Faculty of Social Sciences
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THE GOOD TELEVISION

FACTUAL PROGRAMMES, QUALITY AND SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This doctoral dissertation starts from the premise that the presence of and exposure to factual programming can have an indispensable effect on societies and individuals. The focus of the study is in the quality of and viewers' engagement with small audience factual television programmes and programming in Finland. This dissertation explores the seemingly self-evident, quiet, uneventful television viewing, which, when examined more closely, is actually a multifaceted and rich part of factual audiences' lives. It examines how factual programmes are experienced and connected with on an individual level and how both pleasure and public knowledge via public connection can be obtained.

The vast empirical data stretches over two decades and is comprised of a large national media diary collection from 2001, a set of focus group discussions from 2006–2007 and social media comment samples from 2015, 2018 and 2019. The ontological focus is on the individual, private and cognitive aspects of the experiences of watching television. In this study, media ethnography and phenomenological-hermeneutic theory form a mindset for exploring and understanding the types of experiences the observed members of audiences have with factual television. When dealing with knowledge obtained through experience, the goal is not to generalise but to understand. The author of this study has pursued an understanding of audience needs and complacency from the professional position of a producer creating and transmitting media products to viewers. The study operates with the concepts of public connection, pleasure, quality, cultural property and cultivation.

The analysis found that, although media penetrates all aspects of contemporary life and its use is often casual and mundane, much factual viewing can be conscious and attentive as well as selective and critical. The participants are aware and possessive of their media usage and its place in their lives. Factual viewing can be solitary, and audiences may value certain contents or genres more than those they pass more time with, since the reward for the time spent with the valued programmes can be worth more than the greater amounts of time spent with less appreciated but more popular programmes. The craving for content – for something to think about – often equals a craving for meaning and sense of coherence. An anticipated factual program can provide quality time and can be the highlight of the week. Being enlightened can also mean being delighted.

Even if the media environments are dominated by change, factual reception is characterised by constancy. The findings from temporally and demographically varied datasets suggest that audiences' core needs, expectations and engagement motives do not seem to have altered over the period examined. In search for a gratifying cultural or factual programme experience, viewers have turned to public service media where available. In Finland, Yleisradio (YLE) has been almost solely responsible for the factual supply and repertoire on television. The changes in legislation, the changes in research practices and approaches and the changes in strategic goals have resulted in significant changes in the amount and content of factual programming on YLE platforms. The volume and diversity of domestic factual production and programming have fallen significantly, and some genres have disappeared altogether.

To ensure that the communication and cultural rights of all viewers are met with worthwhile choices and generic diversity, this study proposes a systematic and perpetual public consultation which offers audiences and stakeholders a layout for a television strategy and detailed program plans, including well founded factual program policies.

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In journalism and in filmmaking time is of essence. When a deadline is approaching, things get done. In academic research the concept of time is different. The process of a doctoral dissertation takes on average a few years, so there seems to be endless time to think. But the distance from reflection to action can be long, especially when the subject of the study is as enchanting and evolving as factual television, and when other deadlines elsewhere provide the impression of urgency. The key is people who convince you that your work is salient and deserves to be out in the public.

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Contents

ABSTRACT III

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS V

CONTENTS IX

1. INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1 PUBLIC SERVICE AS A MODEL OF GOOD TELEVISION 6
1.2 MAKING FACTUAL TELEVISION UNDER THE RULE OF RATINGS 10
1.3 RESEARCH OBJECT AND RESEARCH DESIGN 14
Research questions *17*
Structure *20*

2. PREREQUISITES FOR THE EXISTENCE OF FACTUAL PROGRAMMES **23**

2.1 BROADCASTING SYSTEMS AND FACTUAL PROGRAMMING 24
Regulation, Plurality and Audiences *29*
2.2 FINLAND AND YLE: REGULATION, SELF-REGULATION AND AUDIENCES 32
Diversity and factual supply in Finnish television *32*
Legislative guidelines *34*
New guidelines for programming *36*
Reach, age, engagement *40*
Understanding audiences *44*
2.3 PROGRAMME AND PLATFORM POLICIES AND FACTUAL VIEWING 49
Cultural programmes and policies *53*
The changing factual landscape *56*

3. CULTIVATION, RECEPTION STUDIES AND FACTUAL GENRES **63**

3.1 MEDIA ENVIRONMENT 63
3.2. PUBLIC CONNECTION, RECEPTION AND AUDIENCES 67
3.3 FACTUAL GENRES, PLEASURE AND QUALITY 71
Pleasure *74*
Quality *76*

4. DATA AND METHODS **81**

4.1 PHENOMENOLOGY AND MEDIA ETHNOGRAPHY 82
4.2 THE DATA 84
Media diaries *85*
Focus group discussions *88*
Docventures *89*
4.3 QUESTIONS OF VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY 91
Researcher's predisposition and research process *93*
Features of the data and the analysis process *95*

5. FACTUAL TELEVISION IN THE EVERYDAY 101

5.1 ENGAGING WITH FACTUAL TELEVISION 102
5.2 SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF WATCHING FACTUAL PROGRAMMES 107
5.3 PLEASURE AND PUBLIC CONNECTION 112

6. ELEMENTS OF QUALITY IN FACTUAL PROGRAMMES 121

6.1 TALKING QUALITY 122
6.2 FORM, CONTENT AND BAD QUALITY 126
6.3 QUALITY OF THE AUDIENCE 130
6.4 MAKINGS OF QUALITY 132
Quality in factual genres 132
Dimensions of content treatment 137
Narration, content and interaction 139

7. PUBLIC CONNECTION, KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURAL PROPERTY 153

7.1 COGNITIVE NEEDS 155
Self-development and ethics 157
Growth and factual supply 160
Age and factual needs 163
Cognitive needs and quality 170
7.2 THINKING, BELONGING AND COHERENCE 176
Thinking process 176
Cultural property and sense of coherence 183

8. CONCLUSIONS 193

8.1. RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS 194
8.2 A GOOD TELEVISION 197
8.3 FACTUAL ENVIRONMENTS 200
8.4 NEW PLATFORMS, NEW PROBLEMS 204
8.5 FACTUAL PROGRAMMING FOR THE FUTURE 207

REFERENCES 213

1. INTRODUCTION

> *I think all the time, I think thinking is like real fun, you know, I get a lot of fun out of thinking. I mean I can't see no other point in getting up in the morning, doing everything and going to bed and getting up again. It's the thinking that makes it a point*. (Joe Strummer)

Joe Strummer spoke these words in Julien Temple's documentary *The Future is Unwritten,* a film about the lyricist, guitarist and singer of the British punk-rock band *The Clash*, and one of the founders of the punk movement. The film evidences the craftsmanship and commitment of both its subject and its author. It tells the story of a marginal artist whose impact on a whole generation of followers was far greater than that of many of his mainstream counterparts. The Finnish Broadcasting Company's (Yleisradio, YLE[1]) arts and science channel YLE Teema (Theme) broadcast the film in July 2010, when I came across it by chance. I had learned to trust the channel's quality repertoire and decided to watch the documentary. Since I was not consciously searching for this film, it is unlikely that I would have encountered it if it had not been on television. I did not know much about the personal history of Strummer, nor did I know it would interest me, but the film gripped me from the very beginning. It was an insightful and delightful experience, particularly since Strummer's thoughts about thinking resonated with other problems occupying me at the time.

My relationship with television goes beyond being a member of the audience. I have been working in the field of factual television since the early 1980s (with forays into entertainment and cinema, both fiction and documentary) as a writer, director, producer, commissioning editor and executive producer. The productions I have been involved in have included almost all forms of television, from one-camera inserts and news reports to feature-length documentaries and live concerts, ranging through politics and current affairs to high arts, entertainment and marginal popular culture. The core of the work has been in the area of arts and culture, rather than in prime-time

[1] The official abbreviation is Yle, but the capitalised form YLE is in use in this text to keep abbreviation usage concistent with other media companies such as BBC, NRK, DR, SVT, PBS..

content that appeals to mainstream audiences. The accumulated experience I have thus developed has generated an interest in understanding what television, particularly factual television is, and can be, for audiences.

In the foreword of *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman (1986) discussed the differences between the prophecies of Aldous Huxley's dystopia *Brave New World* (1932) and those of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Postman finds Huxley's visions more chilling. Unlike Orwell, Huxley saw that no Big Brother would be needed to deprive people of their autonomy, maturity and history; people would themselves come to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think. When Orwell feared those who banned books, Huxley feared there would be no reason to ban any, for there would be no-one who wanted to read them. The possibility that Huxley, instead of Orwell, was right is the central focus of Postman's (1986: vii–viii) critique of television as a medium, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. It would seem obvious to dismiss that critique in the late 2010s by stating that broadcast television is history. The following account considers that claim, and the definition of the television of the present, but begins with a brief consideration of the arguments put forward by two popular television pessimists.

Postman's (1982, 78) first concern is that children are getting their education through media, as there have been generations of children to whom television (and now video on demand, VOD) has been the first and most accessible teacher, as well as their trusted companion and friend. Postman is critical of this situation because he argues that children are exposed to adult issues far too early, but also that the medium itself is bad for intellectual development because its symbolic form poses no cognitive mysteries (Ibid., 79). He claims that faculties needed for rational inquiry are weakened by television. His argument is that reading is an interactive and intensive activity, whereas television encourages passive involvement: "To say it as simply as one can, *people watch television*. They don't read it". (Ibid., 78) I disagree with this claim, as do other television scholars who have demonstrated that all forms of television can encourage active audiencehood and cognitive dimensions of reception, and can enrich public knowledge (O'Connor & Klaus, 2000; Parcemain, 2019). In the context of this research I argue that factual television, contrary to Postman's claims, can enhance the faculties needed for rational inquiry and that people do read television programmes. For this argument to be upheld, factual television programmes must be available, along with a media environment that supports them.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1996, 10) also claims that television poses a serious threat to all areas of cultural production, to art, literature, science, philosophy and law and, consequently, to democracy itself. Bourdieu's view has been challenged in many ways by numerous scholars and also by the author in this study, but some of

his observations bear to date. The connection between thought and time is essential for Bourdieu, whose pamphlet *On Television* (1996) identifies one of the major problems posed by television to be the question of the relationship between time and speed. Bourdieu recognises that the fast-thinking and fast-thinkers that television produces and consumes create mere banalities. Only 'received ideas' are passed: 'communication is instantaneous and in fact it has not occurred, it only seems to have. Nothing new happens; it is communication with no content but the communication itself' (Bourdieu, 1996, 28–29). Furthermore, television's potential and danger lie in it being an instrument that can, theoretically, reach everybody (Ibid., 14). A very high proportion of the population continues to rely on television as their primary source for news. Therefore, claims Bourdieu, "television enjoys a de facto monopoly on what goes into the heads of a significant part of the population, and what they think" (Ibid., 18).

Bourdieu's claim may be overstated, but it is certainly outdated. The television of the early 2020s hardly has a monopoly over people's minds or the things they think about in most of the Western media sphere. At the turn of the century, the prospects were quite different; when this study was contemplated in 2001–2002, the greatest source of media turmoil in the foreseeable future was the digitalisation of analogue television, accompanied by a vision of interactive viewers facing a new array of choices. For the frontrunners, this vision already outdated the media of traditional, linear television. Facebook was launched in 2004, YouTube in 2005, and the entire media landscape was altered. Consequently, as the voices predicting the death of broadcasting became louder year by year, and as the setting of this research—the study of the reception of factual programming in competitive, but rather stable, media surroundings—seemed to deteriorate, the research organically developed into a longitudinal study of the reception and supply of factual programming in a volatile media environment.

Meanwhile, broadcasting has not died, and smaller screens have not overthrown bigger ones—in fact, bigger screens are taking over. Netflix reports that 70% of its streams end up on connected televisions instead of phones, tablets or PCs. Remarkably, viewing patterns change over time; six months into a Netflix subscription, most viewers have moved from their smaller screens to the biggest one in their house.[2] Broadcast television also seems to be thriving. Daily television viewing time per individual in vast territories is stable: based on 46 European Broadcasting Union (EBU) markets, the 2016 average of 3 hours 40 minutes per day is the same as in 2010, with an annual variation of three minutes (EBU 2017a). By 2020 the average viewing was down by eight minutes, to 3 hours 32 minutes (EBU 2020). Among 21st-century

[2] https://www.recode.net/2018/3/7/17094610/netflix-70-percent-tv-viewing-statistics ref. 8.3.2018

generations, television viewing time has declined, but it has not evaporated, and the decline is predicted to slow as the use of new devices and platforms saturates. In the audio-visual sector, new media are not replacing old media; new platforms are used not only instead of, but also in addition to, traditional ones.

In cinema, the abrupt developments have been even more remarkable than in broadcasting. The disruption of competing means for movie viewing—such as VHS in the 1980s and DVD in the 1990s—threatened movie theatres and fragmented and downsized the audiences of non-blockbuster films. In 1995 in Finland, with a population of 5.2 million, the number of annual visits to cinemas was 5.3 million, but by 1996 the share of viewers of domestic films fell to 3.7%.[3] Twenty years later, Finnish films' share of cinema audiences had risen by nearly tenfold to 29%,[4] and unique visits to movie theatres by over 50%, to 8.7 million. Moreover, streaming services such as Netflix or YouTube, in addition to advanced home-projection techniques, competed for the same viewers. Instead of collapsing, the industry and the art form grew to new heights. This revitalisation is attributed to several separate causes. Nationwide investments in theatre infrastructure and digitalisation enabled easier access to cinemas and brought new films instantly to the remotest counties. State funding increased by 20%, and instead of focusing on (young) audience segments, the funding was content driven and allocated to diverse genres and styles, thereby enriching the repertory of Finnish films. Hence, by supporting the diversity of the distribution ecosystem and the plurality of the products, the industry and the art form entrenched the fusion between tradition and modern and is now in a strong position.[5]

The same strategy might apply to the television ecosystem. Even with the emergence of new and manifold internet-enabled media services, television remains one of the grand platforms that continues to influence people's minds in some aspects, fields and regions more than in others. These developments do not imply a simple shift from broadcasting to narrowcasting, as Hagedoorn (2013, 57) remarks, for "digital television's screen does not simply replace the window; rather, it re-purposes, remediates, and constantly recalls and recirculates television's window-on-the-world positioning in the digital era". Instead of searching for a formula from other media and platforms, a more viable strategy might be relying on the medium's own qualities and strengths. User behaviours have been and are in such turmoil that it makes little sense to draw conclusions from present developments even for the near future, let alone to determine media consumption trends and changes for decades to come. The present stage is not the end of history. Therefore, this study explores how factual television can

[3] http://ses.fi/fileadmin/dokumentit/HAmuistio.pdf

[4] http://ses.fi/fileadmin/dokumentit/Elokuvavuosi_2016_Facts_Figures.pdf

[5] Pre-COVID 19

be a vital asset for viewers of different ages and platforms. To retain the features that make a medium valuable to its users, it is essential to know what the users themselves think about those factors. In television, mere ratings do not offer that information; hence, this study attempts to access viewers' perceptions of factual programming and explores the assets and pleasures that factual television as a pattern of public connection can offer.

Both Postman and Bourdieu envision an alternative to the television dystopias. Television can offer valuable content, admits Bourdieu, who, in defence of the conditions necessary for the production and distribution of art as the highest human creation, notes a prospect: "We must universalize the conditions to access the universal", precisely because television has the capacity to reach the highest number of individuals (Bourdieu, 1996, 66). Postman's perspective concerns the far future: "There may be new and profound uses for television that may be thought by people not yet born" (Postman, 1982, 75). Indeed, well-thought-of and smartly conceptualised linear television could thrive in the 2020s if the rest of the media landscape remains cluttered with an overflow of unorganised and ephemeral content.

Within the industry discourse, the general consensus seems to be that television is yesterday, has no future, and is not worth developing when resources are in better use in newer platforms. However, these predictions may be wrong, and hasty interpretations and actions prompted by the changes in the operational environment could be more damaging than the actual changes in that environment. The statistics regarding media usage in 2018 predict the survival of traditional media, and even as structures and balances between old and new media formats will keep transforming, television will not die if it does not commit suicide. The needs that television serves lie deep in the functions of society and human nature. Television's future is grounded in the ideas of its past.

1.1 Public service as a model of good television

The word *television* derives from mixed Latin and Greek roots, meaning 'far sight'. The early years of television were filled with an enthusiasm that suits the etymology; the new medium promised further sight. In Finland, it was expected to bring peace on earth:

> ...despite the freeze in room corners, television allows the family to fly to distant, warm islands in the Pacific, see strange lands and people, and in general travel the world over as a global citizen. How this will affect the to the rise of enlightenment of nations is impossible to precisely imagine. One of the pioneers in the field, the world's first television director, engineer Landsberg even suspects that 'World-wide-television' will make future wars impossible—the interaction between nations will ultimately become so close that it will be totally impossible for any dictator to rise to power and try to distort the facts that television presents. This may be an embellished view, but in any case, television is a major force in improving general good will. (*Uutisaitta,* 1/1946)

The same phenomenon, high hopes and expectations for the new medium occurred with the next big leap in electronic media at the turn of the 21st century, when the internet opened a whole new world of creative and business possibilities, nurturing beliefs in immediate adaptation of the blessings of a new medium (Lindblom, 2009, 245).

The core ethos and the institutional condition of public broadcasting services are based on altruism—*giving* services to people as a collective to benefit their social welfare (Lowe, 2010, 20). The first director general of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC, 1927—38), John Reith, laid the foundations for public broadcasting in 1924. He conceived that the responsibility of the BBC was "to carry into the greatest possible number of homes everything that is best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement, and to avoid things which are, or may be hurtful" (Reith, 1924, 34). Sensitive to criticism that the BBC was giving the public what the BBC thought it needed, Reith stated that it is better to overestimate the public than to underestimate it (Ibid.). The same ideals echo generations later in the BBC: "programmes and services that build public value through active and informed citizenship; British culture and creativity; a revolution in learning; connected communities and building the UK's voice in the world" (BBC, 2004).

The Act on Yleisradio law (22.12.1993/1380) treasures the ideals of Reith and of enlightenment. The first three duties stated in Section 7 of the law oblige public service programming in particular to do the following: 1) Support democracy and everyone's opportunity to participate by providing a wide variety of information, opinions and debates, as well as opportunities to interact; and, 2) Produce, create and develop Finnish culture, art and inspiring entertainment; take educational and equality aspects into consideration in the programmes, provide an opportunity to learn and study, focus on programming for children, and offer devotional programmes.

These are the principles that fuel the perpetual media policy debates in Finland and in the European Union (EU), where commercial competitors backed by political actors insist that public broadcasters settle on those limited functions, instead of competing across the field with 'full service' (Hellman, 2010b; Karppinen, 2010). The public and the private are often represented as two factions, which Williams (1974, 78–80) categorises as Types A and B. Public service programming consists mostly of factual genres and performing arts (Type A), whereas commercial television concerns drama, movies and general entertainment (Type B). As cultural forms, Type A represents good and Type B bad in Williams's dichotomy (Keinonen, 2011, 24). In the interest of commercial competitors—supported by the European Commission—being 'good' should be sufficient for public broadcasting stations, and they should leave the economically viable genres to market forces (Karppinen, 2010, 153). The questions of public service and market values in relation to plurality of contents and genres is further discussed in Chapter 2.

The values of public service broadcasting (PBS) and the execution of these values have been questioned by scholars as well as by market forces, at times with similar arguments. For instance, Jacka (2003) claims that much of what public service broadcasting does can be "justifiably challenged" and that the standard defences of public service sound tired. Her viewpoint is that in an increasingly plural society general good cannot be defined and that democracy is best served by allowing public good be envisioned by "pragmatic and negotiated exchanges about ethical behaviour and ethically inspired courses of action" in many different kinds of media texts and media organisations (Ibid., 183).

In response to Jacka, Garnham (2003) asserts that "democracy was an unfinished historical development" and public service broadcasting (in Britain) is a model to be improved rather than discarded, worth defending for its potential and in part for its record. Garnham admits that it is desirable, in the name of difference, not to agree about the common good, but adds that the result is either a version of common good, or the good of special interest groups (Ibid., 195).

In face of the demands for more choice in increasingly plural societies (Jacka, 2003; Hartley 1996), this study supports Garnham's and Napoli's (2001) positions in that audience needs cannot be met by the market alone, but with more plural and diverse PSBs and a mediasphere in which a cultural or do-it-yourself citizenship as defined by Hartley (1996) can be successfully constructed.

Jacka's (2003) critical notion of PBSs *supposed natural superiority* is relevant in the situation in which PBSs no longer find themselves in competition with their commercial counterparts but with international streaming services and other active media platforms. There the paradigm that Larsen (2011) presents is crucial: is public service an end in itself or is it a means toward other ends. The chosen paradigm is the key to the program and platform policies public service media companies make in deciding the kind of diversity and plurality they aim to produce and offer.

Quality media is one basis for the obtaining of general knowledge; general knowledge is, in other words, a user interface for learning new things. Hill defines television as a part of a public knowledge project, television for the public good (2008, 228). Curran and his colleagues (2009) state that the existence of a public broadcaster fosters political participation and understanding of societal functions, and that public service media also increase trust in other public institutions. For Mulgan (1990, 27), the remit of public service entails built-in diversity, defined as a range of different programme types, as most of the pleasures of television come from moving between mass audience programmes and minority ones. Most people use television for pleasure and relaxation, and for most of the time it is a relatively low-involvement medium and it does not much matter what is on TV. Mulgan adds that at other times, television has different characteristics, as the messages it conveys can change people's lives, and the medium itself becomes present in large processes of change (Ibid., 28).

However, the idea of entertainment or drama as *bad* is hardly a dominant perception in any television company, be it public or private, and although the consequences of excess consumption of entertainment can be and are scrutinised, many implications of entertainment consumption are found to be positive in various ways. For instance, the daytime and prime-time soap operas popular among female audiences, particularly in the 1980s, were a salient phenomenon that attracted much attention in television studies (Alasuutari, 1999a; Ang, 1985; Hobson, 1982; Liebes & Katz, 1994; Kilborn, 1992; Seiter et al., 1989). Consequently, the audiences, instead of being seen as taking the role of mindless consumers of mass-produced entertainment, are regarded as active and applying a range of skills and strategies. Programmes are used as social agents to trigger conversation or to encourage togetherness, or they serve as companions in solitude. Soaps offer identification and involvement, and they

prompt viewers to contemplate and reflect (Kilborn, 1992, 68–82). The encounters with these programmes can be empowering and offer moments of privacy. Entertainment is a right earned, and soaps such as *Dallas* offer outlets to melodramatic imagination in a form of cultural practice; it is directly available, casual and free (Ang, 1985, 21, 79, 84).

In the empirical findings of many television studies, viewers seem to have a very positive attitude towards television, sometimes with a hint of guilt for the quantity or quality of consumption, but overall, they seem to express more joy than guilt or shame for their viewing choices (Roos, 1989; Kytömäki, 1999; Gitlin, 1983; Hill, 2007). The quantity of consumption can, however, be an issue more complex than a feeling of guilt. Elisabeth Bird (2003) tested this phenomenon by exposing members of her seminars to media-deprivation exercises to enlighten students regarding the various implicit roles media play in their lives. Participants were asked, for instance, to avoid all media, from music and movies to radio and television, for four days and to observe how this affects their lives. What became apparent in these tests is that many of the determinative functions media have in everyday life concern television, which is utilised as a reference in defining or dealing with human experience or world views (Bird, 2003, 1–3). Eventually, the vast majority of participants in the exercise in the United States (US) confronted the revelation that they could not imagine a life without television; heavy-users' lives were pervaded by it. In Dardenne's (1994) study, for some participants, the media abstinence experience created a craving of information; however, for many, the most appealing feature of television was that it required no thought, and instead helped them to avoid thinking entirely (see also Tammi, 2016, 31). These experiments were conducted in a television monoculture; however, the outcome might be more drastic in a test setting in which participants would need to experience abstinence also from smartphones, tablets and computers.

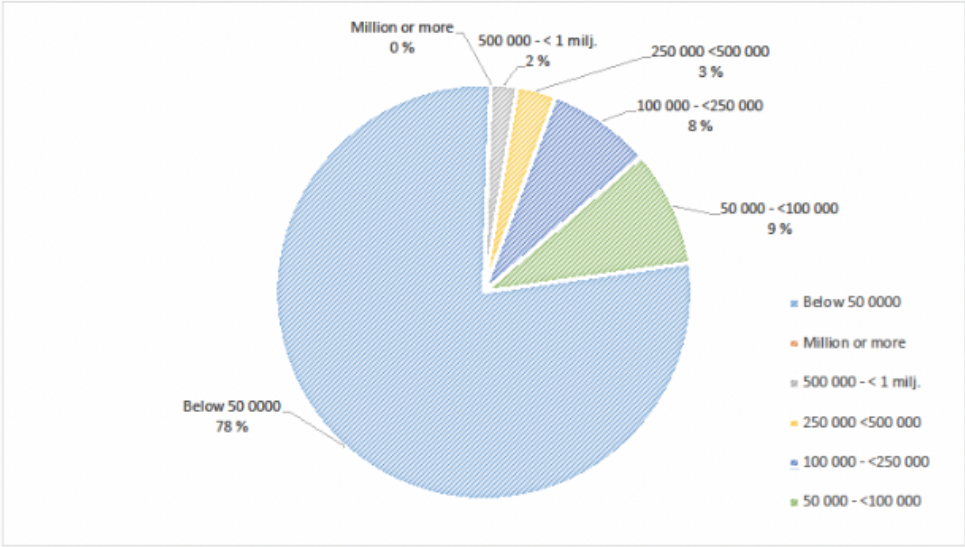
Television and other entertainment platforms are certainly effectively utilised to reset a strained mind and block disturbing thoughts, functioning in general as mood managers (e.g. Mustonen, 2000). Equally, media can respond to the craving for information and can stimulate thought; television's potential to bring pleasure (e.g. O'Connor and Klaus, 2000) by provoking thought is the premise of this study, and that capacity and its consequences are explored throughout the research. In Finland, a substantial supply of factual programming has characterised the public broadcaster, YLE, which has set benchmarks for other media, as quality content in one media outlet imposes a burden of competition on others (Benson and Powers, 2011). The fact that in Finland some quality newspapers and the public service platforms of YLE have

managed to stop or slow the decrease of their audiences implies continuing demand for the quality and content they offer. Their supply impacts the quality of civic society, since factual media affect the general knowledge and thereby the human capabilities of the societies in which they operate (Curran et al., 2009).

1.2 Making factual television under the rule of ratings

One premise of this research venture is that experiences with factual television can be valuable (in multiple ways), and that to obtain those experiences there must be factual programmes available, and to have factual programmes available, there must be public service media to produce, commission and programme it. To have factual programming in (public) television, empirical knowledge on how people experience factual television and what they value in it is vital.

The academic literature has been strong on the reception of news and other much viewed programmes, in particular popular entertainment and popular factual (e.g. Hill, 2007; Gergathry, 2003; Keinonen, 2018; Williams, 2008). Clearly, popularity is an interesting phenomenon, and the reasons or causes behind it are worth considering. Popularity continues to be the defining factor of programme planning. Inside broadcasting, including public broadcasting, it takes an idealist to persist with less popular, small-audience factual production. There are no meters against which to measure a programme's success, as indisputable as ratings are. Nevertheless, fascination for top figures can cloud the bigger picture; in search of hits, the vast majority of programmes are overlooked or taken for granted. In the 2017 account of programmes' audience shares, only 0.05% of the programmes on Finnish television surpassed one million viewers (which equals a 20% viewing share), while the bulk of the supply (77%) amassed fewer than 50,000 viewers. The figure, below, illustrates the phenomena, crystallising the magnitude of the issue of such a large part of actual viewing behaviour remaining under most radars.



(YLE 2017d)

Figure 1.1 The percentage of programs by the number of viewers on free-to-air TV-channels in Finland in 2016.

A logical conclusion from Figure 1.1 might be that small-audience programmes are not important to audiences, but one might also claim, by contrast, that precisely those programmes are important since they constitute such a large share of all viewing. Popularity and potential social benefits may motivate viewers to watch what other people watch, but based on the figure, popularity accounts for only one-fourth of all television viewing. Social motives may also be behind the favourites of smaller audiences, but so can personal and private motives. The vast majority of all watching may be individuals finding their chosen programmes important and relevant to them as individuals and members of society; pleasure, knowledge, understanding and participating may motivate much factual watching. There are no available statistics for the genre division, but as factual television accounts for 30% of overall YLE television (YLE, 2011d) consumption, and as it is scarcely represented in the top quarter, a safe estimation is that, of the 77% share of programmes that have fewer than 50,000 viewers, factual programmes comprise about 50%. The rest consists of, for example, daytime soap operas, reality television and lifestyle programmes.

I had for a few years, from 1995 to 2003, a window to plan, manage and produce several types of cultural programmes for a programme entity titled *Culture Thursday* (*Kulttuuritorstai*). It was a year-round, weekly, late-prime-time slot of 90 to 115 minutes that consisted of different entries, from current affairs to documentaries and

live events. One feature of the evening was that it gathered the scarce and scattered culture programmes supplied from marginal, ever-changing slots and scheduled them to a visible late-prime-time window available on a regular basis throughout the year. With in-house current production and with national and international documentaries, it was sometimes possible to build evenings and seasons that connected with each other and with the world, at best creating new meanings and contexts. For a producer, this programming was challenging but rewarding as it also seemed to be appreciated by viewers—not that all implicit connections were intended to be noticed by everybody, but to those who belonged to a group whose interest and knowledge were served or surpassed, it was enjoyable. In addition to singular programmes being commended, the agenda-setting quality of the Thursday entity was welcome and meant much to some viewers.

In an influential article entitled 'Encoding/Decoding' (1980), Stuart Hall reveals patterns in which television contents are transmitted and transformed in the process. Hall believes that production and reception are differentiated functions in the entity of the communication process, and that production rotation, distribution and reception, and renewal are interlinked. The production system is not closed but draws subjects, treatments, agendas, personalities and visions from the audience, so that the audience is both the source and the receiver of television messages. The production end is thoroughly framed by meanings and thoughts: by practical knowledge, technical skills, professional ideologies, institutional information, the concepts and assumptions of audiences, and so on, which comprise the ways in which production structures shape the programmes (Hall, 1993, 133–138).

Hall's theory on the interactive process between production and reception applies accurately to the circumstances in which cultural programmes are created and circulated, although programming and scheduling contexts, which are also relevant in the process, are not discussed by Hall. In the case of non-mainstream factual production, in general, and of *Cultural Thursday* in particular, the way production conditions and structures change, and how they are defined in relation to content and audience, can be decisive. There can be no decoding if encoded programming is not available.

In the course of a lengthy process related to overall changes in the media worldwide, with audiences on the move, and in the restyling of YLE's television channels as a result of deregulation (Aslama, 2008; Hellman, 2010a), the Thursday evening slot was eventually cancelled in 2003. This cancellation, together with further developments, made it more complicated to get the once almost self-evident journalistic and art-specific programmes commissioned, as no new regular slots appeared. Currently (2020 season), no daily or weekly domestic cultural programmes

appear on YLE television channels, the number and scope of produced and commissioned factual programmes has fallen considerably, and educational television is extinct (see Section 2.2.5).

The process of overall narrowing of the production and scope of factual programmes makes it all the more important to study the significance and impacts of factual television and its viewing. The goal of this research is to explore what is lost if audiences lose their encounters with programmes that, as I argue, produce other kinds of pleasures and meanings than mainstream current affairs and entertainment programmes. The research was initiated by consistent, yet non-systematic viewer feedback, which confirmed the notion that at least in the cultural arena, people perceive and genuinely appreciate programming that is alert, concentrated and genre-specific. The audiences of Cultural Thursday seemed to find the existence of such programmes and program-entities genuinely relevant and meaningful. In the debate over scarce resources and air-time, however, 'somebody says' is no grounds for a strong argument. In all content areas, at least in public broadcasting, the programme makers tend to find their own field and its significance to viewers invaluable. Since there is little research on the impact or reception of (non-popular) factual programmes in general or of cultural programmes in particular, in Finland or internationally, there is not much evidence with which to justify those programmes. Appealing to occasional expressions of viewers' opinions on small-audience, easily replaceable programmes, does not carry much weight, and in the absence of verifiable arguments, figures prevail. Mulgan (1990, 11) has remarked that "everyone claims to speak for the viewer, and everyone wishes to mobilise viewers behind their own ideas and interests". The crudest argument for Mulgan is that the only useful notion of quality is the one that identifies it as the preferences of the viewers, hence the most popular programme is the best, and questions of quality are merely of intellectual interest.

At the turn of the century in Finland, only two formal ways of assessing the success or potential of a programme were available: 'the people meter' (i.e., ratings) and the viewer-satisfaction survey. The people meter Finnpanel (still in use) measures the number of televisions tuned to a certain channel in the households participating in the panel, along with the number of people registered as viewers present in the room. In Finland, each panellist represents an average of 2,200 other persons of the same age, sex and region. One critique of the meter panel method is that with small audience, specialised programmes, the sample may not have a single hit. The complaint is equally often overruled by the argument that the figures, in the long run, are relationally comparable. Yet, the comparability does not capture statistics that have not even been collected.

Another criticism levelled at the meter is that it cannot tell us much: "It says only little about who's watching, and especially little about the quality of the viewing experience, as the electronic set meter can register nothing more than whether the set is on or off when people register as present" (Gitlin 1986, 54). The numbers do not necessarily relate to programmes watched, let alone grasped, remembered, loved, learned from, as Ien Ang (1991, 62) notes, "what audience measurement tends to erase from its field of discernment is any specific consideration of the meanings, saliencies or impacts of television for people". Nevertheless, when the meter rules, the logic is simple: the higher the rating, the better the programme. Eventually all discussions of quality or content tend to end with the ratings, thus quantity. It might be argued that having a million people watching a show and remembering nothing of it a few programmes later is less important than having 100,000 or only 10,000 people watching a programme and being deeply touched by it. One million is more than 100,000 or 10,000, and it is definitely better to have a good number of viewers, but as long as meters are designed to measure numbers and not impact, the question of value remains unresolved.

1.3 Research object and research design

Television as an object of study is problematic to define since it has undergone such major transformations during the first two decades of the 21st century. Technologies, platforms, distribution, repertoires, genres, dimensions of regionality and territory, universality, aspects of nowness, scheduling and release, modes and means of consumption, layout and exposure have all affected how television is conceptualised. Gray and Lotz (2019) have remarked that only a few aspects of television have been untouched by rapid change, making it difficult to explore how it all relates. The very words 'television' and 'television programme' are equivocal. From various perspectives television is a transformed medium, and the concept of a television programme alongside the use of new venues may have nothing to do with broadcast television or television sets.

The consequent emergence of online audiencehood complicates conceptualisations even further. I contemplated referring to members of audience in this research as users, since the word refers to individuals using websites (a sample of such is one of the empirical datasets of this study) for personal choices or purposes rather accurately. On the other hand, streamed television programmes are most often simply viewed,

often on a big screen, just like broadcast television. Viewers seldom use the experience or the product in any other way. The data used in this research, while entrenching the personal relationship to programmes and viewing, do not, as is argued, seem to establish direct instrumental motives, neither social or practical, in viewing non-popular factual programmes. A user uses services and programmes for something, while a viewer is a more passive term, except when a viewer is perceived to be an equal reader in the active reception process, which underlines the relationship to each unique event of encountering contents. Considering that the contexts in which the words for the subject are needed are complex, I use both terms accordingly.

This study approaches the concept of television from two angles: 1) a distribution platform: as broadcast television or as internet-distributed or online television, bearing in mind that the latter is still in its infancy (Lotz, 2017), and that the former is not yet past and may not be so in the foreseeable future; and 2) a content collection: in broadcast television a scheduled repertoire, resulting from programme policies, or in online curated collections ,or an unstructured storage, originating from broadcast or streaming services. The focus in the data sets explored concerns mostly factual encounters with broadcast television, but the accounts also deal with encounters with singular products, for which the original platform is not the predominant feature.

The term *factual television* in this study is used as a synonym for factual programming, and both terms are used as an umbrella concept, describing a limited selection of genres and programmes types demarcated from the multitude of existing television content classified as factual. The traditional genre divisions of factual programming—news, current affairs and documentaries, and, more recently, also reality programmes (Hill 2007, 5, 213)—includes several subgenres (reportages, discussions, magazines, drama-documentaries, debates; see Section 3.3). *Factual entertainment* is a relatively new term, covering most reality shows but also lifestyle programmes such as cooking, childcare and house-cleaning shows. Hill sub-categorises factual programming as follows:

> news, current affairs, documentaries, investigative journalism, political programmes, consumer programmes, nature programmes, documentary series, reconstructions, experiment programmes, lifestyle programmes, and reality game shows. (2007, 53–54)

This list is not comprehensive, and for the purposes of this study it needs to be supplemented with the categories of *science and cultural programmes*, as their reception is specifically addressed in the datasets in use in this study. The list is expressive since it makes the difficulty of unambiguously classifying programmes visible. Genre and subject matter are not commensurate but are often used as such.

Factual genres and their features are discussed further in Chapter 3, together with the choices of subcategories explored in this study. The research focus of this study is the reception of the traditional factual categories of documentaries, reports, magazines and discussions. These genres, as Hills points out, could also simply be classified under *general factual*, in the meaning of all factual content that is not news or current affairs (2018, 219).

Drastic, visible, hidden or slow changes in media landscapes—with subsequent policy re-evaluations inside broadcasting companies—result in the renewal of programme repertoires (Lowe 2010, 24). In order to assess such developments, one must know how audiences relate to different programme types to begin with. Many of the programmes and programme types discussed by the participants in the data sets are now gone, but their generic types, features and values can be assessed for future evolution in similar or transformed environments.

As indicated above, small-audience (low-ratings) factual programmes form an essential portion of television repertoires, but few of the characteristics of their reception are known. it remains unclear what viewers value in small-audience factual programming and how they evaluate the qualities of the programmes.

This study examines the functions and meanings of factual television programmes for viewers, through the subjective expressions of individual experiences with some of the factual programming available over the researched period, and in the research literature within the chosen scope. One of the presuppositions of the study is that factual programmes can stimulate thinking and respond to cognitive needs, and that these needs and responses differ from the needs and responses of other genres such as entertainment or news. Two questions emerging in this research are how a factual programme viewing experience might be perceived in relation to the reception experiences of other programme types, and what qualities in factual programmes respond to viewers' expectations.

Although the issues explored here are common to many mixed-media systems (Curran et al., 2009), the empirical analysis focuses on Finland. As factual programming is typically a public service media feature, the study engages primarily with the ideas and realities of public service television. Having worked with factual genres inside a public broadcaster for decades, I have an unusual perspective on the actual processes steering the production and output of television programmes in one company, as well as access to the company and industry research, which in turn guide strategies and, thus, what people get to see. Silvo (1988) categorises the process of production of strategies and programming, and their control and regulation into media policies, programme policies and editorial policies, which frame my work, and the repertoire

audiences engage with. In relation to editorial policies, I am, in this study, able to speak, on occasion, as a participant; in relation to media and programme policies I am an observer (see Chapter 4). These relationships are eventually reflected in the experiences of viewers, as programme policies affect the autonomy and leeway of producers and subsequently the prospects of what Hill (2017), Mulgan (1990) and Scanelli (1996) have deemed to be essential: the dialogue between producers and audiences.

Following on from this background, this study examines how factual programming can give viewers constituents for the capability to think and subjects to think about, thereby giving them assets to learn, react, adapt and act resiliently in everyday life.

Research questions

The study poses three basic research questions:

1. What kind of everyday engagement with factual programming do viewers have?

How are factual programmes positioned in media usage and in everyday life? Broadcast television viewing is either habitual or occurs by appointment (Costera Meijer, 2009). It can structure daily or weekly routines, be mundane and transient, or the highlight of the day. On-demand watching is chosen, therefore always by appointment. Demands for selected programmes are higher than for those routinely screened, but the latter type can also evoke interest and offer unexpected rewards. What regulates routine viewing, what kinds of interests steer programme choices, and what is expected from the chosen programmes? Livingstone (1999a) asserts that what audiences gain from specific media genres derives from what they consider valuable. How are the viewing experiences of factual programmes assessed and valued by viewers, and what are they used for?

2. What kind of expectations do viewers have for factual television and with what type of qualities in programming are these expectations met?

An experience bears a meaning (Perttula et Latomaa, 2005, 11–17), and meaningful experiences leave the recollection of information, knowledge, feeling, belief or intuition. Not all experiences are pleasurable, but appreciated ones motivate elaboration on thoughts and feelings inspired by the experience (Oliver et Bartsch 2010: 76). What are the issues that evoke depictions and how are they elaborated on?

What qualities in programs satisfy, dissatisfy or neglect expectations?

Quality as a concept in media studies is a social construction (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984, 1993, 1996), often specifically cultural quality, for devoted and aesthetically sophisticated audiences (e.g., Shcrøder 2018). Quality television or quality programmes as attributes are generally deployed in connection with fiction (e.g., Napoli 2008; Cardwell 2007). In this context of factual television, the concept of quality is, in addition to being socially constructed, perceived as personally, emotionally or cognitively constructed. On the macro-level, quality serves as the pre-eminent standard for judging public service media (Costera Meijer, 2012), and defines the yield of public connection.

3. What kind of public connection, knowledge and pleasure does factual television offer?

In environments where television has versatile content and where factual television gains substantial exposure, such programming can complement available repertoire, and be a source of meaningful viewing experiences, which might be unavailable from other sources with the same ease. Television *can* offer something to think about. Factual television, where it exists, can respond to various needs and expectations, and the response may be quite meaningful when the need is relevant to the viewer. Public connection is a concept developed by Couldry and his colleagues (2018) to '"examine whether people are in fact oriented to a world of public issues beyond what is of private interest to them, their family, friends and close associates?" (1). They define public connection as a shared orientation to a public world where matters of common concern are addressed.

In presuming that the needs of knowing and understanding, of cognition, are relevant for viewers, this study also examines the potential constructive uses of thereby gained containment, and the aspects of television's quality as a constituent of ontological security (Giddens, 1991; Williams, 2008). The perspectives of containment and ontological security are connected with structural forms of publishing and often are the equivalent of the public service ideals of diversity and stability. As Mulgan (1990) remar, in a heterogenous society, an adequate broadcasting system must retain a diversity of qualities. The real threat to a diversity of qualities only emerges when one view or interest (which might be the view of financers, advertisers, regulators, or broadcasters themselves) crowd out all the others (Ibid., 8).

What we see on traditional television and on alternative screens is a continuum—arising from the history of the medium—of media policies and of political climates.

How is television programming and factual supply affected by international politics, the EU and national policies? What are forces that enable or obstruct the supply of and exposure to factual programming?

In considering the capacity of contemporary media to connect and isolate as the ability to make the world concurrently larger and smaller, Deuze (2011, 42) has found it crucial that 21st-century media studies engage directly with people's experiences. The study of experience is, as outlined above, by definition, a study of individual experience. There can be no common experience prior to the singular one (Linko 1998, 15). Viewers and audiences are groups, often target groups, but each individual possesses more features than those which, from an administrative viewpoint, join the individual to a particular segment. Accessing viewers' experiences requires understanding of their depictions of what took place in their minds.

This study aims to say something new and essential on what people *seek* from factual television, what they *get* from it, what they *think* about their experiences of it—and what difference, if any, factual television makes for the individual and for society. I consider the experiences from the viewpoint of a phenomenological hermeneutic tradition, considering the phenomenon of watching factual television and its subjective elements and social consequences. The approach deals with cognitive processes and cultural contexts, but not in isolation from other ongoing cognitive processes or cultural contexts.

Phenomenology regards experiences. An experience can be understood as a person's relationship to his or her own reality, to the world he or she lives in (Laine 2010, 29). Phenomenology stands for the analysis of the meaning structures of being (Ibid., 40). Hermeneutics is a theory of understanding and interpretation. It includes the study of meaning and sensemaking, and the relationship between facts and values (Anttila 2000, 25–26). The events of the mind can be captured only through their expression (Latomaa 2006, 17). Meanings, in turn, are common and shared, intersubjective, and, therefore, the study of each individual also reveals something general (Laine 2010, 30). The verbalised expressions are not equal to the 'raw' experiences, but there are, so far, no other means in science than to evaluate articulated experiences (Linko 1998, 12). In this research, the articulations are scrutinised from texts written by viewers, namely diaries, online focus-group discussions and social media commentaries.

The Finnish Literature Association (SKS) initiated in November 2001 a media diary collection, with a selection published a year later. The original collection offered rich ethnographic material of 753 diaries, the validity and reliability of which were

increased not only because I had not influenced the creation of it with my own research interests (i.e. they are so-called naturally occurring data), but also because the dataset was far larger than I could ever have collected on my own. The data appeared to be able to answer especially the question of what type of experiences viewers express regarding watching factual programmes. Supplementary, more specialised data emerged to compensate for the shortcomings of the diaries: in 2006 and 2007, YLE's audience research unit experimented with technology-enabled online focus group interviews that examined the reception of a cultural programme, of science programmes in general, and of the television channel YLE Teema. The questions asked were relevant to my study, and the number of informants was 78, considerably larger than could have gathered and handled on my own.

As the research process was prolonged, partially because the topic kept being blurred by the drama of the threats and possibilities that social media, search engines and global streaming services held for traditional media, I included yet another naturally occurring dataset, samples of social media commentary sequences concerning *Docventures*, a strongly branded documentary project on YLE TV2. I chose a short discussion period from their 2016 season, and smaller samples from 2018 and 2019, classifying the texts by the same principles used for the other datasets. This approach was employed to analyse what (if anything) was abiding in factual programmes' reception or viewing experience compared with the previous decade, in which the disruptions of the new platforms and the later evolution of repertoires were not yet in effect.

Structure

This study explores viewers' engagement and experiences with factual programming. The research and aims to explicate how factual programmes are positioned in the mediasphere, in program supply and in viewers' mindsets. Chapter 1 introduces the concept and ethos of public service broadcasting as the environment in which factual programming is produced and offered. The chapter discusses the author's experience and involvement with factual program production. Additionally, this chapter outlines the focus of the study in relation to factual genres and presents the research questions.

Chapter 2 describes the media environments that enable the supply and availability of factual programming and the forces that affect the field of factual television internationally and nationally. In addition to presenting a number of the characteristics of the US and EU models, the chapter deals with how factual television is regulated and

consumed. Finally, the chapter examines the situation in Finland and at YLE and explores the company's outlook on audience segmenting and research, cultural policies and program policies.

Chapter 3 introduces a range of literature and research that adresses cultivation theory and public connection, and audience and reception research, in relation to the features related to factual television programmes and programming. The chapter also discusses the key concepts of the research, factual genres, pleasure and quality

Chapter 4 describes the chosen phenomenological approach in greater detail and explains the media ethnographic method employed. The datasets used are presented and their qualities, differences and similarities, validity and reliability are discussed. Researcher disposition and the research process are also concidered.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the results of the analysis. In response to RQ1, Chapter 5 explores the engagement experiences of viewers. Chapter 6 explores how the qualities of factual television meet the expectations of viewers' experiences as a response to RQ2, and Chapter 6 answers the questions posed by RQ3, concerning the type of public connection, knowledge and pleasure factual that television offers.

Chapter 8 presents an overview of the analysis of the data. Based on this analysis, the chapter suggests breaking down the elements of quality as properties of viewers, products and producers. The present state of factual television environments is depicted in addition to the challenges that the new and emerging platforms pose for the availability and exposure of factual programming. The chapter concludes with a perspective on the future of good television.

2. PREREQUISITES FOR THE EXISTENCE OF FACTUAL PROGRAMMES

Presuming that factual television is of value, for individuals as well as for societies, is the premise of this study; in that the forces and circumstances affecting the existence and quality of factual television are crucial. There can be no experiences of factual television if there are no factual programmes available, whether they are available on linear television or on other platforms. This chapter discusses the issues of the existence, quality, impact and features of factual television on an international, European and national level. This and the following chapter outline the international and national policies and practices that affect what viewers are exposed. Public service media is the model of good television in its diverse and plural offering (Hill, 2007; Mulgan, 1992; Parcemain, 2015), and the public broadcaster is often the primary or only source for factual programming.

The salient factors defining factual television output are both quantitative and qualitative, and they relate to politics, welfare, regulation, market interests, public service legislation, international and national media policies, ratings and media consumption. Also relevant are the relations and ratio between entertainment and factual programming, and perhaps most crucially, the perceptions of audiences.

Despite the expanding streaming services and the figures, marking them as the preferred media platforms among young generations, traditional television is still alive and well. Of the studied EBU members, close to half of European internet users watch live television daily, and 77% weekly (EBU, 2017b). In the past 25 years, the Eurodata 2018 report states, global daily television viewing time has remained steady: in Europe at 3 hours and 49 minutes per person, despite the increasing availability of online video content. The age gap is growing, but among youth, live

television is still viewed most often. That trend keeps the overall figures from dropping, and for adult and senior generations, viewership keeps growing.

Coherent and consistent long-term public statistics on television usage (e.g. by genre) are not readily available even on a national level due to evolutions in classifications and definitions. While the whole consumption of factual programming (Eurodata, 2014) is 21% of watched titles, only 11% of viewing is for documentaries, the biggest programme type in new titles offered. Removing news (63% of the factual genre in the Eurodata classification) from the top-10 list would indicate the consumption of factual information to be much lower, less than 10% of all television viewing on a global scale. When factual is mostly (apart from reality genres) a genre broadcast by public broadcasters, access and exposure to factual programmes, and thus, the possibility to consume them, depends both on the share of factual programming on the broadcasters' channels and on the broadcaster's market share. In Europe, market figures range from 45% in Germany to 3.5% in Romania (EJO, 2018).

In addressing the consequences of the movement towards market-based media for informed citizenship in a comparative study of media systems, public knowledge and democracy, Curran and his colleagues (2009) found three trends since the 1980s: the multiplication of publicly owned television channels, the weakening of programme requirements on commercial broadcasters, and a contraction in the audience share and influence of public broadcasters (Ibid., 6). The purpose of the comparison was to test the hypothesis that a market-based system impedes the exercise of informed citizenship, the core assumption being that citizens are to be adequately exposed to public affairs programming in order to cast informed votes, to hold governments to account and to be properly empowered (see also Lowe, 2011). To be able to think critically and contest given information is not possible until one has a certain level of basic knowledge.

2.1 Broadcasting systems and factual programming

Broadcasters do not operate in a void, nor are they autonomous in their programme policies. Both regulation and deregulation affect program choices and programming structures in the long term. In addition to the actions of competitors, the wishes of advertisers, audience tastes, ratings, technical developments and production trends, politicians also make decisions that have far-reaching yet not

necessarily imminent social repercussions via television programming structures and content.

In the absence of studies reflecting on other factual genres and their relation to societal issues such as civic knowledge, news as a factual genre is indicative of the role of factual programming amidst other options, particularly when content is considered. In the UK, for instance, the public obligations of the commercial broadcaster ITV were lightened during the 1990s, and by 2005, its international factual programming had dropped below that of any other channel (Curran et al., 2000, 8). This development was reflected in the programming of the BBC and Channel 4, which also softened their news values to match ITV's style of less hard news and more human-interest stories. Another evolution in Britain has been the push of news from prime time to later and earlier slots, also by the BBC. The researchers consider this a major shift (Ibid., 22), for in traditional public service, practices interspersing information with entertainment are thought to increase the size of the inadvertent audiences, who float from one genre to the next when program schedules facilitate that.

Simultaneously, generic channels have been challenged by an increasing number of competitors. Although in many European countries, especially in Scandinavia, public broadcasting companies are market leaders, in market-led societies competition is fiercer. In the US, smaller channels' market shares have threatened the traditional national networks' positions, and even though the latter may have occasional successes with nationwide audiences, their ability to dominate or even influence what is thought and talked about in the country has evaporated.

In its almost-complete reliance on commercial media to present critical commentary, investigative reporting, and a broad range of voices and viewpoints, the US is unique among Western democracies (Benson & Powers, 2011). The dominant content for most media outlets and their audiences is entertainment, crime and disaster news, and light human-interest stories. This development is logical, as entertainment tops the charts, not factual, so low-budget entertainment is likely to attract more advertisers and is easier to sell to audiences than low-budget factual programming. The US media system, based on market control and minimal interference by the state, pays little attention and small subsidies to public service broadcasters, resulting in a minimal 2% share for the public television network PBS. Few outlets provide public affairs content, but whether publicly or privately funded, they rarely reach a broad public audience (Ibid., 8).

Western Europe has quite a different narrative from that in the US, as in the early years of broadcasting it established the model of public service instead of a market-

controlled media model. However, both in the US and in Europe, the deregulation of commercial media and, in Europe, the regulation of public service media have gradually changed the environments to be more favourable to strong players and popular content, weakening the supply of content for small or specialised audiences and narrowing the overall output (Ibid.)

In Western Europe, all 14 public broadcasting channels examined in the Benson and Powers (2011) survey attracted one-third or more of the national television audience (Ibid., 8). The economic health and the exposure of public service media is not so much a normative matter as a pragmatic one for the purposes of this study. Most countries with strong public service broadcasters have more factual programmes at peak viewing times and a greater range of factual genres than those with weak or non-existent public service channels (Hill, 2007, 56). The pledge for factual information is written into PSB's commitment to inform, educate and entertain. The difference in mixed-media systems between privately and publicly operated media has been clear (Benson & Powers, 2011, 59; Blumler et al., 1985, 351). The former tends to broadcast the same types of programmes at the same times, suggesting that the broadcasting systems most dependent on advertising schedules have the narrowest range of programming.

A large study (in a shape of public consultation) in Britain in 2000 examined what viewers understand by public service broadcasting and what they expect and want from public service broadcasting channels in the future (Sancho, 2001). Among the key findings was a wide consensus that public service broadcasting requirements were prerequisites for quality television and that market forces alone could not deliver diversity, high quality or innovative programming. Without public service broadcasting, viewers feared, certain strands of programming would disappear altogether, and quality itself would diminish (Ibid.). In countries where public service media have a strong share, the factual supply available for audiences is also significant, whereas in regions controlled by commercial media, 'serious factual' (BBC, 2011a) supply is marginal or non-existent.

A mixed-media architecture, as the case of the UK indicates, can also produce a wide range of programming on commercially funded channels. The BBC channels are financed by licence fees, and the channels' two strong rivals (i.e. ITV and Channel Four) mostly by advertising, although the latter has public service functions and funding. An important implication of strong public service broadcasters is their influence on the overall quality of their respective media markets. McKinsey et al. (1999) studied 20 public service broadcasters from around the world. The study defined distinctiveness by the percentage of factual, cultural and children's programming on the assessed channels and found a strong correlation between the

distinctiveness of the PSBs and the distinctiveness of the commercial broadcasters, with the linkage affecting the overall quality of the market (Ibid., 18). To impact the quality of the surrounding media market, the public service broadcaster must also have a sizeable audience share. Distinctiveness alone is not enough, and even share is all-explanatory; content also matters. Share is relatively easy to gain with resources, and programmes such as football, game shows and hit movies will increase shares, claims the report, using Italy as an example. Radiotelevisione Italia (RAI) has a schedule quite similar to that of its commercial rivals, and it has a significant share, but its proportion of factual, cultural and children's programming is relatively low. Hence, RAI has little effect on its commercial competitors' offerings (Ibid., 21–22).

When competitors are impacted, the effect can be deeper than merely an increase in the amount and diversity of programme supply. In addition to affecting audiences' tastes and demands regarding the quality and range of programmes, public broadcasting companies can affect the quality and range of programmes offered by rivals. In the UK, ITV and Channel Four, challenged by the BBC, created their own popular natural history and science programmes, and this competition raised the quality of, and reinforced audiences taste for, these genres. The threat of losing viewers to a public service broadcaster forces commercial broadcasters to make their rigorous programming appealing, and when regulation has forced UK broadcasters to produce these programmes, competition has forced them to produce them well (McKinsey et al., 1999, 18–19). The influence can also be reversed if an opposite path is chosen; those public service broadcasters that have pursued a higher market share (e.g. Portugal and Spain) to keep their funding have affected the overall standards of their respective markets and resulted in the descent of audience tastes to the lowest common denominator (Ibid., 199, 28).

In comparing a country's media system on its students' learning results, there is an interesting concurrency between a country's rank in learning comparisons and its public service media's market share. The best performers in the International Programme for Student Assessment (PISA), International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) and Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) comparative studies were countries with public broadcasters dominating audiovisual media-market: Denmark had 64%, South Korea 56% and Finland 44% shares of their respective audiovisual markets. Combined with the results of Curran and his colleagues' (2009), this concurrency might explain how factual programming provided by public service media can support an equality of possibilities.

Finland was one of the top three countries for four consecutive studies in PISA, which measured 15-year-old students' skills in mathematics, science and reading using a 2009 sample of almost half a million young people in 65 countries. One of the

relevant findings for this research, in the PISA study, was that in Finland the differences in learning skills between schools and between different social backgrounds were the narrowest of all the 65 countries (PISA 2009, 35), suggesting that, in Finland, potential social or economic inequality did not deprive children of the will nor the ability to learn. The international report finds that GDP per capita does influence educational success, but this success explains only 6% of the differences in average student performance while the other 94% reflects the potential for public policy to make a difference (OECD 2010, 5). The quality of Finnish schools varies, and so do the socio-economic backgrounds of their students, but the learning outcome does not; the one common denominator is media and, in particular, the national broadcaster. These results suggest that the share of factual content in the broadcaster's selection and the share of audiences of the broadcaster—the market share—influences the equality of access to knowledge and the individual and collective learning outcomes. With new time-consuming media attractions, time spent by young people with broadcast television has dropped, as has Finland's rank in PISA since 2009. This shift supports the idea of the influence of television content's availability and use on learning results.

A non-school-related comparative study on the public knowledge level and the media architectures of four countries—public service in Denmark and Finland, a dual model in the United Kingdom and the market model in the United States—examined the availability and content of news programmes, finding that the public service systems foster greater knowledge in these areas (Curran et al. 2009, 5). Interestingly, Denmark and Finland—having the strongest public television viewing shares, 64% in 2006 for the former and 44% in 2007 (43% in 2018) for the latter—had the highest civic knowledge scores in the ICCS study, of the four countries studied (Ibid., 7). On this basis, adding the public broadcasting market share or the supply of factual content on television as a variable in the PISA and ICCS measurements, could be worth consideration.

The study found the knowledge gap between disadvantaged groups to be significantly greater in the United States than in the three European countries, where the less privileged knew just as much as those who were better off. In the United States, those with limited education scored 40% less in the hard news questions compared to those with higher education. In Britain, the difference between the two groups was 14%, in Finland 13% and in Denmark zero (Ibid., 17-19). Another noteworthy result relates to income. In the United States, 29% of the low-income group answered hard news questions correctly, compared to 62% of the high-income group, a 32% difference. Income data was not collected in Denmark, but in Britain the difference was 13%, in favour of high income; in Finland the trend was inverted—the low-income group was correct in 79% of the questions, compared to only 67% correct

for the high-income group, a difference of 12% in advantage to the low-income group (Ibid., 18). One of the explanations the study offers is that, in addition to the steady drip-feed of public information (in Denmark and Finland) in prime time, in contrast to the entertainment diet of American television, the public service broadcasters in Europe had been quite successful in enabling the disadvantaged groups to join the daily ritual of watching the evening news (Ibid., 20). Although my study does not focus on television news, presumably the usage of 'serious' (as opposed to light) news fosters interest in more specialised factual programming as well as other forms of new knowledge. It seems that the education system of a country alone may be and inadequate factor in explaining the knowledge levels and differences occurring in them.

Media policy defines who or what gains exposure, as the differences in the media structures in the United States and in Europe reveal (Karppinen 2010, 183–184). In Europe, public service companies are deregulated by appealing to freedom of choice and a consequent increase of it, although viewers' do not endorse the radically pluralistic view (Karppinen 2010, 66) that sees pluralism as a maximum of choice. Instead, audiences surveyed in the United Kingdom (Blinc 2007, 4) found that the growth of multi-channel television has created a bias towards entertainment and that although there is more choice quantitatively, there is less choice qualitatively.

Regulation, Plurality and Audiences

Viewers considered *plurality* to be an essential element of public service broadcasting (Sancho, 2011, 5). The term itself, as self-evident as it may seem, is the source and foundation of the debates over the types of media environments the audiences populate and the types of media policies that regulate those environments. The concept is ambiguous, and the positive impression of plurality and diversity can be used in media policy arguments for various and often incompatible objectives: for further intervention and regulation as well as for free competition and freedom of choice (Karppinen, 2010, 10). The fetishes of choice and competition under the labels of 'pluralism' and 'diversity', as Freedman (2008, 79, cited in Karppinen, 2010) notes, have been reduced to convenient justifications to secure the marketisation of the media.

The actions that the EU takes in media legislation and regulation are impactful but ambiguous. A relatively broad consensus exists, reflected in several EU declarations, that the market alone cannot guarantee pluralistic media landscapes (Karppinen,

2010). Despite consensus on the principle, the European Commission and the market interests that influence its work tend to emphasise economic factors and a discourse in which the free flow of media content is seen to provide maximum choice for consumers, and in which state aid is regarded as boosting unfair competition against market actors (Benson & Powers, 2011). Cultural and democratic values may be routinely declared, but the actual policy measures and indicators used in policy formation rely on considerations that can be translated into quantifiable economic data.

Instead of directly attacking the ethos of public service, European media policy risks curbing the legitimate scope of public service media indirectly through the inaccessible, technocratic and undemocratic apparatus of European competition policy and state aid rules, claims Karppinen (2010, 155). He believes that many of the central ideas on which public service broadcasting were based in Europe, including programme quality, have lost much of their persuasive force (Ibid., 170). Instead, these ideas can be considered abstract or emotional criteria obstructing proper consideration with economic rigour, as the Association of Commercial Television in Europe (ACT, 2009) puts it.

European Union (EU) policy is, thus, commonly believed to erode national capacities for promoting public service values and cultural or democratic aims in media policy (Karppinen, 2010, 136). As a result of the EU and the member states' national policies, some public broadcasters (e.g. Bulgaria, Hungary and the Netherlands) have encountered considerable budget cuts and consequent operational limitations (Hellman, 2010a, 13). The process of revaluation is perpetual and ongoing; in early 2018, Switzerland held a referendum (*No Billag* initiative) on whether to abolish licence fees for the Swiss public broadcaster SGR SSR. The referendum resulted in the public service being favoured by 71% of the voters (EBU, 2018).

In terms of retracing what audiences are looking for, the BBC, in never-ending turmoil over its remit and competitive position, is illustrative. The governing bodies of the company, and their counterparts, regularly turn to professionals and audiences to consult them and to obtain a wide and detailed perspective on what the company should do and what is important to its users and patrons. The outcomes, which tend to support the BBC and its programme policies, provide a robust backrest for the company. The consultation process is also likely to soften the sharpest operations aiming at downsizing the company. I briefly present the BBC Charter renewal events over the past decade as an example of the forces that directly affect the market share of a public broadcaster and, indirectly, its programme policies.

The developments in Britain from 2008 onwards have restricted the resources of the BBC after commercial competitors underwent massive drops in funding (Karppinen, 2010, 55); in the period 2010–2019, the inflation-adjusted drop was already 30% (VLV, 2020). Prior to the next revision of the Royal Charter, the UK Government published in 2015 a green paper to revise the existing charter. The paper's main concerns were the overall purpose of the BBC; what services and content it should provide; how the BBC should be funded; and how it should be governed and regulated. Culture Secretary John Whittingdale questioned whether the BBC would have to be all things to all people (Plunkett, 2015). The question was posed to the audience and the public's answer was yes.

The question of the scope of BBC's tasks was included in the debate following the publication of the green paper. The BBC Trust (2016) conducted two public consultations on this question and held seminars around the country and commissioned research on the BBC's public value (BBC Trust, 2015). The responses to the Purposes, Value and Scope part of the consultation confirmed that audiences do not want a smaller and weaker BBC. The report states that a majority (56%) of the public believed that the BBC should provide more rather than less. Over a third (37%) thought that the range of services and programmes at the BBC is about right. The majority of people (55%) who wanted to see the BBC do more said that they would like the BBC to show more and better programmes across a range of genres. Of the genres wish-listed in the report (Ibid., 6), six out of nine were factual: 1) Drama; 2) Sports; 3) Documentaries and factual programmes; 4) Comedy and entertainment shows; 5) Arts, culture and music programmes; 6) Environment and science programmes; 7) History and natural history programmes; 8) Current affairs content and documentaries; 9) Educational and outreach programming. Respondents felt that the BBC's social value should be specifically addressed within its stated public remit: "The quality of the BBC across the board", wrote one respondent, "is better than any other comparable organization" (Ibid., 2). This sort of response made it more difficult for opponents to continue arguing that the market would handle BBC's business better than the BBC does; however, in the spring of 2020, the Government re-consulted whether to de-criminalise non-payment of the TV licence, and it has suggested the BBC could become a subscription service (VLV, 2020).

Nevertheless, there is a lesson to be learned from the UK public consultations' tradition for public service broadcasters elsewhere. If media policy decisions are left to politicians and market lobbyists, and if the public's viewpoints are ignored, influential advocates for public broadcasting may be absent. Consulting audiences may also guide programme policies subject to market thinking at the management level in public broadcasters. Diverse choices of genres and programmes quickly begin to suffer in the pursuit of larger or preferred audiences if programming decisions are

made oblivious concerning what might matter to the public as a whole.

When media policies at the US and European levels rule boundaries and funding, program policies at national and company levels ultimately affect individual citizens' options in their respective countries. The following section describes the programming environment in Finland.

2.2 Finland and YLE: regulation, self-regulation and audiences

Despite the grand transitions in the media sector, the positions of Finland's media operators and broadcasting structures have remained relatively stable, with three major companies: MTV, Nelonen (Four) and YLE (82% combined market share in 2018; Finnpanel). Their relationships and programming functions have evolved rather organically, apart from the phases of new legislation and regulation of YLE, which have initiated debate and new interpretations of YLE's mission and duties in society. In the following section, those interpretations and developments are examined from the dimensions of diversity, regulation, strategic choices, audience understanding, programme policies and consequential effect on the factual repertoire.

In this section, I briefly describe the supply of factual programming in the Finnish television portfolio, the recent legislation regarding public service media, the resulting funding status and the revised strategic guidelines. I then examine YLE's adoption of the parameters that have emerged from the new legislative status, the development of the perception of audiences, and the consequential programme policies, including the declining production and supply of factual programming.

Diversity and factual supply in Finnish television

The overall diversity of Finnish broadcast media programming has been studied since 1999, when Heikki Hellman published his doctoral dissertation on the consequences of competition between public broadcasting and the then recently deregulated private broadcasters. As reinforced by later national (Aslama, Hellman & Sauri, 2005b) and international reports (McKinsey, 1999; Nielsen & Linnebank, 2011;

Benson & Powers, 2011), Hellman found that public broadcasters and their output affect television's generic output on a national level.

Diversity, as an indicator of the variety of genres, is a difficult meter. Scholars have found the commercial MTV3 to be the most diverse channel, more so than any of the YLE channels (Hellman, 2010b, 57; Vähämaa et al., 2011). However, had documentaries been used as indicators of diversity, the image would have been significantly different: in 2004 YLE TV1 and TV2 broadcast 1,600 hours of documentary programming, while MTV3 broadcast only two hours.

The problem is that genre divisions remain unclear and that new forms of factual entertainment, for example, tend to blur with more traditional forms, making it difficult to classify content coherently. *Finnish Television Programming 2010* (Vähämaa et al., 2011, 57) found 'factualization' instead of 'entertainization'; the actual content had not changed, but the classification had. Since 2010, 'light factual' has not been a separate category in the industry's classification in Finland. For research purposes (in 2010 and 2011), factual programming was divided into three subcategories: (1) traditional factual (42% and 49%), containing serious knowledge programmes and reality television; (2) cultural programmes (7% and 8%); and (3) service and lifestyle programmes (51% and 43%; Vähämaa et al., 2011, 68; Koskenniemi et al., 2012, 88; see Section 2.3 for developments in in-house factual programming at YLE.)

The authors of the 2011 report found it increasingly difficult to differentiate between genres, as 'infotainment is there to stay' with the ever-increasing role of reality programming. Within traditional factual programming are programmes whose function is to entertain; the same subject matter can either be handled very seriously or can be pure entertainment. Distinctions are, therefore, subjective and dependent on whether the classifier knows the programme or must rely on brief programme descriptions (Koskenniemi et al., 2012, 93). Companies decide for themselves on how and in which category they classify their own programmes. In the long term, the changes in genre shares can express either actual changes or changes in how genres are appreciated or played with, for instance, to make a channel look more diverse or factually orientated than it would be if the content were classified using another rationale.

In the most recent (and last) annual report on Finnish television programming (Juntunen & Lagus 2015), the share of reality television is a separate category by a remarkable 26% of the programming output; as a whole, it represents the biggest program category. Factual programme share in 2014 in Finnish television was 10%, but together with lifestyle at 9% and cultural programmes at 2%—which were

included in the 2010 factual category—factual programming output on Finnish free-to-air television channels in 2014 would be 21%. On YLE channels alone, the joint factual category share of its overall output in 2014 was 35%, corresponding to individual categories of factual 23%, culture 7% and lifestyle 5%, which was quite expectedly larger than on commercial channels (Ibid., 58).

Regarding factual programmes, 80% are broadcast by YLE in peak evening hours, and 90% of cultural programmes in Finland are aired by the public broadcaster. Hence, YLE has been solely responsible of programming in these categories in aspects of diversity and distinctiveness, at least quantitatively. The latest developments indicate that factual and cultural genre shares have dropped significantly since 2014. I address that evaluation and the contributing factors towards the end of this chapter after describing some dimensions of YLE's regulatory position in society and its actions as a programmer.

Legislative guidelines

The presence—or absence—of factual programmes in a public service media's (PSM) repertoire is the consequence of programming and implemented strategy. The art of programming is a fine game between the skills and capabilities of the in-house and independent talent, international programme supply, available channels and platforms, a programmer's own vision, and company strategies that define what gets produced, commissioned, bought and displayed. Company strategies are constructed from the remit and guidelines set by the legislator; from audiences' needs and demands and the research commissioned and produced based on those; from the leadership's world vision and its understanding of regulator's and audience's demands; and ultimately from the management's apprehension of its remit in society. It is important to acknowledge that the actions and reactions of a public service media company enhance or subvert its position as the provider of public good, of which factual programmes form an essential part.

In December 2011, the Ministry of Transport and Communications proposed a new funding system for YLE. The company had been funded by a clear-cut licence-fee system, which had been deteriorating from the turn of the century because of public opposition to the digitalisation of TV distribution, increasing competition created by the opportunities that digitalisation enabled, and earlier deregulation. With the emergence of mobile internet and new ways of consuming media content—creating

generations with no TV relationship—payment obligation based on the existence of a television set in a household was no longer rational (Soramäki, 2017). The new solution, taking effect in 2013, was a 0.68% designated YLE tax for adults, ranging from €50 to €140, depending on income. The Finnish Government also agreed that the YLE tax would be processed separately from the general budget frame, and thus, be unaffected by savings in other civic sections (Soramäki, 2017). The proposed PSM funding model was unique and reflected a perception of public service media as a commodity of indisputable public value.

In addition to the funding model, and with general administrative regulations, the changes to the 1993 Act on YLE (1380/1993) were small but potentially significant. New services are to be *pre-evaluated* in terms of public value and market effects; the definition *full service* is replaced by *diverse and comprehensive public service*; the service is to be available in public communication networks both *nationally and regionally*; public service programming is to produce, create, develop and *preserve* national culture, art and inspiring entertainment; in programming, YLE must consider cultural, educational and equality aspects, offer a chance for learning and self-development and emphasise programmes aimed at children and *youth,* as well as provide religious services (HE 29/2012).

Many of the requested statements in the Act and in much of the media coverage focused on the economic and competitive impacts of the law. Unfair competition was seen not only in the overall arrangement, but also regionally on the internet, in which YLE's potential for producing textual contents was considered to be a threat to local private media. Another major issue was the addition of youth as a new target group in addition to children, attracting attention away from commercial actors because that is the age segment they most target, and because that was the area in which the market was already relatively saturated. The Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM) criticised the emphasis on youth because it undermined senior citizens, a demographically growing group (OKM, 2012). Media scholars have argued, in a statement regarding the proposed legislation, that the amendment could lead to short-sighted competition for young audiences, a competition that YLE cannot win, at least not quantitatively (Hellman et al., 2012). The Tampere University statement (Ibid.) also questioned the implication of the amendment, given that the company had seized the production of all children's programmes in radio despite the law, and concluded that the existing statement of strengthening the supply for young and young adult audiences in the company's strategy would be sufficient. The degree of complicity in the clientele discourse is elevated by the comprehensive tax, enhancing YLE's role as a public service in parallel with other tax-funded services such as libraries (Ibid., 2). As such, the model implicitly stresses the idea that a public broadcasting service cannot lean on purely consumer-based thinking or focus on

serving clients' individual needs, but rather on serving the entire user population; that is, society. Clean-cut clientele orientation feeds pay-tv ideology, according to which the client should pay for only those services he or she wants to buy, which is not the emphasis for public service broadcasting. The tax settlement would allow the company to perceive its audiences as citizens and to build its services accordingly based on the benefits and public value it provides for the nation and for individuals (Hellman et al., 2012).

The Committee for Transport and Communications emphasised that the actual content and target group reach is ultimately related to the content of programming and the quality of programmes. The Committee stated that YLE should, above all, focus on developing qualitative criteria and on improving the quality of programmes (LiVM 1/2012, 3).

In a 2016 review of the Act on Yleisradio Oy, a section of the remit was revised from supporting 'tolerance and multiculturalism' to supporting 'the fostering of Finnish cultural heritage, tolerance, parity, equality and cultural diversity' (Soramäki, 2017, 119; finlex.fi). Both the 2011 and 2016 revisions are significant from the perspective of this research. The redefinitions in YLE's explicit duties in supporting cultural functions could be interpreted as a mandate and plan of action for stronger and more diverse factual output. On the other hand, the 2011 amendment of youth into the Act on YLE, as slight and insignificant as it appeared (Koskenniemi et al., 2012), would have major implications indirectly and directly in the opposite direction to programme repertoire and, eventually, to the supply of factual programming, as described at the end of this chapter.

New guidelines for programming

With the 2011 funding settlement, with the company's size and market leadership in many areas, and with the support it has been enjoying almost across the political field, YLE in the 2010s was stronger than it had been in decades. Outside threats seemed weaker than in recent history as the tax settlement eliminated the imminent risks that the market-dependent actors must face: the turmoil of media platforms, wandering audiences, diminishing and unpredictable income. Furthermore, with the conjuncture-dependent index rise frozen in 2017 and 2018, YLE has had the opportunity to plan and execute its strategy of choice in the long term. Although the Board of Governors has, since the 2016 law revisions, a formal role in accepting the grand tracks of the company's strategy, the YLE management ultimately defines its

function in Finnish society through the scope and quality of its supply. Therefore, the strategic choices, perceptions and definitions of the issues and values that guide the decision processes are pivotal.

Strategic guidelines defining YLE's goals and programming prior to the alterations to the YLE law materialised through three fields: media policy at political level, programme policy at administrative level, and editorial policy at creative and journalistic level (Silvo, 1988). The latest revision has led to great structural independence and freedom of speech (Soramäki, 2018), and to a situation in which media policy formation is, in practice, conducted on the level of the same administrative bodies as programme policy and, eventually, some strands of editorial policy as well, as the final section of this chapter describes.

Unlike many of its PSM counterparts in Europe, struggling in hostile or pressured political environments, YLE has a strong hold on TV audiences in Finland. The company's total share of Finland's TV market has been consistently around 45% over the past decade despite the fragmentation of the field (43.6% in 2018; Finnpanel, 2019). Commercial channels have to compete with each other and with the new platforms for advertisers, who have been moving their assets to the web, whereas YLE is unfettered by similar pressures. Furthermore, YLE has not been as affected by Netflix and its peers as the commercial sector has (YLE, 2019a).

The licence fee versus tax discussion prompted concern about losing younger audiences in the then new management of YLE. In the process of the new legislation, YLE redefined itself. The market opposition saw that the new tax solution altogether separated paying for content from consuming it, as opposed to the situation in which only those who watched television would finance YLE (Tapaninen, 2015). The company concluded the opposite and associated paying with consumption. The argument is that when the payment is no longer licence- or equipment-based, but when everybody must pay, then everybody should be served. In the company's view, the younger generations were losing by not being offered services by YLE, while the older generations were being *overly served.* Consequently, the resulting strategic goals set in 2012 (YLE, 2012b) were increasing reach, focusing on particular segments and on those under 45, setting the web over broadcast, and reducing the number of programme titles. The following section describes and assesses the measures and actions deriving from these chosen strategies, and, in particular, considers how the new guidelines impact factual production and output.

The evolving media ecosystem has shaken broadcasting and streaming service positions globally and locally and produced a variety of reactions and results. Measuring reach and using it as a grading scale is common practice for both commercial and public broadcasters.

In 2011, YLE reached 74% of Finns daily, 95% weekly and 98% annually. Of those over 45 years old, the daily reach was 87% compared with 57% of those under 45 years old. Customer satisfaction in the groups reached was 95%, with only slight differences between younger and older audiences (YLE, 2012c, 26). The company, however, set the goal to reach 80% daily, 90% weekly and 100% yearly (YLE, 2011e), but in 2015 reset these to 75%, 85% and 100% respectively. In 2018, the measured reach was at 80% (YLE, 2019a).

As an audience-understanding tool, YLE has used segment conceptualising since 2010. At the turn of the decade, TNS's RISC Monitor was the most influential of the commercial enterprises serving YLE. Of the young generations, the youngest groups were the most difficult to attract: initially, the 'fast movers' in 2011, and in 2015 the 'thumbs up' and 'chillers', were the most wanted.

As an audience-understanding tool, YLE used segment conceptualizing since 2010. At the turn of the decade, The Research Institute on Social Change (RISC) Monitor was the most influential of the commercial enterprises serving YLE. The international and widely applied market research method monitors social change by analysing life-styles, attitudes and values (Hujanen, 2008). RISC Monitor analysis constructs sosio-cultural attitude maps, and for media into audience segments, characterised by their dominating attitudes and values, and further described as trends (Suhonen, 2010).

The YLE adaptation of the RISC-segments divides the population into six segments based on media usage and notions of behaviour.

CHILLERS 16%	THUMBS UP 20%	RENEWED SMITHS'S 16%
Chillers are typically under 30, ¾ under 45. Media is entertainment. YLE = whatever	Thumbs up (likers) are typically urban singles under 40. New technology and the internet have taken over whole existence. YLE is good, but not used.	Renewing Smiths (Virtaset) are typically middle-aged men. Media is factual and sports. YLE reaches well, best by TV-channels. Web pages, text-TV and very popular YLE Areena.
COUCH LOVERS 17%	**SETTLED 19%**	**LOYALS 10%**
Couch lovers are typically middle aged with families. Passive users of media, television often on background. YLE reaches well, but more to be done for attractiveness.	Settled are typically pensionaries and women over 50. Media usage is dominated by television and radio, web usage small. YLE is important and reaches well.	Loyals are typically men over 60. Radio & television important, but the internet also. YLE lovers. Best reach of all.

(YLE; 2014)

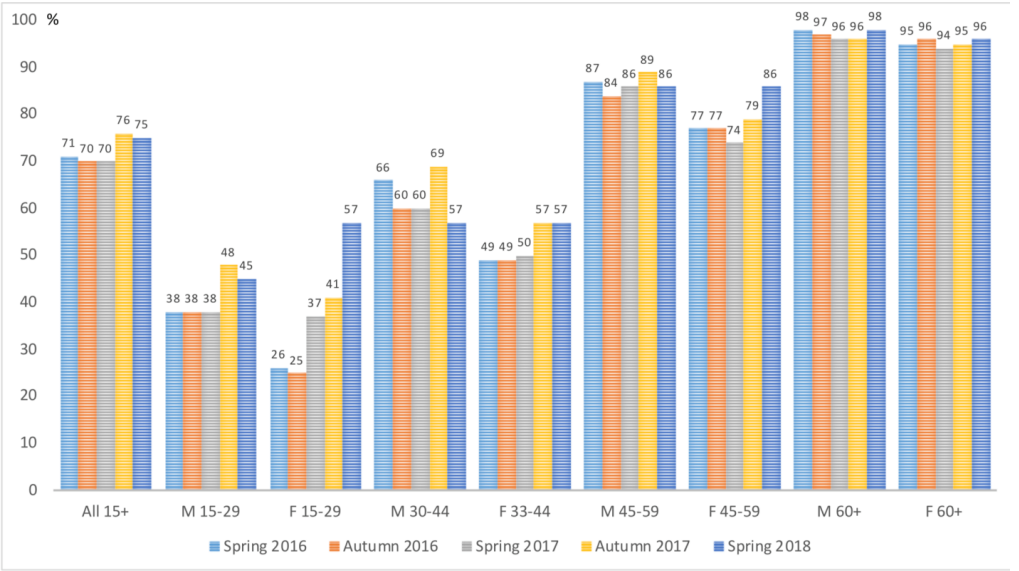
Figure 2.1 YLE-segments 2014, basic

Of the young generations, the youngest groups were the hardest ones to get; in 2015 the "thumbs up" and "chillers" were the most wanted. On the basis of the new segmentation, the strategic goals of 2015 were set high, to reaching 80% of 'chillers' weekly, 90% of 'web thumbs' and 90% of all those under 45-year-olds (YLE, 2015). By 2017, the behavioural segments were abandoned, and the goal set to simply prioritising the population under 45 and reaching 75% daily (YLE, 2017f).

In 2017, YLE had a 43% market share, making it the third largest broadcasting company in Europe. In terms of reach, it was 16th in the whole population and 24th in youth reach in comparison with the other broadcasters belonging to the EBU (EBU, 2017b). Reach is a central concept in measuring performance for both the commercial and public media. Reaching the young seems to be the most valued parameter for European public broadcasters (Ibid.).

Reach, age, engagement

Reach is a problematic measure. For the traditional TV meter (Finnpanel), weekly reach qualifies as a minimum of 15 minutes of weekly television uninterrupted. Web measurement standards keep changing; YLE sites' usage has been measured by TNS Metrix, from 2017 by ComScore and most recently by Adobe Analytics via complicated and evolving patterns. Social media scores, which are, since 2017, considered in YLE's reach, vary according to each platform's and application's meter systems, and are, at times, quite unreliable (Pirhonen, 2017). The company services' measured reach varies between seasons but not significantly, as the long-term figures seem relatively steady. In the chart, below, no clear downward turn in any service among the entire population from 2016 to 2018 is visible, rather the contrary.



YLE 2018a

Figure 2.2 YLE services' daily reach (%) spring 2016–spring 2018

In the above diagram, the daily reach of YLE services in spring 2018 was up by 4% from 2016 (the same 71% also in 2013). On the other hand, television's daily reach in the entire population plummeted, and was at 54% in 2017, and 34% in the 30–44-

year-old segment (YLE, 2018a). Even so, broadcast television has remained the most attractive option for this age group and the younger generations.

The changes and trends in national and international measurements of the reach and/or usage of different media seem significant, but there is a lack of consensus about what exactly reach as a measure signifies. The minimum achieved *weekly* reach of 36 minutes seems vague as a meter when the average time of *daily* TV viewing in the entire population is 73 minutes for YLE alone, and 168 for all television (YLE, 2018a). For the purpose of a strategy to obtain new audiences, 15 or even 36 minutes a week appears small for actual impact and for creating lasting relationships. If the goal is not only to reach but to build a relationship with young users, the contact should be significant enough to leave a memory trace. For that to happen, the experience should produce appreciation, which is "an experiential state that is characterized by the perception of deeper meaning, the feeling of being moved, and the motivation to elaborate on thoughts and feelings inspired by the experience" (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010, 76). I discuss these features from the audiences' viewpoint in more detail in Chapter 7. In this context, to form a contact for appreciation, other terms also need to be fulfilled, including *exposure*, *access* and *engagement*.

In the above diagram, the daily reach of YLE services in spring 2018 was up by 4% from 2016 (the same 71% also in 2013). On the other hand, television's daily reach in the entire population plummeted, and was at 54% in 2017, and 34% in the 30–44-year-old segment (YLE, 2018a). Even so, broadcast television has remained the most attractive option for this age group and the younger generations.

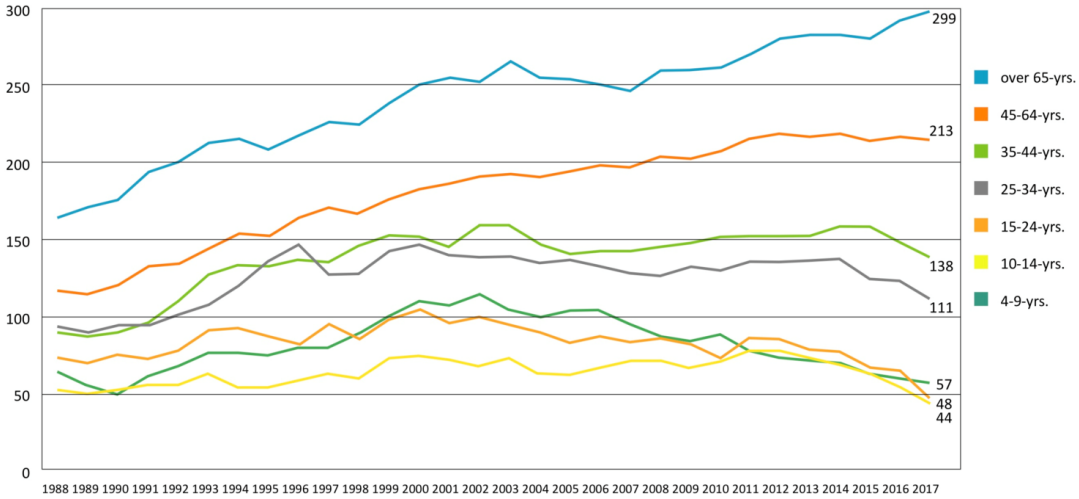
The changes and trends in national and international measurements of the reach and/or usage of different media seem significant, but there is a lack of consensus about what exactly reach as a measure signifies. The minimum achieved *weekly* reach of 36 minutes seems vague as a meter when the average time of *daily* TV viewing in the entire population is 73 minutes for YLE alone, and 168 for all television (YLE, 2018a). For the purpose of a strategy to obtain new audiences, 15 or even 36 minutes a week appears small for actual impact and for creating lasting relationships. If the goal is not only to reach but to build a relationship with young users, the contact should be significant enough to leave a memory trace. For that to happen, the experience should produce appreciation, which is "an experiential state that is characterized by the perception of deeper meaning, the feeling of being moved, and the motivation to elaborate on thoughts and feelings inspired by the experience" (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010, 76). I discuss these features from the audiences' viewpoint in more detail in Chapter 7. In this context, to form a contact for appreciation, other terms also need to be fulfilled, including *exposure*, *access* and *engagement*.

Reach as a concept implies that something measured is visible, has been noticed and, in some cases, has also been reacted to. In advertising parole, reach can indicate potential, such as the entirety of a given demographic group or multiple demographic groups segmented by separate features and summed up together, indicating very large potential audiences or users. On other occasions, reach may mean time spent with content or actual engagement with impact. In media industry language, engagement means something measurable (such as clicks). In a list of 20 forms of audience engagement, Napoli found a wide spectrum from time spent to collective qualitative experiences (Ibid., 2011); engagement as a concept is multifaceted. Keinonen and her colleagues (2018, 58) found the literature on engagement and its disparate conceptualisations to be still limited. They define audience engagement as a set of experiences. In their study on modes of engagement with musical talent shows, audiences equated engagement with immersion and with being captivated (Ibid., 61). A broad academic conceptualisation has defined audience engagement as signifying personal and collective relations with policy and social issues or cultural artefacts or events (Hill & Steemers, 2017). In this context, I define engagement simply as an experience of involvement and impact. Engagement is essential for any impact to occur. To engage properly, one must have real access to the content reacted to; it must be easily found, available and usable. If the content is only briefly glanced at, it hardly evokes further interest. The user or viewer needs to commit to live- or on-demand TV or other online content for the encounter to be cognitively active. Only engaged content can have an impact and, consequently, create an experience of what the distributor or the production company—the brand—is about. Mere reach is not likely to construct loyal relationships with a medium. The other conditions should also be met for a meaningful impact to occur and for a relationship to form.

Philip Napoli (2008, 27) criticises public interest-orientated concerns towards media industries' emphasis on exposure for the very limited conceptualisation of the audience because such an analytical approach is most reflective of the needs and interests of the content providers. Reach is a mediacentric measure. Reach numerates what media receives—how many views, clicks, minutes—from audiences and target groups. The institutional demand of reach is to retain the audience, to have them stay tuned rather than trying to keep them informed (Alasuutari, 1999b, 131). Reach does not weigh what audiences and target groups gain or whether that is likely to attract them to keep coming back.

In market-orientated media research, the general conclusion is that not all reach is equal, but after cutting through and gaining attention, the key is to be chosen and to build memory structures of the product or the brand (Nelson-Field, 2018). Constructing a future loyal customership based on young audiences of the present is also an ambiguous matter, as the concept presupposes that media-usage patterns and loyalties that are vivid in older age are built in youth. Presuming that this is the case, the following new questions arise: How well and how long does a viewing experience—or an experience of being reached for 15 minutes in a week—carry on in a life span? Is a youth television or website favourite relevant in adulthood and does it translate into perceptions of the platform that offered the experience? Is the platform later in life the same, or does it represent different factors than it did in the user's youth? Are the needs or motivations for using a particular media in adulthood the same as at a younger age? How much does youth media behaviour in general predict media behaviour later in life?

The following data on long-term media usage suggest that media consumption in early life does not eminently predict viewing behaviour later in life. However, quantitatively clear patterns in age-related television consumption can be found. The figure, below, illustrates television usage by age group in Finland from 1988 to 2017.



(YLE 2008, 2016; Finnpanel 2019)

Figure 2.3 Daily viewing time (minutes) by age segments in Finland in 1988-2017

The diagram demonstrates, how the younger generations in Finland have consistently spent much less time with television than the older ones. This phenomenon did not start with the emergence of the internet and new media services

and platforms. During the last 30 years, the segments under 35 years old have consistently watched less television than their elders, while, generation by generation, time spent with television steadily grows with age. There is a clear drop from 2011 to 2015 in the minutes spent with live TV for those under 34, but a clear rise in the 35–44 segment in 2015. Those 35 years old in 2015 were 30 in 2010, and then belonged to a segment whose watching was diminishing, indicating that broadcast's grip on them would not be holding. Yet, a few years later the generation that already grew up with the internet seemed to watch as much as the preceding generations.

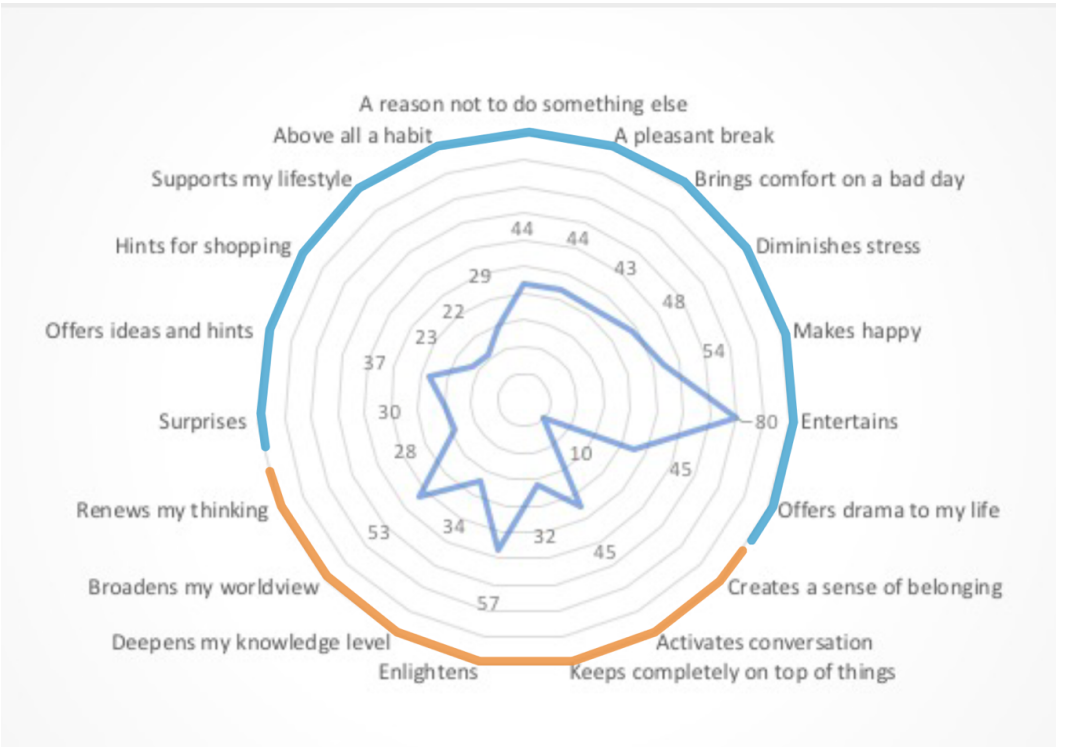
In the light of these statistics, former usage patterns do not seem to dictate the media usage of adult life. The pattern of the charts is bound to evolve—and, to some extent, has already done so, as, in 2017, television minutes for the under 45s are a few minutes down from 2016 (YLE, 2018, 13) as time spent with other media forms increases. To what extent that happens relates to what needs traditional media and customary viewing habits serve. Television is a domestic media (Hagedoorn, 2013), and settling down in a life span implies a domestic life. In a substantial national consumer behaviour research study, television remains the favourite activity of all age groups over 24 in Finland (TNS, 2018). In addition to media usage, general human conditions have an influence on media usage. Human attributes are subject to personal development and can change through a person's efforts (Molden & Dweck, 2006, 193). With reference to the latter assumption, life-span developments in the uses of factual television are discussed in Chapter 7, based on the data of participants' experiences. The bond with present and future users is formed both by actual experiences with YLE's products and the resulting user expectations from YLE.

Understanding audiences

Judging by the evolution and wording of the act on YLE (1380/1993), there is an agreement among politicians from across the political spectrum that YLE's mission is to cultivate the nation in multiple ways. An annual study carried out with the general public on YLE's worth to Finns (YLE 2017c) revealed that the cultural mission is considered to be very important, scoring 5.17 on a scale of one to six.

Although the participants in the study (Ibid.) assessed YLE's performance favourably in relation to many of its public duties, the issues where it failed to reach the perceived importance are in addition to civic culture matters that relate to the yield of factual programmes. The study found that YLE is not delivering expectations for the younger segments of participants surveyed in the following areas: learning new things and being able to educate oneself; being able to participate in public discourse; gaining a view on the everyday life that people in Finland lead; understanding better the changes taking place in Finnish society and in the world; gaining critical viewpoints and understanding entireties (YLE, 2017c, 15–17). The under-performance in the eyes of the under 45 years old to whom the mission and YLE's performance in it means more than to the older group, is remarkable in relation to the strategic goal of bonding with young generations. However, the results on these issues are not raised in presentations of the report, though the better results in other issues of the same study are regularly reported in policy papers, including the board of governors' yearly report to parliament. (e.g., YLE, 2018c). In the light of the results of the study on YLE's worth (YLE, 2017c) and the strategic generational goals, it would seem productive to perform better in cultural and factual supply across platforms to serve the under 45s, rather than doing less. In other words, downscaling factual output in the manner described in the last section of this chapter is not supporting YLE's strategy. This notion becomes evident when examining earlier research undertaken on audiences' preferences since the beginning of the decade. The few qualitative studies made, commissioned or subscribed by YLE have suggested that audiences on all platforms can have several motives and interests either simultaneously or subsequently, and that knowledge orientation is among the strongest motives (e.g., YLE, 2011f, g, h)

A 2013 presentation of media usage motives, by an 18–44 age group, illustrates the multiplicity of ways and needs for which television is consumed or perceived to gratify.



(YLE 2013, 14)

Figure 2.4 Motives for the use of content provided via television 2013[6]

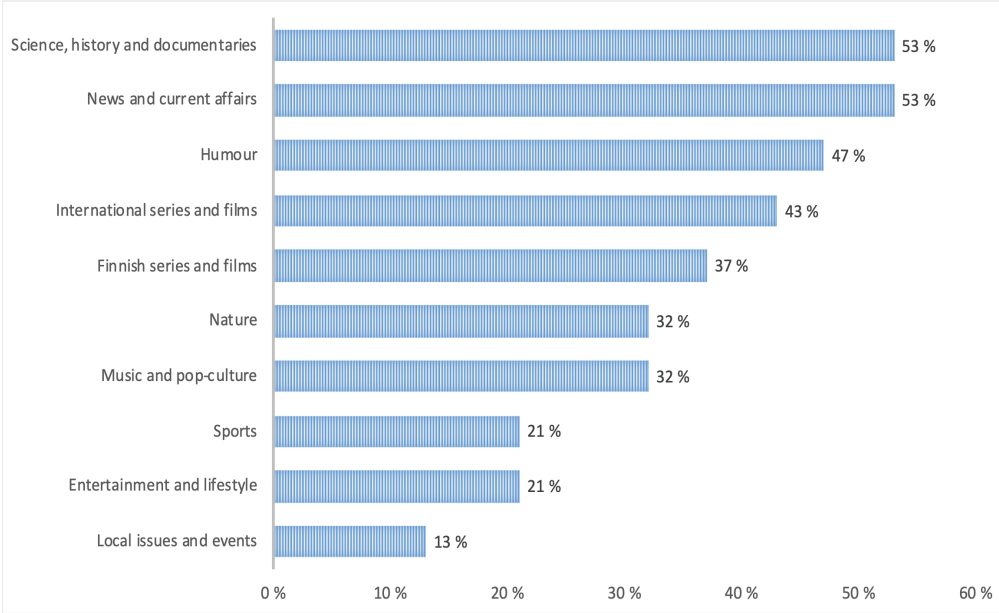
From the point of view of public service media, the strength of information or knowledge orientation (yellow line) in the figure is very solid, even at its weakest in the 15–29 generation in the same report (YLE, 2011f). Close behind the entertainment function come enlightenment and the broadening of worldview, and this is followed by the deepening of knowledge level, keeping up with things, and the renewal of thinking. The relative use of different media may have significantly changed from 2103 to 2020 but the multiplicity of needs and gratifications in all generations is obvious.

Napoli (2008) has pointed out that the specific analytical approaches and techniques in audience understanding in both public service and other media companies have changed over time, changing the perceptions of the audience that have emerged from these different analytical approaches: "It is out of these efforts

[6] The original figure also illustrates the same motives for radio and internet.

that media organizations' conceptualizations of their audience are formed. These conceptualizations are central to the decisions that media organizations make in the production, distribution, and exhibition of content" (p. 3). General audience's motives and expectations for programming were last researched at YLE in 2011. When examining the expressed interest in different programme types in the population under 45, entertainment and light factual were placed far from the top. Only movies outranked documentaries, which 92% of the 395 panellists found attractive (YLE, 2011c).

When it comes to the expectations of the 15–30 age group for YLE specifically, the expectations for factual programmes were clear: science, history and nature documentaries top the chart (YLE, 2011b):



(15/30 Research; YLE 2009, YLE 2011b)

Figure 2.5 What I want from YLE, 15 to 30 years

Entertainment and lifestyle were at 9th place in this survey where traditional factual genres dominate the wish lists. In another study, 15–30-year-olds were asked what kind of *entertainment* they wanted from YLE and the public service (YLE, 2011c). The responses varied from drama to sports and from pop-music to factual programmes. Documentaries were mentioned remarkably often. The 15–30 years old

expected support in everyday life, for their studies and for working life, and wanted YLE to offer good journalism: impartial, plural, knowledgeable, deep, brave and clear. Respondents longed for more understanding about topics dear to them, and they hoped for a sense of belonging to communities or subcultures. They wanted depth, expertise and duration (Ibid.).

Perhaps following the BBC's example in conducting public consultations (see Section 2.1), YLE consulted the public in spring 2012, not with its own strategic outlines as in the BBC consultations, but with an online questionnaire and live events titled *YLE of Dreams* (Mäkinen et al., 2012). The goal was to define YLE's role in society by listening to citizens. The results of the 8,000-participant study seemed to reinforce the earlier qualitative conclusions on, for instance, younger audiences' quest for knowledge and a thirst for specialised factual programmes and documentaries (RISC, 2012; YLE, 2011b, 2011c, 2011g). The respondents (38% were under 45) were unanimous that the most important properties for YLE are diversity, quality and documentaries. Diversity was further defined to mean fact-based, reliable, educational and cultivating output. While respondents appreciated the company's ability to listen to audiences and to renew forms and expressions, they also saw that it had lost clarity in its actions and direction, even though it should help the nation to think. More factual programmes at the expense of other contents and a wider perspective on the world were recommended (Ibid., 16–18, 24–25).

Since 2012, audience motives, interests or citizens' perceptions of what YLE should focus on have not been similarly examined.[7] In addition to the yearly report on YLE's worth to Finns (e.g., YLE 2017c), the company measures customer satisfaction on existing programme output. Those results are also relatively consistent in the long term, and there is no indication of a change in audiences' evaluations. In 2017, in the whole population, of the top 10 of 111 programme titles eight were factual or documentary programmes (YLE 2017a). The most devoted to factual programming were female and male viewers between 30 to 44 years old (Ibid.).

[7] Audience research at YLE has been conducted separately in the Strategic Department, Publications, Creative Contents and News and Current Affairs. In August 2020 Publications and Creative Contents were united.

2.3 Programme and platform policies and factual viewing

Actions on online services by YLE have gained international attention for their progressivity. A Reuters study on news and digital media has complimented YLE (and the BBC) for being agile in reacting to developments in media and technological environments, and abandoning some of the previously, apparently valuable services as a cost, as "the changes involve hard decisions such as cutting legacy services to free up money for new initiatives" (Sehl, Cornia et Nielsen, 2016, 39). The report concluded that some of the new initiatives are likely to fail and that change without conflict is rare (Ibid., 40). Even with major investments in webservices, as noted above, broadcast television continues to be the most attractive medium for all generations. The figure below illustrates the difference between time spent with YLE broadcast channels and web-television YLE Areena. The top set illustrates the viewing of the whole population, and the second set applies to the viewing of those under 45 years of age.

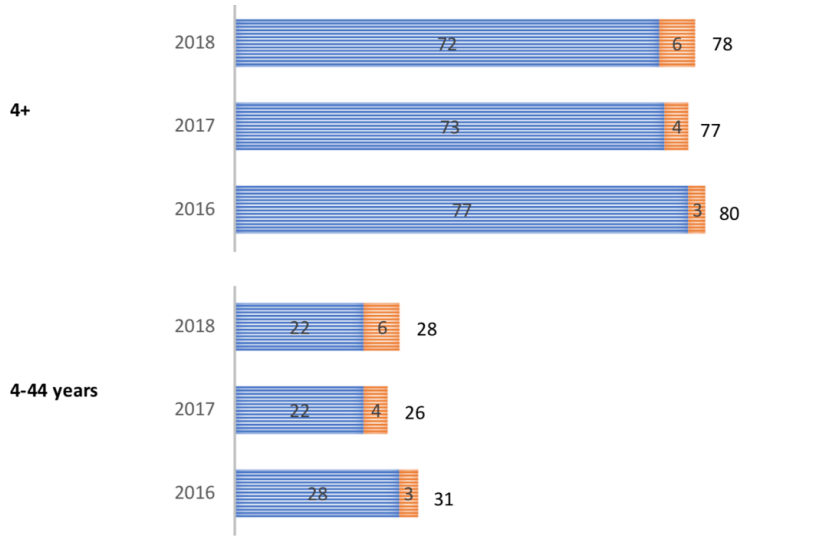
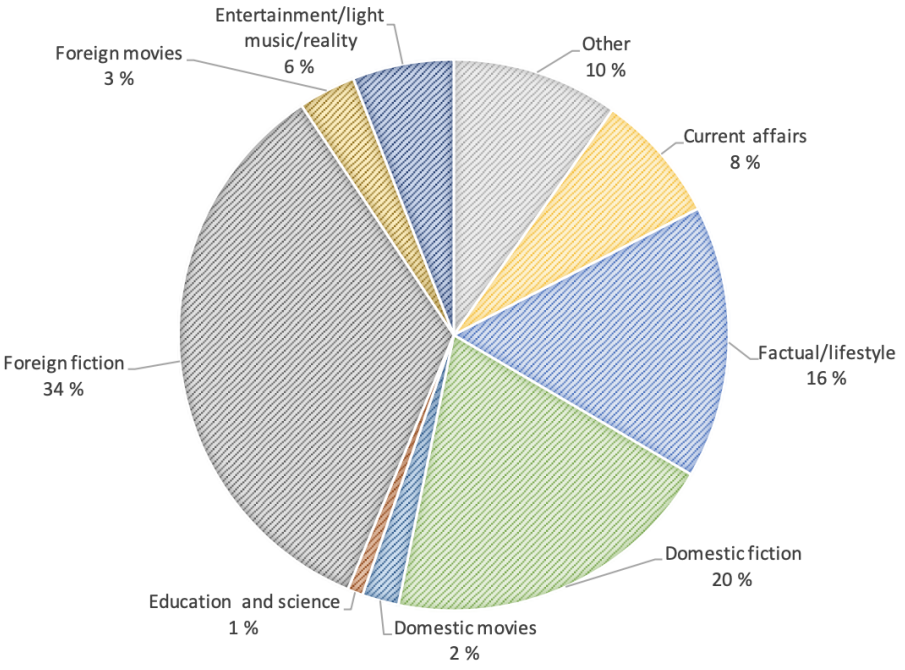


Figure 2.6 Total daily viewing of YLE TV channels and YLE Areena, minutes per day

While television and radio shares were decreasing, streaming did not increase among youth and young adults in 2017 nor in 2018 (YLE 2019a), and the YLE Areena usage minutes are growing in the over 45-segment only. In assessing the YLE board of governors' yearly report, Nieminen (2018, 89) has found it difficult to infer how YLE has so far succeeded in its aspirations. In spite of the company's own assessments of managing to reach the strategically important under 45s, the development is controversial, if their usage of web services is despite the efforts diminishing.

In terms of the diversity of generic supply in the national media environment, factual programming at YLE has had hard times in the transition process. The measures taken to rejuvenate production and the repertoire, and the effects of the chosen guidelines on factual programming's availability, visibility and viewing on different platforms are further explored below.

The following figure illustrates different programme genres' viewing on YLE's web service YLE Areena.



(YLE 2017b)

Figure 2.7 Shares (%) of viewing minutes by genre in YLE Areena 2017

Compared with the consumption of factual programmes on television, which is approximately 13% of weekly consumption (YLE, 2019a), web-television or VOD factual watching is remarkably lower than that of live-TV and time-shifted factual watching. The classification of factual in the above figure contains popular lifestyle programmes, which implies that traditional factual catches only a few percent, if the ratio is similar to that of television, where traditional genres form approximately half of the joint genre's viewing time (Juntunen & Lagus 2015). This may have a severe impact on the reach and usage of factual programmes in online use. Several factors affect the phenomenon, but, excluding demand, I suggest the relevant factors are websites' rudimentary ontological architecture, chosen algorithms and design, which obstruct the exposure and access to basic factual programming. Popularity is even more crucial for exposure on streaming services than on traditional channels. The titles that are chosen for attention are at the top of the websites, while, deep down, often buried in the abundance, are the programmes that never make it to the Top 20 charts. Yet the less popular, small-audience programmes on YLE's web platform, just as on broadcast television, generate 75% of all the usage. Information on that usage is insufficient, since the classification and information architecture do not produce adequate data, so that programmes that eventually are found by their audiences may remain invisible in the statistics. If that is the case, they and other similar programmes are unlikely to be reproduced, as there are no figures to show for possible demand.

Much of the existing YLE customer research is quantitative and based on surveying programme performance and focused on the top 10 or top 20 titles (e.g., 2017a, 2017b), and the size and number of the high scoring titles is closely followed in quantitative analysis. Apart from sports, national events and children's programmes, the 'hits' seem to be seasonal, and few of the YLE Areena or TV hits of 2017 exist in the charts anymore. Whether the studies deal with television or web, their frame of top scores leaves a large portion of the target groups' interests out. As the strategic goal is to reach *everybody* and particularly the under 45s, it could be of interest to explore what is it that catches the eye of 75% of the preferred viewers. News and current affairs excluded, most factual programmes fall into small-audience categories, hence, outside of the interest and support of YLE's customer research and excluded as factors in programme policies and strategic thinking. Nieminen (2018) has remarked on the vagueness in YLE's strategic guidelines in approaching youth. The indicators assessing the reach of youth are too approximate and quantitative, and, thus, superficial in an environment where the young audiences continue to split into smaller subcultures (89). From the point of view of engagement as defined above, consumed time is more relevant than reach or exposure, but it does not yet assess the nature of impact or the bond formed.

Who or which parts of the audience segments are not watching or using contents is as noteworthy as how many or which segments are watching or using contents, since high figures are the measure of success. The portions of television audiences for a given programme now vary from 0.5% for 1 million viewers to 77% for under 50,000 viewers in the whole population (Figure 1.1). Should the same ratio be applied to a hypothetical audience of 1 million of the age of 30–44, then in a case where a successful programme would get a maximum of 150,000 viewers of the one million between 30–44 years, then 850,000 of the same age group would not be watching it, but might be watching the smaller-audience programmes, the less popular factual ones instead. A part of the 850,000 who are not watching the more popular programmes at a given time could be watching any of the less popular programme instead. The TV meters that are quite inaccurate in smaller numbers, and unrepresentative when it comes to subcultures and subtleties in taste, do not produce adequate information of smaller shares. Therefore, when people say they like documentaries over entertainment, it may well be true, and they actually do watch documentaries, just not in large numbers and perhaps not often. Most YLE channels and services have higher interest scores than daily reach in the whole population (YLE, 2012b), which supports the possibility that audiences can *value* some contents or genres *more* than those they *pass more time* with, and that the reward for the time spent with the valued programmes is qualitatively worth more than the quantitively larger time spent with less valued but more popular programmes (Mulgan 1990). This proposal is explored in more detail and from the viewers' points of view in Chapter 5.

The annual Finnish Television Programming overview[8] of 2012 (Juntunen et Koskenniemi, 2013) pointing out the rise in the share of factual programming happening at the time, was commissioned by the Ministry of Transport and Communications and executed by communication scholars. Most academic studies concerning television or YLE were funded either by the ministry or by other public interest sources. The Audience Research Unit of YLE, which cooperated actively with the academic community, evolved into the Customer Research Unit in 2007 (Markkanen & Nieminen, 2010); in addition to its own inhouse research the company has since trusted commercial enterprises, such as Kantar TNS[i] in producing audience information (Mäntymäki, 2010).

Focusing on the most popular programmes can result in a unified future supply and decreased diversity and distinctiveness. In demonstrating the portion and amount of the small-audience programmes, the charts (Fig. 1.1 and 2.7) underline the lack of information on the quality and features of smaller programmes and their

[8] Discontinued since 2015.

audiences. If in audience research the interest is focused on the 'hits' for the under 45 years old, leaving not only all those over 45, but also those under 45 who do not contribute to the hit formation, unattended to. The operation mode appears reasonable, as the whole media scene is tuned to appreciating top-ranking products. From a public service point of view, it could be worthwhile to turn attention also to analysing which genres, subjects and treatment forms attract which kind of viewing for which rewards.

As the quality of the viewing experience has been scarcely studied, there is no analysis of what the viewing of popular products as opposed to smaller-audience programmes means. When even the most popular programmes are viewed alone or with only a few people, the amount number of other non-present viewers has no effect on the viewing experience, although it might have social or social media benefits. Pursuing social capital does not necessarily bring pleasure but may also, like excessive viewing (Hill, 2007), bring feelings of discontent.

Cultural programmes and policies

Inside YLE's cultural programme department (documentaries, portraits, arts),[9] where the author works as an executive producer and director, the dominating focus in cultural programme policy until lately, has been on audience segments that do not express (quantitatively measurable) interest in culture. Segmentation has steered attention to programmes' style and expression, to satisfy the perceived demands of the desirable and hard-to-touch "fast movers" (Fig. 2.1), or young audiences in general. The supply, the product itself, its journalistic value and its relations to culture and to society have been of less attention. Yet the audiences do not necessarily perceive themselves as segments, or as target groups being served, but when attending a programme or service on one platform or another they tend to be interested in the actual products and their qualities. In the absence of means or conventions of conveying the interests, audience's views rarely manifest themselves, nor become an issue in programme planning and commissioning.

A recurrent discourse on cultural programmes' repertoire, instead, has related to

[9] In the latest reorganisation of content departments, the department is now Culture and Society. Popular culture, mostly music, is covered by another department, as is classical music. The Youth Programmes department also produces documentaries, some of which have cultural subjects. Some events, in addition to cultural news are covered under News and Current Affairs.

the aspiration to reach broader audiences than the rudimentary target groups. That is to say that they should not be made solely for those interested in one or more specific cultural genres, but for those who might be attracted to cultural contents where they are made attractive for them. The broader audience was estimated (Kytömäki, 2003) to be 11% of the population over 10 years of age (total 4,720,000), around 500,000, and the general public, also considered potentially seducible, of 2.6 million viewers.

In cultural programme development success in broadening audiences has been rare. When a new cultural show was commissioned to gain viewers, who are not interested in cultural programmes, the result was a disappointment. "What happened? They did *K-rappu,*[10] which is a great programme for people who are interested in cultural programmes!" lamented the then Head of Development (Uronen, 2016, 77–78). Ratings-wise, cultural programme concepts at YLE have only occasionally exceeded their targets, with viewers ranging from 5,000 to a rare 300,000, depending on content, channel and platform (Finnpanel). Ideally, for arts and cultural journalism every recipient is a cultural citizen and deserves inclusion, as Jaakkola (2015, 91) remarks. Yet, the primary concern, from the viewpoints of TV-producers is that when resources are scarce the hunt for broader or younger audiences is likely to impact negatively on the core culture audiences, if it means losing genre-specific qualities. It also undermines the original quest of luring disinclined viewers to cultural caches, if they have all but ceased to exist in the process of luring new audiences.

Jaakkola (2015) has argued that as journalistic products are produced for heterogeneous audiences of a variety of cultures and subcultures, cultural journalism should reflect and produce a picture of culture that is diverse. Therefore "cultural journalists' imperative becomes to contribute to substantial (high and popular as well as high and everyday), structural (specialized and general treatment), and temporary (cultural heritage and contemporary reflection) diversity of their content production" (Ibid., 5).

From the editorial point of view, then, if cultural journalism is to be, as Jaakkola (2015) defines it, journalism with a difference, making cultural programming by avoiding cultural substances for audiences who are presumed not to care about the substances is a motivational challenge. The core aspects of journalism that Jaakkola has proposed are knowledge, audience, power, time and ethics. This theoretical framework become rather redundant if the demand for such skills in specialised cultural journalism vanishes.

[10] *K-rappu* is the topic of an online discussion in one of the datasets analysed in this research.

Cultural productions in broadcast television, at YLE in Finland, have been news, current reportages and magazines, documentaries, portraits, discussions, interviews and specialised programmes. These productions differ from radio, in the number, diversity and thoroughness (of long series), and from print journalism, particularly in the lack of essays and critiques, and in the continuity of coverage of different fields. In Sweden, the national broadcaster emphasises their cultural duty to monitor, mirror and critically scrutinise various cultural events in Sweden and elsewhere in order to provide programming from different cultural arenas and different parts of the world (Hellman et al., 2017, 114). The programme types are similar to those on Finnish television: news, magazine programmes, cultural profiles, live event coverage, debates, and documentaries. Content-wise the difference between YLE and other Nordic broadcasters suggests that the Finnish concept of culture is limited to interesting phenomena in arts and lifestyle and that, in contrast to Sweden, broad political issues and topics are rarely addressed from the cultural angle (Ibid.).

In 2008, the then management envisioned the following three possible scenarios for the already dissatisfactory situation of YLE's cultural performance. The analysis is dated, but in the absence of similar later analysis, this chart remains valid for illustrating the policy and strategic choices facing management and editorial departments in the 2020s.

CULTURE YLE	**TOURNAMENT YLE**
- Genuine devotion to culture - Broad and diverse contents and quality productions - Emotionally strong output - YLE as the number one media - Value for licence fee - A 'loyal customer' feels at home	- Only audience numbers matter - YLE not an active agent in the field - Culture's content focus is lost - Focus on singular 'star events' - No concern for future generations or being an educator in culture - Public service requirements are not met – funding is questioned
PRESENT YLE	**GREY YLE**
- International imports increase - Culture available also on prime time - Investment in domestic culture insufficient (in arts especially) - Agency shatters (supply/producers/actors/channels/ platforms/ languages)	- Only minimum is done - The supply withers and falls apart - YLE is not appreciated by the core cultural audience - YLE does not match its size on the cultural field - New audiences are not reached - Cultural programs' image is old and grey

(YLE 2008)

Figure 2.8 YLE's cultural mission: the scenarios

The upper left side of the chart paints a picture of a media company with a sense of a cultural mission with impact, a top actor in the cultural domain serving loyal customers with devotion. The upper right corner predicts a future in which audience size and reach are crucial, events are central, content focus and the remit to sustain culture are lost. Below on the right is a vision of YLE as an old, grey and tired, disrespected actor. The situation from the then (2008) already weak present-state YLE has further weakened in that the coverage and amount of national arts and culture programming has further diminished, thus, realising some of the threats envisioned in the upper right field.

The changing factual landscape

The results of the studies that have explored audience views and expectations presented above in this chapter are in unison. Viewers of all ages, younger generations in particular, want more and better factual content from YLE. Similarly, the factual programme departments and producers want to produce more and better programming in the frame they operate within. These aspirations are contested by the strategic goals and target segmenting supporting other kinds of programming choices.

In between the policy-making administrative (macro) level and audience (micro) level, the editorial level traditionally uses their expertise and audience knowledge to realise the programming that both follows the policy guidelines and produces programmes for their particular audiences to engage with in a rewarding and meaningful manner. The producer autonomy that Mulgan (1990, 9) has classified as one of the makings of broadcast quality, becomes hard to realise. Moreover, in the diminishing factual programming production volume, the prospects of engagement in a dialogue between producers and audiences (Hill, 2017; Mulgan 1990) are becoming increasingly slim, when the interaction rarely results in actual content or programme production in a relevant form. The set of rules that accounts for the choices and thus delimitations of cultural journalism, and the principles according to which a culture department makes editorial decisions (Jaakkola, 2015, 103) cannot be followed, if the choices are limited by small volume.

Since the developments after the latest renewals of the Act on Yleisradio in 2012 and its adjustments in 2017, YLE's *structural independence*, as Soramäki defines it, from government and its officials is greater than ever (Soramäki, 2018; 2019). In his dissertation, Silvo (1988), a long-time executive of YLE, divided the power structures

reflected in programme output into three areas: media policy, programme policy and editorial policy. He considered a minimum interference in both media and programme policies leaving the public broadcaster to regulate its own action to be ideal. Now the developments from the Act have led to media policy advising public service functions, which was previously under governmental guidance, and programme policy guiding editorial policies, in the care of the executive management of the company, thus, to regulate its own action. As the strategies concerning preferred platforms and audience segments or demographic target groups have guided allocation of resources and, consequently, production volume, the leeway in less favoured production areas is hindered. Hence in some editorial departments, such as the factual ones, the specific demands of content areas and genres are not met, when the departments are often unable to make their choices based on knowledge of their respective fields and audiences, or to make meaningful short- or long-term editorial policies. In other words, during the last two decades, in factual departments of the company factual and cultural programme creation and production have become increasingly more demanding, as the diminishing resources and the given guidelines limit the possibilities for journalistic and creative consideration in the operational fields.

When this study was being developed, from 2002 on, Finland was just entering the digital age, and the challenges of the plenitude of programmes and outlets competing for viewers' time and attention were not yet in sight. In addition to domestic, often in-house drama and entertainment, YLE has, under the period examined of the last two decades, offered a wide range of educational, factual and cultural programming. The (incomplete) list is long: investigative science (*Tutkittu juttu*), education and learning (*Uutisjuttu, Mediakompassi, Ajattelen, siis olen*), environment (*Pallo hallussa*), general science (*Prisma-studio*), health (*Akuutti*), consumer issues *(Kuningaskuluttaja*), international and domestic reportages (*A-studion Atlas, Maailmannäyttämöllä, Ykkösdokumentti, Kotimaan katsaus, Silminnäkijä, Tosi tarina, Täällä pohjantähden alla, Muisti*), economics (*A-plus*), current affairs magazines with mini reportages (*Ajankohtainen kakkonen*), multicultural reportages (*Basaari*), media critique and debate (*Pressiklubi*), cultural history (*Klassinen Suomi*), interviews (*Itse asiassa kuultuna, Aamun kirja*), cultural current issues (*Valopilkku, K-Rappu, Strada*), reports (*Kuuma kesä, Kosmos*), discussions and debates *(Kirja A&Ö, Voimala, Kymmenen kirjaa rakkaudesta*), hybrid formats (*Runoraati, Taloraati, Kulttuurikuntoklinikka*), portrait series (*Tekijänä, Ammatti: elokuvaohjaaja; valokuvaaja; kirjailija*) and individual cultural documentaries or miniseries. Some of the programme titles followed each other in a

designated weekly programme slot, some were seasonal, and some supplemented the regularly scheduled factual and cultural programme repertoire.

Most of these titles and many of the factual genres they represented have ceased to exist. Of four weekly prime-time documentary slots, two (*Dokumenttiprojekti* and *Ulkolinja*) remain. Educational television programming kept diminishing until 2012 and has since disappeared altogether from broadcast television to the website, where the supply is far narrower. Traditional cultural programmes, which occupied 1.5 hours a week prime time on the flagship channel TV1 up to 2005 are now on the niche channel YLE Teema with much less in-house production (23 hours of first broadcasts in 2018) and with no consistent title-slots. International acquisitions fill much of the factual space. Nature, history and science (mostly imported) have salient positions and regularity. Magazines, made up of short documentaries and reportages of Finnish daily life or of specific issues, have been replaced with nightly current affairs studio talk show A-studio, with occasional video inserts dealing with the subject matter of the show.

On the basis of these changes it appears that the volume and role of traditional culture production and programming on television has diminished by more than half in a decade. In 2010–2012 alone the budget for traditional culture programmes decreased by 30%, and by 2019 making in-house cultural TV-programming was all but non-existent in terms of coverage and continuity. Literature and mainstream music (both classical and popular) are relatively well covered, but other art forms and cultural undercurrents appear inconsistently or not at all in the repertoire, in spite of the attestation in the justifications of YLE law (HE 29/2012). There is no single source for the volume or budgetary developments by genre. The decrease can be verified by calculating the sum of singular programme budgets and supplied minutes and comparing them to previous years, which is how these estimates and observations are made.

Numbers, drawn from a very large dataset, containing all in-house domestic first broadcast 2001–2018, show a range from the high 2002 factual programming of 2,078 hours (containing 239 hours of education and science) to the low 1,381 hours of factual programming (containing 0.36 hours of education and science) in 2018. These numbers are precise, but as classifications are not, it is possible to conclude that the observations and estimates of the fall of domestic factual programming are

accurate, even though domestic acquisitions somewhat compensate for the cuts in in-house productions.

In general, the most noteworthy change in factual programming is the scarcity of domestic reports and portraits of 'ordinary' people, including ethnic minorities. For viewers, this implies a lack of insight into citizens' everyday lives but also an irretrievable gap in the aggregation of audiovisual archives, affecting how the past is preserved through audiovisual images (Hagedoorn et Agterberg, 2016).

The developments are a result of several separate strategic actions. Increasing budgetary resources for news and current affairs while downsizing creative contents[13] initially downsized the resources for cultural and factual programming. Those assets later diminished more when a share was transferred to drama, youth and children's productions. A web-first principle has also meant broadcast second. Adding assets to the web has cut assets from broadcast and decreased factual programmes' visibility further. In accordance with the explicit aim of decreasing titles, current affairs studio productions (many of them titled A-studio) have filled prime time, making the repertoire more linear but less diverse. The subject matter does not appear in the title as earlier in the genre-specific headlines (e.g. A-plus, economy, or A-studion Atlas, international issues) The lack of content information makes it difficult to navigate by TV -schedules and on the website, which does not favour small-audience factual titles, which quickly sink out of sight.

The consequences in programme and product policies are unambiguous. Some new openings are original and specific to public service media. Ambitious reality formats (e.g., Elossa24) and short form documentaries (e.g., Docstop, Perjantai-dokkarit) find audiences on small and big screens. The company produced a multiplatform project titled *Sekasin* (*Mental, fiction/real life)* together with mental health organisations. It consisted of TV series, web and social media activities, phone helplines and chats, and turned out to be utterly pertinent for the teenage target group. Another success in terms of distinctiveness and relevance has been *Docventures*, which, in 2020, was is in its seventh season. Each season consists of six to 10 weekly documentaries, a live-TV discussion guided by two male hosts known for their intrepid travelogues, active social media presence, and real-life *Docventures* clubs, where enthusiasts watch the package together.

[13] YLE's organisation in 2018 consisted of five departments: News and Current Affairs including sports; Creative Contents; Swedish Entity; Publishing; Design and Productions.

YLE Teema has a high profile in special seasons (*Teeman elokuvafestivaali,*[14] *Naisten maaliskuu*[15]) and in the weekly thematic evening *Teemalauantai*,[16] which also contain factual titles, mostly imports. Both the festivals and the Saturday themes have loyal followers who engage actively with the concepts. The latest organisational renovation in late 2019 united culture and documentary productions into one entity (*Kulttuuri ja yhteiskunta*), with plans to create new weekly programming to prime time on the flagship channel TV1, and portrait series for the website.

The new openings are, however, unlikely to change the outlook for the factual programmes landscape if the cut resources do not grow, and the new productions mean discontinuing the few existing ones. The disappearance of whole factual genres since the turn of the century is not compensated by new ones. If the volume enabling the *quality* brought *by diversity* (Mulgan 1990) does not also increase, it does not provide the kind of ontological security (Williams, 2008) that a continuing and repetitive output would give. The ultimate threat to the future of television, predicts Mulgan (1990, 24), is that it will become just another heap of information, without foundation in the experiences and needs of everyday life.

In this study viewers reflect on their engagement and experience of some of the extinct programmes and programmes strands as well as some continuing ones (e.g., *Docventures*). This research asks what the qualities are that matter to viewers in programmes and genres, and with what qualities and expectations do viewers respond to them. On the basis of the analysis, I construct a model (Chapter 8) of the key qualities vital in the production and reception of factual programmes, which may be useful in future programme development and policy considerations.

Based on a viewpoint that enfolds people's and society's everyday life, future and past, Silvo (1988, 219) describes a dimension in understanding programme policy where a programme production perceives the members of it audience as considerate, sensitive and experiencing persons. Studying viewers' experiences with past and present programmes may provide firm ground for a future in the midst of change. The head of planning at YLE, Ari Savinen, notes that media behaviour differentiates, polarises and powderises at an incremental speed. Furthermore, he states that it is for YLE to recognise diverse realities and serve them equally (YLE 2018a, 3). This is a particularly important point, since the existence of factual (and cultural) programming in Finnish television is almost entirely dependent on YLE (Juntunen & Lagus, 2015). The changes in legislation, the changes in research practices and

[14] Theme's film festival

[15] Women's March, film festival

[16] Theme Saturday

approaches and the changes in strategic goals have resulted in significant changes in the amount and content of factual programming on YLE platforms. That change, in turn, has altered the cultural public sphere, which Jostein Griprsud describes as "central to the development of subjectivity and self-understanding, in several ways […]" (Gripsrud 2017, 183). In cultivation theory, the mental landscape created by television is seen acting as a source of socialisation and everyday information (Gerbner et al, 1994). What matters is the exposure to the total pattern rather than specific genres of programmes, claims Gerbner (Ibid., 77). Now the pattern is far noisier and more complex than it was in 1990s, but it is worth examining whether cultivation theory still has some bearing in the 2020s. This question is considered at the beginning of the next chapter.

3. Cultivation, reception studies and factual genres

The premise of this study is that the presence, amount of and exposure to factual programming can have a profound and penetrating effect on societies and individuals either directly or indirectly. The approach of this study is, therefore, two-dimensional. The previous chapters have examined the circumstances and strategies that have affected and enabled the availability or lack of factual programmes in media landscapes. Chapters 5 to 7 explore how individuals engage with and experience the factual programmes they have accessed, and how they evaluate and value those experiences. Chapter 4 presents the data sets and the analysis process. This chapter first presents George Gerbner's cultivation theory on the societal effects of 'mass media'—an ambiguous concept in a scattered media environment—and the adaptation of the theory from the point of view of factual supply, cultivation and public connection. Reception and audience research relevant to this study are described, as is the previous research on factual television and genres. Towards the end of the chapter questions of quality (e.g., Mulgan 1990; Costera Meijer 2009; Parcemain 2015) are discussed and key concepts are defined.

3.1 Media environment

Gerbner's (1919–2005) television research and development projects were ground-breaking in their time, and his thinking has much to offer if revised to the more complex media models that later evolved. The developments described in the previous chapter, resulting in the atrophy of the diversity of factual programming in the Finnish media landscape, and in the cultural sphere thus created, can in their own scale be comparable to the media environment that Gerbner describes, as presented below, and as introduced in Morgan's selection of Gerbner's work, *Against the Mainstream* (2002).

Gerbner's key sentence seems simple: "a culture cultivates the images of society" (Gerbner 1973, 188). The implications of this truism-like claim are, however, fundamental. Explicitly, the claim means that the dominant communications agencies, such as broadcasters, produce the message systems that cultivate the dominant image patterns. For Gerbner, the domination chain is the key, for it structures the public agenda of existence, priorities, values, and relationships (Ibid.).

Gerbner specifies that the use of the term cultivation for television's contribution to social realities is not just another word for effects, and not a one-way monolithic process. He argues that the interaction between the layers of different contexts is a continuous and dynamic process, as is cultivation, beginning in infancy and going on from cradle to grave (Gerbner et al., 1994, 197). Gerbner's perception of the influences of a pervasive medium (television) on the composition and structure of the symbolic environment is subtle, complex and intermingled with other influences. Its influence is linked to the concept of *cultural public sphere* (Gripsrud, 2017), which was introduced at the end of the last chapter.

Gripsrud's (2017) concept of the cultural public sphere stems from Jürgen Habermas's (2003/1989) concept of a 'literary public sphere', which precedes the political public sphere. According to Gripsrud, it "developed as a set of forums for public discourse on literature and other arts and was, contrary to the later political public sphere, also to some extent open to the participation of women and non-bourgeois parts of the population" (Ibid., 183). Habermas explains that the literary public sphere had particular functions for a rational-critical debate in the world of letters, and by communicating with itself, it attained clarity about itself (Habermas, 2003/1989, 51). For Gripsrud, the cultural public sphere—which I understand to be largely mediated—is "central to the development of subjectivity and self-understanding, in several ways. It is a space for reflection and discussion on a number of issues that are important to the formation of a self and the subject's own understanding of it—issues relating to human relations of all sorts" (2017, 183)

Similarly, audience-centred instead of media-centred ideas of the long-term and processual effects of a diverse and balanced media environment can be adapted into Aaron Antonovsky's (1979) idea of sense of coherence. Antonovsky's argument along with Gerbner's cultivation theory are essential ideas for reflection on the usage motives and impacts of factual television. Sense of coherence consists not only in the ability of having control over one's own life, but also of experiencing life as understandable and meaningful (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987b; Tuloisela-Rutanen, 2012). Antonovsky's concept was originally developed in the field of health, but I argue that it has explanatory power in the field of media reception as well.

Gerbner does not agree with the idea of determining the 'effects' of communication as immediate 'changes' for individuals, but as the dynamics of continuities. He also sees the effects as change in the reciprocal relationships between social structures, message systems and image structures (Morgan, 2002, 11–12). Gerbner (1970, 71) claims that ignoring the unique functions of mass media "means massive long-term consumption of centrally produced, mass-distributed, repetitive stories among large and heterogenous publics who never meet face to face and have little in common except the messages they share". Mass media as a concept in a post-television-monoculture era of global giants and niche thresholds is unprecise, but the claim of heterogeneous audiences who never meet and have only the messages in common also applies in the early 2020s. Furthermore, the claim raises the question of what the image of society is that the present culture cultivates, and as Levo-Henriksson (1994) points out, what are the values of society and culture, which exist in the background of (mass) media. The questions in the context of this study could be what are the values and ideals of a public broadcaster composing the entity of programme supply, and what kind of an image of a society does it cultivate, and what does it, for instance, contribute to citizens' sense of coherence or does it obstruct that sense of coherence.

In 1986 Gerbner introduced the concept of "mean world syndrome", which described the belief that the world is in reality as brutal and frightening as portrayed in (American) television violence (Morgan, 2002). The essence of his cultivation theory is, therefore, that viewers' social reality, "what they think *about* and *in common*" (Gerbner, 1970, 81), is the product of the messages they consume. In today's media environment Couldry and Hepp (2017) extend the idea of the social construction of reality' and acknowledge the fully mediated character of today's everyday reality. The fragmented nature of that reality suggests a need for clear common knowledge structures, for *ontological security* (Williams, 2008), which could be provided by a media policy that takes the need for perceivable structures into consideration. The lack of such consideration is not new, for Gerbner (1973) has argued for its necessity: "|…] there is probably no area of significant social policy, in which far-reaching decisions are made with as little reliable, systematic, cumulative, and comparative information about the actual trend and state of affairs as in the sphere of the mass production and distribution of the most broadly shared messages of our culture" (175)

To supplement the research undertaken to satisfy the interests of industry and business, Gerbner (1973) called for a *third voice.* In 1969 he initiated the Cultural Indicators Project (CIP) (Levo-Henriksson, 1994, 30) to document trends in television content and how these changes affect viewers' perceptions of the world.

The international project had a three-pronged research strategy of 1) *institutional process analysis*—formation of policies directing the flow of media messages; 2) *message system analysis*—content analysis (of drama)—characteristics of the systems of programming hold the potential lesson television cultivates; 3) *cultivation analysis*—distinctive characteristics of large groups of people acquired in the process of growing up, learning, and living in a certain culture (Gerbner, 1973, 186). The CIP has not been a widespread research strand, but the idea of the media representing how safe or unsafe life might be is seen to be valid for this study, when extended to representing how coherent and diverse the world in media is portrayed. If the presence of substantial factual programming in the cultural sphere can be considered cultivating, then, as Jaakkola (2015, 31) assesses. "the processual nature of the metaphoric derivation of *cultivation* holds relevance even nowadays". She considers that the term articulates inner coherence and unity in a number of social practices through which a society reproduces itself as a stable and self-identical whole (Ibid.).

Therefore, cultivating capacities for critical thinking and reflection are crucial in keeping democracies alive and conscientious.; in an interdependent world, economic interests draw from arts and humanities and from a culture of creative innovation, concludes Nussbaum (2010, 10–11), who adds, "most of us don't choose to live in a prosperous nation that has ceased to be democratic". Bauman (2006, 2) sees a connection between the uncertainty that faces people's prospects in a rapidly moving world where the structure and consequences of a deeply individualised society leads to undirected uncertainty and a particular kind of fear based on an ignorance of the threat and of what is to be done. Bauman's thinking resembles that of Gerbner's idea of mean world syndrome and cultivation, and the power of big platform patterns.

Gerbner's cultivation theory has been criticised for methodological and conceptual inadequacies (e.g., Hirsch, 1981), but also for the very idea of a *transportation model* of communication (e.g., Newcomb 1978) that early mass communication research promoted, and which, as I understand, Gerbner by contrast contested with his theory. Gerbner assumed a multidirectional process, an interaction between the medium and its publics, where viewers' gender or age or class make a difference in perception. For instance, (television) viewing may help define what it means to be an adolescent, female member of a given social class (Gerbner, 1973) or as this study contemplates, television programming may help mitigate the differences in viewers' resources, provided that audiences have access to public knowledge through that programming.

The elements of cultivation do not originate with television or appear out of a void, but they are a product of layers of social, personal and cultural contexts. Gerbner's stand is that the interest is in the *commonalities of association* that in turn cultivate

public conceptions, rather than in the variety of individual differences [of reception][17] (Gerbner, 1979). The mental landscape created by television is seen to be acting as a source of socialisation and everyday information (Gerbner, 1977). What matters is the exposure to the total pattern rather than specific genres of programmes (Ibid, 77; Mulgan, 1990, 20). In definitions of cultivation an individual programme is for Gerbner, a "drop in the ocean" (Morgan, 2002, 11), and the CIP aspired to illuminate the aspects that relate more to institutional policy than to personal choice or taste, and more to general trends and to configurations than to specific items, works and qualities (Gerbner, 1973, 176). Aspects of the CIP and Gerbner's work are valuable for this study, particularly in terms of factual programmes' overall supply, presence and influence in society. However, it is in the interest of this study to explore questions of quality, choice and rewards at the level of individuals' reception of particular programmes. The following section presents previous research, theories and definitions relating to these questions.

3.2. Public connection, reception and audiences

The following section examines the issues relevant to factual programmes that cultural studies in general and reception research in particular have been interested in, such as knowledge, concepts of audiences, the dynamics of viewing experiences and how people orientate and connect with the public world. In British cultural studies the initial emphasis was on the ideological influence and power of the media (O'Connor et Klaus, 2000). Parcemain (2015) defines cultural studies as "an interdisciplinary academic field that critically investigates culture as everyday lived or textual practices to explore issues of power, pleasure and pedagogy" (p.10). She sees the tradition has followed two paths: *public knowledge* and *popular culture*, where public knowledge interest analyses news and current affairs media from perspectives such as power, hegemony and public sphere, while popular culture scholars study entertainment formats like dramas and soap operas, and focus on issues such as pleasure and taste (Ibid., 14)

Schrøder (2018) has considered reception research to be the child of the broadcasting era, emerging as a sub-discipline in media and communication research in the 1980s. In his view, reception research was theoretically and methodologically cross-fertilising and bringing together research traditions from the humanities and

[17] Author's remark.

the social sciences, adding a qualitative orientation to the prevailing quantitative mainstream. For O'Connor and Klaus (2000) the characteristics of the two distinct and separate paths in reception studies were on the one hand, the *public knowledge* project that grappled with issues of ideology and the public sphere, citizenship and the informational role of broadcasting. The authors (Ibid, 4) lean on Corner (1991) who has described this strand of research as being primarily concerned with the media as an agency of public knowledge and power of definition, with a focus on news and current affairs output, in direct connection with the politics of information and the viewer as citizen (p.268). On the other hand, according to Corner, the popular culture project explored the pleasures of fictional genres and was primarily concerned with the implications for social consciousness of the media as a source of entertainment and connected with the social problematics of taste and pleasure within industrialised popular culture (Ibid.). Eventually, in later phases these rather strict approaches have been broadened.

In a study of media, public knowledge and interpretative practices, Harindranath (2009) emphasises public knowledge as a constituent of democratic participation. He claims that if public discourse in and of media are related to experience, then audiences' evaluations of what is valid knowledge become crucial (p.15). What is valid and of interest varies with time, context and life phases as the data sets of this study indicate. In 2007, Couldry, Livingstone and Markham developed the concept of *public connection* in a quest for new and methodologically rich ways of studying whether people, in fact, are oriented to a world of public issues *beyond* what is of private interest to them. The concept was to answer what the researchers saw as a fundamental question in media and communications research and in political science in general: public connection is defined as a shared orientation to a public world where matters of common concern are, or at least should be, addressed (Couldry et al. 2018, 9). The authors emphasise that media consumption (of old and new media) does not *ensure* people's possibilities for public connection and engagement in the democratic process, but it does *contribute* to them importantly (Ibid.) In this study the contribution as well as the concept of public knowledge is seen as the entity of factual genres, not only news and current affairs or subjects related to political issues. This perception has been supported, for example, by Swart and his colleagues (2016). Although the researchers observe that scholars agree that the news media play a dominant role as a party in public connection, they define *public connection* as "the various shared frames of reference that enable individuals to engage and participate in cultural, social, civic and political networks in everyday life"[18] (Ibid., 5); in Gerbner's (1973) terms, cultivation.

[18] Italics in original.

Hartley argues that the study of relations of inequality in class societies within the general areas of sensemaking and everyday life, has evolved to address the democratisation of meaning that may be characterised as an anthropology of the everyday (1999, 208). Harindranath (2009) supports Barnett (2003) in presenting media as the site of production of knowledge through which audiences are made knowable, and audiences as objects of those (knowledge producing) policies of cultivation, in Gerbnerian terms. In the anthropology of the everyday, cultivation theory, on the one hand, is concerned with the pattern that programmes, programming, channels and platforms produce, and the effect they may have on users in general. Public connection, on the other hand, is concerned with how individuals orient towards and value the pattern(s) and products. This study focuses on how a strand of those products, factual programmes—which also have the potential of forming patterns—are experienced and connected with on an individual level, and how both pleasure and public knowledge via public connection can be obtained.

The division between the 'public knowledge' and the 'popular culture' projects in reception analysis have, according to O'Connor and Klaus (2000), major implications for the way in which pleasure has come to be understood as "divorced from politics, power and ideology" (p. 2). Parcemain (2015, 255) suggests that in current media and communications studies the two aspects of media production and reception are not divergent but providing pleasure *and* enlightenment is perceived as possible and desirable.

The concept of public connection has been reshaped by some commentators as being wider than simply connections with news and current affairs public knowledge. Popular culture, for instance, fictional TV series can also contribute to public knowledge. Nærland, (2018) finds that the viewing of TV series clearly provides audiences with a link to the sphere of politics in favourable combinations of media use and habits, and with the appropriate resources, values, and dispositions. TV series also hinge on a number of factors connected to the audience's background resources (Ibid., 651), a finding supported by many popular fiction reception analysis (e.g. Ang, 1985; Geraghty, 2003; Hobson, 1982). Being able to appropriate media material, fictional series included, presumes knowledgeable citizenry, who can make use of the democratic potential of cultural production over the sociocultural variables (Harindranath 2009, 5). The knowledgeable citizenry in turn cannot be produced by TV-fiction alone. I propose that factual television can add means of countervailing what Harindranath defines as "differentiated access to specific symbolic resources and the disproportionate distribution of cultural and political knowledge" (Ibid.), by providing valid public knowledge equally to everyone through open public networks. For Mulgan (1990) the most important quality of television is its democratic, levelling character. It is universally and freely available, visible to all, regardless of wealth and

class, and embodies communitarian, egalitarian values that are not present in other areas (21). Mulgan's view clearly positions audiences as citizens with equal communication rights in defining an equally accessible television or web television platform.

Harindranath (2009) sees several issues that are pertinent to the recasting of audiences as publics and citizens, crucial to which are the concepts of public knowledge and the centrality of the access to the symbolic resources of cultural capital. The claim is relevant in the conceptual frame of this study, where I propose that equal access provision of factual television can be pivotal provider of elements of public knowledge and cultural capital. In line with Parcemain's (2015, 17) views, the communication process is in this study seen as dynamic and interactive, because viewers actively engage with televisual content and because the interaction with the content is influenced by their environments and personal circumstances—as individuals, as this study positions them. The accessibility of a television network or a platform does not in itself nullify the individual differences or equalize resources and capabilities, but I argue that diverse and self-conscious programming can mitigate individual differences in audiences' resources through conscious or informal learning. This potential actualizes mostly on broadcast television as streaming services, even when open and free, hence easily accessible, are often constructed in a way that obstructs the exposure to diverse, less popular programming that could be a rich source for learning and gaining new knowledge resources.

Historically, reception research has studied ways in which audiences make meaning out of mass media (Staiger, 2005). The options of *public* as active and engaged citizens and *audience* as passive receivers or consumers have been argued over. Lowe has claimed that the dichotomy is no longer valid (2010), Hartley (1999) has addressed the notion of public as an abstract, virtual, imaginary concept (189). Livingstone (1998) has claimed that when investigating audiences empirically, attention should also be given to the interpretation of audience responses to texts themselves, as audiences are plural in their decoding and they often disagree with textual analyses (Ibid., 4). In Livingstone's view if both texts and audiences can be analysed, so can the relation between them, and "recognising the embeddedness of viewing practices in everyday life results in local contexts of text-reader interaction becoming highly salient" (Ibid., 10). Therefore, dividing audiences into different social groups or segments is unproductive (Hartley, 1999); it overlooks the audience's capabilities as active producers of meaning.

Harindranath argues that the discrepancy between active and passive audiences, administrative and critical perspectives, texts and readers, makes it all but impossible to follow the patterns of dominance in the various concepts of audience (2009, 29).

Conceptual confusion surrounds the field (Ibid., 44), as Hartley (1999, 17) agrees, and states that there is no unity in the study. Analysts are speaking different disciplinary languages, using different methods and posing different questions about different parts of the overall phenomenon. There is no theoretical approach to the topic because the theoretical standpoints being used are so diverse. For Livingstone (1998, 14) the key earlier traditions have already been rethought, particularly the problematic effects tradition, as well as the uses and gratifications theory (used in this study). Livingstone argues that the uses and gratifications theory should be given the task of reconstructing a more social conception of audience *need* or pleasure. She suggests that "instead of asking what texts mean or what people do with texts, research should ask how texts are located and understood as part of, indeed as agents in, the practices of people's daily lives" (Ibid.). This study draws on both text and media studies (Tammi, 2016, 54) and on audience studies, in an exploration of audiences' responses to factual media texts.

This study shares Harindranath's interpretation of television as active meaning construction, and his pursuit of identifying the links between interpretation or understanding of mediated communication and the construction of everyday, *commonsense reality* (2009, 40). Harindranath (Ibid.,18) elaborates on Gadamer's (1975, 1976) conception of the *horizon of expectations*, a set of ideas viewers bring to the text, in anticipation of the meaning of it based on prior knowledge of its constituents, such as its generic features. The specificity of expectations and the ways in which a particular genre's quality responds to them or lets them down is directly connected to the pleasure gained. As Mulgan (1990, 14) has formulated it: "quality exists within an economy of demands and rewards".

3.3 Factual genres, pleasure and quality

In the above discussion of the factors constructing the dynamism of reception experience, patterns of programming and perceptions of audiences have been explored. This section presents and defines the factors of genre, pleasure and quality in relation to factual television and the engagement experiences it can offer.

Apart from Hill (2007) and a few other scholars (e.g., Harindranath, 2009; Höijer, 1989; Kormelink et al., 2015; Costera Meijer, 2010) who have worked with the reception of factual TV contents in the last few decades, the research on factual

programmes and their qualities is rather scarce. The public knowledge strand of cultural studies has concentrated on news and current affairs, and popular culture strand has focused on fiction, albeit Hill (e.g. 2007; 2017) has broadened the approach substantially with her work on popular factual.

Hill's (2007) research on reality TV and audiences has clarified audiences' remarkable genre awareness, *genre work*, where they "classify factual genres, to make them knowable and manageable, to make order out of chaos" (Hill, 2007, 2). She finds striking similarities in the way Swedish and British viewing practices reveal a pattern in the order of factual genres, with public service genres on the top and popular genres on the bottom. Factual is a value-laden term, and it means different things to different people. The majority of people consider factual television to be concerned with knowledge about the real world, and audiences evaluate the knowledge aspect of a factual programme by assessing the level of information it provides. It is perceived as *true* to life and *authentic*, as providing *facts and knowledge of the world*. Knowledge, in this context, is seen to signify specific information about the subject, events or situations and also to mean knowledge gained through experience. (Ibid.).

Genre simply enables the organising and making sense of large amounts of material by separating them into smaller and easily recognisable categories; genre helps to easily identify the 'artistic' product we want, states *The Television Genre Book* (Creeber, 2001). The third edition (2015) presents nine TV genres: drama, soap, comedy, children's television, news, documentary, reality TV, animation, and popular entertainment. Reality television was added as a section of its own to the second edition of 2008, a detail that demonstrates how genres evolve. Five subgenres appear under the documentary heading (Ibid., 2015): documentary realism, observational, educational programming, natural history and the travelogue. Under the reality headline are grouped docusoaps, reality talent shows, constructed reality and make-over shows. The constricted lists illustrate the challenge of perceiving and conceptualising what factual is. These lists can never be completed, as the definitions and genres themselves transform. However, genre operates as an important means of communication about the television text for prospective audiences, claims Turner (2001) who concludes that "to understand the characteristics, conventions and pleasures of a particular television genre is also to understand a great deal about television as a cultural form" (p. 5),

Hill's study, *Restyling Factual TV*, is concerned with understanding television's cultural form though genres in relation to each other and in relation to popular audiences (2007, 2). The focus of Hill's book is not directly aligned with the topic of this study and its concern with the less popular audiences and genres. However, her classification is a clear basis for outlining the versatility of the genre. The 11

categories chosen to represent the broadest range of programmes available on the public service and commercial channels during peak-time weekday television channels in Britain and Sweden are: news, current affairs and documentaries, investigative journalism, political programmes, consumer programmes, nature programmes, documentary series, reconstructions, lifestyle experiment programmes, lifestyle programmes, reality gameshows and popular factual (Ibid., 53–54). Hill remarks that the list is not exhaustive, and she dealt further with subgenres of documentary in a 2008 study, introduced below. The interest of this study concerns cultural programmes, also absent from the list, but present in the experiences and perceptions of the participants of the datasets of this study.

Cultural programmes can, in generic classification, be categorised as a subgenre of a larger general genre of factual television. As such, cultural programming has been even less studied than general factual programming; Hellman and his colleagues (2017a, 112) have remarked that the slim research tradition is nationally oriented, representing ethnocentric concepts of culture, and has mainly concentrated on newspapers, leaving broadcast cultural journalism with scant scholarly attention. In Finland there is also a lack of audience studies that would describe and explore motives and impact in relation to culture and arts (Virolainen, 2015, 102).[19] Cultural journalism as texts and professional practices is better covered, for example, in *Cultural Journalism in the Nordic Countries*, edited by Nørgaard Kristensen and Riegert (2017), and in *The Contested Autonomy of Arts and Journalism* by Jaakkola (2015). Jaakkola defines the journalistic mediation of arts to be public reception that is carried out for the audience's sake. She cites Kristensen and From (2011) in defining how the transformative emphasis of cultural journalism is in building a resource by creating value to cultural products and producers, the agents in the artistic and cultural sphere, to enhance their cultural competence in political, commercial, cultural and social dimensions (Jaakkola 2015, 91).

The canvas of this study concerning the relevance of cultural programming as a solid constituent of factual programming as public knowledge, is highlighted in Harindranath's (2009) concept of culture as a web of significance (47). The idea of a web or a structure of significance emphasises audiences' sensemaking practices, as opposed to preoccupations with ideology (Ibid., 44, 47), and resonates with the idea of a multidirectional process (Gebner, 1973).

Some aspects of cultural programmes and genres are examined above in Chapter 2. That previous discussion implies that cultural programmes as demarcated in this research tend to be specialised, niche, small-audience and also low-budget

[19] Linko (1998) is an exception to this lack of audience studies.

productions. When their quality and uses are explored in the data analysis, they nonetheless seem in some respects to be able to add value and pleasure to the everyday or to be more significant than their niche share would suggest. One factor contributing to the quality of the experience may be what Mulgan (1990, 14) has described as the requirement for the best television: a high investment of time and attention from the viewer in turn provides a higher level of reward.

In an analysis of genre, scheduling and ratings for documentary, Hill (2008) chose categories that represented the broadest range available to viewers: specialist documentaries in history or science, and natural history documentaries; general documentaries, either as a strand or stand-alone documentaries on a variety of topics; observational documentaries, as singles or as series, including docusoaps; investigative documentaries, which share common ground with current affairs; reconstruction programmes at times containing home-video footage or the dramatic reconstruction of recent events (Ibid., 219). The sheer variety of genres demands different modes of engagement from viewers. In genre work, audiences as well as programme makers draw on production traditions, referring to previous practices of constructing a documentary similar or different to an earlier one (Hill 2007). She has noticed that a key factor in the impact of popular factual programming on documentary is the use of different stylistic techniques within all documentaries, and that an awareness of stylistic changes within documentary and factual programming is something that all viewers share, regardless of their age or socio-economic status (2008, 220). Many of the reality genres are popular, particularly those that Hill (Ibid.) has termed formatted factual entertainment—a trend a viewer in her study named *shockumentaries*. The largest audiences and biggest budgets in factual genres have however been those of a natural history documentary series, David Attenborough's *Planet Earth* (Ibid., 218). The long-standing popularity of the natural history documentary makes it an all-round entertainer. Viewers may watch different types of programming, from formatted entertainment to award-winning features, but as Hill (Ibid.) underlines, they share a general understanding of trends in television.

Pleasure

Although popular genres have been shown to enhance public connection (e.g., Swart et al, 2016) not all forms of entertainment act in this way, since many people's practices of media consumption are oriented away from public issues (Couldry et al., 2007). For instance, celebrity culture is an important point of social connection in media use, but it is not linked in citizens' own accounts to issues of public concern. Couldry and his colleagues "found no evidence […] of a route into broad public

engagement, quite the contrary" (Ibid., 2). Informing and educating audiences or entertaining them are indeed often perceived as distinct and separate, based on the assumption that some media texts and genres promote knowledge while others provide enjoyment (Parcemain, 2015, 7). For Parcemain, *entertainment enjoyment* is, however, not synonymous with hedonistic pleasure or fun as it can also include emotions that are commonly perceived as negative or unpleasant, for although entertainment "usually manifests itself through pleasurable responses such as exhilaration and laughter, feelings of curiosity, excitement, thrill and relief", viewers do enjoy feelings of sadness, melancholy and tenderness as well (Ibid.). Respectively, Couldry and his colleagues (2018, 11) suggest "interesting counterfactuals to the received wisdom on public engagement, that its presence is not just a normative good but associated with a positive life experience, its lack associated with resentment and ennui". In other words, engagement with public knowledge contributes to the quality of life, which is an observation that some participants in this study have also made.

Quality of life has more easily been associated with pleasure and enjoyment of media use than with informed citizenship (Costera Meijer, 2012, 15), whereas factual television has been easily associated with *boredom* and *duty* (Hill, 2007). As a challenge to that attitude, Bourdieu describes a *new morality of pleasure* as a duty, where pleasure is not only permitted, but demanded (1984, 367). Bourdieu combined the fear of not getting enough pleasure with the search for self-expression and identity, issues that are not in focus in the studies referred to here. Instead, in defining the *concept of pleasure*, O'Connor and Klaus (2010) lean on Mercer, (1986, 50), who discusses entertainment, comedy, laughter and enjoyment as the 'accomplices' of pleasure, referring to concepts of leisure, motivation, enthusiasm, gratification and desire. As a multi-faceted social and cultural phenomenon, different forms of pleasure have been identified as explaining audience activity and commitment, and O'Connor and Klaus name genre and genre variations, class, gender, (sub-)cultural identity and generation as instrumental in determining the kind and the variety of pleasures experienced in the act of viewing (Ibid.,370). The division between the public knowledge and the popular culture projects in reception analysis, they argue, has major implications for the way in which pleasure has come to be understood as divorced from politics, power and ideology. They refer to Fiske (1987) who further examined the relationship between ideology and pleasure and advanced an alternative model of *active audiences*, so that in Fiske's approach the reader becomes truly a writer: the pleasure of viewing TV, then, is a *pleasure of making meaning.*

For Tammi (2016, 23) meaning making is active interpretation of texts or other types of contents. It refers to thoughts associated with media use, emotional engagement and worthwhileness. Hermes (1995, 7) defines *making meaningful* implying that, for the viewer, there is a process of making sense of a text by

recognising, comprehending and assigning it associative signification, as well as giving it a place in one's knowledge and view of the world. This level of meaning production consists not only of cognitive thought processes, but also of a reader's imaginative response (Ibid), looking through instead of looking at (Corner, 2017; Hill, 2018, 230). Corner (2017, 1) considers that engagement with media products often leads to forms of engagement beyond them. This is an idea that is supported in the data analysis of this study, as well as by Mulgan, who has argued that television is at its best when it touches the subconscious structures and archetypes with which people cope with life (1990, 24).

O'Connor and Klaus claim that in the process of sensemaking, pleasure directs cognitive processes and determines attention and selective awareness (2000,11). They argue that pleasure is a prerequisite for understanding as without selective attention no cognition would be possible. As pleasure links into the public sphere, taste links into cultural citizenship (Ibid.). Taste, Kuipers argues (2006, 360), must be understood "not only as a pattern of preferences and aversion, but as a form of cultural knowledge". Both studies have established conditions for understanding and enjoying. O'Connor and Klaus (2000) have termed this selective awareness, whereas Kuipers (2006) has referred to cultural knowledge. Knowledge, then, precedes appreciation, and it is necessary to be aware of something in order to like, hate or be indifferent to it: "Television actually seems to be very capable of producing shows and programmes that mean very little to much of its audience, and of producing forms of popular culture not open to many interpretations or readings" (Ibid., 376). Supporting Kuipers' argument, Mulgan (1990) considered that television is, on the whole, a relatively low involvement medium where it does not matter much which programmes are actually on or what is being said (Ibid., 28). However, when it does matter, expectations can be high, and I propose that these expectations are, almost without exceptions, related to quality.

Quality

The political economy tradition prevalent inside media institutions and industry is, according to Boyd-Barrett (2010, 19), weak in the areas of content and audience reception, and in content analysis yields only to fairly crude categorisations. These assertions are based on older quantitative methodologies that were barely able to encompass such subtleties as narrative structure, generic convention and characterisation and which proceed on the assumption that quantitative repetition was equivalent to semiotic and/or affective significance. (Ibid.). In other words, the tradition supports a view where recurrent high ratings are the proof of purport. If a

programme is popular, the quality is presumed right, and there is little use for further analysis (Mulgan, 1990). Regardless, as Boyd-Barrett (Ibid.) says: "it is evident to even a casual observer that there is great variance even within mainstream media products". Furthermore, for heavy users of most popular programmes there is more to quality than popularity, as Hill (2007) confirms, in examining the genre work audiences are involved with in a constantly evolving television landscape. In a similar vein, Williams (2008, 39) proposes that approaches to quality TV must be genre-specific in order to differentiate between types of programmes.

The overall scarcity and the short span of academic and industry analyses of programme quality issues may also be related to the research methods in use. These research methods are often surveys, which tend to produce what is already limited to the foreseen. Costera Meijer (2010), points out the potential of qualitative analysis: "only when respondents were invited to describe their *experience* of quality instead of their *opinion* of that, did the *impac*t of quality media enter the picture" (p.196).[20] To Costera Meijer, emphasising the experience of quality turns out to have far more explanatory potential in relation to viewing behaviour than canvassing people's opinions about it. For quality, Ang (1991) claims, is lived in viewers and is in relation to how television is situated in their everyday life"(p. 59). Ang's approach reflects the intent of the research questions of this study, discussed in Chapter 1.

Livingstone (1999a) states that what audiences gain from specific media genres derives from what they consider valuable. Quality is a crucial factor in the significance and effect of media products—bearing in mind that quality relates to several aspects of the product, and that quality is assessed in relation both to the product and the assessor, the text and the reader, the encoder and the decoder. Qualities are solid properties of the product, and an unanimity can be found in defining a quality feature, albeit the value and meaning assessments can differ. Although Williams (2008), in following Bourdieu's logic, states that "television programmes are not 'good' in and of themselves, but their worth is produced by those who produce the meaning of the shows" (p. 34). I argue, however, that producers also produce the actual products as best they can. Their value is co-produced in reception with viewers, inasmuch as television critics, producers, academics and fans collectively construct the quality discourses that establish a programme as *good television* (Kuipers, 2006). In reception of the product the qualities brought by producers as well as the qualities brought by audiences form a dynamic process, elements of which are explored and presented in the course of this study.

In studying the ways in which citizens discursively construct YLE as a public institution Mäntymäki (2006) findstwo conceptions of quality: absolute and relative.

[20] Italics in original text.

In absolute quality discourse, quality is defined as certain qualities, which are quality always and everywhere (p. 147). Traditional public service discourse is absolute, but the negative quality discourse denying the quality of a media can also be defined as absolute. The criteria of absolute quality are meaningfulness, reasonability and educationalism. The programmes with those qualities are perceived to be provided (in Finland) solely by YLE, and the association is so strong that Mäntymäki termed it as public-service or YLE quality (Ibid., 148).

In relative quality, the relationship varies between genres, and it can address different kinds of features in different programmes. It also differs from the absolute quality concept in that no genre or content is presumed to be self-evidently of quality. Mäntymäki (2006, 171, footnote) relies on Lillrank (1998) in presenting an industrial quality thinking concept, which strays from the absolute quality idea and defines quality as the relationship between the product and producer and customer and consumer.

The components of quality or qualities in television programmes, in relation to the nature of reception, have not been a target of rigorous research (Geraghty, 2003). In the reception studies tradition, the focus has been on sociological aspects, and much work on audiences has underestimated the aesthetic value-judgements being made in television viewing, in favour of more macro accounts of television in its social contexts (Ibid., 35; Mäntymäki, 2006, 154). In television studies, as well as in media or cultural studies, making judgements about aesthetics has proven to be a difficult task. Geraghty (2003), for instance, has noted in commenting on *Television Studies: The Key Concepts* (Casey et al., 2002, 268) that it "has no entry for 'quality 'but an extensive one for 'taste', though conclusions about taste and identity do not necessarily help us think how television is best evaluated aesthetically". The delimiting of the realm of aesthetics out of analysis when emphasising social context in explaining textual pleasures (Couldry et Hepp, 2017, 87), means that important audience concerns are left unacknowledged, making the academic contribution to public debate more difficult (Geraghty, 2003, 28–29). Furthermore, influences from the new school of cultural studies have rendered quality to be a non-issue (Mulgan 1990, 5–6). In his eyes this rendering is just another legitimation of the old hierarchies of judgement and taste as social markers asserting superiority and difference. But that perception it can only go so far, Mulgan claims, as the critique of quality runs the risk of avoiding responsibility and vacating an area of important cultural argument (Ibid.).

Kuipers (2006) agrees with the argument above in that the classical distinction between highbrow and lowbrow culture does not seem to make much sense when applied to television (p. 359). She suggests that all of these configurations may now

be made obsolete and be replaced by a fragmentation model of many different taste cultures without one clear mainstream (Ibid, 362). Geraghty (2003) remarks that middlebrow programmes (as many factual programmes can be classified), which characterise a lot of television, have not been dealt with in media studies, which has been more at ease with quiz shows and soaps. Programmes that aspire to a different kind of cultural value, such as classic series, or art or history programmes are in ideological readings judged on a high and low binary (Ibid., 368). In this study the questions of high and low do not surface in the analysis of the data, as the programmes that the participants deal with in their texts are chosen by themselves and not classified in relation to appreciations or tastes (as social markers) by the author or judged by the participants of the datasets through the attributes in question.

Although Mulgan (1990) acknowledges that it is impossible to arrive at any final definition of quality, he finds it important to try to establish criteria for judging television (p. 5). In *The Question of Quality*, Mulgan (1990) lists seven types of quality that constitute good television: (1) producer quality and professionalism; (2) consumer quality and the market; (3) quality and the medium: television's aesthetic; (4) television as ritual and communication; (5) television and the person; (6) the television ecology and (7) quality as diversity.

While all the listed quality types are entangled in the issues dealt with in this study, some of them have already been touched upon in this and previous chapters. To conclude this section, I highlight the most pertinent quality types, which are further discussed in the analysis chapters. Consumer quality represents, for Mulgan, programmes that provide viewers with new knowledge, and which in his view have consequently more value than the most sumptuously produced drama. Hence special measures are needed so that consumer welfare can be maximised (Ibid.,14). I understand the maximising of consumer welfare to mean other kinds of programme policy and distribution measures than those maximising sizes of segmented audiences. Broadcasting's value as ritual and communion, in Mulgan's thinking, derives not only from the information and pleasure that it (and other media) give to people, but also from its ability to offer a sense of membership, and means of access to the kinds of relationships with other people that are hard to forge in a less rooted society. Its value derives from its ability to function as a uniting, bridging medium that ignores the barriers of class, race and gender (Ibid., 20). Mulgan's vision may appear idealistic, but the participants of this study confirm the kind of expectations of belonging that he describes.

Finally, quality as diversity for Mulgan implies a view in which a broadcasting system of high quality must offer a broad range of programmes (1990, 26). Most of

the pleasures of television for a viewer come from moving between mass audience programmes and minority ones; “diversity a rarely a good thing unless it is the right kind of diversity” (Ibid., 27). Diversity is built into the remit of public service as a range of different programme types (Ibid.) and, as this study also argues, without a diverse selection of factual programmes the rather universal conception of public service is hard to fulfil.

4. Data and methods

The meanings through which reality opens to individuals are not gained at birth. Their source is the community in which individuals grow up and are brought up (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 34; Laine, 2010, 30). Individuals are products of the cultures they are a part of, and (intersubjective) meanings are produced, altered and mediated within those cultures. Even the most individual interpretations of experiences are not fundamentally individual or unique (Alasuutari, 1999b, 72), and, therefore, the study of the experience of each individual also reveals something universal (Laine, 2010, 30). When dealing with knowledge obtained through experience, the goal is not to generalise but to understand. In this research, I search for emerging themes and lived individual experiences that indicate that certain types of television content enable noteworthy TV encounters for the individual informants. Nevertheless, the outcome can contribute to a broader understanding of the reception of similar factual output, and an understanding of the ways in which media patterns and structures cultivate (Gerbner, 1973) societies.

The ontological focus of this study is on the *individual, private and cognitive aspects of the experiences of watching television.* Instead of dealing with popular shows or news-watching rituals, this study considers selective and often deliberate acts of exposure to and involvement with *small-audience factual* contents. This focus constrains the approach and methods used. Couldry and Hepp (2017) promote a *phenomenology* of the social world, which, they believe, remains accessible to interpretation and understanding by human actors, as it is in part a structure built up through those interpretations and understandings. Phenomenology goes further in "taking seriously the world as it appears for interpretation to particular *situated* social actors, from *their* point of view within wider relations of interdependence" (Ibid., 5).[21] The data used in this study do not reveal the sociocultural situations of the participants adequately enough for analysis, but they contribute to the understanding of the meaning-making processes to which Parcemain (2015) refers in her study on the pedagogy of television. Unlike discourse analysis, which Mäntymäki (2006)

[21] Italics in original text.

utilised to review a sample of the same diary data as those used in this study, and who discarded individual participants in favour of structures and predispositions of argumentation, the phenomenological-hermeneutic angle enables an approach that targets individual processes.

4.1 Phenomenology and media ethnography

The phenomenological-hermeneutic approach is more a knowledge interest than a theoretical frame. Of the three knowledge-constitutive interests proposed by Habermas (1987)—the technical, the practical and the emancipatory—this approach corresponds to the practical, interpretive one, which secures and expands the possibilities for mutual and self-understanding in the conduct of life. Phenomenology is the study of experience, the relationship a human being has with his or her lived reality, in a philosophical frame studying something as it appears to consciousness (Oinonen, 2005). Hermeneutics can be described as a theory of understanding and interpretation (Laine, 2010, 29–31). Instead of one grand theory, which in phenomenological research can restrict the apprehension of the experience of others (Ibid., 35), one can use several smaller theories during research (Kvale, 1996). In the interpretation phase, which advances in a hermeneutic circle, in which understanding increases understanding (Ibid.), theories or results of earlier studies are brought in to advance, to support or, in some instances, to contradict the analysis.

The phenomenological frame calls for openness in the choice of methods and data. The chosen method should not restrict or precondition the data or the production of it to force the studied phenomenon into existence by posing too precise questions too early in the process; instead, the method should benefit from unobtrusive means of understanding the meaning-making processes in which audiences engage (D'Heer et Verdegem, 2015). On the other hand, the process cannot be random but must confine itself to the studied issue—in this case, the experience of the reception of factual programmes—and to data that potentially offer insights into such experiences. To study a phenomenon that potentially exists in everyday life, ethnography uses methods subtle enough not to interfere in behaviour or enforce actions that would not take place without the study. Studying an existing phenomenon may, however, force the participants to endow it with a spoken or written form, which only exists, as in the case of interviews, for research purposes (Kvale, 1996).

Media ethnography offers a "way of seeing that gets close to those studied as a way of understanding what their experiences and activities *mean to them"* (Emerson et al., 1995, 12, cited in Bird 2003). In reception studies, the emergence of *audience ethnography* (Alasuutari, 1999b) or *media ethnography* (Bird, 2003) is part of a new wave in cultural audience studies, in which research interest has shifted from analysing media content and effects of audiences' properties, such as gender or social status, to studying reception in its everyday context and the processes taking place there. In this study, media ethnography and phenomenological-hermeneutic theory are expected to form a mindset for exploring and understanding the types of experiences the observed members of audiences have with factual television.

To untangle the main research questions—*What type of engagement with factual programming do viewers have in everyday life? What type of expectations do viewers have for factual television and with what type of qualities in programming are they met? What type of public connection, knowledge and pleasure does factual television offer*?—by merely asking a group of chosen interviewees might answer the posed questions but fail, in unforeseen ways, to cover the issue or to surface latent experiences or thoughts. Re-evoking or even remembering past experiences or producing thoughts of a constructed viewing event in the limits of an interview situation is likely to produce the answers the interviewer is presumed to expect. For the interviewer to formulate sufficiently open questions that reveal the interviewees' relationship with factual television for the purposes of this study is a demanding task. When phenomenology examines the relationship a person has with his or her own reality, and the hermeneutic approach focuses on interpreting the expressions he or she uses to describe those experiences (Laine, 2010, 29–31), it is vital that the expressions are as independently chosen as possible.

An interview, when eliciting an authentic account of the interviewees' individual experiences (Laine, 2010, 37), is a valid phenomenological research method for acquiring information, as long as it is open and discursive rather than restricted in its theme. Bird criticises traditional encoding-decoding audience studies for being limited in their ability to evoke the broader cultural context, "with their usual use of focused, directed questions to artificially constructed groups" (2003, 8). In this study the cultural contexts emerge, in addition to the media environment they develop in, from the datasets in multiple ways due to their nature and breadth.

One problem attached to media ethnography is the influence the researcher's presence and persona has on the situation (Fiske, 1993, 212), which occurs in participant-observant situations, used for instance in David Morley's *Family Television* (1986). It might not have been possible to study the informants in the quiet of their homes without de facto distorting the situation, not only because—as the data

presented in Chapter 5 indicate—factual viewing is quite private, but also because 44% of households in Finland (2018) are single-person households.[22] Therefore, for representativeness, almost half the informants should live alone, and a proper participant-observers' role in assessing the media usage of a single person's household (compared with a family situation) could be intrusive and distort the experiences and the expressions describing them.

Furthermore, in media ethnography, it is unnecessary to resort to participant observation as one must (in traditional ethnography) when studying a culture completely foreign to the researcher (Bird, 2003, 12). When studying a cultural phenomenon that the researcher is a part of, the "fieldwork" started years before (Alasuutari, 1999a). This is true in the case of this study, in the sense that, in addition to being a member of a factual audience myself, I have pursued an understanding of audience needs and complacency from the professional position of a producer creating and transmitting media products to viewers. This work triggered an interest in how people receive and deal with the products from their personal points of view. I discuss the issue of researcher position in Section 4.3 of this chapter.

4.2 The data

The empirical data span two decades dating from the beginning of this century, from the last moments of television monoculture to the contemporary near 2020s in which broadcast television is fighting for its primacy and web television has yet to discover where it stands. To capture the experiences, perceptions and assessments of members of factual audiences, I eventually chose to have the ethnographic encounter happen through first-person written texts produced by audience members. As I require a more varied focus and coverage than a single ethnographic process of a single group or issue allowed, I opted for data source triangulation to develop a comprehensive understanding of factual viewing and reception. I had access to two large sets of data—one consisting of diaries (2001) and one consisting of online focus group interviews (2006–2007). These sources both offer holistic perspectives on the subject of interest in this study and specific views on the key issues related to the factual experiences in question. These datasets are far larger than I could have collected on my own and provide a rich view of the media landscapes people lived in and benefitted from. As the research process grew longer and as the media landscape

[22] https://www.stat.fi/til/asas/2018/asas_2018_2019-05-14_tie_001_fi.html

kept evolving, becoming increasingly polymorphic, I complemented the two sets with one more set of texts from a social media commentary thread on a documentary project (2015, 2018, 2019) to gain perspective on how factual programmes may be seen and received in the multitude of media supply. The difference in the media environments represented in the datasets and their factual diversity is significant, but I propose that the essence of factual programming, the qualities of the genre and the qualities of its reception remain the same. In the forthcoming analysis, I examine whether this assumption is confirmed in the data.

The three datasets examined in this research span 18 years, from 2001 to 2019. The first set of data consists of 565 of the 751 diaries gathered for the One-day media diary call in Finland in 2001 by YLE Audience Research, the Finnish Literary Society and Jyväskylä University (FSD1306, 2002). The second set of data consists of three sets of transcripts of three-day online moderated net discussions (Bulletin Board Focus Group [BBFG]) commissioned by YLE and conducted by Taloustutkimus Oy in 2006–2007 on three separate occasions in Finland. The third dataset (2015, 2018, 2019) consists of discussions on a Facebook site for *Docventures* followers. *Docventures* is a multimedia project by an independent company (GimmeYaVallet Productions), commissioned by YLE and launched in 2013, featuring a 6- to 12-week season of weekly documentaries, a talk show connected to them, radio shows and live clubs around Finland. Next, I introduce these three datasets in more detail and discuss their validity and reliability.

Media diaries

The One-day media dataset is derived from a volunteer sample of Finns who responded to the requests for media diaries (FSD1306a). The project was initiated and executed quickly, moving from the idea to the chosen day in just five weeks. One cause for the haste was that Christmas was approaching, and the other reason was the recent limited launch of digital channels in Finland in August, allowing a partial void of the influence of the digital age (Kytömäki et al., 2003). Erja Ruohomaa notes (2002) that one inspiration behind the call was an earlier collection *A Finnish Day* (Suomalainen päivä; Nirkko, 2001), and another was the British Mass Observation project, which was used in *One Day in the Life of Television* (Day-Lewis, 1989) and *Consuming Television: Television and its Audiences* (Mullan, 1997). Earlier calls for media diaries in Finland had been much smaller. Writings about magazines were collected in 1982 (from 162 participants); about libraries and books in 1984 (208

participants); and about the computer tradition in 1995 (132 participants; Ruohomaa, 2002).

Requests for media diaries were broadcast on YLE's television and radio channels and text television and published in 30 Finnish newspapers. The call was open and addressed all Finns, but it was not published on commercial TV or radio stations, and thus, may have missed people who follow only commercial media. For this study, the statistical representativeness is not relevant, since the focus is not on how many Finns have noteworthy experiences with factual television (although that would be interesting as well) but on how those exposed to and involved with factual content experience it. The wording of the call steered the writers into fruitful domains from the point of view of my research interests:

> *We invite you to write about one of your days in the media, more precisely about Thursday November 29, 2011. What role do newspapers, radio, television, books, the Internet and other media have in the everyday life of Finns on the verge of the digital age? Is media an everyday companion, a source of pleasure, does it evoke thoughts, convey information, create background noise or all of that? How much media fits in a day? Does media raise discussion at home or in the office, how is it commented, how is it talked about in the family? Is media first and foremost very 'private' experiences with one's "own" book, channel, programme or magazine, or joint experiences with family or with a good friend, or both? Are different topics pursued in different media or the same topics from all? Does media on an ordinary day provide new information, does it invoke reflection, does it give food for thought, joy, compassion, wellbeing, irritation, fear, or does the media flood pass by without leaving a trace? How can media surprise and can it?* (FSD1306b)

Participants in the One-day media diary had 24 days to reply, until 23 December 2001. Of the 1,526 respondents, 751 qualified for the electronic archives. Most (629) of the excluded diaries were written as school assignments for Finnish language, the remainder were too short (100) or were otherwise disqualified (24) as unfit for research purposes. Of the 751 writers, 524 were over 45 years of age, 234 were over 65, 130 were between 31 and 44 years old, and 77 were under 30. The final count included 539 females and 222 males. The relative over-representation of women may stem from their greater ability to express their thoughts and feelings in writing compared with men, who relate to writing (letters) in a more business-like fashion, as Bird found in a study on the tabloid press (Bird, 2003, 11). The demographics of the writers differed from those of the population at large, mostly in relation to age and in their interest in literature, which, against expectations, had no relation to their level of education (Ruohomaa, 2002, 9).

In addition to an anthology of selected diaries (Kytömäki et al., 2003), samples of the One-day media diaries have been used in earlier academic work: 134 diaries (of participants aged 31 to 44) were utilised by Eeva Mäntymäki (2006) in her study of the discursive construction of YLE. Raimo Niemelä (2006) scrutinised the writers over 61 years of age in his study on the information behaviour of older adults. Pertti Alasuutari's (2006) study on everyday media use and public service broadcasting is based on 22 qualitative interviews conducted with informants chosen from the diary dataset. For the present study, I examined the first 565 of the 751 diaries in their entirety, without preconception or theoretical limits. The first 565 were examined very carefully, with a docket on each, and the remaining diaries were examined with less precision unless they produced something new for the set. After screening them, I chose 143 diaries for a close qualitative content analysis based on their substance and content in relation to the research questions.

The wording of the call for the diaries posed many of the questions that drive this study, while covering most of the issues reception studies have been interested in throughout the history of the field. These questions were: "*Is media an everyday companion, a source of pleasure, does it evoke thoughts, convey information, create background noise or all of that? Does media raise discussion at home or in the office, how is it commented on, how is it talked about in the family?"* These are topics that have already been quite well covered in reception literature (e.g. Ang, 1985, 1991; Gauntlet and Hill, 1999; Gitlin, 1987; Hall, 1973; Hartley, 1999; Livingstone, 1998, 1999a,b; Kytömäki, 1999; Ridell et al., 2006). In the context of factual content, however, the reception studies are fewer (Harindranath, 2009; Hill, 2007, Höijer, 1988, 1999)

The diaries can answer, directly or indirectly, my main research question: *What type of everyday engagement with factual programming do viewers have?* In the diary call, the question addressing the reception experience was less open and more detailed: "*Does media on an ordinary day provide new information, does it invoke reflection, does it give food for thought, joy, compassion, wellbeing, irritation, fear, or does the media flood pass by without leaving a trace?*" By being that detailed and by offering opposing alternatives, the call created a frame of thought, leaving the informant with multiple choices, and a freedom of judgement, adding to the reliability of the responses.

The question in the call that referred to the subjectivity of media experiences was: *"Is media first and foremost very 'private' experiences with one's "own" book, channel, programme or magazine, or joint experiences with family or with a good friend, or both?"* Publications using these data (e.g. Alasuutari, 2006; Mäntymäki, 2006; Niemelä, 2006) have not addressed this issue. My ethnographic approach to the

diaries raises some intriguing notions (see Chapter 5) concerning the intimacy of media experiences, which a more defined frame or focus could have missed. Few writers commented on the privacy issue directly, but their standing or experience can be inferred from the texts.

Focus group discussions

The BBFGs addressed participants' relationships with cultural and science programmes and with the science and culture channel YLE Teema. The BBFG participants were chosen from a net-panel of 15,000 Finns based on their existing interest in the subject matters (science and cultural programmes, and an arts and science channel). The comments and responses were focused and often explicit in relation to the questions posed. In the course of the process, the discussions were further fuelled by interactions with other participants or input from the supervisors of the panels.

The transcripts of the online focus group discussions concern 1) a mainstream cultural programme, *K-rappu*, on the largest national channel, YLE TV1, September 2006 (BBFG, 2006a); 2) science programmes on YLE channels, November 2006 (BBFG, 2006b); and 3) the arts and science channel YLE Teema, March 2007 (BBFG, 2007).

For the purposes of coding, I treated the three transcripts in the analysis as one, referring to them as BBFG 2006–07 when appropriate. Their subject matters represent different angles on the same factual field. Additionally, they all reflect on the exposures to and experiences of small-audience factual content.

Each of the three groups was recruited from a random sample of 300–800 people from a panel of 15,000 Finns. Based on their interest in the subject matter and in participating in the online interview, 77 people were selected to participate in groups of 24 to 28 in the three BBFG interviews. In the science group, the majority of participants (62%) were male, and 57% were below 35 years of age. In the discussion on the cultural programme *K-rappu*, respondents were older, with 67% being between 45 and 60 years of age; 63% were female. Of the YLE Teema group, half were 35–50 years of age, and more were male than female (Kytömäki, 2007c). Demographically, the groups were relatively heterogenous. The cultural programme group stood out in that its participants were culturally active either professionally or in an amateur capacity (Kytömäki, 2006, 2007a/b/c). Only the first names of the

participants—from which gender could be deduced—and their ages were available. Later in the discussions, the participants could choose, if they wished, to reveal their occupations and regions.

A BBFG is a technique developed by a Canadian company, Itracks (www.itracks.com), and used mostly for marketing surveys. The method differs from the more commonly used online discussions in that writers cannot see other people's comments before they have written their own and because the moderator or interviewer (here a Taloustutkimus Oy researcher) moderates more than in open discussion sites, although less than in a live focus group situation. The commissioners, in this case YLE's researchers and the executives of the studied subjects, monitored the discussions and fed comments to the moderator but could not otherwise participate in the discussion (Ibid.). In terms of qualitative methods, a BBFG is technically a semi-structured interview (Kvale, 1996, 27), focusing on certain themes and including predetermined questions. In the BBFG method, participants visit the site several times a day at their convenience. The site has new questions daily, and the prior discussions remain visible and can be commented upon. The questions posed graduate from general issues related to the theme on the first day to more detailed and in-depth topics, sometimes repeated, over the next two days. The tone of the discussions is mostly moderate, analytic and devoted—at times, even enthusiastic—discussion rather than provocative or confrontational debate.

The focus group data were produced for use as feedback by channel executives and producers. Apart from a summary by YLE's audience researcher Juha Kytömäki, the data have not been further analysed.

Docventures

The *Docventures* dataset is a sample of commentaries chosen from an open Facebook community site for fans of television documentary series. The multimedia concept was created in 2013 and was in its 3rd consecutive season, at the time of the first sample of Facebook discussion threads in 2015. The page had approximately 60,000 followers (107,000 in the spring of 2019). The primary period I observed was October 2015, at which time the thread consisted of discussions of both the content and quality of the documentaries broadcasted (and also affiliated discussions) and of comments on the meaning of the programme concept to its followers. To follow up and gain an overview of possible developments on the site, I took two smaller samples of discussion threads in 2018 and 2019.

Docventures discussions on the Facebook site differ in many ways from the other two datasets. The volume of the combined samples is relatively small (89 comments) compared to the other two datasets. The comments are public, and participants could see each other's postings in real time. The comments on meaning are often prompted by the producers asking the fanbase whether *Docventures* should continue for another season. As texts, the commentaries are of the same nature as the earlier ones, so I read and treated them in the same way as the other two datasets, using qualitative content analysis, with the ambition of understanding and interpreting the thoughts that the participants aspired to express.

The nature of the discussions is different from the other first-person texts used in this study in that the parlance and somewhat accentuated attitude colours the wording and symbols of the comments. The collection would offer grounds, for instance, for field theory–based or discourse analysis approaches. As the data supplemented the other two datasets, the approach was also the same: media ethnography, or, in this form, online ethnography. According to Bowler (2010, 1270), online ethnography "refers to a number of related online research methods that adapt to the study of the communities and cultures created through computer-mediated social interaction". Of the modifications, such as cyberethnography, social media ethnography, digital ethnography, ethnography in virtual space, internet ethnography, and netnography, I found the latter, *netnography* (Kozinets, 2010), to be the most descriptive for the chosen approach. Mathieu and his colleagues (2016), in their meta-study on methodological challenges in online audience research, have remarked that the methodology of online ethnography "has witnessed a constant development since the advent of the internet (see Hine, 2015, 2000)—to the point where an argument could be made that the hermeneutical knowledge interest has taken an ethnographic turn in online audience research".

The challenges in studying online communities and individual agents operating on site are specific, as in productive or performative uses of online media (Ibid.), or in that online contexts are places where cultures are formed and practised (Ibid.). Mathieu et al. have concluded (2016, 298) that as digital spaces become less exotic and more mundane, a part of everyday life, the distinction between online and offline lessens. Therefore, the datasets collected, like the *Docventures* one here, whether the researcher is purely observational or a specialised type of lurker (Kozinets, 2010) are, in terms of this study's interests, as valid and as relevant as the media diary of the BBFG collections.

4.3 Questions of validity and reliability

Few of the writers in the One-day media diary collection responded directly to the questions posed in the cover call for the diaries, although the wording of the call is likely to have influenced the responses. However, the writing seems to have carried the writers away; the accounts become personal, and they deal with the issues, such as the sociality of the TV experience, indirectly. Most diaries deal with the writers' relationship with and attitudes to television, but they less often elaborate on specific programmes.

Diaries are often written for imaginary others (Norkola, 1995, 15). However, in these texts, the private character that could be anticipated of a diary escapes the reader. They are written in the present tense as diaries usually are, but the allowed delivery time may have added some polish to the texts. At best they are more essays or letters to others, means of becoming memorable (Kytömäki et al., 2003). The texts are written from a personal point of view, bringing up issues the writer considers important, instead of issues a survey or an interview situation would emphasise. Bird found that diaries, like letters, offer intimacy without the potential threat of a personal encounter (2003): "They are a particular kind of communicative act, which allows the writer to determine the terms of language, the length of time the communication takes and so on. In that sense they offer an ethnographic way of seeing in which the participant is invited to define the terms of encounter" (p. 12).

The BBFG 2006–07 online group discussions offer specific and explicit views on factual television experiences. Regarding reliability, the BBFG method seems as valid or relevant as any other form of (semi-structured) focus group interview. The BBFG focus group online discussions are semi-structured thematic interviews that differ from traditional live discussions in several substantial aspects. The participants could not see each other's responses to questions or new topics before they wrote their own, with the result that the initial reaction was not influenced by peers. Potential misinterpretations occurring in transcribing were avoided because the discussions materialised in writing in the first place. The web technology extended the duration—instead of hours, the moderated discussions lasted for days—enabling insights and revelations that developed over time. On the other hand, the possibility of delay in responding to the stimuli may have affected the comments, although not necessarily making them less truthful:

> *This has been fun! Occasionally I come to complete the responses, because after answering one gets to think about things, and getting new ideas. In a traditional survey you don't get to add anything.* (F89)

With both datasets, the length of the response process—three weeks for the media diaries and the three days for the BBFG 2006–07—stimulated thinking processes and brought forth latent thoughts that otherwise might not have surfaced, as the participant above remarks.

There is no guarantee that these written statements would not differ from material acquired by other research methods or in different circumstances, in that there would be no temptation to please the researcher or send a message to future readers, but the effort writing requires may restrain those impulses. The styles and the content are more suggestive of inspiration than manipulation:

> *An interesting discussion…it broadened and gave new views. You do have to think about things that you might not come to reflect upon. At least not so precisely.* (F123)

In the BBFG group discussions, the questions, on occasion, were precise and steered the discussion. The media diaries dealt with the same world of meaning; the participants spontaneously described their own experiences regarding the subject matter and produced what seem to be sincere accounts of their experiences. Perhaps there were invented experiences and a need for self-assertion but, in the analysis, I presumed the writers' abilities and will to describe their own experiences truthfully, even when the expressions seem borrowed. Both the diaries and the group discussions were quite demanding. The participants were asked to construct a description of their own media usage. It is, therefore, likely that they were motivated to find the most accurate or exact expressions of their views rather than (merely) offering an impression. The motive was not just to be understood; it was also to understand oneself, as noted by Kvale: "The subjects not only answer questions prepared by an expert, but themselves in a dialogue formulate their own conceptions of their lived world" (1996, 11). This dynamic is also fundamental in phenomenological-hermeneutic research, as Tuomi and Sarajärvi remark. The mission is to make visible and conscious routines that have faded into self-evidence, or what is experienced but not yet consciously thought about (2009, 35).

The *Docventures* commentaries relate to a limited season of specific documentaries and talk shows. In the BBFG discussions, specific culture and science programmes and the niche TV channel elicited experiences dealing explicitly with that content and generated references to other representatives of those genres or their qualities. The One-day media diaries operated in conjunction with the programming on the day in question, and the chosen sample diaries with the writers' relations with those programmes.

Researcher's predisposition and research process

On the day of the diary call, 29 November 2001, the supply of factual programmes on the two commercial channels was non-existent, except for a few factual entertainment shows, while the two YLE channels had an average amount of factual output. On YLE TV1, the late prime time was devoted to *Cultural Thursday*, a programming concept developed by this author, including a cultural magazine, *Valopilkku*, produced by me. During the later treatment and analysis of the diary data, I was quite conscious of the way my own involvement might influence the reading of the passages dealing with those programmes. To avoid any distortion, I strove to classify the whole dataset inclusively and neutrally to ensure that there was no bias favouring the comments on the programmes in question. The original datasets are available, and the quotes can be traced should there be a need to verify the choices made.

The *One day media* call for diaries was initiated in the fall of 2001; the outcome was published the following year, after having entered doctoral studies had presented the initial research outline. At that point, the substantial data that the diary collection presented, with a covering note that tangled many of the research interests expressed in my outline seemed advantageous. Finding the right approach and classification system for the content analysis of such a mass of data was time-consuming. Having worked on approach and classifications, it was obvious that more precise data related to factual programming in particular would be necessary. I contemplated interviewing chosen diary writers who had expressed views on factual television, but as the BBFG focus groups emerged in 2007 with more specific treatment of precisely the kinds of factual content this study took an interest in, and in a form that would submit to a similar kind analysis to that used for the diaries, they seemed to offer a more fruitful solution. After a slow and lengthy analysis phase, the research project was interrupted by major life events from 2012 to 2015. When the work with the study resumed it was supplemented with the *Docventures* data and further updated with recent research.

Both practical and ethical issues have contributed to the pace and efficiency of the advancement of the project. Apart from two-three years of full-time research in the early stages of the process, most of the research has been carried out part-time while

working at YLE in the production of (mostly) cultural programmes. My academic background in communication, media and journalism studies (University of Helsinki; Columbia University) has supported my professional practice, and the distance from the academic community as a part-time researcher can be challenging for a fluent command of contemporary research and discourse. The demands of academic writing and journalistic expression stand, at times, at opposite ends of a communicative spectrum, making the perpetual leap from one approach and viewpoint to the other often quite wide.

Developments in the media environment have pushed the boundaries of professional identities in editorial departments, forcing production and programme planning to adapt to changing platforms, generic trends, audience expectations and strategic guidelines. As a director and a producer, I have worked since 1980 with independent (theatrical) documentaries and at YLE for radio, television and web with current affairs, drama, entertainment, factual entertainment, reality television, live rock concerts, documentaries and other programme formats on classical music, opera, art, dance, theatre, photography, film, literature, cultural history and cultural politics.[24] Dealing with cultural issues requires knowing about cultural content and cultural audiences to create programming that caters to the needs and expectations of users, creating interaction through content. The concept of Cultural Thursday (1995–2003) served this purpose on a structural level, as it was on air every Thursday year-round, acting, reacting and interacting within several cultural fields. By the end of the 1990s the company had adopted a programme commissioning system, which transferred the editorial decision making and programme planning power to the executive level, away from the journalistic and content production departments, disabling meaningful interaction from that level. This turn prompted the questions driving this study. I wanted to find out whether it would be possible to understand and conceptualise audience expectations for factual and cultural programming and audience assessments of the worth of this programming. The goal was to find conceptual and pragmatic tools in order to be able to conduct an analytical discussion, weighing various arguments on programme policies, considering what is produced and how it is published and distributed.

Later on, the need for arguments that support declining factual and cultural programming would become even more crucial, but perhaps more difficult to present, as the editorial levels have not been included in strategic or programme policy discussions. Silvo (1988), in explaining the concept of *understanding programme policy,* underlines that evaluating audiences as experiencing and feeling persons is

[24] YLE's programme archive (2020) lists 148 program titels directed and 991 programme titles produced by the author. See also IMDB, Elonet.

based on a viewpoint that enfolds people's and society's everyday life, the present and the future (p. 219). When the editorial and journalistic levels are excluded from decisive stages of planning, as described in Chapter 2, their expertise and understanding has limited opportunity to affect how audiences are understood and what content they will be offered.

My role as a participant was not only a reason for caution; it also enabled a predisposition in understanding what is involved in the context, as the act of creating programmes or programme entities stems from the desire to produce meaningful experiences. At least there is a shared understanding of or interest in the subject matter, and, though experiences are unique and subjective, conceptions often are not (Laine, 2010, 38). In both the media diaries and the BBFG datasets, the research assignments and their original calls contained similar interests and drew from the intersubjective interests of inquiry between the researchers or commissioners of the datasets and the participants—and, later, in the analysis phase, between the texts and this analyser.

Saukko (2003) argues that dialogical shifting in cultural studies between the scholar Self and the perspective of the Others being studied occurs when "[…] new ethnographic research appropriates the phenomenological 'method' of analysing other people's experiences by reflecting on how they are similar to, and different from, our own" (p. 57). As such, the datasets are "researcher-absent" (the researcher of this study) ethnographic texts (Bird, 2003) where the set assignment or the interviewers' questions form a part of the data. The supervisors' questions here were not analysed or coded as were the texts produced by the participants. Hence, I was able to observe the way people bring up and describe their relation to television or to specific programmes or genres without myself distorting their views or calling for opinions or statements they otherwise would not have uttered (One day media diaries), or would not have come to express without the stimuli of the mediator or the group (BBFG 2006-07) or without the stimuli of the *Docventures* Facebook comment threads.

Features of the data and the analysis process

The descriptions of the uses and experiences of factual television in the datasets could imply a willingness to share views on aspects of (for example) quality, or a need to send a message, or both. One motivation for the expressions regarding quality might be conscious communication to the anticipated readers of the writing, when the

informants know that their texts are likely to be read by the commissioning media professionals at the very least. Viewers are experts regarding their own experiences and deserve to be heard. Their points of view matter, for they are the ones who consume and deal with the supply. However, qualitative aspects do not enter the policy discussions, even though direct and live responses via social media applications to broadcasts are so welcome.

In qualitative research, the size of the datasets does not correlate with the reliability or the generalisability of the outcome. In this study, the datasets were large, which can be distorting and certainly introduces redundancies (Alastalo et al., 1997, 7). Normally, only a portion of a large dataset is chosen for analysis, such as, in this case, the *Docventures* dataset; the rest is used as material for reflection. In this study, the examined phenomenon was not altogether evident; therefore, an overview of everyday media usage, conditions and contexts was required. With the chosen ethnographic approach, I initially reviewed the datasets openly as a whole to obtain an overview of the contexts and environments in which the experiences were gained. I then worked my way to a narrower view, to relevant samples for this study, as described below.

The research roughly followed the phases of the phenomenological-hermeneutic process presented by Laine (2010, 44):

1. The critical reflection of researcher's predisposition throughout the research process
2. Acquiring the data
3. Reading the data; forming a perception of *gestalt*
4. Description – bringing out and transmitting the relevant core in relation to research questions in natural language
5. Analysis – organising the findings into conceptual entities, presenting them in the researcher's own idiom, and examining sentences and sequences that require interpretation
6. Synthesis – composing an overview of the conceptual entities and evaluating the relationships between them
7. Evaluating practical implementations and propositions for further research

The first phase, *the critical reflection of the researcher's predisposition throughout the research process,* guided the trajectory of this study in terms of considering my dual role as a researcher and a television producer. My involvement in the field of factual television has provided me with insights and inspiration into the process, as well as steered its course. The ethical obstacles regarding reliability and validity are addressed above. The rationalisation of the research tools and methods and the

endeavour to produce a transparent and valid study were designed to augment relevance.

The next step, *acquiring the data*, is described earlier in this chapter. The third step, *reading the data, forming a perception of gestalt,* was a lengthy task. The first dataset was sizeable. The One-day media diaries (FSD 1306a, 2002) consist of approximately 4,500 pages. The actual page count in the diary dataset is indefinite; the dataset is electronic and only the total bit size of the 751 archived diaries is known: 4.06 Mb. The letters in the collection that were submitted on paper are also archived on paper, 2,899 numbered pages; the remaining 1,600 were submitted by email. The shortest messages are a few sentences, and the longest are several pages.

Initially, I proceeded with very open coding, including every remark concerning any programming or media or cognitive cultural action in general, and ended up with over 200 codes,[25] some of which did not relate to the research questions or were not expected to be of later use but might bring background and detail to the lived realities of the writers: examples include, *newspaper hoarder; reads domestic literature; watches an entertainment show although hates it; watches an entertainment show because hates it; the essence of unemployment; part-time student; divorced; Emmerdale, Classic FM*; *comment on programme policy; comment on own media consumption; cognition and emotion*; and so on. I then chose citations associated with the 75 codes most relevant to this study and printed them for closer scrutiny and classification. With the three BBFG transcripts (2006a, 2006b, 2007), the same process was followed, except that I went through all the transcripts (350 pages) with Atlas-ti and then reduced the codes to the most relevant ones.

All the chosen codes from all the datasets were then combined, and the quotations that the codes referred to were reclassified into nine background categories—dealing with social aspects, quality, cognitive elements and meaning—that had emerged from reading the data and had become significant in the course of the process. These categories consisted of 246 quotations, which were translated into English and eventually used to marshal the conclusive analysis. This analysis is presented in the following chapters.

The treatment for *Docventures* Facebook followers' comments was simpler, as the source data were less broad. The guidelines for the chosen sample of 78 quotations had already been formed in the treatment and classification of the earlier, larger datasets.

The original One-day media texts were identified with an ID-code that consisted of the running number, gender, age or estimated age, and region of residence. For example, 137N197520 would be respondent number 137, female, born in 1975, 26 years at the time of the call (2001), living in Lapland (20). I kept the ID-codes until the phase in which the citations were translated and then re-coded them with a traceable running number to make the diary and focus group comments commensurate. The BBFG data contained only identifiable (first) name and age. Occupations and regions could be traced through the citations from the original texts. I issued all the citations from the diaries and focus groups with an ID-code that revealed the data source—D for diaries and F for focus group—sex and age: for example, D253—male 22; F54—female 48. The running number in both citation types leads through the Finnish language citation collections to the original diaries and focus group transcripts. The *Docventures* examples had a separate running number and were identified as DV; for example, DV15. The Facebook identity markers were not reliable enough to make any suppositions about demographic properties such as age or gender, so there are none.

Although a substantial and long-term task, the process also offered a rich backdrop of information about everyday life around Finland, a life in which television viewing (from available screens) often plays a central part. The media diaries offered the context of how lives are lived, while the artificial groups in BBFG 2006–07 were more focused. Reading the diary texts openly, without, at first, looking directly for answers to the questions posed or data corresponding to a pre-set theory, added to the understanding of what was said. Some of the *Docventures* texts were emblematic in their habitus, in their "belief in the game" (Bourdieu, 1984), and portrayed the discursive and performative means with which the programme producers had built their following. At the same time, the fanbase and the way fans participate and share their experiences substantiated how the yield of factual television has maintained its vitality.

The multiplicity of the datasets also added to the quality of the results. This multiplicity reflects the capacity of new ethnography to allow polyvocality and multiple perspectives and to enable many voices to enrich research as lived experiences and realities (Saukko, 2003, 63–64). Saukko (Ibid.) states that studying experiences in plural rather than in the singular—via many speakers or writers instead of one—provides a fairer account of the phenomenon being studied and helps overcome the temptation of thinking of a particular lived experience as the 'truth'. Contrasting several potentially contradictory lived realities helps to realise that one reality is not the whole truth and to do justice to the specificity of each experience.

An open approach also allowed the studied data to expose itself. The chosen approach, which followed the premises of media and audience ethnography while also leaning on phenomenology, supported the authenticity of what was studied and enabled insights into experiences of factual television. In this research, the goal is to find patterns and concepts through which to understand the qualities and meanings of experiences with factual television. In the process of this research, the diaries hinted and guided the need for more focused data on factual television, which were found in the BBFG discussions. Later, the *Docventures* comment threads added yet another dimension of engagement with factual programming. The codes, themes and eventual categories in the analysis resulted from the constant juxtaposing of the datasets and prior and current research in the field of television (and web) audiences.

The process in this research of following the first steps recommended by Laine (2010), *acquiring the data* and then *reading the data, forming a perception of gestalt,* are detailed above. The fourth facet, *description – bringing out and transmitting the relevant core in natural language,* was, in this case, a simple task, as the data were already in natural language and because the analysis, classification method and software already produced a relevant core: the citations.

The fifth step, *analysis – organising the findings into conceptual entities, presenting them in the researcher's own idiom, and examining sentences and sequences that require interpretation*, forms the basis of the following chapters, in which I first examine what role(s) factual television plays in the everyday life of those for whom it is a factor.

5. FACTUAL TELEVISION IN THE EVERYDAY

The first part of this study dealt with the variety of media environments that enable the supply and availability of factual programming and considered a range of influences at play in the field of factual television internationally, nationally and at company level. Defining those circumstances provides the context for an empirical analysis of audience engagement and perceptions, since viewers can only access and watch what is available, and the features of the supply determine the quality of the experiences gained in engaging with them. The overall patterns of media offering contribute to viewers' conception of social reality and cultivate the conceptions of the realities of their own lives (Gerbner, 1979). Viewers comprehend the nature of and relate consciously to the institutions and platforms they connect with (Alasuutari, 1999; D'Heer et Verdegen, 2014). According to Scannell (1996), public service media as the primary source for factual programming should be understood as a practical public connection between institutions, producers, programmes and audiences. Scannell claims that, in a phenomenological approach, the purpose of research is not the transmission of information but interpreting the interaction between media contents and audiences (Oinonen, 2005). What is required is an attempt to understand rather than explain; understanding the everyday is an essentially humanistic enterprise (Couldry et Hepp, 2017, 54).

The following chapters analyse audience interactions with and through factual contents as the interactions emerge in the datasets. The notions, commentaries and evaluations of a variety of engagements do not form an organic pattern or natural structure as a whole but, in the following sections, the units of analysis and their treatment are organised into three broad categories: first, engagement as everyday practice (the present chapter); second, the perceptions of the qualities of factual programmes (chapter 6); and third, the qualities and rewards of the experiences of engagement(chapter 7). Relating to Scannell's (1996) call for understanding the function of programmes regarding their meaning to viewers, this study assesses the role, value and use of factual television for viewers. This assessment is grounded in the understanding, gained also in professional practice, that factual programmes have a particular meaning to viewers (e.g. Hill, 2007, 2017; Höijer, 1989; Harindranath, 2009). The following sections explore the functions of factual viewing in participants' lived experiences and the pleasures that factual television can offer. The first section

offers an overview on how media in general and factual television in particular are situated in participants' daily lives. The next part describes the forms of engagement and the social dimensions of interacting with programs of value to participants. The last section addresses the pleasures viewers gain in public connection with a media sphere that offers sufficiently cultivating patterns for factual audiences. These issues are further elaborated in the Chapters 6 and 7 from the angles presented the second and third research questions.

5.1 Engaging with factual television

'Watching' television is a neutral and somewhat passive term; thus, it is suitable for describing an action or an actor, the viewer, as a subject with or without other attributes. What happens in a viewing situation between the viewer and the programme has, in recent media research, been conceptualised as engagement (e.g. Corner, 2017; Hill et Steemers 2017; Keinonen et al., 2018; Tammi, 2016). In media industry and marketing research, the interest and methods in measuring engagement are often quantitative (Tammi, 2016), such as time spent with content or clicks on social media, or in advertisements as recall, attitude or behavioural effects (Keinonen, 2018). In addition to the concept of engagement as quantitative data, the sense of 'engagement' as a subjective and slippery term deliberates debates on its meaning as signifying personal and collective relations with policy and social issues, cultural artefacts and events (Hill et Steemers, 2017, 1).

Engagement is a concept that captures different interests, feelings and involvement, from love to hate and indifference (Ibid., 3). A similar concept is 'emotional attachment', which refers to a strong affective connection to a specific media title. Specific concepts of readership contract, worthwhileness and general fandom contain elements comparable to viewers engagement with media (Tammi, 2016, 45). Hence, engagement is much more than the public's interest in something, as it captures the subjective positions of other people, producers creating content to engage with, professionals promoting content for mass and niche audiences, and fans, producers and users experiencing media content (Hill, 2017, 1).

Corner (2017) regards engagement as a second phase, from a more passive state of exposure, a decision to *attend* to something through communicational means; looking, listening and processing its meanings. Corner, like Tammi (2016), emphasises the significance or meaningfulness of the encounter. If the engagement

proves positive, it could be called *involvement*, at which stage, a deeper cognitive interaction between the product and subject occurs as "we would enter the work or the work would enter us" (Corner, 2017, 2). This action is more or less a conscious decision of attention, which James formulates as "my experience is what I agree to attend to" (James, 1890, cited in Krugman et Hartley, 1969/2001, 186). Mulgan (1990) similarly stresses that the best of television often demands a high investment of time and attention from the viewer in exchange for a high level of reward (p.14). The concept of engagement helps to address *people's individual relationships to different media titles* and the variety of perceptual and material experiences that a user has during and about media use (Tammi, 2016, 42). The active viewer, in engaging attentively with contents that provide cognitive interaction, can gain significant and meaningful experiences. Not all viewing is significant, and the attention paid, or the experience gained, is not solely dependent on the product engaged with. The viewers' own context and situation frames their engagement, as noted by the participants:

> Sometimes you crave cold, analytical facts and information, sometimes a humane point of view. F298 – Female, 25

> The emotional state produced by the subject matter depends on the experiences of the viewer watching the programme, and the positive or negative emotions those experiences create. F156 – Female, 58

What is noteworthy in these comments is how the participants situate themselves—their media use is not defined by media but by themselves. This notion falls into the reoccurring discussion of what media *is* for individuals or for humankind in general. From the view point of a media-studies continuum, the focus is no longer on what media does to us, nor what we do with media, to replicate the paradigmatic dichotomy (Jensen & Rosengren, 2008, 329) but on how we *live with* media—or as Deuze (2011, 138) expresses it, how we live *in* media. Deuze argues that media is not an external agent affecting us but penetrates all aspects of contemporary life, up to the point that it becomes invisible and disappears from consciousness as it becomes a playground for a search for meaning and belonging. In this regard, media structures lived experience, in which people assemble their own personal information space and live a *media life* (Ibid., 138–139). However, from the viewpoint of those participating in the production of the datasets in this study, this is not the case. On the contrary, the participants are aware and possessive of their media usage and its place in *their* life, as the participants above establish. In Silverstone's (1994) thinking people's lives and daily routines have both an influence on media use and are influenced by media.

Corner (2017) shares the idea that living *within* the media makes more sense than living *with* the media, as the shift of preposition recognises their complex penetration of our thinking and feelings, but he states that this does not mean that the media *control* us. In line with Gerbner's (1973, 1979) idea of exposure to the overall pattern of the media, the older notions of their *effects* should, instead, be exchanged for a subtler sense of their permeation of the everyday:

> I got to go through many feelings and sensations during the programme, from anxiety via identification to the urge to help. DV27 – Female

One aspect of the viewers' awareness of their own place in the equation is their sense of *audiencehood,* as when they comment on their own programme choices:

> Portraits and documentaries, history documentaries, science documentaries, inventions, biosciences. Hey, am I really this boring as a TV watcher? 357 – Male, 32

Tammi (2016) believes that audiencehood, as in the above example, is not limited to the specific moment when people use and decode media texts, but that it is in the context of the temporal, spatial and social aspects of people's lives. Audiences seem to have what Höijer (1989, 189) calls a metacognition on audiencehood, partly in the form of collective ideals and partly in the form of ideas about one's own and others' audiencehood. The above categorisation by the participant to place himself amongst boring TV watchers implies there is a more exciting watcher who is interested in less 'boring' genres.

Self-aware notions of the participants' own audiencehood can produce sophisticated illustrations of the meaning of media, irrespective of age and gender, as is evident in the following comments from a 24-year-old man and a 61-year-old woman (in 2001

> In the modern age, the media does not merely reflect reality, but it creates it as well. The post-modern has produced a situation where humanity as a whole is us in a sense, there are no others, there is only us encountering problems and possibilities. D316 – Male, 24

> A dynamic fragmentary day. I have travelled on several continents. Distant events have forced their way here, into me, here and now [....] I clearly live in the modern. I am torn. It would be my job to create that thing that would unite me again in this flood of information. D268 – Female, 61

The above comments can be read as displays of social roles, even though they are presented in diaries with no obvious or instant social gain. These observations of the surrounding mediascape are expressions of thoughts by the participants underlining the desire to think for oneself, which emerges as one of the key motives for factual viewing. This motive is discussed further later in this chapter.

Rather than living in media and being absorbed by it, the participants *absorb* everyday media events *into* their lives. The participants do not seem to perceive themselves as living in the events and experiences media produces but situate media supply into the life they live and their personal space. As Alasuutari (1999a,4) suggests, the participants go beyond media content. The information the participants choose to consume forms a part of their experience. In the following comments, it is not the media that dictates the agenda, but the person interacting with what is available:

> The choices between television, radio, newspapers, magazines, literature, etc. naturally depend on the day, the selection of programmes and the time available. The fact that Thursday happens to be a research day puts a heavy emphasis on culture programmes in at least my chosen media use. Nonetheless, this 'Culture Thursday' is very important to me, and a special weekday in the good sense. D79 – Male, 4

> Thank you! Wednesday has got a new meaning [with *Docventures*]. DV24

Independent of the popularity or specialty of a programme provided, programme choices are personal and belong to the viewer, not to the media, although programmes may be considered the property of the latter. The autonomy of the viewer is an overall observation from the datasets. A single quotation does not validate this notion, but through an aggregate of those cited in the chapters to come, the same observation can be made. Even if the media's place in life is often implicit, media consumption is partially habitual, even ritualistic, but it is often also deliberately chosen. "Our culture", Bird (2003, 3) notes, "may be media saturated, but as individuals we are not, or at least not in any predictable, uniform way". The rapid changes in media consumption may necessitate the reconsideration of the notion, although the outcome is still unpredictable. This finding concurs with Deuze's (2011) claims concerning the search for meaning and belonging and can be attached to the usage of factual television.

Reflections on routine and meaningful media encounters do not easily translate into language. Language poses constraints, and there can be unconscious or even subconscious reactions (to media) that are incommunicable (Höijer, 1999, 3). Communicating one's interpretations is a situation of recall since human consciousness is intimately related to memories. As Höijer (1990) states, even the communication that takes place within us—our internal language, the thought process—takes place in

language in the form of inner speech. In speaking of their experiences, as Alasuutari (2006, 364) remarks, people come to talk of their daily life in a way that evaluates things and sets them into an order defined by cultural codes, as these examples suggest:

> In my own circle of friends, I'm a bit of a lone wolf in terms of my so-called awareness. At least, I believe and I think that I am aware of making a difference, and of the general course of life. D127 – Male, 24

> I'm the most boring TV viewer in the world. I mainly gaze at the news and documentaries… The tabloid-like 4D scandals, too. Rarely do I have the energy to watch a film from beginning to end. Some fluff I watch regularly: Desperate Housewives, X-File repeats, Dr Phil, South Park… Maybe they serve as a break from the endless documentaries. Soaps with laugh tracks don't interest me. F72 – Female, 32

Culturally charged expressions may be the particular codes people possess to assess their experiences. In these texts, the participants occasionally recognise that they are speaking with expressions reflecting outer expectations. In the quotations, above, feelings or preferences are 'so-called' or 'boring'.

The quotes are sometimes mundane in their descriptions of everyday television experiences and, at other times, highly complex and analytical in their interpretation and understanding of factual television encounters. Some of the diary writers merely describe their media usage matter-of-factly, without opinions, evaluations or contexts. However, many participants relate what they watch to their personal life or the world outside. Media, and especially radio and television, are consituents of their daily life, as the public connection complementing it:

> I often come home from work as late as half past nine, and a good programme can be relaxing then. […] Today I will need to make a choice: on One there's a literary programme, with none other than Aulikki Oksanen, whose recent book I just read. At the same time, *Hardtalk*, one of my favourite programmes is on BBC World, and then there's *Radioateljee*. *Radioateljee*, too, is one of my favourites, and one of those I don't tire speaking of and advertising to friends, but few seem to take notice of it. D107 – Female, 57

> Thursday night is my TV night: *Valopilkku* and the cultural programme after it are a must. Maybe even *Kotikatu*. Now, however, I'm off into the grey thickness of late November. D85 – Female, 51

> How crazy that this is the last episode! What shall we now do on Wednesdays? DV52

Television programmes are an integral part of people's lived worlds; they own them, in the sense that once experienced, the programs are no longer merely a part of the broadcaster's or platform's offering but something viewers have personally experienced and which have become a component of their cultural property. Therefore, all interferences with viewers' accustomed programme schedules, genres or contents are intrusions into their personal lives and their sense of ontological security (see Chapter 7) and should be communicated with the acknowledgement of their meaning to viewers. Despite the boundless availability of online content for viewers to decide when and where they want to watch, *Docventures*'s TV season and its fixed weekly slot captures a place in users' schedules: '*What shall we now do on Wednesdays*?' The fondness the writers express for their favourite programmes and the joy television brings is evident in the comments. Factual programmes feature strongly in creating those expressions, as discussed in the final section of this chapter. The next section examines the sociability of television viewing and how this notion relates to the accounted experiences with factual programming.

5.2 Social dimensions of watching factual programmes

The scarcity of instant viewer feedback to the broadcaster regarding factual watching, except in the case of major changes in schedules or repertoire, distorts the perception of what these programmes mean to people, especially in the case of small-audience programmes. Private watching is often buried beneath the publicity and buzz generated by big entertainment and sports events. Factual television reviews are rare, and public debates absent. Popular entertainment programmes' attention is strengthened by social media, creating a feeling or illusion of something remarkable happening. Success in social media is considered inside the industry to signal the success of a media event or a product. In a television monoculture, most media-usage habits were formed and performed in social circumstances (Blumler et al., 1985). Blumler and his colleagues (1985) claim that, "little media consumption is utterly private and unobserved" (Ibid., 58). The sociality of watching has also been the focus in many cultural and reception studies (e.g., Morley, 1986; Lull, 1990; Harindranath, 2009), and in media ethnography and netnography, especially those drawing on

participatory observation (e.g., Morley, 1986; Mathieu et al., 2016). However, the social dimensions of television reception may have been overemphasised simply because they are easily observable. Unlike interaction, subjective and inner reactions may not be revealed in a participatory social situation.

Keinonen and her colleagues (2018) underline the context of place or digital space of consumption in creating social activity (p.63). The presence of others and the sense of potential of being part of a community can mould an experience and produce a reaction or action, but the experience to be shared comes first. As a *Docventures* fan remarks in a tweet, "Social media events often take place elsewhere than in social media. And then they are of course recounted in social media" (A.I. 23 Apr. 2015). Höijer (1989) emphasises that inner action precedes interaction. Boyd-Barrett (2010, 13) corroborates that an individual has sources of pleasure that are solely theirs, and they possess an inner life that is independent of being a part of a group or a culture. Reflecting on his own *Family Television* study (1986), Morley (1992, 36) claims that although factors such as class, ethnicity and gender define the cultural codes a person uses, individual personal responses to a situation also matter (see also Gauntlett & Hill, 1999, 3; Kytömäki & Savinen, 1993, 16).

Being a member of a large audience or part of a big television (or online) event is commonly perceived as sociable and communal, and thus, the antithesis of being lonely, even though for an individual member of the audience this might not be the case. The sense (or illusion) of communality is valued, and as communality is not a feature attached to factual programmes with their small audiences, they tend not to gain the same noteworthiness and appreciation from publishers as popular programmes that generate social media activity gain. Nor do the viewers mention looking primarily for communality from factual watching. Nevertheless, factual programmes can create a sense of belonging, perhaps not to peer audiences, but to the contents or beyond. Active engagement signifies much more than the public's interest in something; it captures the subjective positions of other people (Hill et Steemers, 2017, 1); it means public connection providing participation in cultural, social, civic and political networks in everyday life, in Gerbner's (1973) terms, cultivation.

The sociability of a viewing event is not always a choice. The number of single households in Western cities has been steadily growing for the past 50 years and is, at 44%, particularly high in Finland (Tilastokeskus, 2018). Accordingly, programme choices are solely the viewers' own. In the BFFG focus groups, the moderators asked what provokes choices and how much other people influence what is watched. In the following responses, the individuality and privacy of viewing experiences are underlined:

> Friends or acquaintances might tell you about some new series that you then try for yourself, but their opinions do not have a very strong influence on my TV watching. F143 – Male, 23

> I should add that I might certainly take a look at a programme that someone I know has recommended, but usually I only go by my own taste. F144 – Female, 43

> I'm quite picky about what I watch, but if, for example, my sister, whose taste is quite similar to mine, praises something, I will watch it out of curiosity. F147 – Female, 38

A YLE in-house presentation (YLE, 2016) revealed that recommendations to over half of a 15 to 29-year-old target group were very (14%) or quite important (42%). This importance declined rapidly with older-aged segments, who experience less peer pressure. Recommendations do not, however, equal sharing personal experiences or elaborating thoughts on received factual programmes, as the examples above emphasise. Miller (2008), supported in D'Heer and Verdegen (2015) suggests that communication via social media, the online media culture, is rather for performativity or impression management, without informational or dialogic intents. While it is unlikely that social media create a need for discussions on factual programmes if the need does not exist to begin with, the Docventures social media sites (contributing to the data of this study) occasionally contradict the claim in their moments of dialogue.

Data and research on the extent to which factual programmes are discussed on social media sites are yet to appear. However, regarding the overall phenomenon, Couldry and his colleagues (2018) point out that social media do not displace the influences of traditional media in public engagement, and the starting points in online engagement have their roots in face-to-face relationships (p. 7).

Nevertheless, whether the interaction is physical or virtual, it calls for an experience and a thought process to communicate about. If there is no interaction available, even when it would be sought afterwards, the experiences are gathered anyway, indicating that they have value independent of the social situation.

> I have had profound discussions with myself. When I was still working, we talked a lot about topical issues. You can't get a critical discussion going alone, and those friends with whom you can talk like that don't come by often. D187 – Female, 64

> There isn't any real use in a pensioner's level of knowledge increasing, of course, as it is not too often that you can discuss the things you have read

> with anyone, and it is not as if there are people interested in listening. D235 – Female, 69

To contradict the above discussion on the independence and solitude of factual, *Docventures*, a concept built on the reactions from and interaction with viewers, is an exception that exploits and rewards the uses of social networks in enhancing viewing experiences:

> Television is full of documentaries, but *Docventures* frames and aggregates them well. It is nicer to watch when one is not left alone with big or confusing issues but can share the experience with you [with the hosts and followers]. DV35

Popularity seems to define one-fourth of all television viewing (Figure 1.1.), which suggests that social motives may also be behind the favourites of smaller audiences, as well as personal and private motives. Some viewing choices seem grounded in the perceived importance and relevance of programmes to the viewers as members of society. Programmes serve as a public connection; pleasure, knowledge, understanding and participating may motivate much factual watching.

In the data gathered, the question of family status is not posed, but it emerges sporadically when mentioned by the participants. Considering the vast research on family viewing and on audiences' social identities, it is remarkable how seldom this aspect is raised. Watching television with someone is seldom mentioned, nor is it emphasised, unlike the participants' own experiences. Within families and other social units, television can both unite and divide (Kytömäki et Savinen, 1993; Roos, 1989). The separating or unifying dimensions emerge also in this data when the issue of family watching is mentioned.

> I only watch a little television, and even that is planned out. I have to admit that the biggest group of viewers at our house is the kids and the teenagers. My 15-year-old son has been influenced by me, and he, too, watches factual programmes. F138 – Female, 39

> The kids record series. I try to limit it since both have their own TV in their rooms. It would be nice to watch together and contemplate the 'educational' aspects in documentaries. But they're interested in *The Days of Our Lives*, dancing with whomever, etc. There's not much to discuss about those. F135 – Male, 49

As the participant above remarks, there needs to be something to discuss about to begin with, and, for him, entertainment does not offer that. Based on everyday experience, Höijer (1990, 34) deems it realistic to suppose that television programmes are discussed briefly and at a superficial level. Like weather, news items are useful for small talk or chitchat, but not for elaborations or interpretations. I suggest that the reception experience and the following interaction, at least with factual contents, are often separate phenomenon serving different needs and motives, as noted by D'Heer and Verdegem (2015).

Sometimes, the communication itself is the goal, and discussing television is merely a tool for it. On other occasions, watching a programme can be a goal in itself and carried out for private reasons, not for social ones. According to Höijer (Ibid.), we keep much or even most of our subjective interpretations to ourselves; the interpretations are partly unconscious and partly semi-conscious and are naturally and imperfectly integrated into our cognitive structures, as with other daily experiences. Höijer notes also that we normally do not formulate verbally and reflect on our own (TV) interpretations in any deep sense. Nevertheless, discussions can serve a purpose of helping to formulate interpretations, entrenching and enriching the viewing experience. This process may have taken place also in the creation of the datasets used in this research

Some viewing experiences or thoughts were shared by the participants at work or elsewhere. However, the fact of *not* sharing TV experiences was considered worth mentioning and was stated even when this was not a direct question or not asked at all:

> In my class and amongst my friends we hardly talk about what's in the media. I'd probably like it if we did so more frequently. We sometimes talk about the big catastrophes, like the terrorist attacks in September. Even then they're not able to talk about it in a diverse way, but from a quite limited point of view. I'm perhaps frustrated to speak with them about the current situation and news. D133 – Male, 24

Being sociable and socially active prevails in the media sphere as an ideal. Nevertheless, not everybody is social and an extrovert, and even those who are may not be all the time. This percpective leads to a suggestion that the social functions of television vary between individuals and within individuals, depending on acute or long-term purposes and needs, and are, at times, not present at all in a TV encounter in the everyday meaning of the concept. A viewing experience may not be similar in the company of family or friends, or the programmes may not be same as those watched in

solitude. Some TV programmes are particularly consumed by groups and/or as family viewing (Keinonen et al., 2018, 63), but those that are not can offer different motives and rewards.

It is also noteworthy that social interaction during TV watching is easily perceived as active watching, even if that activity does not relate to interaction with the television programme but is built in the format of media events. Participating in group conversations on media contents and events composed of popular culture entices people to participate to acquire what may be perceived as social currency (Keinonen et al., 2018, 68). The level of contact with the programme can, in a social situation, be distorted, unintensive and, in that sense, passive. Therefore, it is crucial in programme development and in framing strategy to know what is measured when, for instance, engagement is assessed.

5.3 Pleasure and public connection

To educate, to inform, to entertain—the core missions of public-service media are at the centre of the recurrent redefinition of media policies. In discussions about factual programming, the mission of informing is traditionally related to news and current affairs. Entertainment is perceived as a differing or contradictory genre to information. Education is considered to be the obligation and function of a public broadcaster. In viewers' minds, the functions are less separate. 'Serious' factual programming, such as documentaries and content-orientated programme types (e.g., science, culture), can contribute to all three functions. In this section, the conventional perceptions of expectations for and rewards from factual programmes are re-examined from the complex set of real-life experiences of the participants. Multiple motives drive multiple interests in multiple moods, and viewers find pleasure in unexpected contexts, which do not always follow the genre divisions of the overall programming output. Pleasure in engaging with factual programming is related to the meaning-making and worthwhileness of public connection (Tammi, 2016; Couldry et al., 2018).

Traditionally, and in everyday discourse, educating and enlightening equal boring. Hill (2007, 48–49) describes conventional factual programming as 'a bitter pill to swallow', especially for young viewers. She notes that television viewers are inconsistent; they want more programmes reflecting cultural, social and moral values, and yet many do not want to watch them (Ibid.). For Alasuutari (2006), television viewing and the values attached to it are a fundamentally moral question, and viewers

judge their own media habits by the benefits gained with the time spent with a media instead of doing something else.

The notion of factual, when informative or educative, as something stiff and patronising is a reoccurring theme in professional broadcasting discourse and acts as a guideline for features to avoid. The efforts to change these perceptions do not always please audiences as intended, as discussed in Chapter 6. Factual-programme audiences' interpretations of what is boring can differ from industry trends. One finding of this study is that being enlightened can also mean being delighted.

> […] it is nice to give your brain a break and be entertained after a challenging day at work :). I do, however, watch with pleasure many of the science programmes that are shown on YLE. You often learn new things from them and catch up on the latest topics in science. F112 – Female, 27

The meanings and rewards retrieved from programmes vary from one person to another. Individuals experience media in non-predictable and non-uniform ways, as Sonja Livingstone (1999, 98) notes, "[…] the same viewers, after a sitcom or soap, may watch (indeed, many actively seek out) a documentary, a current affairs programme or a talk show…". When this is the case, it should or could affect how audiences' preferences are to be read and understood by broadcasters, particularly as actual viewing behaviour seems to be in dissonance with the findings of many surveys on what is appreciated (e.g., YLE, 2018b; Mulgan, 1990 SIVU). It is difficult, if not impossible, to place viewers according to their programme preferences into segments, as people tend not to follow typologies:

> My favourite programmes by genre include fictional films, documentaries and current affairs programmes. A bit of sports, too, is fine every now and then. I'm not the biggest sports buff, however. My tastes are varied. I like both entertaining programmes but also programmes classified as heavy. I'm a pretty cultured individual at heart. I like the film classics, but I also enjoy watching trash films. As for documentaries, I'm fine with several types of subject matter, (e.g., art documentaries – fine arts, music, literature, architecture, etc.), documentaries dealing with popular culture, politics, history, natural science and also technology. F76 – Male, 50

This type of viewer and viewing are easy to serve; diversity suffices. The prevalent feature or motive driving the participant's viewing choices can be reduced to curiosity, a motive that characterises factual viewing in general. Behind this attribute lie many

separate interests or rewards. In an RISC 2013 chart (Fig. 2.1), these interests and rewards for a typically factual domain are categorised as follows: activates conversation, keeps on top of things, deepens my knowledge level, broadens my worldview, renews my thinking, and enlightens. Entertainment was the strongest motive, but enlightenment and the broadening of worldview were close behind as illustrated in the chart (Fig. 2.1).

The argument that 'entertaining' is the most crucial factor for all media usage, and especially for television, can be used as an irrefutable fact in inside-industry television discourse. However, this aspect is not an exclusive function of a certain genre, and although the RISC 2013 chart does not reveal how many and which functions each respondent chose, the participants in this present study are outspoken regarding their choices and motives:

> Currently, I enjoy watching programmes about space research, inventions, science documentaries, science entertainment and quiz shows, psychology and education, health and nutrition, as well as environment, energy. I'm interested in expanding my general knowledge. I'm especially interested in small anecdotes and the backgrounds of events, as well as subjects that examine a particular phenomenon as a whole. My newest area of interest is psychology and education owing to our family's growth. Space matters, on the other hand, have always interested me, just like subjects related to the environment and energy. The Open Academy broadcasts are and were interesting depending on the subject—quality programmes for a specific audience. F274 – Female, 28

For this participant the enjoyment comes from engagements with variety of content types that can be expected to provide the meaning-making and worthwhileness that for instance Couldry and his colleagues (2018) associate with public connection. Consumer quality equals, for Mulgan (1990) also, programmes that provide viewers with new knowledge. Previous research has indicated that the blending of genres rarely satisfies the demands of the fact-orientated, genre-savvy viewers (e.g., Snell, 2003; Jääsaari, 2004; YLE, 2011b, 2011c). That is not to say that the subject matter should not be entertaining, even if the genre is not perceived as such. Viewers can separate substance from narrative styles (Hill, 2007) and demand precision in whether the factual content's substance is entertaining, or whether the programme is *executed entertainingly*:

> In my opinion, a factual programme should not be entertainment. From these programmes, I expect information and food for thought. The name

> of the programme could hint at the programme's content: is it entertaining or serious? You need both in your life. If you've dealt with really heavy issues during the day, science entertainment would be real relaxing (e.g., a fun monkey documentary). Sometimes, the brain craves work, and a serious factual programme helps to keep the circuits clean. F16 – Female, 39

The participant's observation of the cleansing effect of a concentrated and 'pure' factual viewing experience could also be read as a definition and claim for the diversity of quality television. The dichotomy of factual vs. entertainment emerges also when examining programme evaluation. In an audience satisfaction study (Kytömäki, 2001, 16), the respondents appreciated some of the most watched entertainment categories the least, and factual programmes the most, and the same perception is present in later, YLE-commissioned studies as well. For instance, a study amongst 15 to 30 year olds (YLE, 2011b) emphasised that the public broadcaster is especially expected to offer quality factual programming and is commended for that. The following quote explicates that standpoint:

> In my opinion there aren't enough science programmes on television. It has to be said, though, that the situation has improved, but they could be even more varied and shown more frequently on television. MTV3 and Channel Four show mostly 'entertaining science', if it can be called science at all. For instance, the 4D documentaries on Channel Four are truly bad in my opinion. Maybe you can watch them to satisfy some kind of need for voyeurism, but it's no source for solid information. In other words, I find the YLE channels to be the channels for trustworthy and quality programmes. In my opinion, it's about time for MTV3 to wake up and realise that viewers don't settle for fluff anymore. F64 – Female, 22

There seems to be a great contradiction in people continually claiming that they value factual over entertaining when they consume the latter more—or, at least, entertainment genres have the largest audiences Considering the consistency of the data of this research and the audience research referred to previously, my view is that the statements are valid and the behaviour coherent if the surveys measuring appreciation are not simultaneously posing the question of what is most watched. The measured ratings already gather information on the popularity of programmes and genres; popularity is, inside the industry, often considered to equal appreciation or importance, but considering Kytömäki (2001) and Alasuutari (2006, 365), appreciation of factual exceeds that of entertainment. The genres offer different rewards, or, in the words of this participant, they serve different purposes:

> I do suppose that behind every programme there's a desire to entertain some group of viewers. The creators of the programme have intended to entertain us viewers, perhaps with cultural subject matter instead of fairy tales for grown-ups. Could there also be a sincere idea in the background concerning the significance of civilisation to the individual, the people, humanity…??? F201 – Female, 56

The participant decodes not only the genre, but also the encoders' ideals, and condones their aspirations of educating by entertaining. For the next viewer, excess entertainment ceases to be entertaining:

> I'm a film buff, but since I've watched so many films during my life (as many as 60 films in theatres per year), I really crave content, proper, intelligent content. In a way, I feel sorry for today's young people; there's plenty to choose from, but from what? I wonder what young people can actually learn from this media frenzy. D349 – Female, 47

In interviewing young (15 to 29-year-old) Dutch adults on their experiences with news, Costera Meijer (2009) found a 'double viewing paradox': 'their satisfaction about and even interest in "serious" news does not automatically cause them to watch it, while, vice versa, their contempt for light news programmes ("stupid," "junk") does not keep them from watching and enjoying them'. 'Guilty pleasures' (e.g., McCoy et al., 2014; Hill, 2007) is a term usually attached to fiction or reality TV, and it appears as such in these datasets as well. Here, the guilty subject is a weekly soap drama, which is rather exceptionally charged for features usually attached to factual television, such as being educational:

> I loathe *Kotikatu*, the simplified and even fundamentalist attitudes and the educational approach. That is why I watch every episode. D344 – Female, 53

The emotional pleasure of 'junk' can be deceptive. Costera Meijer points out an inverted U-shaped relationship, in which an increase in emotional arousal (of form and content manipulation) at first increases enjoyment but later decreases viewers' liking for news (Ibid.). Kytömäki (2001, 15) re-evaluated another common interpretation of viewing motives. According to him, the motive of *staying on top* of news and current affairs almost supersedes the *accumulation of knowledge*. In a study on usage motives for different media, based on RISC Monitor 2011, Pihanurmi (YLE 2011i) found that

social motives for media usage are far lower than the informational motives. Yearning for information, knowledge, and curiosity for new things are amongst the central motivational findings (Ibid.). In this present study, gathering new information was an essential motivator, not in the sense of information as knowing what just happened via current affairs or news, but in the sense of accumulating knowledge. The following three participants portray the anticipation factual viewers have for new knowledge and learning.

> I'm interested in history (especially old history and archaeology), science of all sorts, culture in general, why not popular culture as well. There's lots of interesting stuff coming. This Japan theme, especially, was right up my alley. I can't wait for next week's Kabuki documentary. F123 – Female, 43

> [...] if the programme is good enough, you will be drawn into watching it even if you have housework to do. I suspect that the deeper a programme goes, the more fascinating it is (e.g., I still remember a documentary about Virginia Woolf from a few years back. It had a calm tempo, splendid.). F248 – Female, 49

> I enjoy watching and sampling all kinds of things, even when I have little prior knowledge about the subject. F279 – Female, 22

Alasuutari (2006) underlines the importance of self and self-development, which are also factors in the consumption of factual programmes in this analysis (see Chapter 7). The desire to obtain more information to form one's own opinions is evaluated and valued in programmes.

> A good science programme can be understood by all. It's objective, but it must make the viewer ask questions and also let them draw their own conclusions. F13 – Male, 26.

> I thought it was inspiring listening to the writers read their poems. It wasn't so with the poem reviews. You don't need to say what's good or bad; the listener draws her own conclusions. F203 – Female, 63

In this respect, viewers subscribe to one of the core principles of journalism – objectivity – claiming that 'you don't need to say what is good or bad'. From a viewer's perspective, this principle is important not only for impartiality, but also for ensuring the pleasure of an independent assessment and thought process. In this sense, the pleasure of factual television is not (only) the enlightening 'message', but the new knowledge and inspiration. This aspect does not seem to have changed in the timespan

of this study, and the same motives move *Docventures*' digi-native viewers, too:

> There has been nothing as awesome and thought-provoking from TV for a long time. I am frankly amazed. You provoke discussion on topics I have long craved for. I think you also provoke young adults to think with their own brains. DV38

The appreciation for factual programming over entertainment is consistent also in the majority of the industry's audience research and surveys (e.g., YLE, 2012c; Mulgan, 1990, 7), although consumption of the latter is far higher. To presume that the informants are not consistently lying is to presume there must be more dimensions to the issue. An essential factor is the quality, or the type of pleasure provided, definable as hedonistic entertainment centring on fun and escapism or eudaimonic entertainment, linked to enlightenment, insight and reflection (Tammi, 2016, 158). The different pleasures are not directly linked to genres per se, but to viewers' own expectations and the ways they are met.

An essential feature of enjoyable television or online content consumption is diversity, as much of the pleasure of television comes from moving from one genre to another, and from mass audience programmes to minority ones (Mulgan, 1990, 26). In lived reality, no one wants, needs or uses media for a single need, mood or motive. Instead, people desire a variety of contents and qualities to choose from, as repeatedly stated in audience studies (e.g., Alasuutari, 2006; Ang, 1991; Hill, 2007; Livingstone, 1999). The noteworthy element emerging from the data is that quality drama series and quality documentaries are, at times, classified as serving the same needs and are equally pleasurable:

> I'm an occasionally active TV viewer. In general, I like watching a good series and reality television. Sports and science are also very close to my heart. I follow motor sports quite frequently and I try to watch every documentary that somehow sparks my interest. F71 – Male, 22

> Favourites: Monty Python, popular music, science documentaries, the TV archive. Reasons: they're interesting, nostalgia. Also, the nature of the programmes, their calmness and patience as a counterpoint to contemporary '3-sec cut productions'. F78 – Male, 41

For the next participant, the distaste for generic entertainment and narrative manners covers whole channels instead of only particular strands of programming:

> Pap again! I certainly choose what I watch even when coming home tired from work, unlike those who just need 'some sound' to fill the air. I am as selective as are my old mother and my mentally disabled sister, who watch without interruption almost anything that's on MTV3. It's as if other channels don't exist to them. To me, it's the 'Alzheimer's channel', from which I approve, at most, a film every now and then. D48 – Female, 52

In this remark, MTV3 represents a commercial channel that offers plenty of light entertainment and popular factual and, occasionally, quality films, in the writer's view. She implies that she needs something substantial, instead of the output she sees that does not offer much for the brain from 'the Alzheimer's channel'. She needs something else to unwind after a tiring day. In this study, everyday relaxation and entertainment—*giving the brain a break*—are most often associated with each other, although with differentiation and nuance. The difference may be the intensity and, often, the uniqueness of the experience, a particular public connection, as the following examples describe:

> On Sundays, it's pleasant to relax with a science programme that has just the right amount of thought-provoking material. F117 – Male, 54

> The culture-heavy evening on television took up my whole evening, which is usually the time I read literature. D69 – Female, 65

Entertainment and factual are consumed in varying everyday situations, and for varying modes and purposes, including everyday demands and the highlights of domestic routines. To compare viewing to another everyday domestic event, supper—on a weekday, people eat ready-made meals or simple home cooking, even if they might enjoy other types of food more. On the weekend, when there is more time, they may devote themselves to cooking and dining in the style they appreciate.

Favourite factual programmes, particularly documentaries and special-interest programmes that are attentively chosen, are more individual routines than a ritual; choosing the content to concentrate on demands conscious activity (Tammi, 2016). Routines, rituals, habits and traditions provide ontological security in terms of schedule (Williams, 2008), and the overall patterns of dominating media (Gerbner, 1973) sets the tone for the symbolic environment and the choices it enables. Everyday lives are not built upon random practices, which vary from day to day (Tammi, 2016), and repetitive engagements, such as weekday current affairs studio programmes, offer hedonistic or eudaemonic gratifications (Kormelink et al., 2015; see Chapter 7). Specialised forms and contents can also set an agenda, but the reward is in more than repetition. The forms should fit the viewer's life, as in these examples:

> The channel makes no difference. Entertaining science programmes and documentaries for the whole family could be shown on Saturday night between 6 and 9 p.m. The programmes unsuitable for children later in the night, of course, on weekdays and Sundays, for instance. On Saturdays after 10 p.m., challenging science programmes requiring adult intelligence could be shown, nothing too shocking, however, so the weekend relaxation wouldn't be ruined (after all, people can decide whether or not they want to watch the subject). I would gladly watch science programmes every day. F111 – Female, 39

> Every so often, the two of us, me and the husband, sit down to watch a good picture, sauna first and then a glass of wine and good food. On Sundays, the TV may affect our outdoor activities etc., if there's a good documentary on. F124 – Female, 47

Weekends seem to differ from weekdays regarding viewing habits, as do people's lives. There is time and space for luxury and quality time:

> When I still worked five days a week, I used to think that TV should pay more attention to workers. On Fridays, some light entertainment or fluff should be shown. You don't have the energy to concentrate on anything special after a week at work. On Saturdays, there could be something more challenging, perhaps the current programmes on TV 1 and TV 2 are fine. On Sundays, you finally have the energy to concentrate on something deep, perhaps quite philosophical. F228 – Female, 58

The essence of a satisfying factual experience is that it fulfils or exceeds the expectations of the viewer. Considering these datasets, audience expectations for factual most often include expertise, depth and no-nonsense; a possibility for a meaningful public connection. The quest to be entertained by high-quality factual does not demand entertainisation of the subject matter. An intensive viewing experience of factual is pleasurable, entertaining, thought-provoking and memorable. The qualities of factual experiences are produced by and interact with the qualities of factual programmes. In the following chapter, I examine what type of qualities, according to this study, affect the quality of the experience.

6. ELEMENTS OF QUALITY IN FACTUAL PROGRAMMES

The quality of the text is the key factor for a concentrated viewing experience. This factor produces and reproduces committed viewing situations; it strengthens, disturbs or weakens the experience. Programming that pleases through the way it is executed creates meaningful and memorable experiences; whereas, a programme that fails viewer expectations causes disappointment and disengagement and is likely to be remembered for that feeling and for its low quality instead of the substance it aimed to offer.

Quality is hard to measure and difficult, if not impossible, to classify (Geraghty, 2003; Mulgan, 1990). Mulgan (1990, 5) notes that quality is a concept distant from both economic liberal tradition and new schools of cultural studies, vacating an area of important cultural argument. When uniform content classification in quantitative industry metres or qualitative academic research is not achieved, the chance for a consensus concerning qualitative issues in programme assessment is frail. There is no single, all-inclusive definition of quality. The Merriam-Webster dictionary provides three meanings of the concept: 1) how good or bad something is; 2) a characteristic or feature that someone or something has: something that can be noticed as a part of a person or thing; and 3) a high level of value or excellence.

These definitions are essential but insufficient attributes for the purposes of this study. With factual television programmes, quality relates also to the receiver (i.e., the audience), who ultimately assesses the worth of a product based on expectations and actual experience: what does a viewer get? How touching, exhilarating, relevant and meaningful is a programme? According to an online business dictionary, the ISO 8402-1986 standard recognises the user and defines quality as *the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs.*[26] This definition applies to the experiences discovered in this study and the analysis thereof on a general level.

Regarding programming and in engaging with programmes, the need for definition and attributes is more specific, particularly as the viewer's perspective is seldom the

[26] www.businessdictionary.com/definition/quality.html

focus in quality analysis. Mulgan (1990) lists seven types of quality: (1) producer quality and professionalism; (2) consumer quality and the market; (3) quality and the medium: television's aesthetic; (4) television as ritual and communication; (5) television and the person; (6) the television ecology; and (7) quality as diversity. Quality as diversity, television ecology and consumer quality were explored in Chapter 2 in relation to existing practices and trends, in particular in public broadcasting, specifically YLE in Finland. The dimensions of quality and the medium, television as ritual and communication, television and the person, and producer quality are addressed in the following section.

I begin with an oversight of how quality is discussed by the participants, what makes quality as a research topic so difficult and why quality discussion is so seldom validated or heard. The next section covers the dichotomy between form and content and the tepid usefulness of bad quality for distinctive purposes. I then elaborate on how factual-programme genres and formats are transformed, and with what effect for the viewer, and deal with narrative elements' function in creating or distorting pleasurable viewing experiences. The final segment examines aspects of interaction between and capabilities of both programme-makers and audiences, encoders and decoders in apprehending programme qualities and summarises the making of quality factual programmes.

6.1 Talking quality

Since the informants' demographic data are incomplete, it is impossible to determine how much their economic, social or cultural backgrounds influenced their viewing practices and interpretations. From the perspective of being able to express quality concerns and aspirations, the ability to express oneself in writing is a capability not everyone possesses, but it is not evident that only a certain social or cultural class can do so, either. I support an intersubjective approach regarding the informants, whereby they, as members of 'interpretative' communities (Radway, 1988) can express interpretations of viewing experiences based on a shared understanding of values, worldviews and aesthetic choices. Their individual peers might not have the usual nominators—age, education, social or economic status, temperament, or even media consumption habits in common—but would share and underwrite or dispute an appreciation for a particular feature of a television programme. The experiences and interpretations of quality features vary, but the object of the parole, the speech, is one.

The parole, then, is not in unison, as the capabilities, resources, preferences and needs of viewers vary.

When discussing something as influential in everyday life as television or web television programmes, the stated and implied needs are many, as are the gratifications. 'Quality enjoyment' is open to all tastes, genres and media (Costera Meijer, 2009, 203). It is unlikely that this term means the same thing to all members of an audience, or that it means a singular thing to an individual responder. Understanding and openness to several types of qualities are present in each viewer's repertory (Hill, 2007), some sufficient for everyday use, while others are reserved for special occasions. Viewers recognise styles, structures and gimmicks quickly, and can adjust their viewing strategies accordingly. When the viewing situation is premeditated and anticipated, such as when a viewer prepares to engage with a programme, the demands are higher than when viewing is casual. The demands differ according to genre also—this participant, for instance, outlines the minimum requirements for science productions:

> A good science programme has a good subject, which is examined with sufficient depth and from different perspectives if possible, a good presenter who understands that he or she is a presenter and not a star. F61 – Female, 46

The requirements in the above example are the basic and essential elements of any traditional, factual programme, and they re-emerge later in this chapter. For cultural programmes, there is an additional and specific set of demands:

> A good cultural programme: doesn't underestimate the viewer, isn't arrogant or elitist, isn't loaded with jargon, presents the phenomenon, the subject, analyses, puts it into a broader context, does not make value judgements, provokes questions in the viewer, the desire to know more or at least to think more – or to come to the conclusion that this really isn't for me, helps in understanding who we are, where we're coming from, and why it's that place where we're possibly going. That's what culture is about. F202 – Female, 48

It is evident that the participant has a personal commitment to the genre, and therefore high expectations for programmes dealing with culture. In the user-produced data available in this study, especially in the diaries, casual viewing, which does not contain surprise elements, rarely evokes reactions and is explicated denotatively. A

more wilful and perceptive viewing experience is described connotatively, either in reference to related issues or to one's own experiences.

One of the remarkable findings of this study is that, while expressions used to talk about everyday encounters with television can be mundane, even banal, in other cases, the precision with which some writers depict, reflect and elaborate on the qualities that define programmes can be very analytical:

> In the evening, I watched ER, which is my absolute favourite TV series, and a programme about girls' violent behaviour, *Silminäkijä* (Eye Witness), where the subject was handled rather poorly in my opinion. They never got beyond the surface and the so-called expert opinions were really trite. The female perspective was never really brought up, and it was in danger of getting eclipsed by the general youth perspective. To end the night, I watched *South Park*, whose mocking of everything and supposed non-conformity is starting to bore me a little. D51 – Female, 25

In addition to the assertive expression, a noteworthy aspect of this statement is the difference when approaching fact and fiction. *The Eyewitness*, a traditional, issue-focused programme, is rigorously scrutinised and assessed, while episodes of (an American hospital-drama series) *ER* and *South Park* (an American satirical animation series) are judged for their emotional value to the young viewer: 'absolute favourite' and 'starting to bore'. In this example, factual programmes are evaluated for the quality of their features; whereas fiction is judged based on its impact.

With factual programmes, the vocabulary used and features addressed generally differ from the aspects and discourse used for fiction and entertainment. Quality talk seems more common and, in some cases, a part of the social and cultural functions of the latter genres. Factual genres rarely generate media buzz; there are fewer specialists and fewer schools, fewer public debates and fewer fandom sites. Opinions about the quality of factual programmes may stay as private as their watching, as noted in the previous chapter. When factual programmes are debated, the talk often centres around the political content of talk shows. In this data, the scope is limited, in the sense that it contains only a few politically orientated programmes. Instead, science and nature programmes are likely to be assessed for their treatment of the subject matter, while cultural genres evoke more emotional responses in these datasets. The next statement, however, analyses the genre interpretation and style of a cultural newscast:

> *Kulttuuriuutiset* (Cultural News). The Finlandia Junior Prize-winning book seemed interesting; perhaps I'll borrow one and read it. Why does something with a good, useful idea like *Kulttuuriuutiset* have to be executed so seriously and in the form and style of television news. The subjects were well chosen and interesting, but the format utilises the

> familiar studio presentation and insert model. Do they assume that culture is thus elevated to be 'taken seriously' alongside economy and politics? D49 – Female, 25

An interesting aspect of the above comment is the way it reveals the difference in frame and focus between the sender and the receiver, the encoder and the decoder. Concept designers' idea of user-experience seems to reflect a news format, and they style the transmission accordingly, perhaps without considering the needs and capabilities of audiences. On the other hand, the user or commentator would prefer the form to hint towards the polymorphic quality of the field in question. The idea of the designer may have been to elevate the prestige of sometimes marginal content by using the official form. The discord between television professionals and knowledgeable, demanding audiences is apparent in a part of the quality discourse here and emerges again in a later section of this chapter.

When people do talk about their programme preferences, there is a danger that they are discarded or not validated, even in academic and industry studies. For example, Mäntymäki (2006, 152) states that analysing quality discourse offers a conspicuous example of how popular discourses can intertwine with wider discursive formations. She concludes that this factor gravely contests the idea that enquiring 'so-called' ordinary people or media users produces somehow pure and authentic knowledge. Considering this entire study, Mäntymäki's view on quality discourse renders the emergence of critical voices on the state or development of programme standards rather futile. In contrast, my study proposes that people can analyse their own stances, and that their genre knowledge is firm:

> I really enjoy the sciences, anything goes. However, in the programmes and documentaries shown on television, the way they are made usually determines whether I like the programme or not. F41 – Male, 22

The idea that thinking and expressing one's thoughts on quality issues is not 'authentic' or personal disputes the entire prospect of genuine thought and expression. In this aspect, the genuineness of expression is not a validity issue but a phenomenological one. Words come from somewhere, though not necessarily from an authoritative source of discourse. In media talk, audiences have, as Geraghty (2003, 35) remarks, problems articulating why a programme is enjoyable or of good quality and, in reaching for words about what they value, they are bound to draw on the contested terms of the high versus popular culture debate. I propose that if everyone had the same resources and the same vocabulary to choose words from, there would still be variation in preferences according to individual backgrounds, experiences, personal preferences and levels of engagement. In studying quality as perceived by

audiences, it might be more important to hear what is said than to focus too much on how it is said. Quality can be discussed, and common ground can be found. Quality talk is personal, detailed and analytical, and, at least in these datasets, most likely true to the speaker.

6.2 Form, content and bad quality

In one comment above, a young man avows his fondness for science programmes: 'I really enjoy the sciences, anything goes' (F41 – Male, 22). However, when science is dealt with in television programmes, whatever the field, 'the way they are made usually determines whether I like the programme or not'. Thus, being interested in the subject, the content, is not enough to guarantee enjoyment of the programme if the treatment, the form, is not enjoyable. This aspect may be evident, but it is also a fundamental dichotomy of television: 'And now we encounter the reality of buoyant life in the miracle of television, which is ready to explode the experience gathered by the makers of silent and sound cinema', envisioned Soviet cineaste Sergei Eisenstein in 1946 (Eisenstein, 1978). He was a master of montage, which is a method of using editing as a forceful narrative tool, and a paragon of the power of form.

All the possibilities that Eisenstein looked forward to are a nuisance for Bourdieu, who, decades later, wanted to wipe the content clean of all interruptions disturbing speech. Bourdieu believes the text should suffice, for the purpose is to transmit speech and thought in as original a form as possible. He concludes that the means of television—including camera angle, illustrations and archive material—disturb the presentation of content (Bourdieu, 1996, 11). From the audience's perspective, both these opinions are wrong: television is not about form *or* content; it is about form *and* content. Both aspects need to be there and be right by the measures of the genre in question. For this next viewer, form provides otherwise un-suspenseful content a meaning:

> Ordinarily, the subject of the documentary isn't necessarily all that important. If the time is right and the programme is interestingly done, I may end up watching a documentary about the current state of lace-making (apologies to all lace aficionados for using that analogy to refer to something uninteresting. It was all I could think of.). F43 – Male, 49

On the other hand, form can distort otherwise interesting content:

> Why must the interviews be conducted in such a miserable setting, amid dismal scaffolding or piping? I would hope that people involved in culture, too, know how to dress stylishly and that the milieu is peaceful, aesthetically pleasing. This way all the annoying details are eliminated, and the message of the programme gets across better. F193 – Male, 61

Initially, the first comment seems to support Eisenstein and the importance of form enabling content encoding, while the second supports Bourdieu's view of form disturbing content—and that would accurately reflect what is being said. What the remarks also represent, however, is the media literacy and genre know-how of these respondents and audiences in general (e.g., Hill, 2007, 2018). In this particular case, the participants, who express opposing views of the role of programme qualities, might agree on their effect when facing the same programmes—but might also assert them differently.

Quality is a plural concept. The one-kind-of-quality feature or element does not apply to all situations and products in an abundance of genres and categories. Nevertheless, the term is frequently used in media debates as a noun instead of an adjective attached to a particular feature of a specific cultural product. A viewer does not desire quality, per se, but sufficient quality for different viewing or listening situations (Nukari & Ruohomäki, 2002, 91). Surpassing anticipated standards produces delectation and falling below those standards results in frustration and disengagement. Instead of connection, the viewer is disturbed by, for instance, bad visual design or poor quality of content (Tammi, 2016, 42).

However, 'bad' quality is not necessarily a bad thing (Laseur, 1992; McCoy & Scarborough, 2014). What is 'bad' is genre-related; quality, in general, is genre-related (Hill, 2018). Expectations and gratifications for entertainment and factual programmes differ in many aspects, but particularly regarding what is considered 'bad' or low quality.

> Tastes vary, I would prefer that documentaries featured only views from experts – even if they are numerous and different. The opinions of laymen are aimed mostly at the emotions – which in itself is probably effective. But I enjoy my fact as fact, and propaganda is another matter altogether. F63 – Male, 30

Some people watch 'bad' entertainment because they like it; at times, the 'badness' is the catch. As Boyd-Barrett (2010, 21) formulates: "The process of meaning-making has been shown as surprisingly subtle, with people quite capable of conforming with prevalent social disapproval or deprecation of certain categories of text, on the one hand, while continuing to take pleasure from those same texts on the other'". Similarly, Mulgan (1990, 7) claims that people constantly feel the need to criticise the quality of the same programmes they enjoy. These viewing practices apply to popular factual and reality programmes as well. In a study on Swedish factual and reality audiences, Hill (2007, 23) found that viewing strategies are characterised by the experience of watching the programmes. These experiences are sometimes connected to conceptual value judgements, but, other times, they contradict these judgements when the experience of watching is on an emotional rather than intellectual level (Ibid). In this study, the participants recognise this difference:

> Emotions tell about us and our relationship with the world we live in. In my opinion, the wisdom we gain from them is just as real as factual information and learning material. F21 – Female, 28

> I myself focus more on the facts in a programme, but I think it's the experiences that help in giving you a better handle on the subject. F22

The informants here do not talk about watching low-quality factual programmes but discuss the narrative means of storytelling and their effect on the viewing experience. The writer of the second example refers to having a person or persons as subjects to identify with, instead of an abstract or objective narration. The latter part of this chapter concentrates more on the narrative structures of programmes, with the focus on viewers next.

'Bad' in factual tends to be reserved for reality and docusoaps, which for audiences 'appear to be the lowest form of television' (Hill, 2007, 48). With popular genres, feeling guilty about watching television seems to be a universal feeling. In Hill's research, the guilty viewers experienced different and extended levels of guilt from being entertained (Ibid; Mulgan 1990). The viewers used morality as a framing device, and some participants categorised popular factual programmes (e.g., docusoaps) as bad because such programmes lack moral values (Ibid, 23).

With 'bad' popular factual, the irritation and negative identification can be rewarding and even the key motivator. 'Bad' serious factual, however, rather frustrates and infuriates, as is evident in the comments such as 'why must the interviews be conducted in such a miserable setting…'. In the following quote, anticipated pleasure is not delivered, at least not when there is no new information (to agree or disagree with), and when some or all aspects of programme fail expectations:

> Next, we watched a literary programme, where writers spoke on their own works and analysed Aulikki Oksanen's new novel. It would be nice to read it. I'll get one for Christmas. The personal comments were interesting, but the treatment of Oksanen's novel was dull and vague. On top of that, on another channel, a programme about *Tough Girls*[27] who fight in the streets was about to begin. This was a programme my husband had waited for. The subject was interesting, but the programme was very unprofessionally made. Instead of an expert, they interviewed a political scientist who had written a detective story about the subject! And the voluntary workers brought up prejudices, one worse than the other. The programme did not consider the causes of increased violence or question the harsh allegations. Instead, different characters scolded the young people with violent inclinations and, in between, parts of an interview with a 'fighting girl' were shown. The girl appeared under her own name and revealed her face. Viewers undoubtedly put a label on the girl and her relatives based on the programme. The girl didn't have any chance to respond to the harsh arguments that the adults rattled off about children and young people. Both my husband and I were angry about this sub-standard and biased programme. We criticised the immoral reporters while getting washed. D47 – Female, 37

In this lengthy comment, the participant is herself an expert on the issue in question; hence, she demands high quality in the treatment. The quality of viewers is (in Finland) presently one of the guiding factors for television production planning in the shape of target groups. However, this approach rarely encompasses the prospect that members of the targeted group could have a better grasp of the issues at hand than the producers do, if they are viewed as consumers and members of social tribes instead of thinking, knowing, acting and curious subjects.

[27] An episode of *Silminnäkijä* (The Eyewitness)

6.3 Quality of the audience

Costera Meijer (2009, 190) conceptualises viewers of quality programming as quality audiences and constructs (Dutch) audiences as 'public intellectuals', connoisseurs of TV or specific genres of television programming, well-educated migrants, socially committed young people or creative professionals. With this construction, she recognises the audience's potential leadership role in society. Costera Meijer (Ibid.) ponders how public-service media could be of particular service to "these (future) experts, managers and leaders" seeing the mission and the effect of diverse and high-quality public-service programming in the light of this study.

I claim that a high-quality television supply nurtures the needs and potentials of the audience *as a whole,* in that the mental landscape, as Gerbner (1977) claims, can be seen acting as a source of socialisation and everyday information. Freely and equally accessible quality programming can enhance the capabilities of all viewers and facilitate equality, instead of simply catering to the already privileged. Quality television can construct, even create new audiences who appreciate and are inspired by its offerings.

Although watching unsatisfactory or 'bad' factual programmes does not cause social or private embarrassment, being interested in science, culture or history programmes (i.e., watching 'good' factual programmes) is not as evidently means of social or cultural distinction as watching quality drama or other popular genres, which generate live or virtual discussions, can be. Interests and passions for small-audience factual programming are, as noted previously, often private and rarely offer topics for small talk or means of bonding with the likeminded in immediate social circles.

Consuming 'good' factual programmes is unwieldy for purposes of gaining membership access to a 'quality audience', presuming the concept exists in the minds of audiences. There is little reward in boosting cultural competence or cultural capital as a proof of taste or competence with the help of particular viewing experiences if others have not seen them, or if they do not generate discussion. There is no community of individuals bound by media quality (Costera Meijer, 2009, 200). In sociology, the research interest focuses on how the consumption of goods manifests one's identity and serves purposes of distinction (Leskinen & Soronen, 2006; Kuipers, 2006). For Bourdieu (1984), good taste is not purely an aesthetic issue but characterises the knowledge and attitude, or the cultural capital, with which one can distinguish oneself from the other (Costera Meijer, 2009, 200). In this study, the diaries and focus-group discussions emphasize inner reflections instead of, for instance,

talking points. Nevertheless, finding companions who share a pleasure that was assumed private is delightful, as this comment from the science focus group presents:

> Hello all! It's nice to notice that there are other science programme viewers, too, see you tomorrow ;) F139 – Female, 39

However, the case of *Docventures* contradicts the argument of antisocial nature of factual viewing in both virtual and real life. Via Facebook, Twitter and other social media channels, audience members participate in *Docventures*' direct broadcasts. At live clubs all over Finland, people gather to watch the transmissions and to discuss them; hence, the sense of (at least temporary) community is strong. The programme concept of celebrating documentaries was in its third season on YLE TV2 in 2015 and had built a community of followers, forming a relationship not only with each other and the hosts, but also with the content.

> It is true that the documentary is not that ambitious visually, for instance, the same image is presented twice as though authentic. But it is mesmerising and entertaining, and it full of feeling, thanks first and foremost to Fetisov. And there would not be an interview without an author, and the relationship between the author-interviewer and the interviewee. Absolutely worth watching. DV7

Watching and knowing about the internationally acclaimed documentaries can create a sentiment of exclusivity and style, and thus, social capital, but also an understanding of the genre and the issues in question. When the focus around *Docventures* is more often on content than quality, and as producer quality is implied by the choices made by the gatekeepers, the documentaries are 'good' by definition; hence, elements of quality do not tend to enter the discussion in detail. Hill (2007, 15) notes that generic discourses of factual television are framed by an elitist view of culture that can lead to morality or distinction claims to dismiss those stands, especially by those in the industry who favour lighter, entertainment-orientated factual programming policies.

The 'quality audience' as a concept is characteristic of the discourse and industrial school of thought in which audiences are, for practical purposes, reduced to represent certain possessed behavioural features and affinities to objects, rather than subjects in process, with complex and layered sets of values and needs. Treating audiences as target groups, reality audiences, 'quality audiences', or as users or non-users of social media, as consumers, and generally categorised on a behavioural basis is likely to be

useful at some stage of product development. However, such categories may overlook people's capabilities and needs for more than, for instance, mere entertainment, even though those capabilities would also be in their repertoire. Classifying audience qualities, and then catering to the presuppositions thus concluded, discards developing programmes as products and leads to less diverse or genuinely innovative output, particularly with factual genres, for which the 'quick hits' are rare and less profitable than within popular genres. If the point of interest is changed from audience qualities to programme qualities, and audiences become different types of autonomous entities, "insisting on the delightfulness, usability and communicative character of programmes" (Costera Meijer, 2009, 198), then the entire process may become richer in detail as a result.

6.4 Makings of quality

The single factor most forcefully guiding the quality of programme development and programming as a whole is, in my experience, not the need to elevate quality but the urge for renovation. The slowness, stiffness and seriousness of the previous decades seems amusing, but so do the extra journalists with a laptop in a studio of the early 2010s[28] reading out loud what 'the social media' says about an ongoing topic, representing modernity and youthfulness. Constant renewal and development are in the nature of programme production. From the standpoint of audience experience, and for the sake of maintaining or enhancing quality, however, renewal should be conscious of which elements construct a given quality and how the relationships between elements or their essence should be altered to improve the experience instead of weakening it. I now discuss quality in terms of genre, content, narration, interaction and impact.

Quality in factual genres

Television trends, as with the styles of talk shows and lifestyle programmes, come and go. Genres change more slowly, but they do change. Reality television, stationed between fact and fiction (Hill, 2007), and factual entertainment have, at least in

[28] The practice returns sporadically, now with tablets instead of laptops.

Finland, evicted traditional factual to the extent that documentary-based or specialised programme types have all but ceased to exist in some genres.

Viewers are inherently genre-savvy, which, as Ellis (2001) formulates, is characteristic for television: "One of the remarkable features of television is the way that its genres are so explicit and instantly recognisable […] channel suffers can instantly attribute accurately what they are watching as one of the great genres of television" (p. 102). For the participants in this present study, the reforming of traditional genres is bemusing and annoying:

> Truthfully, I'm peeved by the trend where (e.g. in natural history documentaries) the focus is on computer animations and a made-up story while facts are brushed aside. Many of these have been shown. A potentially interesting subject is watered down with lightweight content. Everything's okay as long as the dinosaurs look impressive. F46 – Male, 37

The above complaint is representative of how content can be essentially lost from the viewer's perspective when programme genres are renovated without a sense or recognition of their value and meaning to audiences. Particularly in nature and science programmes, the trend towards speed and entertainment at the cost of scientific substance annoyed the participants:

> The nature programme on Saturday evenings was my favourite for many years, but as I said, I think their quality has gone down and the treatment of the subjects is often superficial. Nothing new is told, the reporter throws in general comments to go with the beautiful scenery or they're jumping from one animal species to the next so quickly that they don't even stay on the same continent. F35 – Female, 46

For those genuinely interested to know more and who value the tradition and the pleasure they used to get from old brands, the new approach is disappointing.

> In my opinion, the quality of *Avara luonto* has fluctuated a lot in recent years. When there are many episodes that rush from one continent to the other, not really focusing on anything, your interest in the programme flags, and in the end, you don't even bother with watching the beginning (the current situation). I wouldn't be at all against it should they decide to rerun all Cousteau episodes. F37 – Female, 46

Critiques on style and attitude, as above, may also be a national and cultural point. The changing, generic environment of factual television is constructed within

culturally specific broadcasting environments (Hill, 2007, 55). Therefore, expectations for different stations, channels and brands vary. Furthermore, these expectations (e.g., for international media brands) differ from one country to another despite globalisation. Fürzich (2003, 147) claims that the globalisation of the media industry does not necessarily lead to the globalisation of genres. What works in the US does not necessarily work in Scandinavia:

> America is a big country, they do make good documentaries there, too. But it has to be said that the majority of it is simply crap.
>
> The worst part is that in Europe they've started taking cues from them, in nature programmes especially. Normal is not enough anymore, everything has to be the biggest and the greatest. Nature programmes just have to have a dramatic arc, and everything must culminate in the ultimate battle for life and death. And it's all put together by manipulating events and combining takes that are not dependent on each other. F23 – Male, 49

Here again, distorting the core content and, subsequently, the viewing experience for generic reasons is 'simply crap'. For the next Finnish viewer, the BBC's nature productions seem to be holding onto quality standards, but English science programmes, in general, do not even deserve the title anymore:

> BBC's nature programmes are good, no question about it. But what do you think about the so-called science programmes made in England? In my view, they underestimate the viewer's intelligence. Take the recent series where they built catapults and other archaic machines. The way they're narrated is somehow naive and annoying. It wasn't really my style; it's all so pre-digested. F59 – Male, 38

Nature programmes are valuable for viewers to whom they are an opportunity to be mesmerised, inspired and to learn. The treatments described above obviously disturb those viewers genuinely interested in nature or science, and to whom the undramatised or undiluted version would suffice. The notion of 'excess' includes reconstructions, the intrusive activities of filmmakers and the use of too many devices for narration (Ellis, 2000), which only irritate subject-orientated viewers. The same can apply even to popular culture, where trifling and special effects are rooted in tradition. If the programme category is documentary, as with the commentary below, then the viewer expects to get something out of the content.

> In documentaries dealing with pop culture, the treatment would be important. That means that ideas are expressed calmly and without fearing that the viewer will change the channel unless something shocking happens every few minutes. F43 – Male, 49

Distinctiveness decreases instead of increasing when the level of gimmickry grows while content shrinks. The makeover of genres is easily extrinsic and, often, when new generations take over traditional genres such as news or current affairs, this process happens by altering form, usually with studio sets or camera expression.

Generic interaction happens whenever a viewing situation commences, implying a contract between the programme-makers and the viewers (e.g., Tammi, 2016). If the viewers are left confused, the contract is broken. It is essential to understand how viewers conceptualise a genre and its value to modify and develop it in a way the viewer can eventually appreciate. When specialised genres such as the sciences and culture are popularised, the ratings may rise, but those viewers who appreciate substance, new information and fresh viewpoints tend to switch off. However, new contracts can be made; it is up to the means used and skills available to create whole new genres, new approaches to existing genres or new narrative expressions that can engage viewers in novel ways.

Quality can be reduced to a question of generic definition. Geraghty (2003) notes that, rather than comparing all films with each other in the grand category of 'narratives', they should be compared within narrower categories of similarity. In an even narrower sense, problems occur when the essence of an individual story is not respected but forced to fit into a desired mould to present desired features and meanings that do not emerge from the text itself (Marttinen, 2015, 283). Marttinen examines unnatural (literary) narration but does raise a more general issue of generic action in which the given form does not fit the content and, thus, acts to force out meanings or substances that are not there to begin with. In my experience, this strained approach often marks the failed experiences of renewing factual genres.

Frustration at an insensitive or incompetent production is not solely a problem for heavy television users—often the elderly generations—but young audiences demand savvy treatment, as well. In a Danish public broadcasters' study (DR, 2013), young Danish audiences demanded the same things from quality television as Finnish viewers did in the media diaries 12 years earlier. Viewers were annoyed when they encountered programming whose narrative design is too contrived.

Viewers as decoders are more media literate than the encoders generally perceive. Media literacy is understood to mean comprehension and critique (Hill, 2007, 46). Hill

notes that, with factual and reality television, the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that adult viewers are both critically engaged and concerned by these programmes' rapidly changing, often hybridised nature (Ibid).

However, criticism can be mere normativity, concern and fear at facing change. Drotner (1999) refers to the reoccurring situation when the emergence of a new media or genre causes intense reactions such as a '*media panic*'. Drotner thinks that media panics address cultural quality in times of social change, and media-panic discourses contain "various strategies of using 'quality' culture as a means of a moral, and by implication, social elevation" (Ibid, 60). I suggest that even when criticism is not utilised for social distinction, but is an observation of inapt execution, of genuinely bad quality, even then it is beneficial to make space for experiments and failures for evolution's sake. A critical viewer may tolerate play, and well-constructed balance pleases:

> The programme should have only a few main themes that would get addressed more thoroughly, in addition there could also be one or two 'light interludes' (e.g. the weight of the Earth thing was very amusing to me). This kind of trivia is always interesting. F60 – Female

The above remark concerns a science magazine programme (*Prisma Studio*), which in the writer's view should not be too heavy, but she continues:

> Things shouldn't be oversimplified; underestimating viewers is always a dangerous and extremely annoying thing.

'Not underestimating viewers' is a demand that keeps emerging in quality discourse and also in the data of this research, and it is pivotal in viewers' stipulations for factual programmes. Repetition and didactivity can also be interpreted as an underestimation:

> Well made, in other words, the approach shouldn't be (TOO) teacher-like, and the viewer shouldn't be underestimated by continuously repeating the same thing or by using too simple language. […] In other words, it shouldn't be too superficial. F39 - Female

For this participant, simplification is also superficiality, which seems to represent how viewers, in general, feel in these data about factual television's value, depth and thoroughness, features that in target-group-orientated professional discourse are often negatively charged. The next passage focuses on this issue.

'Deep' is a controversial attribute in professional processes for which the purpose of action is to reach young audiences or to appeal to large audiences. The consumer surveys and segment-based media-usage studies that motivate the renewal of form with the search for new audiences also tend to justify the lightening of content to achieve this. With cultural programmes, these visions often bypass audiences already committed to the content and usually result in the conclusion that entertaining elements will help the ingestion of the otherwise heavy content. Passionate viewers tend not to agree:

> A good cultural programme doesn't merely scratch the surface, it has the patience to focus on the matter at hand and has faith in it being interesting as such. Consequently, the programme cannot be too short. The reporter should be an expert, and not focused on making herself look good. F29 – Female

The accusations of superficiality, with that particular word, are, in these data, most commonly connected with cultural programmes; whereas, with other subject matter, the critique treats perceived lack of expertise more broadly. This leniency may be due to the nature of the field, which deals less with hard fact and more with concepts and thoughts.

> Art in Lebanon: Roger Assefu's interview. What a fine thing this could have been, but no! Given the very serious subject, I thought the execution was mockingly indifferent surface-scratching!
>
> The work of the artist of the week, Petri Hytönen, was left entirely unfinished, and the questions were superficial as well. F30 – Female, 37

Based on my own professional experience (as a producer of cultural programmes), I recognise the viewer's experience and how it is generated. The fear of being boring is ample, and sufficient thoroughness consequently suffers—or, even worse, the topic is not properly addressed at all. Especially with current affairs programmes, there is a prevalent understanding that short topics are easier for viewers to receive and deal with. Thus, the subject matter may be overridden.

> It bothered me that the programme felt like a live broadcast with all its flaws. The handheld camera didn't bother me (and it wasn't the whole time as it was apparently for effect), and neither did the speakers faltering etc., but what bothered me was that, at times, the hosts were in a rush for the next insert or to finish the show. The poor artist guest didn't get a proper chance to speak. F33 – Female, 48

In other cases, the programme can be so full and intense that it overpowers the viewer:

> The programme demands that the viewer pays attention and concentrates on the subject at hand, and if you follow it only superficially, your impressions about the interviews and opinions are sure to be incorrect. They are short and concise and raise thoughts about being different. I consider the challenging interviewees to be strong points (e.g. authority problems didn't – being a middle-aged woman who never went to the army – remind me of 'insubordinance', even though now it's obvious). Likewise, the cadets interviewed and their thoughts on Finnish war photographs; I still consider it a weak point that the programme truly demands 110 percent of your attention, otherwise not everything gets through. F16 – Female, 50

This is a rare comment in the sense that few factual programmes in the 21st century are loaded with information. Instead, the means applied aim to ease the viewer's burden in overcoming the difficulties of ingesting factual contents; often, successfully. However, the easiness or lightness of the viewing experience can equal indifference. Research has found that the more entertaining the programme is, the less important it appears to viewers (Hill, 2007, 69). Problems arise if the viewer sincerely wants to learn about the topic in question:

> Go deeper into the subject, it's like you leaf through the first and maybe second page, and then you shut the book and if the viewer doesn't know anything about the thing it can cause confusion and, of course, as a plus, thirst for knowledge, but if there's no means or ability to get more information then it increases fear. F10 – Female, 37

Some viewers are routinely upset and frightened by what occurs in the public sphere (Couldry et al., 2018, 9). Increased fear is an extreme but expressive consequence of an impassive production in which issues are raised and presented but not addressed, provoking more questions than answers. Such factual journalism is

hardly satisfactory either for journalists or for programme-makers. One of the participants provides a list for a good cultural programme that "doesn't underestimate the viewer, isn't arrogant or elitist, isn't loaded with jargon" (F202). Another suggestion lists that a good science programme deals accurately and deeply with interesting subjects and has expert opinions, a clear structure and illustrative examples of the subject, as well as providing enough time to reflect on the issue (F38). The same qualities are mentioned by the majority of the participants commenting on factual programmes, who respect good quality. Furthermore, young audiences surveyed by YLE (e.g. 2011) required 'not more, but better, thoroughly about one issue instead of a little about many issues'.

Narration, content and interaction

What are the aspects of good quality in factual programmes? Textbooks on the subject of factual programme quality are scarce, if not non-existent, as are academic studies, as discussed previously. Everybody has their own conception of good, appropriate and apt quality for a genre, a topic and an era, but factual quality is difficult to discuss without mutual instruments. Television viewers make judgements on the technical (good acting, sets, camera work), the believable, the interesting, the spectacular and the satisfying–terms that echo but do not exactly match the professional concern for originality, authenticity and innovation(Geraghty, 2003, 35. Mäntymäki (2006, 87) classifies quality by focus: manufacture-focused, target-focused, value-focused, competition-focused, client-focused. None of these classes are, however, product-focused, nor does focusing on clientele or competition improve the quality of the product in terms of conveyed or lived experience. The quality of factual programming differs from that of fictional programming and consists of different matters, even if the basic components are, in essence, the same: sound, image, form and content.

With different compositions and incomparable genres, the viewing experience can be equally pleasurable; a quality drama, an ingenious documentary and a skilfully constructed discussion may serve the same needs of enchantment and immersion. Nevertheless, the demands and expectations of their qualities are different. Quality talk with factual differs from quality talk with fiction—it is not about plot, characters, acting, dialogue, design, lighting, music or screenwriting. Some elements are mutual for both genres; factual quality discourse is constructed of narrative means—dynamism, editing, rhythm, design, script, presenters and casting; of content, expertise, attitude or journalistic competence; and impact, emotional imprint and intersubjective grip.

One need not be involved with television to understand that a good topic alone is not sufficient. It takes treatment and narration to make a programme touching and memorable, or at least watchable. If those interested in the subject are not interested in the programme, then the narrative realisation can be considered a failure. To evoke and cultivate interest demands that, at the minimum, the authors themselves are interested in the subject:

> A hotchpotch, that's what came to mind immediately. Other thoughts that kept coming up were the detached treatment of the issues and the socialist idea: art for everyone. I wondered to myself, who are the people who repeatedly watch this kind of programme […] Unfortunately, the business-like approach doesn't work with art; the juice and the flavour are lost, all that's left is a 'cultural programme' in the worst sense. F57 – Female, 37

Cultural programmes are met with particularly demanding expectations, perhaps for the specialisation of the field, the liveliness and dynamism of art and culture, and because of the skills of the actors and audiences of the field. The high expectations relate to the potential of art and culture, as Jaakkola (2015) describes, to liberate the imagination, to put oneself in the place of others, to lessen tension and conflict, to aid mental health and to inspire human emotions (p. 91). For 'quality consumers', cultural events are important in both media content and in life (Perälä & Helle, 2012, 34). Therefore, facility in the treatment of cultural or science subjects does not serve those who are familiar with the topic.

> I long for the strong touch of a professional in dealing with the arts. A truly world-class programme. Just like we have formulas and all kinds of world championships. Something on that level. … I believe that you can make a compelling and rousing programme about the arts, but the content would then have to be pure dynamite. There's nothing wrong with homespun, but does it have to be shown on the nation's (at the time being) foremost channel. F34 – Female, 37

> As a Green, I SHOULD be interested in programmes about energy, the environment and technology, but they tend to be quite dryly produced. Historical dramas are the best. F45

When examining the narrative strategies of television news, Stroehler (1994) found that content was best conveyed in the stories that used narrative means most innovatively. In a study of news-users' experiences on current affairs, Kormelink et al. (2015, 3) conclude that the narrative style had a larger effect on viewers' interest and

attitudes than a merely informative style. A narrative style, and especially synoptic details or examples, seem to affect people and influence their viewing experience in a manner that goes beyond mere enjoyment. A skillful and functional application of narrative means (e.g., rhythm, effects, sounds, voice-over, music, graphics, camera movements) requires know-how and effort. It is more demanding to carry the viewer with captivating narration than with shock or celebrities. Ambitious narration is pivotal, especially in traditional documentary genres, as "[…] people want to be surprised, be exposed to unknown worlds and realities, and to be nurtured with new ideas and perspectives" (Jensen and Rosengren, 2009, 342)

Developing quality television programming calls for a balance between the new, the things to keep and the things to forsake. Not all traditional means of narration are obsolete just because they are old, nor do all new means renew a genre. For all their demands for novelty, audiences tend to be quite conservative—including young audiences. A Danish study (DR, 2013, 25) concludes that, first, programmes should not be too contrived (no stylistic tricks, trailers and gimmicks); second, viewers do not want to be "strung along or their time wasted; conclusions here and now"; and, third, presenters must display enthusiasm and involvement.

The first two requirements demand the same restraint with narrative means as the participants in this research do: the avoidance of excess and redundant effects. The informants of this study do not often, however, offer specific, detailed examples of the actual gimmicks, but talk about the impression left by them. Instead, programme presenters generated reactions.

> A good science programme has a good subject, which is examined with sufficient depth and from different perspectives if possible, [with] a good presenter who understands that she is a presenter and not a star. F61 – Female, 46

In many genres and programme types, the presenter defines the content. Especially in entertainment and in factual entertainment, the star factor and display of personality constructs the character of the show, but a presenter also makes or breaks the nature of a programme in current affairs and traditional factual genres. Artificiality spoils the experience and does not enable either form of engagement that Hill (2008) defines as immersive or reflective. The presenter is a component of several genre programme types: the constructed reality host, the all-mighty narrator, the master of ceremonies, the guide, the surrogate subject, the moderator and the facilitator, to name a few. The personality and charisma of the host or narrator are occasionally so grand—the likes of Sir David Attenborough—that they *are* the content. In cases in which charisma is built on extraordinary substance command—as with author and filmmaker

Peter von Bagh, who mastered cultural history in general, and cinema especially—the presenter is everything:

> The true deep interest in each theme can be seen so clearly in Peter's programmes that it's disarming. F189 – Female, 48

The presenter can be the key to loyalty for a programme, even if the original motivation was the subject matter. The combination of the two factors can be highly valuable to some viewers. For others, too much presenter blocks the substance. Even a neutral presenter can distract the viewer from the subject and prevent the viewer's involvement in the story. If the presenter is chosen because of their celebrity, that too can distort engagement if the choice is not linked to issues in question or those of public concern (Couldry et Markham, 2007).

There is a fine line between emotional commitment to the subject matter and objective presentation. Catering to everyone's taste to attract the largest possible audience may result in blankness.

> What I meant was, basically, that if the presenter isn't even in tune with his own feelings (passion for presenting, interest towards guests, etc.), then the viewer is hardly 'alive'. That is, you don't get excited by the programme, you just stare at it passively. F58 – Male, 48

Docventures' hosts' bold style and excited presence, then, might please this participant. *Docventures*' viewers appreciate this approach and see the style as appropriate, even calm.

> A rock-solid duo! You have contributed such an enormous labour into giving people food for thought and into challenging people to ponder stuff deeper with your own genuine example. DV14

What is interesting with *Docventures* and its two hosts is that, while they aspire to renew the genre with a makeshift basement studio and a deliberately relaxed pose, the essence of their presence seems to be that they have done the research and know what they are talking about. This aspect puts the viewer at ease. Making an audience feel safe to allow themselves to be guided through a topic or issue does demand that the they trust and respect the guide. With cultural programmes, for which the audience is curious and knowledgeable, distance to or pretence with the subject matter is easily detected, and sovereignty is valued.

> Somebody already mentioned Tuula-Liina Varis's Kirja A&Ö earlier – I myself had completely forgotten about it but it was my absolute favourite. What I liked about it was the relaxed pace, the focusing on one author and her thoughts and the GRANNY POWER! TLV plays it straight, is so ordinary and still knows her stuff remarkably well and treats her interviewee with respect. More of that! F32 – Female, 49

The demand for the respectful treatment of subjects, whether people or things, extends beyond the presenter and includes the attitude of the programme as a whole. The demands for impartiality or objectivity and thoroughness as a prerequisite of quality are the same demands presented for any good journalism. Below are a few examples concerning how the participants regard the preferred mindset of science and culture programming:

> If cultural phenomena are examined at the level of discussion, it should be as unassuming as possible, with a plain set, ample time, no funny interludes of any kind. There could never be too many portraits of writers, architects, philosophers, etc., descriptions of countries/cities (not a young US presenter showing herself off). F24 – Female, 49

> A good science programme can be understood by all, it's objective, but it must make the viewer ask questions and also let him draw his own conclusions. F13 – Male, 26

> A good science programme presents facts and well-argued opinions in an interesting package without spelling out everything; however, there must be space left for the viewer to come up with her own opinion. A good science programme is objective. F20 – Female, 25

A common denominator for many comments on factual quality and experience is that viewers want and need to think for themselves, not be guided to a conclusion. Forming an opinion is rewarding, as is any stimulus for a thought process, as discussed further in the following chapter. Here, if the content is captivating enough, simplicity is ample.

> To end the evening, I watch the culture department's 'Kirja A&Ö' programme. It is, although not a so-called television-like programme, nonetheless pretty good television. The people discussing books and giving their opinions on the books that are being scrutinised are rewarding to a person who reads as a hobby. The relaxed format is well suited to bring the TV night to an end. D44 – Male, 48

This particular host and the late literary programme *Kirja A&Ö* received the most comments in the diary datasets. By the time of the focus-group discussion (2007) and the earlier quote (F32) of it as a favourite, the programme was already discontinued (and has not been replaced by another literature programme since). In 2001, the programme was broadly appreciated, and the following participants consider time with it and other Thursday-evening cultural programmes time well spent.

> I watched Kirja A&Ö. Literature interests me, and so does writing. I'm also fond of Tuula-Liina Varis's way of hosting the programme; and the fact that this programme did not seek out a 'media darling' for its host. Tuula-Liina Varis and the other participants on the programme have interesting, memorable, touching things to say. D7 – Female, 37

> A fascinating question that I wouldn't have thought of, had it not been for this discussion. D80 – Female, 53

It seems that factual content stimulates the thought process when a programme is focused. In a viewing experience in which content is not distorted with surplus, artificial storytelling means, but in which the viewer is allowed to be drawn to the subject matter by the subject matter itself, a true encounter and immersion may happen, as the participants describe. The narrative means to transport the viewer to the encounter need to be appropriate to the genre and subject matter in question. Cultural programmes received the most feedback regarding content, structure and attitude.

> At 10:10 p.m. KIRJA A&Ö begins on TV 1. Tuula-Liina Varis's reading group discusses Aulikki Oksanen's book Tryffelikoirat. Additional guests include Anna-Leena Härkönen and the poet Sirkka Turkka. This nearly hour-long programme proves to be the best of today's excellent and interesting media offerings of the day. Tuula-Liina has a knack for organising the discussion, so that it will be really colourful and interesting. Fifty minutes slip by almost unnoticed and so many interesting subjects are dealt with. D52 – Female, 61

Although the literature programme *Kirja A&Ö* has a basic discussion format, the participant notices the underlying structure and acknowledges that content is not just presented, but that there is a line of thought behind the presentation. A thought-through structure allows the treatment of several subjects without an overload of information. Another viewer pays attention to the roles of the participants:

> It is a literary programme, hosted very genuinely and empathetically by Tuula-Liina Varis, where the same people have read a stack of new books and they discuss them. The author of a new book will also join and chime in on the conversation. This time it's Aulikki Oksanen. There's always an appearance by some young person, who will showcase five books of personal importance. The picks are often surprising. A refreshing programme […]. D52 – Female, 61

What is noteworthy here is the ease with which the informant observes how guests are cast and what qualities they bring to the programme—and how these aspects add to the sense of surprise and refreshment and, hence, the sense of quality. The above quote is a diary excerpt; the next writer was involved in an online discussion and urged to form an opinion of a programme, but addresses the quality of the programme structure analytically:

> Prisma Studio is something I've watched a few times. I really like it because the subjects are relevant and varied, and the approach to science isn't too serious-minded […] The subjects have been chosen in a way that each viewer will surely find something to their liking. The programme is concise and has a clear form. All phenomena and other issues are described, so that even a viewer who has no prior knowledge of the subject at hand gets new information. F36

There is a fine balance between not being too seriously minded but maintaining the substance and letting viewers have what they are looking for:

> A fragmented, restless programme is irritating (to me, at least), even though there are some gems among them. It's unlikely that being irritating is the aim of a programme. F55 – Male, 61

Being irritating or provocative occasionally *is* the aspiration of a programme, although rarely when there is a content to be conveyed. The reason is equally often the disbelief in viewers' tolerance for a longer form or disbelief in programme makers' own ability to treat the content interestingly. Yet, viewers can be quite tolerant:

> There's nothing I'd classify as having no quality at all. Nowadays in my opinion to be quality all a programme needs is a script of some sort (not only question answer, or a, b, c format). F42 - Male, 50

In factual storytelling, when the generic convention is not factual entertainment, current affairs or reality, it is script or structure that take and keep the viewer in the story, irrespective of the chosen narrative format. Particularly in the absence of a presenter or voice-over, the meaningful construction of the sections and elements—the editing, graphics and sound narration—either convey what is meant to be conveyed and incite and maintain viewers' engagement or turn their interest off. As the informant in the beginning of this chapter wrote, the relationship with a programme is determined by how it is made. The more expectations, the more demands. The better the demands are met, the higher the assessment of quality; the lower the estimated quality, the deeper the disappointment. Low quality is often attributed to the provider—a channel, a distributer, a programme genre or a brand—but often also to the programme-makers:

> The presentation of themes and, thus, the binding of viewers to the television set should be discussed more in public, since people's time is on the table and the information overload is as heavy as ever. In other words, on this side of the TV screen one shouldn't be the victim of a reporter's indifference, narcissism or laziness. D53 – Male, 49

The consequences of indifference to narrative realisations are observable in professional practices. I claim that television work, just as with film-making or any other profession that requires craftsmanship, calls for endurance and the pursuit of perfection. Programme-makers must attend to every detail, as details make entities. Professional television requires know-how, technical skills in technical tasks, and journalistic and expressive skills in content processing. Producer quality is in Mulgan's (1990) category is a craft view of television, in which programmes are judged on how they are innovative and creative within the given conventions of the medium (p, 9). However, people do drift into television from various backgrounds, occasionally without visual or audio-visual education or experience.

Nonetheless, alert producers can attentively read 1) the field in question, 2) generic requirements, 3) viewers' knowledge base and 4) interests. The ability to read and understand the viewer enables an appropriately executed offering. For instance, audiences interested in politics can still be turned off or rewarded by the storytelling form; an approach that affirms what is well-known and does not broaden their horizon is off-putting, but new perspectives or enlightening insights draw them in (Kormelink et al., 2015). Furthermore, viewers can recognise a skilful and devoted production, as in this case of a cultural programme.

> Fortunately, people involved in culture are creative, so there's always something new and surprising going on. I suppose a basic

> requirement/necessity of any good programme is simply that the team of creators (+ the other folks on the programme) is passionate about the subject matter, knows it thoroughly (better than us viewers) and that the presenter has a grasp on delivery. F197 – Male, 54

The production of an experience of quality should also be connected to the relevance of the programme's content to viewers' own lives, note Kytömäki and Savinen (1993, 73). Gripsrud (1999), agrees "the delivery of strong, many sided meaningful experiential relations to [viewers'] own lives and conditions" (p. 104) creates the sensation of relevance; whereas, the lack of a joint point of interest with the programme leaves the viewer uninterested.

> I believe, at least I hope, that semi-old age wasn't the reason why nothing about a few of the clips seemed to stick to my cortex. Each interview, the object of the programme, the content should be critically important and interesting to the viewer. F192 – Male, 61

Viewers may be ignorant and indifferent in some fields of expertise, but they may be highly knowledgeable in others. This situation applies, too, to genres other than factual programming; audiences often see their own area of expertise misrepresented or oversimplified (Kormelink et al., 2015, 2). With specialised fields such as culture, science and history, it is rarely useful to conceptualise target audiences by their consumer lifestyle or media-usage realms provided in segmentation reports. A great deal of production and editorial know-how is rooted in a thorough knowledge of the field in question, which enables a grasp of what viewers already know, what might they be interested in, and how they could be surprised. Much of this type of information is subtle, only implied, and requires the creators of the field to specialise in the field themselves. Even then, there is likely to be members of the audience who know more.

> Kudos for the daring subject matter, which, however, was handled a bit superficially. For example, someone like Peter Englund has offered a much more interesting take on war in art and as an inspiration for artists in his book of essays Brev från nollpunkten: how World War I got writers excited about, for instance, masculine values, the randomness of life and death, and how they were now, as soldiers, useful (something they didn't feel as artists…). Why not themes like that? Why did everyone trample what could've been interesting with pacifism or conventionality… you should've interviewed someone like Marco Casagrande, that famous (?) architect and

> mercenary from Bosnia. In other words, I expected a more exciting approach. As all the speakers were men, you might have expected that they, having been in the army, would've had some idea about what goes on in a war. F54 – Female, 48.

If ignorance of a subject matter is evident, being fresh and innovative with narrative means is futile. Viewers are knowledgeable and read more into the implications of style than producers perhaps intend:

> I changed the channel to TV1 and *Valopilkku*.[29] The programme as such is well put together, but the concept is lacking. I believe that the idea behind *Valopilkku* would work better in the form of culture news; currently, the subjects cover too much ground. D15 – Female, 18

The participant testifies to the media-literacy level of her generation, a resource that, in my experience, is underexploited in programme development. Conventional audience research inside the television industry does not easily enable this type of feedback or development input. At their best, programmes are made with interaction between the common ground that audiences and programme-makers share. Hill (2007, 225) describes the ideal of public-service broadcasting for the public good being realised through the co-production between programme-makers and audiences. Her examples deal with rather practical cases and are more concrete than the conceptual constructions here, but the idea of co-production or intersubjectivity is viable:

> The most interesting thing in Valopilkku was the theatre performance based on Tuula-Liina Varis's novel Maan päällä paikka yksi and directed by Maarit Pyökäri. The basic idea for both was that a thing like this can't be made by aiming at the general, the starting point has to be one's own concrete, private experiences in which case it correlates with the viewer's / reader's private experiences and makes the thing subjectively general. Just like local becomes global (e.g. Garcia Marques' Macondo or Göran Tunström's Sunne are anywhere in the world). D168 – Female, 63

The viewer is inspired by the idea of a detail or an example representing more than itself and being intersubjectively significant to larger audiences through that representation. The significance of the subject matter is, thus, co-produced by the

[29] *Valopilkku*, a magazine-form cultural weekly was produced by the author in 1995-2003

subject, programme-maker and viewer, creating an essential viewing experience that can feed other processes, the functions of which I discuss in the following chapter.

This shared cognitive space is apparent in Costera Meijer's (2008, 193) findings on Dutch quality professionals' and quality audiences' views on quality broadcasting, which they described using similar terms: 'Innovative, liberal-minded, creative, distinct, critical, global, and progressive'. The finding was surprising to the researchers; they expected a significant difference in views because of declining rates on quality viewing and because almost half the 59 professionals interviewed displayed a condescending attitude towards the public (Ibid, 192).

Costera Meijer (2010) presumed that the declining ratings resulted from disrespect for the audiences. Instead, she found that empowered viewers wished to end this patronising attitude and find an equal standing with makers and audiences together, with room for friendship, mutual respect, appreciation, reciprocity and inspiration (Ibid., 205). The participants in this present study perceive the programme-makers' possible condescension, whether it be rooted in a sense of superiority, a feeling of knowing more than the audiences, or of not caring about what audiences know and want. At times, this lofty attitude manifestly addresses the younger segments, ably or otherwise, while simultaneously ignoring the wants and needs of older viewers.

> As most of the viewers are also senior citizens, their cultural background and experience should also be valued. F193 – Male, 61

The participants wish that programmes (or programme-makers) would interact with viewers who are willing to commit to them; viewers from all backgrounds and backdrops. Again, this aspect is particularly important in specialised fields, such as science, culture or sports, in which indifference towards a subject or audience, when it occurs, is highly evident. Competence that includes consideration of viewers' *cultural spheres,* a term presented by Gripsrud (2017), can produce quality and yield genuinely rewarding results, not only in maintaining the standards of traditional genres, but also in renewing traditions or creating new ones. Excellence is detectable.

> But if there's cause for bickering, I can also lavish some praise from my sofa here. Reasons for this can include the reporter's intelligence and quick tongue, the skill of the camera operator, superb angles and framing, as well as visual narration in general. Good subjects and their balanced treatment equally deserve praise. D27 – Male, 49

The absence of sensitivity towards and grasp of subject matters or the audience's generic knowledge is reflected in the product. As one informant (F57 – Female, 37) points out, above, regarding culture, "the business-like approach doesn't work with art, the juice and the flavour is lost, all that's left is a 'cultural programme' in the worst sense." A distant treatment not only annoys viewers; it also hinders them from engaging with the content or the story.

> I don't really understand what their aim is. Presumably, they weren't looking to influence people's emotional life too seriously, and that's good. No one should have to lose sleep over a cultural programme. It should make some kind of impression, though... F195 – Female, 59

Kormelink and his colleagues (2015) call appreciation "an experiential state that is characterised by the perception of deeper meaning, the feeling of being moved, and the motivation to elaborate on thoughts and feelings inspired by the experience" (p. 2). Being moved or touched is an essential feature of a deliberate and involved factual viewing experience, particularly one that extends beyond the viewing situation. Based on the data in this research, factual content needs to be packaged and treated with restraint to avoid warding off audiences. Sentimentality rarely receives a favourable response, but a layered narrative structure, which evokes feelings instead of representing them, can be more effective.

> A good cultural programme provides its viewer with an experience they will remember for a long time. F8 – Female, 63

There exists no singular formula for touching viewers. A touching experience can be an intellectual one and result from a programme that does not merely present facts and opinions, but also deals with values, worldviews, emotions and ideas. Hill (2007) notes that, "watching factual content can bring about intense feelings, whether in response to people or events featured in a programme, or in the way a programme has been constructed" (p. 231). How a programme allows space for viewers in the process and conducts or interacts with their emotional state can be productive:

> Time is used well, there's no sense of haste, and the viewer, too, is allowed to dive into the subject. I almost felt I was involved myself, and I chose my side as well as my viewpoint on the matter. F14 – Male, 38

Good factual television may be simple in form and content, or it may have a complex narrative and informative structure. Costera Meijer (2010) argues that enjoyment, rather than being conceived as an unreflective personal consumption of popular

culture, should be regarded as a layered form of worthwhile and intellectually reflected appreciation that is emotional, sensual, aesthetic and cognitive. In a successful encounter, a generic or narrative contract is made and followed through. The makers promise the type of product they intend to create and offer an understanding and commitment to provide an enjoyable experience. The viewer needs to navigate the story and, to do that, they need to understand early on the type of programme they are watching. The product qualities highlighted by the participants are depth or expertise, field and focus, authenticity, narration means (aesthetics) and assertiveness. The experience of quality is derived from the production and treatment of these elements, which are readdressed in Chapter 8. The following chapter explores the acquiring and value of cultural knowledge gained in engaging with factual programming.

7. Public connection, knowledge and cultural property

In the previous two chapters, I explored data from the angles of the first two research questions posed at the beginning of the research: 1) What kind of everyday engagement with factual programming in do viewers have, and 2) What kind of expectations for factual television do viewers have and with what qualities in programming are they met? In this chapter, I focus on the motives and rewards that drive factual watching to answer the third research question: What kind of public connection, knowledge and pleasure can factual television cultivate?

The responses given by the participants are manifold, and I approach them here both from the perspective of needs and motives and from the perspective of long-term gratifications. In order to discuss reception, it is vital to acknowledge the significance of the composition and structure of the symbolic environment (Gerbner et al, 1994), of what is being offered, and how the qualities of factual supply respond to the needs and expectations that drive factual watching. A participant defines the expectations clearly:

> In my opinion, people are in need of knowledge specifically, and they shouldn't be underestimated. Rather, people should be helped and encouraged to use their brain and absorb new information.
>
> I believe that information belongs to all, not only researchers and scientists. That is our privilege in a society where every person has their own domain, everyone has the right to enjoy the contributions of others. F338 - Female, 28

In most countries that have public service broadcasters, giving citizens the opportunity to 'enjoy the contributions of others' is in their remit. People make broadcast and online television content part of their own, private everyday – part of what they think about, part of the time and cultural property they possess. As the writer above puts it: it is a privilege and a right. Television *quality* is, therefore,

essential in what viewers get to process, a means of public connection and belonging and of making sense of the world and oneself. The patterns of cultiovation offerd by media enable viewers to define what it means to be an adolescent, female, or a given social class (Gerbner, 1973).

Couldry and his colleagues (2018) note that while media consumption contributes to public connection it does not ensure it, because many people's practices of media consumption are orientated away from public issues (p. 10). The authors emphasise that it "remains as crucial to recall that there are not only inclusive spaces in which learning, expression and deliberation can take place, but links from media consumption to spheres of action in which individuals and groups can feel invested as actors". Mulgan (1990) sees television as one of many sources for creating stable structures of meaning, for resolving or working through problems, and at its best when it taps the subconscious structures and architypes with which people cope in life (p. 24).

Coping with or making sense of life are processes connected to emotion and cognition, entertainment and information, pleasure and ideology, fact and fiction (O'Connor et Klaus 2000,11). Public connection as pleasure results from linking into the public sphere and cultural citizenship, a concept covering both producers and consumers. Pleasure directs cognitive processes and determines attention and selective awareness (Ibid). In this study public connection is understood as a connection to the cultural sphere constructed of factual programming on art, culture, history, nature, science and society. The pleasure of the connection derives from obtaining what can be perceived as cultural knowledge and thereby accumulated cultural property.

The concept of cultural *property* is used in this study as a synonym for cultural knowledge, instead of cultural *capital*, as the latter term is associated with distinction and hierarchies, which are not apparent motivators in the comments of the participants in the datasets. Cultural property as understood in this study can simply be compounded of incremental knowledge experiences (not limited to cultural subjects), in a process where the knowledge elements enact with each other and enable new knowledge experiences.

This chapter addresses cultural property, thinking, and cognitive needs, and the ways in which factual programmes as an ingredient of a cultural sphere contribute to the process of creating intellectually and emotionally rewarding experiences, to the renewal of perception and to identity as one's sense of self in the world (Gripsrud, 2017, Gerbner, 1977). The information, inspiration and thoughts received and

nurtured fuel a thought process that is rewarding in itself and results in the accumulation of cultural property—also an end in itself rather than a means for gaining something else. As a part of the process, an individual gains the ability to connect with the outside world and is in interaction with it, even if it not in social contact in the traditional, physical sense, or in real time.

Factual programmes do not produce the resulting *sense of coherence,* (a concept developed by Antonovsky (1979), to be described later in this chapter) on their own, but I argue that they can be essential ingredients in both the production of a sense of coherence and meaning and of the quality of life. Factual television's impact and influence is constructed on the macro level, as suggested in Chapter 2, and reconstructed on the micro level, as presented below.

This section begins by examining the ethical and normative aspects that frame factual television's supply, quality and usage, and proceeds to the needs that, in participants' minds, invite factual watching. I further discuss the motives and needs involved in television experiences and personal growth and the function of age or developmental phase as a nominator in evolving needs. I then explore the relationship between thinking processes and factual programmes and the qualities in programmes that best fuel thought. To conclude the chapter and the data analysis, I discuss how the informants use factual programmes to entrench their sense of belonging and coherence.

7.1 Cognitive needs

To claim that factual and fictional television programming respond to a whole different set of needs would be inaccurate. Both deal with past, present and future, and both give emotional insight, new information, worldviews, access to new territories and fresh thoughts. For instance, Rieger et al. (2015) found that entertainment can evoke appreciation when dealing with topics such as moral virtues, values or questions of sense in life. They examined whether entertainment can serve as an anxiety buffer, shielding against the threat of death, as it transports cultural worldviews and enhances self-esteem among recipients. Entertainment, both factual and traditional entertainment, is utilised for various purposes, and although a rewarding entertainment experience can bring joy and open new horizons, it is not *expected* to provide material for gaining new thoughts. A Danish study demonstrates that audiences expect the contrary: "When they watch TV mainly for relaxation and

entertainment, viewers do not expect to have to do the thinking themselves. That part is up to the TV producers" (DR 2013).

This analysis shows that the participants' expectations for serious factual are the opposite of those for light entertainment. Factual television should offer actual information even when it is light, as this previously in another context cited participant demands:

> In my opinion a factual programme should not be entertainment. From these programmes I expect information and food for thought. If you've dealt with heavy issues during the day, science entertainment would be real relaxing e.g., a fun monkey documentary. Sometimes the brain craves work, and a serious factual programme helps to keep the circuits clean. F341 - Female, 39

The participant points out that the time and place for serious factual is not incessant, but sometimes the brain does crave work. The need to think, comprehend and conceptualise, has been directly or indirectly addressed in reception studies for decades. I reflect on this study's findings in relation to the uses and gratifications theory (Katz et al., 1973; Blumler et Katz, 1974; West & Turner, 2010) and Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs. The division of hedonistic and eudaimonic motives, as addressed by Kormelink et al. (2015), is introduced, as are Dewey's ideas on education, (e.g. Pikkarainen (2004).

The uses and gratifications theory or approach, developed by Blumler and Katz in 1968 (e.g., Blumler & Katz 1974), re-emerges in studies that explore media usage motives from the users' viewpoint. Katz et al. (1973) found five basic sets of needs for media usage: cognitive, affective, personal integrative, social interactive and tension release needs. As many reception scholars state, users' needs are seldom unambiguous, but intertwine. However, factual television is expected to gratify cognitive needs, that is, needs of information, knowledge, thinking and understanding. Factual television also gratifies personal integrative needs, including, stability, as will be discussed later in this chapter. On the basis of this study, the gratifications sought and obtained from factual television are most importantly those of knowledge, understanding, stability and coherence. The focus here is in cognition as gaining knowledge and understanding, manifested as curiosity and interest in a variety of subject matters, as the participants below demonstrates:

> I'm interested in all kinds of factual information. The deeper and more difficult to understand the more I'm interested. Also all truth based programmes. Problem-solving programmes are interesting, e.g., this

> Nanny - I'm here to train your unruly kids. The subjects that are most close to my heart deal with different cultures and tropical nature. As for the examples, the following interest me the most:
> -scientific current affairs programmes
> -science documentaries
> -ethnology
> -natural sciences
> -medicine and biotechnology
> -psychology and education
> -practical knowledge
> -the Age of Discovery
> -mental growth
> - health and nutrition.
> F287 - Female, 39

This writer's vast field of interests includes reality and current affairs, and her viewing motive seems to be keeping up with or staying on top of what goes on. The need to be up-to-date is a common variable in this industry's audience research, but it does cover—and hide—the need for also accumulating knowledge (Kytömäki et al., 2003), a need that lies beneath the simple motive of being informed. Cognition is broadly defined by Kallio (2016) as referring to all forms of acquiring, internalising and processing information and to the phenomena surrounding it, such as detection, attentiveness and action, learning and memory, linguistic ability, deduction processes, decision making, creative thinking, dreams, imagination, socio-cognitive capabilities and intuition (pp. 18–19).

Self-development and ethics

Maslow's (1943, 1954, 1969) hierarchy of needs goes deeper in specifying and classifying the mental or intellectual cravings that drive the need to be informed. The hierarchical structure and order of need satisfaction has been challenged and refuted, but the value of Maslow's hierarchy for studies dealing with individual media usage and viewing experiences lies in defining and naming the needs that precede or cause them. Such needs are also driving the uses of factual content.

In McLeod's (2014) elaborated list on Maslow's concepts, the cognitive, aesthetic and self-actualisation needs are topped by transcendental and esteem needs. The

latter elements can occur simultaneously or be intermingled or contradictory, like self-actualisation (first person) and transcendence (philanthropic) needs. In Maslow's original pyramid construction, above basic physiological needs lie the needs of safety and belonging, which are in this study assessed to be also involved with the gratifications of factual watching as factors in building a sense of coherence (see 7.2.2). The need and ability to think are essential in the process that leads to fulfilment of other non-physiological needs, regardless of their eventual hierarchical status or the lack of it. Maslow named the 'higher needs' *metamotivations* and defines that as to *strive for constant betterment* (Goble 1970, 62). In this study, the strive for self-improvement by knowing more is often only implied in the texts, thus debatable, but it is explicit in the next example:

> Inventions, science entertainment and science quiz shows, portraits, science news, space research, medicine, biosciences, psychology and education, science documentaries—I'm interested in science programmes in general. Mental growth is everything. F26 - Male, 59

Alasuutari (2006) defines the striving for constant betterment as the core value of modern culture, and the pursuit of betterment he describes as the claim and duty for progress and development, which can be seen as a secular civic religion (p. 364). One of the sacred principles of that religion is that it is the individual's duty to develop themselves (Ibid., 368). However, participants in this research do not support a duty motive or other normative goals. For instance, while the writer above praises mental growth, he does not express the transcendental motive of bettering others' lives, or that there would be demands for betterment set by culture or society. The motives for an interest in science programming are more of a personal fascination and curiosity, as shown in the following comments:

> (…) space research, biographies, history documentaries, natural sciences, the Age of Discoveries, science quiz shows are my favourites. More specifically astrophysics interests me, nanotechnology and nano- and even smaller technology in general. The kinds of subjects that deal more with the sizes of different states of matter from the smallest ones known to the biggest ones presumable, e.g., other universes and how big they are in theory, etc. F280 - Male, 54

> I would be interested in hearing more about space, even though I already know something about those matters. F296 - Female, 46

For these writers, increased knowledge about space and technology does not need to mean more than mere accumulation of knowledge for its own sake or a moment of enchantment. Space can fascinate, and enchantment can be gratifying and pleasurable just for its own sake:

> It's most interesting to know about all the current developments in science. It's fascinating to note how new research methods reveal new things about history time and again. F272 - Male, 55

> I'm most interested in science and documentary programmes concerning man. As for nature programmes, I'm especially interested in far-away places in the tropics, the sea, and natural disasters. Scientific current affairs programmes have always been interesting. All scientific programmes are fascinating, but I'm least interested in space science and physics. F270 - Female, 39

These informants do not describe normative motives but personal ones—I'm least interested in space sciences and physics'—where the interests seem to fulfil no other purpose or need than the experience itself and the grasp of the subject matter. Neither do they regard their time spent in self-development with factual contents as a reflection of what they should do with their lives nor consider a citizen's obligation or a fundamental or secular religious question, as Alasuutari (2006) suggests. Knowledge and education have a long history as virtues. In Finland, as a relatively young nation, education has played a key role in the building of national identity (Gellner 1983). The demand for progress and development has been seen as a secular, national religion, argues Alasuutari (2006, 364), who sees media *usage* as a moral question, as people use or pretend to use media for elevated purposes. In these datasets, participants do not, however, talk about their own media uses in ethical terms. The descriptions of factual experiences rather portray subjective, non-instrumental interests:

> A documentary subject that I miss at the moment is the events connected to recent political history. What really happened in the 70s and 80s? What were Vennamo's [leader of the populist Finnish Rural Party (SMP)] appearances in election debates like after all? F265 - Male, 49

There may not be much functional use for information such as a late populist politician's performances in election debates. However, in a very general sense, gaining new or different conceptions of what 'really' happened may be helpful in understanding society's undercurrent processes and for the ability to operate in changing circumstances, a feature that public connection serves (Couldry & al, 2018).

The next writer's interests do relate to civic duties in that sense, inasmuch as knowledge of other cultures, for instance, could be seen as a moral obligation and beneficial for a member of society:

> Anything that's Icelandic, Swedish, Danish, or from southern countries, I'm always interested in seeing the way different cultures live and exist. D295 - Female, 60

Expressed societal quests for seeing how other cultures live are absent here, too. Yet, if Alasuutari's (2006) concept of a citizen religion is understood as an individual's moral obligation for personal growth simply as a member of society, or more generally as a member of the human species, these findings support that as a personal choice, not as an imposed moral duty. Mäntymäki (2006) similarly dissociates citizens' conceptions between public and personal and between enlightenment and cultivation. Her findings are based, in addition to the media diaries used also in this study, on an online forum (Suomi24.fi) thread where YLE's public service functions are discussed. She shows that enlightenment as a concept is seen as imposed and patronising, as pompous, while to civilise or cultivate oneself via a broadcaster is perceived as a contrary effect: an opportunity and means for personal growth (Ibid., 149–150). Mäntymäki originates the quest for growth with a Finnish national tradition, and unlike Alasuutari, who considers striving for civilisation to be a spiritual quest, she sees it as striving for cultural or cultivated citizenship. The growth of self-actualisation (Maslow, 1962) refers to the need for personal growth and discovery that is present throughout a person's life. For Maslow, a person is always 'becoming' and never remains static in these terms. In self-actualisation, a person comes to find a meaning to life that is important to them.

Growth and factual supply

Self-development as a transcendental need equals growth and learning as gratification or result. Growth does not happen in a void but requires internal and external functions. Apart from upbringing at home, education goes on at school, at the workplace and in the media. Educational activities, whether intentional or implied, produce growth-enabling experiences. Pikkarainen (2004,201) specifies that growth is the goal of education and simultaneously its own goal. Growth has no outside goal. Therefore, growth-producing experiences—such as satisfying factual television experiences—enable growth but are also satisfactory in themselves (Ibid.).

When looking at the possibility of influence through education or factual programming, in the light of Dewey's (1916/1938) educational philosophy, it is essential to be aware that an educator (a broadcaster, here) cannot directly create growth in the receiver (Dewey, 174). As with mass communication research's de-validated transmission theories (Boyd-Barrett 2010, 7), there is no injection effect intentionally causing growth: A growing person is the subject of their own growth; growth is not done to them, they do it to themselves (Dewey, 1927, 47). While growth's subjectivity is indisputable, the potential implication that growth takes place in isolation and solely inside an individual is not. Growth as cultivation is initiated and occurs in (intersubjective) interaction with the suppliers of growth constituents and with the actual contents. Growth may not occur instantly or directly, and a single deed or a singular programme is unlikely to intentionally cause it, but, at best, factual programmes can *enable* growth and offer a space for reflection and discussion of issues that are important to the construction of a self and theperson's own understanding of it (Gripsrud, 2017, 183). Growth is by definition a process, and as such it can be affected and nurtured with available and accessible factual programming:

> Basically, thanks for the chance to watch, learn and evolve. I'm approximately at the midpoint of my life, there's still time for plenty! F244 - Male, 49

This participant is explicit and conscious in using factual contents as an opportunity for self-development. The next respondent perceives his interests in, for instance, history and science as something lighter than a quest for learning:

> If I had unlimited time to spend, I could imagine myself watching the following programmes from the proposed list of programmes:
>
> Documentaries:
> History documentary
> Science documentary
>
> Popular music:
> Classic rock records
> Jimi Hendrix
> Juice and stories from Tampere
>
> Science and history:
> Science documentaries...

> 60s picture book
> World War I
> [...]
> I try to avoid watching Opera, dance, etc., artistic programmes. They're just not my cup of tea. I can't comment on the quality of these programmes. Similarly, educational programmes hardly interest me especially during the week. I just don't have the energy to focus on those. F313 - Male, 29

If a citizen's development or growth is seen as a right instead of a duty, then the role of the educator also alters. As factual programming can be educational in the sense of informal learning enabling growth, programming can hence be seen as catering to specific needs instead of general enlightenment. To cater to specific needs, then, requires actual knowledge of what might be relevant to audiences in specific fields. For instance, cultural journalists can be characterised as public pedagogues and co-producers of meaning (Jaakkola, 2015); not just distributors and analysers of information but expected to contribute to the procedures of historical valuation in the art world by sharing the principles of valuation (p. 93). An intersubjective grasp of subject matters, or interaction with viewers via contents, as discussed, builds up the experience of quality. However, general knowledge also gratifies cognitive needs when the quality is assessed as adequate for the genre and context:

> I especially enjoy those science programmes that deal with subject matter from outside my own field (linguistics). I see them as notable sources of general knowledge—depending on the quality of course. Some programmes focus on subjects you're already so familiar with that they don't make you much 'wiser'. I suppose the challenge for the people making programmes is to find balance in the middle ground between under- and overestimating viewers. More science programmes for the people! F207 - Female, 32

This participant, too, underlines the supply of science programmes as viewers' right, not their duty, and calls for programming that correctly assesses viewers' needs and capacities. It calls more precisely for the people making programmes to make correct judgements about viewers. This position raises another type of moral dilemma, where the moral choices are not confined to viewers but instead to broadcasters, who decide what viewers are allowed to see and think about. The choices that favour light content in an effort to gain more and younger viewers can be as or more patronising than the old-school enlightenment guidelines. Similar to Mäntymäki (2006), this study implies that viewers do not express normative

concerns when it comes to their own viewing habits. Audiences, instead, tend to recognise their own versatile needs and how to gratify them with factual programmes when appropriate. Therefore, it takes not only skilful programme makers but also skilful commissioners and administrators to create strategies, commissions and programmes that enable cognitively enriching viewing experiences.

This analysis points at the ideal that the moral imperative of betterment, in the informants' minds, is with the supplier, particularly with the public broadcaster from whom viewers expect robust factual output. If the administrator or the administrative level does not share or recognise the ethos the viewers expect from it and does not offer distinctive and relevant products, the experiences offered may be in vain.

It seems that it is rather the creation of media output and the mechanisms and structures steering the production and output that are rooted in moral and ethical questions, instead of viewers' motivations. With factual programming, it is not evident whether and which programmes are encoded with particular political or cultural hierarchies, but more that its quality is steered by perceptions of audiences and their needs, which in turn are steered by cultural perceptions of what audiences are. The way audience needs are assessed and perceived inside public broadcasting affects strategies and ultimately programme quality in the whole field, and also sets qualifications to the administrators. Dewey's pragmatic theories set compelling duties for those in charge of the education and development of those guided. An educator—in this case, the broadcaster or administrator—has a right and duty to influence the receiver's experiences and to assume that they are more experienced, 'more grown', than the educator (Pikkarainen 2004, 206). The moral imperative or responsibility of offering meaningful programming stems from the core missions of public broadcasting, the influence a public broadcaster has on the media ecosystem and their society's knowledge level (Curran et al., 2009; Gerbner et al., 1986), as well as on the capabilities and resources offered to audience members.

Age and factual needs

Irrespective of age, life's course brings situations where the best entertainment offers no escape, but different kinds of content are sought to gain new viewpoints or solutions. Younger viewers, too, see that type of content as the public broadcaster's responsibility, a public good. News, current affairs programmes and documentaries are socially important, something to be accessed when viewers feel like it, "a service they would not want to be without, but which they can tap into when they need it"

(Hill 2007, 83). Hence, the disappearance of traditional, basic factual programming may leave viewers feeling abandoned and lost.

At the same time, programming needs constant renewal, and narrative and expressive means need to evolve. When, as Hill observes (Ibid.), public service has the capability of producing programming which is "a bitter pill to swallow", it takes skill to be contemporary as well as relevant. To achieve that, producers need to be in tune with their age group. Even though based on this analysis, the fundamental cognitive needs to know and to think persist, the narrative means viewers respond to are expected to develop. Viewers are sensitive to narrative choices:

> On my own behalf I can say that I've lived, but that doesn't always mean that I like programmes aimed at the so-called older folk. F205 - Female, 37

Having lived might mean that the writer has experienced all kinds of things in her lifetime; although she is already 37, her cognitive abilities do not (yet), in her mind, require simplified or slow storytelling. The challenge is to renew without underestimating viewers. A meaningful encounter does boost the broadcaster's brand in a viewer's experience, as this young man describes:

> This evening I watched mainly (sports) news and the weather forecasts on different television channels because the profound aspects of things interest me, and not any of the e.g., too superficial foreign, American, entertainment series. This is exactly what both MTV3 and Channel Four are guilty of nowadays. YLE I thank greatly for the in-depth research perspectives, that is, for deeply delving into different subjects. D237 - Male, 21

Another young man expresses his concern about the knowledge interests of his peers:

> In my class and among my friends we don't realy talk about what's in the media. I'd probably like it if we did so more frequently. We sometimes talk about the big catastrophes, like the terrorist attacks in September. Even then they're not able to talk about it in a balanced way, but from a quite limited point of view. I'm perhaps frustrated to speak with them about the current situation and news D133. - Male, 24

This same participant described earlier in Chapter 5 the solitude in which many viewing experiences take place, as opposed to the premise that watching television is functionally social. Neither are media choices univocally dictated by age. On the basis of these data, it would not be unfounded to assume that age is not the biggest common nominator when it comes to cognitive needs. The common notion of the weight of social background on cultural choices among youth is in an atomised cultural environment not quite as explanatory as earlier; cultural choices are also individual (Räisänen 2015, 42–43). Factual watching as a cultural choice is individual, even private, but television watching does have to do with common nominators involved with the life course in some respects. Some strong viewing experiences happen in youth, maybe with friends or parents, and become generational, shared memories. Later in life, new pleasant or otherwise impactful viewing experiences can be quieter and more private and belong to a different phase. For the purposes of this study, I will define 'developmental' as behaviour people grow or change into, and 'generational' as behaviour that stays with people as they age, perhaps more as memories than practices.

Generational topics on television have to do with shared experiences, notably fiction series that bind teens and young adults, such as these millennial series: Seinfeld, Gilmore Girls, Friends, Monty Python and Sex in the City. Popular is often generational by nature, as it feeds and is fed by zeitgeist. Historic events also mark generations, as do social and political processes and turning points. Narrative means can also be generational, as the informant above showed, although means are often generated from medium's own perceptions of renewal and the anticipated demand for them. Docventures on YLE hit the mark by providing classic, heavy documentary content packaged in an aspiring and, in some respects, successfully contemporary frame.

> Bad it is! With Docventures is born a new TV-generation, which was thought already to have been lost to SoMe. DV50

> Hi dudes! You know how to awaken, thank you. I'd like to get more of the same, not pre-smoothed, should I say. Valuating, thinking, no prefabricated answers, think for yourself. THANK YOU. DV29

> Not for a long time has there been anything as magnificent and thought-provoking programming, I'm downright astonished. You evoke discussions about topics I've missed for a really long time. I think that you also awake youth and young adults to think with their own brains. So, in many ways you can be an inspiration to others, When was this last done? I can't even remember. You are more needed than ever. DV38

The cognitive aspects and gratifications of the *Docventures* concept were detected by the commentators, and the presumably intended thought-sparking, growth-enabling impacts were seen and appreciated. As in Mäntymäki's (2006) study of citizens' conceptions of YLE, viewers comment fluently on the civilising aspects of the experiences they were offered. The Docventures' viewers emphasise the collection's particularity and execution, which implies that the producers and broadcasters were alert in reading the potential interest in a portion of the audience, and the hook that the presenters and their style might add to the appeal.

Another noteworthy aspect in the comment chains from a generational angle is how viewers capture both the producers' aspirations and their own positions as members of a particular audience. The clarity in some viewers' ability to see the agents and preferred focus groups is obvious in these comments on cultural programmes:

> In my opinion, K-Rappu is aimed at middle-aged people. By middle-aged I mean people both under and over 40, so I'm a bit 'overage' to be watching this programme. It could also be stated in another way: For all those people who haven't fallen in a rut but are looking for something different to make their viewer experience enjoyable. The creators of the programme are thinking of the latter. F199 - Female, 63

> An old rocker like myself is a natural resource on its way out. I assume that K-Rappu is tailored to a middle-aged audience. Our age group has the patience to stop and contemplate when confronted by such a format, at least for a while. F194 - Male, 50

> It's clearly not aimed at the younger crowd. I feel that I'm a part of this more mature target audience and the creators of the programme are probably thinking that this older buzzard, too, probably likes listening to Tuuri and Numminen, while we're at it, we should sneak in some new stuff to expand their limited consciousness. Which is quite OK, I crave new thoughts, images, sounds… F200 - Female, 56

The craving for new thoughts does not need to vanish with age, but a lay supposition that ageing people turn conservative and stagnant may explicate media's dread of ageing audiences. This impression is founded on national and international ratings (e.g., EBU, 2017), which expose that the majority of almost all programme

audiences is seniors—even when the style and intended focus group is young. The chaste conclusion could be that the programmes were made to please and be used by the elderly, and, thus, failed in being interesting to the under-45 focus groups. It also might imply, however, that the intended focus groups are busy doing other things, while the dynamic adaptors of the older generations consider their time well spent with and seek public connection in new and fascinating programme contents and types. Like this participant:

> We are fortunate to be living in such interesting times, as technology advances all the time and we receive information with pictures from the dawn of the universe and see pictures of other galaxies and stars, and we also get to be personally a part of the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence with the Seti@Home programme. I enjoy this all very much. D320 - Female, 71

By contrast, a younger man reflects on the prospects of accessing the information universe:

> I'm too lazy to take advantage of the possibilities the internet offers in the way of alternative information sources, even though they would undoubtedly offer a more expansive view of the world. Perhaps being aware of this problem alleviates it to some extent. D321- Male, 22

It might be productive for the industry to study age segments' or generations' interests, preferences and motives horizontally across target groups instead of vertically through age. That would enable a more precise and, to audiences, more relevant scrutiny of the variety of needs that factual programming can serve across segments. However, discarding age or life phase as a factor of cognitive needs and activities would also be unfounded. Goebel and Brown (1981), when looking at need hierarchies in the Maslow frame, propose that the importance and order of needs for love, self-esteem, self-actualisation and security vary in different age groups when assessed by informants. In the study at hand, age groups seem to have evolving *patterns* in their uses of content and media outlets. In that sense, factual uses are *generational* and circumstantial. Evolving *needs* are further strongly based on life phase and *developmental* stages, as this writer describes:

> When I was at university, I even had a bad conscience about not following 'important' programmes and newspapers, things I supposedly 'had' to follow. One summer after an intense stretch of studying I read all of Anni Polva's silly romance novels instead of reading something 'constructive'!

> And I watched mainly trivial entertainment series on television, if I watched television at all. Now that my studies are mostly behind me, I mostly watch factual programmes on television again. D236 - Female, 25

The developmental stages of a life span are both internal and external, taking place in cognition and thinking processes, behaviour and environment. Youth and young adults may not need more cognitive challenges than their life already sets them, as they are literally growing up and seeking their own place, which requires a considerable amount of cognitive energy. With the surrounding information in school environments, studies and professional and social relationships, there is constantly something to learn in the basics of becoming oneself. Deuze (2010, 142) claims 'self - identity is a life-long project'. As such, and if or when a person settles down in their family and professional life, there is cognitive capacity and strive available again—'*sometimes the brain craves work'* (F341).

When major fields in life, such as school, university and professional training, are completed or left behind, and if family life is stable, there is room for new cognitive challenges and a possible yearning for self-development. If serious factual programming is available, the kind of programming where the producers have not done the thinking for the viewers (as they should do with good entertainment, according to the DR 2013 study), it may be welcome as a source of satisfaction, discovery and inspiration.

> The older I've got, the more extensive my interest in culture seems to get. F238 - Female, 56

> In my older age, my range of interests has got notably wider. Especially opera - both new and old - is strangely inviting to me, a rock guy. F239 - Male, 57

The viewers who previously had no interest in concentrating on factual contents may occasionally or regularly turn to television for substantial content later in life, and they expect at least YLE to provide it.

> Debates (both for and against) between good experts interest me. However, I would be especially willing to watch documentaries on the work of Finnish top researchers. In general, however, I'm very satisfied with the programming on YLE. It seems the older I get, the more likely I am to watch the YLE channels, whatever that may say about me… F243 - Female, 41

> Otherwise I watched e.g., T-klubi on One. They were incidentally talking about the significance of the media on the programme. I've started watching mostly factual programmes and entertainment has taken a back seat. D232 - Male, 24

Except for changes in interest in genres, based on the data in use, also tastes change during life span. This participant was previously quoted in relation to excess entertainment, here in relation to personal development:

> I'm a film buff, but since I've watched so many films during my life (as many as 60 films in theatres per year), I really crave content, proper, intelligent content. In a way I feel sorry for today's young people: there's plenty to choose from, but from what. I wonder what young people can actually learn from this media frenzy. D349 - Female, 47

The craving for *content* – for something to think about – often equals a craving for *meaning*. The participant poses this relevant question for the study: 'What can young people learn from this media frenzy?' The online supply multiplies at an enormous speed, making it hard to grasp and search for new and potentially individually meaningful content.

It is logical to conclude that as young generations now use content online and on mobiles, they want it to be light and entertaining—which is what they mostly consume. In the bigger picture, entertainment and popular culture are generationally and developmentally in demand and in use, but more is needed and required from the media environment. A 2015 research (TNS Monitor) found that a remarkable 81% of Finnish 18–24 aged women—the ones hardest to reach—wanted more meaning in their lives (68% of same-aged men). The number declined with ageing to 42% of women over 65 looking for more meaning (33% of men 65+). Meaning is certainly sought from all walks of life, but when (public) television is free-on-air, effortlessly present, and if there is a supply of meaningful, factual content to be found by those who need it, it offers the possibility of meaningful encounters.

Cognitive needs and quality

In reflecting on the *qualities* of memorable or meaningful *factual experiences*, it is necessary to return to the purport of genre and style, discussed earlier in terms of *qualities* in *factual programmes*. MacLuhan (1974) claims that reading (of a media product) is not defined by individual differences in understanding content but by the cultural experiencing of form: "Media effects are not a result of exposure to media content but from using the essential form that is routinely and almost universally consumed. In other words, media effects are often medium specific and may be cultural - rather than essentially individual - in scope" (Ibid.). Presuming that this is the case, and that audiences have adapted to cultural consumption in media environments that offer factual contents as their quality standards, then those premises also influence and stimulate their thought processes, as these examples describe:

> I take a quick shower and return to the television to watch the Eyewitness [Silminnäkijä] report 'Tough Girls'. I'm not horrified by what I see and hear because I've seen similar things while working with young people mainly on weekends. It's certainly a horrible thing to think about, but I've decided that on my part I keep my family and my volunteer work separate. Nevertheless, I'm interested in the views and opinions of others on the subject in question—there's always a chance that you'll learn something new. D162 - Female, 21

> At around 3 p.m. the newscast woke me up, and I planned to go to the library immediately, but a repeat of what I missed yesterday began: Death in Jerusalem [Kuolema Jerusalemissa] and the programme had me spellbound.

> Once again I thought about how few of us really understand the situation of the Palestinians. […] This programme hurt me deeply. Once again, I thought about religion (personally I don't believe in anything anymore, even though I realise that faith is the only thing that can give the distressed, who have no hope at all, hope—whatever the name of that religion, and whether they worship God, Allah or a beetle larva. D171 - Female, 67

As the participants testify, factual television has the capacity to be thought-provoking. The cultural form of traditional television with its conventions—channels, schedules, generic formats—and the access, exposure and familiarity thus offered are unique in respect of how television enables the gratifications of thought processes

described by the participants. Non-linear television platforms, streaming services, offering similar qualities in individual factual programmes, often require more effort to access and are, in that sense, another cultural form even though the products are the same. As for other media, the same subject information could have been conveyed by alternative means or media, had it been accessed, but is unlikely to have had the same impact, considering the expressive audio-visual means television formats use (see Chapter 6). How the participants respond to and what they make of what they have experienced are not just uniform reactions to cultural conventions, as MacLuhan claims, but also individual ones. Hence, Morley (1986, 239) confirms, "the meanings of texts are be constructed differently according to readers' knowledge, prejudices, resistances etc." In the *Eyewitness* example above, the participant reads the programme with a personal experience of the issue in question, while another viewer's reaction to *Death in Jerusalem* represents a moral or ethical stance. Bourdieu (1996, 19) discusses perceptual categories, the particular way we see things—the invisible structures that organise perception and determine what we see and what we do not see.

If cultural form, which MacLuhan (1974) refers to above, is viewed on the genre level, and more particularly from the aspects of content, style and treatment, one distinction could be a categorisation of factuals into specialised and current programming (excluding factual entertainment, such as reality shows). The specialisation would include programmes that focus on one issue, whether in the form of documentary, debate or discussion, or report. The current programming would cover current affairs debates—most often concerned with topical political questions—investigative reports and multi-issue magazine programmes. In between the categories fall studio magazines, which focus on particular fields such as science, environment, economy or culture. Core characteristics of politically orientated current affairs programming are the variation of subjects, reactions to topical events and often controversial issues. While the genre aims at offering *information* about an issue, it may end up offering opposing *opinions* for the viewer to assess. The necessity of conflict is explicit even with the treatment of soft subjects such as culture in current affairs news programmes (Hellman et al., 2012, 120).

In specialised programming, even topical ones such as science or culture magazines, the tendency towards confrontation, when present, is implicit and more on the level of conflicting facts rather than conflicting opinions. The mission could be described as seeking the truth—presuming it can be discovered—rather than owning it. The concepts of debates and other programme formats in specialised genres are also more focused on exploring an issue than looking for opposing positions around it. The participants in this research do not provide a direct answer to the difference in rewards of watching a documentary or a current talk show. However, Kormelink

et al. (2015) studied the reception of two different types of current affairs studio shows in Holland. The first was a light, daily, early evening, broad-audience talk show, *EenVandaag*; and the other one, *Buitenhof*, a serious and focused late-night, weekly interview programme for a highly educated and politically orientated audience. Participants wanted *EenVandaag* to offer an enjoyable, understandable and entertaining viewing experience, while *Buitenhof* was considered appointment television, for which the participants are willing to invest time and effort in watching demanding, high-level conversations. As a return for the investment, they expected new perspectives and enlightening insights into politics. Both expectations were found regardless of age, and it appeared that the experiences were mostly influenced by genre conventions and related viewer expectations (Ibid., 10).

In addition to the *experiencing* of *a cultural form*, the question is also about *cultural experiencing* of *a form*. Kormelink et al.'s study found a double viewing paradox: an interest or satisfaction in serious (news) genres does not make people watch them, just as contempt for light genres or forms does not prevent viewers from using them. Quality conventions can be considered 'good' but boring, whereas 'bad' journalism can still be seen enjoyable, though when studied, it had no significant but at times even a negative effect on self-reporting enjoyment. Sensational content in a political talk show led to longer viewing time but to a less satisfactory overall viewing experience (Kormelink et al., 2015, 3). The habit or accustomed easiness of spending time with programming that is not really satisfactory and avoiding programming that takes more effort but eventually brings more pleasure is entangled with the lay idea of effortless leisure. It may be that the quality of reward or gratification could define its amount; a short time with intensive appointment television is enough to satisfy cognitive or intellectual needs, whereas viewers can spend long times with casual, uninvolved television watching without a sense of something gained. These experiences can be and often are successive and can attest to simultaneous, sometimes contradictory needs or moods, as this participant explains:

> It's difficult to say which interests me the most—it depends so much on the documentary. Portraits are boring sometimes, but I'm interested in, e.g., Stephen Hawking. The only category that doesn't interest me is 'mental growth', which more or less smells of pseudoscientific fluff. Perhaps after seeing a documentary from that category my opinion would be different.
>
> Watching Cousteau's underwater adventures made the biggest impression on me when I was in primary school—they really impressed me. (And now I have them as a DVD box set, too.) F266 - Male, 30

Kormelink et al. (2015) further analyse their participants' experiences with the help of the *eudaimonic* and *hedonic* concepts—a fun, mood-managing, hedonistic experience and a meaningful, thought-provoking, eudaimonic experience. The latter is connected to appreciation and a perception of deeper meaning, the feeling of being moved, and the motivation of elaborating on thoughts and feelings inspired by the experience. Even though both needs may co-exist, there is a clear distinction between them, and the satisfaction of eudaimonic needs for insight, meaning and self-development tend to be incompatible with hedonic mood regulation (Ibid.). In other words, one cannot replace the other. The following example describes an eudaimonic or rich viewing effect:

> The programme had a lot to offer. I was especially interested since I haven't heard of Mulate Astatku before and hadn't really thought of how to make death alive in art like in Lebanon by hanging everyday objects from the 'dead city' on display in a cohesive fashion—in a large frame.
>
> Tuuri's views on the difference of the Winter War and the Continuation War—the shock and the 'hilarity' of the trench warfare in the Continuation War was a new perspective to me. It was also new to me that Tuuri inspired the war veterans of the battles of the 14th Division to describe them through writings. You don't always stop to think about how folklore and history can be compiled. D263

This media-diary participant elaborates on the experience building on earlier experiences and knowledge and is delighted by a new perspective. The *Docventures* viewer below is in turn touched by the apparent humanity a documentary has presented:

> Awesome that also programmes of things like compassion are made. It is clear that people who in the long run simply are compassionate and empathetic can be found. However, it is rare.
> Why do I say this? What is compassion? What is empathy? How do we name the lack of these? Is it insensitivity, maybe selfishness?
> […]
> Let us put all our hopes on those who still are different and able to care. Maybe they still can save the world, even if I would not have it in me to believe it. DV 9

Both comments imply appreciation for the experience's quality. While both hedonistic and eudaimonic experiences can be entertaining, the latter is more about meaning making and public connection, being a part of and belonging to a larger community, as discussed in the last section of this paper. The study also finds that viewers of the more serious and thought-provoking current affairs show, *Buitenhof*, do not value drama and conflict, like the viewers who preferred the lighter *EenVandaag*, but wanted to learn new things and get a deeper understanding of politics. While Kormelink's and his colleagues' study compared two current affairs narrative and journalistic approaches, the insights gained in this study suggest that there is a similar, perhaps more significant difference in audience expectations and gains between current affairs and other traditional factual genres. Current affairs programmes, as described above, tend to be agenda-orientated reactions to recent political events.

The comments describing the viewing experiences or processes evoked by news or current affairs are scarce in this study's data. It seems that factual programming is able to produce the kind of cognitive and emotional reactions that other genres do not. The participants have been elaborative in describing their experiences and thought processes with specialised programming. The excerpts below illustrate how and what (already extinct) cultural programmes evoke in the participants.

> The film segment on Valopilkku featured the Norwegian film Elling and also another Norwegian film, about a male choir. Both of them seemed pleasant. I think I will go see them. It's so rare that Nordic films are shown. Kirjan A ja Ö is a rarity in Finland, a literature programme on TV, a full hour. The programme is delightful as it brings up new literature and talks about it. The panellists include all manner of people, not only literature professionals, which is a good thing. Diverse views come to light.
> D168 - Female, 63

> Perhaps I subconsciously focused on contemplating the possible questions raised more than the emotional states. The Christmas tree in Lebanon was something that surprised me. That someone should think of something like that in such great chaos.
> F196 - Female, 59

These examples speak of the perspectives a few specialised programmes gave their viewers. The impression of urgency and imminence around evolving events can frame news and current affairs audiences as objects, not actors in their own lives, weakening their sense of coherence and self, as this participant describes. The

experiences also resonate with Gerbner's (1973) conception of media as a pattern that structures the public) agenda of existence, priorities, values, and relationships:

> As I fall asleep, I think of the density of modern life. The many events of one's own life; at work, at home, in the free time. They overlap with information, emotions and experiences received from the media. One must speak out on countless issues during the day. Expression, too, is condensed into tabloid headlines and text messages. No wonder there's so much exhaustion! D152 - Female, 25

If there is no horizon, there is merely the hectic present and the incomprehensible or uncontrollable future. The pace at which life in the media landscape passes by gives the illusion that there is not much more worth telling about, and yet, there may not be all that much information conveyed. Bourdieu (1996, 29) describes most television programming as instantaneous communication that, in fact, has not occurred because of an already received idea. Nothing new happens; communication has no content but the communication itself. The evolution occurs not only due to less diversity and plurality in contents and genres, but also because of the pace itself. Thinking takes time, insists Bourdieu (1996, 29): 'thinking thought, thought in the process of being thought is intrinsically dependent on time'. Time and silence for thinking thoughts are also essential to this participant, who emphasises the necessity of timely stimuli:

> Even though people need silence to listen to themselves and their thoughts, I believe that the media and the interest they bring stimulate the brain so that people are invigorated, and their brain is active.
> D261 - Female, 60

Factual television fuels thinking processes and consequently moulds the cumulated knowledge capital and its uses in the constant redefinition, reconstruction and evolution of a person's relationship to their own lives and the world. The next chapter explores those aspects in viewers' experiences.

7.2 Thinking, belonging and coherence

The focus above has been on the *needs* of audiences and how those needs are met with factual programming by producers and broadcasters and with programming quality. I now focus on the uses and gratifications of factual programmes as means and ends; what do people get when they fulfil their cognitive, emotional and transcendental needs with factual programmes? What do they use them for? This participant answers:

> …I would presume that the objective of programmes is to make the listener/viewer think; it's a demanding task. F211 - Male, 59

Underlying the statements and descriptions the participants offer is an idea of value. Meaningful factual television experiences are essential when viewers need more than diversion, a feed into a thought process that perpetually constructs and reconstructs one's environment, worldview and identity. Factual programmes consequently serve to create or enforce this sense of meaning, belonging and coherence.

In everyday, professional reception discourse, media gratification often means instant gratification, a stimulus-reaction chain—being entertained, amused or informed—and not long-term, delayed or indirect effects. In the following chapters, I focus on experiences with factual television as a chain of experiences, where a new experience merges with previous experiences to form new or evolved knowledge, perception or syntax that are at one's disposal if or when needed. I also discuss how the new knowledge or cognitive experiences accumulate cultural property and serve to construct perceptions of a predictable and manageable world where individual deeds matter.

Thinking process

Individual viewers' encounters with individual programmes have the potential to become more than a fleeting moment when the whole process is considered instead of only the viewing event and the response it may or may not evoke. The viewer encounters individual programmes, and both short-term and long-term effects

originate from these meetings. In fact, the long-term effects are reflected in viewers' interpretations of any given new programme. When a viewer watches a specific programme, he or she 'bears within him- or herself an array of collected experiences and world-knowledge, including the results of earlier TV-viewing' (Höijer 1990, 30). Höijer emphasises that while the individual's microcosm is obviously a social product, it is still a mental phenomenon, and every new television programme will be understood and interpreted within cognitive structures already containing the earlier ones (Ibid.). It is precisely the set of processes or the chain of experiences that each individual makes his or her own. As Höijer (1989, 32) states, attentiveness, recognition of relevance, comprehension, interpretation and response may all be involved for a single audience member in front of the screen. The joy of revelation manifests in issues and details that matter to the individual:

> I usually watch science programmes according to how I feel. If the subject sounds interesting and somehow close to my taste, I tend to watch the programme. I follow documentaries about inventions, technology and partly interesting people. I also tend to watch science fun like Einstein and Brainiac (Järjen jättiläiset). One of the most interesting documentaries that I've watched is a documentary about a famous sniper battle. In other words, the very same battle that can be seen in the film Enemy at the Gates (Vihollinen porteilla). I saw it at my mate's house and found it really interesting. F273 - Male, 22

Here, the chance to combine a real-life historical event with a previous fictional representation is one way that a chain of intertwining viewing experiences can be rewarding. The idea of continuity in Dewey's theories implies the thought of both micro- and macro-history, and that an experience should not be regarded as a separate incident but always in relation to past and future experiences (Pikkarainen 2004; 201); in other words, as an interaction between the subjects' internal terms and the objective terms of outside reality. Fiske (1987, 16) approaches the matter by presenting two schools of thought: the processual one, which focuses on passing senders' fixed message as intact as possible in the communication process, contrary to the idea of a thought process discussed above; and the semiotic one, which sees meaning as negotiation between the signs and codes that form the text (programme) and the meanings and codes that the reader (viewer) brings in. As previously noted, the interaction extends to the texts or programme's authors, particularly in specialised fields, where programme makers need to be familiar with audience expectations.

Cognitive growth, as opposed to cognitive preservation, which aims to maintain the status quo (McQuire, 1974, 178–79), is the common denominator in the pursuit of thinking. The emphasis of growth or development as a cognitive goal from one's present state but as human growth, has no end or destination; the goal is the growth process itself (Ibid.). There is, furthermore, theoretical dispute on whether development and growth should be seen as atomistic or as a comprehensive, holistic phenomenon (Kallio, 2016, 18). In the context of this study, the latter phenomenon is relevant; even though single learning or stimulus experiences may be isolated, the participants experience them as whole persons, to or by whom the events or experiences occur and who are active participants in them. Being a thinking subject is, at times, a conscious and existential matter:

> Sometimes I feel almost schizophrenic when I start thinking that one should be able to be critical of one's own true self. That's it, the little devil we call cultural relativism. One should be able to stay outside it all to keep from being brainwashed, but nothing could really be in that case because thought is not born in a person by itself without any outside influence. D152 - Female, 25

Indeed, change or development in the thought process is influenced by both inner and outer activity. In the line of thought of Dewey, a human being is an experiencing creature who changes through experiences and is always both passive, subject to external influences, and active, influencing their own experiences and environment (Pikkarainen, 2004, 206). Experiences shape persons' conventions and, thus, define all future experiences (Dewey, 1938, 27). The procedural nature of gaining and collecting factual television experiences in a sense equals the hermeneutic research process, where understanding (of a research problem) increases and accumulates with further knowledge, and where prior understanding or meaning creation enables further creation. In everyday life, the emphasis for factual experiences is not so much on solving specific problems—though they may occasionally do that—but rather on serving cognitive needs and processes. Reality can be seen as emergent, in constant flux and in the process of emergence, or as a network of elements and a process of becoming (Poutanen, 2016, 44). This is precisely what makes factual television compelling; there is or should always be something more and novel to expect to emerge or to become, as the following implies:

> Now would be the time to make a new programme about Stephen Hawking. He has apparently slightly altered his views on collapsing galaxies and the 'disappearance' of their energy. As the result of a bet, he had to redeem the encyclopaedia that was the object of the bet and give it to the winning

> opponents. According to him they were more correct than he. He had thought about the matter while being in hospital again. He should be 'heard' now when it's still possible. F283 - Male, 59

Meanings, like knowledge—as in the above example—are also in constant flux and can emerge as something new and meaningful. In fact, meanings are never solid or final, but exist only in circulation (Fiske, 1993/90, 211) It, therefore, makes sense to collect all kinds of information, even though it is not evident that there is any use for it.

Höijer (1990, 32) perceives meaning in the reception of a television programme as a complicated relation between the programme, social reality, the viewers and their lives and thoughts. Meanings are decoded, interpreted and comprehended by the viewer as a whole set of interrelated cognitive processes on different levels, which interact and influence each other in numerous respects (Ibid.). A viewer might, therefore, not recognise their motives or be able to articulate them, as meanings emerge and evolve in the process. Hence, when thinking is both subjective and interactive, factual programmes function both as a starting point, stimuli, and as resonance for the thinking processes. In a successful encounter, the experience can mount to an indirect coproduction between the producers, the product and the user, as pointed out earlier. The act of thinking is actively taking place within an individual; early behaviourists defined it as 'implicit speech' (McQuire 1974, 177). Arendt (1977, 171) calls it 'the silent dialogue between me and myself', and Nussbaum (2010) 'the solitary dialogue'. Inner action, the unique way of perceiving and processing, can bring about equally unique interpretations of shared events, such as how this participant envisions 9/11:

> The plane going through the other WTC tower is like the ultimate vision, the archetypal explosion, and the people saying that it's now been seen can hardly be wrong. Action films in their windowlessness no longer have the ability to surpass the oratory power of the ominous plane heading toward the still-intact tower. D345 - Female, 61

To see the 'oratory power of the ominous plane' or the attack as an 'archetypical explosion' implies that the writer not only possesses cultural resources, but that she utilises them in her thought process to grasp and reconstruct a manageable synthesis on her own. Thinking individually is a form of independence, or autonomy, and as participants have emphasised above, people want and need to think for themselves. A platform, such as a television channel, that offers exposure to new thoughts is, therefore, of value:

> In general, I watch all science programmes if I happen to be watching the channel that is showing them. The thing that interests me about science programmes is their factual truthfulness and also the debunking of 'self-evident' truths using scientific ways. F271 - Male, 27

> Personally, I enjoy it when things are called into question and the subject is considered from different points of view. F292 - Female, 39F

The cognitive pleasure here is clearly the opportunity to renew one's previous conceptions or perceptions of factual matters. If cognitive needs exist and incite stimulation, and if television is employed for that purpose, then programmes are rewarding only when they offer the stimuli. Otherwise, the opposite chain is realised: no new information, no new knowledge, no new thoughts and no need to revisit previous knowledge. Hence, the same longing for what appears trivial but fascinating information is vivid among the participants, especially when it comes to science. Here, as a reply to a list of preferred programmes from the online focus groups, are two explicit examples of it:

> Currently I enjoy watching programmes about space research, inventions, science documentaries, science entertainment and quiz shows, psychology and education, health and nutrition, as well as environment, energy.

> I'm interested in expanding my general knowledge. I'm especially interested in small anecdotes and the backgrounds of events as well as subjects that examine a particular phenomenon as a whole. F274 - Female, 28

> If I look at my book cabinet or the sites that I follow on the internet, space, aviation, and war history would be the closest ones to my heart. I aviate myself and I follow space matters because of the megalomaniac proportions. Furthermore, space is beautiful.

> And money, economics is an interesting subject; the national economy and the way corporations function in general and at the individual level. Almost everything can be and is measured in money nowadays.
> [...]
> I will watch any and all types of science news stories, regardless of the field. F278 - Male, 38

These participants implicitly underline the pleasure of merely obtaining information or knowledge. Though knowing is not thinking (Arendt, 2002, 172), there is no thinking without knowledge or without something to think about. The need to know is fuelled by the need to think, and the need to think is fuelled by the need to understand:

> You have done an enormous deed in giving people something to think about and challenged people to contemplate things deeper with your own genuine example. DV14

> I have come to watch ALL ventures docs and AGAIN there was a piece worth thinking about. DV5

> More of this, the kind that people really like, and Docventures gives food for thought, even to the grimiest brain. DV23

The above comments were prompted by asking the members of the Docventures Facebook group whether Docventures should continue for another season. The participants were not given guidelines on how to vindicate the potential demand, and the choice to emphasise thinking was these commentators' own. A noteworthy implication in the comments is the appreciation for the deed's remarkability in giving the audience something to think about, as if that was a rarity. If it is, there is reason to conclude that the participants' information environment is such that they otherwise get little cognitive stimulus from it. If or when school and professional life do not keep offering cognitive challenges, it is up to media offer informal learning. If free-to-air television supplies factual programming, that can be the source most easily available for new things to think about without too much effort or initiative for the search. In this example, the offering of YLE led to participating in the data collection that ended up being used in this research:

> The guests Marja Simonsuuri-Sorsa and Hannu Sariola were very knowledgeable and intelligently balanced. Hopefully their opinions represent Finland's scientific perspective in a more general way, too. At some point I also noticed a website address for audience research on aamutv. I had a look at that site and decided to make a diary on today's media behaviour (whatever that means, I did read the label on the bag of carrots, after all). D354 - Male, 25

The quote crystallises the uninhibited curiosity urged by cognitive needs. There does not need to be, and often there is not, a reason or use for the information obtained. It is just information, gathered for curiosity or just for the fun of thinking thoughts. For Arendt (1958, 172) the essence of thinking is uselessness, an ongoing and never-ending process, while knowing is a process with an end. Knowing has a goal, whether a practical need or 'idle curiosity', but when it is reached, knowing is saturated. Random pieces of information have the potential to become new knowledge, meanings and entities, and at best, innovations when making new, original connections with existing pieces of information (Ibid.). Factual television can and does serve as a source of inspiration in acquiring more information or knowledge on the issue that triggered interest. It may not be evident beforehand which prior knowledge is an element in the network of pieces that unexpectedly become a new revelation or gestalt.

> Water caught from fog sounded like a ridiculously good idea. I had never even heard about the thing before. Hopefully it will provide a solution to the water shortage in the third world—and why not elsewhere in the world too. A very fascinating subject, I could have watched even a longer documentary on the subject, it really sparked my interest. F209 - Female, 25

> Jazz too is worth getting to know. You can never tell if documentaries will get you excited about the subject. Shouldn't it be one of the purposes of the media to inspire new ideas? F218

These remarks again support the notion that (broadcast) television functions as a unique platform for both intentional and random exposure to meaningful subject matters that would otherwise require active seeking and might not be served in as inviting a form as well-made audio-visual presentations provide. They also serve as a gateway to going deeper, awaking interest. If factual programming is genuinely universal and accessible to all, as public service can be, then it also can genuinely support the equality of possibilities. A viewer must have some resources to begin with, but what the experiences open up in terms of the inspiration described and processes discussed above, do add resources and further the ability to collect cumulative knowledge experiences. The incremental atomistic or consistent knowledge experiences and processes possessed by each individual as their own become their cultural property, and unique as such.

Cultural property and sense of coherence

Feelings of trust in oneself and one's surroundings enable clearer perception than fear and distrust. Aaron Antonovsky, a health theorist, tried to identify the origins of health instead of seeking the mechanisms of illness (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987). He developed the *sense of coherence* concept, which consists of three components: *comprehensibility*, *manageability* and *meaningfulness* (Antonovsky, 1987). In their explanation of Antonovsky's theory, Bergström and his colleagues (2006, 219) define *comprehensibility* as referring to whether or not inner and outer stimuli make sense in terms of being coherent, ordered, cohesive, structured and clear. *Manageability* is about the extent to which we feel resources are at our disposal to manage the demands of the stimuli to which we are exposed. *Meaningfulnes*s refers to whether we are able to perceive life's difficulties as 'welcomed' challenges instead of a burden that we would prefer to avoid. These three features can be claimed to characterise participants' needs and expectations about the world that factual programmes can help to make sense of. In the following section, I explore these expectations through the concepts of cultural property and belonging.

Acquiring cultural property is stimulated by needs, of which Maslow's (1962) classification provides useful categories; for instance, the growth of self-actualisation dimension (Ibid.) refers to the need for personal growth and discovery that is present throughout a person's life. For Maslow, a person is always 'becoming' and never remains static in these terms. In self-actualisation, a person comes to find a meaning to life that is important to them (Ibid.). Instead of a once-in-a-lifetime-experience, the process of holding on to a meaningful life by gathering cultural knowledge can go on throughout a lifespan.

As Ang (1985, 35) points out, pleasure does not need to be instrumentalised in any way. However, if we look at cultural experiences as property rather than an asset in a social field, then every new and pleasurable experience adds to one's cultural possessions and is an instrument in fostering the property. The more one knows to begin with, the more pleasure one gains in knowing more and the more useful new experiences are for the thinking process. Factual experiences are utilised as substances for the pleasure of thinking processes, which build cultural property. The instant reward or gain from the time invested is the inner impact, the delight, which this participant implicitly describes:

> To see the old and the familiar. To encounter the new and even the strange. To expand the diversity of life. F339

To be able to exploit and take pleasure in the encounters with one's available factual supply requires resources; not everybody can benefit from all types of content equally. Knowledge bases and thinking skills vary and are dependent on social, economic and biological variables. Yet, it can be claimed that the existence of and exposure to diverse and plural factual programming, in terms of genres, styles, contents and narratives, can contribute to increasing and upholding equality and providing assets for less privileged users as well.

The intentions behind programming choices and their quality in traditional platforms can be apparent and valuable to users. In online services, viewers and users with the most resources can be their own curators and benefit from the restless and atomistic abundance of the ever-increasing and boundless media environment, while those who have less cultural property to begin with can benefit from the structures and limits that, for instance, traditional broadcasting can give, if online factual viewing is dependent on the capacity of actively using the right search terms. Hence, factual television can enhance the equality of possibilities in accumulating cultural knowledge, in online with distinctive curating, such as that of Docventures, which made exposure and approach lucrative even for some reluctant viewers:

> Thanks to these gentlemen for getting our family's' teen boys watching documentaries! DV58

Watching Docventures' choices may be valid social capital in the fields where teen boys need to be competent, but factual programmes can also cultivate capabilities and add to personal cultural property. In fulfilling self-transcendental needs (Koltko-Rivera, 2006), is essential in the notions of this study in terms of viewers' interaction with the outside world. Interaction with factual programmes can be active and participatory, and the more cultural property an individual has, the more they are able to give, for instance, to democratic processes. But cultural knowledge is a means for more than participation. It is a key essence in what I have come to name as *belonging* in how it is manifested in the datasets of this research. Cultural knowledge emerges as a need or phenomenon implied or expressed in many of the descriptions of factual television experiences, some quite explicit, as these previously presented examples of factual television usage testify:

> We are fortunate to be living in such interesting times, as technology advances all the time and we receive information with pictures from the dawn of the universe and see pictures of other galaxies and stars, and we also get to be personally a part of the search for extra-terrestrial

> intelligence with the Seti@Home programme. I enjoy this all very much. D320 - Female, 71

> I believe that information belongs to all, not only researchers and scientists. That is our privilege in a society where every person has their own domain; everyone has the right to enjoy the contributions of others. F338 - Female, 28

Being a part of a search for extra-terrestrial intelligence or enjoying other's contributions through factual programming can be seen as the habitual function of an audience, a relatively passive reception of a content. Yet, in another sense, belonging is also participatory—the action of taking part in and interacting with the world, though not physically or verbally. In fact, and contrary to what I claimed in Chapter 5, interaction with factual television can be very social, albeit on emotional and intellectual levels, connecting with content and the features of society and environment they represent. Resulting thought processes and revelations can prompt concrete action or social interaction later on. Or in this case, conclusions:

> At 11:20 a.m. I leave to eat lunch at the cafeteria of an electric plant, which is a few hundred yards away. It's a bit chilly, ice has partly melted off the asphalt. All the way there I thought about the discussion on TV yesterday. Writers speculated on the question of using one's own life as the basis for literature. […] I suppose it's just that people's ability to imagine is simply getting worse. Or that because factual communication gets more and more 'fluffy', people resort to fictional literature just to find someone who would tell 'what's really going on'. D158 - Male, 39

In spite, or perhaps because of, the critical treatment of the content, and from there derived notion of factual media's general quality, the participant's reflections can also be seen as a form of empowered existence, of being a worthy member of society as a thinking, functioning individual. Whether these particular thoughts existed before they were expressed for the media-diary call or not, they were formulated to describe a thought process generated by the viewing experience. as with the participant quoted in Chapter 6, in the context of coproduction: " […] *a thing like this can't be made by aiming at the general, the starting point has to be one's own concrete, private experiences, in which case it correlates with the viewer's/reader's private experiences and makes the thing subjectively general. Just like local becomes global, e.g., Garcia Marques's Macondo or Göran Tunström's Sunne is anywhere in the world.*" (D168 - Female, 63)

The sensation of being one with the world or living and experiencing similar phenomena and thoughts as others do or have done can be a worthwhile take from a factual programme and enhance a person's sense of coherence. Gaining insight from other people's revelations, the intersubjective moments offered when dealing particularly with art, science or philosophy content are these datasets the ones that define meaningful and memorable factual experiences. Meaningful and memorable experiences also mould media consumers' apprehension of self, as this participant describes:

> I need media to identify with something or someone, to know, to understand, and to be entertained. I need them to retain my identity as a citizen of this society and the world. D258 - Female, 48

Personal identity, and the life-long project of it (Deuze 2011), as some of the participants recognise, is in fact co-produced with the elements and actors chosen—and given—in the world around:

> Personally, I try to find my identity by examining the arc of my life, my skills, and my emotions, but also through different information sources, picking up the bits that are essential to me. D254 - Female, 69

To get the feeling of connecting with a larger community and being a member of it, one must have properties with which to connect; without knowledge, experience and thoughts, it is hard to anchor to anything or to elaborate onwards. Cultural property is, therefore, not only to have and keep, but also to connect with. Ricoeur (1981, 142) suggests that the final object of interpretation is the world opened up in a text – a world the reader could inhabit and where they could fulfil their truest potential. In adopting that world, elaborates Ricoeur (Ibid.), the reader can give up their former identity and receive a new form of existence and perception of themselves. The participant above (D258), though, uses media to retain, not to give up her identity, but the openness she demonstrates likely affects her perceptions of both herself and the world. Though it is reasonable to presume that a singular text or programme may not alter identities, long-term exposure to consistent and substantial media offerings can have deep-reaching effects on users' personalities (Gerbner et al., 1986).

Whether we live in media, as Deuze (2011) suggests, or media lives in us, as I suggest, media affects and can change what we are and what we think about, how we see ourselves and the world, and can amplify the elements we want to live with or the

elements we wish to resist in a preferable world. In the following example, the viewer's interpretation of an interesting and inhabitable world carries her to the Blue Mosque:

> When the reporter promises an appearance by Juhana Idänpää-Heikkilä from the University of Helsinki, I leave the TV on after all. Last spring I went to hear him speak at the Critical Academy when the Buddha statues carved in rock 'disappeared' from the cosmos. Even then I wondered what kind of people could be found from the 'depths' of university offices. With 1970s style glasses and a wide tie, he is delightfully different from the 'commenters' you see on the average morning. I once read that he knows Arabic languages and Persia and seeing him visualised a picture of the blue mosque into my mind. The morning begins well at the Blue Mosque. D160 - Female, 41

The complex elaboration, inspired by a topic in a talk show, illustrates how much detail a susceptible mind can produce. Ricouer's (1981) idea of a world to inhabit through interpretation is corroborated by Dewey (1938), who states that for the world made by people to be what it always was meant to be—peoples' home during their time on Earth—it has to adapt to completely useless activities such as action and talk. A sometimes seemingly useless activity such as watching and interacting with TV programmes is one of the actions that results in feeling at home in the world, for instance, in including distant ways of life into own experiences:

> One programme I would surely watch: Some exotic far-away tribe in the jungle or by the sea. The tribe would be introduced, their history and way of life would be described. There would be no effort to influence the tribe's way of life and their customs would be respected. The programme would try to get the core of the tribe's ways, without it overemphasising or leaving out anything. F281 - Female, 39

The participant again stresses the style and execution of an ideal factual programme. In a cultural programme, the understated tone of the discussion enables viewers' participation, even of belonging on the discussion team:

> Voimala has that something. Many times I'm not even aware of the books that they're discussing alongside the other issues, but I get the urge to pick them up at the library and read them myself. And then there's the so-called education or awareness part. If you have no other peer group, this may be

> considered one, or at least you get the urge to identify with that message. It's as though it elevates your mind. D249 - Female, 59

The defining feature of cultural property, in the sense I have utilised it in this section, is inclusivity. In the above examples, belonging implies not only relating oneself to the world but relating the experience of others to one's own, individual universe. Another central element of a mental universe among the participants is the presence of time – past and present perhaps more than future—or the essence of past in dealing with today and tomorrow.

> Panzar was quite right in that in economic studies history, sociology and other disciplines that help us understand backgrounds, why and how this world spins, should be obligatory. Without that background an economist is just a mathematician! If you know nothing about the past, you cannot learn anything from today, nor know nothing about future. DV4

Providing access to history, contexts, backgrounds and memory is one of the characteristic features of factual television supply. In the age of multiple interfaces for programme distribution, television as the potential common nominator results in it being a practical tool for cultural memory. Hagedoorn (2013) outlines television as a practice of active and passive remembering and forgetting, an institution of active memory that preserves the past as present. As archives and museums preserve the pastness of the past, television can be active and maintain the dynamics of cultural memory (Ibid.). While in some phases of television's technical evolution, cultural history has been wilfully destroyed for technical reasons, and in others willingly neglected due to ignorance or ideology—thus enhancing forgetting—consciously managed public television platforms are a reservoir for living cultural memory. Crucial in Hagedoorn's model is that users can engage with the past as represented via the medium of television and use it as an instrument for deeper understanding of cultural memory as the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts. Viewers work historical facts into their own context; this participant's particular interest in art history is the destination and whereabouts of archaeological findings:

> Archaeology interests me very much by the way, especially excavation carried out in the beginning of the last century, i.e., how findings were handled in that period (a documentary was just shown about Caligula's ships, which I had never heard of, a really good programme) and where the objects were transported, e.g., how many of the national treasures of Egypt and Greece and other Mediterranean countries are in England and

> other European countries—especially in private collections?
>
> Artist biographies also interest me (e.g., the Alphonse Mucha documentary on Teema was really nice) as well as art history in general. F282 - Female, 41

In the participant's chain of thoughts, art history as cultural memory on television can be interpreted as becoming a personal memory of a programme experienced. Human consciousness, as Höijer (1990) previously stated, is intimately related to memories and to our internal language—the thought process—which largely takes place in the form of inner speech. Höijer's explanation reconfirms the supposition that factual experiences can be non-social in the physical world, and, therefore, invisible as motives in industry's market research. Yet, the motives of belonging, relating to memories and accumulating cultural property can be interpreted as fundamental needs of safety, social being, esteem and self-actualisation. In his later writings, Maslow added a sixth and higher motivation to his metamotives (Kottko-Rivera, 2006), namely self-transference: a motive reaching out from mere self-actualisation to the actualisation and existence of others. Being able to identify to others' circumstances, cultures and experiences has been an at least implied quality of many of the excerpts above, as it is in the following:

> Lately there have been a number of programmes about other cultures, which is good since people are unnecessarily prejudiced. Over the weekend I watched a programme where a young girl got to know about the faith of Islam. It was a good programme, enlightened me too. F166 - Female, 59

If Maslow's needs distinctions are treated as a classification instead of a hierarchy, as it is often represented, the needs of belonging and safety tangle into both self-actualisation and self-transference when self-actualisation is defined as seeking fulfilment of personal potential (Koltko-Rivera, 2006) and self-transference as seeking to further a cause and experience a communion beyond the boundaries of the self (p. 303). Self-transference can be seen as a need to understand and connect with the realms beyond self and the capability of gaining abilities for dealing with issues concerning human existence while acquiring ingredients for personal growth. Fulfilling the needs for self-actualisation and self-transference can also fulfil the need for safety. The next quote is a telling example of how awareness of other peoples' distant actions can bring about serenity for a viewer:

> The discussion is a part of the TV channel's Culture Thursday programming, and I watch it regularly. Listening to writers speak makes you feel peaceful.

> Somewhere there are still people who strive to make life decent. They examine the world with curious eyes and increase our awareness. They write for our pleasure and benefit. D252 - Male, 48

There is comfort in knowing that all is well in the direction the viewer is looking. Yet, the same needs of self-actualisation and self-transference can result in factual viewing that increases anxiety:

> The day ends as I write these sentences and words and TV one is showing a Uusi Kino documentary about child soldiers. I suffer greatly as I watch a young girl speak of being raped by soldiers when she was just a child… I think of my own daughters in Rovaniemi, Siilinjärvi and Vantaa. I think that I, too, could have been born somewhere else, with different colour, a different mind, bad or even worse and because of that the lives of my own children … no, it's difficult to even think about it. D170 - Male, 43

In studying reception with people under mortality salience, Rieger et al. (2015) found that meaningful media can also serve as an anxiety buffer shielding against the threat of death, as they transport cultural worldviews and enhance self-esteem among recipients. In less extreme existential situations, the meaningfulness of media offerings is closely connected to a sense of coherence or the opposite of it.

> I'm about to finish 1. Asimov's sci-fi book The Gods Themselves. I liked it some twenty years ago. This time my reading experience wasn't quite as inspiring. Nevertheless, the theme based on Schiller's idea—Against stupidity the gods themselves contend in vain—feels almost too topical. The digital channels are here and the possibilities to choose have multiplied, but will we become wiser? Are the media fighting against stupidity with verified information or are they simply making money? Was Ignacio Ramonet right in his book The Tyranny of Communication? He claims that media reporters and the creators of programmes are no longer critical and that there is no effort to analyse. The media are the messenger-boys or -girls for money? I hope not, but it's looking bad. The time is now 12:01 a.m. The media day is over and a new one has already begun. Should we keep up and with what? D322 - Male, 61

These last words, 'should we keep up and with what', summarize the anxiousness many participants, and observably many members of audiences feel in front of the media landscape, which is so hard to grasp in the escalating change: the 'runaway

world', as Giddens (2002) names it. Public connection to factual programming perceived to be of high quality or value to the assessors can contribute to the quality of life, provide cultural property and construct a coherent life experience.

8. Conclusions

This study has explored the experiences of groups of factual television viewers in Finland in the first two decades of the 21st century. The project began when television monoculture prevailed. In the course of the research, the entire media environment transformed fundamentally, and, at times, it seemed that television might not survive to be studied for long. Now, with the 2020s having arrived, new forms of consuming television contents have arisen in addition to – not instead of – broadcast television, to the extent that there is more television than ever (Gray & Lotz, 2019). For factual programming, broadcast television with an organic web presence is a sustainable model, although the conditions under which traditional factual genres presently struggle for living space are growing increasingly difficult. Both the multitude of video streaming platforms, competing for viewers' time and attention, and the television programme policy choices narrow factual exposure and demand activity and capabilities from individual users of contents.

Popularity is a prevailing factor inside the television industry and inside public service media. Popular programmes are measured and reproduced, while less popular, small-audience programmes are hardly noticed—even though they form the majority of all programme output. In television and audience studies, popular genres, such as news, drama, comedy and reality, are analysed, but research on traditional factual television is scarce. This present study is relevant because it explores the seemingly self-evident, quiet, uneventful television viewing, which, when examined more closely, is actually a multifaceted and rich part of factual audiences' lives.

I analysed three datasets from different periods. The first set was large national media diary collection from 2001 (FSD1306), the second a set of focus group discussions from 2006–07 (BBFG) and the third social media comment samples from 2015, 2018 and 2019 (Docventures). Following Costera Meijer's (2017) observations that approaching experience openly rather than through pre-decided categories can

reveal complexities and explain contradictions that would otherwise remain undiscovered, the analysis found salient perspectives on factual television engagement. Such engagement has qualities and features unique to factual television, and it provides the types of public connections that news and fiction cannot offer.

This study demonstrates that, even if the media environments are dominated by change, factual reception is characterised by constancy. The findings from temporally and demographically varied datasets suggest that audiences' core needs, expectations and engagement motives do not seem to have altered over the period examined.

I now explain, by revisiting the research questions that guided this study, what the findings reveal about the experiences and views that the participants in this study expressed.

8.1. Responses to research questions

The ambition of this study has been to assess the role, value and uses of factual television for viewers. This assessment is grounded in the understanding gained in professional practice that factual programmes have a particular meaning to viewers, and that the engagement with factual programmes adds value and quality to everyday life, a view confirmed in studies exploring different aspects of the factual field (e.g., Hill, 2007, 2017; Harindranath, 2009; Höijer, 1989). To obtain insights into the focus of this study, three research questions were posed: RQ1) What kind of engagement with factual programming in everyday do viewers have? RQ2) What kind of expectations of factual television do viewers have, and with what type of qualities in programming are they met? RQ3) What kind of public connection, knowledge and pleasure does factual television offer?

As an answer to RQ1 *(What kind of engagement with factual programming in the everyday do viewers have?),* the comments reveal that although media penetrates all aspects of contemporary life and is often casual and mundane, much factual viewing is conscious and attentive. The participants are aware and possessive of their media usage and its place in *their* lives. Rather than living in media and being absorbed by it, the writers in these texts *absorb* everyday media events *into* their lives. Everyday lives are not built upon random practices, varying from day to day, but daily and weekly routines have both an influence on media use and are influenced by media. Favourite factual programmes, particularly documentaries and special-interest

programmes, are consciously chosen and engaging with them forms more individual routines than rituals. An anticipated factual program can provide quality time and be the highlight of the week.

Much of television engagement is social or socially motivated, and some television programmes are particularly consumed for group and/or family viewing. *Docventures*' viewers in these data cherish sharing their experiences and thoughts with likeminded people of the documentaries they watch, and that possibility may be what initially brought them to the programme series. However, the experiences they share do not much deviate from the experiences of the participants of the other datasets, in which the privacy of the experiences is more characteristic. Factual viewing in these data is, remarkably often solitary and independent of the popularity of the program. This notion reveals a perspective in which audiences do watch programmes they value, just not as often or not in such large groups as the more popular programmes are viewed. Not everybody is social and extroverted, and even those who are may not be so all the time. The social functions of television vary between individuals and within individuals, depending on acute or long-term purposes and needs, and are, at times, not present at all in a TV encounter. Questions of quality as decisive determinants of the engagement experience are raised instead.

The findings regarding RQ2 *(What kind of expectations of factual television do viewers have, and with what type of qualities in programming are they met?),* provide accounts of how the makings of quality are experienced. The diaries provide these accounts mostly indirectly; whereas, the online focus group data and *Docventures* commentaries are more explicit when issues concerning programme qualities are elaborated. Quality experience is the result of an interactive process in which production decisions manifest in a product with specific properties or qualities that resonate (positively or negatively) with the viewers' resources and expectations.

The essence of a satisfying factual experience is that it fulfils or exceeds the expectations of the viewer. Factual viewing is selective and critical. For factual audiences of this study, quality means adequate substance, depth, expertise, focus and a genre-appropriate choice of narrative means. Being entertained by high-quality factual does not mean the dilution of the subject matter to be pleasurable, entertaining, thought-provoking and memorable. Good factual television may be simple in form and content, or it may have a complex narrative and informative structure. The qualities of factual experiences are produced by and interact with the qualities of factual programmes, and some of those experiences are rarely produced by other genres or programme types.

The viewing experience can be equally pleasurable in different genres: a quality drama, an ingenious documentary and a skilfully constructed discussion may serve the same needs of enchantment and immersion. However, the demands and expectations regarding the qualities of different genres are not similar. The quality of factual programming differs from that of fictional programming and consists of different features, even if the basic components are the same: sound, image, form and content. Nevertheless, quality talk on factual differs from quality talk on fiction—it is not about plot, characters, acting, dialogue, design, lighting, music or screenwriting. Factual quality discourse is constructed of narrative means, not exclusive but central in factual genres—dynamism, editing, rhythm, design, script, and presenters; of content, expertise, attitude or journalistic competence; and impact, emotional imprint and intersubjective grip.

Finally, RQ3 *(What kind of public connection, knowledge and pleasure does factual television offer?)* provides an inner perspective on factual engagement and interaction. Public connection in the factual viewing explored in these data implies connection to art, culture, history, nature and science, rather than to power and politics or the events of the day. This connection is active and participatory and can be highly social, albeit on emotional and intellectual levels, related to content and the features of society, participating in and interacting with the world, though not physically or verbally.

Thinking and cognitive needs are the key concepts that keep either explicitly or implicitly emerging from the participants' comments. Obtaining insights from people's revelations and the intersubjective moments offered when dealing, particularly, with art, science, society or ideas define meaningful and memorable factual experiences. Viewers encounter existential questions, and a factual program can contribute to the renewal of perception and identity, to one's sense of self in the world and to the sense of belonging to it.

One of the realisations of this study is that being enlightened can also mean being delighted. The pleasures sought and obtained from factual television are, most important, those of knowledge and understanding. Informal learning or accumulating knowledge, which I call cultural property in this study, can be non-instrumental and have intrinsic value. Growth and self-development are often explicitly or implicitly mentioned as a delight. Growth may not occur instantly or directly, and a single deed or a singular programme is unlikely to produce it intentionally, but factual programmes can, at their best, *enable* growth. Growth is, by definition, a process, and as such it can be affected and nurtured with available and accessible factual programming. Viewers work facts into their own contexts; for instance, art documentary as cultural memory on television can be interpreted as becoming a

personal memory of a programme experienced.

An experience should not be regarded as a separate incident but one in relation to past and future experiences. A common denominator for many comments on factual quality and experience is that viewers want and need to think for themselves, not to be guided to a conclusion. Forming an opinion is rewarding, as is any stimulus for a thought process. There need not be, and often there is not, a reason or use for the information obtained. Information can be gathered for curiosity or just for the fun of thinking thoughts. At other times, the craving for content – for something to think about – often equals a craving for meaning and sense of coherence.

8.2 A good television

This study shares Harindranath's interpretation of television as active meaning constructor and as the producer of everyday, *commonsense reality* (2009, 40). Gadamer's (1975) conception of the *horizon of expectations*, the sets of ideas viewers bring to the text, in anticipation of the meaning of it based on prior knowledge of its constituents, such as its generic features, are central. The specificity of expectations and the ways in which a particular genre's quality responds to them or lets them down is directly connected to the pleasure gained. in Mulgan's (1990, 14) words: "quality exists within an economy of demands and rewards".

Factual programming produces the type of cognitive and emotional reactions that other genres do not, as long as the viewer's demands and expectations are met. Television *quality* is, therefore, essential regarding what the viewers process, a means of belonging and of making sense of the world and oneself. Factual programming perceived to be of high quality or value contributes to quality of life, provides cultural property and constructs a coherent life experience. There is continuous exchange and interaction among and between producers, products and viewers, with information, analysis, fascination and understanding being created and gathered.

A great deal of production and editorial know-how is rooted in thorough knowledge of the field in question, which enables an understanding of what viewers already know, what they might be interested in, and how they can be surprised. Producers can, at their best, attentively read the field in question, the generic requirements, and the viewer's knowledge base and interests. The ability to read and

understand the viewer's position enables an appropriately executed offering. A skilful and functional application of narrative means (e.g., rhythm, effects, sounds, voice-over, music, graphics, camera movements) requires know-how, but also effort and craft (Mulgan, 1990, 9). As advised by Mulgan, if it is impossible to arrive at a final definition of quality, it is still important to try to establish criteria (Ibid, 5). In the chart, below, I present some elements that need to be considered when producing factual programmes, how those qualities might be manifested as product properties, and with which viewer resources or qualities they resonate.

PRODUCTION decisions	PRODUCT properties	AUDIENCE resources
Field	Focus	Capabilities
Genre	Depth/Expertise	Cognition
Presenter	Authenticity	Attitude
Narrative means	Narrative style	Emotion
Knowledge	Assertiveness	Receptiveness

Figure 8.1. Elements of quality

The chart maps the features that are activated or demand attention or action in the meaning production system of factual programming and its construction. These elements are fully operational only in an environment where there are substantial resources and demand for a full scale factual programming, but they can also be of operational assistance inside genres or projects when analysing the types of qualities aspired and the type of impact anticipated.

This chart (8.1) can be used as a tool for understanding and managing the complexity of a satisfying programme process from production to reception. The elements can be considered and utilised in different orders, more elements can be added and others can be excluded. In this figure, for example, the aspects of field are first decided. In the field of e.g. science, culture, history, society, or education, a choice of a subfield is then made, including a consideration of which area from which aspect or focus should be covered, what is perhaps overly treated already, and what deserves attention for whose benefit; what does the viewer gain and are they expected to be interested in or knowledgeable of the field to begin with. The choice of genre defines product qualities–e.g. documentary, report, reality, discussion,

magazine, livestream, and their subgenres. What kind of knowledge does the choice contribute to viewers' thinking or understanding, if the intention is to increase it? If the chosen genre calls for a presenter, what is their relationship to the field, how genuine, convincing or entertaining are they, and how affectively will viewers respond to the personality? Other factors of narrative style also operate within the chosen genre: visual style, pace, music, diversity of characters, presentation of information–each should fit the genre to fulfil or surpass viewers' potential emotional expectations. All of the above demands enlighten producers in creating products that convince viewers with their expertise, know-how, or desire for excellence, so that an openminded audience can join the viewing experience. Also, the question of worth must be assessed: do viewers get something new or unavailable elsewhere; is the product distinctive; how inclusive or exclusive is it ethnicly or demographically?

The background to production decisions is discussed in Chapters 2 and 6. Chapter 6 addresses programme qualities and how they impact viewers. Audience resources correspond to the participants' experiences, as expressed and implied in Chapter 7.

Quality is a question of taste and likes and dislikes (Bourdieu, 1984), but preferences can be deconstructed, as in this case, to dimensions of superficiality versus thoroughness, and of focus, presentation, structure and competence. Analytical audience research and hearing audiences' thoughts, instead of only surveying their opinions, is vital (Hill, 2007; Höijer, 1999), since it is not necessarily the loudest voices that convey an audience's experience.

Most of the pleasures of television come from moving between mass-audience programmes and minority ones, from comedy to nature programmes to film, as diversity is one the foundations of quality (Mulgan, 1990). Defined as a range of different programme types, diversity is built into the remit of public service (Ibid). Diversity is an essential condition and, perhaps, the only guideline for small-audience factual programming's existence. I argue that a diverse and substantial factual programme supply cultivates a media environment that contains qualities and genres without which the television landscape would lack important dimensions, and which offer qualities and experiences that cannot be replaced by other programme types or genres.

Programmes and programme brands that become important to viewers are owned in the sense that they become a part of the viewer's personal life and their life experience. From what they define as quality, factual viewers seek deeper meaning: the feeling of being moved and the motivation to elaborate on thoughts and feelings inspired by the viewing experience. The participants in this study often look to factual programmes for new thoughts and constituents for their own thinking and for their

own private cultural property. Cultivating capabilities, learning and accumulating knowledge property using the information and insights obtained from documentaries or other factual genres is valuable to individuals with the opportunity and desire to engage in critical-thinking and reflection, and to those looking to improve theit capabilities.

The more expectations, the more demands. The better the demands are met, the higher the assessment of quality; the lower the estimated quality, the deeper the disappointment. As an example of high hopes regarding a genre, the quote, below, indicates that the participant is well aware of what to expect from a cultural programme:

> A good cultural programme: doesn't underestimate the viewer, isn't arrogant or elitist, isn't loaded with jargon, presents the phenomenon, the subject, analyses, puts it into a broader context, does not make value judgements, provokes questions in the viewer, the desire to know more or at least to think more – or to come to the conclusion that this really isn't for me, helps in understanding who we are, where we're coming from, and why it's that place where we're possibly going. That's what culture is about. F202 – Female, 48

When a viewer searches for a gratifying cultural or factual programme experience, they have turned to public service media where available. In Finland, YLE has been almost solely responsible for factual supply and repertoire. That outlook has been transforming in a way I describe in the following section.

8.3 Factual environments

To discuss the demands and conditions of factual media environments, I begin with an environment that deals almost exclusively with fiction, namely the Oscars, whose 2014 host remarked: 'I'm not saying that movies are the most important thing in the world, because we all know that the most important thing in the world is youth' (Ellen DeGeneres, Los Angeles, Feb. 3, 2014). DeGeneres was talking about showbusiness, but youth seems to have become the most important thing in public service business as well.

The developments in factual television environments are remarkable, particularly within public service, which produces many factual genres and kept a variety of them viable. The measures, norms and values employed when strategies and programme policies are formulated seem – within YLE and other European public broadcasting companies – to have been in transition. When a national public broadcaster is competing for viewers' attention with the global internet and trying to defend its position and share from the pressures of changing platforms and markets, its means require revising. Nevertheless, what may have been misjudged is that viewers' needs and expectations are presumed to have undergone the same changes as distribution technology and consumer markets, and just as quickly. However, there may be no parallel between cognitive and growth needs, on the one hand, and consumer behaviour or even media usage on the other.

Over the research period of this study, the Finnish Broadcasting Company's YLE's market share has remained relatively stable; whereas, its national commercial competitors have been losing their positions as global streaming services providers are gaining ground. YLE's institutional and funding status was, over the same period, repeatedly re-evaluated at parliamentary level, most recently in 2012 and 2017, when the tax-based funding and administrative bodies were confirmed and settled. One determining factor in the 2012 amendment to the law (Finlex 434/2012) and to the consequent strategic guidelines was the addition of youth as an explicit age segment (in addition to children) that YLE should serve.

Since the early 2010s, YLE has, in its audience understanding, relied on quantifiable information derived from its own data sources or from market-research companies, a tactic that Philip Napoli (2008) conceptualises as the *rationalisation of audience understanding*. This concept implies attempts to enhance knowledge, predictability and control in relation to audiences. These efforts tend to be accompanied by analytical simplifications of information gathering and processing that are highly selective in terms of the nature of the information gathered (Ibid., 3). This simplification entails the quantification of audience size and composition, resulting in the neglect of other dimensions of the audience (Ibid., 26). At YLE, audience (or customer) analysis focuses on successes in terms of largest audiences in a chosen target group, while low-popularity products and their reception remain on the margins. Most factual programmes belong to this category.

The data-driven and quantifiable audience analysis – prioritising reach, for example – is media-centric. This approach measures what media gets, not what the users get, as there are no tools in use for measuring impact. The public's media usage could inform policymaking, remarks Napoli (2008), but since audience research in its

current analytical approach oversimplifies the nature of the public (as audience) and its needs and interests, this leads to poor policy decisions (p. 27).

In searching for and designing programme policies in an evolving media environment, YLE's solutions (in addition to the pursuit of young audiences, often through drama and reality programming) have resulted in an emphasis on news and current affairs, and – most remarkably in the context of the present research – in the disappearance of whole factual genres. Educational television does not exist anymore, and the online educational programme production and services replacing it are far less than used to be in broadcast. Environmentalism, consumer service, economics, culture and domestic reportage as regular, titled, relevant and substance-orientated programming have (as of spring 2020) all but ceased to exist on YLE television channels. Instead, investigative reporting on hard topics is entrenched, as are daily current-affairs studio shows that provide information, opinions and reactions on news in an agenda-setting volume.

What is difficult to perceive, as the changes in programming are gradual and non-dramatic, is that the phenomenon of vanishing factual genres has the potential to change conceptions of what the world is about. In other words, the thinning diversity and plurality of genres can twist audiences' sense of what reality (as seen on TV or displayed on web television) consists of. If one thinks of reality as seen through media as a landscape, the endless stream of 'latest' and 'most popular' races by, and there is no longer a horizon to the past and future, to things being, not 'happening now'. If there is no horizon, there is merely the hectic present, and the incomprehensible or incontrollable future. The pace at which life in the media landscape passes by offers the illusion that there is not much else worth telling, and yet, not that much information may be being conveyed (Bourdieu, 1984). The impression of urgency and the imminence of evolving events can frame news and current-affairs audiences as objects, rather than actors, in their own lives, weakening their sense of coherence and self. The *mean world syndrome* (Gerbner, 1973) becomes a *chaotic world syndrome*.

Factual television promotes thinking processes and, consequently, moulds the cumulated knowledge capital and its uses in the constant redefinition, reconstruction and evolution of a person's relationship to their own life and to the world. A sense of coherence – *comprehensibility*, *manageability* and *meaningfulness* (Antonovsky, 1987) – is a crucial outcome of a diverse and sane media landscape in which a visible supply of factual programming provides the constituents of this sense of coherence: (1) how inner and outer stimuli make sense by being coherent, ordered, cohesive, structured and predictable; (2) how resources are available to manage the demands posed by the stimuli; and (3) how those demands are meaningful as challenges and worthy of investment and engagement (Antonovsky, 1987; Bergström et al., 2006).

The sense of the world's comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness making individuals more resilient to the stressors they encounter in daily life is nurtured by the individuals' relationships with their environment. Television is one of many sources for creating stable structures of meaning and for resolving or working through problems (Mulgan, 1990). Furthermore, the continuity and relative stability of the media environment that television constructs, has provided ontological security (Williams, 2008). Williams studied fandom and its relationship with features of television programmes, and how the presence of significant programmes can be interwoven with past experiences and events. She concludes that the studied reality and drama shows could offer a source for the routinisation of day-to-day life and a defence against anxiety. Ontological security involves the ability to deal with change and to obtain a sense of trust in the surrounding world (Ibid.). I suggest that audiences of factual programmes, who turn to public service media for the perpetual reconstruction of their sense of coherence, expect such media to provide ontological security in offering a repertoire of generically fulfilling and diverse programming, with several perceptual categories of contents and viewpoints.

This ideal is evident also from the perspective of a cultural right, as the diminishing diversity of factual programming can be interpreted as depriving citizens of their rights. A participant in this study insists that people should not be underestimated (by TV program supply), as people are specifically in need of knowledge:

> I believe that information belongs to all, not only researchers and scientists. That is our privilege in a society where every person has their own domain, everyone has the right to enjoy the contributions of others. F338 – Female, 28

Meeting fundamental communication and content needs or the right to *enjoy the contributions of others* is amongst the democratic basic principles that enable inclusion, in addition to access, diversity and plurality, as defined by Picard and Picard (2017; also Ala-Fossi et al., 2018, and Jaakkola, 2015). Silvo (1988) explains that a programme policy that prioritises audience understanding considers people able to value, feel and experience and is based on a point of view "which enfolds people's and society's everyday life, present and tradition" (p. 219). Targeting audiences randomly by age alone can dilute journalistic consideration and autonomy, and when attention is focused on the qualities of audiences and their reach, their needs and expectations and the content and quality they are reached with is largely or altogether absent from the discourse. The vagueness and abstractness of media policy and the disappearance of the concept of programme policy from professional

discussions result in the programmes as texts not being the centre of attention. Over 20 years ago, Livingstone (1998, 8) discussed texts tending to get lost altogether, and of how concerns about disappearing audiences are turning into fear of texts being in danger. While this assessment may not be the whole truth, the focus in both industry and academic research is on consumption, platforms and social interaction. However, particularly with the emerged and emerging distribution platforms and screens of different sizes and uses, the aesthetic elements–structure and storytelling–and the diversity of content should be at the forefront of research and development

Research on online/offline web usage of factual contents is difficult to find, partly because commercial services do not release their figures or analyses, and partly because most of this content likely comprises low-popularity programmes. In a focus group study of male and female 16 to 19 year olds (YLE 2018e) who do not find YLE meaningful in their lives, one conclusion is that, for YLE to become important, audiences must consume more than a few products every now and then – preferably weekly or daily. The need for routines and rituals seems not to have faded, even if the usage of ritual-producing legacy media may have. Therefore, web platforms and services should offer a sense of coherence and ontological security: undercurrents of continuity, adequate constancy, comprehensible structures and predictability.

8.4 New platforms, new problems

It might be bold to state that, today, there is more television but less structure than ever before. This statement would also be false, as the emerged and emerging media are quickly evolving into structures of global giants and rising competitors, small national broadcasters and media houses, and flourishing spheres of small and individual sites. Everything is 'out there', and it is easy to search for whatever one can think of – though perhaps not so easy to find it, if the results provided by algorithms are eventually not responding to the questions people enter, or if the answers are pre-filtered and confined. Therefore, underneath and inside the wealth of forms and contents, ontological structures are missing. The emergence and growth of web platforms have often been so rapid that information architecture has been built along with or after the accumulation of the programmes' data basis, from the surface down to contents, which are unevenly classified.

A year consists of 8760 hours, and YLE Areena alone provided 50,000 hours of programming in 2017 (YLE 2017e). Perceiving and approaching the supply as a user can easily be done using simple parameters, especially if the user knows precisely what they are looking for, or if the manmade or algorithm-generated recommendations suffice. However, the absence of a site map, comprehensive directory or index with several levels or semantic classifications and possible entry points makes refined browsing or even effective navigation of a website difficult if not impossible. The qualities of websites' information structures can also be patronising in making pre-selections on users'/viewers' behalf and depriving them of autonomy. Democratic and participatory ideals characterise digital technologies, but persistent 'digital divides' hinder opportunities for access and production (Horowitz & Napoli, 2014, 309). The evolution of digital technologies and services is not and cannot be very democratic and participatory as long as media operators and IT-industry interests solely control the evolution.

Navigation practices and programme choice processes on a large scale are yet to be studied (Napoli, 2016), but a YLE study (2018e) reveals that young users of YLE Areena applications only watch what they came to see, and then remove the application – they do not browse the rest of the output. The average daily usage of YLE Areena in 2018 by the under-45 demographic was six minutes (for TV, it is 22 minutes); viewers over 45 also watched YLE Areena for six minutes a day (TV for 72 minutes), but their share is growing, unlike that of the younger segment (Ibid.). In spring 2020, the usage of all media increased remarkably as a consequence of Covid19, but it remains to be seen what long-term effects follow.

Recommendation as an attraction tool can be effective both in social media and on streaming platforms, for which algorithms are programmed to select content individually based on previous viewing or on the popularity of a product. Popularity breeds popularity, and research has found that inputs such as existing popularity in making recommendations can lead to greater concentration of further usage (Napoli, 2016): when users are directed to popular content, it enhances the demonstrated popularity of that content, which is likely to lead to the content being recommended even more. Napoli refers to Anderson's (2006) idea or *ideal* of the long tail)– that is, of niche programming having an everlasting presence in the unconstrained digital shelf space – together with sophisticated recommendations and search systems mean that previous limitations of usage would be surmounted. In the new environment, and with a much greater choice of options, content would be consumed and, eventually, due to the long tail, low-popularity content would gain a share of audience attention as large as even larger than the popular content, the 'fat head' (Ibid.) However, Napoli concludes that the empirical findings on the success of such strategic approaches are,

at best, inconsistent, and that the mechanisms can be manipulated to work in the opposite direction; that is, for the popular contents instead of the niche ones.

The initial optimism generated by expectations about the internet's ability to facilitate the democratisation and diversification of cultural production and consumption (Ibid., 342) has faded. D'Heer and Verdegem (2015, 231–232) call for an ontological and epistemological understanding of how digital objects and pre-ordered *data structures model the world*. They rely on Manovich's (2001) concept of transcoding, reflecting the translation of information from the computer layer – the database – to the cultural layer, the sociocultural meaning and categories.

The nature of programme policies and the problem of guiding users to diverse contents in web services are issues not easily debated in journalistic communities. The mechanisms of website layouts, top choices, content streams and algorithmic value constructions belong to specialists. The ethical and journalistic choices that may eventually surpass programme policy to form parameters for media policies are emerging in an environment of constant development. The issues of cultural rights or generic diversity are not likely to dominate the process. Using the services takes skills and capabilities that not all potential users possess; skills that linear broadcast television in its equal access does not require, and capabilities which the availability and use of factual programmes could be, for their part, fortifying.

As such, present major global steaming services like Netflix, HBO and Disney are boosting their documentary catalogues, and given the near infinity of YouTube videos, there is more factual programming available now than ever. However, this cannot be said with certainty. Global platforms and other commercial enterprises do not release their figures, and in national broadcasters' repertoires, the sheer mass of unstructured content data is a challenge for research. As copyright issues are less complicated in factual programmes than in drama, it is likely that the majority of the 50,000 yearly hours at YLE Areena that remain on the site are factual, but information on the generic quality and size of the repertoire is unavailable due to a lack of consistent classification.

Audiences are data, and data are figures, but figures are not knowledge. The fragmented field is vast and unformed, and the information available is too uncertain to be useful in making predictions. In an extremely volatile environment, all media operators – including public broadcasters – must make far-reaching decisions to hold on not only to their present and future audiences, but also to their given remit. Although–particularly from public broadcasters–data on the *usage* of contents can be extracted on a general level, it takes further analysis and detailed classification to realise how the different available factual contents of their repertoires are used. It is necessary also to examine what type of exposure and display these contents have had

to analyse their rank in relation to other consumed contents. Moreover, usage figures alone will not explicate the interest, appreciation or relevance of a given product, nor the value of the viewing experience.

8.5 Factual programming for the future

In relation to public services' role in shaping the flow of information in societies via their websites, Sørensen and Hutchinson (2018) identified five challenges, (1) balancing popularity and distinctiveness, (2) diversity of exposure to programming, (3) transparency of the logic underlying recommendations, (4) user sovereignty, and (5) the issue of dependence on or independence from commercial intermediaries (Ibid., 91). The challenges listed are addressed above, apart from the final one, concerning commercial intermediaries, highly topical in public service media's pursuit of young audiences. At YLE, a decision was made (YLE 2019b) to develop strongly the publication of some contents on third-party (social media) platforms, in addition to developing personalised services on the company's website, both of which were to be accomplished by allocating resources from broadcast services.

This decision may prove harsh for the diversity of television and the production and quality of existing factual programming. Former content development phases have strengthened news, drama, children's and youth programming, while resources for factual and cultural programming have diminished. Third-party platforms may reach those who are not initially exposed or attracted to YLE and, if the impact is effective, attract new audiences. However, competition is fierce, and the stakes are high. If the cuts to broadcast are significant, and the web strategies do not bring growth or slow the disappearance of new generations, the long-term societal and information-environmental repercussions may be high. The need for a sense of coherence and ontological security that audiences, as I claim, are searching for and have found from public service television is difficult to fulfil via the above-described actions or by infrastructures developed without attention to those needs. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the need for factual contents, knowledge or thinking is fading. If factual contents are easily available from services familiar to younger users, they will turn to them in their need.

In a study of the repercussions of the 2016 closing down BBC Three, a channel targeting young audiences, and moving its offering online, Thurman (2020), found that BBC Three's audience shrank by 60–70% and viewing minutes by 89%. Thurman considers that this decline may be affected by the loss of the audience that consumed it exclusively offline before, but also by a phenomenon in which ending offline distribution seems to be causing a sudden and substantial fall in the time spent with a media brand by its audience.

Staying relevant to future generations might imply strengthening and modernising legacy features instead of weakening them, sustaining the 'good' in television. Limits, linearity, structure and factuality, as a robust combination of public media services, could be a lasting attraction in the ever-transforming application contest. If a well-managed and strong public service media can, as a provider of factual contents, be considered a national resource affecting the well-being of civic society, then it should be acknowledged that the actions and reactions of a public service media company enhance or subvert its position as a provider of public benefit. As Mulgan (1990) formulates, the question that needs to be asked of any broadcasting system is whether it is adequate for its society.

For a PSM an inquiry into what audiences really want may also be a route to reconfirming legitimacy. The Swiss PSM, SRG SSR, faced a national referendum challenging its funding system and threatening to withdraw the public funding of its activities. The management and staff began a campaign to explain their value to citizens. By the time of the referendum in March 2018 the previously unfavourable polls were transformed to a 70% majority in favour of the funding system (Suarez Candel, 2020). A number of lessons were learned in this process. An important observation was that there may be a gap between the company's perception of the contribution to society that they are delivering and how the public and stakeholders see it. A PSM needs to be proactive, since citizens and stakeholders will not come to them with clear questions and expectations. Assessing, communicating and improving public value is a complex process; underestimating such a complexity, is likely to result in failure (Ibid.),

Legitimacy for a PSM cannot be taken for granted. Programme policies and the resulting media policies should be topics of wider public reflection, research and debate in Finland also. Substantial cooperation with national and international academic communities would provide more comprehensive understanding of the undercurrents in public sphere,and offer new insights into industry reports and daily numbers. A thorough public consultation, extending from a solid television strategy and general programming issues to specific factual and cultural programme policies, would enable genuine and valid interaction, and offer a concrete voice to audiences

whose interests media policies and programme policies are aimed at serving. Another outcome might be that the dynamics of continuities, rather than only those of change (Gerbner et al, 1986), would be examined. Gerbner, in emphasising the longitudinal and comparative nature of such examinations of the processes and consequences of institutionalised acculturation (Ibid.), defines the nature of this study as well.

The shortcomings of this study are also its strengths; the older datasets are from almost 20 years ago, and many of the programmes they analyse are long finished, as are many of the programme types and genres. Similar large media diary collections to the 2001 set have not been made, so there can be no validation through comparison. The data are not demographically representative; hence, no claims can be made about how quality perceptions may differ between demographic groups. Furthermore, no apparent divide was found between participants of different ages. Nevertheless, the perceptions and issues the participants raise are not dated but express the value of past experiences, which, in the present, must often be sought from other sources, media and forms. The later datasets amplify the meanings and value ascribed to factual experiences and suggest that factual needs and gratifications strongly abide in the studied field, and that providing them in multiple forms and substance genres would be appreciated.

Gray and Lotz (2019, 142) remind us that the researcher can never hope to speak for 'television',[29] but only about the little piece of it their study investigates, which constitutes one piece of a puzzle, other parts of which have been or are being pieced together by others. The researchers propose that the days of television studies as an independent field are over, and that they should be become a separate subfield, an *approach* [30]within a broader field. If Gray and Lotz are correct, this present study may be one of the last to have the word *television* in its title and to discuss television as if it had a future – which, I suggest, can be a bright one. Television's future is not happening, it is made.

For now, the amount of output, as well as the developments and abilities of usage of factual programming in broadcasting and on-demand services, is a phenomenon worthy of research, as are the texts (as contents), their qualities and their ability to entrench collective memory and individual cultural property. Knowing what is changing and in what direction provides a firm basis for enlightened media policy and decisive action. A culture cultivates the images of society (Gerbner et al, 1986, 188) just as the dominant communications agencies "structure the public agenda of existence, priorities, values, and relationships". In Gerbner's approach, media both

[29] Quotation marks in original.

[30] Italics in original.

shapes and mirrors society (Levo-Henriksson, 1994). What happens to television and its descendants, and what will be the stake of factual programming in this development, is more an act of moulding than of mirroring. A mirror as large and shiny as public service television can, merely by reflecting, shape developments that are not best for public service itself or for society. In other words, legacy and remit should oblige providers of public media services to maintain and foster factual programming to provide audiences with experiences that constitute what Hannah Arendt (1977) calls the faculty of thought; that is, the ability of an individual to think and judge for themselves.

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