66 hours of content, both national and regional. Excluding reruns, 64 per cent was in-house productions, 2 per cent production outlays, 2.5 per cent domestic co-productions and 0.5 per

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13 When it comes to domestic production this is rare; seldom is content produced without the question of distribution having already been settled, and as the major broadcaster of Swedish TV content, SVT is often involved in one way or another.
cent co-financed and co-produced with foreign partners. SVT bought 31 per cent from external sources, and of this 3.5 per cent was of Swedish origin (SVT, 2008a).

**Table 3.1 SVT’s share of productions and acquisitions of its total output**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours of first time broadcast content</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Production</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house productions</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production outlays</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish co-productions (co-financed)</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International co-productions (co-financed)</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acquisition</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish acquisitions</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International acquisitions</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total time broadcast</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This means that in relation to the programme budget, where around 10 per cent is spent on co-productions, in-house productions are cheaper and they are found in categories such as news and live broadcasts from parliament: these kinds of programmes take up more than their budget shares in the TV schedule. Whether or not a programme has been produced as a production layout or as a co-production, has been bought as an acquisition or has been produced in house is much dependent on genre. According to SVT’s annual public service report (SVT, 2008a), 100 per cent of all news is produced in house. If instead one looks at the other genres apart from sports and news, usually called “general production” (allmänproduktion in Swedish), 30 per cent are co-produced (SVT, 2008a). Co-productions are typically adopted for costly products such as drama and documentary programmes. To produce one hour of drama is generally regarded to be four times as expensive as the costs to produce an hour of cultural, factual or educational programming, and 10 times as expensive as that for news and current affairs (Tunstall, 1993; YLE, 2001).

Next I give a brief overview of the legislation governing public service TV in Sweden, and the rules set for SVT. As will be noticed further on in this dissertation, these are rules and guidelines which have bearing on the programme makers’ work in this study.
Legislation governing public service TV in Sweden

The regulation regarding public service TV and SVT are of two sorts: laws concerning the broadcasting of TV in Sweden, which apply to SVT as well as to its commercial competitors, most importantly the Radio and TV Act of 199614; and the SVT Broadcasting Charter issued by the government (sändningstillstånd in Swedish).

The Radio and TV Act from 1996 states that a Swedish broadcaster of TV programmes should make sure that its programme output is characterised by democratic values and the principle of human equality as well as the individual’s right to freedom and dignity (chapter 6, paragraph 1). Furthermore, it is stated that “programmes which are not advertising must not in an inappropriate way promote commercial interests” (chapter 6, paragraph 4). In the next paragraph, it is regulated that programmes that should be impartial may not include messages from political or religious interests (chapter 6, paragraph 5).

The SVT Broadcasting Charter issued by the government, the document that in most detail aims at governing SVT’s conduct, states that broadcasting should be impartial and objective and freedom of speech and information should be held high. SVT should offer an all-round choice of programmes, from wide to narrow, of high quality and innovative form. Programmes should cater to, and mirror, the different interests of the population in the whole country. As a whole, they should have educational ambitions. News and current affairs programmes at SVT should present a variety of views and analyses. Programmes should stimulate debate and provide information so that citizens can engage in social and cultural issues.

SVT should also broadcast programmes from neighbouring Nordic countries in order to strengthen the Nordic cultural community. It should collaborate with external producers in the Swedish cultural sphere and provide an extensive production of cultural programming in the Swedish language. SVT should contribute to the development of Swedish film production. When it comes to children’s programming, it should produce a varied choice of high quality programmes. These programmes should be on children’s own terms and provide news, facts and cultural experiences from different parts of Sweden and the world.

Regarding the modes of production, SVT should contribute to a diversity of programming output using a variety of production modes. As well as

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14 The Radio and TV Act (in Swedish: Radio och TV lagen) was changed in 2010, but since the 1996 version of the act was the one that guided the conduct of programme makers during this empirical study, and the one to which they referred in their interviews, this is the version used here.

15 As shown later in this study, this paragraph is highly relevant to programme makers in collaborative productions.
substantial in-house production outlays, collaborative projects and acquisitions should contribute to this diversity.

SVT must not broadcast advertising. This ban on advertising does not include sponsors’ messages in connection with sports events (directly sponsored programmes) or advertising for one’s own programme operations. When it comes to indirectly sponsored programmes, SVT can broadcast such programmes if:

1) Are produced in collaboration with another party, where there has been external funding or

2) Are programmes that SVT has bought ready-made.

The restrictions concerning indirectly sponsored programmes should be especially firm when programmes are aimed at children under 12 years.

In this chapter I gave a background to the public service TV institution and described the contemporary discussion of it in Sweden. The Swedish public service TV field was described as well as SVT and its collaborations with commercial production companies. Finally the legislation set in place for public service TV and SVT was explained. In the upcoming chapter I discuss the methodological choices and aspects of this study, and describe how the study was conducted and how the dissertation was written based on the study.
4. Methods

In the previous chapters, I discussed the wider context in which this study plays out and the theoretical framework that I draw on in order to interpret and conceptualise the institutional work on public service TV in collaborative productions. In chapter 3, I made more of a “traditional” institutional description of the public service TV institution in Sweden and the arrangements in the field. By comparison, this chapter describes how the remainder of the thesis takes a more interpretative-, practice- and practitioner-oriented stance on institutions, at the same time as it relates this to the institutional context that the practitioners are both influenced by and at the same time influence.

In this chapter, I describe and discuss the specific collaborative productions studied and how I went about generating the empirical material. I discuss the questions and issues that became important in the study and the themes that were constructed based on the empirical material and my further interpretation of the material. The chapter starts with a description of how the study was designed. I give an account of how the programme projects and programme makers were found and of the reasoning behind the selection of programmes. The interviews and encounters with programme makers are then described, and I elaborate on what anyone can say about “the reality” based on interview material. Other sources of empirical material are also described and discussed. At the end of the chapter, I discuss how I constructed this story out of the empirical material and my role as a narrator in this construction. In this chapter I will not dwell explicitly on my ontological stance since I outlined the social constructionist foundations of institutional theory – which are also the foundations of this dissertation – already in chapters 1 and 2. Here I focus and discuss what kind of knowledge can be generated in a study like this, and my position as a researcher in generating and communicating this knowledge.

Designing the study

As described in the first chapter, the purpose of this thesis is to explore and interpret collaborative TV programme production from an institutional perspective, conceptualising how programme makers do institutional work on public service TV. The collaborative context provides what I consider to be an excellent opportunity to capture negotiations over what public service TV is and should be as well as over who should produce it. In collaborative settings are also played out processes opening up for a questioning of the (previously
taken for granted) association between SVT and public service TV, as well as processes working in the opposite direction (aimed at strengthening this connection). There are thus two main reasons why collaborative productions make for a good research setting for this study.

First, in collaborative productions actors from different positions in the public service TV field meet: programme makers employed at SVT, programme makers from the production market and external financers of programmes. These people bring with them into these collaborations their understandings of public service TV informed by their prior experiences from working with TV production in different positions in the field. Such meetings, where old actors and practices meet new actors and practices, set processes of negotiation and the reconstruction of their reality in motion, and ought to make these processes more visible (I discuss this further in a little while). The projects of collaboratively produced programming become arenas in which public service TV is carried out in practice by actors that have to ongoingly reconstruct what public service TV programmes should be. These arenas are thereby good places for studying the work this entails and the impact this can have on the public service TV institution.

Second, collaborative productions shine the spotlight on the connection between public service TV and SVT because of the new actors and new practices in this setting. This new context provides an opportunity for that which for so long has been taken for granted – that SVT is the same thing as public service TV – to begin to get opened up for negotiation and questioning. For programme makers, this sets in motion the processes of working on this connection, both work that aims at strengthening it and that which aims at weakening it and replacing it by offering new ways of understanding how public service TV should be produced and by whom.

**Studying a setting where (new) external actors and practices meet (old) internal actors and practices**

It is a good idea for a researcher to conduct studies in places where some kind of change takes place. An old favourite among researchers of organisations is to carry out research on organisations in times of upheaval. Why this makes sense, writes Czarniawska and Sevon (1996:1-2):

> has to do with the fact that, during periods of stability, people take their realities for granted, and are therefore unable to reveal their construction to themselves or to others. In times of change, old practices are destroyed and new ones are constructed, which invites the questioning and de-construction of the previous social order. Perhaps this is not a result of change, but rather change itself – change being the periods during which people begin questioning things that were previously taken for granted. Luckily for those
studying organizations, change abounds. One could almost speak of continuous change, which should not be surprising, as the social world undergoes constant construction although projecting a strong illusion of stability.

When I set out to conduct this study, I reasoned that the setting of collaborative production, where people employed at SVT produce public service TV content together with external producers, ought to be a setting where processes of deconstruction and negotiation of meaning (R. E. Meyer & Höllerer, 2010) can be set in motion. In such settings, new actors from different positions within the organisational field come into public service TV production, which provides opportunities for opening up discussions on how public service TV should be carried out and by whom. These actors bring with them their ways of doing things and their understandings of television making.

In collaborative productions, there is also the need to develop the new practices of contracting and financing, as well as the associated practices of controlling, and to record the outcome. I was interested in how these changes in the practices of making public service TV affected the meanings ascribed to and inscribed in them. In this setting, the public service TV institution would surely come under negotiation and re-evaluation. Hence, letting external producers into public service TV production provides an arena for institutional work on the public service TV institution. As Suddaby (2010:17) writes: “[institutions] tend to reveal their inner workings during times of disruption or stress, when the social order is inverted, as Barley (1986) observed, or the institutional fabric is torn, and we can observe, however temporarily, the inner mechanisms of institutions”.

This is where the institutional work perspective comes in. Most empirical studies of institutional change so far have been historical, secondary data studies of long-term sequences where one in retrospect can trace the creation and disruption of institutions (e.g. Holm, 1995; Jones, 2001; Leblebici, et al., 1991; K.A Munir & Phillips, 2005). This makes sense since it is often afterwards that one can draw conclusions about the outcome of institutional work and about what caused what. However, these historical studies tell us very little about the practices of institutional workers: how do actors in their everyday work on and with institutions? How is it possible for “prisoners of the iron cage” to transform (or if they require it, maintain) the very cage that holds them prisoner? What institutional work in practice looks like, historical studies are not likely to tell us. My study is an attempt at taking a closer look at institutional work “as it happens”. I am curious about how actors are involved in making sense of redefining, maintaining and defending an institution, and how a change in practices (such as co-financing a collaborative production) or in actors (external producers getting involved in public service TV productions) can provide a setting for these processes. Here, a researcher can study these
efforts from an institutional work perspective. Lawrence and Suddaby (2006:234) write about this:

That is, in order to maintain institutions, actors must cope with the entrance of new members into the organization or the field, the evolution of the field in new and unexpected directions, and changes in pan-institutional factors such as technology and demographics. /.../ Understanding how institutions maintain themselves, thus, must focus on understanding how actors are able to effect processes of persistence and stability in the context of upheaval and change.

**Getting access**

The first thing I did while assessing what had been written in the media about SVT\(^{16}\) and its use of external producers was to contact commissioners at SVT who had been involved with collaborative productions and meet them to talk about this. I wanted to know the practicalities of collaborative productions: how pitching sessions worked, who at SVT decided which programmes to commission, how ideas were developed, the use of contracts and the work of project managers. I also talked to a couple of commercial producers about their experiences of developing programmes together with broadcasters. My meetings with these commercial producers made me realise just how sensitive the issue of talking about their relationships with SVT and the conditions under which they collaborated was. On one hand, they gladly shared their thoughts about the imbalance in the TV production market. From a production company’s view, the broadcasters had the power to pick and choose programme ideas and the producers to work with, as well as state the demands of these collaborations. The production companies lived from hand to mouth in a very competitive market in which they had to be in constant production mode in order to survive. This meant that at the same time as they gladly spoke of these tribulations “off the record”, they were reluctant to say anything publicly – at least if they were not promised anonymity. For the production companies, having a good relationship with SVT was fundamental in a market in which there were few buyers of TV programmes (especially for production companies focusing on such genres that only SVT among the Swedish broadcasters would be interested in). I thus soon realised that if I were to get any external producers to tell me their stories, I had to promise them anonymity and a chance to read “their parts” in the material before it was published.

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\(^{16}\) During this period, the Swedish public service radio, SR, had also slowly begun to commission radio programmes from external producers. However, I decided that it would be wise to limit the study to TV production only, since already in the public service TV field there were enough complexities to handle within one thesis.
4. Methods

Finding collaborative productions

After these initial talks, I set out to find programme projects in which SVT and external producers collaborated. In order to find such TV programmes I contacted the CEO of SVT. (I also thought it would be good for the CEO to know that there was a researcher busy studying “her” organisation, so that I wouldn’t get kicked out if she found out later on.) I wanted to study programmes as early in the production process as possible and in different genres. I also wanted them to be made by different geographical units at SVT in collaboration with external production companies that differed in size and genre focus. The reason for wanting productions that were different from each other (however within the boundaries of collaborative production) was that I wanted to be acquainted with a wide range of programme makers and production companies. This would enable me to cover a range of actors with different positions in the field, from environments where both cultural and commercial logics reigned (as described in the section on institutional logics), and how these actors from their perspectives engaged in the collaborative production of public service TV.

The studied programmes are not news programmes, but rather in such genres as drama, entertainment, documentaries and children’s programming in which external financing can be found. During my time as a media student, I had read many excellent inside accounts of how news media are produced, especially in newspaper newsrooms (e.g. Boczkowski, 2005; Löfgren Nilsson, 1999; Melin-Higgins, 1996; Orre, 2001; Raviola, 2010; Tuchman, 1973, 1978; Tunstall, 1971). However, studies of media content production other than news “from within” have been less prevalent, even though there are some very good examples (Born, 2004; Deuze, 2007; Graffman, 2002; Håkonsen, 2007; Tunstall, 1993). This added to the appeal of collaborative productions as a research context, since this would grant me the opportunity to study how public service TV content that is not news is made.

After my initial contact with the SVT management, I was referred to a couple of people within the organisation working in different genres as commissioners of programmes. After meeting with these people, as well as other people which they in turn recommended I speak to, the writing of letters explaining what I wanted to do, some negotiation and more meetings with additional people, I had eventually found five programme projects that seemed interesting for my study.

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17 An important reason for collaborative production is to gain access to finance outside SVT, which is available only for the types of programmes that also have a value in the commercial market, something that is rare for news programming. In addition, news is deemed by most people at SVT as too important to SVT’s trustworthiness and impartiality to be produced outside SVT.
The children’s programme about records *The Record Bureau* commissioned by SVT Stockholm’s children’s unit. Produced together with Patrik Sthlm, a small production company, which had never produced TV programmes before but that had a history of working in the advertising and PR industry.

- The children’s drama series *The Christmas Calendar* commissioned by SVT Väst’s drama unit. Produced together with Anagram, a production company specialised in drama of various sorts (both feature length films and TV programmes).

- The documentary film *Videocracy* commissioned by SVT Stockholm’s documentary unit. Produced together with Atmo, a production company that makes programmes and films in the documentary and society genre, often with a critical viewpoint.

- The societal documentary *Class 9A* commissioned by SVT Syd's society unit. Produced by Strix, one of Sweden’s big production companies with productions in most genres; however, mostly known for its reality programmes and formats.

- The science series *The Wreck Divers* commissioned by SVT Norrköping’s science unit. Produced together with Deep Sea, a production company specialised in underwater filming.

**Five collaborative productions**

These five programme projects are different from each other in many ways. They are financed in different ways and they have different budgets: some are small projects and some are bigger. The genres are also different, which means that they are influenced to various degrees by the co-existing institutional logics of culture and commerce in the field. Some of the external producers make documentary films that can be defined as cultural and artistic, whereas others make more popular and commercial programmes. This means that their understanding of TV making and their experiences are guided to different degrees by cultural or commercial logics.

However, there are also similarities. As previously stated, they are all non-news programmes. They all have a high degree of artistic freedom in the sense that they are not ready-made TV formats but original ideas developed in collaboration with SVT. The work of developing and producing them were thus not guided by pre-existing blueprints, but were carried out from scratch (even though there were obvious sources of inspiration, such as the Jacques Cousteau films for *The Wreck Divers* – more about this in chapter 5). And most importantly for the purpose of this study, they were productions made in collaboration between SVT and external producers. Throughout the thesis, I will call them “collaborative productions” when I refer to them as a group of programmes. In SVT’s own classification (as described in some detail in chapter 3), the five programmes are examples of three types of external productions:
4. Methods

collaborative productions, outlays and purchases. *The Christmas Calendar, The Wreck Divers* and *Videocracy* are “co-productions”, since they are co-financed by SVT and a number of other co-financers (among which the production company is one). *Class 9A* is a “purchase”, the production company financed the whole production and SVT bought the broadcasting rights for the Swedish market. *The Record Bureau* is an “outlay” since SVT financed the whole production while the production company developed the idea and produced it.

I have chosen to use the term collaborative productions since it highlights the aspects that are of relevance for this study: the joint development and production of an original programme idea, the collaboration between internal (old) SVT programme makers and (new) external programme makers, the activities of negotiating contracts concerning the rights to finished programmes, footage and programme ideas, and the negotiation of payment for the job carried out. Collaborative productions also denote the setting in which new actors who are often not used to the public service TV legislation and unwritten rules regarding what to do and not to do when making public service TV programmes collaborate with “old” SVT programme makers. Encompassed in the term is also the meeting between actors from various backgrounds and positions within the public service TV field.

**Interviewing the programme makers**

Within the empirical boundaries of these five TV programmes, I studied their development and production. My aim was to follow the productions from as early as I could in the process until the programmes were broadcast on SVT. Of the five programmes, *The Record Bureau* was broadcast first, in the autumn of 2007. *The Wreck Divers* was aired during the winter of 2007/2008 and *Class 9A* in the spring of 2008. *The Christmas Calendar* was broadcast in December 2008 and *Videocracy* was shown on SVT in March 2010.18 The main method was interviews with the people involved in developing and producing these programmes. I started interviewing the programme makers in the spring of 2007 and finished the last interviews in the spring of 2009, which means that most of the interviews for the five productions were conducted in parallel.

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18 The film *Videocracy* was finished in the spring of 2009 and premiered at the Venice Film Festival in the summer of 2009. The reason it was not broadcast on SVT until 2010 was that it was first released in cinemas and only later shown on TV.
Across the five programme projects, I interviewed 32 people working in various functions (who they were and what roles they had in each programme project you can see in chapter 5). Several key contacts were interviewed more than once in order to follow the project over time. In addition, I interviewed six people outside the programme projects whom the programme makers in the programme projects recommended I talk to about collaborative productions, making up 48 interviews in total. The interviews lasted for about one to two hours, some even longer, and were recorded and transcribed by me. I started the interviews by asking the programme makers to tell me how they became involved in the programme (“tell me the story from the beginning”). From there, I let their stories evolve. I spurred their stories by asking questions about their involvement in the production, focusing on specifics in the activities of planning the production, negotiating the contract, commissioning the programme, writing the script and financing the production – all depending on what their roles in the production were. In follow-up interviews, I asked what had happened since we last spoke. This made their narratives take a chronological form, starting from when they became involved in the production and ending with how the production ended. This chronological form is mirrored in chapter 5, where I describe the programme projects from the initial idea until the programme was aired.

From my initial talks with the programme makers, I realised that it made more sense for the purpose of my study not to ask directly about public service TV, since the answers often tended to be “theoretical” and less connected to the daily activities of making programmes. Instead, I wanted the programme maker to focus on the work that went into producing TV programmes that were understood and labelled as public service TV programmes and how public service TV was related to this work. In this way, they did not have to make any speeches about the nature of public service TV “as such” or what they thought of public service TV in theory, producing such lists of the “defining
characteristics of public service TV” as I presented in chapter 3. By asking them to talk about what they did in the programme projects, I could ascertain how public service TV was inscribed in and ascribed to their practices of making programmes. In most of the interview narratives produced, the concept of public service TV came up in relation to the practices that the programme makers were involved in without my asking specifically about it.

The programme makers

I focused on interviewing those people involved in the creative and organisational aspects of making the programmes. These are typical actors doing typical things (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Larsson, 2008) which they have been trained and are specialised in doing. These people include those who came up with the programme idea as well as those who developed it, directed it and edited it. It also included those who commissioned the programmes and who worked on negotiating the contracts, making the filming schedule, staffing the production and finding financers. This selection means that I did not include people in the lower levels of the production hierarchy working with light, sound, props and decor, casting of actors, catering, assistance work and so forth. These people are in the TV industry described as “below the line” workers (Deuze, 2007), and are called so because their names usually appear at the end of a film’s credits instead of at the beginning where people bearing copyright are shown (the “above the line” workers). In terms of what they do in a TV production, the two groups of people can be compared to white and blue collar workers where the people not included in my study do more of the physical, handicraft sort of work compared with the people I studied. The below the line workers are usually not involved in the development and planning of a production, but come into the project once it is time to film it. They are also usually not involved in the post-production of a programme. The reason I chose to focus on studying the above the line workers was because these people deal with the issues of what the programme should be about, which connects to ideas about public service TV. I also included the people dealing with commissioning, financing and contracting since these practices are also related to public service TV, SVT and production companies, and the associated institutional arrangements under study.

Below is a list of titles in English, translated from Swedish, of the interviewees from the five programme projects. I here describe their main activities in the productions.

At SVT

Head of programmes/Commissioner (Programchef): Responsible for a certain genre and for a certain geographical unit at SVT. In charge of commissioning programmes as well as executive decisions about the project.
As seen from this list, there are several titles for the same kinds of jobs (especially the producer/project manager distinction is blurred). Generally, there was a tendency to call the same function “producer” in the external production companies and “project manager” at SVT. Therefore, the external production companies would usually call those people working with the making of a programme producers, which would entail both organising aspects (making the schedule, budgeting, staffing) and creative aspects (editing, adjusting the script, scriptwriting). In some cases, the director was also called the producer. Some of the more senior producers were also called executive producers, as their tasks were to negotiate contracts and find financers rather than be active in the day-to-day activities of the programme project. At SVT, the people responsible for the organising and creative aspects of a programme were usually
4. Methods

called project managers. The project managers’ bosses were the heads of the genre or a geographical unit that had formally commissioned the programme. The contract negotiator at SVT negotiated the terms with the production company and other financers involved in the project; their counterparts in the production companies were usually the executive producers.

In the rest of the thesis, I have worked to make things as clear as possible to avoid confusion regarding peoples’ titles. I will call people by their specific title if the context requires it and if it helps the readers to understand what I am trying to say. However, if it is not necessary I will simply use the label external producer to refer to all kinds of personnel working for an external production company. This is also a way to keep their identities anonymous within the group of external producers, so that they cannot be identified as a specific person. When I refer to all my interviewees as a collective, both SVT employees and external producers, I will call them programme makers, which then indicates all those involved in the creative and organising aspects of making TV programmes.

Finally, there is one more important thing I should mention here regarding the wording and labelling of people and phenomena in this dissertation. Throughout the text, I will call the people working for production companies operating in the Swedish production market external producers to indicate that they are external in relation to the SVT personnel. This labelling makes sense in the context of this study, since I am interested in the public service TV institution as it is set in Sweden, where SVT has been and still is the main enactor of public service TV, as explained in chapter 3. In this study, external producers have been granted entrance into public service TV productions, which is a possibility for them to take part in the ongoing negotiation over what public service TV in Sweden should be. Despite this, SVT remains the powerful incumbent in the field where production companies are still relatively small and have less influence over the field’s issues. (Remember the discussion in the chapter on institutional theory about organisational fields and the issues that participants are involved in ongoing struggles over.)

Hence, the term “external producer” is my term. If asked, the external producers would probably prefer to call themselves independent producers (www.filmtvp.se) to indicate their supply chain independence from the broadcasters: here, independence would connote that they are not owned by any broadcaster and are free to sell their programmes to any buyer (and thereby differentiate them from the in-house producers at SVT and other broadcasters). The reason why I have chosen not to use the label independent is that it connotes freedom from all kinds of things; in the media literature, independent media often refers to media not financed or owned by large corporations, and producing “alternative” media content. Many Swedish production companies are far from independent in this sense of the word.
Other sources of material

This study is mainly an interview study, since most of the empirical material on which I base my interpretations was generated in interviews with programme makers. However, other sources of material have also been used. I have had access to six annual volumes of the SVT internal magazine *ViPåTV* during the years 2006–2011. This is published 20 times a year and it reaches all SVT co-workers and other interested parties. This has been a good source for keeping updated on the issues of importance for SVT and its collaborators, such as changes in commissioning structures and practices, changes in the crediting system, internal discussions, responses to governmental investigations regarding SVT and public service TV and so forth.

For this study, I have also used internal documents given to me by the SVT programme makers such as handbooks for commissioning and producing collaborative productions and generic contracts used in co-productions. In order to also understand the official standpoints of external production companies, I have been in contact with the Swedish Film and TV producers’ association and gotten access to among other things their writings in response to the governmental investigation on public service and other such official investigations, as well as other texts and material. For the writing of this thesis, I have collected and analysed media content from the general media as well as specialised media (such as journals, blogs and newsletters) on the topics of collaborative productions and public service TV. Reviews and reportage on the five programmes in this study have also been collected. All these texts make up empirical material that all in all weighs about 10 kilos.

I have also been engaged in onsite observations. During the production of *The Christmas Calendar*, I was present in one production meeting where the whole production team was gathered (from SVT: commissioner, project manager, sales representative, web responsible, script editor. From the external production company: executive producer, producer, scriptwriters, director). During this meeting the script and its recording was discussed. This included how the series should look and feel, how humour should be used and how the programme makers thought of the viewers and their target group. During this meeting, the products that were additional to the TV programme (such as the paper calendar, website, computer game, radio calendar programme) were discussed and ideas for them developed. In *The Christmas Calendar* production, I was also present during a day at the set where I participated as an extra in a hospital scene. In episode four, I had my 15 (or rather five) seconds of fame where I, dressed in a white hospital gown and yellow knee-high socks, pushing an IV stand in front of me, passed the camera and walked down a hospital hallway just before the main characters entered from an elevator behind me.

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*ViPåTV* (WeOnTV) is a name that dates back to the days when SVT was the monopoly broadcaster and the employees of SVT were in fact the only people working in TV!
4. Methods

About the interviews and the reality generated in them

As a reader, you may now ask yourself: what pieces of reality are conveyed in an interview situation such as those in this study? Within social sciences at large as well as in organisational studies, there has been lively debate on interviews as methods for generating empirical material. This debate is part of a greater “linguistic and narrative turn” (Alvesson, 2003; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Czarniawska, 1998, 2004) where the taken for granted claim of neo-positivism – that language can accurately mirror social reality – has been questioned and found to be lacking. Within post-structuralism and discourse analysis, it has been argued that the conventional understanding of language as a passive medium of reality simply does not hold. Instead of passively representing reality, language actively constructs, reifies, constitutes and maintains reality. Alvesson and Kärreman (2000:142) write:

… language is poorly understood if viewed as a simple medium for the mirroring of objective reality through passively transporting data. Language use, in any social context, is active, processual, and outcome oriented. Language is used to persuade, enjoy, engage, discipline, criticize, express feelings, clarify, unite, do identity work, and so on. It constructs reality in the sense that every instance of language use is to some extent arbitrary and produces a particular version of what it is supposed to represent.

In light of language as an (active) constructive device rather than a (passive) mirroring device, Alvesson and Kärreman (2000) and Alvesson (2003) suggest what they call “discursive pragmatism” and “reflexive interviews” as a way to move beyond the mainstream (more or less) positivist use of interviews as tools for mediating (the one) reality. They claim that interviews can be a useful research practice, but only as long as the researcher takes a more reflexive approach to what is generated in an interview.

I appreciate this stance towards interviews and the importance of reflexivity when dealing with interview material. I see interviews as a setting in which people get an opportunity to construct and reconstruct their realities, to make sense of who they are and what they are doing, to pursue their interests and how they think things ought to be. This means that I think of my interviews in this study as: 1) situations that trigger sensemaking, 2) situations in which narratives are produced and 3) situations in which institutional work takes place.
Interviews as situations that trigger sensemaking

Weick (1995, 2001) is famous for introducing to organisational studies the idea of “sensemaking” (how people interpret and at the same time enact the world in which they live). His sensemaking recipe “How can I know what I think until I see what I say” depicts the sensemaking idea: that sense both depends on who we are and constructs who we are, that it is retrospective, that it creates the world that is imposed on us, that it is a social and ongoing activity and that it is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. Inspired by Weick, I see my interviews as situations that trigger sensemaking by the programme makers (as well as by me, the interviewer). The programme makers are put in a situation where they have to try to explain what they do to a person (me) who might know a thing or two about media in theory but who has little practical experience of producing TV programmes.

Writers weary of the neo-positivist, logico-empiricist claims on qualitative research and qualitative methods have written about all the things that goes on in an interview situation: it is an arena for the construction of data rather than for the transferring of data (Alvesson, 2003; Czarniawska, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Schwandt, 2003; Silverman, 1993). Alvesson (2003) argues that many complex social processes at work have fairly little to do with conveying the truth about “how things are”. Instead, many of the efforts on behalf of the interviewee (which I suspect could also be valid for the interviewer) are about making sense of what the interviewer is looking for in terms of responses, what the politically correct responses are, which responses construct a favourable identity of the interviewee, which responses suit the ideology and discourse en vogue at the time and place of the interview, which responses fit the interviewee’s worldview (which she may be assumed to actively work to reconstruct) and so forth.

All these issues played a role when the programme makers in this study tried to make sense of their work of producing public service TV programmes together with other actors. The interview sites thus became sites for the construction and reconstruction of their realities as well as sites for reflection. At the same time as the programme makers were sometimes confused about what kind of information I wanted from them and how I would use that information, they often seemed to appreciate the opportunity of having somebody listening and paying attention to their stories. It is not often that people have the time or opportunity to think aloud about what they do – especially when somebody listens intensively and seems interested. Czarniawska (2004:48) notices something similar:

The experience of 30 years’ interviewing in four countries taught me that practitioners, especially those in elevated positions, are often quite lonely in their thoughts. Every exposition of their thinking within their own organizations has political and practical
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consequences: others listen, draw conclusions, and act accordingly. There is also a limit to the amount of ‘thinking aloud’ that even the most loving family can take during the dinner hour. A research interview thus opens a possibility for an unusual but symmetrical exchange. The practitioners offer a personal insight into the realities of their practice. The researchers offer that which our profession has an abundance of but others do not: an opportunity of trying out one’s thoughts without practical consequences.

Alvesson (2003) calls for a reflexive approach to interviews as a method for generating empirical material in opposition to the view of positivists (“reality can be conveyed through interviews if they are carried out in a scientifically robust manner”), romantics (“reality can be conveyed through interviews if the researchers make an effort to feel for the interviewee and the situation at hand”) and localists (“interview material does not say anything about anything more than the interview situation in itself”). Even though Alvesson sympathises with much of the localist claims on interviews as situations in which talk is produced, he however argues that one should not give up on the relationship between the reality “out there” and the interview material altogether. Interviews are not carried out in a vacuum, and it is unlikely that interviewees make up totally fictional stories when talking to researchers (after all, as Czarniawska (2004) says, it would be presumptuous to think that people take the trouble to do so just because there is a researcher present.) Interviews are settings in which interviewees get an opportunity to step back from their everyday activities and reflect on what they do – but this still happens in relation to the practices about which they speak in the interview. When talking about their work, the programme makers in this study make sense of the production of public service TV from their positions in the organisational field, based on their experiences and interests. The social contexts in which they live their working lives are thus always present in the interview setting, and these inform the interview conversation.

The interviews I conducted with the programme makers gave us both the opportunity for sensemaking. From the point of where they stood and who they were (being an external producer or an SVT representative), they were forced to try to explain often complex events of negotiations and how they tried to influence the programme project according to their interests, emotions, ideologies and views on what the programme should be. The exercise of doing this became a way for them to think aloud about what they do and thus make sense of the practices of producing public service TV. And as Weick (1995) points out, one important way in which people make sense of things is to produce stories that explain how the world works. This brings us to the next point, namely about interview situations as sites where narratives are produced.
Interviews as situations in which narratives are produced

This dissertation is full of narratives (Czarniawska, 1997, 2004) on several levels: the programme makers’ narratives produced in the interview situations about the programmes they produce; the societal-level narratives (or discourses or debates or rationalised myths using other vocabularies) about SVT, public service TV and the market; and the narratives I have produced based on the programme makers’ narratives combined with the societal discourse/debate on public service TV. I return to my construction of this thesis’ narratives and my role as a narrator later in this chapter, but first a few things about the programme makers’ narratives.

In the interviews with the programme makers, I usually asked them to tell me “the story from the beginning”. I asked such questions as: How did the idea for the programme come about? When did you first become involved in the programme? What do you do in the production? This was an attempt to get them to produce narratives about the productions and their parts in these productions. I stated above that I see interviews as sites for the production of narratives. This means that the material generated in interviews should be seen as such: narratives produced in interviews and not as a window to reality. It is a sample of reality – an interpretation and construction of the world as it is enacted by the programme makers in that time and place. Czarniawska (2004:49) writes: “what people present in the interviews is but the results of their perception, their interpretation of the world, which is of extreme value to the researcher because one may assume that it is the same perception that informs their actions”. Giddens (1993) argues along the same line, namely that actors’ ways of making sense of their actions are constitutive of those actions.

However, I am not trying to make any claims about a “one-to-one” correlation of talking about action and action in itself (even though action and talking really should not be seen as two diametrically different things since talking is action as much as other actions are action, and since talking “constitute[s] organizations... [and is] the medium through which organizing and activity are talked into existence” (Weick, 2004:405). For example, it seems that the interviews with programme makers triggered many narratives in which money played a role (talk about contracting, financing, budgets and so on). There are several interpretations of this, all of which are reasonable. One is that budget and financing is of great importance for programme makers, especially in collaborative productions since in four out of the five studied productions the external production companies invested money in the production. As shown in the empirical chapters, money is not only seen in terms of return on investment; it also limits what the programme makers can do in terms of

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20 Czarniawska differentiates between narratives and stories, and argues that narratives become stories when they are emplotted, namely when one introduces a plot that makes the narrative go from one equilibrium to another. For the purpose of simplicity, however, in this thesis I will use the words narrative and story interchangeably.
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staffing, recording and so forth. Another interpretation is that the interview situation lends itself to talking about money, which is easy to verbalise, compared with talking about other less concrete things such as taste, artistry and gut feel. Yet another interpretation is that the programme makers, knowing that I came from a business school, made sense of me as a person being interested in issues of money and financing, and thus steered the interviews in that direction.

Seeing interviews as production sites for narratives, I can imagine few other groups of people to interview that are as skilful at producing narratives as are TV programme makers, especially those working with editorial and artistic content production. These people are after all professional storytellers, and to listen to their narratives is often entertaining. They know how to tell a story, how to emplot it, how to make it interesting – and last but not least, how to construct their own characters to suit their understanding of who they are as well as of their interests (Alvesson, 2003; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000) in relation to the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field. This brings me to the third point about interviews, namely that they are settings for institutional work.

Interviews as situations in which institutional work takes place

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006:239) observe that much institutional work involves the practices of speaking and writing: “composing legislation, telling stories, writing histories, making jokes and insults, writing memos and letters, writing legal opinions, writing and making speeches and making announcements”. Producing compelling narratives helps actors make sense of ongoing events in the field, influences other actors’ sensemaking of them and affects and even instigates these ongoing events. Since interview situations trigger the production of narratives that are interest driven and fuelled by the intentions within which the narrative is produced, it makes sense to see these “narrative acts” (Barthes & Dusit, 1975; Zilber, 2009) as institutional work. Producing narratives where cause and effect are explained, where the outcome of something is connected to the structure of something else and where actors are assigned roles as villains and heroes is active and political work. Alvesson points out that this is a fundamental aspect of any interview: “Interviewees are then not seen just as eager to save or improve their egos or their organization’s reputation through more or less routinized and unreflective self-promoting (or organization promoting) statements but as politically aware and politically motivated actors” (Alvesson, 2003:22, emphasis in original).

In the interview narratives, the programme makers are not mirroring a for once and all finished world, but they are ongoingly working on the institutionalised arrangements, arrangements in which they have their vested interests and which grants them different possibilities and resources. They are questioning certain things and offering alternative explanations, they are
working to make connections between things that were previously not connected or enforcing connections that are already in place. These narrative acts are not passive – they are active, often passionate, regularly political and always constitutive. Obviously, they take place within a certain institutional order – this is the whole point of an institutional analysis of the world – actors are constituted by institutions and act within these. As Czarniawska (2004) summarises Berger and Luckmann’s understanding of the human condition, we create culture so that culture can create us. The programme makers in this study thus carry out institutional work from their entrapment in the iron cages of institutions, which both define what they can do as well as limit their agency.

Interpreting the material and writing the story

Chapters 5–8

The interviews with the programme makers took place during the spring of 2007 and spring 2009; however, most of them were conducted during the autumn of 2007 and spring 2008 (during the autumn of 2008 and spring of 2009 I followed up what had happened in the programme productions that were still ongoing at that time.) The autumn of 2008 and spring of 2009 was spent trying to make sense of the programme makers’ narratives (“What the heck is it all about?!”). I was interested in conceptualising the programme makers’ institutional work on the public service TV institution within the public service TV field, but how should the text be structured and which stories should be told? At this stage, I turned to the old and wise, in this case Weick (1995), and followed his recipe of sensemaking: “How should I know what I think before I see what I say?” In order to see what I said I started writing chapters 5–8, where chapter 5 told the chronological stories of the five collaborative productions and chapters 6–8 were organised into themes.

In order to write these chapters, I coded the empirical material by reading and re-reading it and formulating empirically grounded categories (Charmaz, 2006). When reading the material, a few themes continued to reoccur. As stated earlier, one theme was the economic side of the programme productions. A lot of time and effort by the programme makers was spent on discussing such things as payments, contracts, economic rights, investments and the return on these and budgets. These statements were coded as “monetary” aspects of programme making. Another theme was the prevalence of an “us and them” plot in the programme makers’ narratives. The collaborative forms of production made visible the programme makers’ “organisational homes” in the field, where external producers became the suppliers and the SVT people became the buyers at the same time as they were collaborating partners working together to make the best programme possible. This relationship coloured many of the experiences of collaboratively producing public service TV
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programmes and manifested itself as an “us versus them” plot, especially in those productions where there were conflicts and disagreements during the project. These statements were coded as “people/relationship” aspects of programme making. A third theme was the outcomes of the programme makers’ endeavours – the programmes themselves. During the interviews, the programme makers were given the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon the success or failure of these programmes and how such assessments were made (i.e. how does one know that it is a success or a failure?). Often, this discussion was tied into one about what public service TV was and should be and what about the specific programme made it public service TV. These discussions were coded as “programme/outcome” aspects of programme making.

Building on these three empirical categories: the monetary aspects, the people aspects and the programme outcome aspects, I started writing texts that focused on these themes. These are chapters 6–8, respectively. When constructing these chapters, I relied heavily on the programme makers’ interview narratives and wrote stories that were close to the empirical material and thus not so theoretically informed or with much visible interpretation from my side. In these chapters, material from all five productions was mixed together; each programme is thus not treated separately. However, in order for the reader to understand the background story about each of the programmes, in chapter 5 they are presented separately. Here, each programme is described chronologically from the initial programme idea to the finished article.

In chapters 5–8, I stayed close to the programme makers’ interview narratives in my construction of the chronological stories in chapter 5 and the thematic chapters 6–8. However, as Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) state: as soon as the researcher formulates a tentative research question and starts interviewing people, the interpretation begins. Furthermore, the construction of the empirical material starts there: the researcher chooses who to interview and who not to interview. When one continues to “write up” the material, the researcher interprets the material (as well as constructs the story) by choosing what to include and what to leave out, as well as by contrasting and putting different interview statements against each other. For example, I chose to exclude episodes on the creation of web content in the programmes since this was carried out by SVT personnel (not in collaboration with external producers), and my aim was to focus on what happened in the collaborative programme making. My authorship of this story, therefore, began as soon as I set the study in motion. Even so, in the chapters 6–8, I constructed the text close to the empirical material (what Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) call primary interpretations), however with some efforts at relating the interview narratives to each other as well as to the institutional context (organisational, political, economic) in which they were made (what Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) refer to as secondary interpretations).

Inspired by a narrative understanding of knowledge and organisations (Czarniawska, 1997, 1998; Weick, 2004; White, 1980, 1987), my idea in this
thesis is not to try to say so much about what the interview texts say but rather what they do. Thus, I did not try to decipher any inherent meaning in the interview narratives, but rather look at the narratives as active, namely what they accomplish (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Schwandt, 2003), which is also in line with the idea of institutional work (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In chapters 6–8, the dualities activated in the interview narratives are also made visible: populist/elitist, commercial/cultural, public bureaucracy/market, employee/freelance, us/them, old actors/new actors and old practices/new practices. These dualities were present in the interview narratives, and in my text I tried to contextualise and interpret them in relation to the institution of public service TV and the public service TV field. In these chapters, the aim was to investigate how the public service TV institution is inscribed in the (new) practices of collaborative production and how the programme makers ascribe the institution to these (new) practices. Here, I depict how the public service TV institution is present in the programme makers’ work of producing programmes, providing templates that both enable and constrain action (as shown in Figure 4.2 by the upper arrow from institution to action).

Figure 4.2 The recursive relationship between institution and action (as illustrated by Lawrence et al., 2009:7)

Chapters 9–11

In the final three chapters (9–11), I turn the discussion in a more theoretical direction by interpreting the empirical material informed by the ideas of institutions and institutional work. In chapter 9, I conceptualise the programme makers’ practices as they are described in chapters 6–8 as three streams of (different) institutional work by asking what they – namely, the practices and actors – do to the public service TV institution and the institutional arrangements in the field. Here, there is no longer a focus on the programme makers’ work to produce programmes together. Instead, I interpret the material as institutional work directed at the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field. Here, the actors are seen as belonging to different interest groups, which I interpret as collectively engaged in institutional work. This
institutional work is directed towards different outcomes when it comes to the institutional arrangements. Some practices are directed at preserving the current division of power and labour in the field, where SVT has the power to define what public service TV is and should be. Other practices are directed at making collaborative ways of producing public service TV into “normative” ways of doing public service TV in the field, and thus also granting external producers some power (however within limits) in defining what public service TV is and should be. Still, other practices open up new ways in which power and labour can and should be divided, and thus these are directed towards different institutional arrangements in the field, where actors other than SVT have the power to define and enact public service TV, thus limiting SVT’s power.

Chapters 9–11 thus deal with how action and actors can affect an institution (as depicted by the lower arrow in Figure 4.2, from action to institution). When interpreting the material, in chapter 9 I group together practices that I conceptualised as directed at:

- **Maintaining** the institutional arrangements by defending the current order in the public service field where SVT is seen as the proper enactor and safe keeper of public service TV. This work was mainly carried out by SVT people, and consisted of practices such as “accentuating differences”, “clarifying purpose”, “internalising regulation”, “equating commercial broadcasters with commercial interests”, “representing the viewers”, “measuring audiences”, “co-opting commercial practices” and “making SVT accountable”. This work entailed making clear the difference between SVT and commercial broadcasters and underlining the importance of SVT in keeping safe the public service TV institution from commercial forces. By describing and grouping together practices that were directed at defending the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field, I generated descriptions of institutional work that in different ways advocated the maintenance of the current arrangements.

- **Transforming** the institutional arrangements by casting collaborative productions as not just “normal” and legitimate, but even superior in several ways to programmes produced in house at SVT by SVT employees only. These practices work to open up the production of public service TV in the hands of not just SVT, but for an arrangement where more actors are involved in the enactment of public service TV, actors from all realms of the Swedish TV industry. I categorised this work as “drawing on each others’ strengths”, “sharing responsibility for programme and process”, “channelling creativity and innovative ideas”, “sharing costs for programme production” and “shaping the future of Swedish TV”. By emphasising how collaborative productions can add to the quality of programmes by enlarging the intake of ideas and creativity, by using the experience and knowledge of external producers and by widening
the pool of financing available for programming, such productions can change the perception of how public service programmes are produced. By describing and grouping together practices that were directed at transforming the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field, I generated descriptions of institutional work that in different ways advocated the transformation of the current arrangements.

- **Disrupting** the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field by questioning SVT’s legitimacy as the main actor entrusted with the enactment of public service TV. I categorised this work as “disconnecting taken for granted connections”, “enhancing self-abilities” and “delegitimising authority”. The actors engaged in these practices are the external producers, who have most to gain from rearranged institutional arrangements where SVT is no longer perceived as the obvious actor in charge of public service TV. I propose that when actors engage in these practices, doubts are created about SVT’s taken for granted right to define and control what public service TV is, at the same time as the external producers’ abilities to produce public service TV programmes are underlined. By engaging in these practices, the external producers are opening up the public service TV field even wider for external producers by making them a necessary part of the enactment of public service TV. The privileged position of SVT is here questioned by the external producers pronouncing themselves as better (both more efficient and more creative) at enacting public service TV. By describing and grouping together practices that were directed at disrupting the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field, I generated descriptions of institutional work that in different ways advocated the disruption of the current arrangements.

In chapter 10, I propose a new way of looking at institutional work – that of institutional work as “solutions looking for problems to solve”. The “solutions-looking-for-problems” idea is a reframed way of how I picture the processes of institutionalisation work. Since we cannot help but see something as something (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Asplund, 1970; Schwandt, 2003), we might as well try to see our empirical material in a new way – as something new – which can give insights and revelations that the way we usually see it doesn’t. By doing so, I try to follow Alvesson and Sköldberg’s advice, namely to carry out research that is rich in points by “looking at things in some particular way, which allows a new understanding of the empirical situation concerned” (2000:278). This is what I aim for in chapter 10, as I suggest a reframed way of understanding what institutional work entails. Here is discussed how the “solutions-looking-for-problems” idea can provide a way of understanding how institutions are transformed and yet still durable, by arguing that institutions may in fact have to transform in order to remain legitimate solutions to
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changing problems over time. This discussion makes issues of power evident, since it proposes that power is about the ability to define and connect these problems to a solution/institution in a given field. Chapter 11 closes the thesis by pondering on which problems might be connected to the institution of public service TV in the future Swedish public service TV field.

**The importance of merging theoretical levels**

Inspired by the practice turn in social sciences in general (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Giddens, 1984, 1993; Miettinen, et al., 2009; Schatzki, et al., 2001) as well as by practice-based institutional work ideas (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence, et al., 2009, 2011), I tried to avoid separating the analysis into “micro”, “meso” or “macro” in this study. This attempt was made in order to remain continuously aware of the programme makers’ actions in relation to the public service TV institution and the public service TV institution in relation to the programme makers’ actions. Even though, as discussed earlier, the chapters in this dissertation have different foci, I have tried to portray the interrelatedness of actions and institutions. This is one of the fundamentals of practice-inspired studies: to try to bridge the gap between “individualism” and “societism” (Schatzki, 2005) that has dominated social sciences and instead treat these notions as fundamentally interrelated:

The practice instinct is to resist the choice between micro-detail and larger social forces. Foucault (1977) can link the minutiae of military uniforms and marching steps to a transformation of modern civilization and notions of the human self. Giddens (1984) is as happy drawing on the detailed ethnomethodological studies of Garfinkel and his followers as on theorists of social class and the state. Actors’ particular activities cannot be detached from society, for the rules and resources it furnishes are essential to their action. Society is, in turn, itself produced by just this action. (Whittington, 2006:615)

One of the main points of this dissertation is that institutions are to be “found” in the sets of practices in which actors engage, and that actors do institutions at the same time as institutions do actors (which resonates in the saying “we invent culture so that culture can invent us”). I have tried to treat my interpretation of the empirical material in line with this understanding, and even though it might make for a somewhat untidy analysis where “the miniaturist portrait is located in the big picture of society” as Whittington (2007:1582) puts it, the aim has been treat the little and the big as constitutive of each other.
Maria the narrator

There are several levels of narratives in this thesis. First, as discussed above, are the programme makers’ narratives generated in the interviews. Then, there is the narrative I construct while writing this thesis. My narrative is based on the interview narratives and the theoretical framework (institutions and institutional work) that I am inspired by, as well as on the societal-level narratives (or discourses or rationalised myths in other vocabularies) about public service TV and the commercialisation and marketisation of the media (which is a part of both my and the programme makers’ reality). My narrative is also influenced by what other students of media and organisations have said about public service TV and media organisations. However, my voice and presence as an active storyteller are less visible in chapters 5–8, where the voices of the programme makers take up most of the space. In chapters 9–11, the voice of Maria is more visible. Here, I interpret and conceptualise the programme makers’ practices at a collective level as institutional work, and investigate how this work is undertaken in order to maintain, transform and disrupt the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field, and its effects on the public service TV institution. Here, I also present a reframed way of understanding institutional work, which is inspired by the empirical material in the thesis but aims to add to the theoretical discussion about institutions and institutional work.

Two more things about the use of illustrations and the style of writing in this thesis. There is not just text in this thesis, but also illustrations. These were created by Anita Norbäck (and yes, she is my mum). I wanted illustrations because I think it makes the dissertation easier to approach and less intimidating for a reader sceptical of “scientific texts”. They also add to the story and experience of reading. I also thought it made a nice twist having my mother draw them – sort of an echo of when I as a child drew pictures for her to hang at work. Regarding the style of writing, I have been inspired by writers who try (like Caulley, 2008) to “make qualitative research reports less boring” by writing texts inspired by textual forms usually produced outside academia, such as fiction and in-depth journalism. This may disturb some readers used to the standard way of writing “scientific” texts where personal pronouns such as “I” are kept to a minimum and where the author is not supposed to be present in the text – as if the study was conducted without the interference of humans, thus producing “true” and “objective” material. But this study is not untouched by human hands – rather the opposite. It has been formed by me from start to finish, and it would be dishonest to pretend otherwise. The mode of writing this thesis thus reflects my wish to make qualitative research texts less boring. It is also institutional work aimed at changing – disrupting! – the institution of “scientific” (often quantitative) texts (Symon, Buehring, Johnson, & Cassell, 2008) where the norm is to hide the author away behind the rigorous use of
passive rhetoric (McCloskey, 1998) in order to persuade the reader that what is presented is “objective”.

One story of many to be told

When reading a research text, readers usually wonder whether it can be trusted. When you read this text, I would like to ask you to remember that it is but one of many stories that can be told about the making of Swedish public service TV programmes in collaborative productions. It is also one of many ways of understanding institutional transformation and maintenance.

As you may have noticed by now, I have not described in length the way I view the world – my ontological standpoint – but rather focused on the knowledge of the world – epistemology – which one can acquire in a study such as this. I have no doubts that there is a world “out there”; the million kronor question is what we can know about it. As Rorty (1989:5) points out:

Truth cannot be out there – cannot exist independently of the human mind – because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own – unaided by the describing activities of humans – cannot.

Please remember this as we move along to the empirical part of this study. What follows will be a description (one of many) of the world, a story told by me, from my perspective. I hope that it will make sense to you, that you will learn new things when reading it and that you will not fall asleep meanwhile. Hopefully, it will enrich your understanding of TV programme making and public service TV and how institutions survive and transform. If it does, it has served its purpose.
5. The collaborative programme productions

After having introduced in the previous chapters the institutional arrangements in the Swedish public service TV field, including the specific setting of collaborative production, as well as the theoretical framework of institutional theory and institutional work, it is now time to make you acquainted with the empirical material of this study. In this chapter the five collaborative productions of public service TV that I have studied will be presented: *The Wreck Divers*, *Class 9A*, *The Record Bureau*, *Videocracy* and *The Christmas Calendar*. Here I will tell the story of each production in order to give a description of what the programme is about, the process of making the it and the programme makers involved in the production. Each production is described from start to finish, following the chronological (generic) structure of a collaborative production: generating the programme idea, pitching it to SVT, the financing and negotiation phase, preparing and filming, and finally evaluating the finished programme (see Figure 5.1).21

![Figure 5.1 A generic illustration of the process of a collaborative TV programme production](image)

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21 Please note that this description of the process of a collaborative TV productions as something that occurs in sequential “steps” is highly simplified. However, in order to give an overview of the five programme productions in this study, I have chosen to simplify the entangled and complex processes in this manner.
The Wreck Divers

Title: The Wreck Divers (Vrakletarna)
Production company: Deep Sea Productions
Genre: Science documentary
Number of episodes: Eight 30-minute episodes
Financing form: Co-producers SVT, Deep Sea Productions, YLE and Nordvisionen

The idea

The idea behind The Wreck Divers was initiated in the late ‘90s when the person who was later to become the project manager at Deep Sea Productions and his friends started to experiment with deep sea diving, and developed techniques for diving deep enough to reach shipwrecks that until then had been unexplored because of the depths of their sinking places. Since some of them worked in the TV industry, they started playing with the idea that one should really show the viewers at home all the wonders hidden at the bottom of the Baltic Sea, a sea that because of its low level of salt also preserves wooden wrecks better than any saltier sea would. Said and done, they came up with an idea that they called “Expedition wreck”, which however wasn’t accepted by SVT at that point.

A decade later, one of the project managers in the science department at SVT in Norrköping approached the project manager, who by then worked for a production company called Deep Sea Productions, and asked if he could resuscitate the idea about a wreck expedition. She thought that SVT might be ready for it this time around. The Deep Sea project manager then sketched a proposal for a series of programmes, with some help from his diver friends and two marine archaeologists.

Pitching the idea to SVT

In the spring of 2006, the project manager at Deep Sea Productions, together with SVT’s project manager, pitched the idea to the current SVT programme management team. The Deep Sea project manager explained how the pitching process worked:
5. The collaborative programme productions

And when we felt that we were done with [the idea] we pitched it. Now they keep changing the rules at SVT all the time, but at that time all series were to be pitched to the genre managers. And the genre managers were those that have culture and documentary, you know, or culture, facts and leisure, news and so on. There were six genre managers plus some other people, the programme manager and such. And then they travel around Sweden and let people pitch. So, we pitched it in Norrköping, since the procedure then was that we should first sell it to an editorial department [at SVT], then the department would pick it up and we would pitch it together to the programme management.

Deep Sea project manager

The SVT project manager described her memories of the pitch:

And then at the pitch, it became a huge success, it was one of the best pitches that I have seen, that I have done myself and that I have ever seen, the one we did then, and that is how we sold it in.

SVT project manager 1

Financing and negotiating

An enthusiastic SVT programme management liked the idea of a wreck diving series, and at the beginning of the summer 2006 the programme makers got the green light and could go ahead and make the programme. From the beginning, it was clear that this programme would be especially costly. The programme makers would need to use an expensive ship with a full crew that could help them detect wrecks hidden at the bottom of the sea. Therefore, during the spring of 2006 before the SVT programme management had made a decision, the SVT project manager contacted her network of science programme commissioners at the other Nordic public service broadcasters to see if any of them would be interested in co-producing the series. The Danish and Norwegian broadcasters declined, but the Finnish broadcaster YLE was interested. With two Nordic public service broadcasters co-financing the series, The Wreck Divers’ team was able to apply for additional funding from Nordvision (a collaboration between the Nordic Public service broadcasters devoted to the co-production and exchange of programmes). They got funding from Nordvision, which meant that funding for the project came from four sources: SVT, the production company Deep Sea Productions, Finnish broadcaster YLE and Nordvision. The money from YLE and Nordvision, however, was only a small part of the total budget; the bulk of the funding was
provided by SVT and Deep Sea Productions. During the financing negotiations, it was decided that SVT would chip in with about two thirds of the budget and Deep Sea would finance one third. For its money, Deep Sea would retain a lot of the property rights to the filmed material. The producers at Deep Sea’s long range strategy was that they would be able to recoup the money invested by using the footage in other productions, and maybe even develop the programme idea into a format that could be sold internationally. However, when asked about how in the world the company would ever make its money back, the Deep Sea project manager said:

In this case, it was extreme, really it was so under-financed this project it was crazy! Because SVT had its maximum cost, this is how much a programme can cost per hour, regardless whether you film a reality soap or whatever, it doesn’t really matter. And looking back I think that we were stupid enough to accept it. Because it wasn’t like they forced us, we could have said no. And there I have learnt a lesson, which I had really learnt previously. But it is often so, just like in love relationships, like: “but this time it will work out, it will be OK…”/…/ You want it so badly, because you are burning for your idea, you are burning for your programme. And you are stupid enough to say yes to it.

Deep Sea project manager

Preparations and filming

Deep Sea did indeed say yes to go on with the project on the agreed terms. During the autumn and spring of 2006/2007, the team of programme makers at Deep Sea started to plan the expedition during which most of the filming would take place. As in all TV-making, time is money, and once you have gathered the whole film crew you have to make sure that you get as much footage filmed every day as possible. They thus tried to plan the expedition in detail, and carried out extensive research on which wrecks were out there to be filmed, which wrecks had interesting stories to tell, which would make for beautiful footage, which wrecks had already been discovered and which had not. In some instances, they decided to take a chance and search for wrecks that might not be found, but it was very important to have a couple of “safe bets”, so that they at least in some of the episodes knew that they had a certain payoff in the end. SVT’s project manager explained:

An important question is how to tell a story and it is really very elementary, but there needs to be a riddle. And what was the most difficult to find in [a previous programme SVT did about archaeology] was a solvable riddle, so that you get that classical
5. The collaborative programme productions

storytelling with a riddle, a course of events where you are looking for clues and some kind of payoff as we call it when you deliver an answer. /…/And if you cannot find it you have to somehow construct it, so that one understands what causes all this seeking and researching and digging and searching. So, that we worked on very much with *The Wreck Divers* as well, to find these riddles, in order to get the excitement in the programme.

SVT project manager 1

During the planning phase, the editorial team also shot the short historical reportage pieces that were to be placed in the programmes, for example to explain the context of why a certain ship sank. Then, at the end of May 2007 the expedition set out on a month’s filming, where it shot 200 hours of film and dived on 30 wrecks. On board the ship *Franklin* were about 30 people: the ship’s regular crew, a group of divers, marine archaeologists and marine biologists, the film crew with camera people and the producers and director. Deep Sea’s producer was pleased with the organizing of it all:

So, this filming was rather ingenious I must say. I have never experienced anything that efficient. We worked around the clock. We had two camera people onboard, we had four cameras, two in the boat and two in the water, namely underwater cameras. And then we had a couple of hours with a helicopter on two different occasions.

Deep Sea producer

**The finished programme**

Early into the project, even before the crew had set out to sea, it also became obvious that Deep Sea Productions with its project manager taking charge and SVT’s project managers had quite different ideas about what kind of programme they were making. SVT’s project manager described the differences of vision:

They [Deep Sea Productions] wanted to see it more like a documentary, and we wanted to see it more like an entertaining factual series which is more like “regular darn bread TV” as we call it, kind of like “*Vetenskapsmagasinet/The science show*” or “*Toppform/Get in shape*” or “*Packat och Klart/All set to travel*”.

SVT project manager 1
The project manager and the producer at Deep Sea envisioned no “regular bread TV”, but rather what they called “a filmic storytelling” where the images would speak for themselves rather than having experts and a programme host explaining things to the viewers. They saw this as an opportunity to do a modern Cousteau with slow tempo and footage without comment from the bottom of the sea: images of wrecks that had been hidden from human eyes for centuries.

And there we [SVT and Deep Sea Productions] had a lot of discussions about how to do it. That is really what has been hardest, to convince them [SVT] that this documentary storytelling will work, to just register what happens onboard because that is exciting enough. /…/ What we have done is really we have looked back, far back in history, we have looked at – that is the Deep Sea project manager who is the strongest inspirer for this – he has watched Jacques Cousteau’s films from the late ’50s and early ’60s and said that we should try to recreate this joy of discovery in this film. But we should do it by showing how far things have come since then, that is. So, we had that as a gimmick on board, everybody who owned a red knitted cap should bring it. So, you see here and there kind of a hint at Cousteau, people having a red knitted cap.

Deep Sea producer

Deep Sea’s project manager said:

… we tried to create a sense of what Cousteau did in the ’50s and ’60s and all the way into the ’70s. And we even showed them [SVT] the Cousteau films as a reference. And they are incredibly slow, you know tempo wise, and there is very much footage and little talk. And sure you can argue that back then the underwater world was new to the viewer. Yes it was, but how many have really seen the Baltic Sea from the bottom? Not many! So, we wanted to create something where the footage would be guiding, where the experience of the footage would be strong, where the viewer would come with us to the bottom of the ocean. And not be lead by some corny programme host who would tell us exactly what happened, you know, explaining things in the tiniest detail.

Deep Sea project manager

The programme makers at Deep Sea also wanted to show documentary footage from the everyday life on the ship, where footage from crew members would help tell the story. Instead of relying on a programme host taking an active role or the extensive use of speaker, which are devices often used to tell
5. The collaborative programme productions

documentary stories, they wanted the footage to speak for itself. However, since the first episode was to air at the beginning of November, the programme makers didn't have much time to edit the programmes. SVT's project manager explained the problems with this ambition:

The production company had the ambition to have less programme host and a more documentary style, that the happenings and the relations on board would tell things by themselves. And there one could say that we did not really reach an agreement. /…/ And one could say that the reason for that is, if one has that ambition to do something more documentary, is that if one succeeds then that is really nice. But in order to succeed there has to be enough clear happenings that don't need commenting, that can be put together, and that is where we had too little time. In that case you need longer time [in the editing process], to see that this that they talked about the viewer will associate to what happens in the cabin, what they talk about, to what happens on deck where they prepare an activity and so on. It is a more difficult puzzle to put together.

SVT project manager 2

In retrospect, SVT’s project manager said he wished that they had been a bit sterner during the discussions about how to narrate The Wreck Divers story:

…I mean we should have stated that the documentary ambition, not having to rely on programme hosting and a speaker, would not hold. If one had accepted this at an earlier stage, then a whole lot of what happened would have been made easier at a later stage. But that is said in hindsight from my part. And in this case we let the people involved with that ambition find it out themselves. Which made it a bit tough.

SVT project manager 2

The representatives from SVT and their counterparts at Deep Sea never really managed to reconcile these differences of opinion and the outcome was described as a compromise between their different ambitions. Nevertheless, SVT’s representatives, the two project managers, seemed pleased with the final programme series.
It became, if one says compromise that sounds negative, but I think it became a good compromise between their way of constructing a story and ours. So, we made adjustments from both sides I think.

SVT project manager 1

The project manager from Deep Sea was a bit more disappointed. As he described it, the ratings were good and the viewers seemed to enjoy the programme, and under the circumstances – differences of opinion between broadcaster and producer, shortage of time during the editing process – it still turned out to be a fairly good end product. But he could still not escape the thought of all that fantastic footage of long lost shipwrecks having to give way to what he thought was a dumbing down of the show through the focus on a programme host. He had envisioned it to be so much more than it became: instead of being a new Cousteau classic, it ended up being just another OK programme.
The idea

The idea came to him one September morning when the Strix producer sat by his breakfast table reading the newspaper. His interest was caught by an article about a man who had heroically saved people from a burning subway carriage. But this everyday hero didn’t want to talk so much about this, he rather wanted to talk about his pupils and his job as a maths teacher in one of Stockholm’s (in the media often portrayed as problem-ridden) suburbs, where he had achieved fantastic results. Since the Strix producer was working for one of the biggest television production companies in Sweden, he thought that there might be the foundation for a good television programme here:

Then the thought hit me: what happens if you were to gather a gang of teachers of this kind, super pedagogues – which really has become a coined expression more or less which I am very happy about. What happens if you put together more [teachers] of his calibre in a team and let them take on a class in a school, a class that simply performs below average but has potential?

Strix producer

He thus started playing with the idea: what if one made a TV programme where a school class of poorly performing teenagers was given these “super pedagogues” during one semester. Would it be possible to turn such a class around from one of Sweden’s weakest performing to one of Sweden’s three best? The Strix producer started to work out the details of how such a programme could be constructed. He arranged a meeting with the “super pedagogue” he had read about in the paper, and contacted various school
experts to see if it would be at all possible to pull off such a programme. According to the Strix producer, all the people he spoke to about it thought that it was a fantastic idea, which made him confident that he was indeed onto something.

Pitching the idea to SVT

A couple of months later, in November 2005, the Strix producer pitched the idea to SVT in Malmö. He knew that they were looking for a programme in the current affairs genre, and since Strix had a pitch scheduled there, he went there to persuade them to take him up on his idea. The man who became SVT’s first phase project manager for the programme recalled the pitch:

Well, it was after Strix had been here and pitched some ideas for our programme managers, then this [idea] was one of them. Then it was called Class 9D, which [the producer] who then was working for Strix had developed. And the idea was really just to take the weakest class nine in Sweden and put in Sweden’s best teachers, and in one semester they will become the best class nine in Sweden. It was an incredibly simple programme idea, but it was very fascinating and provoked a lot of thoughts.

SVT first phase project manager

The final decision was, however, not to be made at the geographical unit in Malmö, but rather by the programme management in Stockholm. At first, they turned the idea down. The reasons were surely several, but one of them SVT’s late phase project manager argued, was the complexity of making a programme where one was to intervene in a real class of school children and their teachers. The ethical and moral dilemmas involved in such an endeavour seemed too great to overcome.

Financing and negotiating

The SVT first phase project manager also argued that there was a financing side to it:

... when we pitched this idea in the spring of 2006 to our current programme management all the signals from there were: “oh what a

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22 In this programme production, three different SVT project managers were involved. The reasons for this were that they moved onto different projects before the project had been completed. I will call them first phase, second phase and late phase project managers in order to tell them apart.
5. The collaborative programme productions

fantastically exiting idea”. And then suddenly it was just dead no, there was no money. And then we were very disappointed, I got really angry, because this is such an idea, I started more and more to believe that this could be done.

SVT first phase project manager

To the satisfaction of the future project managers of what was to become Class 9A, the head of SVT in Malmö wouldn’t take no for an answer. She managed to persuade the management in Stockholm to change its decision, and use finances from the coming year’s programme budget to finance the project. However, this meant that SVT could not go in as a co-financer in the project, but ended up only buying the right to broadcast the programme series. When it came to the rights to the programme, Strix thus ended up with all the property and format rights to the series. The first phase SVT project manager said that he had been against this construction from get go. He argued that since SVT played a part in developing Class 9A from just an idea into a doable programme, SVT ought to share the ownership and any possible future revenues from format sales and such. Still, since Strix paid for the production and SVT only bought the broadcasting rights, Strix became the owner of the programme.

Preparations and filming

Even though the programme makers assigned to the project saw huge potential in the idea – from their perspective it was a chance to make TV about one of the most important societal issues: the school system – there were still a lot of practical problems to overcome. How would one find a school where teachers and staff would be willing to take part in such an experiment? And how would one deal with filming underage children that after all were forced by law to go to school?

So, the producer from Strix and first phase project manager from SVT started working on transforming the programme idea into something that actually could be done. They began looking for schools in the Malmö region, since the people at SVT Malmö (the unit of SVT that was commissioning the programme) were located there. The region also fitted the profile of having a lot of schools with lower than average performing pupils. SVT’s first phase project manager said that the principal of the first school they approached thought the idea was crazy but appealing, since he recognised that there was potential in his pupils that did not show in their grades. However, higher up in the hierarchy the proposition was met with fear and suspicion:

And then it turned out that [the management of the local city council] they said plain no: “we will not have some bloody reality show in our
“Pilot” is the industry term for a test programme that is produced to see if a programme works or not.
down the school, there were three strangers there. And they said nothing, “you may introduce yourselves and why you are here”, and then we did and said that we wanted to do a TV series that meant that we are going to remove all the teachers from one class and replace them with the best teachers in Sweden. And they just looked at us! They just looked at us! /…/ And then, we talked and talked, and then it came: bang, bang, bang. It took half an hour before the first positive comments came. But we kept at it for one and a half hours that meeting. And finally it turned, you could feel the majority starting to turn. And that was a rather critical, a rather crucial moment.

SVT first phase project manager

Once they had a participating school, where both the school management as well as the staff were on board, the school’s two principals picked one of the (at the time) eight grade classes to be the class to participate in the project. The programme makers could now intensify the editorial work of finding a way to tell the story. They knew that they had to tread very carefully: they made house visits to all the children in the class and their caregivers to make sure that they were aware of what they embarked upon. They founded a set of “Class 9A rules” for the recording crew that would ensure the integrity of the pupils in the class. They contracted a psychologist who would be available if needed. They also chose the film crew very carefully, since the ethical dilemma of working with children was something they were acutely aware of. SVT’s second phase project manager explained:

It was also important to be able to assume a journalistic responsibility, it was important that we had a policy for the journalism, because we cannot have 15-year-olds talking about each other. Which from a narrative perspective is rather good, because then you can push, which is the traditional reality show perspective, that you push conflict through: “but he said this, what do you think when he said that?” and so on. We had to find a journalistic way of doing things that wasn’t built upon those conflicts.

SVT second phase project manager

During the spring of 2007, the programme makers finished recruiting the team of “super pedagogues” that would replace the ordinary teachers during the autumn semester. However, the political sensitivity of the programme was still looming over their heads, and during a brief period during the spring the whole project was shut down because of a dispute at the political level in Malmö. That was eventually resolved and the recording crew started filming a week in the

5. The collaborative programme productions

...
spring in order to prepare both themselves and the pupils for what would come during autumn:

And then we got the project started in May, the class was chosen sometime in April and we started sometime at the beginning of May. And then we filmed for one week. That was very good from a number of aspects, to get them used to the camera, now during the autumn we will actually be there every day, but also to get to know them. It was a very important and good period. And you learn the environment, you learn how to be in a school, how to film, well you know. We had a summer vacation to plan it and then it started, on 21st August.

Strix producer

At the end of August, the recording began, and continued all through the autumn. Since the first programme was to be aired in the middle of February, the editing of the first programmes in the series started parallel to the filming of the later episodes.

The finished programme

On Tuesday night February 12, 2008, at half past nine the first episode was aired on SVT’s Channel 1. Close to a million Swedes (out of nine million in total) watched it. According to the programme makers unanimously, it was depicted as a huge success. Not only did the class reach the goal of becoming one of the nation’s best performing classes, but more importantly the TV makers were extremely satisfied with the tone and feeling in the programme:

…I cry every time, each programme, I think they are so cute these children and it happens so much and I love these teachers and I really think this project is like: Oh the best TV in the world! I really think that there is nothing better on TV at the moment, nothing [Swedish]-produced anyway. So, I feel really proud and everybody I know thinks that this programme is really good and really exiting and so darn good looking and well produced and funny and… I’m just proud, it feels great, it feels fantastic. I really think like this: my God this is a programme that has made such a difference for so many people’s futures! It is totally amazing; one becomes a little religious when one thinks about Class 9A.

Strix project manager
5. The collaborative programme productions

Their pride of being a part of making a heart warming yet engaging piece of documentary filming about something as seemingly mundane as a Swedish ninth grade school class was obvious. The SVT second phase project manager said:

…I could never have dreamt that we would get such a response on a series like this. Because you yourself think: [ironically] “Wow, I really feel like watching a series about the Swedish school system”. You don’t imagine that it would shiver in the soul of the people, like: “This I want to see!”

SVT second phase project manager

But according to the ratings, as well as the public debate about the programme and the fact that they won the Swedish TV industry award for best documentary, there might have been a “shiver in the soul of the people” after all. The SVT first phase project manager said with a laugh that he had watched the last episode over and over again to make sure there were no faults or inappropriate things in there: “And be darned if I didn’t cry at the end every time!”

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24 Class 9A was later turned into a format by the production company and sold internationally. In Sweden, it won the TV industry award Kristallen for best documentary, and the Strix producer was nominated for the prestigious Stora Journalistpriset (the Big Journalist Award) as the narrator of the year. A second season of the programme was aired on SVT during the spring of 2011.
The Record Bureau

**Title:** The Record Bureau (Rekordbyrån)  
**Production company:** Patrik Sthlm  
**Genre:** Children’s programme  
**Number of episodes:** Ten 13.5-minute episodes  
**Financing form:** Financed by SVT, produced by Patrik Sthlm (production outlay)  
**Aired on SVT:** Autumn 2007 (second season autumn/winter 2008)  
**Cast of programme makers interviewed:** From Patrik Sthlm: Project manager and Producer. From SVT: Project manager, Web responsible, Web editor, Contract negotiator and Head of Children’s TV.

**The idea**

The whole thing started when the Patrik Sthlm project manager and his wife came up with the idea of doing something about records. He remembered how fascinating he found the whole thing about records and record breaking when he was a child and he thought that this would probably be true for children today as well. They started brainstorming about the various ways of doing a TV programme about records. Should it be a younger and crazier version of the Guinness Book of Records or should they construct it more like an awards show? They knew that they wanted it to be an idea that was applicable for various media platforms and that the web was to play an integrated part in the programme idea. Finally, the idea transformed into a programme about a fictive governmental bureau where children sent their records to have them officially approved. This bureau was run by a true bureaucrat, a crazy character called Gillis who would be the programme host and comment on the filmed record attempts made by children. The idea was that these record attempts could be filmed or photographed by the children themselves and then uploaded on the programme’s web page. From these record attempts, the programme makers could pick the ones they wanted to include in the programme as well as contact the children and film more “professional” versions of their record breaking endeavours.

The Patrik Sthlm project manager was the founder of an advertising and web agency that had never carried out any major television projects before. However, a number of the people that worked for the agency had experience of producing television commercials, and the aim of the agency was to work with audiovisual media products in the future. The project manager and his wife
were friends with the woman who later was to become the SVT project manager for *The Record Bureau*. She was working in the TV industry as a producer and had been working a lot for SVT, and during a skiing holiday in February 2006 they told her about their programme idea. They decided to join forces, and the three of them started to work out the details of the programme.

**Pitching the idea to SVT**

When the details of the programme were finalised, they delivered their written proposal to SVT where the idea was well received and instantly accepted. The Patrik Sthlm project manager described the pitching process:

> Things were very easy for us since everybody thought, all the SVT managers on all the levels where this [programme idea] went, thought it was a good proposal and an idea that had not been done before, just because it was records, strangely enough. So, that is why we came all the way. Otherwise you end up in, well either you get kicked out immediately, it doesn’t work out, or you end up in “yes” but you must go there [to SVT] and pitch this at the same time as some other people or on your own, kind of like before the Idol jury. And from that it is decided if you continue or not. But we didn’t have to do all that this time because everybody liked it [the idea] so much.

Patrik Sthlm project manager

However, even though the programme management at SVT liked the idea, they thought the original proposal was too expensive and asked the programme makers to rewrite it. In their second version, they revamped the structure of the series in order to make it more cost efficient to produce, and ended up with a fairly slim budget. They also put even stronger emphasis on making sure that ordinary children all over Sweden should be able to take an active part in the making of the programme. Once the revisions had been made, they resubmitted the proposal to SVT and at the beginning of summer 2006 got the green light. By that time, the TV producer who had been one of the people working on the programme proposal had been hired by SVT as a project manager at its children’s TV department and it was decided that she should be SVT’s project manager for this project. It was also decided that the programme series was to be aired during the autumn of 2007, which gave the producers a little over a year to plan and record the programme. Since one of the original creators became SVT’s representative and could no longer be involved in the everyday activities of the project, Patrik Sthlm hired another producer. Her main task became to organize all the practicalities of the recording, while Patrik Sthlm’s project manager dealt with the more “creative” parts of the series’ form and content.


**Financing and negotiating**

The autumn of 2006 was spent negotiating the contract and where the various intellectual property rights were going to end up. Since SVT’s policy was to divide the rights according to how much money the various actors had contributed, and since *The Record Bureau* was fully financed by SVT without Patrik Sthlm contributing with any financing, all the rights to the programme ended up with SVT even though the idea came from outside.

**Preparations and filming**

During the spring of 2007, the programme makers produced a trailer that was aired on SVT that encouraged children to film their record attempts and upload them on the *Record Bureau* website, which was also launched simultaneously. Out of all the children who sent in films and photos of their records, the programme makers picked out a few that they visited and filmed with their professional equipment. For other records they used the children’s’ own films and photos to include in the first programmes. When the first programme in the series was aired at the end of September 2007, this spurred a new stream of records to be sent into the programme, records that then became part of the later episodes of *The Record Bureau*. The programme makers also actively used the website to encourage children’s participation by having “the challenge of the week” which could be to build the highest tower, to stand on one’s head for the longest time or eat slices of lemon without making a face. All material that was sent into the website went through an editorial “check” at SVT before it was published on the page, to make sure that the content wasn’t inappropriate in any way. SVT’s web editor who had this editorial role explained one case where he decided not to publish a film:

… there was one [child] who had a kind of massage thing which vibrated that he put on his nose, and each time he did it he started to sneeze. And then there was the dad behind the camera who kind of urged him on, kind of: “but come on!” And then he sneezed, but then his nose started to run and after a while it looked like this boy wasn’t enjoying it any longer, but he kept on doing it and had snot all over his face. And that didn’t feel good, you get that feeling, it maybe wouldn’t have been possible to press charges against or so, but for children you really have to think about how it comes across.

SVT web editor
5. The collaborative programme productions

The finished programme

At the end of 2007, the 10 programmes had been aired and the programme makers were very happy with the result. They had enjoyed the collaboration: the people at Patrik Sthlm thought that it had worked out really well to have a project manager at SVT who was not involved in the everyday making of the programme, but who could come with creative input from “the outside”. They also felt that the people they collaborated with at SVT were passionate about children’s TV:

The main focus is to make good TV for children. That is the way I have experienced it any way. And all the people you talk to have that, they never let it down, this aim. That comes first, and then the form, how to do it, is a bit more secondary.

Patrik Sthlm project manager

The project manager at SVT thought it was refreshing to work with people from the “outside”, since she felt that she sometimes got stuck in the mindset of having to make programmes that were educational and “good” on the verge of being boring and “goody two shoeys”. The Record Bureau, she said, had no ambition of teaching the children anything. It just wanted to stimulate children’s imagination and playfulness, and inspire them to think of activities that could be turned into records. And the kids watching seemed indeed to be inspired. The programme makers told me that they were very happy about the response that the programme generated, of which the activity on the web page was proof. They also stated that the ratings were above average for their timeslot (even though they were rather hesitant to read ratings as evidence of popularity for a specific show since the children’s timeslots usually had quite consistent ratings.) In the evaluation meeting that was held after the series had been aired, it was agreed that the collaboration had gone smoothly, and the focus was on what should be changed if the programme was to run for a second season. Some minor changes to the dramaturgy of the programme were discussed, but more importantly for the people at Patrik Sthlm, the rather slim budget was also discussed. SVT indicated that a continued commission might increase the budget slightly in order to give the producers a bit more room to breathe, even though this would not mean a whole lot more money.

In the autumn of 2008, the second season of The Record Bureau was aired. SVT’s project manager explained that her favourite thing about the programme was that it gave all kinds of children an opportunity to be on TV, not just the forward and likable ones:

We thought it was good that there were children from all over the country, and that there were ordinary children, and all kinds of
children. And that you don’t have to be so “TV fit” to be in this programme if I can put it that way, that it is cool that it is such a programme that lets in many kinds of children. There are, for example, children that don’t have to say anything to take part. Otherwise you must be so competent in order to be in a children’s show, and I thought it was nice that there were all kinds [of children].

SVT project manager

In the spring of 2011, *The Record Bureau* had been running for three seasons and 45 programmes in total had been produced in collaboration between Patrik Sthlm and SVT. In 2010, the series was nominated for the Swedish TV industry award *Kristallen* in the children and youth category.
5. The collaborative programme productions

Videocracy

| Title: Videocracy |
| Production company: Atmo |
| Genre: Documentary film |
| Number of episodes: One (feature film length) |
| Financing form: Co-producers Atmo, Zentropa, DR, Danish film institute, SVT, Swedish film institute, Nordic Film and TV fund, YLE and BBC |
| Aired on SVT: Broadcast on SVT March 30th, 2010 |

The idea

The idea to make a film about a country ruled by television had been in the back of the filmmaker’s head for a long time. His experience of having lived the first half of his life in Italy and the other half in Sweden made him want to make a documentary film about the country in which he grew up. He explained that most Swedes see Italy as an exotic country, but often it is forgotten that Italy also is a country with huge problems. He told me about an occasion that made this clear in his mind:

And I remember when reading on BBC’s homepage where they had a kind of profile of different countries in Europe. And in this profile there was also a press profile where it said that what makes Italy an anomaly mass media wise is that 80% of all Italians have TV as their main source of information. And there is no country in Europe where TV has such a strong influence.

Atmo filmmaker

He wanted to know what effect this had on the country and on the people: could depicting Italy as a “videocracy” – the power of image on society – help explain the problems that Italy was wrestling with, political and otherwise?

But I don’t know, I have the approach that I want to find out things without deciding exactly what the film should say. I am busy myself, it is like research to me, filming is like research. I don’t really know what effect this has, but I take the statistics as a starting point to
make a journey in my home country and explore Italy through the idea about a videocracy. So, that is what the film is about.

Atmo filmmaker

Pitching the idea to SVT

The filmmaker who was also one of the producers of this film had made quite a few films before with his production company Atmo and had had successes both in Sweden and internationally. This time around, he thought that it was time to really work on the financing of the film. Earlier in his career, he had had a more “guerrilla-inspired” idealist idea about documentary filmmaking as an endeavour where money was not an issue. “Why whine about money when you could just go out and make a film?” However, working with his latest film had taught him that if one really wanted to spread a film to an international audience a big budget was required. He thus placed a lot of effort on putting together the financing of this new project. In many of his previous films, SVT had been a co-financer; therefore, it was natural for him to turn to the head of documentary films at SVT and ask if he was interested in backing this new film. Since the people in the documentary department at SVT saw their task as backing not only young upcoming filmmakers, but also people who already had a reputation and track record in the industry, they agreed to go in as a co-financer of Videocracy.

Financing and negotiating

The filmmaker also knew early on that he wanted to work together with the Danish production company Zentropa and a producer there that he liked and had worked with before. Zentropa got the Danish film institute and the Danish public service broadcaster DR on board while the filmmaker contacted the Swedish film institute, the British broadcaster BBC and the Finnish public service broadcaster YLE. Having more than one Nordic public service broadcaster financing the film also meant that the production company could apply for money from the Nordic Film and TV Fund. These actors all became co-producers. The Atmo filmmaker explained that it could be tricky having so many co-producers on one project, who all (at least in theory) had the right to interfere in the process and have opinions about the content of the film:
5. The collaborative programme productions

...in this case, there have been many co-producers, and I can say that I am not really sure that it is always so fun to have it like that. Because there are a lot of people, and they have very different opinions sometimes. The dream scenario would be to produce a film completely with Swedish money. But that is not the way it works today.

Atmo filmmaker

When asked about how SVT’s project manager handles a situation where there are so many different actors all having a stake in the film, he said:

...I have had [projects] before where there has been eight, nine, 10 [co-producers]. And then we have had to appoint two that speak for the rest, because otherwise the poor filmmaker becomes all bombarded and that doesn’t work, that is unprofessional.

SVT project manager

The SVT project manager also explained that as a project manager for a documentary film at SVT, he was most heavily involved at the beginning and the end of a project. At the start of a project, the filmmaker would come to SVT and the allotted project manager would discuss the film idea: first of all what the film should be about and how it should “look and feel”. Often the filmmaker would have already started filming so filmed material could give a hint about the tone and approach the filmmaker was aiming for. Discussed at this point in time was also the kind of budget and financing plan the filmmaker had in mind. In order for SVT to ensure that the filmmaker would get the financing necessary, it usually required a separate producer for the film, who could take care of the financial aspects of the project. When those things were processed and the project manager and filmmaker felt they knew what to do and within which budget, a contract was usually signed where all the details regarding intellectual property rights and division of profits were regulated. These rights were usually divided according to how much the various co-producers were contributing to the total financing of the film. Here it was also decided which actor would be responsible for what, such as the various ways of distributing a film (cinema, TV rights in different countries, festivals, DVD sales and so forth). In the contract would also be specified all kinds of technical specifications of delivery as well as delivery dates.

Preparations and filming

In the case of Videocracy, the project manager at SVT didn’t seem so worried about keeping control of the film or the filmmaker for that matter. Since the
filmmaker had proved his worth in several films before, SVT’s project manager didn’t feel the need to keep a close eye on everything the filmmaker did, but had faith in him being able to deliver something interesting:

Let me put it like this, [the filmmaker] has, when we were to decide whether we should go into the project, he has shown us material that is visually very exciting, but I don’t think that we or I am a 100% sure what [the filmmaker] will make out of it. But I am pretty sure that he will make something good out of it. /…/ I expect [the filmmaker] to make a personal story about the world’s biggest videocracy, and I think he has an enormous ability to find these special people and situations. I think he will make something very good out of it. But I cannot say exactly what it will be.

SVT project manager

One of the things that the project manager at SVT did get involved in during the time the filmmaker was out filming were issues of legal character. The filmmaker used SVT’s project manager as a sounding board for questions such as if it was possible to use material generated when an interviewee didn’t know that the microphone was on, and if so, how this material was to be used. Since the project manager had a long history of working with current affairs programmes, and being legally responsible for such programmes at SVT, he could give advice on such matters. He was also responsible for when the film would be aired on SVT and, therefore, had an interest in making sure that SVT could guarantee its publication.

The SVT project manager explained that every documentary film and filmmaker has their specificities and, as a project manager at SVT, you needed to adjust your approach to each specific case. During the time the filmmaker was busy filming, depending on the filmmaker and the project manager as well as which project it was, the contact and involvement from the project manager’s side varied. Some filmmakers wanted project managers to be more involved, while some were more independent. For the project manager it was also a question of trust: would the filmmaker be OK on her or his own, or did the project manager feel a need to keep a closer eye on the process? Then, when the filmmaker started editing the film, and came up with a rough cut, a first version, the project manager’s involvement usually re-intensified. SVT’s project manager explained the whole process:

Well I would say that it is rather intensive at the beginning when you are kind of trying to agree on the terms and what to do and these

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25 According to the Swedish fundamental law of freedom of speech (Yttrandefrihetsgrundlagen), there has to be a person who is not a maker of the programme who assumes legal responsibility for the content.
5. The collaborative programme productions

things. Then it is relatively calm, that is you have contact and have meetings now and then, you follow the production. And then it becomes more intensive again when it [the film] goes through the cutting stage. And then you are usually sitting in the editing room and watch and have opinions and discuss together. In the best of worlds.

SVT project manager

When it came to documentary films, especially what the filmmaker called “creative documentaries” or “point of view documentaries”, the more personal, subjective documentaries that he was making, what happened in the cutting phase very much determined the film. In the editing room, it was often decided what kind of story it would become and how the story should be told.

So, in that sense documentary films are a bit special, because it is built upon a process that is different from everything else. The equivalent to a feature film, the scripting when you decide what the film will be about, that comes in the cutting of a [documentary] film. It is when you cut that you decide…

Maria: How it is to be told?

How it is to be told, in any case in which order, and how it is to end. Often you have the possibility to make 100 different films with the same material. In a script you make new versions, you let people read and say: “Yes but this character feels weak” just like you do in the cutting. You bring people in and ask: “how do you experience this, do you get that, how does this part feel and what are your impressions of it?” So, it is the reverse of a feature film.

Atmo filmmaker

The finished programme

It took about 18 months from the time when the filmmaker approached SVT and started discussing the project with SVT’s project manager until the filmmaker started cutting the film. During this time, he got the financing in place and did the major part of the filming. After the summer of 2008, the process of cutting the film began, and together with his long time editor they spent the autumn in the cutting room. There they slowly brought the story of a country sick with obsession for fame and surface to life. At the beginning of 2009, the film was almost finished, and the filmmaker was content with the result. When asked what effect he wanted the film to have on the people who saw it, he answered:
That people recognise what I am trying to tell them as something they really want to be confronted with one way or another. Because this film is really about something important! It always sounds boring when you say important, but it is after all important! It is about something that I find incredibly fascinating, Italy’s TV situation. In the film, it is not just journalistic, it moves at a much more existential level I would say, about a country ruled by visual media where surface has become incredibly important and where people are obsessed with becoming famous./…/ A country ruled by television, ruled by images is something that everybody can recognise wherever they live in the western world.

Atmo filmmaker

The SVT project manager argued that the film would probably not have very high audience ratings when it was shown on SVT, but he hoped it would nevertheless make a mark on the world:

These are not films that generate giant audiences and give you attention in the newspapers for having so many viewers. We usually say that either you have ratings or you have impact. And this is a typical impact film that can make an impression, maybe even influence things in Italy… No, probably it won’t, I’m not that naïve! [laugh] But it will probably affect somebody, I hope it just doesn’t batter at open doors! After all, you sit there with a knot in your stomach after watching it.

SVT project manager

Videocracy had its cinema premiere in Sweden in August 2009 and it was aired on SVT in the spring of 2010. It was selected to be shown at the prestigious film festival in Venice, Italy. Videocracy was timely released: during the summer, the Italian prime minister Berlusconi, who controls most of Italian TV, was involved in a series of sex scandals. Berlusconi being involved in scandals was nothing new; however, this time the trailer to Videocracy, which was scheduled to run both on Italy’s state TV channels and on Berlusconi-owned Mediaset channels, was stopped by the broadcasters since it was deemed to hurt Berlusconi’s reputation by alluding to the sex scandals. This censorship by the mainstream Italian TV gave the film publicity that no advertising budget could have bought, and in a few days the trailer had been viewed more than 120,000 times on YouTube. The fact that the Venice Film Festival at first did not want to include the film in its official competition programme (the official reason was that the festival manager did not like it and that the decision had nothing to do with politics) also made the film a discussion topic even before it was
shown. Eventually two separate sections of the festival joined forces to show
the film, and on the day of the festival premiere, there was such a crowd of
people who wanted to see it that an extra screening was scheduled in the
festival’s biggest film theatre.

The day after it was shown in Venice it was premiered in 25 Italian cities,
something very unusual in Italy where documentary films almost never are
shown in cinemas. Because of all the attention, instead of the 30 copies planned
100 copies of the film were released and, by the end of October, 150,000
Italians had seen the film at the cinema. The Italian right wing and Berlusconi-
controlled newspapers were not enthusiastic and most of them dismissed the
film. The majority of Italian newspapers, however, praised it and regarded it as
an important document about the state in Italy in the early 21st century. The
Torino newspaper La Stampa wrote: “The film tries to portray the story of a
collective bewitchment, of how the Italians fundamentally have been changed
by the magic potion of television”.

Only the future will tell whether Videocracy will contribute to breaking the
spell under which the Italians are captive. But at least it received more attention
and made a larger impact than the filmmaker and his co-producers could ever
have dreamt of.
The Christmas Calendar 2008

**Title:** The Christmas Calendar 2008 (Skägget i brevlådan)
**Production company:** Anagram Produktion
**Genre:** Children’s drama
**Number of episodes:** 24 12-minute episodes
**Financing form:** Co-producers SVT, Anagram Produktion, Film i Skåne
**Aired on SVT:** December 2008
**Cast of programme makers interviewed:** from Anagram Produktion: Executive producer, Producer, Scriptwriter (idea generator) and Scriptwriter (companion). From Film i Skåne: Executive producer. From SVT: Head of drama, Project manager, Script editor, Web manager, Contract negotiator and Sales representative.

The idea and pitching it to SVT

The Christmas Calendar (or advent calendar) in SVT could be called a real tradition. The first calendar was broadcast in 1960 and since then there has been a calendar every year, starting with the first episode on December 1st and finishing on Christmas Eve. The Christmas Calendar is truly one of SVT’s flagship programmes and every year the attention from the press and media as well as the expectations from children and their parents all over the country is enormous. I remember when I was a kid, the feeling of anticipation when my parents bought me the calendar of paper that accompanied each year’s programme. Eagerly my brother and I awaited December 1st when the programme would finally start. Would this year’s programme be as good as last year’s was? Would we be disappointed or pleased?

The planning of the 2008 Christmas Calendar began in the winter of 2005/2006 when the executive producer at the production company Anagram got talking with the head of drama at SVT’s unit in Göteborg. They had worked together previously when Anagram had produced another drama series together with SVT. This time SVT contacted a couple of production companies, among them Anagram, which they knew were good at producing drama, and asked them to come in with suggestions for a Christmas Calendar. The set up was that SVT would rerun an older Christmas Calendar and that they wanted a new “frame”, a story that could accompany the already existing drama series.

The executive producer at Anagram contacted the man who was to become the scriptwriter, who also later was to play one of the main characters, and asked if he wanted to write a synopsis. The scriptwriter had been writing and
5. The collaborative programme productions

starring in programmes for both TV and radio previously, and he was eager to write more for television. He tells the story of how the script that originally was meant to be only a frame for another story ended up being the main drama:

Well, there were possibly some slip-ups in the communication or we made a little blunder. From the beginning, we were asked to write a frame for a rerun of another Christmas Calendar, that was the first. /…/ With such a frame you could make the production a bit simpler. But then I got a feeling, so I wrote a bit more [laugh]. And then they [SVT] thought it was good and then somewhere along the way SVT thought that this is so good that we drop [the other Christmas Calendar]. And in that situation, when that decision was made, I don’t really know when that decision was made, Anagram ought to have put its foot down and said: well OK, then this will be like a regular Christmas Calendar, but wait a minute, we only get half the amount of money it used to be. But it never happened.

Anagram scriptwriter

Financing and negotiation

The producer at Anagram had the job of finding the technical and organisational means to translate the manuscript into a recording, and to find cost efficient solutions when it came to the actual production of the programme. She says that both Anagram and SVT should have really understood that it ought to be impossible to film such a script for that amount of money:

…I was not even involved in that [early] stage, I was busy with another production. And then when I got the manuscript in one hand and the money in the other hand, these were not adjusted to each other. Because you cannot demand that the scriptwriters know what things cost or what is realistic, they write what they like. And there were no control from either side, neither from SVT nor Anagram. So, there you can say that I got involved too late. And for that I think both are to blame, it is Anagram’s fault for not having control or appointed somebody who had that control from the beginning. And it is SVT’s fault who bought a script and thought that this will be good for this money, it looks really nice, it is great if we can do this fantastic manuscript for this money, it seems really realistic! [ironic laugh].

Anagram producer
Once SVT had chosen Anagram and its manuscript for *Christmas Calendar* 2008, the co-producers of the project started negotiating the prerequisites for the production. Since the budget was slim as it was, it became crucial for the production company Anagram to find additional co-producers who could add to the financing. However, it proved difficult to find co-financers that wanted to back a production without getting anything in return, and the chances of making their money back was not sure even for Anagram. This meant that they were not keen on splitting any future profits on DVD sales or any of the other merchandise produced around the project, and no commercial actor would want to invest money with such prospects. So, Anagram had to look for the kinds of backers that would not want a financial return on their investments. Since the production company was situated in Lund, the municipality of Lund was interested in backing the production as a support of the local TV industry. This, however, SVT put a stop to since it found it to be in conflict with their policies on sponsorship, which is an especially sensitive issue in regards to children’s programming. With Film i Skåne, a regional film fund for the development of film production in the Skåne region, SVT however had no problem, and it became the third co-producer of the programme. The process of finding an additional financer went on during the autumn of 2007 and the contract was finally signed at the beginning of the New Year.

**Preparations and filming**

The events that played out during the early phase of the project meant that it from the get go wrestled with a very slim budget in relation to the rather elaborate script with many costly ingredients such as many different actors and locations. The money that was planned to cover a “side story” now had to be enough for a whole drama series in 24 episodes. Despite this, the work with the production went on, and the scriptwriter took onboard another person to help him write the story. This person had previous experience of writing drama for SVT and the scriptwriter thought it would also make the process more fun and creative to have somebody to write together with. The aim of the scriptwriters was to write a story that had both humour and excitement, and that would not underestimate the viewers. It was the first time they wrote for children and the scriptwriter explains how he thought about “the audience”:

Maria: But how does one think when writing for children? Do you think that “my daughter would like this” or “I would have liked this when I was nine” or what?

Yes, I think both. And I also think that this is what I find funny now. This I find funny, but I have also taken sneak peeks at my daughter when she watches TV and film and I have watched a fair amount of children’s programmes. And my first conclusion was, well that is also
taking a chance, but I really believe it, that you can have a fairly complex story, you can be fairly challenging. I think, this saying of not underestimating your audience is pretty hard, because you don’t know when you do and when you don’t. But I think that young people can follow rather complex stories, this is what I believe. We will see if they do. So, it is a rather complex story. Then I have tried to analyse what kind of humour children like. And I reached the conclusion that children, basically the same as adults, that is children like slapstick, they like when people fall on their face, and children like strong emotions, when people get very angry and scream and stuff. Not in the sense that they get scared. And then they like funny derogatory words, like ”you potty fish” or something. [Pause] Ahh, I don’t know.

Anagram scriptwriter

The basic plot was about two characters called Klas and Lage (played by the scriptwriter and his long time comedy partner) and their friend Renée. The three friends have a firm together that sells Renée’s crazy inventions. Renée is the leader of the gang and the one with the brains, Klas is egocentric, lazy and often mean to Lage who is positive and kind but stupid. The whole adventure starts with Lage by mistake mailing the grocery list instead of the wish list to Santa Claus. In order to avoid the catastrophe of getting groceries for Christmas, they set out on a quest for Santa. But they soon realise that other people are also looking for Santa Claus, and that these people have evil intentions. Will the three friends be able to find Santa and save Christmas?

Since the Christmas Calendar is no ordinary children’s programme, being one of the Christmas traditions that is loved by a great part of the Swedish people, all the programme makers were a bit nervous about what the audience would think. They knew that whatever happened, whether this year’s calendar became a success or not, it would be widely talked about and reviewed in the media. The fact that the calendar was also usually watched by a lot of adult viewers and not only kids made the scriptwriters feel they should try to target the two groups of viewers and create a programme that would appeal to both:

No, I have never written for children before. All the things that [my comedy partner] and I have done before have turned out a bit more childish than I had wanted, so I thought directly that this will be no problem. But I am still anxious and wonder how it will go down with the target group. /…/ I find it very tricky. For an ordinary children’s programme, you can just not care about the grownups and just focus on the kids. These are my personal reflections of the whole thing, but it feels like, even though SVT says that the target group is children it feels like the whole family should be able to watch. So, therefore we
have allowed ourselves some grownup jokes. But that also makes it a bit complex, a bit hard when trying to reach two target groups at the same time. For example, there are lots of things about the wish list and such things, so some of the fundamentals are rather childish. But there are some elements that are quite scary. So, in the worst-case situation it will turn out that these childish fundamentals scare off everybody who are not children, and that which is rather scary scares the kids away. And then we have a problem!

Anagram scriptwriter

Long before the contract was signed, the co-producers had to start planning for the various elements of The Christmas Calendar. In these projects, not only the programme itself has to be made, but all kinds of additional products have to be produced. First, there is a calendar of paper that is connected to both SVT’s TV series as well as the public service radio’s Christmas calendar. The design of this paper calendar has to be finalised in the spring in order to be printed and delivered to the shops in early November, in good time for the programmes. Then, SVT in previous years had made a videogame on the same story as the TV programme, which they decided to also do this year. This videogame was also to be available in good time before the series was aired. Finally, there was the decision on which distributor to choose for the DVD, which would be released after the programme had been aired on TV.

At the beginning of 2008, the scriptwriters started to finalise their script. In one painful session, they had to cut 70 pages of funny material, since the budget didn’t allow for more than a two-month period of recording, and they just didn’t have time to cover everything in the script. To make sure that they could cover the amount of minutes per episode they had promised to deliver to SVT they had in each episode an intro-vignette, a resume about what had happened previously and a teaser at the end for next day’s programme. This meant that they only had to produce ten minutes of drama per episode, and since they had about 40 working days to film the whole thing, they needed to record 6 minutes of usable film a day. The main decision the producer made in order to get the logistics to work out was to decide that the whole thing should be shot in a studio. When filming everything inside there is no transportation and no waiting for weather conditions or any other such things that slow down the pace of filming. The producer also had to be tough when negotiating salaries for the film crew and actors in order to keep the budget down. Luckily, she said, most people wanted to participate because of The Christmas Calendar’s inherent “attention potential”. The actors knew that they could count on an

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26 In most TV productions, the most expensive phase of a project is the recording phase, where many people are needed on set: actors, director, camera, sound and light crew as well as props, wardrobe, make up, extras coordinator and all other kinds of coordinating functions.
5. The collaborative programme productions

The recording took place during March and April and the summer of 2008 was spent editing the material. Once the editors at Anagram had put together a first version of an episode, it was sent to SVT where the project manager and head of drama watched and gave comments. When this process was over the postproduction process took place and in the autumn, the finished episodes were delivered to SVT.

While the TV calendar was recorded in the spring, the public service radio, SR, was planning its own calendar. At the time, the CEOs of SVT and SR had agreed on a new policy to cooperate more between the two organisations. Since the two scriptwriters had started their careers in radio, they thought that they should see if SR could be interested in making a radio calendar with the same characters as in the TV version. Back in history, such coordinated calendars had been common, but the last time it had happened was in 1976. SR liked the idea that the scriptwriters put forward and decided to let them write the 2008 radio calendar. The radio story was a different one from the story in TV, but the same three main characters played the lead. They recorded the radio programme in August over ten days with one of the scriptwriters as director, and with the same producer from Anagram who produced the TV calendar.

The finished programme

When November came, the paper calendars appeared in supermarkets together with the videogame, and the SVT and SR PR machines got working to make sure that the press and other media reported on this year’s Christmas Calendar. The programme makers started to get a bit nervous about people's reactions, and hoped that the slim budget would not be noticeable:

Hopefully that [the small budget] will not be obvious on the screen. So, that is what remains to be seen, will that shine through, will people think that we have done it on half of the money, or will it…? We don’t want that at all. We are proud that we have done it, so that is nothing we want to come through on the screen of course. So, it will be interesting, it is a bit nervous now as we come closer to the premiere.

Anagram producer

On the evening of December 1st, about 1.4 million Swedes (out of 9 million in total) sat down to watch the year’s Christmas Calendar. The young viewers were enthusiastic and thought it was both funny and exciting, as evidenced by children’s “viewing panels” in the newspapers as well as by the masses of e-mails that came to the children’s unit at SVT. However, some grownups in the older generation were outraged by the lack of “Christmas spirit”: they thought
there were too few Christmas trees and jingle bells and cottage roofs with newly fallen snow. Even though the programme makers had suspected this reaction, they were still surprised by the “Christmas fundamentalism” in some groups of the Swedish population:

We were a bit shocked for the first couple of days at how much Christmas fundamentalism there was! They gave us shit! It was totally crazy! We had anticipated that people would say something about it not being so “Christmassy”, but shit, it was really a witchhunt over the first couple of days. People calling both [the SVT head of drama and the SVT project manager] at their homes! People calling me here, they had found out that I was the producer and called me here at the company and wanted to talk to me. Mostly older people. Never children of course, but often grandmothers who thought it was a scandal. So, it sure stirred up a lot of feeling!

Anagram producer

The programme makers at SVT, however, knew that The Christmas Calendar usually aroused all sorts of feelings in its viewers and took the whole thing with ease. They were very satisfied with the final programme, and the fact that they received the best ratings for a calendar since 2001 – on average 850,000 viewers per episode (excluded viewing on the web and mobile). For the programme makers, this was seen as a sign that the audience liked the series.

Upcoming…

In the next three chapters 6-8, there will be a description and discussion organized around three themes: The Money, The People, and The Programmes. These themes include what I have found to be pressing and meaningful dimensions in collaborative production of public service TV. The themes cover topics that trigger active sense making and the production of narratives in relation to these new forms of production. The themes bring to the surface what the actors involved are talking about as they account for their experiences of doing public service TV in collaborative productions. In these chapters you will find an extensive description of the programme makers’ collaboration in the programme productions, and important events and aspects when making programmes for public service TV. In this part of the thesis I will also begin to articulate the impact and “doing” of a public service TV institution in relation to these central themes.

After that, the analysis chapters 9-10 will focus on interpreting and conceptualizing how the public service TV institution is being worked on by the programme makers and what this work entails. Here I will interpret the
5. The collaborative programme productions

programme makers practices of making collaborative programmes informed by
an institutional work perspective, to see what these practices can do to the field
and the public service TV institution. The chapters 9-10 thus deal with how
action and actors can affect an institution. In these chapters I will also elaborate
on the concept of institutional work and how this study can add insights for
scholars interested in the concept.
6. The Money: Negotiating the terms

The contents of the media always reflect the interest of those who finance them.

Denis McQuail

This chapter is about the monetary aspect of collaborative productions, and related issues such as contracts between SVT and the production companies, programme budgets, and the negotiation over exploitative rights to the finished programme. Here I will describe how the financing and producing partners tried to agree on the financial terms of the production: how much should each actor contribute with and how are the rights to the programme and other material to be divided amongst the parties? In this chapter I will tell a story of how SVT tries to keep “its” programmes pure from any other interests than its own and how this control is exercised – and what the external producers think of these practices.

This chapter will thus focus on the programme makers’ activities of agreeing on which terms the public service TV programmes shall be made. In this process, as we shall see, there is an ongoing negotiation over who shall have control over the public service TV programmes that are produced in collaborative productions, and how public service TV shall be enacted in these kinds of programmes.

Financing collaborative productions

Denis McQuail writes in his influential book Mass Communication Theory the words cited above: “the contents of the media always reflect the interests of those who finance them” (2000:198). This reasoning has been one of the main arguments for the existence of licence-funded public service broadcasters, namely that a broadcaster funded by viewers will broadcast content that serves viewers’ interests and nobody else’s. Unlike advertising-funded television that broadcasts programmes to generate audiences to sell to advertisers, licence-funded public service TV should not need to worry about airing controversial or challenging programmes that might offend advertisers or not appeal to certain audiences desirable by advertisers. By being funded by licence fees, the Swedish public service broadcasters argue that they have been able to operate
independently not only from the state but also from any commercial interests that might want to influence the content broadcast. This independence is mentioned in SVT’s broadcasting charter as “opartiskhet” (impartiality) as well as in its official documents as one of the cornerstones of its existence and of its “public serviceness”. It was also mentioned by many of its employees I talked to during the course of this study in regards to various issues related to making public service TV.

But then what happens to the independence of SVT when it is no longer the sole financer of programmes, namely when it seeks joint financing agreements with other actors? If “the contents of the media always reflect the interests of those who finance it”, how does SVT deal with having actors with different interests co-financing its content?

Three of the studied productions, *The Christmas Calendar*, *Videocracy* and *The Wreck Divers*, were co-financed by SVT, the production company involved in the production and other various co-financers. *The Record Bureau* was fully financed by SVT (formally called a “production outlay”), which paid the production company to produce it. Finally, *Class 9A* was fully financed by the production company from which SVT bought the rights to broadcast it in Sweden.

Table 6.1 The financing forms of the five programme productions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Financing form</th>
<th>Financers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Christmas Calendar</em></td>
<td>Co-financing</td>
<td>SVT, Production company Anagram Produktion, Regional film fund Film i Skåne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Videocracy</em></td>
<td>Co-financing</td>
<td>Production company Atmo, Danish production company Zentropa, Danish public service broadcaster DR, Danish film institute, SVT, Swedish film institute, Nordic Film and TV fund, Finnish public service broadcaster YLE, British public service broadcaster BBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Wreck Divers</em></td>
<td>Co-financing</td>
<td>SVT, Production company Deep Sea Productions, Finnish public service broadcaster YLE and Nordvisionen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Record Bureau</em></td>
<td>Production outlay</td>
<td>SVT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Class 9A</em></td>
<td>SVT bought the broadcasting rights</td>
<td>The production company Strix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. The Money: Negotiating the terms

The process of financing collaborative SVT productions varies somewhat from genre to genre as well as depending on what kind of financer is involved. The first aspect when it comes to jointly financed programmes is that some characteristic of a programme or film must appeal to a financer in order for it to be interested in investing in the programme. Either the programme has some commercial potential in the form of DVD sales, format sales, cinema and festival sales and broadcasting rights in other countries and markets, or the programme fulfils some other criteria of interest for a financer. Examples of financers not primarily interested in monetary returns on investments are various film and TV funds, which are financed by the state to help the production of cultural products that would otherwise not be supplied by market forces. There are also geographical funds that produce programmes and films in a specific region in order to boost the turnover of capital and labour in that region.27 If a programme has none of these qualities, it will be hard to find a funder outside of SVT, and thus SVT itself would have to finance it using licence fee money. For a researcher wanting to understand collaborative productions commissioned by SVT, the financing aspect is a crucial part of these productions, and one of the most important differences between SVT’s in-house and collaborative productions.

27 For programmes produced for commercial channels, there is another type of financing as well: what usually is called ”advertising-funded programming”, where an advertiser pays for its products and services to be featured in the programme (product placement), or for a whole programme which in some way promotes ideas or activities the funder want to promote.
September 2009: Two diametrically opposed realities depicting SVT’s use of production companies

On the Swedish news site DagensPS on September 9th, 2009, is the news that Peter Settman, a well-known media personality, programme host on several programmes aired by SVT and owner of a production company, is selling his production company Baluba to a Finnish company. Two of the readers’-comments show how political the issue of production companies working with SVT is, as well as how vastly different opinions there are about this.

Reality nr 1: "WELL DONE SETTMAN!!! YOU HAVE REALLY SHOWN HOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS. HOPE YOU GO ON FOR MANY MORE YEARS EVEN IF YOU NOW BECOME EMPLOYED. IT IS JUST BULLSHIT THAT IT WOULD BE CHEAPER FOR THE CHANNELS TO PRODUCE EVERYTHING THEMSELVES. JUST LOOK AT SVT, WHICH HAS THOUSANDS OF EMPLOYEES THAT DRAG THEIR FEET INSTEAD OF DELIVERING. IT COSTS TONS OF MONEY, WHICH WE WHO OWN A TV HAVE TO PAY WHETHER OR NOT WE WATCH SVT. WE ARE FORCED TO DO IT.” (capital letters in original, my translation from Swedish)

Reality nr 2: “A textbook example of how it would be cheaper for the TV channels to produce programmes internally. Now they pay obvious over-prices, which generate large profits to single individuals. Nothing bad about Peter S, he has only skilfully used the system. In a similar manner, the system is used when day-care centres are “given away for free” and in a short time generate millions of kronors in profits to the new owners and then on expense of lower quality and fewer personnel.” (my translation from Swedish)
6. The Money: Negotiating the terms

Co-financing enabling public service TV

One driving force for collaborative production is, as this study will show, that many of the SVT employees involved in collaborative productions that are co-financed by external sources see such projects as opportunities to produce more expensive programmes, and more of them, than the SVT budget allows. For some of the SVT employees, collaborative productions are thus seen as a facilitating activity in their making of public service TV. The SVT project managers of The Wreck Divers were makers of science and factual programming, a genre in which science programmes and documentaries are very costly to produce. They thus looked for all sorts of financing constructions that can help them make this kind of programming. One of the project managers told me that they preferred to work with other TV broadcasters as financers, since such productions were as she said "purest interest wise", but also other models were possible as long as they didn't jeopardise SVT’s independence:

Maria: Is it preferably public service companies then [with which you collaborate]?

Yes, within Europe we have such a network but we collaborate also with private broadcasters around the world. But very much of course with public service, both in the USA and England. But then we also try to find other collaborations, I will try to think of a good example... Yes, we even have collaborated with TV4 [a Swedish advertising-funded broadcaster]. I am such a person who tries to find collaborations rather than doing everything ourselves. I try to find as many collaborations as possible and as long as we can maintain our independence then we can allow even collaborations with TV4. We have shared a camera that is going with some researchers down to Antarctica, and there we have a deal with Stockholm University, TV4 and SVT. And that I am actually proud of that we can go so far as to collaborate even with our competitors.

SVT project manager

The other Wreck Divers project manager at SVT argued along the same lines, and said that his mission was to make science and factual programming have an even larger share and stronger profile within SVT’s offerings. Therefore, it was important to maintain good networks with other commissioners at TV channels in other countries as well as making these collaborations work. Not only were they jointly financing projects, but there were all sorts of ways to exchange footage and whole programmes to make sure that the costs were split as much as possible. These collaborative practices, which involved cooperation with various actors, were in this way seen by the SVT programme makers as a
way to enable public service TV programming to be produced. New and innovative collaborative practices were not seen by them as a threat to the existence of SVT or public service TV. On the contrary, by engaging in such practices and by maintaining and building networks with actors both in Sweden and internationally, they could continue making programmes that would educate and inform the audience about science topics. As the project manager said in the quote above, to go as far as to collaborate with one’s competitors was a practice that it would gladly engage in if this meant that the outcome would be stronger for science programmes within SVT’s total offering.

**The Christmas Calendar: Finding potential financers**

In *The Christmas Calendar* project, the co-financers were SVT, the production company Anagram and the regional film fund Film i Skåne28. In genres that have a low appeal in the commercial market such as science and documentaries, there are networks in place between Nordic and European public service broadcasters and other presumptive co-financers. For co-productions in these genres, SVT’s project managers often acted as producers for the programmes in the sense that they were actively involved in finding financers for the programme outside of SVT. In contrast to this kind of programming, in collaborative productions of other genres (such as drama and others) there seemed to be an understanding among both the project managers at SVT and the external producers that it was the responsibility of the external producers to attract investors to projects (the role of executive producer as a role is defined in the feature film industry.) This was the agreement under which *The Christmas Calendar* project was initiated between SVT and the production company: the production company was to be responsible for finding the additional funding the project needed in order for it to be feasible. This task was put upon the executive producer at the production company Anagram who had long experience of producing drama for various production companies and thus had both a good network and a sense of which actors could be interested in co-financing the project. The problem in this specific project was that the calendar, being such a SVT flagship and tradition, promised to be a bit tricky to make money out of in a commercial market. Other more “traditional” drama series, the producers at Anagram told me, would have been easier to market and sell as something independent of SVT. This series, however, would always be tightly connected to SVT, which would make it even harder to sell in a DVD format. This meant that Anagram wanted all of the (admittedly small) DVD profits in order to recoup what it had invested in the project. Since it hoped to break even when it got its share of the DVD money, there was no room for an additional financer to share the already thin DVD profits. With SVT claiming the broadcasting rights in exchange for its share of the funding, few other rights

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28 Skåne is a region in the south of Sweden.
to the drama series would be worth any money to tempt additional investors to join the project. Anagram was thus in a position where it had to find a financer that would require almost nothing in return for its investment. Where does one find such a backer?

Well, within the film and TV industry that make “arty” and less commercial films, such money is called “soft” money and can be found in various film funds aimed at stimulating film production. Soft money is the kind of money that is given as a form of support, with few strings attached. Often the conditions are that only if the film makes a lot of money will the backer demand its investment back. Anagram, being situated in Skåne in the southern part of Sweden, had previously worked with such a backer, Film i Skåne, in other projects, and now turned to it again. Film i Skåne is financed by the Skåne region and its mission is to support the regional production of film and TV in order to boost economic activity in the region. Since the production and recording of the series were to take place in Skåne, it was willing to put in the extra money that would make the series doable. However, even though the CEO of Film i Skåne was happy to be able to back the operations of one of the region’s promising production companies, he questioned whether SVT really should use external production companies as co-financers for productions where the chance of making the money back was as slim as in this project. He argued that even though in theory production companies should be able to say no to take part in projects that seemed like bad investments, the reality of many production companies often forced them to accept anyway. He explained:

They [production companies] are dependent upon being in production, which means that they live a bit from hand to mouth. Few of them have time to build a value, that is a catalogue of films that they can recoup money from retrospectively, very few have that possibility. Rather they must be in production to survive. And then it is of course tempting for them to take on even a rather bad [project], even though it is fairly bad, just so they can produce and get some money and have a certain income. But there of course SVT has a big responsibility.

CEO Film i Skåne

The necessity for production companies to always be in production and have projects in the pipeline was stressed by other external producers, who concurred with the Film i Skåne CEO that this was a reason why production companies often were in bad negotiation positions vis-à-vis the commissioning broadcasters. They simply had to accept the offers given to them or else lose the commission, which would mean that they risked finding themselves without any jobs and income sources. Faced with such a prospect, a bad deal was better
Judging from the external producers’ narratives about the conditions of Swedish TV production companies, there indeed seems to be an imbalance in the power relationship between SVT as a commissioner of programmes and the external producers as suppliers of these programmes. SVT’s practices of leaving the task of finding additional potential financers in many of its collaborative productions to the external producers means that it is outsourcing one of the most challenging and time-consuming aspects of the pre-production of visual content (Ribera & Sieber, 2009; von Rimscha, 2009). It also means that production companies find themselves in a position where they have to bear a lot of the risks associated with this financing; if they cannot find an additional financer or if the budget is not being kept – for whatever reason – it is the production company that will have to bear the cost. In this way, SVT is able to outsource the activity of financial source scouting as well as the financial risk, while at the same time retaining much of the control over the final product.

The Christmas Calendar: Keeping it pure

The Christmas Calendar’s executive producer at Anagram also contacted the municipality of Lund, the town where the production company had its base, and asked if it would be interested in backing the project financially. The Lund municipality thought it sounded interesting, and since it wanted to support promising production companies in its municipality agreed to back the production financially. The producers at Anagram were pleased since the additional money meant that they could prolong the recording time by two weeks and did not have to stress so much during the filming phase. However, their collaborators at SVT were a bit doubtful about having a municipality coming into the project as a financer, and ran it through SVT’s internal legal experts. The legal department gave the verdict that such a collaboration was not in line with SVT’s policy, which was based on the requirements in its broadcasting charter. Since this was a children’s production, SVT deemed it crucial that there should be no external interests involved in the financing. A SVT negotiator explained this standpoint:

29 Another factor that has made independent producers – particularly the small “lifestyle” ones – invest in projects that from an economic standpoint were less than promising was the love of their ideas. If they had a chance to realise a film or programme idea, they jumped at the chance even though it meant that the money and time they invested in the production might not pay off in the end. Many producers at production companies also had a group of people relying on them for their livelihoods: groups of freelancers or employees at the company with whom the producers usually worked and felt responsible for. This put additional pressure on independent producers to accept less than ideal production deals with broadcasters.
In certain cases, it could be OK to have other parties investing, but as a rule not when it comes to children’s productions, then it has to be as pure as possible. Then there should be nobody but maybe the film funds and some others, the Swedish film institute and Nordic film and TV fund and such.

SVT contract negotiator

The programme makers at Anagram were a bit disappointed by this decision, especially since the production resources were as thinly spread as they were. When the Anagram producers in the interviews retrospectively tried to make sense of SVT’s decision to turn down Lund’s municipality as a financer, the fact that any kind of sports event aired on SVT, such as the annual sports award show, could show large signs with the names of their sponsors was incriminating. It didn’t make any sense to the external producers that certain genres at SVT were allowed liberal use of sponsors when others were far more restrictive. It was also argued that even within the same genre it seemed to depend on which specific SVT project manager had supervised the production as to how strict SVT’s “independence from commercial interests” was. From the Anagram producer’s understanding, it seemed like a bit of a lottery how strict the policy of not showing logos and product names in SVT programmes was implemented. This made collaborations difficult, and the producer at Anagram said that even though she shared many of SVT’s quality goals and guiding principles, she found the implementation of their “commercial independence” problematic:

At the same time, it becomes quite unworkable because I think that there are so many mixed messages at that company [SVT], which makes it hard to work with them. Like this inappropriate promotion, which I sometimes think can be a bit hypocritical, about what is the inappropriate promotion of commercial interests [otillbörligt gynnande]. And then you can watch a programme that another [SVT] project manager has done, and there 70 brands swish past, like in Musikbyrån [a SVT music programme]. There, Per Gessle [a famous Swedish musician] sits and shows all his instruments and they are all of the same brand and you just go: well, okay…

Anagram producer

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30 It should be noted that SVT’s practices for sponsoring sports events, as well as indirect sponsoring in programmes for children under the age of 12, are regulated by SVT’s broadcasting charter. This document clearly states that sponsoring is allowed “in connection to sports events”, and that “strict restrictiveness should be taken when it comes to indirectly sponsored programmes for children under 12 years” SVT. (2009). SVT’s sändningstillstånd/SVT:s broadcasting charter.
Public service TV: Pure and independent

The events that played out during the financing phase of *The Christmas Calendar* could be interpreted as an example of different institutional logics clashing and creating confusion and frustration for the actors in the field. For external producers, a very important financing source when working for commercial broadcasters was companies wanting to have their products and services exposed in return for payment or discounts. Such financing deals were often not only welcomed by commercial broadcasters but often necessary, since this reduced the amount of money they needed to invest in programmes. Many external producers bore witness to how commercial broadcasters increasingly refused to finance programmes they commissioned, but demanded that external producers should find all the necessary investors themselves (van den Brink, 20090616). In collaborative productions with SVT, however, any kind of exposure of products that could be seen as the promotion of commercial interests was banned, especially if there could be the slightest suspicion that the producers had received any favours in return for this exposure. For external producers, this meant that what was a natural and even necessary practice when producing for commercial broadcasters – namely making deals with advertisers about the exposure of products – was a mortal sin when they were producing for SVT. The prerequisites for finding additional financers was thus fundamentally different depending on whether the client was a commercial broadcaster or a public service broadcaster – even though both clients were pressuring the external producer to find financers that could contribute with increasingly larger parts of the total production budget.

However, since making programmes without showing any kinds of brands or logos is practically impossible in our contemporary society where almost everything – prints, logos, colours, sounds – connote a commercial source, there seemed to be an inevitable predicament when making public service TV programmes. From the understanding of the producer at Anagram, SVT solved this dilemma by being randomly hypocritical: some financers were banned in some productions, whereas some logos were OK in some programmes produced by some project managers. For external producers working for both commercial broadcasters as well as SVT, the practice of production and especially financing took on different meanings depending on for whom they produced a programme, even though the daily activities of TV production were the same independent of the commissioner.

But if working with SVT made some things complicated for external producers, things seemed even more complex for the people working as commissioners, contract negotiators and project managers at SVT. They were the ones whose task it was to keep commercial interests at bay, maintaining the SVT independence at all times and making sure that its programmes were kept “pure”. This was a hard thing to do even in their own in-house productions,
but it became even trickier in programmes where there were external co-financers with their own interests.

Going back to SVT’s refusal of Lund’s municipality as a co-financer in *The Christmas Calendar* project, the producer at Anagram saw this as somewhat overprotective and questioned how Lund’s interest would really affect the final programme:

> And then we of course got a bit disappointed, because I think it is a bit farfetched, because it is not like it is a product, it is not like we would try to put in some weird coffee brand or any darn thing. It is after all Lund’s municipality and we are after all recording it there. Would people really feel like moving to Lund, or would the kids start thinking: “hmm, I think I will start studying in Lund!” “No, stop this!” (laugh) /.../ So, I think it was a bit exaggerated to think like that to be honest. Even though I understand that they must be really careful when it comes to children and all that, I mean it is a municipality and it must really be a borderline case, and then it would have been easier to tip it in the right direction than to tip it in the wrong direction.

*Anagram producer*

The *Christmas Calendar* contract negotiator at SVT was aware of the problems SVT’s strict policy for financers caused production companies. Companies that often produced programmes for commercial broadcasters were used to having many financers involved in projects, and were often very savvy when it came to smart financing solutions. However, in productions with SVT such solutions were not acceptable and the negotiator’s job was to explain why this was so to companies producing for SVT. This was a sometimes troublesome task, which he took most seriously. He told me:

> But I am very fond of public service so I take this most seriously, try to do the right thing all the time. Which sometimes makes you a rather uncomfortable figure in the eyes of the production companies. Different smart financing solutions, à la Mercedes [referring to a recent product placement scandal] which I must say no to. And it is also important for me that I can motivate why, and not just be a no advocate, but have reasons for what I say. Because otherwise I don’t like myself if I am just to sit and say no. So, it is important to create this understanding in the other party why it has to be in a certain way. Why these small short filmmakers cannot thank Mio furniture in the credits. That is not public service, we have rules against that.

*SVT contract negotiator*
Keeping productions “pure” and free from commercial messages of any kind seems like a daunting task, especially when thinking about the reality in which we live where almost all products we use have a logo or can be associated with some commercial operator (the marketing profession has done its job!). Even so, since the act governing radio and TV in Sweden (Radio och TV lagen 1996/844) clearly states in chapter 6, paragraph 4 that: “Programmes which are not advertising may not in an inappropriate way promote commercial interest”, this is what SVT has to live by. The question is only what should be considered such inappropriate promotion. If a programme is perceived by anybody to violate the law after it has been broadcast, it is up to the Swedish broadcasting commission to decide whether there has in fact been a violation. However, since SVT is trying to avoid its programmes from ending up as such cases, its project managers are keen to make sure their programmes are “pure”. In the long run, every time the broadcasting commission rules against SVT in a case of “inappropriate promotion of commercial interests”, this means a slight loss of legitimacy for SVT and an opportunity for its critics to strengthen their claims. Keeping the programmes pure is thus in the long run a survival tactic for SVT as an accepted and legitimate enactor of public service TV.

SVT’s programme makers argued that one of its project manager’s main responsibilities was to make sure that the production company had not gotten any products or services for free or at a discount in return for exposure in the programmes. (The fear of commercial production companies as bringers of “commercialism” into public service TV will be dealt with further in chapter 7.) Therefore, SVT’s programme makers argued that the project manager from SVT must have that kind of insight into the production as well as access to all the documents and contracts the production company has signed with participants and suppliers. Many SVT employees saw this control function of the project managers as a vital part of their jobs, since keeping commercial interests out of SVT’s programmes was a way of keeping public service TV “unpolluted”. In the long run, maintaining SVT’s public service TV programmes pure would help preserve and maintain SVT’s survival as the assigned keeper of public service TV, and differentiate SVT from its commercial competitors. One SVT negotiator illustrated the difference with a personal observation:

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31 The reason why independent producers producing programmes for other channels can engage in product placement and sponsoring is because most commercial broadcasters in Sweden are in fact broadcasting from the UK, where other rules apply. However, in the summer of 2010 after the empirical part of this study had been completed, the law changed. In the new radio and TV act, product placement is in fact allowed for all Swedish broadcasters as long as it is clearly stated which products shown are paid for by advertisers.
6. The Money: Negotiating the terms

[On] TV4’s morning show sofa, they have only [the newspaper] Expressen on the coffee table, very deliberately of course, the same owner. And it is so wonderful to be able to point at that and dissociate oneself from that: “no we read several newspapers here, we are free, we are independent”. And we must always take great care of this in order not to get this kind of criticism against us. This I think is the way to survive in a good way as a public service. And then it helps us when others make mistakes, it does, it highlights the difference. Bluntly speaking it is really like that, it strengthens public service…

SVT contract negotiator

**SVT’s dual responsibilities towards the external producers and the viewers**

Many of the external producers in this study were of the opinion that during the past decade, the price SVT paid for broadcasting rights had decreased. (Out of the total amount SVT invests in a collaborative production, a certain amount is for the rights to broadcast the final product on its own channels. For the rest of the invested money it wants something in return, such as the rights to sell the programme abroad, or rights of other kinds that could be turned into revenues.) The external producers’ perceptions of the change in SVT’s financing practices are illustrated in figure 6.1.
Figure 6.1 External producers’ views of SVT’s decrease in payment of broadcasting rights

(Before: Total production budget 10 million. SVT’s investment was 7 million (broadcasting rights + other rights). SVT’s payment for broadcasting: 70% of SVT’s investment. SVT’s claim on other rights: 30% of SVT’s investment. Now: Total production budget 10 million. SVT’s investment 7 million (broadcasting rights + other rights). SVT’s payment for broadcasting: 50% of SVT’s investment. SVT’s claim on other rights: 50% of SVT’s investment.)

Whether this general opinion among the external producers is congruent with “reality” in the form of programme budgets and SVT’s internal accounting over the past years, I have no way of knowing since I have no access to these figures. It is, however, clear that SVT has been (and is continuously) under economic pressure with inflation rates exceeding the yearly increase in the licence fee (SVT, 2007). Whether this has affected the pricing of TV broadcasting rights cannot be answered here, I can only say that it seems to be a general opinion among the external producers in this study. Following this, the external producers argued that this meant that out of the total amount SVT invested in a project, it now demanded more of other kinds of rights in return for its money. From SVT’s side, the increased broadcasting “windows” put great demands on SVT having full access to content. Today it has several TV channels as well as “Play”, an online streaming function where it wants all material accessible for viewing 30 days after it has been broadcast on TV. For SVT, it is thus important to have rights to “its” programmes so it can show
them as often as it likes. This accessibility of content for viewers is framed in the SVT programme makers’ narratives as a service to the public and as a part of their public service mission. Since the viewers with the licence fees have paid for the content, they should be able to access it.

Not being too hard, nor too soft, at SVT

The negotiators at SVT, whose responsibility is it to handle the negotiations over financing and the related discussions over rights to the finished product, saw as a part of their jobs making sure the viewers got value for their licence fee money. This meant that they could not be “too soft” when negotiating the deals with external producers. But at the same time, another part of being a public service broadcaster was to treat co-financers fairly. For negotiators, this meant that they could not be “too hard” either. One SVT negotiator compared working in negotiation for SVT to working for a commercial broadcaster:

...as negotiator for [commercial] channel 3 or 5, I could have moved much more freely. I could have done more wheeling and dealing; here, there are a number of wrong moves you have to avoid. We have peoples’ eyes on us, we shall be good, and justly so, at SVT. And if we do the opposite there will be more attention around it than when the others [the commercial broadcasters] make a mistake, at least I find it so. I am much more cautious here. I am partly business-minded, because that is a demand from the licence payers, to take care of the licence payers’ money, but I am also good, do the right thing; that is difficult. So, as a negotiator I must not only make sure we don’t pay too much [to the production companies], but we cannot either pay somebody too little. According to our internal policy, I must never take advantage of somebody’s lousy ability to negotiate. .../ It is a responsibility, a huge responsibility.

SVT contract negotiator

The SVT programme makers’ jobs – where they are both looking out for the licence payers’ interests at the same time as they have to take into account the external producers’ welfare – seems indeed like a daily balancing act. This balancing act works to uphold SVT’s ownership and right of enactment of the public service TV institution. As long as SVT seems to be the legitimate caretaker of the licence fee in the licence payers’ eyes, then it can continue to receive the support and authority to do as it sees fit in regards to spending the licence fee. But for this institutional arrangement to persist there needs to be constant work from SVT’s side, where licence fee payers are assured that they have indeed entrusted their money to the right actor. At the same time, SVT also needs to be legitimate in the eyes of its collaborating partners, such as the
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external producers, and can therefore not risk losing their trust, at least not completely (even though many of the external producers in this study indicate that SVT has indeed a problem with securing their trust and legitimation). In order to maintain an institutional arrangement where SVT is the upholder of everything to do with public service TV, it needs to secure legitimacy from important constituents in the field. These are the citizens of Sweden and their elected political representatives in government and parliament as well as important agenda-setting individual and organisational actors in the “culture field” and actors of increasing importance such as the commercial producers and broadcasters. Being able to balance the requirements and pressures from various field actors is an important part of maintaining institutions; in this case SVTs guardianship of public service TV.

The responsibility that came with being a representative for SVT is echoed in many of SVT employees’ narratives. The project managers felt it when talking about being a professional commissioner that doesn’t put unfair expectations and pressure on production companies at the same time as keeping control and making sure the final product meets all kinds of SVT criteria. The negotiators felt it when having to be considerate and treat contracting partners fair at the same time as they negotiated good deals for SVT and its financers, the viewers.

The role of being a supervisor, customer and commissioner at the same time as being a colleague, sounding board and mentor shows through when SVT people talk about their jobs. One of the SVT negotiators working with small “arty” documentary filmmakers saw her role as being something of a mother to the business-inexperienced “lifestyle” filmmakers she worked with:

I visit the production companies who work from a hole in the wall, the office in the pocket, from the kitchen table. /…/And I work with tiny tiny filmmakers, such lost little creatures! I call them my uncut diamonds! “What shall I do now, invoice what is that?” (laugh) But they make good films! But I tell you, if I were a pure bureaucracy-administrator these types of people would drive me crazy! But I have full acceptance, I enjoy the way they are. We have good conversations. I have an incredibly good relationship with all our filmmakers.

SVT contract negotiator

The SVT negotiators in this study told me that during the past couple of years there had been an internal professionalisation and formalisation of the negotiators’ work, a necessity as the amount of collaborative productions grew and more programmes were produced by production companies – something that also meant that more people worked as negotiators at SVT. A common criticism from production companies was that depending on which genre and geographical unit at SVT you dealt with, the terms differed. Some negotiators
were tougher and demanded more rights than others did, for example. This SVT was working actively to change, and the negotiators often came back to the wording “business-minded” (affärmässig) as a way of describing the kind of professionalism to which they aspired.

In order to adapt to the new practices of collaborating with external actors, SVT tries to implement a new mindset, which has been imported from outside its original domain. In this case, it is enforcing a business orientation, something that the not-for-profit public bureaucracy SVT – at least in the old days – ought to have seen as rather alien to its operations. In the contemporary environment, however, where new practices of co-financing and collaboration have been introduced alongside in-house content production, being business-minded is a strategy for making sure these new practices are seen as fair and just by other actors in the field. Being business-oriented thus fits with the rational myth (J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1977) of marketisation and “new public management”, which has gained widespread popularity among public bureaucracies during recent decades (du Gay, 2004; Spicer & Fleming, 2007). In the long run, such a move – if successful – can assure the continued legitimation of the institution and thus help preserve it. This is an indication that an actor interested in maintaining an institutionalised arrangement can introduce new practices and mindsets, which secure legitimacy for its operations in order to reproduce the overall institution, even though these new practices seem both alien to the organisation as well as originate within a different institutional setting.

The value of rights, ideas and work

One key aspect in every negotiation between SVT, the producing company and any other financers was the division of rights to the material. When I asked SVT project managers and negotiators about what rights SVT generally was interested in when co-financing productions, they all said that television broadcasting rights nationally and usually in the Nordic countries were its first priority. This meant that as sole broadcaster it had the right to broadcast the programme in Sweden, and sell or trade it to broadcasters in the Nordic neighbouring countries. When it came to the pricing issue of how SVT decided how much it was willing to pay for the various kinds of rights, this was a secret affair that the programme makers were not allowed to talk about (according to SVT policy). SVT deemed this as being a part of its business

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32 How broadcasting rights are defined can differ somewhat depending on the genre, and with the rise of streamed TV on the web, these definitions are changing. Nowadays, most often they are sold in licence periods, often 30 days where the broadcaster can show the programme an indefinite number of times, or during a longer time span.

33 For SVT, the Nordic TV rights were important since there are several exchange networks between the Nordic public broadcasters where material is shared free of charge.
secrets, and the final deals with their co-financers and production companies were classified. However, after having spoken to people (both SVT people and external producers) involved in these deals, I got at least a vague idea of how it worked. One negotiator explained:

There are not really any price tags on these [broadcasting] rights, but we have checked internationally, we have compared with others, so we have an unofficial price tag. Then I have a price tag, and that is nothing I can make public really, but just to know roughly how much SVT can charge, or how much we can pay. /…/ So, TV Sweden we value at [X amount] for an hour.

SVT contract negotiator

For each genre there thus seemed to be an unofficial internal hourly price that SVT invested in the production in order to get the rights to broadcast the programme. For the TV rights in other countries, there was also a similar generic sum, which the negotiators started from in their negotiations. Generally, the principle in co-productions were that the financers split all the rights and revenues according to share of investment, namely pro rata. In co-productions where SVT had a small share, for example, the TV rights for Sweden might be all it received. In other productions in which it was a large investor, it would share the profits according to the capital invested. These profits were generated from the sales of TV broadcasting rights in international markets, DVD sales, format sales, sales of footage material and so forth.

Low monetary value in ideas

Many external producers raised the question of how the ideas for a programme or film should be valued in collaborative production and co-financing. They argued that broadcasters (SVT as well as others) were not valuing the ideas highly enough, but rather paid for the handicraft of producing these ideas; of the actual work of transforming them into a finished programme. One external producer explained:

…I think the focus, what they are prepared to pay for at the [TV] channels, is the work it takes to produce an idea, but not the idea itself. That is, they don’t value the ideas but they value the work with the idea. /…/ And I think this is a common feature, at least as I have noticed it and what seems to be the biggest problem in this industry which I have begun to get an insight into, that is that they don’t value the ideas. Because it is the ideas that create a prerequisite for making a good job. But they only think of the production line.

External producer
This meant that in collaborative productions in the form of “outlays” – where SVT produced programmes together with production companies but where it financed the whole programme and the company “did the work” – SVT was paying the company for its skills and resources, but kept all the rights to the programme. (*The Record Bureau* in this study is an example of this kind of collaborative production.) Such financing constructions were usually used where the production company was the originator of an idea that SVT wanted but where it didn’t want or hadn’t got the capital to invest money. (Such programmes could, for example, be entertainment shows without promising formats that had no value in the DVD or TV rights market.) However, as both SVT’s public service reports34 and the programme makers point at, such outlays have become rarer during recent years. There seems to be two reasons for this. The first is that SVT no longer has the money to fully finance all programmes itself, and thus looks to share the burden with others, which is one of the driving forces for engaging in collaborative productions in the first place. Secondly, many production companies are reluctant to accept the kinds of agreements where SVT keeps all the rights, since it means that they will have no share in any rights to the programme, and thus no chance of profits in the future, which in turn would cement the “from hand to mouth” existence that many small companies find themselves in. Surely, the growing international TV format industry is a result of the practices of broadcasters not paying for the programme idea, but just the work of making it. One way for a production company to be paid for its idea and not only the production of it is to turn it into a format that then is magically ascribed a value. This value will then be transformed into hard cash when the broadcasters pay for the format, either by licensing it or by buying it. Turning an idea into a format is thus a way for producers to force the buyer to pay for their idea.

**The value of the production company’s work**

At SVT, there seemed to be different opinions on how well rewarded people thought the production companies were for the work they did for SVT. Some SVT people had reflected upon it, and one SVT project manager talked about the price difference between programmes it produced on its own and programmes it produced collaboratively:

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34 See SVT’s public service accounts for the latest years where the amount of co-productions, production outlays and internally produced programmes are accounted for.
The problem with in-house productions is that they are still relatively expensive, which may indicate that we pay too little for co-productions. They [in-house productions] cost more than [their share] of our budget. So, they are relatively expensive. And that is a bit problematic.

SVT project manager

For this project manager who also worked as a commissioner of programmes, this situation meant that when he wanted to find a programme for the slot\textsuperscript{35} for which he was responsible, after buying a readymade foreign programme (which is almost always the cheapest kind of programming) a co-produced programme would cost SVT less than an in-house production would. (Here, it should however be pointed out that productions that a single financer fully finances will be more expensive for the financer than would productions for which several actors share the financing, given that the total budget is the same for both kinds of productions.)

Another SVT project manager argued that SVT as an organisation had not yet fully come to terms and understood what it meant to collaborate with production companies who were driven by profit. He saw a fundamental difference between the way SVT and the commercial producers conducted their business, and argued that SVT must learn to accept the rules of the market:

Corporations make money and we at SVT engage in non-profit operations. So, we have kind of a hard time to relate to this, that if [a production company] makes a production for us they have to make money out of it, otherwise they have no reason for their existence. And we must learn that that is OK. That it costs more, because if somebody is going to make money, if you have a budget of 25 million and somebody makes a 20% profit, that is five million going down the drain you could think. But that five million is what the production company has as investment capital in its next programme series, and when we calculate, then we just count what the production costs. We don’t calculate what it takes to develop it, because that is sort of a different budget. And that is where we go a little wrong: we still have to respect that fact that we after all live in a market economy, and then we have to accept that. So, we have be so mature that we don’t think we can pay just for the nitty gritty, because that is not what it’s about.

SVT project manager

\textsuperscript{35} In the TV world, a slot is the window in the TV schedule, e.g. “the Friday eight o’clock slot”.

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Related to the external producers’ complaints about “only” getting paid for the actual production and not for the development of creative ideas was the complaint that the broadcasters (SVT as well as the commercial broadcasters) in their generic contracts were strict at keeping the rights to the material they had paid for. These rights were even kept long after the programme had been broadcast and were of no use for the broadcaster (at least according to the external producers). For the external producers, this meant that they could not capitalise on what they had done previously. One external producer explained:

It is much better if the rights stay with the producer. /…/ preferably I would like to utilise what I have done. Say that I have made a film about Lake Aral, then I would like to know that that film – at least sometime after it has gone it’s first round – is mine so I can use it and do a follow-up some way. That is a very important part of being an independent producer.

External producer

The same external producer continued:

Maria: So, the rights end up at the sender, at the channels?

Yes, exactly. Even rights that they never bother using. /…/ In the generic contract with SVT it says – I do documentaries and there you film very much and it can be valuable material, especially with this modern technology where you lavish with tape, when you often record 100 hours for a one-hour documentary. Then you have 99 hours of which a tiny bit possibly can end up in the extra material on a DVD; you have a lot of material. And that material has a value in the margin, which only the production company will utilise. But by some old routine the channels put in the contract that the raw material belongs to them, mainly by legal reasons to protect them from copying: that you should use the raw material to do something similar for another channel. Which would be suicide if we did as a production company, then we would only undermine our trustworthiness!

External producer

The people at SVT, project managers and negotiators, framed their contracting practices in light of the responsibility towards their financers, the licence payers. They pointed to the viewers’ rights to access programmes that the licence money had financed (even though it can be argued in co-financed productions
that they didn’t in fact pay for the whole programme). The routine practice of making sure filmed material belonged to them was also framed as a safety precaution to prevent material co-financed by SVT being used in some incriminating way, which could jeopardise their independence and legitimacy. Even though these arguments all make sense from SVT’s perspective, SVT’s critics argue that they can be used to excuse all kinds of misdealings; if after all everything SVT does is in the service of the public, how can it be wrong?

**SVT and accountability**

One aspect of collaborative productions relates to the feeling of ownership and accountability for a programme that many SVT programme makers voiced in the interview narratives. They argued that since SVT was the broadcaster of the programme, few viewers would think of who had actually produced it. In the eyes of the audience, the programme would always belong to SVT and it would have to take the full responsibility for any criticism or praise aimed at the programme. Researchers interested in the accountability concept have defined it as: “something a person feels, something a person has been granted, something a person exchanges for authority, an abstract and impersonal property of an authority structure, and an artifact of scrutiny” (Florin-Samuelsson, 2002:33). In the context of this study, SVT as an organisation embodies these characteristics: it has been granted authority in exchange for accountability as the organisation given the authority and resources to broadcast public service TV in Sweden. In return, it is accountable to the legislators and licence fee payers via both traditional means such as the annual financial report and its “public service account” (public service redovisningen) where it tries to account for the totality of programme offerings and how it fulfils its public service obligations. At a more micro-level, the people at SVT are also accountable for the single programmes that they are involved in producing. For some of them, this accountability is regulated by law, as with the “responsible publisher” (ansvarig utgivare): according to the Swedish fundamental law on the freedom of expression (Yttrandefrihetsgrundlagen), for all TV programmes one person should be appointed responsible for the content (Hadenius & Weibull, 2003). It is thus not one single reporter or programme maker that will be held legally accountable if the content is, for example, found to be libellous or contain facts that might jeopardise the security of the nation. This responsibility is born by the appointed responsible publisher. In some programmes at SVT, the commissioning editor – who is also the project manager – is the responsible publisher, whereas in other programmes it is the head of the department commissioning the programme. But even though the programme makers are not legally accountable for their programmes, they certainly seem to feel morally accountable to their viewers. This accountability towards those who view the programmes meant that it was important for the project managers to
6. The Money: Negotiating the terms

have control over collaborative productions in the same way as they had when producing programmes in-house.

**SVT’s views on control**

How this control should be exercised and how much control you could demand to have over a collaborative production was a complex issue:

…[over the years in different projects] I can state that we [SVT] have been very different as commissioners and project managers. As I see it, it’s a complex question of how active one should be: it could be distracting and annoying, it might be a much better end result to let go with a long leash, but then you should feel that you dare to trust [the production company]. In some productions, it would have been our great fortune if we had been inside “poking about” much more, we can state that in retrospect. And which approach [the project manager] has chosen in this production I don’t really know, how active she wants and thinks she should be.

**SVT contract negotiator**

The SVT project managers whose responsibility it was to be inside the production “poking about” said that the approach had to be adjusted to each specific production. Some productions were prestigious “high profile” programmes, which implied that the project manager would take a close interest in the production of it. The collaborating partner was also an important factor for which approach the project manager would take, as well as the working style of the project manager her/himself. In general, most SVT project managers argued that production companies and producers with whom they had worked before were “easier” to work with, since they had gotten to know each other and misunderstandings were less likely to happen. Routines and procedures were also established, which made communication and collaboration efficient. But independent of whether they had worked together before or not, some external producers liked to have the SVT project manager as a sounding board for all kinds of issues, whereas others preferred to work more independently.

The issue of SVT’s control over collaborative productions, and how much control should be exercised came up in many of the programme makers’ narratives. Here, their views differed, often depending on which part of the public service TV field they belonged to, namely whether they were SVT employees or external producers. SVT programme makers saw exercising control as a way of ensuring public service TV quality for viewers. Many SVT programme makers stressed the high expectations the viewers put upon SVT when it came to accountability, expectations that commercial broadcasters were
not subject to. The pressure on SVT to always act responsibly and in the interests of its viewers meant that it should have the right to have control over the content of its productions:

But I absolutely think, we are the broadcaster for crying out loud, of course we should have the right to “wash” the production any way we want. But then we still have to do it in a way that we think is good. That the viewers think is good I was going to say, that’s what I mean.

SVT project manager

What I here have chosen to call control, but that the SVT programme makers might prefer to denote as influence and overview of the content and production process, thus does not have a negative connotation for them. From their understanding, this was the prerogative of the broadcaster, who by law is responsible for the content and whose reputation is on the line if it misbehaved in any way. The Record Bureau’s SVT project manager described how she had dealt with the commissioning project manager’s dilemma of being involved in the process but at the same time not interfering or “micromanaging”. She argued that there might be things in a collaborative production that would have been done differently if the production had been made in-house at SVT, and that that was the whole point of collaborative productions: to access new ideas and ways of doing things. Thus, a SVT project manager had to be able to tell the difference between what things to change and what things to let be:

But then the question is how much you should change it, because it is exactly this, the value of it coming from somewhere else and maybe not resembling the things we do ourselves [in-house]. So, there is a real balance I think. But we have agreed pretty much [in this project] and you must after all feel that you have trust in those whom you have given a commission, at the same time as you after all are a commissioner as well. It is a product that we will broadcast on our channel, so we must after all be pleased with it. So, it’s a little bit like that, you feel your way forward between what to leave be and not leave be.

The Record Bureau SVT project manager

Another SVT project manager seemed eager to point out that SVT was not out to decide everything in the project, but rather it strived for an open communication with its collaborating production company. She rejected the words “influence” and “overview” (words that I used to describe what I wanted to talk about) and preferred to talk about “feedback” from the SVT
people’s side. From her understanding, she and her colleagues at SVT functioned as a sounding board for the production company’s ideas and suggestions on things such as the staffing of the production crew, the choice of director, the development of the script and so forth.

In many of the SVT programme makers’ narratives, the duality in the relationships with external producers was evident. On one hand, it was a “contract relationship” that introduced a buyer–seller relation in collaborative productions, and thus primed a sense of emotional distance between the commissioner and the sub-contractor. On the other hand, the SVT project managers argued that there had to be a feeling of trust between the two collaborating parties, and that it would be most unwise to collaborate with a production company in which you had no trust. Most often though, this trust seemed unidirectional: when SVT programme makers spoke about trust, in all but one occasion it was in the sense of them having to have trust in their collaborator, not vice versa. Judging from the way the SVT people treated the concept of trust, it was the prerogative of the commissioner of a programme and not the external producer.

The external producers’ views on control

For the external producers, however, the interview narratives contained little discussion about trust. One interpretation of this could be along the lines of “beggars can’t be choosers”: the external producers simply cannot afford to be picky or put demands on the commissioners of their services. In a buyer's market, the sellers have to try to adapt to any demands put upon them but have little power to demand things in return. This is not to say that the external producers didn’t recognise SVT’s need to exercise control over the content. On the contrary, they could well understand SVT’s need to keep control over the programmes aired on its channels. Often the external producers also referred to SVT’s “ownership” and accountability of the programmes in the eyes of the audience. Many of the programmes SVT broadcast are in fact not its own productions: some are purchased from international producers, whereas others are co-financed and co-produced by several actors. Still, the viewers in general are assumed by the programme makers to ascribe the broadcaster the general responsibility and moral ownership of the broadcast programmes. The act of choosing to broadcast a programme makes the broadcaster accountable for this programme. However, even though the external producers often could sympathise with SVT’s need for control over the content and production of collaborative programmes, many of them still thought that SVT demanded too many decision rights when it came to both content and process. One external producer said about SVT:

It is as if they still live in the days when they fully financed. [They have] stopped fully financing but demand the same things. And then
you could think that if you [the production company] can afford it: well, OK, we won't get full financing but then at least we have the right to decide. But now you have neither the right to decide nor full financing, which is pretty fascinating.

External producer

The external producer above points to the idea that if other financers have the resources to go in and back a programme – which in collaborative productions often is the production company itself – these backers should be allowed to have a say in the production proportional to the financing. The feeling that SVT still seemed to conduct its business as if it was the sole financer, even though it actually wasn’t, caused both irritation and resentment. Another external producer reasoned along the same lines:

Back in the days when SVT fully financed their projects, there were no problems because then they decided themselves: now we want to do this, we think this is exciting and fun and so on. What happens now in this situation when they source out so much and not take the whole risk themselves, namely they are still left in this idea that they are the one who owns everything. You could say that this means that they have demands and can say that you cannot do this and this and this. And that it should look in that and that and that way, even though they have become a smaller owner of everything. So, they are still left in the idea that they are full owners.

External producer

These sentiments about SVT being mentally stuck in a golden age where they had the financial resources to finance all its productions alone can be understood in the context of a general underdog feeling within the TV production industry in respect to the broadcasters.

The division of risk

When production companies team up with SVT and other kinds of financers to invest financial and other resources in programme production, the golden rule of investments says that they must also bear the risk – with a chance of profit follows a risk of loss. Some external producers were critical of SVT’s increased co-financing of productions, since this meant that too much risk was put upon small production companies in relation to their solvency and ability to survive bad investments. They said that in theory the problem was easy: a production company should simply not invest in projects where there was a high risk that it would not make its money back. However, as described earlier in this chapter,
6. The Money: Negotiating the terms

production companies’ needs to be in constant production mode in order to survive combined with the “idealistic artist” quality of many small producers in the industry made production companies go on bad deals without having done their financial homework properly. Some external producers framed the broadcasters’ practices (both SVT and the commercial channels) in moral terms: they were outraged that they used their market positions to force production companies to agree to their conditions.

This is the big problem, that most channels don’t pay anything. Before you could at least get some money for development, but that’s not the way it works now. Now the production companies bear all the cost in all ways, and come up with the world’s greatest idea, which probably could be sold all over the world, which then the channel has all rights to, and that is really… that is really… I get so upset! It is incredible that they have the nerve to treat them… They [SVT] will not go out of business the way production companies do time and again here, because the demands are too high and nothing is given back. They [production companies] are not allowed to keep even a little part of what they have created, they should just be glad that it is broadcast.

External producer

A representative for one of the geographical film funds seemed reluctant to openly criticise SVT’s commissioning and financing practices, and kept assuring that his organisation most of the time worked very well with SVT. However, now and then in his narrative there were glimpses of criticism, or at least a questioning of SVT’s treatment of the production companies with which they collaborated. From his understanding, SVT, as the Swedish public service broadcaster, had a responsibility to give small external producers fair conditions in order for them to survive and become long-term players. SVT ought to be an active player in the creation of a stable Swedish market for commercial television and film production (which is also one of the political reasons for an increased outsourcing of the production of public service content). SVT, he argued, had a responsibility:

Not only to themselves and to their public, but also to take part and make sure companies become robust in the long-term in order to deliver good stuff. And then you can always discuss which terms should be given … There has been a tendency [at SVT] to reduce [the price for] the broadcasting rights and so on. And then you can ponder on which terms can be reasonable to give, not just economically how much one should pay, but also access to rights. That is, how much should [SVT] let the company have if they take...
part and risk very much, how much should they be prepared to give up, how much will SVT demand in the form of: “we should be able to broadcast this forever and ever”.

Film fund representative

**SVT’s role in sustaining a production market**

In paragraph 10 of the SVT broadcasting charter granted by the government (SVT, 2009), it states that “SVT shall contribute to the development of Swedish film production.” In the same scripture, paragraph 15, it says that: “SVT should strive for plurality in their programme operations via a variety of production forms. In addition to a substantial in-house production, outlays, collaborative productions and purchasing of programmes should contribute to this variety, as well as external producers’ participation in in-house programme production.”

In line with these guidelines, many SVT interviewees explained that they saw as part of their jobs to engage in various ways with external producers. The head of drama at a regional unit explained that they had a project in place together with the regional film fund and the Swedish film institute where they offered makers of short films assistance with scriptwriting and development of their film ideas. One SVT project manager commissioning culture documentaries argued that it was in SVT’s own best interest to be on the lookout for new talents if they were to survive:

…just like with music or other art, it is so that if you only buy art by the same painter you miss those coming up from underneath. So, I think it is absolutely necessary for us in all genres in the TV world to be looking for new talents. That is the way to develop.

SVT project manager

One SVT commissioner for the children’s genre argued that collaborations with external producers prepared SVT for a future where it had to commission more programmes from external suppliers. She said that it ought to take all opportunities to try out new production companies:

…there are not so many that produce children’s programmes and we must always be open to the prospect that the reality looks different tomorrow, regarding how many we are [employed at SVT].

SVT commissioner

When this commissioner and her colleagues at the children’s department were approached by production companies that in her understanding seemed to have
a sincere interest in and understanding of children’s programming, they saw collaboration as a way to test if this production company could be a future partner. Many of the SVT employees in this study thus saw sourcing talents and new ideas from producers in the market as a way to ensure the future existence of SVT. The argumentation by the SVT top management – that SVT in order to uphold its position as a public service broadcaster in the frontier of quality television needed to make use of creative talent wherever they could find it – was echoed in the SVT programme makers’ narratives. In terms of safeguarding the institution of public service TV, the introduction of a new practice of collaborative production could therefore in the long run help strengthen the legitimacy of SVT as the operator entrusted with carrying out the public service mission. Preparing for a future where SVT might not have the amount of in-house production it has today meant that there was a need to cultivate relationships with external production companies in the market.
7. The People: The makers of the programmes

There is no “them” without “us”, no “us” without “them”.

Unknown

This chapter is about the programme makers in collaborative productions. Here we will meet the programme makers representing SVT, and the external producers working for production companies, and learn more about how they related to each other during the collaborations. This chapter will tell the story of how these actors dealt with issues that arouse during the course of the collaborative productions, something that much depended on their various positions within the public service TV field, i.e. whether they were employed by SVT or by a production company. In the end of the chapter we will also see how the external producers talked about public service TV in relation to SVT, and whether or not they thought SVT could live up to the responsibility of enacting public service TV “properly”.

This chapter thus focuses on the actors involved in making public service TV in practice, in a setting where not only the usual makers of public service TV, the SVT programme makers, but also external producers, are involved in the enacting of public service TV.

Being employed vs. working in the open market: external producers’ narratives

Researchers interested in identities in organisational fields (Czarniawska, 1997, 2008a; Sahlin-Andersson, 1996; Sevon, 1996; Wedlin, 2006) have underlined the importance of comparison: actors compare themselves to other field actors, which can serve as role models as well as actors to disassociate themselves from. Involved in identity processes is thus an underlying element of sociality: identity is impossible in a vacuum since one is what one is only in relation to somebody else. As Weick (1995) points out, identity is closely linked to how we make sense of the world, meaning that the sense we make is dependent on who we are and how we think of ourselves.

In the narratives of several of the people working for production companies whom I talked to during the course of this study, one can find descriptions of how it is to live a professional life in the commercial realm of the public service
One external producer said regarding his experiences of working as a contractor and freelancer for SVT:

… an observation I made at SVT is that I never ever saw anybody in a rush at SVT. There was a hell of a lot of dragging of feet in the corridors! But what the hell, a little hurry, sometimes the pulse should go up a little, sometimes there should be some adrenaline, that could be good for a person! It becomes boring if everything moves incredibly slow: “no we can’t do that today we have to do that next week.” “But you stand there, why can’t you just…?” “Well no, we have to do that later because now we have to have a coffee break.” I mean, that is not good either, it’s a bit about some sort of working ethics that has evaporated [at SVT] by not feeling a responsibility, by the single individual not feeling a responsibility for the end product.

External producer

The image of SVT as a place where bureaucrats “who never hurry” got stuck, where nobody was personally responsible and inefficient people were allowed to stay on was expressed by many of the external producers in this study, however often in a slightly less straightforward fashion. But often they also realised that this picture lingered on from a time in the past when SVT did indeed have a lot more resources and when the demands of efficiency was not as high as they are today. An external producer that used to work for SVT was asked to compare her experiences:

Well, the difficult thing with that is that it is a long time since I sat inside [SVT] and worked, which means that quite a lot has changed at SVT since then. That is why it is really hard to compare, because back then it was easier to work inside SVT. And that I think has changed also at SVT, so if you were to get in there now it would be the same difference. And that was that they had another way to look at money, perhaps an unrealistic way actually, that they thought that they had the money they had and then one could always say: “oh, now this turned out a bit more expensive, can we have some more” “oh, okay”. There was a negotiation about things inside SVT: nothing was definite. And that meant that one maybe didn’t think as definitely as one does now. /.../I think it has become a lot tougher within SVT and I think that people who have been there all the time have a hard time relating to that. And that means that there is a waste there and an attitude that is not totally sharpened, and that is why they are sharpening it now and well, that is tough for those who have been there a long time...

External producer
However, some external producers seemed to think that the cutbacks and downsizing at SVT during the past decade had led to an organisation of “desk workers” where the people who had managed to stay within SVT were the ones with “desk skills”, and therefore no longer knew what it was like to do the “actual work of producing TV”. One external producer argued this:

...it is connected to that if you are to employ anybody at SVT, they have had employment freeze since 1973 sort of, then it has to be somebody in a management position. If you then want a project manager, he or she is not a management position so it has to be recruited in from somewhere inside. And often these enterprising creative people, there is no room for them at SVT, they are being cut down and then they go out into the open market and the products of the drawing board are left and they have to go somewhere so they become project managers.

External producer

Another external producer making television of a more “arty”, less commercial style than many of the big production companies reasoned that many people who had been employed for a long time at SVT tended to stagnate:

...having real passion at SVT is no guarantee. People get tired, people are appointed positions, there are a lot of politics in there which all institutions of that kind live with. Permanent employments that run during a lifetime and people’s need for a career and prestige. And the lack of real artistic visions I think is a problem at SVT. And I really think it has to do with the fact that it is an institution, I don’t think it can be avoided that institutions create these kinds of risks.

External producer

The comments that these four external producers made, working in their own one-person companies, as freelancers or as employees at a production company, illustrate a lot of the discussion going on within the commercial producing community. Even though SVT also generated positive reviews, especially when it is interpreted as the gatekeeper of commercialism, a part of its image was as a company where people tended to stagnate, both when it came to production smartness and the operational side of TV making, as well as artistically and visionary. When taking a step back and looking at what these producers seem to collectively say, they are drawing on the rationalised myth of marketisation (Hesmondhalgh, 2007) in our contemporary society, but they are also contributing to and reinforcing it. Indirectly, the external producers’ stories of SVT and its employees are also saying something about them, the external
producers, and of how they are not. Their narratives paint a picture of themselves belonging to a realm of the public service TV field where almost nobody has permanent employment, where everybody is on one’s own, where you are only as good as your last production, where there is no room for idleness or “dragging of feet in corridors”. The tempo is fast and those who cannot handle it will not survive for long. The producers that survive in the open market have proved their worth as TV makers and they are the real enterprising heroes of the market economy. It is in light of this that their rather harsh words about SVT and SVT employees should be understood: all that which is negative about being employed at SVT reflects positively on the external producers in the open market. The blessing of market mechanisms in terms of efficiency and innovativeness is also drawn upon in the lobbying initiatives by the external television producers, organised by the association of film and TV producers. This association is aiming for an increased external production of public service TV programming, targeting legislators and various kinds of decision makers, arguing that their sector of TV producers are an important part of a healthy and creative Swedish TV industry.

Additionally, as the above quotes show, SVT’s employees are seen not only as “tired and slow” when it comes to work pace, and spoilt by overly big budgets, but also as devoid of passion and avant-garde when it comes to visions and ideas about programme making. Some of the external producers working within genres that are more artistic or journalistic and less commercial such as current affairs, documentary and culture claim that SVT tends to stifle artistic vision and risk taking when it comes to such programmes. One external producer talks about the “insecurity” that he finds at SVT:

And this insecurity it is really, I guess, not the project managers’ fault, there is an incredible insecurity at SVT, which is frightening to see.

Maria: You mean style wise?

An insecurity in: [with a fake voice] “Oh, is this really good? I have to ask 13 other people, oh can we really do it this way, we have never done it like this before”./…/ Do you understand, there is an insecurity all the time that you will be told off by somebody higher up [in the hierarchy]. That means there is not this artistic drive: “hell, this is what I burn for, this we have to do, let’s go with it instead of against it!”

External producer
This sort of criticism from external producers is interesting since much of the criticism levelled by the union and employees at SVT, as well as in the public debate against SVT's use of freelancers and commercial production companies, has to do with them being "stifled by their commercial status". In other words, people that are not safeguarded by employment at SVT, which could provide a haven for free and independent thought and fearless artistic visions, would have very little knowledge and experience of doing in-depth, artistic and "risky" programming (cf. Napoli (2003) for an in-depth discussion on the content of advertising-funded programming, which tends to be risk-averse, repetitive and uncontroversial). Commercial broadcasters are not interested in artistic programming since it is not economically viable, and producers who make their livings from selling programmes to advertising-funded broadcasters don't know how to do such programming. The fact that external producers on the market have to live from hand to mouth, often without enough time or resources to devote to avant-garde, daring ideas that will prove hard to sell to most broadcasters would also be an argument in favour of "employed creativity". Küng (2004) argues that long-term employment is beneficial for creativity, since short-term contracts force people to start looking for new jobs before the current contract is finished, which can prevent a full focus on the current project. In addition, she argues that long-term contracts can work as a buffer against short-term "ratings thinking" and fear of failure if programmes are deemed too risky and innovative. Many of the SVT employees whom I met during this study would agree with their CEO (Hamilton, 2008), who argues that SVT is the only broadcaster in Sweden that, much because of its financing model, is in a situation where it is free to be daring, artistic and innovative.

36 As an example, the best-selling Swedish author and debater Jan Guillou made reference to the public service companies' increased uses of external production companies in his book The enemy within/Fienden inom oss, where he – in his renowned debating style – makes it clear that he is not at all pleased with the "sell-out of public service".

37 However, the discussion on how to structurally organise the production of TV in order to achieve creative and novel TV programming has been going on for quite some time and will probably continue to do so (Bilton, 2007).
December 2007: The death of the permanent employment

It is the first week in December and I am waiting in the reception at the combined SVT and SR offices in Göteborg for my interviewee to come and collect me. The reception area is a large space with glass walls facing the harbour. From where I sit, I can peep into one of the radio studios that are used for live interviews and local programmes. In a hidden corner of the reception, down by the lavatories, a choir is practicing Christmas carols that they are to sing on the radio. The decorations and carols render the whole experience very Christmassy. A young woman comes through the security doors from within the building and approaches the reception. The receptionist asks her in a cheerful voice if she is going off for her Christmas break.

“Well, you could call it that, or you could call it what it is, I’m now unemployed until the beginning of January,” answers the young woman.

“Well isn’t it nice to be free for Christmas?”

“Sure, but I’m not making any money so it will be a poor Christmas,” the woman says.

When she leaves, the receptionist turns to the other receptionist who has listened to the conversation: “OK, if I want to make a note in the computer system that she will be back on 7th January, what should I note her as?” (referring to the computerised system where there are a couple of default options). “Not leave of absence since she is not really employed?” The two receptionists ponder over how to solve the issue for a while. “Maybe we could just write that she is away until the 7th?” Finally, at the bottom of the list they find the option “free”. They settle for her as being free and go about their business. Just before my interviewee comes to collect me, I’m thinking how fitting it is that even the SVT switchboard computer system has a hard time dealing with the new employment logic of freelancers going in and out of the organisation. It is ironic how being an unemployed freelancer equals being “free”.

7. The People: The makers of the programmes

**Being employed vs. working in the open market: the SVT employees’ narratives**

If some of the external producers, at least when it comes to certain aspects, express fairly derogatory views of SVT and its employees, what do the SVT people think of the external producers? First, it seems as though SVT’s position as a big and powerful player in the TV field prevents its employees from openly expressing negative attitudes of people in the production market (if they indeed had any such attitudes). It might be easier for smaller production companies and freelancers to criticise the big incumbent than vice versa (at least when promised anonymity by the researcher). Additionally, the external producers have both a widespread ideology singing the market’s praise as well as a persistent rational myth about the ineffective “state television” backing up their arguments. Criticising SVT also meant that the external producers could direct their criticism towards a faceless corporation more than towards any particular person with whom they had a close personal relationship. The people employed at SVT are aware that they represent a company that plays a powerful role in the Swedish television field and that with this power comes responsibility. As we saw in chapter 6, many of their narratives feature discussions on the responsibility that comes with being a commissioner and project manager at SVT, namely that one has to safeguard the values one associates with public service TV at the same time as one treats the co-producing company fairly both in contract negotiations and during the collaboration. Nevertheless, even though the people at SVT were more reluctant to criticise the external producers as a collective than the external producers were to criticise SVT as a whole, in some of the narratives there were still small hints of irritation shining through. This irritation usually centred around production companies being “whiny” and making over-exaggerated complaints about SVT paying too little for their services, retaining too many of the property rights and putting too many demands on them. An SVT contract negotiator says:

Oh yes, I have been sitting on the SVT side and I have experienced how the production companies do not want to take instructions from the commissioner. And from my perspective, then I go: “but hang on a minute, we go in with 97% of the financing and commission something from you, and you break down like a dying swan and think that you don’t want to be directed, I don’t understand it!” But please, we go in with a lot of money, we must be allowed to take part and have opinions. Some production companies are very sensitive on this issue, just like some [creative] originators are incredibly sensitive on that issue.

SVT contract negotiator
When SVT employees engage in criticism against external producers, it is usually as an irritated response to what they see as an unfair criticism of SVT’s commissioning practices and when they think external producers play too much on the prejudice of SVT as “state television” and “the bunker on Gärdet”\textsuperscript{38}. (See Såthe (2008) and Wegelius (2008) for examples and discussion about the history of the public discourse about SVT.)

The ongoing debate about the collaboration with external producers at SVT (a debate both internally at SVT but also in the media) is one that the SVT employees I interviewed can relate to, being as they are involved in the commissioning and managing of such projects. Generally, a majority of SVT employees are depicted as being rather negative towards the increasing trend of co-productions and of SVT becoming a “commissioning organisation” (c.f. von Platen’s (2006) study of two geographical SVT units). The SVT employees interviewed for my study all work with various aspects of collaborative productions, and they have a quite positive view of collaborations with other actors, both commercial producers and channels as well as other public service broadcasters. One project manager within the science genre said:

Generally, we look very positively at all kinds of collaborations and co-productions. This is a costly industry, it costs a lot of money to make science documentaries. Internationally, it is said that science documentaries are among the most expensive documentaries you can make. And we often need expensive graphics and we need to travel a lot and often follow events over a long time. So, it is costly to make and the more actors who can share these ideas the better, preferably foreign TV companies, those co-productions are sort of purest interest wise, and not problematic for SVT’s independence.

SVT project manager

This project manager pointed to one of the most important driving forces behind SVT’s increasing collaborations: the need to split costs for expensive programming such as documentaries, but also fiction and other types of costly productions. To be able to offer viewers programming in these expensive genres, SVT has to be on the lookout for all kinds of collaborations that can help it invest its funding in the best possible way. The motto is that viewers should get value for their money, and this is achieved via the use of creative ways of co-financing and sharing expenses. However, the quote above also deals with the other side of the co-financing coin: when financing programmes is shared between SVT and other actors, the question of SVT’s independence is

\textsuperscript{38} “The bunker on Gärdet” refers to a derogatory nickname of SVT (Gärdet is the location of SVT in Stockholm), connoting SVT as a bureaucracy full of red tape that shuts out innovation and progress in favour of rigidity and reactionism.
7. The People: The makers of the programmes

raised, as discussed in Chapter 6. The difficulty when co-producing with other co-financers is making sure that these co-financers do not in any way “pollute” the content with their interests.

**Collaborative productions opening a door to commercialism**

While I was carrying out my study, a programme called *The Stars in the Castle/Stjärnorna på slottet*, which was co-produced by SVT and the production company Meter came under fire in the media when Mercedes cars and sailing jackets were exposed a little too well according to both TV reviewers and the responsible SVT project manager (Svedjetun, 2008)\(^{39}\). This event was commented on by several of the programme makers, and one SVT contract negotiator saw it as one of his main tasks to make sure that SVT as well as its collaborating partners guarded their independence from commercial interests. He says:

Now *The Stars in the Castle/Stjärnorna på slottet* has been exposed to that criticism recently, and I don’t think it is pretty what I see on the screen at all, I have seen one episode because I’m not so fond of the programme but there was…

Maria: I have seen it, there was a lot of car cortèges …

Yes, and then they all were going sailing in a clip I saw, and then everybody put on identical jackets with the same logo; it was so ugly, it was so ugly, it was so ugly, it was against everything that SVT should stand for in a way. /…/ It is a constant wrestling match when it comes to the production companies’ commercial situations and our public service mission, and no matter whether we like it or not we have to follow these rules, because it is our broadcasting charter, it is the radio and TV act. That you always have to make clear.

SVT contract negotiator

A part of the internal resistance at SVT and the fear of increased collaborative productions can probably be explained by the commercialisation aspect: that people see a risk of opening a door to commercialisation by collaborating with production companies. A poll of the readers of SVT internal’s magazine *VipåTV* (Mårtensson, 2007b) shows that more than 70% think that it is hard to

\(^{39}\) The programme was ruled by the Swedish broadcasting commission (Granskningnämnden för radio och TV) to have violated the regulation about the inappropriate promotion of commercial interests (otillbörligt gynnande) – however, not for the jackets or the cars, but for a sweater one of the participants wore with a big logo on the chest.
keep commercial messages out of SVT’s programmes. Another poll in the same
magazine shows that the same percentage, over 70% of the SVT people polled,
think that production companies should undergo some kind of “public service”
education (Mårtensson, 2007a). Such courses were given internally to SVT’s
project managers during this study, and during the spring of 2009, they were
also offered to external production companies. Here, they were being
accredited with “green cards” in relevant TV regulation and SVT practices
(such as SVT’s broadcasting charter and the radio and TV act). These green
cards should then work as an accreditation for future collaborations between
external producers and SVT.

**Collaborative productions infusing public service programmes with new ideas and voices**

All of the SVT employees I interviewed for this study seemed to think the
discussion about external producers opening the door to “commercialism” was
overly dramatic and argued that as long as they had control over the
collaborative productions there was no problem. There was, however, some
disagreement about whether collaborative productions, where the production
company was in charge of contracting the participants and organising the
production, in fact meant that SVT could maintain the same control as it could
over in-house productions. Some project managers argued that they could not,
but most seemed to think that it was not the production form that was
essential, but rather the work by SVT’s project managers. In order to guarantee
that collaboratively produced programmes lived up to the standards set for
SVT by the broadcasting legislation, it was argued that the appointed project
manager from SVT had to be present during all stages of the project and have a
constant dialogue with the production crew.

One of the official statements often communicated by SVT management
about why it must engage in collaborative production is that co-production
makes it possible to use talents and personnel that SVT could never realistically
employ. New inputs and new ideas, both content wise as well as production
wise, are also what SVT was expecting to get from co-productions with external
producers (Wegelius, 2008). In the five collaborative programme productions in
this study, the programme makers from both SVT and production companies
argued that the idea was what made SVT want the programme. In some of the
projects, such as *The Wreck Divers* and *Videocracy*, the people behind the
programme idea had specialist expertise that could not have been found within
SVT. In the other projects, it was not as clear that the production company
possessed any special skills that SVT could not have found internally.

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40 Note, however, that the sample for these polls was not statistically random, which means that
they should only be considered to give a hint at the opinions of SVT employees’ attitudes on
these matters.
7. **The People: The makers of the programmes**

Nevertheless, the people involved in making *Class 9A* discussed how their collaboration drew on the respective strengths of the two organisations involved. The programme makers at Strix valued SVT’s legitimacy and good reputation as well as the SVT project manager’s long experience working with current affairs programmes. The SVT middle phase project manager for the series argued that Strix’s experience of making programmes for commercial broadcasters, where programmes are constructed for viewers that do not stay tuned to one programme at the time but switch from channel to channel mainly to avoid advertising, was one of the things SVT needed to learn:

> We [SVT] overestimate the ability to actually dramaturgically follow [a programme], it is as if we believe that the viewer only watches our TV programmes. But viewers don’t do that, they go around and watch that and that and that, and then they come to us. And then we have to be damn good at explaining, repeatedly in our programmes, why you want to watch this programme.

**SVT project manager**

The SVT project manager claimed that *Class 9A* benefited from the Strix people’s skill at repeatedly within an episode reminding viewers why they should watch the programme into which they have tuned. This was a narrative technique that he argued until now had been absent in SVT’s programmes, and which SVT needed to master for the future if it was to survive in a new media environment with ever increasing competition for viewers’ attention.

**The public service TV field: a diverse organisational field**

The external producers in this study are heterogeneous when it comes to the genres and kinds of programming they specialise in. The biggest production company in the study, Strix (*Class 9A*), has previously been known primarily for its entertainment, reality and “commercial” programmes (even though since it is rather big it has been involved in productions in most genres). Anagram (*The Christmas Calendar*) has specialised in entertainment and drama, mainly targeted towards SVT and feature film production. Atmo (*Videocracy*) has produced several “point of view” society documentaries and thus has a distinct “alternative” approach and identity. Deep Sea (*The Wreck Divers*) has specialised in diving films and has produced programmes that would end up under a “science programme” label. For Patrik Sthlm, *The Record Bureau* was its first TV programme production; previously, it had focused on PR and communication. It is obvious then that these companies come from rather different positions...
within the organisational field of TV and they also seem to follow rather different institutional logics.

For production companies producing and developing programmes that are sold to commercial channels, issues of the formatisation of programmes, sponsoring and ratings (which is the measurement by which commercial broadcasters charge their advertisers and thus the currency of choice in the commercial TV industry) are part of their everyday existences. Since most programming for commercial channels is within what Lund and Edelvold Berg (2009) call “soft programming”, such as various entertainment genres (quiz shows, various reality programmes, popular sport), production companies targeting commercial broadcasters live mainly under a commercial institutional logic. At the other end of the spectrum are production companies engaging in documentary film and artistic productions, where large parts of the financing come from various publicly financed film and TV funds. Here, Swedish TV is just one of the distribution windows (others are cinemas, DVDs and foreign TV broadcasters). For these companies, among which we find the “lifestyle” filmmakers that are seldom driven by commercial aspirations but rather by idealism or artistic vision, the institutional logics are rather different from those of their more commercial colleagues. One can depict the Swedish TV public service TV field on a continuous axis ranging from a commercial (or populist) logic to a cultural (or elitist) logic, with production companies plotted along this line according to their operations. Even though the Swedish production companies during recent years have actively worked to organise themselves (e.g. through increased activity by their industry association and the merger between this TV producers’ association with the film producers’ association), there are still obvious differences between them. These differences include values and motives, what is regarded as important or not and why individuals and firms participate in the field in the first place. Below, I have plotted the five production companies in this study along such an axis in order to show their different orientations. (It should, however, be noted that this is a simplification: for example, Strix produces both commercial and cultural programmes, even though the commercial logic is the most dominant.)
7. The People: The makers of the programmes

The commercial/populist pole: Attracts many viewers, makes easily accessible programmes and programmes that are interesting for advertisers to advertise in. Guided by a commercial logic.

The cultural/elitist pole: Attracts fewer viewers, makes programmes that are harder to access and seldom interesting for advertisers to advertise in. Guided by an artistic logic.

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<tr>
<th>Commercial/Populist</th>
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<td>Strix</td>
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<td>Patrik Sthlm</td>
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Figure 7.1 The two poles in the public service TV field, and the studied production companies’ place in the field

Regarding the external producers’ dealings with SVT and their claims on public service TV, as well as SVT’s collaborations with external producers in the field, the institutionalised field logics play an important role in the collaboration. The public service broadcaster’s dilemma, as illustrated by Nissen (2006), as “navigating between the Scylla of populism and the Charybdis of elitism” can be used to illustrate the conflicting views in The Wreck Divers project. In this project, SVT’s project managers wanted the programme to be easy accessible and somewhat “light”, and thus needed a programme host to explain what happened to the viewers so that nobody would miss a thing. The Deep Sea producers, by contrast, had other aspirations for the programme, which they envisioned as a documentary in Cousteau’s spirit, with little talk and a slow tempo. In this particular case, the external producers, even though they were by nature “commercial” – being a profit-driven firm – were trying to push the programme in an “elitist” and artistic direction, whereas SVT were trying to push it in a “populist” and easily accessible direction, which is somewhat contradictory to the simplistic idea that everything originating in commercial production companies has to be commercial in nature. In fact, many of the SVT commissioning editors of collaborative productions in “artistic” genres such as cultural and society documentaries and science programming told me that part of their jobs when working with collaborative productions was to make sure that the external film and TV producers made their programmes accessible for the relatively large TV audience. (Even though an “arty” culture documentary would only get 1% of the Swedish population in audience ratings when aired on SVT, this still would mean that 90,000 people watched it, which is a huge amount compared with how many people would go and watch it in a cinema.)
The heterogeneity of the public service TV field means that collaborative productions range from genres where programmes are produced by external producers operating according to a commercial logic to genres where programmes are produced by external producers operating under a cultural logic. But it also means that both logics are present in the field, and this creates tensions as well as opportunities for the actors to draw on the different institutional logics in different situations.
What it means to be an external producer and a market player differs depending on where on the commercial/cultural axis the external producers locate themselves. The “commercial” external producers underscore such things as efficiency and production smartness, whereas the “cultural” external producers underscore avant-gardism, creativity and artistic vision. However, all external producers share the experience of being a contractor to SVT, and have at least in that aspect similar attitudes and ideas regarding these collaborations.

The Christmas Calendar: The tale of the credits

I have now given examples of how the programme makers in this study reason regarding how they see themselves as well as their collaborating partners “on the other side of the divide”, be it either the external producers or SVT employees. I will continue by telling the story of how a particular conflict played out during the making of *The Christmas Calendar*, and how the external producers at the production company Anagram (who was SVT’s collaborating partner in this production) made sense of this event by drawing on the institutionalised logics in the field. I call it “the tale of the credits”.

It is the end of January 2008 and the preparations for *The Christmas Calendar* are in full swing. The producer at the production company Anagram is busy planning the filming of the programme. The SVT head of drama told me that one of the reasons it approached Anagram with the commission of *The Christmas Calendar* was because of its reputation for “production smartness”, meaning that it knew how to find ways to produce drama for little money. Still, the producer has a big job ahead of her trying to find smart solutions for how to film *The Christmas Calendar*’s elaborate script and keep within budget. It comes down to mathematics: the programme will be filmed over two months, which gives the crew 40 working days to record the whole series. The contract between Anagram and SVT specifies that each episode should be 13.5 minutes, but that it can be 30 seconds shorter or longer. The producer is therefore aiming at 13 minutes, and plans the recording accordingly. (She argues that in the editing phase they can be a bit flexible, some episodes might be some seconds longer and others shorter depending on what fits the material best.) Anagram thus needs to deliver 24 13-minute episodes. Out of these 13 minutes, the producer has calculated that about one minute will be spent for the intro-vignette where the actors and the setting are introduced to the viewer. One minute would be spent for a résumé at the beginning about what happened in the previous episode, as well as a teaser at the end about what is to come in the next day’s episode. One minute is to be spent for credits at the end where the names of all participants and people working on the programme will appear. According to the producer’s calculations, when these three minutes are
deducted, they will have to record 24 episodes of 10 minutes “pure” drama. Thus, 240 minutes in 40 days means six minutes a day. Six minutes a day of usable film is, therefore, what the production crew needs to produce and this is what the producer bases her planning on. One day she hears via her husband who works at SVT that the SVT management has introduced a new policy for credits, and a couple of days later the newspaper reports on this policy. This is what it said:

**SVT shortens too long credits**

The credits in the programmes in SVT are too long. Now the TV management has decided to shorten them, unnecessary names will be removed and the time for showing the credits will be limited to 15 seconds. After February 1st, the credits in SVT shall be a maximum of 15 seconds long, with the exception of drama productions, which can be 20 seconds. – “It has been a flora of names and occupational functions in the credits, and it has increased. I saw that the programme Subtitled/Dubbat the other night had the name of an intern and that is not important for the audience”, says SVT’s head of information Helga Baagoe. “The tightening is an adjustment to the competing channels, which have shorter credits,” says Helga Baagoe. “We don’t believe that the audience wants to sit and wait while all the names roll by. It becomes a cause for irritation.”

The information shown after the programmes are partly regulated by the copyright legislation which demands that people with copyright, actors and artists must be named. Apart from that, SVT aims to inform who is legally responsible, the project manager, the programme’s webpage and an additional optional function that is assumed to be interesting for viewers.

Ulf Clarén, *Sydsvenskan* 2008-01-26

The producer at Anagram immediately e-mails the people at SVT who she is co-producing the programme with, stating that she has planned a production based on one-minute credits. This sets off a couple of months of negotiation between SVT and Anagram, and a significant amount of frustration on the Anagram producer’s side. For her, there are several problems associated with the seemingly trivial decision from SVT management to shorten the credits. First, it would mean that Anagram would have to produce 45 seconds of extra drama per episode, which would amount to one and a half extra episodes in total. She argues that she has stretched production resources as thinly as possible already and that there is simply no room for anything more. Second, in
the contracts she has already agreed with all the people involved in the production, actors as well as technical staff, it states that they are promised exposure in the credits. In an industry where most people are freelance and manage their careers from contract to contract, credits are an important component, as researchers who have studied the careers of media professionals remind us: “Economists show that the credits system reduces the transaction costs of contracts. Sociologists underline that reputation markets generate dual trajectories: the reputed individuals are sought-after whereas outsiders have difficulty in finding work” (Cadin, Guérin, & DeFillippi, 2006:296). The question of whether one’s name will appear at the end of a programme is thus important for the individual’s future ability to find work, and it is not only a symbolic recognition.

One of the external producers commented on the decision by SVT to shorten the credits. This producer was somewhat amazed at how SVT seemed to have missed the “career” aspect of the credits system:

But it [the credits] is not for the viewers! It is not for them so they can sit there and say: “But God was it Kalle Svensson who was the intern, well then I get why it was so good!” It is for the people who made it! And for other people too, to market yourself because that is the way the industry works. And that I find it strange that they [SVT] don’t understand.

External producer

Internally within SVT the credits decision was also criticised. Employees at SVT who did not work in creative functions bearing copyright and thus would be cut out of the credits were not pleased. Two employees, a photographer and a light designer, wrote in the internal SVT magazine that it was a sign of “commercial panic” to shorten the credits, and that it sent a signal to certain employees (read: those employees working in lower status, technical and supportive functions) 41 that they were not valued in the company. They were also upset that freelancers’ names would be exposed but not those of employees. They wrote:

41 Mark Deuze is studying work in the media industry and he explains how workers in the film and TV industry categorise different sorts of work: “…film and television workers tend to see their activities in terms of “above the line” and “below the line” tasks. Above the line work is thought of as creative talent and is more visible and better paid. It mostly consists of acting, directing, producing (scheduling, budgeting, human resources, quality control), and scriptwriting. Below the line practices are placed at the end of a movie’s or show’s credit roll as these consists of technical and supportive work as varied as (digital and analogue) editing, lighting, set design and construction, wardrobe assistance, and camera work.” (Deuze, 2007:191)
The statement that “the audience start zapping away from the channel when long credits start rolling” must be taken out of commercial thin air – we are convinced that the audience zap away whether there are credits or not. SVT is not a hunter for advertising revenues, the concentrated sharpness of afterthought ought to be in the public service company SVT’s absolute interest.

Röhr & Wemmenlöv, Vipåtv 2008-05-23

Reaching an agreement

For the producer and her team at Anagram, it took some time to resolve the dilemma. She experienced that her collaborating partners at SVT did not really understand the severity of Anagram’s situation:

... because we said: we cannot change how much we will record; we cannot suddenly deliver 45 seconds times 24 more than what you have ordered from the beginning. And they [SVT] were very unsympathetic, there you felt like: do you know nothing about TV making? No, because this is what happens when they don’t understand the practical work, how you have calculated, and you get a bit frustrated and say that of course there will be a big difference. Then they said: “but don’t you have material to fill it out?” No of course we don’t have material to fill out with, it is times 24, it is not just one episode we are talking about, there are 24 episodes…”

Anagram producer

Then, the team at Anagram thought that if they could make credits that were fun and exciting, the viewers might not want to switch channels. Inspired by other programmes they had seen who had the same idea, they made a short credits film where they used humour and animation to present the production crew. Their hope was to convince their co-production partners at SVT that in this way it was possible to both fulfil the commitments they made to their production team and avoid viewers zapping away. However, even though the SVT head of drama and project manager at the collaborating unit in Göteborg liked their idea, they claimed that their hands were tied: it was a decision taken at a strategic level, and they could not interfere even if they wanted to. Therefore, the producer at Anagram decided to contact her lawyer and get her to contact the SVT top management to see what could be done. The matter was dealt with at the highest level at SVT, and the solution was to reduce the amount of material Anagram had to deliver per episode by one minute, from 13.5 to 12.5 minutes. This meant that Anagram’s planning and budget would still hold. But there was still the problem with what Anagram in its turn had
promised the people they had contracted, since they were promised to be credited in the programme. In the new credits policy, SVT had decided that one additional function (see the newspaper article above) could be allowed if it was deemed to be in the viewers’ interests. This the production company’s producer interpreted creatively, and decided that for every episode she would have a new function shown, so that one episode showed the names of the props team, the next episode the name of the casting person and so forth. In this way, she could credit almost the whole production team, one function at a time.

Us and them

In the end, it was sorted out and the Anagram producer retrospectively said that she was quite pleased with the collaboration with SVT. But it was obvious that speaking about the “credits event”, both while it happened and afterwards, triggered a sense of “us and them” in the external producer. The executive producer at Anagram also showed the same kind of reaction and said that it was “typical of SVT to change the rules in the middle of a production”. It thus seems as though Sherif et al.’s (1961) old prophecy from the ‘60s still holds: conflict is a trigger for in- and outgroup tendencies, here seen in the “us and them” narratives by the people at the production company. But more interestingly, conflict also got the external producers in the various projects to emphasise their “marketness” and point to their ability to both understand the rules of the market and play by them. When conflicts surfaced, both in The Wreck Divers and in The Christmas Calendar, the people from the production companies constructed narratives where being able to understand the needs of the market as well as being on demand in that market were seen as characteristics that they embodied, no matter to which realm of the public service TV field they belonged – the cultural or the commercial. Their collaborating partner SVT, by contrast, embodied none of these virtues, and in the words of one of the external producers, this was why they were being “outcompeted and left behind” in the new marketised television field.

Still, the market is not only characterised as something positive even from the external producers who are out there proving themselves in this very market. Surely, in some of the external producers’ narratives it is seen as a benevolent mechanism that separates those who have got what it takes from those who don’t. If we take the “credits event” described above as an example, from the production company’s point of view the shortening of credits destroyed freelance workers’ abilities to function in the market and make a name for themselves. However, the external producer who was involved in this event also discussed another aspect of the same event employing a market narrative, but with a different outcome. She had the same argument as the SVT employees who lost the right to be credited: from their understanding, the shortening of the credits was a sign of the SVT management yielding to market pressure from its competitors, namely the commercial broadcasters (which was
labelled “commercial panic”). In this situation, the market was characterised as something negative, the pressure of which SVT as a public service broadcaster should stand above. Thus, in the programme makers’ narratives two conceptualisations of market are enacted. One is the market for (commercial) products where negative market forces are at play that force SVT to commercialise both its programmes and practices. The other is the market for labour in the TV industry on which the external producers bring forward their abilities to compete and survive (in comparison to the employed people at SVT who don’t have the skills to compete in this market). In this latter enactment of the market, market mechanisms are being conceptualised as generally benign, since they help separate the wheat from the chaff in a sort of survival of the fittest procedure.

The love of public service TV – whatever it may be

The picture I have painted so far has given a fairly one-sided view of the collaborations: the people at production companies and freelancers seem to think of SVT and its employees as tired and artistically visionless bureaucrats.42 This is, however, not a full picture of the situation. The other side of the story will be touched upon here: the love programme makers feel towards public service TV. It should be noted, however, that the external producers don’t uncritically accept the absolute relationship between SVT and public service TV (as in SVT equals public service TV). Some of them question SVT’s universal claim on public service TV and argue that they as external producers could just as well produce public service TV programming, and some even claim they could do it better than does SVT (as in SVT does not equal public service TV). But first I will give room for some of the programme makers declarations of love towards SVT. Here are two quotes by two external producers that illustrate the appreciation many external producers have of SVT:

And SVT is fantastic in a lot of ways, I mean nobody else has the possibility to do these big drama series and these cultural programmes, and at that they are fantastic. Because the commercial channels don’t have the money to invest in documentaries and public affairs in the same way. Do you understand what I mean – deep down I love SVT!

External producer

42 One should, however, remember that it is easy in interview situations to indulge in that which people have problems with; the things that work smoothly are not as pressing and don’t require any “active” sensemaking in forms of explanation or justification.
SVT is probably the only TV channel in Sweden with no commercial demands upon it, which is fantastic. They don’t broadcast commercials. I know how TV4 works for example: to TV4 comes a bureau, which has a budget from, let’s say a pharmaceutical company, which says: “OK, we have a pill here, a period pain pill, and we want to reach young girls, or girls between 12 and 35”, let’s say. “We have 30 million to spend on advertising and we want to spend a lot of it on TV. Do you have a programme that reaches that audience?” Then they think: “No, not at the moment but we can get a programme like that”, you see? Who is deciding what content should be on TV? It is the pill! It is not the creators or whatever you call them. That is my big insight into why SVT is really, really important to me, a really important collaborating partner in that way. /.../ So, in that way public service TV is the reference I have, the ones I want to work with.

External producer

Two things are touched upon in these quotes. The ability to make important programmes in genres that advertising-funded channels are neither interested in nor can afford as well as the importance of an advertising-free TV alternative are common themes in the programme makers’ narratives, both the external producers’ and those of SVT employees. In almost all the interviews with programme makers from both sides, the idea of public service TV was discussed, problematised and philosophised without my asking directly about it. Rather, the subject of public service TV was brought up not only in reference to the contents of programmes, but also in connection with SVT’s commissioning practices, its collaboration practices and its contracting and control practices. The basic assumption underlying all actors’ narratives is that public service TV – whatever it is – is something Good and Fine, and Something That Should Be Treasured. All actors also seem to share an understanding that advertising free is a core part of anything public service TV do. The fact that SVT as a public service broadcaster does not have to make programmes that will appeal to certain audiences that are especially attractive to advertisers is seen as a big advantage. This means, at least in theory, that SVT does not have to be obsessed with ratings and audience figures in the same way as its commercial competitors are. It also means that SVT is free to broadcast critical and provocative programmes without fear of scaring away advertisers that generally prefer lighter and feelgood content to place their advertising in (Napoli, 2003).

43 This could be seen as a rather northern European perspective, because only in a few countries, such as the Nordic countries and the UK, is public service broadcasting free from advertising. In most countries, public service broadcasters are funded by a mix of public funding and advertising.
Another issue that some external producers (others had the opposite opinions) talked about was the pleasure of working together with SVT people when collaboratively producing programmes. One of them said:

SVT is usually the ones who are easiest to work with when developing projects together. It is easier to work together with SVT and develop [the programme] than it is to work with TV3 and TV4, for example.

Maria: Why is that?

Well, their culture is like that. They’ve produced so many in-house productions that they have another way of looking at it, you work together on a project. TV3 and TV4 don't have in-house productions in the same way. There, you always get the feeling that they think… they think they will be tricked in some way. And at SVT it is more like: "but we do this together because it will be aired and will be the best for everybody.” It is very comfortable to work with SVT once you’ve gotten over the first threshold [of negotiation and pitching].

Several of the external producers who had been involved in collaborations with people from SVT had pleasant experiences from these collaborations. One external producer making children’s programming told me how great it was to collaborate with people who take children seriously and who are passionate about children’s programming. When he explained what he meant by this he, like the external producers above, came back to the fact that SVT is advertising free, and that because of this SVT could put the interests of the kids first rather than those of advertisers. These narratives about SVT as a trustful and serious collaborator co-exist with narratives about SVT as too controlling and too powerful. It seems that both aspects are relevant to the external producers who experienced collaborating with SVT. For those external producers involved in collaborative productions in which there had been tensions and disagreement (at least in the external producers’ understanding), mixed reviews of the collaboration were especially evident. (These mixed reviews were prominent in the stories told by people from The Wreck Divers (disagreement over storytelling and discontentment over financing), The Christmas Calendar (discontentment over financing and splitting of costs) and The Record Bureau (discontentment over the division of intellectual property rights).) Even so, these external producers also gave witness to what seemed to be a deeply rooted awe and appreciation of public service TV and its custodian, SVT.
7. The People: The makers of the programmes

Media scholars who have studied another public service broadcaster, namely the BBC in the UK, write about the respect and honour people who are working within this organisation feel towards it (Born, 2004; Küng-Shankleman, 2000). The sense of working in a place where one’s childhood heroes once made programmes that now are a part of the cultural heritage can both make people proud as well as appear challenging. One of the external producers in this study used to work as a freelancer for public service radio, and he spoke about how cool he found it to work for the same channel that once broadcast his teenage radio idols. The same held for SVT he said:

It is so incredibly cool to walk down the same corridors where Lasse Holmkvist has walked, and work where Lasse Holmkvist has worked! (Laugh) Where Magnus and Brasse and Hasse and Tage, and…well it was so cool! /…/So, I have found it very luxurious to work in public service.

External producer

SVT and public service TV – the same or different things?

In the above sentiments, we have heard some of the external producers declare their love for advertising-free public service TV. For some of them, public service TV and SVT seem to be “the same”, in the way that they speak about the two concepts interchangeably. For others, public service TV seems to be something like a Weberian “ideal” state, and they argue that SVT in one way or another falls short of reaching this ideal.

In the early 2000s, when SVT started to increase its commissioning and collaborative production of programmes, many SVT employees along with their union representatives argued that the only ones that can make public service TV programmes are in fact SVT and people belonging to this organisation. A large study of two geographical SVT units (von Platen, 2006) shows that many SVT employees saw the emergence of a commissioning organisation (beställarorganisation in Swedish) as something other than a public service organisation. Many of the SVT project managers working with collaborative production that I have spoken to don’t agree, and argue that of course public service TV programmes can be made by other people than SVT employees and in other organisational constellations. One of Class 9A’s SVT project managers says that Class 9A is a splendid example that good public service TV can be produced in collaboration with external commercial producers. The SVT people in my study do not agree with many of the individuals whose voices are heard in von Platen’s study. It is not surprising that individuals that have a positive reaction to collaborative production end up in project manager positions in such productions. (Probably the causality is circular here as well, when one works with collaborative productions, one starts
framing such collaborations in a more positive way.) However, it is clear that in this study SVT employees are aware of the ongoing debate and have to relate to it, both in their everyday activities and when talking to a researcher about these issues. One SVT project manager commented on the ongoing debate:

It is a rather strange view of people to think that just because you’re working for a production company you are a bearer of evil, that is totally against all… I think it is even against the principles of human rights, I don’t really get that thing.

SVT project manager

Even though my SVT interviewees wouldn’t buy into the discourse that all commercial producers were “bearers of evil”, an interesting paradox still emerged in their narratives. On one hand, in-house production is not the only way to guarantee good public service TV. On the other hand, SVT must still exercise control (in various ways, as discussed in the previous chapter) to make sure that public service TV is attained both in external and internal productions; thus, the prerequisite for public service TV seems to be the public service broadcasting organisation SVT. For many external producers, however, SVT as an organisation was not a prerequisite for public service TV; rather SVT failed in many circumstances to deliver “true public service TV”. For them, public service TV was a utopian dream or an ideal state that for a number of reasons had not come true. One external producer who had worked with SVT in many productions said passionately that:

And that is why I so steadfastly hang onto SVT, because I argue that we are public service TV. And if there is any place where one should dare, dare be creative or dare be artistic, or dare be innovative or sort of dare to expand the limits, within the frame of public service of course – it cannot be offensive in any way – then it is at SVT [banging his hand on the table to underline his words]. It is there one should dare to expand the limits, but it is not done!

External producer

According to this external producer, instead of being artistic and innovative, there were too much fear and insecurity at SVT, which hindered it from fulfilling its “true” public service TV potential. Real public service TV should set trends instead of follow them; the latter was unfortunately what SVT was currently doing in his opinion. It is interesting to note how some of the external producers use the public service TV idea and the legitimacy connected to this institution as a weapon against SVT, an organisation that wants to see itself as the keeper of the public service TV tradition. This external producer’s opinion
is that SVT is sailing way too close to the “Sculia of populism” that Nissen (2006) talks about, far away from the utopian public service TV where programmes are daring, artistic and innovative.
8. The Programmes: Evaluating the outcome

"To make the good popular and the popular good has been a core purpose of Public Service since its foundation."

Sir Huw Wheldon, BBC

In the previous chapters 6 and 7 we have seen the money and the people aspects of collaborative production. In this chapter the focus will be on the actual outcomes of the collaborative productions in this study: the programmes. Here, I will describe and discuss how programme makers made sense of the outcomes of their collaborative efforts. We will learn more about what criteria they use for deciding whether a programme has been a success or not, and what aspects matter when they define what a good public service TV programme is. In the end of the chapter there will also be a description of how SVT works with trailers and information for their programmes, and how important it is that this information work is not too much alike the commercial broadcasters’ PR and advertising practices. This chapter thus deals with how the institution of public service TV become inscribed in the programme makers’ evaluations of the programmes they make, as well as in these programmes as such. The institution also guides how much “advertising” one can make for public service TV programmes after they are finished without appearing to imitate the commercial channels and in that way distort the meaning of public service TV.

Criteria for making good public service TV programming

Gut feeling

When it comes to how the people involved in making the programmes in this study describe the end result, in effect “was it a good public service TV programme?”, several factors play a role. Most TV makers claim that the inner compass is the most important judge of success; gut feeling is a phrase that reoccurs in their narratives. Since there is no such thing as an objective measurement of the quality of cultural products (see Lampel et al. (2000) for a
discussion on this), programme makers must first and foremost ask themselves about the end result. (For a social constructionist researcher interested in institutions, however, one must of course acknowledge that “personal taste” and “inner compass” is something that is developed in a social field where norms and values about good quality and aesthetics abound). But a person’s inner compass is not the only judge of the quality of a programme and whether it was a success or not. External sources also help programme makers determine the outcome of a programme, such as audience ratings and reviews from both friends and professional critics. How the inputs from these actors act as cues for making sense of the quality of a programme is described next.

In the case of The Wreck Divers, the collaborating programme makers from SVT and the production company Deep Sea had somewhat different ideas about the kind of programme they wanted to make and about how the story was to be told. The Deep Sea project manager tried to balance the disappointment of his original vision turning into “bread TV” with a more pragmatic view of the end result: after all, they did the best they could under the circumstances and they got the ratings they were supposed to reach. However, the thought of all the material they did have that was never was put to use in the programme, of the unique footage of wrecks at the bottom of the ocean, left a bitter taste when he talked about it. He painted a picture where instead of making the most of this material the producers instead had to spend a lot of time and effort editing to make sure the programme host turned out OK, a programme host that the project manager and his colleagues at Deep Sea didn’t even want but which their customer SVT had demanded. For the company Deep Sea Productions then, it might not have been a failure (at least in status and prestige even if it was in monetary terms): it delivered what its customer wanted and the customer seemed satisfied. For the people at Deep Sea personally though, who had dreams and hopes of something original and new, something that would both give satisfaction personally but also further their reputations as TV makers, the programme was a disappointment since the thought of what it could have been was hard to escape from. The SVT project manager said that they were quite happy with the outcome of the programme. She evaluated the programme according to the ratings and reviews, but also according to how inventive and novel she thought a programme was, both in terms of subject as well as storytelling. In her mind, The Wreck Divers’ way of mixing diving and connecting it to historical events was the most innovative aspect of the programme, and in this respect she thought it could be a suitable candidate for nomination for awards and fairs.

For the people involved in making Class 9A, the pride and sense of accomplishment was inherent when they spoke about the programme. Their inner compass pointed straight at the S of success. The project manager at Strix said:
I really think that there is nothing better on TV at the moment, nothing [Swedish] produced anyway. So, I feel really proud and everybody I know thinks that this programme is really good and really exiting and so darn good looking and well produced and funny and… I'm just proud, it feels great, it feels fantastic.

Strix project manager

The filmmaker behind Videocracy initiated the project because he had been fascinated by the idea of a country ruled by television and by the effects it had on the people who lived there. Now the film was finished he hoped to be able to share what he had learnt with the rest of the world:

Film has that ability, it can make a boring subject or a fuzzy subject materialise as something really tangible, which effects you almost physically. Film has that strength, it stops being intellectual exercises as when I speak about it now, and becomes something you can be affected by at a different level. /…/ …television in Italy is not just a word that refers to a machine, but when you think about TV in Italy you think of a monster! Because in Italy, television has changed society, created a totally new power structure, a political dimension, and enclosed the country in a bubble that many experience as totally sick.

Atmo filmmaker

He continued:

What fascinates me about film is that all your thoughts, your travels, all material, all the people you've met, all this you can package in a DVD! It is almost scary that all this, all the reflections, discussions, impressions and your own journey as a filmmaker, that there is room for this in this small gadget! And that is what is magical, all of a sudden all other people can take part in your journey, and get something out of it.

Atmo filmmaker

Making sense of the audience

As the project manager from Strix points to in a quote above, the reactions of not only colleagues in the business but also friends and laypersons in the programme makers' social world are important when making sense of a programme's quality. Some of the programme makers I spoke to had specific
people whose reactions to their work were important to them; it could be their two teenage children or a group of friends who were shown the programmes before they were aired. Other programme makers used imaginary persons, with certain lifestyles and demographics, for whom they created their programmes. Studies on the making of media content (television and other) have illustrated how the makers of content usually produce an image of their target audiences whom they then have in mind when producing content (cf. Ang, 1991; Edin, 2000; Graffman, 2002). Feedback from viewers is also an indicator of how the programme went down with the public, and was input in the process of deciding whether it was a success or not. In *The Record Bureau*, where a part of the programme idea was to get material for the show from the audience via interaction on the programme’s web page, a natural part of evaluating the show was to see how much interest and activity the programme managed to spur. The programme makers were happy to see that children seemed to be stimulated to invent and set new records, and took the activity on the web page as a sign of success for the programme and its interactivity idea.

When the creators of the two children’s programmes in the study, *The Record Bureau* and *The Christmas Calendar*, came up with the idea for their programmes and during their work with the realisation of them, they used children in their environment as targets for what they did. The manuscript writer for *The Christmas Calendar* told me that he had been spying on his daughter to see what kinds of programmes she enjoyed to watch, and thus came to the conclusion that children like (among other things) cliffhangers and slapstick humour. The creator of *The Record Bureau* also got inspiration from having children in the age group for which the programme was targeted. In both these children’s series, the programme makers used groups of children as focus groups to test the programme before it was aired. In *The Record Bureau*, the makers wanted to check if kids in the target age understood the idea of the main character and his function as a bureaucrat for recording records. They thus showed the programme to a couple of school classes and filmed the reactions of the children. From this they could form a fairly good understanding of what worked and what parts the children laughed at. They also got confirmation that the kids understood the concept of the main character, the main issue the programme makers had been a little worried about. In *The Christmas Calendar*, the programme makers also tested a couple of episodes on children in the target age to get a sense of their reactions. This was done after the first round of editing and they argued that the input they got from the kids could help them in the editing process, for example if there was a need to adjust or clarify

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44 Ien Ang is well known for her analysis of “the audience”, and she argues that the audience in this aspect becomes a discursive construction, with less to do with the “actual” audience than with discourses about viewers that are reflecting and reinforcing the interests of the powerful in society. This perspective will not be dealt with further here, but for those interested in this aspect, Ang’s book from 1991, *Desperately Seeking the Audience*, is highly recommended.
something. In this case, the programme makers got the impression that the children understood the premise of the programme and seemed to enjoy it, and thus did not feel the need to change anything in the next editing round. Regarding viewers’ reactions to *The Christmas Calendar* once it was aired, the programme makers knew that people would have opinions on the programme no matter what, since it was a programme (along with a few others, like the Swedish Eurovision song trials) that always triggered opinionated responses.

**Audience Ratings**

Bourdieu has written a harsh critique of a television system that increasingly is guided and controlled by a commercial logic. Here, he portrays the ever-increasing importance of audience ratings: what he calls “the hidden God”, which is worshipped and steers the actions of all TV makers. He writes: “Here is the hidden god of this universe who governs conduct and consciences. A one point drop in audience ratings can, in certain cases, mean instant death with no appeal” (Bourdieu, 2001:250).

When it came to the hidden God of audience ratings, the reasoning among the TV makers in this study were more complex than when they spoke of their own gut feelings and senses of accomplishment. In all project specifications for programmes, it is specified how many viewers the programme is aimed at. This figure is based on programme genre and target group, as well as the estimation given by the programme makers during the pitch of the programme idea. Usually this demand seems rather unproblematic for TV makers (maybe because all programmes in this study reportedly lived up to their expected ratings). *The Wreck Divers, Class 9-A, The Christmas Calendar* and *The Record Bureau*, I was told, had good ratings, namely they achieved the ratings that was expected of them, with *Class 9-A* even exceeding predictions and *The Christmas Calendar* getting better ratings than had many of the previous *Christmas Calendars*. However, when the programme makers started reasoning around the concept of ratings it was obvious that the situation was much more complex than it seemed on the surface. Ratings depended on the time of day and day of the week the programme was aired, the competition on other channels, whether it was broadcast on SVT’s Channel 1 or Channel 2 (Channel 1 being the channel with more viewing no matter what programme), what programme was aired directly before and after the programme (lead-in and -out effects) and how much publicity had been given to the programme in advance, both by SVT and by other media such as reviews in the press. Many programme makers also had an elaborate reasoning around what ratings really meant: just because a lot of people watch a programme, does not mean it is good. Some saw a reverse correlation between quality and ratings and most questioned ratings as a good

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45 For a similar discussion about how newspaper people make sense of paper sales, see the article by Kärreman and Alvesson (2001).
measurement of quality. Dimensions such as what a programme really gives and means to a viewer and how it affects societal debate could not be measured by how many pairs of eyeballs tuned in to each programme. One SVT project manager discussed the problem of what ratings really measure:

Maria: So, how important are ratings then?

Well unfortunately they are very important in general for TV. And you could say that we have a tendency to measure our success with a measurement instrument that is concretely applicable constructed for a totally different part of the industry, the advertising-funded industry where ratings is about giving viewers to the advertisers. It has nothing to do with the programmes really. What we really want to know is what do our programmes and films say to the Swedish people? And that is much harder to find out. So, you could say that SVT... one could have the opinion that SVT is too blinded by ratings.

SVT project manager

Another SVT manager, working with science programmes told me why she thought that ratings were indeed an important measurement when deciding if she had carried out her job successfully:

Maria: How do you know that you made a good programme?

I think ratings show quite a lot. And it is not about maximising ratings; rather it is about having people’s support. That people who sit with the remote control choose a popular history programme instead of a pure entertainment programme on TV3 or TV5. And it is for me one of the most important driving forces that I have in my job, to communicate, spread knowledge and science to more categories that those already convinced. It is a purely democratic aspiration; I almost get a bit religious when I talk about it! (laugh) And then it is not about making only highbrow, narrow science programmes that reach the educated public, but really make science and knowledge relevant for broad groups. And that is why I like high ratings. And then I don’t mean that we shall flatten out or make shallow programmes to get as much ratings as possible, but to get many viewers on good programmes is what we seek.

SVT project manager

Some programme makers had a quite advanced analysis of the workings of audience ratings, arguing in the same vain as researchers such as Napoli (2003),
8. The Programmes: Evaluating the outcome

that what ratings really show is the viewers' expectations rather than what they thought of or got out of a programme:

It is also so that ratings are an incredibly bad way of measuring quality, because it is not even what they [the viewers] liked watching but what they beforehand decided that they would watch. So, if we have a film that communicates very poorly subject wise or title wise with the audience, then you get bad ratings. And then you cannot prove to the audience that it really was damn good.

SVT project manager

According to this project manager, only if viewers switch off in the middle of a programme can you really say that that is an evidence of the viewer thinking it was a bad show. He continued to argue that what he and his colleagues who make rather narrow films in the culture genre wanted to achieve was to make programmes the viewers did not know they wanted to watch. (Instead of giving the audience what it wants, their credo was giving them what they didn’t know they wanted!) In his world, this meant that there were certain topics that were “easy” and which they knew would attract viewers, and gave the example of the Swedish well-known and loved author Astrid Lindgren. “Astrid will make the viewers turn the TV on, no matter how poorly the programme is made.” But the types of programmes the programme maker and his colleagues wanted to make were not so instantly appealing to the audience. Portraits of unknown but artistically important artists, for example, were not the sorts of films that made readers of the TV schedules immediately turn the TV on.

Many programme makers also recognised the contradictory situation SVT as a public service broadcaster was in, being both very interested in ratings at the same time as trying not to care about them. This is an old dilemma for public service broadcasters, which wrestle with the “lead or feed” question (see e.g. Küng-Shankleman, 2000): are you supposed to lead the public taste and offer programmes you think the citizens need or are you meant to feed the public appetite and offer the audience what they want? The SVT programme makers saw SVT's mission as doing both: both the narrow and the broad (which is also what the management of SVT argues for every time SVT is criticised for doing either highbrow programmes that nobody cares about or populist programmes that compete unfairly with the commercial channels for the big audiences). This meant that some genres and programmes should and must have high ratings, which is often referred to as “campfire TV”, around which the whole family (and nation) could gather to be entertained and which could help create cohesiveness and unity among Swedes. Other programmes had to be sheltered from the pressure of ratings, since they were deemed to be of great importance to the few people that watched them, as well as to the state of the nation, much like opera or other less popular cultural forms. One of the programme makers
quoted a BBC executive who he had heard saying that the task of public service TV was “to make the popular good and the good popular”\textsuperscript{46}, which he saw as a very fitting description of his own understanding of public service TV.

The discussion of audience ratings could be connected to the theme explored in the previous chapter, of co-existing field logics. Within the group of programme makers, among both employees at SVT and external producers, there seemed to be different understandings of how important ratings – the currency of choice in the commercial TV industry – were and should be for public service TV programmes. Some of the programme makers, SVT people as well as external producers, expressed opinions that would make them closer to the “leading the public taste” school of thought. Others, again a mix of SVT employees and commercial producers, came closer to the idea of “feeding the public appetite”. Even though there was a tendency for the SVT people in general to be more critical or at least more reflective about the role of ratings within the public service TV field than were the external producers, there was not such a clear difference between the two sub-groups when it came to how important they thought ratings were. Maybe this is not so strange, since many of SVT’s programmes in popular genres such as entertainment and drama are directly judged based on their mass appeal. The fact that, for example, the Swedish Eurovision song trials captivated more than a third of the Swedish population was by the SVT people seen as proof that it was good public service TV, and seen as one of SVT’s flagship “campfire” programmes. The former project manager for the Swedish Eurovision song trials said about it:

No other programme even comes close to [the Swedish trials for] the Eurovision song contest campfire wise. The whole family watches and everybody can find a favourite. [The Swedish] Eurovision song contest is as sort of miniature SVT. There is something for everybody and everyone is invited. It is broad, it is narrow, it cuts across all ages and has a great diversity.

Kajsa Palmskog, \textit{Projektvärlden} 2008, no 3

Even so, since SVT is not in the business of selling audiences to advertisers, ratings (as we have seen) became something vastly complex. Inherent in being public service TV, many programme makers argued, was that one could do very narrow programmes seen by only a fraction of the population. By contrast, if almost nobody watches what you do, how is that serving the public, and if nobody watches it, can it still be a good programme? In order to make sense out of all this, contingencies such as genre and the purpose of programmes were generally taken into account when it came to ratings. For the makers of

\textsuperscript{46} The person who coined this expression was the legendary BBC broadcaster and executive Sir Huw Wheldon, who argued that this was and had been the core purpose of the BBC since its foundation.
8. The Programmes: Evaluating the outcome

*Class 9A*, the popularity of the programme *despite* it being a documentary about something as dull as life in a school was taken as a token that they had hit a nerve. For the makers of *The Wreck Divers*, the ratings indicated that the programme was far from a disaster: “since people watched it they must have liked it”. For *The Record Bureau*, the programme makers told me that ratings during the children’s slots usually were very stable, and thus it was rather difficult to say anything about specific programmes in the slot. Regarding the ratings for *The Christmas Calendar*, the production company’s producer said that despite the “Christmas fundamentalism” (the complaints about the lack of snow and jingle bells), she read the ratings as a sign that people liked it.

**Reviews and impact**

Another complex issue is how to make sense of reviews in other media, often reviews in the press. *The Wreck Divers’* programme makers told me that their programme was appreciated by divers and wreck fans, as indicated by the activity on various web communities and special magazines. However, the SVT project manager was more ambivalent about how to make sense of the reviews the programme had gotten in the mainstream press. One review had been wildly enthusiastic; another reviewer had trashed the programme on account of the programme host who was depicted as the worst ever on TV. “These are just the personal opinions of these reviewers whose job it is to have opinions on everything! How can I base a judgment of what I have done on that?” However, directly after saying so he smiled and said of course he was very pleased when he got good reviews. Another SVT project manager expressed the same thing:

…reviews are read by the industry, if one get good reviews it is a measurement of success. If one get bad reviews it is not to the same extent a measurement of failure, because it is very much about the preference of the single reviewer.

SVT project manager

This horoscope-like quality of reviews – that one tended to believe them only if they were good – was echoed also in many of the other programme makers’ narratives. From a Weickian (Weick, 1995) sensemaking perspective, such a way of dealing with the world is perfectly sensible. People search for cues that help them carry on with what they are doing and that fit into the current view they have of themselves and their world. To maintain a positive view of self is often a prerequisite for action, and thus such cues that help the individual go on with his or her work tend to be noticed, while such cues that are not helpful in this way tend to be disregarded.
In the case of *The Christmas Calendar*, the programme makers knew that their series would be heavily scrutinised and talked about, since the programme is such a high profile SVT tradition and there is a big hullabaloo about it every year at the beginning of December. Even so, the people at the production company Anagram were taken aback by the intensity of peoples’ levels of engagement, with people even phoning the responsible producers at home to convey their opinions. The scriptwriter was a little displeased with some of the reviewers’ approaches to the programme, since he thought that they let their grownup, personal opinions guide what they wrote:

And then the reviewers have been so-so, like [the scriptwriter] who was a bit disturbed by a number of reviewers who judged it based on themselves: “No I don’t think this is good, it’s not funny blah blah blah”. “But excuse me, are you nine years old?” And really not from a child’s perspective, but totally from their own personal angle.

Apart from reviews in the media, many programme makers talked about “impact”, stating that this was an important aspect for evaluating if one did one’s job properly as well as being a characteristic of public service TV. That people talked about it and that it received some attention in the public sphere was deemed important. Impact was often juxtaposed with ratings, where the programme makers would argue that even though few people watched a programme, it could still have a great impact on societal debate. To make and broadcast a programme that put an issue on the public agenda was seen as one of the purposes of a public service broadcaster. One SVT project manager explained:

Maria: Is it a success even though it receives bad attention or negative attention?

No, I would not say so. It depends on what the negative attention is about. But I think that we [SVT] have a goal to create debate and stick our chin out. That belongs to the democratic values that a public service organisation should stand for.

Within the documentary genre, which belongs to the kinds of genres that are usually the opposite of “campfire TV” – that is relatively few people watch them – impact was deemed as one of the most important measures of success. *Videocracy* was such a documentary, even though it was a rather big project in terms of budget and financers. The SVT project manager explained that in this
production, the impact the film would have on the debate about the Italian media situation, both inside and outside the country, was of greater importance than the ratings it would create.

The school experiment Class 9A stirred up a lot of attention in the media. The programme received mixed reviews from TV reviewers in the newspapers: some liked it and thought it a trustworthy insight into life in a Swedish school. Others disliked it and thought it immoral to make “reality TV” out of young people’s lives. The opinion pages were full of angry comments from teachers who claimed the programme did not reflect their realities, but also rave reviews from viewers that thought it was a touching portrait of young peoples’ everyday lives in school. The chat sessions organised by SVT after the broadcasting of each programme gave viewers an opportunity to ask questions to the teachers in the programme as well as the makers of the show. Here, the fans of the programme had a chance to share their opinions, of which most were overwhelmingly positive. Whatever people thought about the programme, it was clear that it evoked emotions, and had a huge impact on societal debate. On many opinion forums in the media during spring 2008, many of which were SVT’s own programmes, there was vibrant debate about the state of the Swedish educational system. Even though the amount of attention came as a surprise to the makers of Class 9A, it was not a total coincidence. One of SVT’s project managers explained that he had worked on the PR part of the project for a number of months, meeting with editorial teams in newspapers and debate programmes both on TV and on radio, in order to ensure that the debate lived on beyond the scope of the programme. From his understanding, the most important aspect of the impact Class 9A had on the debate was that it gave voices to the schoolchildren who before the programme were given no room in the debate:

... I am deep down an idealist. I work at SVT because I think what we do is important, and in some cases that can be measured by many people watching it. In other cases, one must measure it, like in this case: that the goal with Class 9A was to democratise the school debate./.../Nobody has asked those who attend school. There are almost one million people who go to school, nobody really listens [to them]: what do they think?

Class 9A SVT project manager

Further evidence of the impact of Class 9A was the Swedish television prize Kristallen, which was awarded to the programme in the category “Best documentary”. The programme makers of Class 9A were left in no doubt that they had managed to make a programme that was spot-on public service TV. One of the SVT project managers said:
That is the trick, making TV about incredibly interesting things totally uninteresting. And I think that what we have succeeded doing in Class 9A is that we have done something, a series that is about something darn important for many people. But we have done it in a way that you can relate to. As a viewer, you can follow this series because you become engaged, you kind of engage in these people’s lives and living. And then I think that is sort of... it is far too seldom we succeed at doing it but that is kind of the absolute core of public service.

Class 9A SVT project manager

Another thing that made Class 9A good public service TV according to the programme makers was the fact that it managed to put the school issue on the public agenda. Part of the public service mission, argued the programme makers, was after all to give input to the public debate and facilitate ongoing discussion, all of which is important in a democratic society. SVT with its large resources and market share had according to such arguments a “built in” capacity for doing public service TV since it had the ability, if it wanted to, to actually work strategically to put a certain issue on the public agenda. According to a circular logic, one could thus say that the Swedish public service broadcaster fulfils its public service mission because it has access to the public service broadcaster’s apparatus. (However, it is of course up to the organisation to use this apparatus or not.)

As touched upon by the SVT project manager in the quote above, the programme makers were especially proud that the programme had given voices to the children actually attending school. He said that in the wake of the programme, children had gone from being objects of the debate – either as cute little things with no voice of their own or as juvenile delinquents – to subjects worthy of listening to. The programme makers also realised as the programme took shape that they had given the Swedish people a common frame of reference of what it was like to go to school in Sweden today. This reference could then serve to discuss how to deal with “the school problem”. The programme makers also pointed out that for them it was crucial that the thesis of the show was humanistic. The basic assumption behind the programme, they argued, was that no child is hopeless; that there is potential in every kid, it’s just a matter of releasing it. This was a worldview that they considered compatible with their notion of public service TV.

Public service TV is in the detail

Just like the saying “the devil is in the detail”, many of the SVT programme makers in this study seem to argue that public service TV can be found in the
8. The Programmes: Evaluating the outcome

detail. Public service TV is an elusive concept, of which there is no clear definition but which seems (maybe just because of the lack of clear definition; cf. Bolin, 2004; Syvertsen, 1999) to be as relevant as ever, as shown by the ongoing public debate about public service. However, some of the SVT people in this study had a rather clear idea about their understanding of what public service TV was in relation to their jobs of producing public service TV programming. One SVT project manager said:

Is it public service? Yes it is. Public service I think is to give the filmmaker a personal expression that is free from market forces where they can do what they themselves want without too much interference.

SVT project manager

An SVT negotiator talked about what public service TV meant in his job when negotiating contracts with external production companies:

I feel safer now [compared with when I started this job] about what public service stands for in all these aspects … what I really should fight for and what I can let go.

Maria: I understand that it might be hard to explain, but what would public service in this project be, as you see it, when it should come down to this [points at the contract]?

Yes, a very important part here is this commercial promotion, logos and such, inappropriate. It is cherishing our independent status.

SVT contract negotiator

Most SVT programme makers, however, thought that public service TV could not be pinpointed to just one aspect of their jobs or to the productions they were engaged in. So many things played a role. One SVT project manager reasoned around the differences between in-house and external productions, and argued that several factors influence the “public serviceness” of a production, of which the in-house or out-house question was not the most important:

The biggest difference I think is not whether it is an external or internal production; the biggest difference is the prerequisites for it. They guide what kind of programme we should make, what is the slot, what is the target group we should aim for, what is the return. From the amount of money follows what kind of possibility we have in terms of people working. So, this is what guides much more than if
[a production] is internal or external. On Monday night, I was at this debate at the journalist club (Publicistklubben) where I was on the panel, and some people went on and on about how terrible it is that we [SVT] work with production companies. But it depends on how you do it! I think that Class 9A is an excellent example of how we can make damn good modern public service TV together with production companies. For me, it is one of the best examples of that actually. Nobody can say that Class 9A is not public service. There is not a single person who with trustworthiness can claim that. And we have done it together with Strix. Good!

Class 9A SVT project manager

The understanding that public service TV depended on a lot of things and also was not always so obvious to outsiders was expressed by one of the SVT commissioners of children’s programmes. She talked about how programmes and approaches to programme making could be as innovative and new as the programme makers wanted as long as they were kept within the boundaries of public service TV:

…it can absolutely be new and fresh, but we cannot abandon our public service, our policy and our values. That is more like it is, and then there is a competence here [at SVT] which is important. And it can be as new and as much and all that, but we cannot talk over the children’s heads, we cannot have a level where we miss the target and flirt with somebody else. That is what is important, now I talk about nuances: if you are not working with children’s programming, you would probably see it as real nuances, but it is after all those nuances that enable us to do what we do!

SVT commissioner

The fuzziness of the public service TV concept

Among the external producers, some found the “fuzziness” and nuances of public service TV problematic when they were collaborating with SVT. Indeed, in some cases such as The Wreck Divers, the fuzziness opened up for the external producers to define what they thought public service TV was and ought to be about in the specific production. Still, one external producer argued that SVT’s demand on things being public service TV without clarifying what public service TV was put the external producers in a tight spot. Since SVT could always claim it needed to have control over things (contracts, processes, outcomes) in order to safeguard public service TV, it become in a sense omnipotent, with the production company in no position to question any final decision taken by SVT. The undesirable position in which this relationship put
the production companies made this external producer think about looking for other customers in the future:

And that is difficult. There they [SVT] are sort of, how should I put it, almighty. And that is a problem that I think will remain. And that has led us during the course of this journey to talk about: “well, but what other [broadcasters] are there, what is TV4 interested in? Because we have worked very much with SVT since we want to do the kind of things they want. We have the same kinds of quality goals and have been into the same kinds of programmes. But at the same time it becomes quite unworkable because I think that there are so many mixed messages at that company which makes it hard to work with them. Like this with public service, which I sometimes think can be a bit hypocritical, about what is inappropriate promotion of commercial interests [otillbörligt gynnande].

External producer

Other external producers had other experiences of and attitudes about working with SVT in relation to their “public serviceness”. One external producer argued that SVT was an attentive collaborating partner, just because the illusive concept of public service TV forced them to be actively involved in the production in order to ensure that public service was being upheld during the whole process:

But then they play a great role in participating [in the production] in order to broadcast it, but that is because of public service as well. And the tricky thing about the public service concept is that it is rather fuzzy, there is nothing written down, it is about feeling and tone and what is right and wrong, and then they must be active.

Maria: In order to know what’s going on...

In order to know what’s going on, and because they cannot hand over a pile of rules and say: hey this is what you are going to follow. In the case of the commercial channels, TV3 and Channel 5, they broadcast via London, so there the Ofcom rules apply, and there they have a regulation, a British regulation since they broadcast from England. That can also be fuzzy, but it is written down and is something to relate to. And that is also mixed, it is both fuzzy but also very strict. The fuzziest bit there is probably the “code of decency clause”, where “decency” is a bit different in England and Sweden! [laughs]

External producer
Another external producer agreed that SVT’s public service mission made it hard to know where the limits for what they could and could not do were drawn. But it was not just production companies collaborating with SVT that seemed to have these problems. SVT was also struggling with how to interpret the radio and TV act’s clause of “inappropriate commercial promotion” (in this case, whether it was OK or not having programme hosts dressed in Burberry plaids on screen):

It is really difficult, where does that limit go? And that SVT is not totally sure about either, and has diffuse rules about. And as an external production company you would want that to be much clearer. Because how can we know that we will not be accused of something like that? It becomes very tricky. And that I think has been more difficult just because we have been working with a children’s programme.

Maria: That’s right, it’s extra strict there.⁴⁷

Yes, then it is really strict. But at the same time they [SVT] don’t know themselves, they said themselves that their programme secretariat is investigating Burberry at the moment because they don’t know themselves where that limit is. So, it is a bit tricky, when they don’t know, how should they give instructions downward [in the organisation]?

External producer

There is also evidence from SVT employees that some of them find the concept of public service TV, at least in some respects, a bit tricky to translate into their daily work. During the autumn of 2007, an actor known as the main character in a TV commercial for one of Sweden’s largest food retailers was stopped by SVT from participating in its flagship entertainment quiz show, with the argument that he was too associated with the retailer. This was the starting point for one of the weekly polls of readers of the SVT internal magazine VipåTV (Mårtensson (2007b), who were asked if it was hard to keep commercial messages away from the programmes. Some of the written comments given by employees, which were published in the magazine, interpreted the event of the actor being banned from SVT’s quiz show as a long awaited step towards a practical translation of what public service TV should mean in terms of policies and practices at SVT. One employee wrote:

⁴⁷ According to the SVT contract negotiators interviewed for this study, SVT policy about various forms of co-financing in children’s programming was very strict, as stated in the SVT broadcasting charter.
Finally somebody who not only talks about public service but also defines it so that we and the audience understand why we should exist.

Another employee argued:

[It is good] that SVT finally finds a straight policy where one actually starts to define the concept of public service.

Other employees were critical of the decision, and saw it as hypocritical and an overreaction, since they argued that in various sofas in morning, entertainment and cultural programmes there was a constant promotion of new records, books and films by the invited artists. The sports broadcasts (where sponsoring is allowed) also came under attack. One employee wrote:

It is nothing less than a scandal that we call ourselves public service and a non-commercial TV company when millions of kronor yearly are being brought into the programme activities via so called “sponsorship agreements”.

Furthermore, when it came to issues of how to create awareness in the minds of viewers before a programme was to air, there was a discussion within SVT about how to do this in a “public service TV” way. This became a delicate task of “informing the public” without “advertising to the audience”.

Balancing information and advertising

When the production of a programme was coming to its end and the premiere drew closer, there was time to start planning for how to communicate the outcome of the programme to the viewers: in other words, how to promote the programme on SVT’s channels and other platforms. However, it was obvious that “promotion”, or even worse “advertising”, were concepts that led to ambiguity within the SVT programme makers. Since advertising was what their commercial competitors engaged in, the SVT programme makers seemed reluctant to associate themselves with such practices, or at least use the word “advertising” to connote the activities that they engaged in. One SVT project manager talked about what she had done recently regarding the planning of PR for her programme:

And then we got into communication [here meaning PR], which I am not involved in. But it is really important that you collaborate on certain levels. And that you give each other, now I’m going to say a bad word, advertising. That you are not supposed to say, you know!

SVT project manager
In *VipåTV*, there was a report about SVT’s work with trailers for its programmes entitled: “That’s why trailers should be something other than advertising”. It continued: “SVT has self-advertising – but it cannot be made as other TV advertising”. In the article, four SVT employees who worked with producing and planning trailers for all SVT’s programmes were presented. The article said:

SVT informs and attracts interest for its programmes in many different ways. One of the more effective is the trailers on its own channels. Captivating drama should arouse the viewer’s curiosity.

-Our aim is always to market each programme as tempting as possible for the audience. Our task is to convey a feeling, the idea of the programmes, which builds and supports the trademark SVT and all its channels, says the trailer editor Ingrid Petersson.

She says that SVT, just like in advertising, sells a product.

-But we cannot exaggerate or distort too much, since we are careful with our trustworthiness. The viewers have to trust us.

Fredrik Marklund, head of the trailer and profile department, agrees that it is hard not to draw parallels between trailers and advertising, but points out that there are also important differences.

-Advertising is often about building a brand that can live over a long period of time. The programme trailer should over a short period plant the programme as a brand and create a high awareness about it, he says.

Later in the article, one of the trailer producers said that SVT had too wide target groups (e.g. in terms of age, one target group could be 24–39 years, which he thought was far too broad). He argued that SVT needed to learn from the advertising industry, which has very clear and defined ideas about whom they target. For example, he wished for a clearer separation between SVT’s channels, where they could differentiate the mode of address and have speaker voices customised for each channel. He said he kept himself updated of the trends and practices of other broadcasters, mostly American and British, and that this was very educational: “Even though most of it is super commercial, there is plenty to be learnt from them,” he said.

It is interesting to note the apparent reluctance these SVT employees feel when it comes to promotion activities for their programmes. Even though what
they are involved in are practices that in other (for profit) companies without hesitation would be termed “promotion” or “branding” or “advertising”, these SVT employees rather denote it as “information” or “communication”. Judging from the SVT project manager quote above, she is very much aware of the taboo when it comes to the dirty word “advertising”. The framing and perspective taken in the internal magazine on the topic of trailers also points to this taboo: “It may look like advertising, but it is really not.” The reporter and the trailer makers are eager to point out that what they do may look like what the commercial competitors do, but it really is something different (even though the nuances between the two practices might be almost invisible to an outside eye).

This beating around the bush and disguising of practices by calling things by other names might seem quite strange to an outsider, but if we take the history of SVT and its close connection to the public service TV institution into account it makes (at least a little) more sense. For a long time, everything that had any connection to “commercial practices” was unthinkable in many European public service broadcasters with their emphasis on citizenry and education rather than audience and entertainment (Born, 2004; Lowe, 2009; Syvertsen, 2003; Tracey, 1998). Historically, public service broadcasters were seen, by themselves as well as others, as the antithesis to commercial television, including the commercial practices in which these broadcasters engaged. However, in line with a marketisation and managerial turn in society in general and in public sector organisations in particular (Brunsson, 2002; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Holm, 1995; Spicer & Fleming, 2007), public service broadcasters during the past decade have started to incorporate practices that previously were associated with for profit companies. One such set of practices is promotion, branding and self-advertising (Norbäck, 2005). Nevertheless, judging from the behaviour of the SVT employees in this study, these practices are still not totally legitimate and taken for granted within SVT. The consequence is that the practices are engaged in, but under less controversial labels, and the differences between the ways SVT engages in them in relation to how its competitors engage in them are underlined by the SVT people.

In preparation for the next chapter: Collaborative production as a trigger for institutional work

In the next chapter, I interpret the material described in chapters 6–8, which is informed by the theoretical perspective of institutional work, and see what the programme makers’ practices can be conceptualised as doing to the institutional arrangements in which they are embedded. Thus, in chapter 9 I ask the question of “what collaborative production does to the surrounding society”?
This means that the focus is no longer on the programme makers’ work of producing TV programmes, but rather of their institutional work – as I conceptualise it – in the public service TV field and its institutional arrangements. As I have argued previously and as shown in chapters 6–8, the setting of collaborative production is a trigger for the negotiation and (re)construction of what public service TV is and should be by the programme makers involved. The context of collaborative productions provide a setting for new actors; external producers and financers that previously have not been granted access to SVT’s internal production, and new practices; co-financing and collaborative production, which set the processes of negotiation and sensemaking in motion.

However, institutional work does not only take place in the setting of collaborative production projects. Parallel to SVT’s increased use of external producers and financers has been the public debate about the future of public service TV. This debate has taken place on opinion pages and other discussion forums and in parliament by a range of actors such as intellectuals and academics, politicians and policymakers, commercial media actors and their lobby forces, and grassroots licence fee payers. In the half decade during which this study has been undertaken, one Swedish minister of culture has been forced to leave her post after it was discovered she had purposely neglected to pay her TV licence fee, one governmental investigation about the future of public service has been both initiated and finalised, and yet another has been initiated as I write this. As a public service TV researcher, I have been very interested to follow the ongoing public discussion about public service TV. This ongoing societal discussion infuses the programme makers’ institutional work around public service TV. At the same time, new practices engaged in by public service broadcasters feedback into the public debate over what public service TV should be and over which actors should be entrusted with its enactment.

The societal discussion thus serves as a backdrop to my study of collaborative production. In this setting, SVT’s programme makers are joined by external actors – external producers and financers – which bring with them their perspectives on what they jointly should be doing in the name of public service TV. The introduction of new actors and new practices set in motion processes of (re)construction regarding the meanings of public service TV. Institutional scholars that have studied which events or contexts usually set processes of institutional change in motion argue that it usually comes from sources such as high levels of uncertainty in an organisational field (which are the breeding ground for institutional entrepreneurship and change) as well as some kinds of crises within fields that become the “disruptive events”, “shocks”, “triggering events” or “jolts” (Hardy & Maguire, 2008:204) that are needed for “the entry of new players into an organizational field, [to] facilitate the ascendance of existing actors, or change the intellectual climate of ideas” (Hardy & Maguire, 2008:204).
8. The Programmes: Evaluating the outcome

I see the emergence of a new set of practices such as co-financed and collaborative productions which bring with them new actors into the setting of public service TV content production, as a trigger of institutional work on behalf of all the people involved, both “new” and “old” actors. At the same time, we should not forget – in line with the proponents of institutional work (Hardy & Maguire, 2008; Lawrence, 2008; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Zilber, 2002, 2006, 2008) - that institutions by their very socially constructed nature (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) are constantly subject to ongoing interpretation. The meanings of institutions from such a perspective can never be settled on once and for all, but are always in process (Hernes, 2008) by negotiation and interpretation by actors in a complex social entanglement. In this study, the introduction of new actors and practices serves as a context for these ongoing processes and triggers such work.

From this perspective, it is interesting to compare this study with the study carried out by Thomsen and Schultz (2008) of the Danish public service broadcaster DR. They studied programme makers (particularly makers of news and current affairs) at this organisation during two different time periods, namely 2003 and 2008. In 2003, there was no vocal public debate about public service TV in Denmark, and the researchers had a difficult time getting programme makers to talk about public service TV in relation to their jobs and everyday activities. In 2008, however, the situation had changed completely. DR had moved into a new, highly controversial location, the “DR city” and critical DR employees had erected a cross outside the building with the words “Public Service: Born 1926 – Dead?” In 2008, there was heated public debate about public service TV in Denmark, about what it should be and about who should produce it (Mieritz, 2008). DR has been heavily reorganised and downsized, of which many of its employees are critical. In the language of institutional theorists, there is thus a crisis in the field that triggers institutional work. In 2008, the programme makers at DR saw public service TV as being threatened and now they have plenty to say in the defence of both public service TV as a general concept as well as DR as the defender and enactor of it. This Danish study shows how the institutional work of the Danish programme makers is influenced by (as well as influences) the macro institutional environment in which they are embedded (Holm, 1995).

Let’s now turn to chapter 9 and see how I have conceptualised the material presented in chapters 6–8 as three streams of institutional work in the public service TV field.
9. Interpreting three streams of institutional work

In chapter 5, I told the chronological stories of five collaborative TV programme projects. In chapters 6–8, the programme makers and their work of collaboratively making public service TV were introduced. Issues of contracting, financing and dividing rights to the programmes were explained and discussed. The institutional arrangements in terms of the programme makers’ labour situations and their “organisational homes” either at SVT or in the producers’ market were described in terms of how this affected their understanding of the collaboration with the other programme makers and companies. The outcome of the collaborative projects – the finished programmes – and what the programme makers think of them were described, as well as how SVT works to promote these programmes to the public. The idea in these chapters was to give a detailed description of how the public service TV institution is present in the programme makers’ work of producing programmes by providing templates that both enable and constrain action.

In this chapter, I interpret the programme makers’ practices of making programmes in collaborative productions as institutional work on the public service TV institution and the institutional arrangements in the field. Hence, I am no longer interested in understanding how programme makers’ collaborative practices achieve TV programmes as the outcome of these practices, as was in focus in chapters 6–8. My aim here is rather to see what these practices do to the institutional arrangements in which they are performed. Inspired by the ideas of institutional work, I interpret and conceptualise the programme makers’ practices as institutional work directed at affecting the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field. This means that the “target” for these practices are the institutional arrangements, which – according to the terms I use in this chapter – can be maintained, transformed and disrupted.

Thus, my aim in this chapter is to understand what these three streams of institutional work do to the institutional arrangements in which they are performed. I discuss this next.
What is it that doing the practice does?

In the interviews for this study, programme makers talked about their collaborative productions of programmes and the making of these programmes (i.e., “what do they do” when they make programmes together with actors from other positions in the field). From this perspective, chapters 6–8 illustrate what the programme makers do in order to make as good a TV programme as they can in the institutionalised context of the field and the public service TV institution. However, I am not interested as such in “what the practitioners do”; rather I am interested in what doing the practice does in terms of its impact on the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field and the public service TV institution. The two concepts “the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field” and “the public service TV institution”, as they are conceptualised in this study, are difficult to separate in the sense that the institution can be found in the practices in which actors engage (Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006), as discussed in the theory and methods chapters (chapters 2 and 3). This also means that institutions should be understood in their contexts, as they are rooted in and defined by the time and place where they are practiced, something I return to later in this chapter and in the next.

Investigating what doing the practice does points at something important — that practices are in themselves performative (Butler, 2010; Feldman, 2003; Orlikowski, 2000), namely they do things to the settings in which they are performed. Feldman and Pentland (2003) state that even though the intent and motivation of people performing a practice is not to create, maintain or modify the structure in which they are performed, this is nevertheless an important outcome. This “recursiveness of practice” (or “duality of structure” in Giddens’ (1984) words) points to practices not as just repetitative but as reproductive. When understanding practices as performative, it acknowledges that the reproduction of practices is not a mechanical repetition of the same activities, but rather processes of innovation by repetition and an ongoing adjustment to changing circumstances in which the practices unfold. “Repetition without repetition,” as Corradi, Gherardi and Verzelloni (2010) so aptly put it.

Taking Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) advice, students interested in practices should study them in their “circuits of reproduction”, meaning the reciprocal and ongoing relationships in which practices create and recreate the social structure and, I would say, the institutional arrangements in which they are performed. Gherardi and Perrotta (2010) urge practice-oriented researchers to investigate this “institutional work” of practices by asking: “what is it that doing the practice does?” They continue:

It is therefore necessary/.../ to analyse the circuits of reproduction of practices in order to examine the expected and unexpected consequences of practices, but above all to consider practices in their
9. Interpreting three streams of institutional work

‘doing’ of society. /.../ ‘People know what they are doing, they know why they are doing it, but they don’t know what doing it does’.

(Gherardi & Perrotta 2010:4)\textsuperscript{48}

From this it follows that not only actors (conceptualised as more or less goal-oriented and purposive) achieve things by engaging in practices, but also that practices as such are performative and thus achieve things; things that can be quite unexpected and unpurposive in regards to the actors who engage in these practices. By taking the advice of Gherardi and Perrotta (2010) and considering practices in their “doing” of society – in effect the institutional work of practices – one can study how the practices engaged in by the programme makers when they collaborate and make programmes for their mutual benefit work to transform the institutional arrangements within the public service TV field. By recognising this “agency of practices”, we can see that not only actors are able to “do” things to society, but that also practices “do” things to the institutional arrangements.

The institution and the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field

The institutional arrangements in the public service TV field at the beginning of 21\textsuperscript{st} century Sweden were described in the third chapter in this thesis, as well as in the programme makers’ narratives in chapters 6–8. In the theory chapter I defined the theoretical concept of “field” as an analytical construct in which actors are engaged in an ongoing battle and negotiation over an issue that is important to them (Bourdieu, 1993; Hoffman, 1999; Sahlin-Andersson, 1996; Wooten & Hoffman, 2008). Within the field, there are actors that have a central position as well as more marginal actors when it comes to defining what should be regarded as important within the field (thus the name “issue field” by some scholars) and how things should be carried out within the field. These central actors often have a privileged position in that they are afforded power and prestige, whereas more marginalised actors are not benefited by the current arrangements in the field.

This study portrays the public service TV field as a setting in which SVT historically has been the taken for granted enactor of public service TV with all the accompanying power and legitimacy that affords. Here, SVT has had access to all of the public service TV licence fee money with the authority to spend it as it sees fit –within the regulations of its Broadcasting Charter and legislations. Even though SVT has increased its collaborations with and reliance on production companies for programme production, it is still the taken for

\textsuperscript{48}Here Gherardi and Perrotta draw on Townley (1993) who in turn paraphrases Foucault.
granted broadcaster of these programmes. And even though SVT has indeed opened up for external producers to engage in the production of public service TV programmes, according to the external producers’ narratives, SVT is still much more powerful than are the commercial production companies in the field, which are relatively small and powerless in their dealings with SVT.

However, there are signs of slow, gradual changes. Swedish commercial broadcasters and media houses have advanced their positions in the public service TV field and have become louder in their critiques of the current arrangements, which they perceive as disadvantageous to their interests. In other European countries, arguments for sharing the public service licence fee with commercial broadcasters have been put forward. There is an ongoing discussion of what purpose public service TV serves, what problems it solves, what it should be and what actors should be granted the right to take part in its enactment.

Interpreting three streams of institutional work

As discussed in the theory chapter, I am inspired by the recent stream within institutional theory called institutional work defined as “the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006:215). As also discussed, something I will return to at the end of this chapter, I find the concept of “purposive” action somewhat problematic. Surely, action does not have to be purposive in order to make a difference that is worth studying from an institutional perspective? This is also what Gherardi and Perrotta (2010), drawing on practice theory, argue. In this chapter, I have used the phrase “directed at”, as in “practices directed at maintaining the institutional arrangements”, in order to point out some sort of direction without arguing that it necessarily has to be fully intentional or with a clear purpose. Also, I have not fully used Lawrence and Suddaby’s classification of “creating, maintaining and disrupting” when describing the three streams of institutional work that I conceptualise in this chapter. Instead, I have chosen to call them “maintaining, transforming, and disrupting” since I think it depicts better what I interpret the practices doing. (At the end of this chapter, I elaborate further on the reasons for this.) Still, it is a bit problematic to define a set of practices as directed towards one goal in particular. As I discuss further at the end of this chapter, this study shows that the distinction between the different forms of practices are less clear than Lawrence and Suddaby’s conceptualisation suggests and that work directed at change may actually be imperative for the durability of an institution.

The aim of this chapter is to interpret what the programme makers’ practices in this study do to the institution of public service TV and the
9. Interpreting three streams of institutional work

Institutional arrangements in the field. By grouping the practices that the programme makers engage in when making programmes in collaborations according to what I interpret these practices as directed at achieving, I have structured this chapter into three streams of institutional work:

1) Practices directed at maintaining the institutional arrangements where SVT is the main enactor of public service TV.
2) Practices directed at transforming the institutional arrangements by extending the enactment of public service TV to collaborations between SVT and external producers.
3) Practices directed at disrupting the institutional arrangements by questioning SVT’s legitimate right to enact public service TV while accentuating own abilities for enacting public service TV.49

Here follows a short summary of these three streams of institutional work:

Practices directed at maintaining the institutional arrangements where SVT is the main enactor of public service TV.
The first stream of work is directed at maintaining the institutional arrangements in the field where SVT functions as the legitimate actor enacting public service TV. This is institutional “defence” work in the sense that actors engage in practices that reinforce the legitimacy of SVT as a public service broadcaster and interpreter of the public service TV institution. These practices, which are mainly engaged in by SVT programme makers, is directed at establishing and reaffirming their positions as SVT employees: they benefit from the current institutional arrangements, which means that the institutional work is pursued in defence of their interests, but this work is also ideological and in defence of the public service ideology. Here, the actors draw on both commercial and cultural logics co-existing in the field in their work to reinforce the institution of public service TV as enacted by SVT.

Practices directed at transforming the institutional arrangements by extending the enactment of public service TV to collaborations between SVT and external producers.
The second stream of work is directed at transforming the institutional arrangements in the field by extending the enactment of public service TV into something that can be carried out in collaborations between SVT and production companies. These practices pool the resources and respective strengths of the programme makers at SVT and in the external production

49 The streams of institutional work listed in this chapter are neither exhaustive nor exclusive. They overlap and there is surely other work that I have not discussed. The practices discussed here are analytical constructs generated by me to be able to point out how actors do work on the public service TV institution and the institutional arrangements in the field.
companies and transfer these strengths into the collaboratively made programmes. By doing so, the practices can contribute to enhancing the strength and legitimacy of the public service TV institution. The institutional work practices of extending public service TV production so that external producers can also be legitimate enactors of public service TV benefit both actor groups (SVT and external programme makers) engaged in the practices, since it meets their interests of getting employment/commissions as well as status and opportunities to fulfil artistic visions and develop professionally. These practices are engaged in by both SVT employees and external producers.

Practices directed at disrupting the institutional arrangements by questioning SVT’s legitimate right to enact public service TV while accentuating own abilities for enacting public service TV.

The third stream of work is directed at disrupting the institutional arrangements by questioning the taken-for-granted privilege of SVT to enact and define public service TV. This could consequently be construed as “attack” work on the institutional arrangements by aiming to delegitimise SVT’s right to control public service TV production and its right to decide what public service TV is and should be, and “transfer” these rights to other actors, such as external producers. These institutional work practices are engaged in by the external producers who possibly have status and job opportunities, as well as opportunities to realise their artistic visions, to gain from different institutional arrangements. This institutional work entails the practices of disassociating SVT from public service TV as well as painting SVT in a bad light at the same time as accentuating the external producers’ abilities to produce good public service TV.

These three streams of institutional work are thereby directed at achieving various results on the institutional arrangements in the field. The second stream (transforming work) are collaborative work in the sense that it does not involve any element of “defence” or “attack”, but it rather aims at opening up the field for new actors and constellations that are seen as legitimate enactors of public service TV. The outcome of this sort of work can be described as: SVT + external producers = public service TV (SVT together with external producers equals public service TV). However, the same empirical setting in which the work directed at transforming the institutional arrangements in the field by engaging in collaborative practices takes place is also a setting for power plays and battles regarding who should be allowed to make public service TV. In chapters 6–8, we saw how collaborative productions trigger discussions around who should have the right to define what public service TV should be and who should have the right to control the production of it. In these collaborative productions, work that is directed at defending the current institutional arrangements (maintaining work) as well as work that is directed at attacking it (disrupting work) are both present. The practices engaged in by (predominantly) SVT
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people directed at maintaining the arrangements in the field where SVT remains taken for granted as the proper enactor of public service TV can be seen as work to uphold the definition: $SVT = \text{public service TV}$ (SVT equals public service TV). The practices engaged in by the external producers directed at disrupting the arrangements in the field and questioning SVT’s abilities as enactor of public service TV aims for a definition where: $SVT \neq \text{public service TV}$ (SVT does not equal public service TV).

Next, I elaborate on these three streams of institutional work by describing them in more detail and giving examples of how actors engage in them, as well as discussing their “doing” of the institutionalised arrangements in the field.

Practices directed at maintaining the institutional arrangements

- Accentuating differences
  - Comparing SVT with commercial broadcasters and highlighting the differences
- Clarifying the purpose
  - Declaring the purpose for making public service TV as different to the purpose for making commercial TV
- Internalising regulations
  - Proactively enforcing rules and regulations (before the external policing actor does)
  - Controlling content and production processes
- Equating commercial broadcasters with commercial interests
  - Enhancing the connection between commercial interests and commercial actors
- Representing viewers
  - Painting SVT as a representative of and serving the interests of viewers (in contrast to commercial and other interests)
- Measuring audiences
  - Making audience ratings a measure of legitimacy, and thus translating audience ratings from a commercial TV practice into a public service TV practice
- Co-opting commercial practices
  - Importing and translating commercial practices into public service TV practices
- Making SVT accountable
  - Constructing the licence payers as active commissioners and SVT as a supplier that is accountable to the audience.
Accentuating differences

...how TV4’s morning show sofa, they have only [the newspaper] Expressen on the coffee table, very deliberately of course, the same owner. And it is so wonderful to be able to point at that and dissociate oneself from that: “no we read several newspapers here, we are free, we are independent”. And we must always take great care of this in order to not get this kind of criticism against us, this I think is the way to survive in a good way as public service. And then it helps us when others make mistakes, it does, it highlights the difference. Bluntly speaking it is really like that, it strengthens public service...

SVT contract negotiator

One of the ways in which the programme makers argue that public service TV solves the problems plaguing contemporary TV is that it is conceived of as the opposite, namely everything (i.e. all the good things) that commercial television is not. The work of constructing public service TV as the opposite is made possible by the presence of something else, of that which it opposes. Logically, something can only be the opposite of something else (the opposite of nothing is nothing and thus doesn’t make any sense.) The value of making public service TV thereby becomes clear and comprehensible to the programme makers in relation to what it is not. In itself, without relation to anything else, public service TV is often seen as a confusing and “fuzzy” concept by many of the programme makers, both external producers and SVT people alike. However, when the practices and purpose of producing public service TV is related to and contrasted with the practices and purpose of commercial television, then the difference becomes clear. The practice of accentuating differences thus entails comparing public service TV with its commercial competitors. When accentuating differences, the programme makers tell stories of past experiences with commercial broadcasters and then compares these with their experiences of working with SVT. Examples, such as in the quote above about the collaboration between the commercial broadcaster TV4 and the newspaper Expressen, are used to highlight the sort of commercial practices to which SVT’s conduct can be compared. The purpose of accentuating differences is thus a way to paint commercial TV as problematic in a variety of ways, which then paves the way for public service TV to be the antidote.

It is an old (even though often forgotten) truth that identities are defined as much in relation to what they are not as to what they are (see e.g.Czarniawska, 2008a; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Sahlin-Andersson (1996:72–73) writes:
Interpreting three streams of institutional work

The identity of a subject – a person or an organization – is defined in relation to others; it is derived from its reference to and relationships with others. / ... / When an organization is compared with a new and different group, its identity will change, and so will the definition of the problems that the organization has.

In this study and in the context of collaborative production, not only is SVT defined in relation, and in opposition, to its commercial competitors, public service TV is also constructed in opposition to what it is not. This may sound paradoxical at first – the opposite is a “negative” way of defining something. It doesn’t say anything about what it is, only indirectly, in relation to what it is not. After all, public service TV is the incumbent, the thing that has been here the longest, much longer than commercial TV has. Why call it the opposite, and by that put commercial TV as “the first”? There is a point to doing so, and it is exactly this: public service TV is made meaningful in relation to what it is not – to the problem it solves. By itself, it becomes abstract and seems to lose much of its purpose. By comparing public service TV with commercial TV, the programme makers from both SVT and the production companies make clear the problems of commercial TV, and in this way articulate the need for public service TV.

For the people at SVT, in whose interests (emotional, ideological, economic) it is to uphold and accentuate the difference between what SVT does and what their commercial competitors do, the SVT activities of the promotion and branding of programmes is also described as “something different” and something other than commercial activities. SVT is keen to point out that even though it may look like the same things that TV4 and Channel 5 are engaging in, it really is not. By accentuating the differences between SVT’s use of trailers for their programmes and their competitors use of advertising, and by using words such as information instead of promotion or advertising, SVT programme makers accentuate the differences between their operations and those of their competitors. This oppositeness is closely linked to the legitimacy of the public service TV institution as well as to SVT, the enactor of this institution in the current institutional arrangements. As long as SVT is different from its commercial competitors, and as long as its purpose and output is different, then it has a legitimate reason to exist. If that difference becomes questioned in the eyes of licence payers, politicians and opinion leaders, then public service TV and the organisation set to enact it, SVT, might become obsolete and no longer be seen to solve any problems. The institutional work of maintaining the public service TV institution, as well as the association between public service TV and SVT, thus draws heavily on this oppositeness.

The practice of accentuating differences thus consists of comparing the various activities SVT as a public service TV broadcaster engages in with those of their commercial competitors. The purpose of such a comparison is to
communicate the various ways in which public service TV differs from commercial TV, and thus achieve consensus about its necessity.

**Clarifying purpose**

These are not films that generate a giant audience and give you attention in the newspapers for having so many viewers. We usually say that either you have ratings or you have impact. And this is a typical impact film which can make an impression, maybe even influence things in Italy… No, probably it won’t, I’m not that naïve! [laugh] But it will probably affect somebody…

*Videocracy* SVT project manager

Not only are the activities that the public service TV programme makers engage in accentuated as different; the *purpose* of making public service TV is also constructed differently. Public service TV is the opposite of what the programme makers see as programmes produced for their commercial value and for commercial purposes only. Its programmes are directed towards the viewers as citizens rather than as consumers. Public service TV programmes have some innate qualities rather than being influenced by commercial imperatives or political interests.

For the programme makers of *Class 9A*, the purpose of making the series was to engage in the public debate about the school system and its problems. They wanted to infuse the Swedish education debate with the flesh and blood of the young people who go to school, and show the school system from inside. Here, pupils’ perspectives should be made visible and young peoples’ voices should be heard. This they argued was a part of a democratic mission, which public service TV at its best could fulfil. By making a series where the viewers became emotionally attached to the children in class 9A, they could use the TV medium to portray a vastly complex issue such as the educational system in a way that viewers could relate to. In this way, viewers would be addressed not as people who wanted only to be entertained for the moment, but as citizens for which the school system should be of great importance.

To touch viewers on an emotional level was also the aim of the makers of *Videocracy*, where another pressing but complex issue was in focus: the Italian media system. Instead of talking to the audience on an intellectual level, the filmmaker argued that his film could reach viewers on a different level, and make them *feel* “the monster of Italian television”. As the SVT project manager said about the film, it leaves you with a knot in the stomach when the credits start rolling. The purpose behind making the film was to say something urgent about the insane media situation in Italy, and – as the project manager put it – maybe even change things in Italy.
9. **Interpreting three streams of institutional work**

The makers of the children’s programme *The Record Bureau* compared their purpose for making public service children’s TV with children’s programming on commercial channels. They argued that they could easily distinguish between programmes where the child was treated as a subject and when “programmes spoke over the heads of children” and instead were made to please advertisers. These differences, they argued, were perhaps less visible for the average TV viewer, but even so they were a part of their professional skills as well as reason for existence as TV makers. They argued that at the core of making public service TV for children was the chance to positively influence their worldviews. One example that the commissioner of children’s programmes at SVT put forward was how important it was to portray girls and boys in a gender-equal fashion, and question gender stereotypes instead of becoming stuck in stereotypical roles. This, she argued, became evident when watching foreign (often commercial) children’s programming. The huge amount of bad children’s shows made it important to make good children’s programmes, and fuelled the programme makers’ reasons for making public service TV.

The practice of clarifying the purpose of public service TV involves elaborating on the reasons why one is making TV programmes in the first place. The programme makers in this study do so by connecting the programmes they make to their views of the audience, constructing the audience as citizens and subjects worthy of being informed and spoken to in their own rights. This view of the audience is then compared with the construction of the “audience” from a commercial TV perspective, where it is a commodity produced to be sold to advertisers. Their programmes are made not for the sake of serving the interests of the viewers, but to produce an audience with the right characteristics that will make advertisers interested in advertising in the programme. By contrasting these two understandings of audience, the programme makers make the purpose of public service TV visible, and thus work to reinforce public service TV as the opposite of commercial TV.

**Internalising regulation**

It is a constant wrestling match when it comes to the production companies’ commercial situation and our public service mission, and no matter whether we like it or not we have to follow these rules, because it is our Broadcasting Charter, it is the Radio and TV Act. That you always have to make clear.

SVT contract negotiator
The image of public service TV as a solution to the problem of commercial TV is related to another problem: that of commercial TV reflecting commercial interests. In order for public service TV to solve this problem it has to be pure and independent. Various policing and coercive forces aim at making sure that SVT’s programmes are free from what the Radio and TV Act denotes as the “inappropriate promotion of commercial interests”. The broadcasting commission (Granskningsnämnden för radio och TV) is the authority put in place to police the conduct of broadcasters. For programme makers, there is thus always a looming threat that their programmes will be subject to investigation by the commission. In the long run, too many such investigations (and even worse, rulings) would probably jeopardise the public’s trust that SVT can actually conduct its affairs in accordance with the regulations and the Broadcasting Charter. The legitimacy of the programme makers and their operations is therefore dependent on (among many other factors) them being seen as playing by the rules.

Legitimacy has been a core concept in institutional theory from Meyer and Rowan (1977) onwards, where the upholding of legitimacy has been seen as especially important for public and not-for-profit organisations with complex goals and where the assessment of “success” is complicated and hard to measure (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Scott, 2001). For the SVT programme makers, this means that the survival of their organisation, at least from a long-term perspective, is dependent upon “the acceptance of the general public and by relevant elite organizations of [their organization’s] right to exist and to pursue its affairs in its chosen manner” (Knoke quoted in Deephouse and Suchman, 2008:51). And what serves the survival of SVT and its allocated right to enact public service TV in the way the people at SVT see fit ultimately serves those programme makers that make their livings and identities at SVT.

It is therefore important for SVT programme makers to make sure that they comply with the rules that govern its operations. It would strike a discordant note if SVT were found to overstep the regulations too often when it comes to the inappropriate promotion of commercial interests. To avoid this, the programme makers at SVT internalise the regulations in the Radio and TV Act as well as in the SVT charter into their everyday activities. By doing so, they police their own activities, trying to make sure that their conduct is unquestionable. In the collaborative productions in this study, such policing work has been performed when there is debate about possible co-financers (such as the Lund municipality in The Christmas Calendar) or in debates around the use of logos and brands in programmes. What some external producers consider hypocritical and almost paranoid behaviour by their SVT collaborating partners when it comes to keeping the programmes void of commercial interests is a result of the SVT programme makers’ practice of internalising regulation.

In collaborative productions, two people are especially important in the work of internalising the regulations: the SVT contract negotiator and the SVT
project manager. During the first phase of a collaborative production, the contract negotiator works to make sure that the financing of a programme project is “pure”, in effect that only such financers that would not jeopardise public service TV’s independence and purity are allowed to invest money. In the later stages of a programme project, once the financing has been put in place and the contract signed, the project manager takes over the work of controlling the purity of the programme. This work is carried out by such activities as controlling receipts issued by actors contracted by the collaborating production company to make sure that the production company has properly paid for all products and services used in their production of the programme. This is carried out to make sure that no goods or services are given for free in exchange for exposure in the programme. Another activity is to “blur” or in other ways disguise logos or other things that could signal commercial origin (such as brands of cars and clothes) after the filming of the programming has taken place. Such an incident took place in The Christmas Calendar project, where the SVT project manager and commissioner made the production company change the animated intro vignette at the 11th hour because they thought that a car in it was too similar to the real car used in the series, and thus were in danger of being “inappropriate promotion of commercial interests”.

The problem of TV content reflecting commercial interests is especially stressed and made relevant in the context of collaborative production, since such settings introduce new actors (external producers) and new activities (new financing models) into the production of public service TV programmes. Co-financing models, where financers outside SVT contribute money to make public service TV programmes, are seen by many SVT programme makers as a potential threat to these programmes’ purity and independence. Hence, the work of controlling content and influence becomes intensified in collaborative productions. Co-financing practices activate a discussion and negotiation within SVT about what kind of financing is acceptable and where to draw the line; what money is clean and what money is dirty, and how much dirty money can one live with without compromising public service TV?

The practice of internalising regulations and exercising control (before the broadcasting permission or other external constituents have the opportunity to do so) aims to self-regulate the work of producing public service TV and to uphold the image of public service TV as pure and independent. These activities are instigated by the SVT programme makers in collaborative productions, and communicated via various means to the external producers. However, at the time of my study there were also efforts made by SVT to educate external production companies in the relevant rules and legislation regarding public service TV. In this way, the regulation is not only internalised at SVT, but SVT is also trying to educate its collaborating partners into practicing this kind of self-control.
Equating commercial broadcasters with commercial interests

SVT is probably the only TV channel in Sweden with no commercial demands upon it, which is fantastic. They don’t broadcast commercials. I know how TV4 works for example: to TV4 comes a bureau that has a budget from, let’s say a pharmaceutical company, which says: “OK, we have a pill here, a period pain pill, and we want to reach young girls, or girls between 12 and 35”, let’s say. “We have 30 million to spend on advertising and we want to spend a lot of it on TV. Do you have a programme that reaches that audience?” Then they think: “No, not at the moment but we can get a programme like that”, you see? Who is deciding what content should be on TV? It is the pill! It is not the creators or whatever you call them. That is my big insight into why SVT is really, really important to me, a really important collaborating partner in that way. /…/ So in that way public service TV is the reference I have, the ones I want to work with.

External producer

The institutional work of maintaining the arrangements in the field where SVT holds a privileged position as the enactor of public service TV is performed by making visible – and even constructing – the connection between commercial broadcasters and commercial interests. From a number of viewpoints, for the programme makers at SVT, the external producers are just by being external producers commercial per se. They are commercial when compared with SVT, which is a not-for-profit organisation. They are commercial since they operate on the production market trying to make a profit. They are commercial since they are free to sell their services to commercial broadcasters. They are commercial since – when producing TV for commercial broadcasters – they are used to constructing savvy financing deals with various financers, including commercial actors wanting exposure for their goods and services in return for investments.

During this study, I became aware of the scepticism about commercial production companies making public service TV programming, which could be found both internally at SVT as well as outside. This scepticism had to do with a fear of production companies as “Trojan horses” that would bring commercialism with them through the gates of SVT. Most SVT programme makers involved in collaborative productions, however, regarded this as nonsense. Instead, they were more interested in producing a narrative where their “real” competitors, the commercial broadcasters, were tightly connected with commercial interests. The connection between commercial broadcasters and commercial interests was stressed by commercial broadcasters’ dependence on
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advertisers – as in the interview example at the beginning of this section by an external producer, about how products dictate what is on TV. By pointing out the very fundamentals of advertising-funded TV – namely, that their business idea is about generating audiences that can be sold to advertisers – this external producer also points out that public service TV is a place where other logics rule. SVT, it is argued, has the opportunity to make programmes for other than commercial purposes. Here, programmes can be made for artistic, democratic or educational reasons.

The practice of equating commercial actors with commercial interests also involves underlining the nature of commercial broadcasters: they are companies with owners expecting the company to make a profit. When the SVT contract negotiator points out how the people at TV4 only read the Expressen because they have the same owner and thus have an interest in promoting each other, this is a way to make their commercial purpose visible.

Representing the viewers

But I absolutely think, we are the broadcaster for crying out loud, of course we should have the right to “wash” the production any way we want. But then we still have to do it in a way that we think is good. That the viewers think is good I was going to say, that’s what I mean.

SVT project manager

In chapters 6–8, I described how SVT employees and external producers discussed the issue of who should really be in control of the programmes. In SVT’s internal productions, where SVT finances and produces the whole programme internally, the issue of control was not as pressing – at least in theory SVT was then in control of the whole production process from financing to broadcasting. In collaborative productions, however, SVT’s role as the broadcaster and thus sender of the programme and all of its content was highlighted, which made the accountability aspect more important. It was assumed by the programme makers – SVT employees and external producers alike – that viewers would attribute the programme to SVT, regardless of who had made the programme. Even though SVT was not the producer, its act of choosing to broadcast a programme made it accountable for that programme. In this study, the SVT programme makers argue that public service TV programmes do not necessarily have to be made and financed solely by SVT, but they still need to be controlled by SVT. Hence, the SVT programme makers are working to establish as a truth that the external producers contribute greatly to public service TV, but it is still after all only SVT that can guarantee purity and independence from any other interest than SVT’s (and hence the viewers’ own).
The work to establish a relationship between SVT and viewers, where SVT is constructed as representing viewers’ interests, is an important practice when it comes to constructing public service TV as pure and independent. The idea that public service TV should be independent of all interests except those of viewers works to legitimise the reasons for its existence. The comment above by the SVT project manager – that he and his colleagues are the interpreters of viewers’ wishes and demands – is an example of the work of the SVT programme makers in trying to equate the interests of SVT with the interests of viewers. This practice is thus twofold: at the same time as it is separating SVT from commercial and other, for example political, interests, it is connecting SVT’s interests with those of viewers. In order to fully understand why it is important institutional work from the SVT programme makers’ side to create an understanding of public service TV as in the service of the public, one should know a little about the criticism directed towards public service broadcasting internationally over the years.

One aspect of this criticism has been what Tunstall (1993) called “Producer Self-Service Broadcasting” where the producer’s own taste is the dominant influence behind content (in contrast to audience, consumers or advertisers). This “von oben” attitude has been seen as evidence of the patriarchal and elitist ethos of public service broadcasting (Borg, 1993) where the Reithian heritage is very much alive (Küng-Shankleman, 2000). In light of this history, it is important institutional work for a public service TV broadcaster such as SVT to show its constituents that it does not operate for the benefit of its producers, but rather for the benefit of the public.

This is a way to maintain the importance of SVT as the enabler and enactor of the public service TV institution, even in times of change when more programmes are produced in collaboration with other actors. The focus on accountability and control thus functions as institutional maintenance work by the SVT programme makers, who in this way work to uphold the relationship between the public service TV institution and SVT, which is accountable for it.

Measuring audiences

Maria: How do you know that you made a good programme?

I think ratings show quite a lot. And it is not about maximizing ratings; rather it is about having people’s support. That people who sit with the remote control choose a popular-history programme instead of a pure entertainment programme on TV3 or TV5. And it is for me one of the most important driving forces that I have in my

50 Lord John Reith, the managing director of the BBC during its inception, is the ideological father of what has been known as the BBC (as well as Scandinavian) style of public service broadcasting, where content is characterised by educational and enlightenment values.
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job, to communicate, spread knowledge and science to more categories that those already convinced. It is a purely democratic aspiration; I almost get a bit religious when I talk about it! (laugh) And then it is not about making only high brow, narrow science programmes which reach the educated public, but really make science and knowledge relevant for broad groups. And that is why I like high ratings. And then I don’t mean that we shall flatten out or make shallow programmes to get as much ratings as possible, but to get many viewers on good programmes is what we seek.

SVT science genre project manager

In the old days when SVT had a monopoly on television broadcasting in Sweden, audience ratings did not make that much sense for SVT: either one watched SVT or one didn’t watch TV at all. During recent decades, however, the advent of commercial competitors has transformed the Swedish TV industry, where TV broadcasting is now seen as a business and not just an educational or informational endeavour. In the advertising-funded part of the TV industry, audience ratings are the currency of choice: audiences are the actual commodity that is being produced and sold (Hernes & Solvoll, 2005; Napoli, 2003). Seen from this perspective, TV programmes are solely by-products in the manufacturing of audiences. So why are the SVT programme makers now paying so much attention to ratings? After all, they are not producing audiences to sell to advertisers.

Audience ratings have been imported from the commercial TV industry into the public service TV field, and in this process ratings have been translated into a currency of legitimacy. Even though many of the SVT programme makers in this study remain sceptical of audience ratings as an instrument for measuring the quality of programmes, it is evident that ratings are nonetheless very important. In the contemporary public service TV field, having high ratings for public service programmes is becoming evidence of their importance. Programmes that people watch are programmes which have an innate value, as “if people watch them they must be good”. Public service programmes that are being watched become legitimate programmes (Engblom & Wormbs, 2007). A public service TV broadcaster that has a large spread among people, and not only caters to certain age or social groups (as in the US where public service TV is a concern mainly for certain small elite groups), has a legitimate reason to exist. This is why audience ratings – “The hidden God” in Bourdieu’s (2001) terminology – has also entered into the public service TV field. The practice of measuring audiences becomes a public service TV practice when the public service TV programme makers are using ratings to justify that what they do is good public service TV. To have their programmes watched by a large number of people becomes important since it provides a foundation for their operations (as in: what is the point of making good public service programmes
The practice of measuring viewers thus provides an easily accessible argument for the makers of public service programming, at least for the makers of those genres that appeal to the masses.

The importance of audience ratings and SVT’s focus on them is also part of SVT’s institutional work to “reinvent” itself as a modern, businesslike company. The practice of focusing on viewers in an effort to become more businesslike can work to replace the old image of an elitist bureaucracy populated by self-sufficient programme makers, derogatorily called “Producer Self-Service Broadcasting” (Tunstall, 1993). The problem of SVT as an inefficient old-fashioned bureaucracy where programme makers aloof from the outside world made programmes that appealed to the tastes of their small universe of peers (“lead the public taste”) is solved by an interest in viewers’ demands and interests (“feed the public appetite”). In this sense, the arbiter of programme quality is whether it is successful in the audience marketplace and not something innate to the programme. In the business company SVT, the importance of audience ratings becomes a part of public service TV as a solution to the old problem of elitist public service TV.

Co-opting commercial practices

And then we got into communication [here meaning PR], which I am not involved in. But it is really important that you collaborate on certain levels. And that you give each other, now I’m going to say a bad word: advertising. That you are not supposed to say, you know!

SVT project manager

At the same time as public service TV is constructed as the opposite of commercial TV, the programme makers at SVT work to legitimise and normalise the use of practices that could be seen as belonging to the commercial TV industry. Above, I elaborated on their use of audience ratings as a measure of success. However, other commercial practices have also been co-opted by SVT from commercial TV, such as the branding and promotion of programmes and services, investment in producing its own programme formats as well as purchasing existing formats, investing money in productions in order not only to recoup investments but also to make a profit, and demanding market prices for broadcasting rights. Some of these practices become especially evident in the context of collaborative productions. This is what SVT employees call ‘businessliness’ (affärsmässighet) when they talk about how they have to behave professionally in their dealings with external producers. One example of this is the argument that SVT can no longer (indicating that it was different in the old days) invest licence payers’ money in programme projects without demanding a return on those investments. In line with an increased interest in narrative and discursive practices in institutional theory, the use of
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the word “business” in this context is indeed interesting. With a social constructivist idea of language, Bourdieu (2001:248) reminds us that: “[w]e know that to name is to show, to create, to bring into existence”. Media scholars (e.g. Hesmondhalgh, 2007; McQuail, 2000) as well as many of the programme makers in this study have reflected upon the increased importance of business in the public service TV field. Their general understanding is that the field (in Sweden and abroad) has gone from a setting where one first and foremost produced “culture and journalism” to a field where business aspects have become increasingly important.

Therefore, when the SVT programme makers underline the importance of being businesslike, they do so in a setting of an increasing understanding of TV production as a business. In an organisation such as a public service broadcaster, which traditionally has been influenced more by a cultural logic than it has by a commercial logic (Blumler, 1992; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Küng-Shankleman, 2000), such language use is in itself a form of institutional work. If one of the increasingly powerful institutional logics within the public service TV field is that of the field as a place for the production and dissemination of commercial products (in contrast to the production of culture where commercial value is secondary), then the work to fit in and understand the rules of this (new) game is a way to maintain one’s position in that field. By emphasising their businesslikeness, SVT employees thus signal to fellow actors in the field that they are still legitimate players and forces to be reckoned with in these new institutional arrangements.

The positioning of SVT as businesslike in the sense of demanding returns on licence payers’ money, as well as the use of other “commercial” practices such as branding, promotion and trailers, are in the SVT programme makers’ narratives framed as serving licence payers. It is thus important that practices that have been borrowed from the commercial TV industry are not seen as commercial TV practices, but rather as public service TV practices. In the interview narratives, the various activities of promoting programmes to viewers, for example in the quote above when SVT and the public service radio SR gave each other cross-promotion regarding their collaborative The Christmas Calendar project, were constructed as something other than their commercial competitors’ use of the same kinds of tactics.

Even though these practices to an outsider such as myself seemed identical to such practices engaged in by commercial broadcasters, which gave the whole situation an almost Orwellian “newspeak” feel, it was obviously very important to SVT to frame them as different. Lawrence and Suddaby’s (2006) category of institutional creation called “changing normative associations” (the remaking of the connections between sets of practices and the moral and cultural foundations for those practices) could be a fitting description for explaining what happened in these instances. Taking practices originating in the commercial realm and recharging them with public service values and purpose is a way for SVT to both engage in practices that give the required business
legitimacy at the same time as it does not destroy the meaning of public service TV as the opposite to commercial TV. Since profit generation historically for many public service broadcasters has been outside their missions, and because marketing-related practices were long seen as alien to public broadcasters (Blumler, 1992; Born, 2004; Küng-Shankleman, 2000; Lowe, 2009), the increased usage of such practices can be ambiguous. By replanting the roots of these practices in public service soil the programme makers try to overcome the contradiction of engaging in practices originating within an institutional logic that collides with their understanding of their organisation’s mission and values.

Making SVT accountable

I should partly be business minded, because that is a demand from the licence payers, to take care of the licence payers’ money, but I should also be good, do the right thing; that is difficult. So as a negotiator I should not only make sure we don’t pay too much [to the production companies], but we cannot either pay somebody too little.

SVT contract negotiator

At the same time as the SVT programme makers are engaged in institutional work by making connections between SVT, public service TV and businesslike practices, they are working to disconnect these practices from their commercial origins. But they are also engaged in another important disconnection: that between the old image of SVT as a public bureaucracy and the new image of SVT as an efficient business-oriented company. The work to make public service TV and its enactor SVT businesslike is a reaction to the image of the old SVT as bureaucratic and inefficient. This old bureaucracy is presented in the external producers’ interview narratives as a place where people become stuck, where money is wasted and where employees are desk workers lacking vision and with no understanding of the “real world” – the market of TV production outside SVT. The SVT programme makers are well aware of this image, and do what they can to portray their current practices as remedies to these problems. This institutional work is about constructing the collaborative production of public service TV as serving licence payers at the same time as treating their collaborating partners fairly.

When the SVT programme makers construct the viewers as licence payers (instead of other alternatives such as viewers or citizens), they are constructing a relationship of commissioner and supplier. In the old days, it was the programme makers who knew what was best for viewers, and viewers passively received whatever was broadcasted. This view of the audience as a group that needed to be educated has been criticised as condescending and elitist (Blumler, 1992; Borg, 1993; Küng-Shankleman, 2000; Lowe & Jauert, 2005). The current work of the SVT programme makers is instead to construct an image of licence
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payers as actively demanding something from SVT, which is the programme makers’ duty to supply. This relationship is the cornerstone of the idea of the “market” as a place where customer demand is met by suppliers, and the neoliberalist idea of the customer as a free agent actively making rational decisions. Thus, by highlighting the construct of licence payers, the SVT programme makers create a role for themselves as suppliers to licence payers and caretakers of their licence money. This makes them accountable to “their” licence payers and thus “reverses” the agency of the broadcaster/audience relationship: instead of SVT as active and viewers as passive (as in the elitist and condescending view), the licence payers are considered to be active and demanding, making SVT accountable for its actions.

What many external producers of collaborative productions see as unfair practices, namely when SVT demands much of the exploitable rights in return for its investment, SVT frames as a responsibility to the licence payers. “To give licence payers value for their money” is the motto advocated by the contract negotiators at SVT. By using this line of argumentation, the SVT programme makers are evoking an image of SVT as a bank to which the licence payers are entrusting their money. From this perspective, it is not enough to produce programmes to broadcast, SVT should also invest their money in rights to their productions, which can be exploited in various ways. When the SVT programme makers engage in practices where SVT is made accountable to the licence payers, they are reinforcing the image of SVT as businesslike.

Discussion: Practices directed at maintaining the institutional arrangements

I have now described and interpreted the programme makers’ practices as institutional work that is directed at maintaining the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field, categorising this work as practices of: accentuating differences, clarifying purpose, internalising regulation, equating commercial broadcasters with commercial interests, representing viewers, measuring audiences, co-opting commercial practices and making SVT accountable. The main actors engaged in these practices are the SVT programme makers whose interests are bound up in the current institutional arrangements where SVT is the organisation put in place to carry out the production and broadcasting of public service TV. (However, it should be noted that external producers are also engaging in many of the practices described above, such as accentuating differences between public service TV and commercial TV and clarifying the purpose of making public service TV.)

51 The Swedish Film and TV producers’ association, the industry organisation for external TV producers, has questioned SVT’s interpretation of its public service charter, and argues that instead of “producing to own” SVT should be “producing to broadcast”.

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For many of these practices, the setting of collaborative production triggers the intensity of the engagement in practice, such as internalising regulation and co-opting commercial practices by aspiring to be businesslike in negotiations with external producers. This work needs to be carried out since collaborative productions threaten and put into question such things as SVT's independence of commercial interests or its ability to behave businesslike in these new collaborative relationships.

The institutional work directed at maintaining the institutional arrangements in the field can be construed as “defence” work in the sense that it aims at preserving the status quo at times when forces are working to destabilise the current arrangements. The setting of collaborative productions both sets new such forces in motion and makes the already existing ones ever more pressing, which mobilises the defence of workers at SVT. The practices described as institutional maintenance work here work to reaffirm SVT's position as the legitimate enactor of the public service TV institution, with everything this entails for the SVT programme makers in terms of careers, visions, emotions and identity. Much of this institutional work is about making clear the difference between public service TV (and its taken for granted enactor SVT) and the commercial broadcasters, as well as defining public service TV as independent of non-viewer-related interests. In this sense, public service TV is constructed as a solution to the problems that plague commercial (especially advertising-funded) TV. But institutional work also aims at presenting SVT as businesslike in the sense that the broadcaster is in tune with the times and master of those practices (such as ratings, branding and promotion) deemed legitimate in the increasingly business-oriented public service TV field. From this, it follows that the meaning (Zilber, 2008) of the public service TV institution not only incorporates the more traditional understandings of public service TV as the opposite to commercial TV, but at the same time it is made more like commercial TV in certain aspects.

As discussed later in this chapter, by engaging in collaborative productions SVT is also carrying out institutional maintenance work on the public service TV institution. The fact that it is using monetary and creative resources from the outside is a clear signal to its constituents that it is a modern public service TV company keeping up with the times. At the same time, however, SVT tries to navigate carefully when engaging in collaborative productions since these very practices can be seen to endanger one of the most important aspects ascribed to public service TV by the programme makers: that of being a solution to the problems of commercial TV. The SVT programme makers who are engaged in the collaborative production of public service TV as commissioners, contract negotiators and project managers thus have to uphold seemingly opposing values at the same time. Their jobs involve engaging in complex processes where they work to make sure that a variety of constituents are pleased as well as dealing with the often contradictory logics of culture and commerce. These programme makers are “the janitors and mechanics of
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institutional maintenance work”, which Lawrence (2008:190) urges researchers to pay attention to. These are not necessarily the elite or the most powerful actors when it comes to bringing about institutional change; rather they are the everyday actors whose mundane work it is to keep institutions running and working smoothly. They have to navigate contradictory institutional logics among themselves, their internal colleagues and their collaborating partners, the external producers. As an important part of their institutional work (as well as explicitly for the purpose of this study) they are also involved in producing narratives that justify, explain and make clear why they do what they do and what they do when making collaborative programmes, which forces they are subject to and which purposes they ascribe their actions.

**Practices directed at transforming the institutional arrangements**

- Drawing on each others’ strengths
  - Learning from each other
  - Getting access to new competences and skills by producing programmes collaboratively
- Sharing responsibility for programmes and processes
  - Working together in the programme’s best interests
- Channelling creativity and innovative ideas
  - Bringing together the enthusiasm and novel ideas of the external producers and the experience and organisational capacities of SVT
- Sharing costs for programme production
  - Dividing the expenses between several actors to make expensive programming possible
- Shaping the future of Swedish TV
  - Cultivating and generating new programme ideas and talents by engaging in collaborative productions

**Drawing on each others’ strengths**

It was also important to be able to assume a journalistic responsibility, it was important that we had a policy for the journalism, because we cannot have 15-year-olds talking about each other. Which from a narrative perspective is rather good, because then you can push, which is the traditional reality show perspective, that you push conflict through: “but he said this, what do you think
when he said that?” and so on. We had to find a journalistic way of doing things that wasn't built upon those conflicts.

Class 9A SVT project manager

One of the practices directed at transforming the institutional arrangements in the field has to do with how the collaborating programme makers make use of each others' specific skills and experiences. In the Class 9A project, the programme makers spoke about several aspects of the project in which they had learnt new things from their collaborating partners, Strix and SVT respectively. The narrative technique of reminding the viewer of the programme’s premise ongoingly during the programme was one such thing that SVT learnt from the Strix programme makers. This technique, which has long been mastered by external producers working for advertising-funded channels, and which was developed in this particular environment, was also of importance for SVT (and hence, public service TV) in the future, argued the SVT project manager. He saw this mode of storytelling as imperative in a new and increasingly competitive media landscape where viewers use several media products at the same time, as well as jump between channels on the TV, and therefore were less focused on a single TV programme.

While SVT learned new ways to tell a story from Strix, the programme makers from Strix also learnt things from SVT. One thing that the programme makers from SVT were extremely cautious about when entering into the project was the way they were to tell the story about the children and their reality in the school. It was clear that they under no circumstances could expose or ridicule the children, or turn them against each other, which is the common way of telling the story in “reality” programmes. Instead, they thought it very important to have high journalistic standards in their work with the programme. They made use of the extensive experience at SVT when it came to making children’s programming; for example, they had a list of rules about what the production crew present in the school could and could not do regarding their work with the children. These “Class 9A rules” set the tone for how the production crew should behave, and made clear that all work should be made on the children's terms.

During the long preparations for the programme (the time it took to find a school and convince teachers, local politicians and parents to participate), the journalistic skills and experience of the SVT project managers were also very useful. One of the project managers had a long career as an investigative reporter (for example, at the programme Uppdrag Granskning, which is renowned for its “tough” stance towards politicians and public representatives). This, said the Strix producer, meant a lot during the period when the programme makers had meeting after meeting with civil servants and local politicians, negotiating their access to a school and its pupils. In this process, a
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vital ingredient in the team of programme makers was SVT’s reputation for journalistic integrity. As the programme makers explained to me, a first reaction by many of the people they encountered during this phase was to immediately associate the production company Strix with reality programmes and “shame TV”. To have SVT’s reputation and credibility to draw on in these negotiations was a big help in order to get people to even consider participating in the project.

SVT, in turn, accessed certain competencies by collaborating with Strix. In the production company’s extensive network of freelancers and contacts with which it had previously worked, it found the editor/reporter who did much of the interviews with the Class 9A children during the filming of the series. He was described by the other programme makers as having a fantastic ability to relate to children, an ability that made the participating children feel at ease and produced an atmosphere where they could talk freely about their experiences during the Class 9A school experiment. Another person of importance for the outcome of the programme was the photographer who filmed inside the school. This person had the expertise to use a special film camera with a specific lens that made the image look very “filmic” and gave depth to the picture. This made the school interiors, which in reality were rather bleak, appear rich in colours and depth. The photographer was also a talent that Strix had found via its extensive network. In the collaborative production of Class 9A, the programme makers had the possibility to look beyond the employed staff at SVT to find the members of the production team in the labour market. This meant that they could be very specific in their requirements, and choose people with specific skills that would be suited to the particular demands of the programme in question.

Sharing responsibility for programmes and processes

SVT is usually the ones who are easiest to work with when developing projects together. It is easier to work together with SVT and develop [the programme] than it is to work with TV3 and TV4 for example.

Maria: Why is that?

Well, their culture is like that. They’ve had so much in-house productions so they have another way of looking at it, you work together with a project. TV3 and TV4 don’t have in-house productions in the same way, there you always get the feeling that they think… they think they will be tricked in some way. And at SVT it is more like: ”but we do this together because it will be aired and should be the best for everybody.” It is very comfortable to work
with SVT once you've gotten over the first threshold [of negotiation and pitching].

External producer

The sharing of responsibility for the programme within the project group is another practice that works to transform the institutional arrangements in the field by opening up for new actors into the enactment of public service TV. In collaborative projects, once the work of negotiating the financing and division of rights to the programme was over, the work to plan, film and edit the programmes commenced. Many of the external producers, also those who were very critical of SVT’s financing and contracting practices, acknowledged the SVT programme makers’ interest and commitment to the programme projects. Some of the external producers who had much experience of working with commercial broadcasters argued that it was different to work with SVT, because of its concern for and commitment to the programmes. From their understanding, the SVT programme makers had an attitude that made the work more similar to that of colleagues than of the work between a commissioner and a supplier. In the productions were all the programme makers agreed on how the programme should be made, this meant that the external producers felt that the SVT programme makers really took part and “morally owned” the programmes.

In those productions where there were more tensions and disagreement, the involvement of the SVT people was sometimes seen as annoying and controlling by the external producers. Still, there was a sense among them that producing programmes together with SVT was a more collaborative effort than was producing programmes for other channels. As the external producer said in the quote above, the people at SVT are used to the hands-on production of programmes because of their long tradition of in-house productions. This contrasts with the commercial broadcasters in Sweden, where very little production takes place inside the broadcasting organisations. These broadcasters thus are mainly commissioners and not producers, a situation that is (at least still) reversed at SVT. SVT’s producer tradition became evident in the collaborative productions, and in those collaborations that were characterised by unity and a common way of seeing things, it seemed to add to the process and the outcome of the project. The practice of sharing responsibility and working in an open and mutually giving collaboration functioned as a signal to both internal programme makers and managers at SVT, as well as to other external producers, that public service TV programmes could indeed be produced in new constellations with excellent results. The SVT project manager of Class 9A gave voice to this “rearrangement” of the public service TV field when he, in response to criticism from fellow journalists about SVT’s collaboration with production companies, said that Class 9A was one of
the best examples of public service TV in a long time, and that was carried out together with the external producer Strix.

**Channelling creativity and innovative ideas**

Let me put it like this, [the filmmaker] has, when we were to decide whether we should go in in the project, he has showed us a material that is visually very exciting, but I don’t think that we or I am a 100 per cent sure what [the filmmaker] will make out of it. But I am pretty sure that he will make something good out of it. /…/ I expect [the filmmaker] to make a personal story about the world’s biggest videocracy, and I think he has an enormous ability to find these special people and situations. I think he will make something very good out of it. But I cannot say exactly what it will be.

*Videocracy* SVT project manager

One practice that can lead to a transformation in the institutional arrangements in the public service TV field is the channelling of creativity and innovative ideas found in the market of external producers. In the five collaborative programme projects in this study, the programme makers from both SVT and production companies argued that the programme idea was what made SVT want the programme. In some of the projects, such as *The Wreck Divers* and *Videocracy*, it was especially evident that the programme makers who came up with the original ideas for the programmes had particular skills and backgrounds, namely being born and raised in Italy (*Videocracy*) and being a deep sea diver (*The Wreck Divers*), which contributed to the uniqueness of the ideas. In the case of *Videocracy*, the particular ability of the filmmaker to tell a story – using images to create moods and feelings rather than facts and traditional journalistic methods – was encouraged by the project manager at SVT. The SVT project manager for *Videocracy* argued that it was his job to make it possible for the creative talents to realise their artistic visions, be they employed at SVT or external producers. From his understanding, the mission of a public service TV broadcaster was to help facilitate and be an outlet for these artistic visions. SVT, as the public service TV broadcaster, should thereby put its channels, expertise and experience, and financing and technical knowhow to the best possible use by channelling and helping bring forward creative talents from the whole TV industry. Public service for him was to give the creative programme makers freedom to pursue their ideas. What he could contribute with in this process was his knowledge and experience of working as responsible publisher, which meant that he could advise the filmmakers regarding journalistic and legal matters as well as function as a sounding board.

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52 *Ansvarig utgivare* in Swedish.
so that they had the support they needed to make the best programmes possible.

The external producer and project manager for *The Record Bureau* talked warmly about the focus and priorities of his collaborating partners at SVT when it came to children's programming. He felt that his ideas and exuberant enthusiasm were met by the same kind of attitude by the project manager at SVT. He thought it had been great to work with SVT since the people there shared his passion for children's TV. On the SVT side, the project manager for *The Record Bureau* shared these feelings of enthusiasm over the project and thought that the programme was proof that SVT and external producers could indeed work together and take advantage of each other's strengths. She said that she had consciously “held back” some of her opinions and thoughts during the project in order not to influence the production with too much “this is how we do things at SVT”. The whole point with collaborative productions, she argued, was to infuse SVT with new ideas and ways of seeing and doing things. She didn’t want to ruin that by imposing too much of the old SVT traditions on the collaboration. However, she also pointed out, some of the values and traditions at SVT were very much worth passing on into collaborative productions. From her understanding, SVT was very good at making programmes for all children of all socioeconomic groups regardless of sex and ethnicity, and this was indeed worth cherishing. She and her colleagues at SVT were good at making programmes that took children seriously and treated them with the respect they deserved. To be a good SVT project manager in a collaborative production, one needed to combine the good qualities within SVT with the good qualities of external producers in order to release the full potential of the collaboration.

**Sharing costs for programme production**

Generally we look very positively at all kinds of collaborations and co-productions. This is a costly industry, it costs a lot of money to make science documentaries. Internationally it is said that science documentaries are among the most expensive documentaries you can make. And we often need expensive graphics and we need to travel a lot and often follow events over a long time. So it is costly to make and the more who can share these ideas the better.

**SVT project manager**

The argument that collaborative productions enable SVT to make more and better programming by splitting the costs for the production with other financers is a reoccurring idea in the SVT programme makers’ narratives. For these programme makers, collaborative productions are not a threat to SVT or to public service TV. They see them as rather the opposite; collaborations
enable SVT to make expensive programming in genres that are important to its idea of public service TV. The work of project managers at SVT to create and sustain extensive networks with programme commissioners working for international broadcasters, both public and private, is an important part of making collaborative productions happen. Collaborative productions enable SVT to get hold of new ideas and creativity, as I elaborated on above. However, it also opens up possibilities for new monetary resources, Swedish as well as international, to invest into public service TV programming. To know what kind of financing is out there for the various sorts of productions and the ability to “sell” programme ideas to international financers are crucial for external producers as well as SVT commissioners and project managers.

But it is not only for SVT that collaborative production can be a way of increasing the funding for programmes. For the external producers, the collaboration with SVT also opens up new possibilities for financing. SVT is an important collaborator because it is in possession of an important outlet for TV products: its channels. However, in order to apply for much of the public financing available in Sweden, such as various film and TV funds, it is required that SVT is part of the project. Collaborating with SVT is thus a way to access financing for productions that the external producers would not get hold of without SVT as a collaborating partner. This was the case in *The Wreck Divers* as well as *Videocracy* where the productions were supported by two of the Nordic TV funds, where the requirements are that at least two of the Nordic public service broadcasters co-financed the production. *Videocracy* was also co-financed by the Danish public service broadcaster DR, which meant that the programme makers could also apply for funding from the Danish film institute. Collaborative production thus presents opportunities both for SVT and the external producers in Sweden to enlarge the budgets for their programmes, which ought to have a positive effect on the quality and production processes of their programmes. For many of the external producers of expensive programming such as documentaries and drama of various sorts, SVT is the only Swedish broadcaster that has the financial ability to produce the kinds of programmes these external producers aspire to make. To collaborate with SVT, therefore, means that they have the opportunity to realise their artistic visions. SVT, in turn, can in collaborative productions get hold of the financing to produce just those kinds of programmes, which by many important constituents are perceived as the essence of public service TV. To engage in collaborative production can thus help gain legitimacy for public service TV as an institution worth upholding, and for SVT as an enactor of this institution – even though it means that SVT is no longer alone in the production of public service TV.
Shaping the future of Swedish TV

...just like with music or other art it is so that if you were to only buy art by the same painter you would miss those currents coming up from underneath. So I think it is absolutely necessary for us and I think that we in all genres in the TV world are looking for new talents. That is the way to develop.

SVT project manager

The practice of engaging with new talents coming from all parts of the field, especially from the periphery in the form of young and inexperienced programme makers, is directed at shaping and influencing in which direction the public service TV field is heading, and which programmes are to be made in the future. For SVT, collaborative productions are important if it is to remain relevant in terms of creative and innovative programming. The practice of shaping the future of Swedish TV can thus be interpreted as institutional work that is directed at remaining a major player in the public service TV field, even though this opens up the possibility for other TV producers to play a larger part as well. As the SVT project manager says in the quote above, in order for SVT to survive and remain relevant it has to be involved in productions by new creative talents. In order to function as a nursery for inexperienced but promising talents it has to both actively be on the lookout for new talents as well as organise the means so that these talents have the opportunity to make films and programmes and become more experienced. Such systems are in place at SVT where it has programmes for young filmmakers and support activities in the form of experienced directors and scriptwriters who can coach participants. Many of the SVT commissioners and project managers also saw collaborative productions as a way to access fresh ideas and new voices as well as the possibility to form relationships with new external producers and production companies. By forming relationships and networks with producers in the production market, the SVT people are also preparing the organisation for a future where it no longer produces the majority of its programmes in house, but rather has transformed into an organisation that commissions most of its programmes from the outside. To engage in collaborations is a way to test out new available producers and provides an opportunity to expose these producers to SVT’s values regarding public service TV.

Another argument put forward in the public debate by SVT’s CEO and other proponents of the current institutional arrangements was how SVT should, and could because of the current system, make risky, daring and innovative programmes. Since they did not need to worry about scaring away advertisers by being too provocative orarty, they were in a position to expand the horizons of TV. This argument was echoed in many of the SVT programme makers’ narratives (as well as in the external producers’ narratives,
Interpreting three streams of institutional work

Even though they would often argue that SVT failed to be risky and innovative, collaborative productions became one way in which this vision could be achieved: by welcoming new ideas and programme makers from the external production market and by providing financial resources and an outlet for their work, SVT had the opportunity to get hold of programmes that expanded the limits of television. This argument applied both to programmes aligned with the cultural logic of the field, such as narrow arty films and documentaries, and to programmes of a more commercial appeal such as formatted gameshows and reality shows.

Discussion: Practices directed at transforming the institutional arrangements

Above I conceptualised certain practices as institutional work that is directed at transforming the institutional arrangements in the field, categorising this work as: drawing on each others’ strengths, sharing responsibility for programmes and processes, channelling creativity and innovative ideas, sharing costs for programme production and shaping the future of Swedish TV. The idea of institutional transformation is not one of Lawrence and Suddaby’s (2006) institutional work terms; however, I find it a fitting description of one stream of practices that the programme makers engage in when making TV programmes collaboratively. When engaging in these practices, the programme makers from both SVT and the production companies work to transform the institutional arrangements in the field by making collaborative productions not just “normal” and legitimate, but even superior in a number of ways compared with the programmes produced in house at SVT by SVT employees or by external producers only.

By emphasising how collaborative productions can add to the quality of programmes by enlarging the intake of ideas and creativity, by using the experience and knowledge of external producers and SVT employees and by widening the pool of financing available for programming, such productions can change the perception of how public service TV programmes should be produced. These practices work to open up the production of public service TV in the hands of not just SVT, but actors from all parts of the Swedish public service TV field. My use of the word transformation is thus an attempt at depicting a situation where the status quo is neither maintained nor where directly disruptive work is ongoing (such as a radical disruption of SVT’s operations and position in the field). Rather the work is about transforming the perceptions within the field about which actors are proper enactors of public service TV.

The practices directed at transforming the institutional arrangements are in line with contemporary rational myths (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) of the efficiency
and quality increasing virtues of the market (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). Public bureaucracies, which often are in critical need of the support of legislators, politicians, the cultural and economic elite and grassroots consumers, are especially vulnerable to institutional pressures such as the ideas of marketisation (Greener, 2009). To advocate collaborative production can thereby work to legitimise the public service institution as enacted by SVT, since it enables expensive programming in high status genres and it infuses the old public service broadcaster with new ideas, values and practices from “the market” outside the organisation. This institutional work – described here as transforming work – may thus ultimately function to maintain the institution of public service TV. At the same time as it functions to make external producers legitimate enactors of public service TV (however, not on their own but in collaboration with SVT), it may also lead to a maintenance of SVT as a key actor in the enactment of the institution. The practices described above can therefore actually be conceptualised as maintaining some of the major aspects of the institution and the institutional arrangements. This discussion about how institutional transformation can in fact be seen as institutional maintenance, and how change might be fundamental for institutional durability, I return to and develop further at the end of this chapter, as well as in chapter 10.

When it comes to the intentionality (or purposiveness) of the programme makers regarding the institutional transformation work in which they are engaged, I would hesitate to suggest that their main intentions are to transform the arrangements in the field. They are interested in getting more commissions and realising their artistic aspirations by producing public service TV programming, and they see collaborative productions as a way to achieve this. The SVT programme makers see collaborative productions as a means to fulfilling their mission of producing good public service TV by widening the pool of available resources and talents. This doesn’t mean that these actors’ main purposes for engaging in the practices described as work to transform the field are just that: purposive work to transform the field. The actors’ main purposes are probably just those mentioned: the will to have more opportunities to produce TV in order to realise your ideas and make a living (the external producers) and the will to make more programmes of good quality (the SVT programme makers). The institutional effect of these practices doesn’t seem to be the main explanation for the actors’ engagements in these practices. However, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, practices are in themselves performative. By asking the question “what is it that doing the practice does?” (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2010), we can see how the work of drawing on each others’ strengths, sharing responsibility for programmes and processes, channelling creativity and innovative ideas, sharing costs for programme production and shaping the future of Swedish TV open up the reorganisation of the field by encouraging new actors to access the enactment of public service TV.
9. **Interpreting three streams of institutional work**

However, there is one important issue to note here. The transformation of the institutional arrangements only involves the *production* of public service TV where more actors within the field are allowed to participate. Even though SVT engages in collaborative productions, its monopoly as a public service TV *broadcaster* remains. The institutional work of transforming the field seems only to rearrange the categories of which actors can *produce* public service TV and not which actors have the right to *broadcast* public service TV. The institutional work described above does not question SVT’s role as a broadcaster: the arrangement where SVT is the only broadcaster of public service TV programmes remains unaltered.\(^{53}\)

**Practices directed at disrupting the institutional arrangements**

- Disconnecting taken for granted connections
  - Questioning the taken for granted connection between public service TV and SVT
- Enhancing self-abilities
  - The external producers reinforcing their freedom from bureaucracy and equating their labour freedom with artistic freedom
- Delegitimising authority
  - Painting SVT as hypocritical and all-powerful

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\(^{53}\) In other countries, the arrangements regarding the *broadcasting* of public service TV have sometimes been altered. For example, in New Zealand the public broadcaster was dismantled and a “pool” of public financing was put in place from which all producers and broadcasters could apply for money for public service programmes, which would then be broadcasted by any of the domestic commercial broadcasters. Another example is Denmark, where a similar construction of a “public service pool” of money has been set up. Programmes financed by this money can be broadcasted by any broadcaster, both the public service broadcaster DR as well as the Danish commercial broadcasters.
Disconnecting taken for granted connections

And that is why I so strong-headedly hang on to SVT, because I argue that we are public service TV. And if there is any place where one should dare, dare be creative or dare be artistic, or dare be innovative or sort of dare to expand the limits, within the frame of public service of course – it cannot be offensive in any way – then it is at SVT [banging his hand on the table to underline his words]. It is there one should dare to expand the limits, but it is not done!

External producer

I will now turn to the third stream of practices, conceptualised as institutional work directed at disrupting the institutional arrangements in the field. In this work is engaged a specific group of actors: the external producers. One disruptive practice is their efforts at disassociating public service TV from SVT. If one wants to understand how institutional disruption and the emergence of new institutional arrangements takes place, then the disassociation of institutions from actors should be of importance. Clearly, a big part of any institutional arrangement is the existence of actors such as various organisations and associations, which are given mandate to either enact, or police the enactment, of a certain institution.

If we take marriage as an example of an institution (known to most people and included in Jepperson’s (1991) list of things commonly thought of as institutions cited in chapter 2) and look at the context of marriage in Sweden, one particular actor has been associated with carrying out this institution: the state church. From the first half of the 18th century onwards, the state church has had a mandate, as God’s representatives on Earth, to be the only actor allowed to organise and make legitimate the union between woman and man. The institution of marriage has thus been taken-for-grantedly associated with the Swedish state church, and wedding ceremonies and the associated rituals were unquestionably connected to this organisation. At the beginning of the 20th century (1908 to be exact), the connection between church and marriage was partly dissolved when the state stepped in as a second actor entrusted with the execution of marriage. The disassociation of an institution from its enactor, like marriage and the state church in this example, should be of interest to researchers studying institutional transformation. In addition, for students of institutional work, the practices that actors engage in when trying to achieve such a disassociation should be relevant objects of study.

So, while the SVT programme makers in this study engaged in narratives that reinforced the taken-for-grantedness of the connection between SVT and public service TV, some external producers engaged in attempts to disassociate SVT from public service TV. One way to do this is by trying to delegitimise SVT’s control claims over content and process in collaborative productions.
that SVT is not fully financing. Instead, the external producers aim to establish a moral and normative connection between financing and control: no matter who is the broadcaster of the content, the actor who is financing the content should have the right to define how it should be made. Hence, the claims of SVT that it should have the “preferential right of interpretation” over the content of public service TV is questioned, as is SVT’s control claims over various rights associated with the programmes. In their narratives, the external producers question the taken for granted association of public service TV as the programming that is broadcasted by the public service broadcaster. Instead, they advocate a connection between public service TV and those who create and finance it. This is a shift from SVT’s view of the broadcaster’s right to define public service TV to a view of the financer and producer’s right to define it, which fits the interests of the external producers better.

At the same time as the external producers are constructing public service TV in the hands of SVT as a problematic, they are advocating their own case as producers of public service TV. They tell stories of SVT and its employees as being too mainstream and hindered by bureaucracy and complacence to produce “real public service TV”. In this plot, they are constructing themselves as heroes with qualities quite the opposite to those of their collaborators at SVT. By producing such stories, they cast a shadow of doubt upon SVT and hint at a possibility of future institutional arrangements in which SVT is not the taken for granted enactor of public service TV. Taken for granted assumptions are only taken for granted as long as nobody questions them, and by creating images of the world where they are indeed questioned, actors can open up sensemaking processes and active institutional disruption work. None of the external producers in their narratives go as far as openly advocating a solution in which the funding for public service TV programming is directly disassociated from SVT or even a dismantling of SVT (which is the case in other countries). However, they still engage in activities that result in a questioning of the current state of affairs, however small and insignificant these activities may seem at present.

Enhancing self-abilities

...having real passion at SVT is no guarantee. People get tired, people are appointed positions, there is a lot of politics in there which all institutions of that kind live with. Permanent employments that run

54 This is a guiding principle of copyright law, by which those who create a product have moral right to control it, even if they do not have the financial rights to the product.

55 In New Zealand, there has been a system of “contestable funding” since 1989, which means that public funding is allocated via a fund in a competitive tendering process to any TV broadcaster or producer that wants to produce public service programming (Mayhew & Bradley-Jones (2005). Similar ideas have been put forward in the UK, often by competitors to the BBC. In Sweden, the liberal party Folkpartiet advocated contestable funding in the mid-2000s.
during a lifetime and people’s need for a career and prestige. And the lack of real artistic visions I think is a problem at SVT. And I really think it has to do with the fact that it is an institution, I don’t think it can be avoided that institutions create these kind of risks.

External producer

Some of the external producers levelled criticism against SVT for its lack of vision, risk taking and artistic aim, which were virtues that ought to signify “true public service TV” according to these critics. By pointing out all the things public service TV ought to be but which SVT failed to embody, and by presenting their own skills, the external producers worked to make themselves candidates for making “real public service TV”. The heaviest criticism of SVT as lacking artistic vision and being too “populist” came from the producers in a part of the field where a strong cultural logic reigned. The criticism from this part of the field is in line with the institutional work strategies (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006) of “valourizing and demonizing” as well as “constructing new identities”: here, the cultural external producers are constructing identities of themselves as the appropriate enactors of anything public service TV since they have the qualities it takes to produce “real” public service TV. They are painting SVT and its programme makers in dark colours while accentuating their own talents and virtues. In the words of Lawrence and Suddaby (2006:230), they are “providing for public consumption positive and negative examples that illustrates the normative foundations of an institution” – or in this case, rather the normative foundations that the external producers wish the public service TV institution rested on.

In their work to enhance their abilities, the external producers are drawing on the rationalised myths of neo-liberalism and marketisation (Friedland & Alford, 1991; March & Olsen, 2005; J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1977). They are describing themselves as the heroes of the new labour market where only the best skilled individuals are able to prosper. This argumentation echoes a Darwinian understanding of the “survival of the fittest”, which at the same time implies that those employed at SVT do not have the skills and stamina it takes to master the open labour market. On the contrary, employment and bureaucracy make people lazy, complacent and risk-averse, and the “the bunker on Gärdet” induces people to focus on their internal careers and “desk skills” instead of developing the handicraft of programme making. By drawing parallels between the mode of employment and the size and structure of the organisation for which one works, the external producers are equating their “freedom” (or in another discourse: insecure working conditions) in the labour market with artistic and professional freedom. They are thereby working to establish a connection between themselves as free agents on the market, and risk taking, creativity and vision as programme makers.
9. Interpreting three streams of institutional work

Thus, the new actors in collaborative public service TV production, the external producers, bring with them into the collaborations a logic informed by their careers as resources on a market, by which they judge their competencies as well as those of SVT employees. In the long run, this can work to reinforce the contemporary rationalised myth of marketisation and thus it could function as destabilising work aimed at the public service TV field as we know it today, where SVT is the taken for granted enactor of public service TV, and the institution of public service TV and SVT is usually perceived as the same thing.

Delegitimising authority

And that is difficult, there they [SVT] are sort of, how should I put it, almighty. And that is a problem that I think will remain. And that has led us during the course of this journey to talk about: “well, but what other [broadcasters] are there, what is TV4 interested in? Because we have worked very much with SVT since we want to do the kind of things they want, we have the same kind of quality goals and have been in to the same kinds of programmes. But at the same time it becomes quite unworkable because I think that there are so many mixed messages at that company which makes it hard to work with them. Like this with inappropriate promotion, which I sometimes think can be a bit hypocritical, about what is inappropriate promotion of commercial interests [otillbörligt gynnande].

External producer

Many of the external producers in this study, including those that were quite pleased with the collaboration with SVT, found SVT’s contracting practices as well as its general ambition to control the productions somewhat unfair. They complained about SVT’s use of contracts where it retains too many of the rights to finished programmes. Another area of complaint is SVT’s habit of “meddling” in the productions by restricting the use of co-financers, sponsors and logos. Complaints such as these might not be uncommon by subcontractors when talking about commissioners; such jargon is surely to be found also in other industries. But as we know, talk is “not just talk”, it is one of the fundamental ways in which we construct reality, and therefore is the talk by the external producers about their collaborator SVT worth taking seriously and worth looking into what this talk does. The activity of talking about SVT as an almighty player in the Swedish public service TV field constructs a picture of a field where one player holds unfair power and advantage over the smaller players. This evokes images of one mighty Goliath and many small Davids (with all the accompanying moral judgments on who is in the right and who is in the wrong). Grounded in such images of how the Swedish public service TV field works, the external producers can then go onto account SVT’s control and
contracting practices as abuses of its market power and hypocritical interpretations of its mission as a public service TV broadcaster. One example of this is when the secretary-general of the Swedish industry association of film and TV producers judges SVT’s interpretation of its public service TV mission as wrong (“Film och TV producenterna,” 2011). The association’s claim is that SVT, according to its public service TV mission, should “produce to broadcast” instead of “produce to own”. By doing this, the association also contests SVT’s taken for granted right to be the interpreter of what public service TV should be and what practices should be associated with public service TV production and broadcasting. By engaging in talk that is directed at delegitimising SVT’s authority, the external producers are opening up new players – themselves – to interpret and enact what public service TV should be.

Discussion: Practices directed at disrupting the institutional arrangements

I have now conceptualised some of the programme makers’ practices as institutional work directed at disrupting the institutional arrangements in the field, categorising this work as: disconnecting taken for granted connections, enhancing self-abilities and delegitimising authority. The actors engaged in this work are external producers, which are the people who seem to have most to gain from disrupted institutional arrangements where SVT is no longer perceived as the obvious enactor of public service TV. As Bourdieu (1993) states, all organisational fields are made up of actors whose interests are conflicting, and there will always be actors whose interests are poorly served by the current institutional arrangements. In the public service TV field, the external producers would have much to win from a renegotiation of the public service TV institution where questions such as “what is good public service TV?” and “who should have the right to produce it?” are asked.

I have called this stream of practices disrupting institutional work since they are directed at producing different institutional arrangements than the current ones. However, it is hard to say whether the work engaged in by the external producers is directed at disrupting (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006) the institutional arrangements to the degree that there will be revolutionary change, where SVT is no longer associated with public service TV at all, or public service TV as we know it will be done away with. Whatever the results of the practices of disconnecting taken for granted connections, enhancing self-abilities and delegitimising authority might be, their purpose is to undermine SVT’s legitimacy as an enactor of public service TV at the same time as the external producers underlining their own abilities to produce public service TV programmes. The privileged position of SVT is here questioned, and the institutional work by the external producers aims at pronouncing the external
9. Interpreting three streams of institutional work

producers as better (both more efficient and more creative) at enacting public service TV.

The institution of public service TV is in this stream of institutional work conceptualised as an ideal and as something “good and fine” that deserves to be in the hands of those who can best realise it (the external producers, that is). There is no work directed at doing away with the public service TV institution as such, rather it is perceived to be in need of help in its enactment, so that its true potential can be released. The external producers work to disrupt the institutional arrangements by trying to appropriate the right to interpret what public service “really is”, a right that so far has been granted to SVT.

Chapter discussion

The institutional work of practices

When I first came across the theoretical stream of institutional work, the framework that has informed much of the reasoning in this study, I thought it made much sense. I appreciated the return to the social constructionist roots of institutional theory and the focus on actors’ practices as the foundations of institutions. I also welcomed Lawrence and Suddaby’s (2006) call for studies of how institutions are maintained, something that had been more or less taken for granted within earlier institutional theory. Since institutions are structures with a high degree of permanence and resilience, their durability is at the very core of institutional theory. How this permanence comes about as well as the work carried out by actors to make institutions resilient has, however, so far remained relatively unstudied.

However, even though much of what Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) argued in their conceptualisation of institutional work made a lot of sense to me, I also had problems with some of it. My main concerns were the question of the purposiveness and intentionality of institutional work and of the a priori distinction between practices aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions (both these concerns I addressed in the theory chapter).

If we look at the issue of institutional work as being purposive (that is, actors having an idea of what they aim to achieve and thus the work to make this come about), Lawrence et al. (2009) argue that researchers interested in institutional work should focus on the institutional work itself and not the outcomes of such practices. This will, they argue, steer interest towards the intentionality of those practices “both the degree to which it is connected to the institutions in which it is embedded, and the degree to which it is motivated to affect those same or other institutions” (Lawrence et al., 2009:14). Even so, I believe it makes sense to widen the concept of institutional work to encompass those practices in which actors engage less intentionally, but which are still important for understanding institutional maintenance and change. This is in
line with Gherardi and Perrotta’s (2010) recommendation to practice-oriented researchers to investigate the “institutional work” of practices by asking: “What is it that doing the practice does?” As I elaborated on at the beginning of this chapter, not only actors (conceptualised as more or less goal-oriented and purposive) achieve things by engaging in practices. Also, practices as such achieve things. By acknowledging that practices in this sense are performative, and by investigating practices in their “doing of society” (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2010:4), students of institutional work will gain a better understanding of the complex processes in which institutional arrangements are changed or maintained.

Addressing the second concern I had about institutional work as a priori distinctions between sets of practices aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions, it seems that most kinds of institutional work practices as classified by Lawrence & Suddaby (2006) can be engaged in by actors with different intentions regarding an institution. An actor engaged in a “disrupting” practice might actually in the long run end up maintaining the institution. Another practice classified as a creating activity might in fact contribute to the disruption of an institution. Actors engaging in the “disassociation of moral foundations” for example (defined as a disruptive work activity) might ultimately contribute to the creation of a new institution via the transformation of an institutional arrangement into something else. The same can go for actors who work to demonise a set of actors or practices (defined as a maintenance work activity): they might end up transforming the meaning associated with institutional arrangements and in this way create new institutions and disrupt existing ones. In their 2009 edited book on institutional work, Lawrence et al. seem to “open up” their distinctions between different kinds of institutional work by acknowledging that one sort of work might lead to several outcomes: “Institutional work aimed at creating institutions may create institutions, but it might also fail to do so; it might affect unanticipated institutions in unintended ways, including disrupting those institutions or creating ones very different from those originally conceived of by the actors involved” (Lawrence, et al., 2009:11).

I believe that this is important, since institutional work by its very nature is entangled with other actors’ institutional work as well as various higher order processes of societal transformation. The embeddedness (Holm, 1995; Seo & Creed, 2002) and entanglement (Hernes, 2008) of institutional work thereby assures that actors cannot have full control over outcomes, even though they act with an intention to achieve certain ends. Czarniawska’s (2003:136) thoughts on the matter are worth noting:

...the volume of studies of organizational change should by now convincingly demonstrate that the intentional action never leads to the intended results, simply because there is always a lot of intentional action directed at different aims in each time and place.
Institutionalization, like power, is a post factum description of the resultant of all those efforts combined with the random events that accompanied them.

It is only afterwards, when the result can be seen and the outcome is visible, that one can tell the result of these various practices. When studying institutional work in the making, one should remember this because it also invites studies of institutional work that ultimately prove unsuccessful or lead to unexpected outcomes. Such studies would advance the knowledge of how institutions come to be, how they are maintained and disrupted and the ongoing struggle in the organisational fields where this is happening.

This study is a case in point: it is difficult to a priori define and categorise practices as directed towards an outcome. So far, most studies that Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) categorise as institutional work studies have been conducted after an institution has been created, maintained or disrupted and thereby the outcome of the work is known. What has plagued institutional research so far has been the retrospect longitudinal studies of events where post factum one can draw conclusions about the successful work of institutional workers. The outcome in the long run of the programme makers’ institutional work in this study, however, is still indefinite and the end is not yet written. Perhaps in a decade or two (or three) we might see the outcome of the work and understand the factors that led to it. So, this study aims to answer the call by Lawrence et al. (2011) for more in situ studies of institutional work that capture the mundane and muddling through quality of this work. In studies such as this, it is much more difficult to draw conclusions about which factors lead to what since the cause has yet to produce the effect. Studies such as this depict the processes of institutional work as complex, situated, social, shared and everyday. However, these studies do not lend themselves well to creating simple stories of the kind: X did this, then Y happened as an effect of this. Even so, I have attempted to categorise three streams of practices as work directed at transforming, maintaining and disrupting institutions. However, as touched upon before in this chapter and as I discuss more next and in chapter 10, the same types of practices that I classify as transforming the public service TV institution can also be construed as in the long run maintaining the overall public service TV institution and aiding its survival. This is related to the idea that if institutions are to survive changes in the field as well as societal change and achieve longevity, they have to adapt and be connected as solutions to new and changing problems: something that will be discussed in depth in chapter 10.

The “permanency” of institutions

In this chapter, I conceptualised three streams of practices: one stream directed at maintaining the institutional arrangements, another stream directed at transforming the institutional arrangements and a third stream directed at
disrupting the institutional arrangements. From this perspective, the practices and the actors engaging in them are performative in the sense that they do things (transform, maintain, disrupt) to the institutional arrangements of the field. However, whether they will achieve some sort of “permanent” maintenance, or transformation, or disruption, is hard to tell based on this study. What will happen “in the end” depends on such things as when you decide when “the end” is: in effect at what point in time you look for the achieved result. Depending on whether you look at the public service TV field in one year from now, or 10, or 20, the field will most certainly look different, and thus the institutional work as I conceptualised it in this study will be seen to have achieved different outcomes. It is also important to acknowledge that any current institutional arrangements in any organisational field depends on countless variables, historical events and the embeddedness of the field in a larger societal setting. What the programme makers’ institutional work will do to the field in the future is a question I cannot answer. I can only say which directions it seems to be taking today and analyse how the work is taking place within the setting I have studied.

The story I have told in chapters 6-8 as well as in this chapter, portrays a field where the actors are involved in an ongoing struggle over what is good and “real” public service TV and, maybe even more importantly, what actors should be entitled to produce this good and real public service TV. Historically, SVT has been the main actor which by the state has been granted the mandate to enact public service TV, the enactment of which entails both the right to define what public service TV should be, as well as produce and broadcast it. In this study we have seen how a new set of actors come in to the public service TV field where SVT used to rule in splendid isolation. This has put in motion institutional work by the various actors in the field. One stream of work is directed at maintaining the arrangements by establishing SVT as the safe-keeper of public service TV and defend the privileges, but also the identities and ideals (Creed, et al., 2010) of the actors associated with SVT. The two other streams of institutional work are directed at opening up and rearranging the field by granting legitimacy and agency to external producers to take part in the production of public service TV and the associated negotiations around what public service TV should be. The setting of collaborative production highlights the (previously) taken for granted relationship between SVT and public service TV, a relationship that for a long time was (and still by most is) perceived as

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56 It should be noted here what Creed et al (2010) also argue: that actors are not always aware of their interest, as well as not only “interested in their interests” (as in material interests). This means that such aspects as emotions, identity and ideology also play a part in institutional work. For the programme makers in this study, their institutional work is not only driven by material interests such as jobs, commissions, and future careers. Public service TV resonates with their identity, with who they are and what they believe in. To have a say in what public service TV shall be is important to who they are as makers of television programmes.
SVT = public service TV. However, as we have seen in this study, this relationship is being questioned, and there is ongoing work to make both SVT + external producers = public service TV, as well as SVT ≠ public service TV.

What consequences does then the institutional work of opening up the public service TV field for new actors have on the institution of public service TV? Regarding the public service TV institution, the stream described as transforming practices are probably enhancing the possibilities for public service TV to survive, since they seem to add to the legitimization of the institution. They do so by managing the financial resources for the production of programmes more efficiently and by drawing on popular rationalized myths (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) of the innovativeness and efficiency of using market forces as a means of making production more efficient while at the same time enhancing quality (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). These collaborative practices ought to add to the chances that public service TV will remain an institution worth supporting both monetarily and politically by the various stakeholders such as licence payers, politicians, the cultural elite and other groups involved in future negotiations over the institution. In this sense, the institutional work described in this chapter as institutional transformation work, could in fact be work which leads to maintaining the public service TV institution, by transforming the organizational field in which the institution is enacted. Collaborative production of public service TV programmes can work to enhance the survival of the public service TV institution, by solving the problems of supply of creative content and lack of financial resources for programming.

In this sense, SVT’s engagement in collaborative productions can be seen as work to maintain SVT’s legitimacy as a broadcaster and as a safe keeper of the public service TV institution. The presence of external producers as both co-financiers of programmes and makers of these programmes enables public service TV to live on, since it aids the production of costly public service TV programming, which is seen as a pivotal part of public service TV. Collaborative production can, therefore, maintain SVT’s connection to public service TV in two ways: it enables expensive programming in high status genres and it infuses the old public service broadcaster with new ideas, values and practices from “the market” outside the organisation. Both of these aspects seem to be important for SVT to remain legitimate in the eyes of important stakeholders. The new practices of collaborative production, even though at first seemingly contradictory, can work to enforce SVT’s connection with public service TV. By engaging with the external production market and co-financiers, SVT proves to viewers, politicians and others that it is in sync with the times. Collaborations open up new and fresh ideas and techniques, while SVT spends its licence funding responsibly and is in harmony with the number one rationalised myth of the current times – that of the blessings of market mechanisms. The current ideological ideas about neo-liberalism, marketisation and competition (Christensen & Laegreid, 2001; Greener, 2009; Spicer & Fleming, 2007) fit SVT’s practices of collaboration with and reliance on market
actors. From this point of view, collaborative productions can work to enforce and strengthen the connection between SVT as a broadcaster and the public service TV institution. By engaging in collaborative production, the SVT programme makers work to access new financing and talents while at the same time keeping control over these processes. Collaborative productions thus enable SVT programme makers to produce what they believe are public service TV programmes, which can strengthen the connection between SVT and the public service TV institution.

This discussion indicates that defining an institutional work practice as directed at only one possible outcome, which can be defined \textit{a priori}, does not seem to make sense. Other aspects of this study also point in this direction, the stream conceptualised as disrupting practices being an example. The way the external producers disrupt work on the public service TV institution is similar to what Creed et al. (2010) describe, where actors are engaged in disrupting institutional practices by using other institutional practices as resources in this work: practices that in this process became preserved. In my study, the external producers used traditional public service values such as artistic freedom and freedom from the pressure of audience ratings in their work to disconnect SVT from public service TV and portray themselves as better suited to enact it. This indicates how certain institutionalised rules, norms and beliefs can be drawn upon by institutional workers in their efforts to change other rules, norms and beliefs of the institution.

From this, it follows that institutional work does not necessarily have to be limited exclusively to the creation, maintenance or disruption of institutions as proposed by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), but can involve multiple aspects at the same time. Creed et al. (2010:1358) write:

Prior research on institutional work has suggested that institutional entrepreneurs create institutions, incumbents maintain them, and challengers disrupt them. As a result, Hargrave and Van de Ven (2009) pointed out that much of the institutional work categorized as institutional creation, maintenance, or disruption implicitly embraces either change or stability, but not both. In contrast, they proposed that both incumbents and challengers will be more effective in their institutional work when they take actions to both stabilize \textit{and} change institutions at the same time.

The literature dealing with institutional durability and change (see e.g. Battilana et al., 2009; Clemens & Cook, 1999) similarly predicts that exogenous “shocks” (for example, newcomers to the field or regulatory and technological change) provide opportunities for disruption to take place. This study, on the contrary, illustrates that which Hargrave and Van de Ven (2009) suggest, namely that stability and change do not have to be mutually exclusive, but that actors can engage in both stabilising and change efforts simultaneously. This thus extends...
9. Interpreting three streams of institutional work

our understanding of how change can lead to stability by empirically showing how “newcomers” (the external producers) and changing legislation (increased reliance on external producers) can work to maintain the institution over a longer time perspective. It seems that change can be vital for the durability and survival of an institution, something I elaborate on in the upcoming chapter.
10. Reframing institutional work

The transmission of the meaning of an institution is based on
the social recognition of that institution as a “permanent”
solution to a “permanent” problem of the given collectivity.

Berger and Luckmann (1967:69-70)

At the beginning of this thesis I raised the question about why public service TV – a solution put in place in the mid 20th century to solve a number of problems at the time – is still around? I wondered what – if any – problems does public service TV solve in the contemporary media landscape? Inspired by Berger and Luckmann’s (1967) statement above, that an institution is a “permanent” solution to a “permanent” problem of a given collective, in this chapter I discuss the idea of institutional work as “solutions looking for problems”, where institutional work can be conceptualized as the construction of problems to which an institution is perceived to be the solution, and the connection of problems and solution. This idea is based on the understanding that action is institutionalized in the first place because it for some actors and in a specific context helps to solve a perceived problem, which makes the action meaningful to the involved actors.

The discussion in this chapter is grounded in the empirical study of collaborative production of public service TV, the years I have spent studying the institution of public service TV, and my understanding of institutional theory and institutional work. Based on everything that I have written in the previous nine chapters in this dissertation, in this chapter I discuss a reframed way of looking at what institutional work can be. This chapter is thus focused on the theoretical implications of this study, in terms of what we can learn about institutions and institutional work from the empirical study of collaborative production of public service TV. My aim is that it may further our understanding of how institutional work takes place, and how institutions are made durable through small ongoing transformations. In this sense, the discussion here aims to bring together the more micro- and practice-oriented stream of institutional work with the more macro- and durability-oriented traditional institutional theory. By linking institutional work to the overall durability of an institution, the aim is to discuss ideas of how (macro)durability and (micro)practices are interrelated. In this chapter I also discuss the issue of power, when it comes to which actors have the possibility of defining what should be considered a problem, as well as connecting this problem to an institution.
In chapter 2, I introduced the institutional perspective by referring to things commonly thought of as institutions, such as voting and marriage. Marriage has been practiced in various forms in different societies and often predates historical records. Still it is clear that although the label “marriage” has and can be applied to most of the various institutional arrangements indicating the bond between (usually) two people, the practices and meanings associated to the institution have varied greatly. If we look at the meaning of “marriage” as it is understood in the Western world today, it could mean the fulfilment of religious obligations, it could mean a way to legitimise sexual relations as well as the procreation of children, it could mean a public declaration of love, or a means to create social, legal or economic stability, or several of the above, or something else. Various practices and rituals also associated with marriage, such as the bride wearing white (signalling virginity) or the father giving the bride away (a transfer of the guardianship of the woman from the father to the husband) live on in society even though the original meaning connected to the practice has transformed into something that fits better with current ideologies.

When I became acquainted with institutional theory, I started to read what had been written about how institutions become durable and how they change. At the same time, I was studying how the history of public service TV had evolved in Sweden since its inception. At this point, it struck me that institutions that survive societal and ideological change (including economic and technological change) – which the public service TV institution so far has – are those institutions where the meanings ascribed to them can be transformed to fit the current understandings of how the world works, or should work (as defined in social negotiation/struggle within a field). The longevity of institutions seems to depend on the institution’s ability to work as a solution to a certain (societal or other level) problem (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). If institutions could transform and reinvent themselves as solutions in relation to the transformation of the problems that they were perceived to solve, wouldn’t these institutions have a greater chance of survival?

From my understanding, therefore, one important aspect of institutional work has to do with actors working to construct, reconstruct and deconstruct the connection between an institution and the alleged problems that it is perceived to solve. Following this, institutions will survive as long as they make sense in people’s lives (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) – at least if powerful actors and societal ideologies can persuade people that this is the case – and are construed as solutions to some kind of problem. As such, they will enable actors to go on with their daily activities.

The idea of institutions as solutions to problems is not a new one. Already Berger and Luckmann (1967:53) noted that as such, institutions free the
individual from the burden of “all those decisions”, since for most problems an already institutionalised solution is at hand. Tolbert and Zucker (1996:180) write that institutions as a form of habitualised action “refers to the behaviours that have been developed empirically and adopted by an actor or set of actors in order to solve recurring problems”. Meyer (2008:530) takes this discussion further:

Institutions are challenged if they cease to be seen as solutions or if the situation is no longer regarded as problematic, or, the argument turned around, if institutions persist, we can assume that they continue to reply to a societal problem, which, however, is not necessarily the original one (Soeffner in Reichertz 2004), nor does this say anything about a ‘rationality’ of this solution.

Even though institutions have been conceptualised as solutions to problems, and it has also been hinted at that institutions that persist do so because they continuously are perceived as solutions – even though not necessarily to the problem to which they originally was paired – this important aspect of institutions seems to have been missed by many institutionalists. Nor have the consequences been elaborated on in terms of institutional permanence and durability. I therefore discuss this further, by connecting the idea of “institutions as solutions” to institutional work.

The “solutions-looking-for-problems” idea

In line with Berger and Luckmann (1967) and their more recent followers (e.g. R. E. Meyer, 2006, 2008; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996), I suggest that institutions that survive over periods of time do so because they function as solutions to (often powerful and resourceful) actors’ problems. Furthermore, an important part of institutional work is actors’ attempts to construct and reconstruct problems that both aid their interests (material and emotional) as well as connect a, sometimes already set in place, institution. Hardy and Maguire (2008) argue that much of the institutional entrepreneurship literature, especially the work that assumes actors as rational and profit-maximising, takes as a starting point that institutional entrepreneurship is about finding solutions to certain problems within an organisational field, and that the recognition of problems triggers activities that aim to find remedies to these problems – usually by creating new institutions that can deal with them. From this perspective, such problems are often thought to be “real”, “rational” and more or less agreed on by all members of a field. Institutional entrepreneurship from this point of view is thus about constructing new solutions to problems that arise.

My argument here – after conducting this empirical study and interpreting the material informed by ideas of institutional theory and institutional work – is rather the opposite and adds to the understanding of institutional work: that
one very important aspect of institutional work, especially so institutional maintenance work, first starts with the solution – an already existing institution – to which actors search for problems to connect to it. Institutions are made durable and live on because actors look for problems – new and reconceptualised – that match the current solution and work to make these problems “real” and relevant to the actors within the organisational field. For example, in Sweden the advent of commercial TV in the late 1980s was by proponents of public service TV interpreted as introducing problems that could be solved by the current institutional arrangements of public service TV. If actors are successful in this work, then the institution is maintained.

Pursuing this line of thought, one can assume that institutional work directed at disrupting an institution would entail the deconstruction, dismissal and disconnection of problems to which an institution is the solution. Actors interested in disrupting the current institutional arrangements would try to dismiss the current institution as a legitimate solution (as some of the external producers in this study are hinting at), as well as to dismiss the legitimacy of the problems that the institution is perceived to solve (something which for example Zsiga (2008) is attempting in his book about public service). In contemporary Sweden, opponents to SVT and current institutional arrangements are questioning the validity of problems that public service TV is perceived to solve (using arguments like “the audience can decide for themselves what TV programmes they need”, and “other market actors can produce almost all content cheaper and better than SVT”). If this work is successful, the solution is no longer perceived by the relevant actors to solve any pressing problems, which in turn means that the institution has lost its purpose and is rendered unnecessary, becoming a relic of the past.

The connecting of problems and solutions

However, not only are the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of problems important in institutional work. The connecting of problems and solutions is also vital. The work of actors to make this connecting is also institutional work, and this goes hand in hand with the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of problems. Because one can imagine all kinds of “problems” out there, but if they are not connected to the institution – if these problems are not ascribed by powerful stakeholders as problems that can be solved by the institution – then the institutional work is unsuccessful. I therefore also suggest that institutional work is not only about the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of problems, but also about connecting:

- problems that are so far not conceived as problems to a specific institution/institution, and
10. **Reframing institutional work**

- institutions that so far are not conceived as solutions to these specific problems.

It is thus only when the connection has been made that problems become problems (when they are labelled as such and solutions are ascribed to them), and solutions become solutions – and institutions – (when there is some kind of social recognition (institutionalisation) about them being solutions to these problems).

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**The “solutions-looking-for-problems” idea**

Institutional work is the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of problems to which an institution is perceived to be the solution and the connecting of problems and solution. From this, it follows that the solution/institution is also transformed over time.

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**Figure 10.1 The "solutions-looking-for-problems" idea**

The current discussion in journalism circles of “the death of investigative journalism” (Halliday, 2010) and how it is currently being connected to public service broadcasting, can be used to illustrate this idea. There is fear that investigative journalism such as previously found in the “old” media (daily newspapers, magazines) are declining because the old media operators no longer can afford paying for this kind of expensive content. This is an effect of the Internet and its “for free” culture, where consumers are used to not paying for content and where new players are able to aggregate audiences and advertising revenues that previously went to the old media. Without these income streams, few of the old media actors are in an economic position to be able to afford foreign correspondents or journalists who can devote months to uncovering a news story (Lundberg Dabrowski, 2009; Patterson, 2009). As a response to the crisis of investigative journalism, proponents of public service TV in Sweden and elsewhere are working to connect this problem to public service TV, arguing that this institution can solve the problem. Their arguments
are that license fee-financed public service TV can enable investigative journalism and expensive news reporting that few other media outlets in today’s media landscape can afford.57

The “solutions-looking-for-problems” idea that I propose here is a reframed way of looking at institutional work, inspired by such thinkers as Weick (Weick, 1979, 1995) and Cohen, March and Olsen (1972; March & Olsen, 1989; March & Simon, 1958). I have been inspired by Weick’s keenness for reversing taken-for-granted truths about the world and turning things on their head. Instead of stating that “I’ll believe it when I see it”, the opposite “I’ll see it when I believe it” is more truthful of how the world works. From Cohen, March and Olsen, I have been inspired by their reasoning about how decisions are made: not in a rational manner but in a process reminiscent of that of a garbage can where choices, solutions, decision makers and feelings are mixed together, and where the solution might steer the choice of problem. In their words: “Recent studies of universities, a familiar form of organized anarchy, suggest that such organizations can be viewed for some purposes as collections of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be an answer, and decision makers looking for work” (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972:1).

To summarise, the “solutions-looking-for-problems” idea is a way to conceptualise how institutions are maintained and made “permanent”, and how they are transformed. It presents a way of understanding how institutions, once already in place, become durable and survive societal and ideological change. It also aids our understanding of institutional work by conceptualising it as the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of problems to which institutions are perceived to be the solution and the connecting of problems and solutions. The activities that actors engage in when they are doing institutional work are from this perspective to try to construct problems that fit their understandings of the world (which often coincides with what fits their interests) and connect these problems to an (often already) existing institution. Note that construction in this sense is not about creating something anew. When using the word construct here, I intend it in the meaning of social

57 The institution of marriage can be used as another example of this: in contemporary Sweden, most people would connect the institution of marriage to the idea of romantic love, and that getting married is a “solution” of sorts to the “problem” of love: how love should be enacted and structured. (In effect: How do you perform love? (problem) By marriage! (solution)) However, this has not always been the case. Historically in Sweden, in rich families as well as among the lower classes, marriage usually had nothing to do with love. People got married to tie families together and to guarantee the succession of wealth and estates, among other things. Only during the past 100–200 years has there been the notion that love and marriage “go together like a horse and carriage” (as the song goes). The idea of romantic love existed before, as did the idea of marriage, but only when they were both connected marriage became the solution to the problem of love.
constructionism as Czarniawska (2003:130) describes it: “construction as a process where something is being built out of the existing material”.

The struggle within an organisational field – such as the public service TV field in this study – then circles around these problems: will they become taken for granted and accepted or will they be rejected by the members of the field? And once they are taken for granted and have become a rationalised myth (J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1977), how will actors work to uphold these problems as “real” and relevant? This perspective also holds that at any point in time there are bound to be several problems floating about, championed by their respective field members who are looking to make these problems valid in relation to the specific institutions that can be perceived to solve them.

Streeck and Thelen (2005) argue that one way in which institutions transform, what they call conversion, is by existing institutions being adapted to service new goals – problems in my terminology – or to fit the interests of new actors. The authors argue that this makes sense since it is easier to “try to accomplish new goals with old institutions. Put otherwise, the number of goals in a society seems to be larger and less stable than the number of institutions available for use” (Streeck & Thelen, 2005:38). I would like to add to this by stating that new actors (which are what Streeck and Thelen focus on) are not the only ones trying to convert old solutions/institutions to match problems that suit their interests, identities and ideologies; old actors, such as SVT in this study, are also working to connect new problems to old institutions. In this way, institutions can be transformed not only by new actors in a field, but also by the incumbents.

Now that I have discussed a reframed idea of institutional work as “solutions-looking-for-problems”, what problems can be interpreted based on the programme makers’ institutional work? These are elaborated on next.

Problems constructed in the context of collaborative public service TV production

Informed by the idea of institutional work as the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of problems to which an institution is perceived to be the solution and the connecting of problems and solutions, I now turn to the institutional work as conceptualised in chapter 9. What problems are constructed and connected to public service TV and how is public service TV constructed so that it solves these problems? How are the institutional arrangements – the relationships between actors and their positions in the public service TV field – worked on, and how are the various actors constructed so as to help solve the perceived problems?

The stream of practices directed at maintaining the institutional arrangements in the field, where SVT is the legitimate enactor of public service TV, can be interpreted as work where the programme makers construct and reconstruct problems that the current institutional arrangement is fit to solve. The
programme makers construct the problem of commercial (and especially advertising-funded) TV as reflecting the commercial interests of its financers and broadcasting programmes based on the programmes’ commercial potential rather than for any other purposes. To these problems public service TV (as enacted by SVT in the current institutional arrangements) is presented as a solution, since it is constructed as independent of any other (i.e. non-viewer) interests. Public service TV in the hands of SVT is also seen to solve the problem of programmes being made for commercial purposes, since public service TV programmes made by SVT, the programme makers argue, are being produced for their educational, artistic, informational or entertainment values. By constructing problems that the current institutional arrangement and the current meanings ascribed to public service TV are fit to solve, these practices can work to maintain these arrangements, which in turn can continue to be perceived as relevant and “functional”.

The stream of practices directed at transforming the arrangements in the field so that external producers in collaborative productions are also regarded as legitimate producers of public service TV can be interpreted as work to construct problems that institutional arrangements favoured by these actors can solve. The programme makers engaged in the collaborative production of public service TV programmes are constructing problems that such collaborative arrangements can solve: they are engaged in constructing a situation where there is a lack of financing for “real” public service TV programmes as well as lack of artistic vision and creativity. These problems can be solved by SVT engaging in collaborative productions with external producers. At the same time, the programme makers are also engaged in constructing collaborative productions as a relevant and legitimate way to enact public service TV. In such productions, the pool of financing is increased as is the pool of creative people available. The work to transform the field and open up new actors to the production of public service TV is carried out by describing the old institutional arrangements as no longer functional in solving a set of problems, while at the same time presenting a rearranged institution/solution – collaborative productions – to these alleged problems. By presenting the situation as problematic at the same time as advocating its solution – transformed institutional arrangements – the programme makers can be conceptualised as engaging in transforming work.

Some of the external producers’ institutional work, however, goes even further. They portray collaborative productions as not enough to remedy a SVT that is overly bureaucratic, complacent and a company that misuses its strong position in the field at the same time as it fails to produce “real” public service TV and thus fails to enact the public service TV institution properly. These external producers are hinting at a different institutional arrangement that would solve the problem, an arrangement in which they are entrusted with the enactment of public service TV, or at least have more influence in the field. Their disrupting work constructs the current arrangements as lacking in a
number of ways in the sense that they are no longer fit to solve the problems which they were put in place to solve. These problems affect public service TV programmes, which in the current institutional arrangements fail to live up to the ideal of “real” public service TV. These problems the external producers’ community can help redeem.

As seen in the discussion above about the institutional work in collaborative productions, not only problems are constructed, reconstructed and deconstructed, and connected to the public service TV institution in the institutional work done by the programme makers. Also the institutional arrangements – in this study SVT’s right to define and control the production of public service TV – are being constructed as lacking in its problem-solving ability, and new re-organized institutional arrangements are envisioned in their place. In this sense, institutional work also entails constructing the current solution as lacking in its ability to solve some pressing problems, and in its place propose reorganised, transformed institutional arrangements.

Next I discuss this transformational aspect of institutional work, namely that it transforms both solution and problem.

The “permanency” of solutions and problems: institutional work transforms both problem and solution

Several institutional scholars are calling for a renewed focus on the “meaning” aspects of institutions: ideational, symbolic and cultural (see e.g. Hasselbladh & Kallinikos, 2000; R. E. Meyer, 2008; Powell & Colyvas, 2008; Zilber, 2002, 2008) and a renewed focus on institutions as symbolic systems (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Zilber defines meaning in an institutional context as: “[w]hat is intended to be, or actually is, expressed or indicated, and in our context, meaning is what is signified in institutional structures and practices. .../ “Meaning” refers then to what which is not structure or practice per se – that is to the intangible” (Zilber, 2008:152). The theoretical interest in institutional work means not only a focus on agency and practice, but also a rediscovery of the often neglected aspects of the meanings of institutions by highlighting the contextual, the local and particularistic, the conflictual and the ongoing. From this, it follows an often forgotten, but very important aspect of institutions: they are context-dependent. Institutions make sense and infuse action with a purpose in a specific time and place. Meyer points out this:

[Institutions] are all historical plants that owe their appearance to the cultural landscapes and regions in which they have grown. Their soil and their nourishment are the particular problems of concrete societies, times and situations. They are the concrete answers to the
concrete problematic situations, that is, concerning their content and phenotype, they are bound to specific socio-historical contexts...
(Soeffner 2006, translated in Meyer 2008:530-531)

Above I described the problems and solutions that the programme makers in this study are engaged in constructing and connecting to each other. (In the next chapter I will continue to outline some other problems “in flux” in the Swedish public service TV field). They are locally grown solutions to locally grown problems in a specific time and place. This means that in another time and another place these meanings may not make sense, since they are solutions constructed in response to problems specific to the situation in the public service TV field of early 21st century Sweden and in the context of collaborative productions. This also means that the societal-level institutional logics of this particular time and place influence the meaning that is ascribed to the public service TV institution, and that any meaning ascribed to and inscribed in institutions is embedded within a specific socio-historical context and should be understood as such.

Therefore, conceptualising institutional work as the “construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of problems to which institutions are perceived to be the solution and the connecting of problems and solutions” inevitably changes the meanings actors ascribe to the institution. Institutions are durable – which is a fundamental aspect and a key feature of all definitions of institutions – in the sense that they continue to be perceived as solutions to contextual problems. But they are able to do so just because the problems assigned to them change with the ideologies of the times. Even though many practices remain the same (like the bride’s white dress when marrying), the sense actors make of these practices change as a result of the new problems ascribed to the institution of which these practices are a part.

Zilber (2002), in her ethnographic study of a rape crisis centre in Israel, shows how old feminist practices were reinterpreted as therapeutic practices, and thus “blended in” with new actors’ understandings of the (new) problems to which the institution was the solution. When actors work to construct new problems that the institution can solve, it makes sense that they also “inherit” old practices and rituals that blend in with the new meaning of the institution.58

From this, it follows that not only the problems that a solution/institution is perceived to solve change as actors are engaged in institutional work, but also that the solution/institution changes during this process. Neither problem nor solution is permanent; they only appear to be so; they are “permanent” in quotation marks as Berger and Luckmann (1967) say. Vogel (2005) gives an empirical example of this, illustrating how traditional Japanese institutional

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58 This is what the early Christians did when christening the North: they took an old pagan tradition of festivities during the darkest period of the year (the Yule celebrations) and turned it into the Christian holiday of Christmas, with some of the pagan practices intact.
10. Reframing institutional work

arrangements (of labour, finance and politics) are being put to use in the service of new societal problems, which over time have transformed the old institution.

Looking at the institutional work that I conceptualised in chapter 9, one can see that the programme makers’ work on the institutional arrangements in the field changes the prerequisites for how public service TV is produced, and thereby also the meanings ascribed to public service TV; what public service TV “is and should be”. In the stream that I call institutional maintenance work, the meaning ascribed to public service TV is programmes that are “pure” and independent of commercial and other interests, and programmes that are the opposite of those broadcast by commercial broadcasters. Such programmes should be produced under the watchful eye of SVT in order to live up to these criteria. In the stream that I call institutional transformation work, public service TV is ascribed to programmes that are pooling the best creative and monetary resources the field can provide, and thus work to restore the problem solving function of public service TV as providing high quality, nationally produced content in all genres. In the stream conceptualised as institutional disruption work, the meaning of public service TV is programmes that are truly innovative and artistic. In order for public service TV to release its true potential, it would have to be enacted by external producers that are not burdened by the lack of imagination and fearfulness that is said to rule the old enactor SVT.

This also means that in other times and in other places, for example before the introduction of commercial TV in Sweden, the meaning ascribed to public service TV would have been different, since the problems that the public service TV institution was perceived to solve were different. For example, before the advent of commercial TV, the meaning of public service TV as the opposite of domestic commercial TV would not have made sense. Instead, as Gustafsson (2005) points out, public service TV in Europe (including Sweden) during the public service monopoly days was compared with the commercial media system in the US. This created a meaning ascribed to the European invention (solution!) of public service TV as something vastly different from the TV system put in place in America.

Transforming to become durable

Streeck and Thelen (2005:36-37) discuss the issue of institutional durability and argue that:

There is nothing automatic about institutional stability – despite the language of stasis and stickiness often invoked in relation to institutions. /../Quite to the contrary institutions require active maintenance; to remain what they are they need to be re-set and re-focused, or sometimes more fundamentally recalibrated and renegotiated, in response to changes in the political and economic
environment in which they are embedded./.../Failure actively to maintain an institution may amount to actively allowing it to decay.

As I have argued here, the idea of “solutions looking for problems” means that both problems and solution/institution are contextual and transforming over time and place. This might seem contradictory at first; isn’t the whole point with institutionalism that it explains durability and permanence? However, as I see it, durability on a more “macro” level (over time and space) is created and maintained by ongoing transformation at the micro level. Tsoukas and Chia illustrate this:

Looked at synoptically, reality appears more stable than it actually is, something already noted by Weick and Quinn (1999) and Feldman (2000). We say that the acrobat on the high wire maintains her stability. However, she does so by continuously correcting her imbalances. /.../ The apparent stability of the acrobat does not preclude change; on the contrary it presupposes it. (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002:572)

Just like the ropewalker has to constantly maintain her balance by moving her feet in order to uphold her stability, institutional work is about an ongoing (re)construction of problems, solutions and the connection between them. The ropewalker metaphor also points out another important aspect of institutional work: the acrobat not only reacts to the movements of the rope, she is also part of the creation of the movement by her earlier adjustments. By setting the rope in motion she is part of the construction of the conditions that are enforced upon her, and upon which she reacts, much like Weick’s (1979, 1995) ideas of enactment.

With the idea of institutional work as an ongoing construction of problems, solutions and the connection between them, one can then question if there comes a point when the institution is no longer “the same”: when it has in fact transformed so much that it is no longer a question of institutional survival but rather a question of institutional change. Meyer and Höllerer (2010:1256-1259) comment on this:

...a variety of meanings can be covered under one and the same label. Equally, different labels may transport the same meaning. /.../ This multiplicity of labels and framings raises a general point with regard to translation studies and questions of isomorphism or heterogeneity in organizational fields: With all the different labels used to denote an idea and the heterogeneous meanings attached to it, how do we as scholars recognize that we are analyzing variations of the same theme? How long can we thing of a concept as “transformed” or “translated”, and when is it to be regarded as “different” altogether?
In the same vein of thought, Streeck and Thelen (2005:26) state that “institutional structures... may be stickier than what they do and what is done through them. /.../...analytical frameworks that take the absence of disruption as sufficient evidence of institutional continuity miss the point, given that the practical enactment of an institution is as much part of its reality as its formal structure” (emphasis in original). These scholars argue that one should take into consideration that changing meanings and functions can be attached to a seemingly stable institution. This means that over time, institutions can become out of tune and mismatched with their societal surroundings, which can allow institutional workers to ascribe new problems to the institution, thus causing it to transform, and maybe as an effect of this, survive.

The importance of recognising such institutional transformation becomes evident in the context of institutional theory. Much of the mainstream studies of how institutions spread and diffuse have failed to recognise that even though the institution “on the surface” is seemingly stable, the problems it is perceived to solve and the sense people make of it transform as the institution travels (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; Meyer, 1996; Sahlin-Andersson 1996; Greenwood et al., 2008; Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008; Zilber, 2008). In order to capture these processes, studies of a character where the institution is taken for granted as something fixed and stable, and structure is taken as a proxy for meaning systems (Suddaby, 2010), are insufficient. To understand the seemingly contradictory notion how institutions both transform and remain durable and how stability and transformation are constitutive of each other, one needs to look into the processes where actors are engaged in ascribing problems to an institution and thus produce the meanings that make sense to them in the specific context. These are meanings that aid their interests and function as performance scripts (Jepperson, 1991) for their daily activities.

From this, it follows that time matters. As Streeck and Thelen (2005:42) argue: “Many institutions ...have been around long enough to have outlived, not just their designers59 and the social coalition on which they were founded, but also the external conditions of the time of their foundation”. As time goes by, the problems that institutions were perceived to solve may no longer be relevant, which can set in motion processes of connecting new problems to the old solution.

The durability of institutions

The “solutions-looking-for-problems” idea suggests that in order for an institution to survive it has to be flexible enough to function as a solution to a

59 These authors address institutions from a political science perspective, and thus discuss institutions of a more formal, and thus wilfully designed kind than those often dealt with within organisational institutionalism, which deals also with informal, taken–for-granted institutions that are not as often designed in this sense.
variety of problems, which come and go with the transformation of society and the spirit of the times. This can be seen in the example of public service TV and the various problems connected to this institution over the course of its existence. These are problems that some have become outdated, others are still relevant, and yet others are currently being constructed. It therefore seems that the easier it is for actors to assign appropriate problems that the institution can solve, the more likely it is that the institution will have a long life. Institutions that give a lot of leeway and freedom for actors to assign problems for which the institution can function as a solution would therefore seem to have a better chance for longevity than might institutions that are narrowly and clearly defined. I therefore wonder if institutions that are “fuzzy”, open for interpretation, and possible solutions not just to one clearly defined problem but several broader problems would stand a good chance of a long life (especially if it has powerful and purposeful proponents aiding its survival)?

Zilber’s (2002) study (of a rape crisis centre in Israel) can be interpreted in this light. In this study, the institution was transformed over time from a feminist solution to the problem of rape to a therapeutic solution, a change that resonated with the change in institutional logics within Israeli society at large.

What then does the institutional literature say about the issue of institutional durability? Well, institutions that are ripe with inconsistencies (often described as institutional settings with contradictory and intersecting institutional logics, and a heterogeneous set of actors) or institutions that are subject to exogenous “shocks” seem to be the most susceptible for change and thus are less durable (Battilana, et al., 2009; Clemens & Cook, 1999; Streeck & Thelen, 2005). This may mean that institutions in institutional fields where there is one main institutional logic and where actors are homogeneous are more stable and less open for change (at least until change knocks, in the form of exogenous shocks such as “social upheaval, technological disruption, competitive discontinuity, and regulatory changes” (Battilana et al., 2009:74). The idea that institutions that survive do so because they are not clearly defined and open for reinterpretation so that actors continuously can ascribe new problems to the solution/institution seems at first to be incongruent with the literature on institutional change and durability. However, I think that the idea that institutions are durable if they can be interpreted as (different) solutions to (different) problems over time may actually help explain why some institutions, once subject to change pressures, survive, while others are disrupted. As Clemens and Cook (1999:460) discuss, there is a great “variability of the robustness of institutional arrangements in the face of exogenous shock or endogenous challenge”. Based on my discussion above, the level of “fuzziness” and how loosely defined an institution is can be one aspect contributing to its varied robustness.
Survival of the fuzziest

In the literature on institutional change, there are several examples of studies where institutions did not stand the test of time and were disrupted, replaced, or heavily transformed (Leblebici, et al., 1991; Kamal A. Munir, 2005; K.A Munir & Phillips, 2005; Rao, et al., 2003) when cultural, economic, technological or regulatory changes transformed societies and other institutions in which the institution in focus was embedded and entangled. Hence, if institutions are challenged by exogenous and endogenous change, those institutions that cannot be perceived as solving new problems that these changes are perceived to cause will not endure. On the same note, institutions that are fuzzy enough to be perceived as solutions to new problems may survive in a sort of Darwinian “survival of the fuzziest”. Again, there is a time aspect here. If, as Clemens and Cook (1999) and others argue, institutions with schemas that allow for inconsistencies are more prone to change, such institutions may encourage ongoing and continuous institutional work, which may in fact make the institution durable over a longer time perspective. If this ongoing work is about making small continuous adjustments to movements in the surroundings in which the institution is embedded, then the institution may not come to be perceived as redundant and useless at solving what powerful actors construct as important problems.

This is in line with Streeck and Thelen who argue that the interpretation of the “rules” of an institution (what Cook and Clemens (1999) call schemas, and which elsewhere have been labelled models or scripts) “can and are likely to change with time and circumstances, which may be entirely functional as they may provide an [institution] with the sort of ground flexibility that it may require for its reproduction” (Streeck and Thelen, 2005:12). This is similar to my argumentation here; that institutions over time have to change with the times in order to survive. To make institutions durable and “permanent” means ongoingly transforming them and ongoingly connecting them to problems in an ongoingly transforming society. Thus, maybe we should not see stability and durability as the same thing but rather the opposite. From this point of view, stability does not lead to durability, since durability requires transformation, which is the opposite of stability.

Continuous, step-by-step adjustments of an institution can in fact produce major “real” institutional change in the long run, while remaining stable on the surface. As Streeck and Thelen (2005:12) state:

...non-disruptive, incremental processes of change appear to cause gradual institutional transformations that add up to major historical discontinuities. As various authors have suggest, far-reaching change can be accomplished through the accumulation of small, often seemingly insignificant adjustments. /.../...there is often dramatic institutional reconfiguration beneath the surface of apparent stability
or adaptive self-reproduction, as a result of an accumulation over longer periods of time of subtle incremental changes.

**Some institutional aspects are stabilised, others are disrupted**

Following this, it makes sense to assume that some aspects of an institution will be disrupted and worked to do away with, whereas others will be drawn upon and actively worked with – work that will serve to preserve these aspects. Creed et al. (2010) conclude something similar based on their study of how homosexual members of church worked to change an institution that discriminated against them. They state that although the challenge to the institutional norm:

> was potentially disruptive of some institutionalized rules, norms and beliefs, it was at the same time necessarily conservative in that it preserved and actively employed traditional logics of church as an institution. /.../ This combination suggests that institutional work in the form of identity work does not necessarily need to be oriented exclusively toward the creation, maintenance, or disruption of institutions, but can paradoxically involve multiple categories at the same time. (Creed et al, 2010:1358)

This is in line with Hargrave and Van de Ven’s (2009) idea that institutional workers will be more effective when they engage in actions that both stabilise and change institutions simultaneously. This has been exemplified by Rao et al. (2003), Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) and Zilber (2007), who have shown how institutional work can stabilise certain aspects of an institutional arrangement while working disruptively on other aspects. My study of programme makers’ institutional work also points in this direction. For example, traditional ideas of what a public service TV programme should be (i.e. artistic, non-commercial, challenging) are used by external producers when working to discredit SVT as the enactor of public service TV. Similarly, SVT employees co-opt certain new practices that have originated within the commercial TV industry, such as attention to ratings and the use of branding and promotion, in their practices of maintaining the institutionalised arrangements where SVT is the main enactor of public service TV.

The fact that there has never been an widely accepted translation of the concept “public service TV” into Swedish (which was mentioned in the beginning of this dissertation), may have added to the fuzziness of the institution in the Swedish context. In their study of shareholder value in Austria, Meyer and Höllerer (2010) argue that the fact that it was a foreign concept made it open to various kinds of interpretations: “The multiple connotations the concept had in the academic and practitioner literatures left
considerable leeway for maneuvers by proponents and opponents alike” (Meyer & Höllerer, 2010:1245). Similarly, the public service TV concept is open for actors with different interests and aims to interpret and use as a resource in their causes. During my study of the collaborative production of public service TV, several programme makers commented about the lack of definition of public service TV and about how this complicated their work. In line with my discussion about the survival of institutions, this may paradoxically be a contributing factor to the institution’s durability. Perhaps if an institution such as public service TV becomes clearly defined and a consensus is reached about its meaning, this prevents other interpretations and meanings being ascribed to it and “locks” it in that time and place. This may then make it difficult for institutional workers to ascribe new problems to the institution, and in the long run make it seem outdated and superfluous.

Power and the “solutions-looking-for-problems” idea

The “solutions-looking-for-problems” idea brings to the fore the importance of power and whose problems are perceived to be important and “real”. Meyer (2006:733) comments on this:

> The acknowledgement of this problem-relatedness of institutions connects the research on the struggle over the definition of social problems in the symbolic interaction tradition with the dynamics of institutional change. It also raises the issue of power. /.../ The definition of what is an ‘important’ problem is not essentially the concern of ‘democratic rationality’.

Even though the Bourdieuan notion of field implies that power is foundational to institutional theory, many organisational institutional studies have failed to pay attention to this (Greenwood & Meyer, 2008; Lawrence, 2008). Recently, however, there has been an increasing interest in the roles of conflict, interests, politics and agency in relation to how institutions persist and change. Berger and Luckmann (1967) emphasise the fragility of all social order and the need for actors to keep chaos at bay. Meyer (2006:733) continues this reasoning and states that “[a]ll institutional order is only a preliminary achievement and the temporary result of struggles. Power is inextricably woven into institutional stability and change”.

Thus, the fact that certain problems are conceived of as real and legitimate in a specific context, whereas other problems are not, has nothing to do with them being more “real” or “functional” (as, for example, some rational choice institutionalists within economics assume). Fundamental to my perspective is
that what is perceived as a real problem is an outcome of ongoing power struggles over the right to define what constitutes a “real” problem. For some, the solution/institution will be “functional” in the sense that it serves to solve problems that are aligned with their interests, identities and ideologies; for others, it will not.

This is in line with the Swedish philosopher Gustafsson’s (L. Gustafsson, 1989) concept of “the privilege of problem formulation” (problemformuleringsprivilegiet), which is inspired by Gramsci’s ideas on hegemony. Gustafsson’s argument is that power is connected to the problems in society that are perceived to be legitimate and real, which in turn determines what solution should be put in place to solve them. This also means that in any institutional field some actors benefit from the institutional arrangements, whereas the interests of others are not met. The institutional work within the field can thereby be conceptualised as an ongoing struggle and negotiation over what problems are relevant and important and what solutions/institutions can be connected to these problems. This institutional work is inherently complex since it is embedded and entangled within other institutions as well as societal logics (Friedland & Alford, 1991). It can be engaged in by “mundane” actors, which may not at first seem powerful, but can in certain situations become powerful, as the literature on social movements illustrates (e.g. Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2008). Holm (1995) illustrates how seemingly powerless actors can become powerful in his study of the “battle” between Norwegian fishers and fish merchants. He describes the work of the collective of well-organised fishers, which became a force to be reckoned with, instead of being many small and relatively weak individuals as they would have been had they not joined forces. The institutional work in Holm’s study entailed that “the fisherman’s problem could be made so important that it warranted a place on the political agenda; second, that the fisherman’s solution would survive through the various stages of the [official] decision making process” (Holm, 1995:405).

In the Swedish public service TV field, SVT and its proponents have historically had the privilege to construct the problems as well as connecting it to public service TV as enacted by SVT, something that the current institutional arrangements are an illustration of. However, the times are changing. Commercial production companies and broadcasters have the rationalised myths of marketisation and liberalisation in their favour and the neo-liberal wind at their backs. Over time, slow “incremental adjustments” (Streeck and Thelen, 2005) will probably shift the power relationships in the field. If I had to bet on the future, my money would be on some of the commercial actors such as the commercial media houses and broadcasters wishing to circumscribe SVT’s operations.
10. Reframing institutional work

The “functionality” of institutions as solutions

To summarise the previous discussion, the “solutions-looking-for-problems” idea does not mean that I think of institutions as rational or functional solutions to a problem – at least not in the sense of rational choice theorists or our everyday understanding of the term. I think of institutions as “functional” in quotation marks, in the sense that when actions are institutionalised they are so because they in some ways and for some – powerful! – actors “function”. Hence, this does not mean that there is a rational functionality (as in this is the best solution for achieving efficiency) but has more to do with who has the power to define which solutions are to be deemed “functional” at solving what problems.

However, and this is an important point, when work is carried out to construct and connect problems and solutions, it also entails making problems seem rational and solutions seem functional; that is, dressing up solutions as functional at solving problems makes this seen as a legitimate solution, and this is inherent to institutional work. As Meyer and Rowan (1977) show, actors act in ways that are not rational but mythical and ceremonial. They then make sense of their actions as “rational”, and use rational and functional arguments (such as efficiency and effectiveness) when accounting for their actions to important constituents. Seen this way, “functionality” is highly symbolic and important for actors’ own sensemaking as well as the communication of their actions to others.

The idea that actors engage in meaningful action is at the core for scholars inspired by symbolic interactionism such as Berger and Luckmann (1967). Meyer takes heed of this in her discussion of institutions as solutions to meaningful problems for the actor:

Not merely the identification and spread of institutions, but especially the question to which societal problem they reply (and who was involved in the definitions), is of central concern. Soeffner points out that, although institutions are transmitted to actors who were not involved in their creation, and hence, acquire ‘old’ solutions mostly without knowing which problems underlay at the time, if institutions persist, we can assume that they still refer to a societal problem, even if the ‘original’ problem does not exist any longer. /.../ What ever these problems might be, who ever shares them or participates in defining them, how often these definitions might have altered in the course of time, the implications for new-institutional research are clear: on the macro or field level, institutions do not persist or spread into other life spheres or social contexts only because they are legitimate. On the micro level, actors do not adopt a practice solely for this reason. Rather, a practice is legitimate because it is a socially accepted reply to a recurrent societal ‘problem’, and actors adopt
practices because, according to their definitions of the situation, they make sense (whether this is the result of a long pondering and weighing of alternatives including potential sanctions or a routinized standard answer) (R.E.Meyer 2006:733-734).

From this perspective, solutions and problems are “functional” and “rational” if they make sense to actors (and from an institutional work perspective are made sensible) in a specific time and place. Take the example of marriage as a solution to the problem of how romantic love should be enacted. Historically, feminists have argued that marriage has not been functional nor in the interests of women as a group. Together with the intertwined institution of the nuclear family, women’s interests have not been served well by the institutional order of marriage — and arguably — are still not (Gähler, 1998; C. Holmberg, 1999; hooks, 2001; Sveland & Wennstam, 2011). So why do women in Sweden and elsewhere in the western world continue to marry despite the weakened coercive pressures to do so? Well, certainly there are still normative and mimetic pressures on us to get married. From this, it follows, as Berger and Luckmann (1967) emphasise, that women still marry because it is meaningful for them. After all, the grand narrative of our time still ends with the couple living happily ever after. A quote borrowed from Czarniawska (2008b:778) serves to illustrate the point: “Pointing out the “iron cage” of institutions, DiMaggio and Powell failed to see what Luhmann has been emphasizing all along. Of course it is an iron cage, but it “functions” well, as long as people inside believe that they are free”.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have discussed a reframed way of thinking of institutional work as “solutions looking for problems” and how the ongoing work of connecting solutions to problems transforms both the problems that the institution is perceived to solve and the perceived solutions to these problems. This idea can help in our understanding of how institutions are made durable and survive over long periods of time, times in which the organisational field as well as surrounding society may change dramatically. It can also help to refocus issues of power in institutional analysis. To think of institutions as “permanent” solutions to “permanent” problems can thus help us conceptualise how institutions are made durable by ongoing work, just like the ropewalker remains stable by constantly moving her body to correct her imbalances. The discussion of change and durability as constitutive of each other opens up the “black box” of institutional durability, something that has been regarded as a fundamental property of institutions to the extent that it has been taken for granted and still remains under-investigated.
The findings by Solvoll (2009) have a bearing on this discussion. Solvoll (2009) conducted a study of the Norwegian public service broadcaster NRK. In this retrospective, longitudinal study, she shows how the ongoing (micro) changes of practices within an institution work to maintain that institution’s overall (macro) durability and thus aid its longevity. Her conclusion is that the practices that the people at NRK (in her case the makers of football programmes) engage in on a daily basis are constantly changed as they are adjusted to technological, competitive, economic and social change in the field. This change in practices at the “micro” level upholds the durability of NRK and the public service TV institution as a whole.

More than a decade ago media scholar Henrik Sondergaard wrote the following about public service broadcasting: “Some say that the concept of “public service broadcasting” already has been an empty shell for some time and is a thing of the past. However, there is considerable evidence that, on the contrary, the original meaning of the concept has been overlaid by new layers of meaning, so that the nature of the concept has changed even though it retains important elements of its original meaning” (Sondergaard, 1999:21). Based on my study of the collaborative production of public service TV programmes, I concur with Sondergaard and think that public service TV may very well continue to play a role in Sweden in the future. However, this is only as long as new problems can be connected to the institution, problems that make sense in relation to the field as well as surrounding society. This means that it is not at all certain that the meaning ascribed to public service TV today, as well the taken for granted connection between public service TV and SVT, will remain. In the last chapter, I discuss possible future problems that may be connected to the public service TV institution in actors’ efforts to maintain it.
The future of public service TV in Sweden

The public service TV solution

The public service TV institution has during the past half century served as a solution to several societal, media-related problems. Early problems that public service TV could solve were the scarcity of airwaves, the failure of the market to provide “content beneficial to society and citizenry” and the propaganda threat from a broadcasting system in the hands of totalitarian governments instead of on an arm’s length distance from the ruling political party. In Sweden public service was also a solution put forward by the lobbying forces of the newspapers, which didn’t want commercial radio and television stealing advertising revenue (Björkegren, 2001; Findahl, 1999; Nissen, 2006; Syvertsen, 1999; Ward, 2006). Some of these problems have become obsolete in the 21st century: there are, for example, no longer any technical barriers to transmitting audiovisual content that can reach everyone all over the world. With new technology everybody, at least in theory, has the capacity to broadcast and receive content via the Internet, which, again in theory, can reach any one of the seven billion inhabitants on the globe.

Problems constructed in relation to the Swedish media landscape

However, some “old” problems are as relevant today as they were half a century ago when public service TV was formed. The public good notion that certain content will not be provided by commercial market forces is also valid today and this is seen by public service TV supporters as one of the reasons why public service TV is an important institution in a well-functioning democracy. Over recent decades, especially since the advent of commercial broadcasters in many countries, Sweden included, new general problems have been constructed (and old problems reconstructed) to which public service TV is seen as a solution. In the Nordic public service TV debate of the early 21st century, public service TV is perceived as a counterpoint to commercial media and broadcasting in general and to advertising-funded media and broadcasting in particular. Public service TV is also seen as a unifying force in a media landscape marked by the fragmentation of audiences and a culturally cohesive force in an era of the globalisation of TV content (Bolin, 2004; Lowe & Jauert, 2005; Syvertsen, 1999). Some of these notions are quite clear in this study: for example the notion of public service TV as the antithesis of advertising-funded
TV from the problems constructed in the context of collaborative productions. Recognisable is also the idea that public service TV has the interest and financing (via licence fees) to make TV programmes in the expensive but culturally and for society important genres such as drama, investigative reporting and documentaries, genres in which commercial TV broadcasters have neither the interest nor the means to make programmes. In this study, we have also heard about the importance of public service TV being allowed to do broad “campfire” programmes around which the whole nation can gather, and not only narrow programmes for the cultural and economic elite.

These problems, to which public service TV has been connected as a solution, have been developed alongside the general development of the media landscape in many old public service countries. The breaking of the public service TV monopoly in many states created new problems to which public service TV soon became the antidote. The proliferation of niche media and new technologies, such as cable, digital and Internet, via which niche content could be spread, has also opened up public service TV as a solution that can include all citizens and not just those desirable by advertisers or those that have the means to pay for expensive programming in certain genres.

The public service TV institution and the problems to which it is connected as a solution thus have developed in tandem with the general trends in the Nordic media landscape as well as the development of society at large. The proponents of public service TV have managed to navigate this more than 50-year-old solution into the 21st century by aligning it with the ongoing changes and transformations of Nordic nations.60

Other problems in flux that actors work to connect to public service TV

In the programme makers’ narratives in this study, as well as in the debate about public service TV expressed in opinion pages, debate forums and academic writings, and in SVT’s own media (internal magazine, website and policy documents), one can also find traces of other potential problems to which public service TV can be connected as a solution. These problems are not (yet) as fully recognised or shared within the field, but they might become seen as legitimate problems in the future. During the course of this study, I encountered these potential problems here and there, and I suspect that at least some of them will play a role in the future institutional work on public service TV in Sweden and the institutional arrangements in the field. Whether they do

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60 Here, it is important to re-emphasise the contextual character of institutions. Presented here is the Swedish and Scandinavian perspective. In other countries, e.g. some of the southern European countries and New Zealand, proponents of public service TV have been less successful and both public service TV as an institution and public service broadcasters enjoy weaker public support than they do in Nordic countries, and have in some places been almost fully dismantled.
II. The future of public service TV in Sweden

become perceived as “real” and relevant problems and whether these problems are connected to the public service TV solution depends on the institutional actors’ work to connect these problems with the public service TV institution. These potential problems are:

- **The globalisation of television content** and small nations’ problems of sustaining national TV production in the face of larger nations’ scale advantage (Lowe & Nissen, 2011). Small nations and small language groups have difficulties sustaining a local TV industry, let alone producing content that can compete in the world market because of the huge amount of TV content produced by some of the world’s larger TV nations.

- **The streamlining and “excessive sameness” of commercial television content**, where increased competition creates more of the same type of content (K. E. Gustafsson, 2005; Napoli, 2003; Syvertsen, 2003; Van Cullenburg, 1999; H. L. Vogel, 2001). The lack of incentives for advertising funded TV broadcasters to engage in the development and commissioning of innovative formats and genres is also a concern, since such content will be both hard to sell to advertisers as well as costly and risky to develop. This leads to low-risk, formatted mainstream programming.

- **The digital divide** between a technology-savvy younger generation that is comfortable and fluid in new media and communication practices and an old technologically illiterate generation that has few skills and a low understanding of how to master new technology for its purposes.

All the above issues can be constructed as problems to which public service TV can be connected as a solution. Public service TV, as a culturally cohesive force that enables national content to be produced in small countries and which unites people at the national level. Advertising-free public service TV as a risk taker and innovator of new content and of new ways to communicate with the public. Public service TV as an educator of all citizen groups in the use of new platforms and content. (Cappon, 2006; Findahl, 1999; Hartmann, 2010; Jakubowicz, 2006; Looms, 2006; Lowe & Jauert, 2005; Palokongas, 2007; Wolton, 2006).

These problems (and probably others as well) are all afloat and under construction in the public service TV field, waiting for actors to champion them and use them in their interpretive struggles over What Public Service TV Is. Some of these problems are new; these new problems have developed in alignment with other changes in the institutional logics in our contemporary society (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Others might be
reconstructions or reinterpretations of older problems, which can now be recycled to fit the current situation. As Wooten and Hoffman (2008) suggest, within fields there will undoubtedly be organisational practices and forms that suffer defeat and lie fallow until they are resurrected for some purpose, or by pure chance and luck. Institutional work can thereby be about the reinvention, rediscovering, remodelling, restoration and upgrading of something old into a new combination of problems and solutions. The issues advocated and put forward in the public debate as problems to which public service TV can be a solution are therefore not necessarily new problems: they might have been present as problems that can be remedied by the institution for as long as the institution has existed. However, in the ongoing institutional work of the various actors, certain issues might become renewed and meaningful again when society and its rationalised myths transform. It should also be noted that the institutional work by viewers and licence payers should not be underestimated. Even though this study has focused on the programme makers of public service TV, the audience, politicians and commercial media houses also have stakes in the future of public service TV.

The future of SVT and public service TV in Sweden

In 2009, the CEO of SVT wrote in the internal SVT magazine about how public service TV from her understanding was in an hour of destiny:

Public service is at present at a time of unrest and upheaval. If we fail now – by not using our money optimally, by not sharpening our programmes, by not developing content on new platforms, by not creating new qualitative programme formats or by jeopardizing the public’s high confidence – SVT and SR will go to the dogs. There are so many examples of that all around Europe and in Canada. Then it is too late. Because it is hardly possible to recreate a radio and a TV in the service of the public (Hamilton, 2009. My translation).

Whether public service TV as we know it in Sweden will survive remains to be seen. As long as the actors interested in preserving public service TV (and its taken for granted connection to the public service broadcaster) are able to continue to maintain public service TV as a legitimate solution to some or several societal media problems, public service TV will most likely survive. But what public service TV will be in the future depends on the construction of the problem to which it is perceived to be a remedy. What SVT and other public service TV broadcasters are busy doing at the moment is working at pinpointing the problems that public service TV can solve – and to which they
are the proper providers of this solution. The future will tell whether they will be successful, and which new problems and actors will appear in the interpretive struggle over public service TV.
### Appendix

**Table A.1. Empirical examples of Lawrence and Suddaby’s (2006) forms of institutional work taken from the context of this study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creating institutions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overt political work</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advocacy</strong>: The mobilisation of political and regulatory support through direct and deliberate techniques of social suasion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- <strong>Example</strong>: The management of SVT and the external TV producers’ association stating their demands to the governmental investigation on the future of public service in Sweden.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Defining</strong>: The construction of rule systems that confer status or identity, define boundaries of membership or create status hierarchies within a field.</td>
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<td>- <strong>Example</strong>: SVT giving “green card” courses for external production companies in (for SVT) relevant TV legislation.</td>
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<td>- <strong>Example</strong>: The external TV producers’ association putting demands on SVT to formalise its commissioning practices and relationships with external producers by advocating a “code of conduct” similar to the one in place in the UK, as well as more standardised rules and practices for collaborative productions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vesting</strong>: The creation of rule structures that confer property rights.</td>
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<td>- <strong>Example</strong>: The European Union and the Swedish government putting in place TV legislation and a Broadcasting Charter that forces SVT to commission programmes from external producers.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Configuring belief systems</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Constructing identities</strong>: Defining the relationships between an actor and the field in which that actor operates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- <strong>Example</strong>: The SVT project managers in this study trying to create the identity of an SVT employee as somebody who can commission programmes from the outside and do collaborative productions while still making public service TV programmes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- <strong>Example</strong>: The external producers in this study working to define themselves as producers of public service TV, which some of them claim to do even better than do SVT’s own programme makers.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Changing normative associations</strong>: Remaking the connections between sets of practices and the moral and cultural foundations of those practices.</td>
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</table>
| - **Example**: The SVT programme makers interpreting SVT’s control and contract practices in collaborative productions as a way for SVT to secure public service TV. They are also framing the increased use of external co-finance as a way to give license payers “value for
money” and constructing practices originating in the commercial TV field as “public service TV” practices.

- **Example**: The external producers framing SVT’s control and contract practices as a way to exercise power and a privileged position over small external producers. They are also framing SVT’s increased use of external co-financers as transferring risk onto the external producers.

**Constructing normative networks**: Constructing interorganisational connections through which practices become normatively sanctioned and which form the relevant peer group.

- **Example**: SVT’s ongoing participation in various networks with other public service broadcasters in Europe.
- **Example**: The formation and formalisation of the external TV producers’ association and its work to separate SVT’s two core activities (production and broadcasting; claiming a larger part of the production for itself).

**Altering meaning systems**

**Mimicry**: Associating new practices with existing sets of taken-for-granted practices, technologies and rules in order to ease adoption.

- **Example**: SVT mimicking commercial broadcasters’ ways of addressing the viewer and of constructing programme narratives in order to “keep up with the times”. These new practices are interpreted by the SVT programme makers as being in the service of viewers. The SVT programme makers involved in collaborative productions frame these practices as using licence payers’ money wisely to ease acceptance within SVT.
- **Example**: External producers emphasising their understanding of and ability to produce public service TV type programmes in order to “fit in” as producers of public service TV in collaborative productions.

**Theorising**: The development and specification of abstract categories and the elaboration of chains of cause and effect.

- **Example**: The practice of collaborative productions introduces a new language at SVT: co-financer, commissioner, supplier, negotiator. New mottos from the SVT management, such as “fewer and better programmes”, and “more value for licence payers’ money” are connected to these categories.
- **Example**: The external TV producers’ association trying to introduce a “code of conduct” intended to regulate the relationship between SVT and production companies, as well as its work to increase the quotas set on the external commissioning of public service TV programmes. It works to connect such changes for the
well-being of the external TV production market.

**Educating:** The educating of actors in the skills and knowledge necessary to support the new institution.
- **Example:** SVT’s formalised “green card” courses (aimed both internally and externally) as well as the ongoing work from SVT project managers and negotiators to educate commercial production companies in “what public service TV means in practice”.
- **Example:** Education efforts by the external TV producers’ association aimed at the Swedish legislators to get them to introduce the BBC’s “code of conduct” regulations, which would lead to better conditions for the external producers.

### Maintaining institutions

**Enabling work:** The creation of rules that facilitate, supplement and support institutions, such as the creation of authorising agents or diverting resources.
- **Example:** The Swedish government supporting the Broadcasting Charter of public service TV and allocating associated resources to SVT as the main actor in the public service TV field.

**Policing:** Ensuring compliance through enforcement, auditing and monitoring.
- **Example:** SVT’s publishing of annual public service accounts as a proactive way of policing itself. This is a way of ensuring that it is the judge of what “public service TV” is as well as showing that it lives up to the enactment of it as authorised by the government.
- **Example:** The Swedish government giving the Swedish Broadcasting Authority the task of overseeing violations of legislation in the field.

**Deterring:** Establishing coercive barriers to institutional change.
- **Example:** The Swedish government using legislation in order to prevent other actors from using the TV licence fee to produce public service TV programmes. SVT is the only actor in the field that is allowed to use licence money.

**Valorising and demonising:** Providing for public consumption positive and negative examples that illustrate the normative foundations of an institution.
- **Example**: Programme makers working to produce public service TV programming by casting commercial TV (both programmes and broadcasters) as serving advertisers instead of viewers.
- **Example**: Incidents where external producers claim that SVT employees are uncreative and bureaucratic, for example by derogatorily referring to SVT as “the bunker”.

**Mythologising**: Preserving the normative underpinnings of an institution by creating and sustaining myths regarding its history.
- **Example**: Stories told by the programme makers about the importance of public service TV for the viewers in a commercialised TV industry.

**Embedding and routinising**: Actively infusing the normative foundations of an institution into participants’ day-to-day routines and organisational practices.
- **Example**: The (new) practices of negotiation and control in collaborative productions are by SVT programme makers infused with ideas of “safeguarding programmes in the service of viewers”.

**Disrupting institutions**

- **Disconnecting sanctions**: Working through state apparatus to disconnect rewards and sanctions from some sets of practices, technologies or rules.
  - **Example**: External TV producers’ association lobbying for the increased external production of public service TV programmes, which in effect means disconnecting licence fee money from SVT’s internal production.
  - **Example**: The Swedish newspapers, together with the Swedish commercial channel TV4, trying to limit SVT’s (and SR’s) use of digital platforms by arguing that it distorts market competition.

- **Disassociating moral foundations**: Disassociating the practice, rule or technology from its moral foundation as appropriate within a specific cultural context.
  - **Example**: External producers questioning SVT’s division of risk and control in collaborative productions as well as its use of sponsoring in programmes.

- **Undermining assumptions and beliefs**: Decreasing the perceived risks of innovation and differentiation by undermining core assumptions and beliefs.
  - **Example**: Market liberal actors opposed to public service media trying to influence public opinion about how public service has played out its role in the modern TV industry.
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