

Television stories

The approximation of factual and entertainment narration

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Abstract

The article discusses the production of live television formats, as they have developed in Europe the last decade. The analytical examples are taken from entertainment as well as factual television, and from public service as well as commercial contexts. In the article is argued that there have been an approximation between the textual features and generic and narrative structures of entertainment and factual live television, and a model is presented, that is suppose to account for these narrative patterns.

Key words: television production, formats, narration, genre, entertainment, factual programs, Sweden, election nights, Eurovision Song Contest

Television stories

The approximation of factual and entertainment narration in European television

Göran Bolin

Television in Europe has traditionally been marked by strong public service institutions. Although the television companies in various European countries may differ from each other in organisational form and in the details of their policies, the idea that has served as a common for the companies has been to avoid commercial financing (Ang 1991, Wieten et al. 2000). This in contrast to the US, where the way of organising broadcasting was commercial from the very start (Barnouw 1975/1982). These differences, that have been at hand since the end of the second world war, however, have become less apparent from the 1980s and onwards, when the rapid spread of commercial television brought with it dramatic increases in the quantities of television programs on offer for the viewing audiences in Europe. The fact that there was a quantitative increase in program time available also brought with it a change in the premises under which television is being produced. This change can partly be ascribed technological developments within the production, but it can also be ascribed the fact that programming have had to adjust to the commercial environment.

One such consequence for programme content have been the increased intermingling of components from entertainment and factual television, leading to new genre mixes, and new program formats (several reality formats for example). Thus, there is an increased presence of documentary forms within fictional and entertainment productions, as well as an increased emphasis on narrative forms from entertainment television in factual television.

Another and more evolving consequence, however, has been the changes in the principles of how to construct narrative progression in programs, especially in non-fictional television genres. It might even be possible to argue that these new forms of constructing the television text are tied to the medium of television itself, and that it is first during the last couple of years that television has realised its potential as a visual narrator in its own right. It might, furthermore, be argued that the specificity of television narration is tied closely to live television formats, as live broadcasting is a founding characteristic of television as a medium (Heat & Skirrow 1977, Feuer 1983). This is also a form of television that transgresses both entertainment and factual genres, in contrast to fictional genres specific for television, such as the sit-com (cf. Feuer 1987/1990).

Against the background of television production in Europe, and with the main examples taken from entertainment shows, election nights, news and pan-

European entertainment productions, this chapter aims at discussing the transformation of narrative structures in live non-fictional television programming, as related to production features. In taking empirical examples from both entertainment and factual live television production, I seek to understand how narrative forms in television relate over genres. In the course of my argument I will suggest a model for an analysis that relates the narrative premises under which television programmes are being produced, with the narrative and generic elements that are activated in the production practices, and the textual features of the television program as it is broadcast. This model should explain why certain texts take on a specific form, as this form will inevitably have consequences for which readings will be privileged in the interpretation work of audience reception.

My examples are picked from four different kinds of live productions. They are chosen on the grounds that they should represent a spectrum of different genres, or formats, as generally perceived. Although we might think of them as belonging to different genres along axes of factual and entertainment television, all are characterised by the quality of liveness.

My first example is the Swedish lottery game show *Bingolotto* (for the analysis of which the model was developed; cf. Bolin & Forsman 2002), broadcast in Sweden since 1991 on Saturday evenings (since spring 2004 on Sundays) on ‘hybrid channel’ TV4 (cf. Syvertsen 1996).¹ *Bingolotto* then exemplifies national, entertainment television, produced by an independent production company in a commercial setting. My second example is an international entertainment production organised by public service companies, aimed at an international audience through public service broadcasters (although broadcast also via commercial channels) and ultimately organised by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU): the *Eurovision Song Contest*. I will relate mostly to the production of the show in Tallinn in May 2002. My third example is the prime time edition (30 minutes) of the news broadcast *Rapport* from a public service channel (SVT), and my fourth example is the Swedish election night coverage (*Valvakan 2002*) in connection to the parliamentary elections in September 2002, produced as an in-house production by TV4, thus making this also an example from a commercial setting. The parameters included in the analysis can be summarised schematically as in figure 1.

¹ A hybrid channel is commercially financed, but have obligations similar to public service companies through concessions agreement with the state authorities. They thus stand in an in-between position between public service and commercial broadcasting.

Program	Public Service / Commercial	Genre	National / International	Production
<i>Bingolotto</i>	Commercial	Entertainment	National	Independent
<i>Rapport 2004</i>	Public Service	Factual	National	In-house
<i>ESC 2002</i>	Public Service	Entertainment	International	In-house(s)
<i>Valvakan 2002</i>	Commercial	Factual	National	In-house

Fig. 1. Parameters for analysis.

From all of these program examples I have first-hand observational knowledge, although of various extent and depth. I have personally been present in the 'studio' at all occasions (in the case of *Bingolotto* on several, and in the case of *ESC 2002* also at dress rehearsals), and have taken part of, and/or have access to, observations and discussions during the planning and preparations of all productions.² I have also access to, albeit to different degrees, interviews and conversations with production staff. And I naturally have access to the television text on video.

My analysis will be at the level of the program texts, although I also acknowledge that all the examples also are produced as series. I will do this by analysing live studio productions along three dimensions.³ The first dimension concerns the relation between factual and entertainment forms: To what extent is it possible to analyse narrative forms in entertainment and factual programs along the same lines? Which similarities are there in the production process, and how does this affect the visuals? The second dimension relates to national and international television production. Is there an approximation of trans-national narrative forms of television? And, if so, which are its distinctive features? The third dimension concerns the relation between public service and commercial television. As the re-regulation of European broadcasting has led to public service and commercial companies competing (or at least co-existing) with each other, I want to analyse the similarities and differences between commercial and public service broadcasters. Which are the main differences – if any – in the ways in which programs get produced within the two systems?

² For the example of *ESC 2002* I am deeply indebted to observations and material collected by Staffan Ericson (who runs a project on *ESC* as media event; cf. Ericson 2002) and Michael Forsman (see especially Forsman 2002), both of whom made several interviews with producers, organisers and other production staff that I have used here.

³ I will hence not discuss live productions entirely produced outside of the studio, such as sports broadcasts.

I will start this discussion by pointing out the main changes in the field of television broadcasting in Europe, leading to the phase that John Ellis (2000) has termed ‘the era of plenty’. I will do this with a special focus on how these changes have affected production practices (and with a special focus on those changes in production habits that have been of importance for the textual features of television programs). I will then describe my program examples, and specify my questions to these. The main discussion of the narrative construction of liveness is organised around the three parts of narrative premises, narrative segmentation and narrative elements. I will summarise this discussion by describing the segmentation of each of my examples, before I make some conclusive statements on the dimensions factual/fictional, national/international and public service/commercial.

The era of plenty: changes in European TV production

The public service institutions have, as already have been indicated, stood strong in many Northern European countries. Although the trend in all European countries has been similar, the Nordic countries were among the last to open their broadcasting systems to commercial competitors in the 1980s (Brants & De Bens 2000 p. 21). The re-regulation surrounding the public service monopolies has naturally changed the structures of media organisations (cf. Curran 2000), and has affected output structures both quantitatively and qualitatively (cf. Asp 2004 for a Swedish example).

Quantitatively the changes have led to the rise of more television channels, more programmes, new genres and formats. More organisations and individuals have also become involved in television production, and there has been an increased change from in-house production (which was the dominant production form within the public service enterprises) to independent production companies serving both commercial and public service channels. At the time of the demonopolisation of public service, there was opened up a space in the field of television production for people who had not previously had chance to produce television (i.e. amateurs and civil society organisations, as well as commercial gold-diggers). This historical unfolding seems to have occurred in much the same way in several European countries, such as in Sweden (cf. Bolin & Forsman 2002), Norway (cf. Bakøy & Syvertsen 2001, Dahl & Høyer 2003), Denmark (cf. Skovmand 1992), as well as in the UK, although in this country at an earlier point in time (cf. Robins & Cornford 1992, Paterson 2001). This might partly explain the rise of new genre mixes. As I will show in greater detail below, people with little or no experience of television production are not restrained in generic thinking in the same way as those who have been working in the industry for long.

Partly as a result of these quantitative changes, and partly resulting from more general societal (economic, social, ideological) changes (cf. Ellis 2000 p. 62), there have been *qualitative changes* in the television systems. The ‘demand-led production’ (Ellis 2000) have meant that production has taken on new organisational forms. It has, for example, led to serialisation and industrialised production, where several episodes of entertainment shows of different kinds are produced each day.⁴ In this ‘era of plenty’, as John Ellis (2000) terms it, production becomes increasingly separated from distribution. Production enterprises have mushroomed over the past fifteen years, and television channels restrict to buying productions from external production companies, making them concentrating on their functions as distributors. As a consequence of the commercial financing, certain formats and programmes also tends to be privileged, e.g. those that has a youth audience (and the aesthetics that can be attached to these). There has also been an increased emphasis on niche audiences. The well-spread cliché that commercial media strive to maximise the size of the audience is far from true today. It is more important and cost-effective to reach *the right* audience without attracting unproductive viewers who do not fit into the niche segment, and which the advertisers do not want to pay for – that part of the audience that become ‘waste’ in the advertising jargon (Bolin 2002, p. 192f). Consequently, formats have been increasingly more important for the television channels. This has to a much higher degree than before led to a development of a separate market where formats are bought and sold as commodities. Furthermore, as more parties have been involved in the production process, and as they have various and sometimes contradictory aims with the production, there often arise conflicts of values (economic certainly, but also social, political and cultural), and these also have effects on the television text (cf. Bolin 2004a).

Codes of liveness

In Stuart Hall’s (1973) famous ‘encoding-decoding’ model, one of the contextual components for the moment of production (as well as the moment of reception) is, besides ‘technical infrastructure’ and ‘relations of production’, ‘frameworks of knowledge’. These frameworks are naturally of several kinds: knowledge on how to run technical equipment, on how to administrate economics, on how to write scripts, etc. One such framework of knowledge is the genre system. The genre level could be said to be one of five textual levels of analysis, where the most textually close is that of the segment. Then follow the level of the program, the schedule, the genre, and lastly the level of the ‘megatext’, comprising the totality of the television output (Ytreberg 1999 pp. 26f). The concept of genre in

⁴ To take just one example: *Iron Chef America* is produced at a pace of two programs each day, and with the whole season recorded in one week (Oldenburg 2005).

media production studies often point to standardised production practices. However, it also refers to standardised narrative codes to be found in the text, and to certain dominant ways of interpreting texts. In all entertainment and factual productions there are certain standardised expressive features and repetitive methods in the production – of talk shows, news broadcasts, game shows, current affairs programs, etc. The literature on genres in television is substantial, and I will not relate to the entire body of works within that area (for examples, see Altman 1999, Cawelti 1976, Fiske 1987, Lacey 2000). My argument rests on the fact that the genre system is prescriptive, and can be seen as a code that is working in both production and reception (Berger 1992). And the one feature I will forefront here is the code of ‘liveness’. News productions, as well as many entertainment programs, have liveness as one of their significant features, and it has been pointed out that the production practices for the two formats are quite similar (Hirsch 1977 as quoted in Ytreberg 1999 p. 12). However, there is also a tremendous difference between the code for liveness in a news broadcast, compared to the liveness in a game show (Bourdon 2000).

Liveness as a televisual code does not presuppose that the program is actually broadcast live. Many productions of course are, but quite a few are ‘live on tape’ productions, which means that they are recorded and broadcast *as if* live. This means that their narrative construction is linear, causal and has a clear direction. Events happen in real time (they take as long to represent as they take to happen), and there are no ellipses or other techniques to overcome linear clock time. Although several camera angles may be involved, obviously shot from different camera positions, the events they cover unfold in real time. There is a direct visual and aural address: the host/news anchor talks as if he or she is talking to me as a viewer right now, and the visuals are presented as things are happening at this very moment. Interviews are not made to look edited (although they often are), games take as long to play as they do in un-mediated contexts, etc. In short, the editing techniques are made to result in seamless texts unfolding for the eyes of the viewers. As Jérôme Bourdon (2000) has pointed out, the notion of belief is central to the live quality, in the meaning that there is a willing ‘suspension of disbelief’ on part of the viewer. Furthermore, also those productions that are live broadcasts in the meaning that they broadcast events as they happen (the typical example being the sports event/broadcast), often have non-live components. A news broadcast may have a taped interview in the middle of a news feature. Sports broadcasts have replays of important moments in a game, which paradoxically can enhance the liveness quality. There are pre-recorded elements in game shows, such as presentation clips of prizes. And sometimes, in order to fit the overall programming schedule, interviews with politicians on the night of the election that actually *could have* been broadcast live, are not, in order to fit better into the overall flow of the program. In the election wake on TV4 as well as on SVT reports and interviews from the different party headquarters were broadcast with delay, but made to look like live

broadcasts, which was also commented on in the press the day after the broadcast (cf. Björkman 2002). They are presented *as if* live, and we usually think of all these programs as live transmissions.⁵ They are thus ‘plausibly live’, a technique initiated by NBC during the Olympic Games 1990 in Sydney, when the company, due to the time difference between Australia and the US, postponed the broadcasts for the US audiences as if live in the morning (Reimer 2002, pp. 231ff). This delay made it possible to adjust the broadcast to what supposedly would attract the US audience, with a special focus on US athletes.

Live television, then, is very seldom entirely live. Live shows are a mixture of pre-recorded parts, live studio footage, and pre-prepared computer graphics and video effects. Out of the 180 minutes scheduled for the ESC 2002, only 130 was live transmission. The rest consisted of pre-recorded material (Forsman 2002 p. 72). This has always been true for news productions, having mixed the live reports from the news anchor with taped reports from far-away places. But it can be argued that it has become more common within entertainment productions. This is especially valid for game shows. The lottery draws on *Bingolotto* are made beforehand and are simulated live, but made to look as if drawn live each Saturday night, since Swedish legislation prohibits live lottery draws. This is a well known fact that seems to have had little influence on the willingness to accept the narrative premise of liveness by the audience, and interpreted as if the lottery numbers were drawn the moment the number is revealed on the television screen (Bolin & Forsman 2002).

When discussing live television it is then valuable to distinguish between live broadcasts with moments of pre-recorded material, and ‘live on tape’, a distinction Bourdon (2000 p. 538) has termed as being between ‘fully live’ and ‘continuity television’. However, the textual quality of liveness is central to both kinds of programs, although the practices and techniques for constructing that liveness differs (cf. Forsman 2002 p. 70f). This textual quality is composed by a combination of characteristics. Perhaps most fundamentally the textual quality of liveness is constructed in ‘the media paratext’, as Gérard Genette (1987/1997 quoted from Bourdon 2000 p. 535) refers to it. This paratext consists of all surrounding texts that generically place the format in the live category: the newspaper tableaux over television programmes, the title (e.g. *Saturday Night Live*), trailers, etc. The most obvious of these paratexts is probably when the channel announcer cues the program: ‘And now, direct over to the studio in Gothenburg, and *Bingolotto*’).

There are, however, other varieties of liveness. In-between what Bourdon calls fully live and continuity television can be found what could possibly be called ‘delayed live’. Delayed live can be exemplified with the sports broadcast

⁵ These practices are not solely confined to the television medium. It is now standard procedure within commercial radio production to occasionally record introductions to songs beforehand (especially before major weekends such as Christmas, in order to save time and to make production more cost-effective).

that is broadcast with 30 seconds delay. These broadcasts are not edited, such as live on tape. They are rather imprinted by simultaneous live editing, but with a short delay in transmission.

It is possible to identify at least four characteristics of the live code in my examples, and they can also – each of course to varying degrees – be applied to other productions/texts as well (cf. Bolin & Forsman 2002 p. 162f). The first of these is *simultaneous (live) editing*. This naturally follow from the fact that if you broadcast as things happen, you have to edit in accordance to how you expect things to happen, or – as is more common – how you have planned things to happen. This is of course not necessary with live on tape, where the opportunities for post-editing are greater. The technical jargon for live editing among media production people, at least in Sweden, is to ‘play hockey’, indicating that the camera and the editing have to follow the events as they occur, similar to how the camera editing has to follow the movements of the players in an ice hockey game. In the production of *Bingolotto* the staff used the phrase ‘follow Leif’, which meant that the camera-work had to concentrate on following the sometimes unpredictable movements of the program host Leif Olsson around the studio. (One reason for this unpredictability was that the quite eccentric personality Olsson never rehearsed before going on air.) This practice had as a consequence that the lighting in the studio had to be of a general kind. After 1999, when Olsson was replaced by a younger, and more US inspired program host, the practice of rehearsals was introduced. As the new host rehearsed before the program went on air, and also had cues in the floor for special movements, the possibilities for the lighting arrangements expanded, which set its clear mark on the text. Rehearsals are of course also of utmost importance for a major media event such as the ESC, where each moment in the program – except for the repeat of the performance of the winning contribution, which can obviously not be rehearsed – are rehearsed in minute detail.

Secondly, live studio programming most often (although not exclusively) are produced with *multi-camera settings*.⁶ To be able to work with a variety of camera angles and movements, you naturally need to have more than one camera working. Often there are at least three floor cameras, several fixed cameras, at least one crane, and a steady-cam. The general rule of thumb is that, the bigger the event, the more cameras. Thus, for the production of *Bingolotto* there were most often seven cameras (including one crane and one steady-cam). This was similar to the production of *Valvakan*. For ESC, being a much bigger event (and a bigger studio – the sports arena Saku Suurhall), the amount of cameras was eighteen, including one steady-cam, two cranes, and 6-8 fixed cameras. The functions of all these cameras of course vary with the kind of production, but generally each camera have the function of performing certain angles and

⁶ This does, naturally, not necessarily mean that all live studio productions require multi-camera settings. There are obviously examples of single camera settings, not least within the news genres and community television.

standard visuals. Entertainment productions such as *Bingolotto* (especially the music segments), and in the performances in ESC, steady-cams and cranes are used to a much higher degree than in a factual production such as *Valvakan*. With the use of cranes and steady-cam it is possible to create vivid movement in the visual expression, even though the visual object to be represented is non-moving. A power ballad like the one performed by Romania in Tallinn 2002, where the two singers were standing fixed to their positions on the stage, according to themselves aiming to express intense emotions, could be made 'moving' only through the extensive use of the two cranes and the steady-cam. The non-movement of the singers trying to touch and move the hearts of the European tele-voters became vivid through the movements in the camera-work. But also in up-tempo songs, the vividness has to be produced, and the visual techniques for this has since long been elaborated in the music video formats.

As a third feature, live studio productions are often characterised by the use of *multi-stage settings* in the studio. These are of three major kinds: the stage for the host, the artist's stage (may be exchanged for having a guest stage in factual programs such as *Valvakan 2002*), and the stage for the studio audience.

The stage for the program host and his or her guests is often placed centrally in the studio, opposite to and facing the audience stage. The host's stage could either be in the form of the news anchor's desk, which can be used for interviews and for direct address to the camera/audience. News broadcasts are exceptional in this respect in that they do not have studio audiences (and do not pretend to have through 'canned laughter' or other special effects). This consequently makes the camera work static, and accordingly also the textual expression. This 'staticness' is then actually one of the main liveness codes for news, indicating seriousness and authority. However, it can also be the desk of the talk show host, as in, for example, *Late Night with David Letterman* (or its Swedish counterpart *Sen kväll med Luuk*).

Another stage is designed for the performing artists or guests. This is of course the most important stage in the case of an event such as ESC. However, this stage is usually also designed to change in shape and colour scheme depending on the performing artist. This stage can, in factual programs, be for special studio guests (rather than for performing artists), like the continuously exchanged guests commentators seated at a podium in front of the (young) audience in *Valvakan*.

A third stage is dedicated to the studio audience. The studio audience have become an increasingly more important component in constructing liveness, especially in connection to musical performances, but also to game and talk shows. In ESC 2002 the dedicated fans in the audience were seated closest to the stage, surrounding its cat-walk, in order for them to act as fans, waving flags, hands raised in the air, dancing along to the songs. In *Bingolotto* the audience is the representative for the viewers at home to identify with, extending the studio room into the sitting room. In the case of *Valvakan* it was obvious when talking

to the producer beforehand that the students they had invited as audience to make up the backdrop for the interviews and political commentaries would represent the politically concerned young voters whom TV4 wanted to reach, as they frankly stated that this was a group that was hard to attract to current affairs programs (but important to the advertisers). The studio audience then has several functions: to form a visual background to other events (interviews, lottery draws, etc.), to create atmosphere for performing artists (playing live in front of a host and a couple of camera operators might not feel too inspiring), and to function as a point of identification for the viewers at home. These functions are of course not mutually exclusive, and in each broadcast all functions are more or less active.

The multi-stage setting is often, although far from always, combined with multiple *hosts* – most often two (and then preferably one of each sex as in the *Eurovision Song Contest* and in *Valvakan 2002*). The program host is of course of utmost importance for entertainment shows, and the equivalent – the news anchor – have become increasingly more important as an identification mark for news broadcasts. Thus, many shows are entirely built around the host, indicated by the fact that the show has their name attached to it (the earlier mentioned *Letterman*, *Rikki Lake Show*, *Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Hylands hörna*, etc.). The program host is the person that binds all of the show's parts together, or, if it is a news broadcast, the person that binds the various news items that in themselves have little or nothing in common, together to form a coherent narrative.

If one host binds the parts of a program together, having a pair of hosts admits more flexible use of the various stages during a live broadcast, as the cameras then have better opportunities to switch between hosts/stages. The host, then, has a 'relay' function in the program. This naturally also makes it easier to re-arrange the artist's stage between acts, in order to let each performing artist have it's own, individually designed visual expression. This is of founding importance for live shows such as the ESC, or any other large show. Such live events can be said to have grown into a sub-genre of its own from the late 1990s and onwards. The typical event being a fund-raising charity event. In shows with single hosts, there is often one person on the set, sometimes several, that act as talking partners to the host. One example is the leader of the orchestra in *Late Night with David Letterman*. This model was picked up in *Bingolotto*, where the host in the same way as Letterman starts every show with small talk with the leader of the house orchestra. However, it could also be one of the cameramen, or the producer, who can function as the verbal sparring partner for the host.

Duo hosts have their equivalent in news productions in the duo anchorpersons, likewise preferably one of each sex. The functional aspect of this is of course the same as in entertainment productions: to allow for flexibility. To have two hosts instead of one can naturally be explained by the fact that it is more natural to have a dialogue between two persons chatting away, than to have a single person addressing the audience. This has since long been a standard

feature of sports broadcasts, where there usually is a combination of a journalist and an ex-athlete of the relevant sport that are commenting on the game.

The host is also a key component in the construction of liveness. The prime instrument in creating liveness that the host has at his or her disposal, is the direct address into the camera. The direct address indicates that the host is talking to the individual audience member, and he or she is doing it in the present. The program host has a specific authority, based on rhetoric techniques, in defining the interaction – both in the studio and with the viewer (Ytreberg 1999 pp. 72ff). However, the host can also deliver pre-planned and rehearsed mistakes (stumbles, Freudian slips, etc.), contributing to the sense that what is happening is not fake, but real, i.e. not rehearsed, and thus live. A technique used in *Bingolotto* after the change of host (and the introduction of rehearsals), was for the producer to arrange surprises for the host, things not rehearsed or being agreed on beforehand, as this made the surprised face of the host more authentic. And what might to the viewing audience look like a spontaneous flirtation with the camera during a song performance in the ESC, reveal to be entirely rehearsed to the researcher who has been present during a couple of dress rehearsals (Forsman 2002 p. 76). And the spontaneous and ethnically French gesture with the hand to the head delivered by the female head of the ESC voting jury, seemingly a gesture of the moment, does not have the same impact on this author after having seen it performed in both dress rehearsals and live broadcast, as it probably has on those millions of television viewers that have not had that privileged access to both performances.

As a conclusion, then, it is possible to summarise the codes of liveness, as they are performed in many, although far from all, studio live productions. Codes of liveness are thus displayed in simultaneous live editing, multi-camera, multi-stage and multi-host settings. However, these kinds of props that are the cornerstones of live television programming, would be nothing if they were not combined and related to narrative structures; those patterns that are structuring time within television discourse.

Spatial and temporal construction of liveness

Narratives in television entertainment and factual programming are constructed in relation to two kinds of narrative premises: space and time. The first, spatial dimension of live television production concern which kind of studio space or other recording facilities you have access to, for example which out-of-studio places can be used in the narrative. In the spatial dimension can also be included those kinds of things that you fill the space on the screen with: props, people, etc. The second important premise for live productions is the extent to which the producers can structure time. One could of course say that all television production deals with the administration of time, but there are certain temporal

features that are highlighted in live productions: scheduled time, transmission time, program time, commercial time, etc. When it comes to program time, however, narrative segmentation is important for how the television text comes into taking specific form.

Spatial narrative premises

The spatial dimension can be sub-divided into studio space and out-of-studio places. Access to places outside of the studio for live productions involves, for example, production teams with OB equipment, making it possible to link together various places, as was made in *Valvakan*, where reports from the seven party headquarters were linked together in the broadcast via (seven) OB buses that could transmit live material (although the segments sometimes were delayed in order to fit into the broadcast as a totality). This is of course also common within news production, where foreign correspondents are interviewed by the news anchor. On an even more complicated level co-operations between several national broadcasting companies makes it possible to interconnect many European cities, as is made in the ESC voting procedure (cf. Åker 2002). The importance of these out-of-studio places for the textual address, and the weight laid on including these places, can be exemplified by the fact that the Swedish Television (SVT) – the competitor that TV4 was programming head to head with *Valvakan* – made an offer to the involved political parties to arrange for the decoration and the setting of the localities where they would wait for the election results, in order to get a competitive advance over TV4. (The political parties, however, did not accept the offer.)

Of even more fundamental importance for the television text in most live television formats (with an obvious exception in those broadcasts that are entirely based on out-of-studio places, such as sports broadcasts), is the studio setting. When *Bingolotto* started their broadcasts, the studio was a lunch diner that was used at evenings as a studio. Quite obviously the use of cranes was then not possible, and the technical facilities of lighting were definitely not optimal compared to a fully equipped in-house studio. It is therefore a striking difference between the program text from those early days of the program, compared to nowadays, when the studio is located in a specially restored factory building. The studio room has, on the one hand, to be constructed in order to make it functional for the movements of cameras: There has to be clear space on the floor for the floor cameras, height enough for the cranes, and space enough on the artist's stage for the steady-cam. But the studio also has to be constructed as meaningful communicative space that can express the program's profile and communicative intentionality. Thus every news program has its own specific studio setting, with specific colour schemes and visual props. In serialised productions such as *Bingolotto* the studio setting is changed for every new season, although the artist's stage is changed every week to fit the performing

artist. This is of course also the case with the ESC, where every new production seems to try to be more spectacularly produced than last years, in the internal competition between the broadcasting institutions. However, the two productions of 2002 and 2003 were produced by the same production team – a combination of staff from Swedish SVT, Finnish YLE, and Estonian ETV and Latvian LTV respectively. Not surprisingly some of the textual features of the 2002 version were repeated in Riga 2003.

Narrative elements are those components, or bricks, in the program construction that do not have a narrative structure of their own, but that are still important for the construction of the text. Each segment is, firstly, narrationally constructed through a combination of various *camera positions*. Through standardised camera positions the space on the television screen is constructed, and everyone who has been in a studio at a recording session knows that there is a difference between how you perceive of the studio space on- and off-screen. A closer look at any program within most of the live formats, then, reveals that the program has certain standard camera positions that are repeated over and over, and combined in various ways: long shots, medium shots, close-up and extreme close-ups. The use of different cameras naturally admits various movements, where the cranes and the steady-cams are used for making vivid movements, while the floor cameras usually pans or tilts slowly, and the steady-cam often have specific patterns for their movements, not least because it is sometimes – as in the ESC 2002 – operated by two people who have to synchronise their movements when revolving around artists, etc.

Secondly, the cameras are directed towards any of the *narrative elements* that make up the studio setting: programme host, audience, artists, house orchestra (and their various members), guests, but also presentations clips and digital and other graphics. In the last section I want to give a more detailed description for my three examples.

Temporal narrative premises

The temporal dimension can be sub-divided into different temporal categories: schedule time, transmission time, program time, advertising time. The *scheduled time* of a program such as *Bingolotto*, is that time that is announced in the television schedules, for example starting 19⁰⁰, with a break for a mini program 19³⁵, starting again 19⁴⁰, etc., and ending with the beginning of a new program at 21⁰⁰. When looking at a production such as *Bingolotto*, that has run for more than a decade, it is obvious that the schedule time has become more important for the broadcasters, as *Bingolotto* nowadays is an integrated part of TV4's overall strategy for the Saturday evening (cf. Søndergaard 1994, Syvertsen 1997 pp. 119ff, Ytreberg 1999 pp. 115ff). The Saturday evening's schedule has become a totality, where certain slots are to be filled by certain formats (Bolin & Forsman 2002 pp. 182f). Furthermore, out of the 120 minutes of the scheduled

time between 19 and 21, the total *program time*, i.e. that time that consisted of the transmission from the studio in Gothenburg, usually varies between 95-100 minutes, leaving at least 20 minutes to commercials, trailers and mini programs. Program time, then, is usually shorter than scheduled time. However, *transmission time*, is always longer than scheduled time. Although the ESC according to the schedules in Sweden started at 21⁰⁰, the actual transmission started already 20⁵⁰, in order for the European broadcasting companies to make technical adjustments, etc. (Forsman 2002 p. 71). *Advertising time*, of course, also varies, since the economic logic of supply and demand leads to the fact that sometimes the broadcasting channel has been successful in selling all available advertising time, and sometimes not (Bolin & Forsman 2002 p. 183).

The combination of all these different types of time contributes to the totality of the program (and, of course, also varies between viewers' *viewing time*). This totality can, for the same scheduled event, differ between different broadcasters, which is obvious when looking at an international media event such as the ESC. As SVT do not have commercials, the Swedish viewers could see the duet between the program hosts Annely Peebo and Marko Matvere in the first commercial break of three minutes, and the slightly more than seven minutes long 'Interval act', where dancers and the ETV children's choir performed an act representing the birth of the Estonian nation (Forsman 2002 p. 72). Contrary to the Swedish viewers, the Estonian viewers were served commercials during these breaks (as were viewers in other countries where the program was broadcast on channels with commercials).

All these narrative premises affect the narrative possibilities in the production, and lead to the development of narrative units such as blocks and segments, which are in turn constructed out of standardised camera positions, and visual and aural elements (props). All of which are founding bricks in the narrative construction, and ultimately have a bearing for how the text is temporally structured in narrative segmentation. .

Narrative segmentation

John Ellis did in his influential book *Visible fictions* introduce the concept of *segment* – 'small sequential unities of images and sounds whose maximum duration seems to be about five minutes' (Ellis 1992 p. 112). However, there are also more unities that can be theorised in television narration: programs, schedules, etc. (cf. Ytreberg 1999 p. 26f). Another unit that can be suggested for some, although far from all, programs, is that of *the block*. It could be argued that in commercial television you do not work with programs, you work with blocks. A block could be described as the time between two commercials, and it often contains several segments. Different broadcasting companies in different countries, have, according to praxis or depending on the national legislation for commercials, different periodisations between the commercials. Some

broadcasters can, for example, make breaks in programs for commercials. Other's – like Swedish TV4 until recently – could not interrupt programs, but then developed sophisticated techniques to circumvent those regulations, by scheduling short two-minute programs that interrupted longer shows such as *Bingolotto*, and could then place the commercials before and after those two minutes and then run on with the game show. The block structure is more pronounced in *Bingolotto* and *Valvakan*, than in the ESC, not least because of the fact the ESC is arranged by public broadcasters, and that the format of the show was developed in 1956 – long before the advent of commercial television in most of the countries involved.

The block structure could be argued to be one of the founding premises in commercial television production. And since there has been an increase in independent production enterprises serving both commercial and public service channels, this also affects public service programming. A thesis that could be suggested is that since formats are bought and sold between countries with both commercial and (non-commercial) public service companies, one could expect the block structure to become more prominent in the future.

Undeniably game shows, such as *Bingolotto*, *Jeopardy*, etc., often have this block structure. Blocks often have some element at their centre. For *Bingolotto*, the natural block structure is centred on the three bingo games. For other game shows it can be centred on each round in the game, or a new block can start with the exchange of players, like in *Who wants to be a millionaire?* Or it can, as is often the case in talk shows like *Late Night with David Letterman* and *Rikki Lake Show*, be centred on the introduction of a new guest. The block structure, where each block contains several segments in combinations, gives the show a repetitive character.

This repetitiveness is further emphasised through the internal structure, that is, the narrative motor, of *the segments*. As each segment has its own internal narrative structure, each block often consists of a number of various segments, which are repeated, although not always in the same order. Each block of *Bingolotto*, for example, usually contains five kinds of segments (some of which are repeated within the framework of each block): bingo games, music performances, phone-ins, lottery draws and 'lucky numbers' (i.e. lottery draws by wheels).

The narrative motor of a bingo game segment is naturally the unfolding of the bingo game. Narrative closure is reached when enough people have received bingo, which is announced verbally by the program host, and shown visually through a computer animation of the sign 'Bingo!' displayed over the television screen.

Music segments starts by the announcement of the artist by the program host. Then follow the musical performance by the artist, with a musical intro, verse, refrain, etc. The segment reaches narrative closure when the host thanks the artist. The narrative of this segment is then structured by the musical conventions

typical for the music genre in question, thus an auditory drive, rather than a visual (cf. Lacey 2000 pp 43f).

Phone-ins are structured by the conventions guiding speech communication, and reach narrative closure when the host thanks the person phoning in to the studio.

Lottery draws have an even more simple narrative progression, where the numbers circulating on the screen slowly stops one by one until all have stopped and the winning number is displayed. Often this segment is repeated, so that there are, for example, four combination of numbers drawn in a row.

Lucky numbers typically start by the turning of a wheel, and ends with a person present in the studio winning (or not winning).

The combination of these segments in *Bingolotto* can vary, both between blocks and between programs, but all blocks have at least one of these segments.

In a similar way *Valvakan* is constructed through the combination of segments, where the duo hosts Bengt Magnusson (famous news personality and incidentally also the person hosting *Who wants to be a millionaire?* in Sweden), and Malou von Sivers (an experienced program host who have worked a lot with morning television) take turns at their respective stage: Magnusson taking care of the statistics and the academic and journalistic commentators, professor of political science Peter Esaiasson (as reported by the producer chosen because he is young and handsome), and political journalist Lena Smedsaas; and von Sivers interviewing guests in a sofa setting, where the guest were placed in front of, and with their backs to, the youthful audience.

Blocks, segments and narrative elements

It is obvious that the block/segment model fit better to the example of news, election nights and live entertainment, and somewhat less good to the ESC. If one compares the narrative structures of the four kinds of programmes, one find that there are between five to seven kinds of segments within each block. Some of these segments are repeated several times in a row within each block, others appear only once.

Each block of *Bingolotto* contains of five kinds of segments (and the first block an additional presentation segment): bingo segments, music segments (artists performing), phone-ins, lottery draws and 'lucky numbers'. And each individual segment is built up of a range of standardised camera positions and movements, as well as by narrative elements such as the host, studio props, audience, studio orchestra, artists, graphics, etc. Some of these segments occur several times within each block. There is only one bingo segment, and usually only one music segment (naturally only one presentation segment), but there are several phone ins, lottery draws and lucky numbers. Especially the phone-ins are often four in a row (sometimes only two), and this is also the case for lottery

draws. There might sometimes be several lucky numbers, but they are seldom combined in rows.

If we adopt this model to the other examples, we can see that each block of *Valvakan 2002* contains of five kinds of segments (and the first block an additional presentation segment). There are presentations of statistics, expert evaluations of the events unfolding with the male host together with a political scientist and a journalist, expert evaluations by the female host and politicians and other commentators, reports from party headquarters (stand up's), and there are edited, pre-recorded features. Just as in *Bingolotto*, the segments are composed from a range of standardised camera positions and movements, as well as by narrative elements such as the two hosts, studio props, audience, guests (politicians, researchers, journalists), graphics, etc. The first of these segments runs for 31 minutes and 50 seconds, which is followed by 4 minutes and 30 seconds of (10) commercials, and 30 seconds of trailers. Then starts block number two. All in all the program text, including commercials and a short break for news (that anyway contain the same footage from the election night coverage supposedly transmitted live), last for three hours, 52 minutes, and 18 seconds.

Just as in *Bingolotto*, the block starts with an intro with graphics, then an establishing shot from the crane from the back and above. These are not segments in themselves, but relay functions, or shifters between the segments. The segments in *Valvakan 2002* are not as varied as in *Bingolotto*, since all of them are structured linguistically, following the format of speech communication. The narrative motor, then, is modelled on the interview structure, and the segments end by a relay from the interviewing reporter over to the studio, or over to another reporter, relayed by the short 'relay shot' via the studio. In this the various segments are brought 'into an interactively structured relationship [of] metadiscursive exchanges in and between spatially dispersed locations' (Marriott 2000 p. 136). The only more narratively complex segments are those pre-recorded and edited features from different election districts around Sweden (interviews with election functionaries, etc.).

The segments in *Valvakan* are only structured in rows when it comes to reports from party headquarters, which are sometimes broadcast alone, sometimes in pairs (relayed by the male host Magnusson).

However, as there are two hosts for the show, the relay function of the host can be varied in more ways than is the case in a single-host setting such as *Bingolotto*. The host Bengt Magnusson is responsible for the statistics and for the two experts (the researcher and the journalist), as well as the arriving party leaders after the result has been confirmed. Malou von Sivers is assigned to the (other) politicians and the other experts and guests in the studio. This work division is up-held through the entire program.

Undoubtedly the similarity between the different segments, caused by the base in the interview, or in the reporting of statistics, follow from the fact that the unfolding of events are harder to predict than in an entertainment show such as

Bingolotto, or a mega-event such as the *Eurovision Song Contest*. This means that sometimes the segments do not reach full narrative closure, as the producer shifts too fast to other segments/studio locations, a phenomenon that is quite common in election night coverages and similar productions when producers do not have total control over how events are happening (cf. Marriott 2000 p. 141).

In many ways a *news broadcast* is similar to the narrative structure in a program such as *Valvakan*. However, there are basically only four kinds of segments: the presentation segment with the headlines, telegrams, news features, and a weather report.

We can see that the segments in news broadcasts differ primarily according to content rather than form: sports news does not differ in form from domestic news, or economic news. The narrative motor in news is also mostly structured around the discourse of speech communication: either the interview or the telegram. News features, however, are sometimes driven by the visuals.

If we, however, look at the *Eurovision Song Contest*, we can see that the segmentation is somewhat different. Here we can find five segments, or, if one counts the ‘Interval act’ in the middle of the show, where a pre-recorded feature described the rise of the Estonian nation in history (while those watching on commercial channels or public service channels with commercials, were served advertising clips). Aside from this segment, there were music segments (songs performed), the reporting of votes from the competing countries, fairy tales in-between the music segments, reports from European cities on the festivities around the broadcast, and finally, reports from the so-called Green room, where artists wait for the result of the tele-voting procedure.

As can be seen, the *Eurovision Song Contest*, firstly, has a more varied set of segments than the other examples. This can be explained by the fact that not all segments are driven by the interview structure, as in *Valvakan 2002*, but also by the musical structure, in the same way as the musical segments in *Bingolotto*. The fairy tales, on the other hand, have their internal narrative structure adopted from well-known fairy tales such as Little red riding hood, The three bears, Goldilock, etc., although their endings deviate since they all are aimed at displaying the advantages of Estonia and promoting it as a nation (Bolin 2004b).

As the *Eurovision Song Contest* is broadcast in at least two different versions – one with and one without commercials – this affects the block structure of the program. In those countries that have commercials, the show is divided into blocks, whereas in Sweden and other countries without commercial breaks, the program is uninterrupted and hence consists of only one block.

But it is quite evident that the *Eurovision Song Contest* fits less well with the narrative structure described in the analysis. The main reason is no doubt its older history, and the fact that it is a product of narrative forms privileged by the public service monopoly situation in 1950s Europe.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the chapter I posed three questions to the analytic examples, concerning three dimensions. Firstly, I wanted to analyse the relations between factual and fictional programs in order to see if it is possible to adopt the same analytical strategy to analyse these genres. Secondly, I wanted to analyse the relation between national and international productions, in order to see if and to which extent one could see similarities in the production practices and thence in the program text. Thirdly, I wanted to analyse the possible differences and similarities between public service and commercial productions. So, which more general conclusions for these questions can we make from these descriptions? What are the consequences of the production practices, the relations of production, for the development of new genres and formats?

There are at least two kinds of features relating to this that sets their mark on contemporary live narratives. On the one hand narratives become increasingly more additive in order to adjust to the segmentation between the commercial breaks. On the other hand, the additive structure with interruptions for commercials also means that each segment has to build its own 'micro-narrative'. This gives the segments a repetitive character, which ultimately leads to a circular temporal structure of the programming.

This structure is not fundamentally different when comparing entertainment and factual genres. Although not all programs can be divided into blocks, all have separate segments that give the programs a circular, repetitive and additive character, which, in turn, gives the narrative a flat character without the overarching peaks and resolutions as has, for example, feature films. As mentioned in the beginning of this article, news have always had this form, with short news items added after one another into a master narrative that content-wise with minor internal variations run over domestic news, international news, sports and weather report. This might also be the explanation for why news seems to have come out least transformed after the re-regulation processes. When it comes to narrative form (although perhaps not when it comes to content), most other genres have approximated the flat and additive narrative form of news more than vice versa. The exception is, as has been indicated above, the *Eurovision Song Contest*, which has not had to adjust to this form for almost half a century.

This means also that the over-arching structure of the *Eurovision Song Contest* differs from the other examples. However, it might be possible to argue that at the level of individual segments, there has been an adjustment. So, at the level of program, there is a difference between the national and international examples, but not necessarily on the level of individual segments. This could be a result of the fact that large-scale international media events are to an increasing extent produced by production teams composed by staff from several national television companies, many of whom have worked within commercial television

production. The degree of commercialism varies between the public broadcasters of Europe – where some, such as the Estonian ETV at the time of *Eurovision Song Contest 2002*, was partly financed by commercials – there are no major differences in production practices. Accordingly there are neither any differences in the features of the program text between public service and commercial broadcasters.

The pattern analysed here would probably hold true also for programs that are not live productions. But it would not fit all kinds of formats: it might fit for reality shows like *Big Brother*, for instance, but not for fiction or drama. Television fiction, such as the soap opera, have narratives that are built around overlapping storylines that run parallel to each other, and where the beginnings and endings have different starting points (Kozloff 1987/1990). In this, fiction is different from live television entertainment and factual programming, where the repetitive, flat narrative and visual expressions have become institutionalised in the serialised form of television production prevailing today, and build on certain standardised features in the technical production and in editorial practices. This is especially so for serialised productions such as *Bingolotto*, but it is also a prominent feature in productions that are repeated more seldom, such as is the case with the ESC (each year) and *Valvakan* (every fourth year). But also in those productions where there is more time to plan and rehearse, the block structure and the special kind of segmentation becomes a production practice that is functional for controlling the contingencies of live television production.

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