Creativity and Commerce in Independent Television Production

Developing Documentaries in the UK and Germany

Anna Zoellner

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds
Institute of Communications Studies

September 2010

Declaration of Authorship

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

The right of Anna Zoellner to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

© 2010 The University of Leeds and Anna Zoellner

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all my research participants for their invaluable insights and generous cooperation without which this research would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the Anna Ruths Stiftung and the Institute of Communications Studies for permitting me to pursue this research through their financial support.

Many thanks to my supervisor Prof. David Hesmondhalgh for his continuous encouragement, advice and critique, which have greatly contributed to the progress of this thesis. Thanks also to staff and PhD students at ICS for sharing their knowledge and experience.

Thanks to Charley, Bethany and Bridget for proof reading and to Anja for her incredible hospitality during my fieldwork in Germany. Last but not least, special thanks to Vincent and my family for their everlasting understanding, patience and support throughout this project.

Abstract

This thesis aims to contribute to the growing field of media production studies through an ethnographic study of independent television production companies in Great Britain and Germany. Discourses of self-enterprise, free markets and consumer choice supported by technological developments, audience fragmentation and neoliberal legislation have led to a shift from a formerly predominantly public-service orientated broadcasting environment to a commercialised, competitive and consumer-orientated television industry. Because they seldom command high ratings, 'serious' documentaries are not a high priority for broadcasters compared to other programme genres, and a formerly protectionist attitude toward documentary is being eroded alongside public service broadcasting values. The thesis examines the impact of these developments on independent companies involved in documentary production. It inquires into the ways in which the new commercial production structures affect the work of independent documentary makers and asks to what extent they constrain or enable individual creativity in the development of original documentary programming.

Combining participant observation with practitioner interviews, the study analyses the complex ways in which television workers adapt to creativity-commerce tensions. It describes how commercial imperatives cause independents to act as service-providers for broadcasters and to conform to predetermined programme preferences. The empirical results show that a sense of professional identity alongside occupational values and genre traditions play a particularly important role in this context. They disguise commercial conformity and prevent or dissolve creativity-commerce tensions. At the same time, they form the basis for an understanding of programme quality that is independent from and potentially in conflict with economic objectives. Consequently, television workers both accept their commercial supplier role and the creative constraints it entails, and are also critically reflexive about the production culture and their own role within it. The thesis will discuss the interplay of these competing values and address the consequences they have for the developed programmes and the documentary genre in general.

Table of Contents

Declaration of Authorship 2
Acknowledgements 3
Abstract 4
Table of Contents 5
1. Introduction 8
1.1. Independent Production and the Changing Television Industry 9
A New Broadcasting Ecology 10
The Independent Production Sector 12
1.2. The Research Project 14
Documentary Production 15
Research Objectives and Thesis Structure 17
2. Theoretical Foundations and Research Questions 21
2.1. Cultural Industries Research 22
Between Political Economy and Cultural Studies 24
2.2. Studying Media Production 27
Structure and Agency 28
Creativity/Culture and Commerce 32
Creativity and Commerce in Studies of Television Production 40
2.3. Studying Documentary 42
Matters of Genre 42
Representation of Social Reality 44
Documentary in Transition: Changing Structures and Functions 47
2.4. Research Questions 52
3. Research Object and Methodology 55
3.1. The Development Stage in Documentary Production 55
Processes and Procedures 57
Key Actors 59
3.2. Media Ethnography 62
Media Ethnography as Intensive Research 63
Participant Observation 65
Multi-National and Multi-Sited Ethnography 69
The Research Experience 71
3.3. Case Studies 79

4. Institutional Responses to Structure: The Broadcaster-Independent Relationship **84**
4.1. Structural Conditions of Independent Project Development 85
The (Economic) Value of Creativity and Project Development 85
Structural Dependency and Commercial Competition 88
Regulatory Support for the Independent Sector 91
4.2. Staying in Business: Conformity and Commercial Success 96
Orientation to Broadcaster Preferences 96
Acceptance and Self-Restriction 101
4.3. Improving the Odds: Personal Relationships and Industry Reputation 106
Becoming a Preferred Supplier: The Value of Reputation and Trust 107
Implications for Development Practice 112
4.4. Economic Dependency and Creative Constraints: The Specificity of Development 117
5. Responses to Creativity-Commerce Tensions: Professionalism, Craft and Critical Reflexivity **122**
5.1. Professional Execution: Quality Measurement and Detachment Strategy 123
Values and Conventions of Professionalism and Craftsmanship 127
Professionalism as Demonstration of Competence: Doing a Good Job 135
Professionalism as Detachment Strategy: Form over Content 138
5.2. Counter-Discourses of Informal Critical Reflexivity 142
Counter-Discourse of Commercially Constrained Creativity 146
Celebration of Realism and Social Impact 149
Perceptions of Change 154
Potential for Resistance and Change? 157
5.3. Ambiguity and Competing Values 160
6. Representational Tendencies in Documentary Development **168**
6.1. A Culture of Risk Aversion: Commercialism and Programme Originality 169
Uncertain Demand and Risk Aversion 172
Repetition and Familiarity: "Something like ..." 174
6.2. Angle: "A new way to look at things" 179
6.3. Exclusivity: The Value of Access 182
6.4. Extraordinariness: Seeking Audience Attention 186
6.5. Formatting and Serialisation: Cost Reduction through Formulaic Production 198
6.6. Commercially Induced Standardisation and Innovation 210

7. Conclusion **216**
7.1. Culture and Commerce in Documentary Development: Giving the Audience What it Wants? 217
7.2. Entertainment versus Social Functions: Decline or Evolution of Generic Traditions? 223
7.3. Beyond the National Context: International Standardisation? 227
7.4. Implications for Future Research 230
7.5. Change and Opportunity 234
Bibliography **239**
Filmography **253**

1. Introduction

This thesis seeks to understand how and under which conditions television texts[1] take the form they do. Much media research has traditionally focused on the study of audiences, macro-structures (including media systems, policy and economy) and media texts. However, an analysis of these sources only provides limited explanation (if any) of why a media text takes particular forms and not others. In order to identify influences on texts and potential areas of concern, we need to study their production processes to find out which and why certain creative decisions have been made. The importance of studying the creation of media texts derives from the central role of the media, including television, in our mediatised society. Media texts shape the way that we think about the world, our society and ourselves despite the highly individualised, complex and subjective appropriation of media content through audiences. It is therefore important to study the influences that shape the media texts that are made available to audiences. This thesis is concerned with precisely this issue. It analyses the production practices in independent television companies and considers the way in which they are affected by the structures and conditions of a transformed television industry. In so doing, it explores the conditions, processes and outcomes of television production and the experience of this process for television workers on an individual level.

Based on the premise of a mutually interdependent relationship between structure and agency, this research investigates the relation between commerce and creativity in the independent television sector. In particular, it asks in what way increasingly commercialised industry structures impact on the expression of creativity in the project development of television documentaries. Drawing on literature from media production studies, political economy, cultural studies and documentary theory, the thesis analyses the relationship between independent production companies and broadcasters and the resulting conditions for creativity in independent companies. It identifies areas of tension between creativity and commerce and describes how workers adapt to both cope with and resist commercial constraints, and the manner in which this setting affects development activities.

[1] The term text refers generally to all kinds of works or products of the media. In the context of this thesis it describes essentially documentary television programmes. As this thesis focuses on the project development of documentaries, the term is also used to describe the 'products' of the development process, mostly in the form of programme proposals – written descriptions of proposed programmes that are pitched to broadcasters.

In this chapter I outline the context of my research. Firstly, I describe the recent structural transformation and commercialisation of the television sector and the situation of independent production companies. As my analysis is based on two case studies in Great Britain and Germany, I focus my discussion in particular on the conditions in these two countries but my observations are also true for many other Western European television industries. I then describe developments within documentary television, which is the subject of my research, and related critical debates. In the final section of this chapter I specify my research question and objectives and provide an outline of the structure of this thesis.

1.1. Independent Production and the Changing Television Industry

Despite voices announcing the end of television in view of new forms of audiovisual distribution, and especially through the so-called new media, television continues to be a medium of high cultural and economic significance in the two countries studied here. It presents a large area of employment and it plays a significant role in the national economy. Television continues to play an important part in the lives of millions of people who look to its content for information and entertainment.[2] The manner and extent to which television representations impact on audiences' perception of social reality is a very complex question but the existence of some kind of influence can certainly not be denied (Hesmondhalgh 2007). The public debates surrounding reality programmes such as *Big Brother* (Ch4, RTL2) or talent shows such as *The X Factor* (ITV1) and *Deutschland sucht den Superstar* (RTL), for example, reflect the importance television has in national discourse. The study of television structures, practices and programming, therefore, remains an important area of inquiry. In the context of recent transformations in the media industries, such research acquires a new relevance and new questions emerge regarding the conditions under which television programming is produced. This transformation of television production is related to wider processes of change in cultural production in general. These changes have been discussed and analysed in detail elsewhere (for example, Hesmondhalgh 2007, Hartley 2005). I will, therefore, only briefly address some of the most important economic, cultural and technological developments in Western television industries.

[2] According to Ofcom (2010b: 6) in the UK and the German Bundesamt für Statistik (n.D.) there are around 60 million television sets in each country.

A New Broadcasting Ecology

Since the 1990s we have seen a dramatic restructuring of the television industry in Great Britain and Germany, which has transformed the production context for television producers and the texts they produce. Digitalisation and the creation of online media have contributed to the emergence of alternative distribution platforms and a multi-channel environment that challenge the traditional organisation and practice of broadcast television (Papathanassopoulos 2002).[3] A multitude of commercial and public service broadcasters compete with each other, and new ownership structures have appeared that are marked by vertical and horizontal integration, cross-ownership, and the formation of transnational media conglomerates (Sarikakis 2004, McPhail 2002).This development has been facilitated by a policy shift that led to a deregulation of the television sector and opened it up to new commercial players (Gomery and Hockley 2006, Brainard 2004). This shift is predominantly based on neoliberal beliefs that lightly regulated markets are the most efficient way to organise the economy – including the production and distribution of cultural and symbolic goods (Hallin 2008). As a result economic competition has increased and not only commercial but also public service broadcasters have been subjected to considerable pressure. The duopoly of public service and commercial broadcasting is increasingly questioned and alternative organisational and funding structures are as under discussion by policymakers, academia and the media (Coillins 2003). Public service broadcasters are hence forced to justify their existence and a funding structure based on a general licence fee by way of economic efficacy and audience popularity in the form of high rating figures.

Although daily television viewing has not declined[4] and audience numbers remain in the millions, it becomes more and more difficult for broadcasters to obtain audience shares as large as in the past, especially among younger audience groups. The way in which consumers use the media has changed, and their tastes and habits have grown more complex. This is facilitated by technological developments and socio-cultural changes including individualisation and an emphasis on subjectivity, reflexivity and choice in postmodern societies (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001, Giddens

[3] For example, the number of nation-wide, privately-owned commercial television programmes in Germany more than doubled between 2003 (56) and 2007 (149) (VPRT n.D.). In the UK the already high number of digital channels continues to rise with an increase from around 400 in 2005 to around 500 in 2009 (Ofcom 2010a: 14).

[4] In fact, Ofcom (2010a) even reports a 3% increase in daily television viewing in the UK between 2005 and 2009.

1991). People are no longer restricted to the consumption of local and national media content. With the help of online technologies, they have access to media content across national borders. They even have the opportunity to create such content themselves and to share it on a global scale. As a result, television audiences are fragmented over a multitude of different viewing platforms including traditional television channels, new digital and internet channels, subscription services and online 'catch-up' viewing such as the exceptionally successful BBC iPlayer[5]. This has resulted in the significant reduction of viewing figures for terrestrial and digital broadcasters which, combined with a general economic downturn, led to a dramatic fall in advertising, traditionally the main source of income for commercial broadcasters. The economic downturn affected commercial and public broadcasters alike causing them to increase their profit orientation and to take measures to reduce the costs of their operation. Cost saving strategies include staff redundancies and a reduction of programme spend, that is, the amount of money a broadcaster spends on the production of first-run programming[6] compared to a rise in programme acquisitions and repeats. The growing importance of the global television market and the increase in international programming trade (Havens 2006, Steemers 2004) have brought more choice for television distributors but ambivalent results for programme producers. The latter may profit from additional, international distribution opportunities but at the same time they also face increased competition.

Overall, the changes described here result in the commercialisation of television production in a climate of intense economic pressure and competition, and the commodification of television content. In the search for profit and a greater market share, broadcasters have shown a preference for entertaining and popular programming in their television schedules, claiming to follow the demands of the market. Nevertheless, many of the texts produced are challenging, innovative and do not simply support the conditions of commercialism. This apparent contradiction is one reason for my interest in current production conditions and processes. My research is not concerned with broadcasters, which have frequently been the subject of inquiry, especially from organisational and political economy perspectives. Instead, I focus on in-

[5] From January 2009 to January 2010 the television programme requests at BBC iPlayer – an online platform where BBC television programmes are available for streaming or download for seven days following their broadcast date – more than doubled from 30.8 million to a record number of 68.2 million (BBC 2010: 6).
[6] According to Ofcom (2010a: 5), the spend on first-run originated programmes at channels with public service remit in the UK (BBC, Ch4, ITV and Five) fell by 16% between 2005 and 2009.

dependent programme producers outside the commissioning television networks who have received much less attention in academic research.

The Independent Production Sector

In both of the countries studied for this research, we have seen the emergence and rapid growth of an independent production sector that produces a large percentage of national first-run television programming.[7] The first foundations for independent production were laid when the original public service broadcasting monopoly was broken with the introduction of commercial television. This occurred earlier in the UK than in Germany with the foundation of the commercial ITV network in 1954. ITV was intended to be an independent alternative to the BBC. ITV programmes were produced by independent regional companies that applied for broadcasting licences and were funded through advertising income. Following a series of mergers, ITV is now made up of a single company that produces in-house and commissions part of their programming from external production companies.[8] In 1982, Channel 4 was established with the explicit intention to provide alternative, innovative, experimental and diverse television content and to cater for society's minorities (Harvey 2000).

The channel's creation was based on a very complex mix of cultural and economic values, which are echoed in its organisational structure as a publicly owned corporation with a strong public service remit, but funded through commercial activities. It is organised as a broadcaster-publisher with the explicit aim to act as a funding body and distributor for the independent production sector. Similar to a publishing house in the book publishing industry, a broadcaster-publisher commissions independents to produce television programmes in accordance with specified outlines. All the major channels in the UK including the BBC, ITV and Five now operate as broadcaster-publishers who obtain their programming through in-house production, commissions and acquisitions. Channel 4 is the only one of the major networks that does not pro-

[7] I am not concerned with providing a detailed historical account but aim to summarise the main influential developments. For a more detailed overview of the historical emergence of the independent production sector in the UK see Lee (2008) and Tunstall (1993). For further discussion of the development of the British broadcasting system see, for example, Cain (1992), Hood (1994), Briggs (1995) and Crisell (2002). For further information on the development of the German broadcasting system see, for example, Hickethier (1998), Stuiber (1998), Schwarzkopf (1999) and Wilke (1999).

[8] For a comprehensive historical discussion of the events surrounding the creation and further development of independent television in the UK, see Sendall et al. (1982-2002).

duce any programming in-house but instead relies exclusively on independent commissions and acquisitions to fill its schedule.

The broadcaster-publisher model and the duopoly of public service and commercial broadcasting have also been introduced to the German broadcasting system but this occurred at a later point.[9] Only in the 1980s were a number of new commercial channels established. This altered the television landscape dramatically and broke the public service monopoly of the ARD network and ZDF. In contrast to the first commercial channels in the UK (ITV, Channel 4, Five), these networks do not have to meet any public service requirements apart from providing air time for information programming. The new channels played an important role for the emergence of an independent sector in Germany. They required many hours of programming to fill their schedules and often they did not possess the resources and facilities to produce this content themselves. They therefore relied predominantly on externally produced content, which was provided by independent production companies. Since then commercial networks have also begun to produce some of their programmes themselves but they are still important commissioning institutions for independent producers. As in the UK, German public service broadcasters also turned from producing all of their first-run programming in-house to broadcaster-publishers who outsourced a considerable part of their production activities to independent companies.

Policy and regulation have supported the emerging independent sector in both countries, not only through the introduction of new television channels and the establishment of the broadcaster-publisher model, but also through the introduction of quota requirements for independent productions that broadcasters have to meet.[10] Such policies may ease some of the economic pressures of the sector by ensuring that a certain percentage of national television programmes is produced independently but this does not outweigh the financial pressure and competition that accompany the new broadcasting ecology discussed above. The existence of independent quotas across the industry does not reduce the financial insecurity and uncertainty for independent companies on an individual basis. Following a period of rapid growth and

[9] I exclude the historical development of television in the GDR from this discussion as its structure has been dissolved in 1990 and the current German television system is based exclusively on the West-German model.

[10] For a discussion of the available regulatory support for the independent sector in the UK and Germany see chapter 4. For a comparison of the policy support and its consequences for the independent production sector in both countries see Elbing and Völzkow (2006).

expansion that saw the emergence of more and more production companies in the 1990s, independents are now faced with a very high degree of commercial competition. At the same time, broadcasters aim to reduce their costs in the face of declining revenues which leads, on the one hand, to more acquisitions, repeats and (cheaper) in-house productions, and on the other hand, to a decline in broadcasting slots and production budgets for independent productions (at least in certain genres). In so doing, television networks pass their own financial pressures on to independent producers. This is one important reason for the integration process of the independent sector, especially in the UK. In recent years we have seen the creation of several so-called superindies, that is, very large independent conglomerations with substantial financial capital and a wide production profile across various genres, which produce a large percentage of the overall independent content on television. At the same time, there are large numbers of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that struggle to survive financially and exist from one commission to the next.

1.2. The Research Project

The new broadcasting ecology and the emergence of the independent production sector have impacted not only on television output but also the production conditions for television workers. More and more workers are employed by independent companies and not directly by television networks. This setting involves different power and organisational structures and a different set of economic pressures and dependencies. Inevitably, commercialisation, high competition and limited resources in the television industry impact on the work activities and priorities of independent companies and thereby the work of individual television practitioners employed by these companies. Driven by the need to be commercially successful in order to sustain the continuation of their work, they have to find ways to adjust to smaller budgets, fewer broadcasting opportunities, fiercer competition and a general increase in precariousness. By studying production it is possible to identify what is specific about working in the independent sector and how workers experience, perceive and respond to their working conditions. In particular, it is possible to recognise how the changed broadcasting ecology and its increased economic pressures impact on the experience of television work. In so doing, we can learn about what constrains and enables the individual creativity of television workers.

As described above, independent companies compete with each other for production contracts with television broadcasters. Although independent by name, in actuality they depend heavily on broadcasters for the funding and distribution of the programmes they produce. This structural dependency on television networks makes independents particularly vulnerable to the intensified economic pressures associated with neoliberal change. This setting makes the analysis of independent production practices a particularly interesting subject. It raises questions about the impact of commercialism on the innovation and experimentation that independent production was originally intended to provide. Such questions concern the conditions for creative autonomy and control within independent production companies and the extent to which they are enabled or constrained by the broadcaster-publisher model of television production. Furthermore, we need to ask in what way these structures impact on the cultural texts that are being produced in independent production companies. This thesis explores these questions with a focus on a particular form of cultural production: the creation of television documentaries.

Documentary Production

Generally, documentaries are not perceived as particularly popular or entertaining forms of television programming – neither in the eyes of the general public nor in the perception of network executives. They are instead linked with dry, even 'boring', notions of education and information. Documentaries generate large audience ratings only occasionally, so are viewed as commercially less attractive by broadcasters. It is therefore fair to assume that an increased commercialisation of television production will have certain negative consequences for television documentaries with regard to financial investment and scheduling. Such effects are of particular relevance because of the genre's alleged socio-cultural importance. Documentaries provide factual representations of social reality that contribute to our understanding of the world. These representations are linked to notions of truthfulness and authenticity that provide documentary texts with a certain authority and validity. Furthermore, documentaries are traditionally associated with the expression of alternative, critical and minority viewpoints. They perform certain social functions (Corner 2000a, 2002), often involve some sort of intention for social impact and may serve as agents of social and cul-

tural change.[11] For these reasons, it is important to ask in what way the documentary genre is affected by the recent commercialisation of television production.

In Great Britain and Germany documentaries predominantly are produced for and screened on television. They traditionally have a strong presence in the television schedules of public service broadcasters as the production of documentaries is considered to serve the public service remit to educate, inform and entertain. They are particularly suited to meet the first two objectives, which are at risk in the new broadcasting ecology with its focus on popularity and entertainment. In an earlier empirical study (Zoellner 2002) a direct positive connection became apparent between the public service character of a broadcaster and the volume and scheduling of documentary programmes. The rise of commercialism, its emphasis on consumer sovereignty and the related shift towards entertainment in programme content, however, have inspired a public debate about the future of documentary. Critical voices express concern about a potential decline of the documentary genre on television, both in number and quality. Television's current focus on popularity is considered a threat to 'serious' documentary. Although factual programming continues to flourish, its generic composition is changing. Reality television and factual entertainment, which are popular with audiences, are booming: they now occupy broadcasting slots formerly reserved for documentary. Documentary in turn is appropriating some characteristics of these forms of factual programming leading to generic hybridisation and a new focus on entertainment.

Critical views relate these developments directly to the commercialisation of television. However, there is hardly any empirical research that examines how exactly commercial pressures impact on the work of documentary producers. Documentary has mainly been explored through textual analysis and programme observation. Such examinations do not tell us anything about how documentaries obtain their final form and what influences are at work in this process. It is the aim of this thesis to assess critical speculations about the negative consequences commercialism is meant to have on documentary texts. In other words, it seeks to understand in what way the described structural changes of the television industry impact on production practices of documentary producers and on the texts they produce. My research addresses this issue by linking an analysis of commercial structures with the observation of produc-

[11] See chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of such claims and their origins in documentary theory and history.

tion processes and relating these to observations about the generic characteristics of contemporary television documentary.

In particular, the research focuses on practices involved in the creation of new programme ideas during the development stage of production. This is the initial phase of the production process during which new documentary ideas are conceived, developed into programme concepts and submitted to broadcasters in a bid for funding.[12] A large number of ideas are processed in this stage of production but only a few will ever be realised in the form of a television programme. This uncertainty raises questions about why some ideas are successful and others are rejected. The presumed impact of commercial imperatives should become particularly evident in this stage of production. At this point of the production cycle independent producers are most susceptible to external influence by broadcasters since they depend economically upon obtaining a commission. I am asking, therefore, what factors and values shape the content- and form-related choices of independent producers in project development?

Research Objectives and Thesis Structure

This brief description of recent developments in the research field has raised several questions about the causal relations between structural change, production practice and media texts. Our broadcasting environment is undoubtedly dramatically different from the situation 20 to 25 years ago. Recent developments have contributed to the commercialisation of the television industry which has inspired intense public debates about its consequences for the nature and future of television. With regard to documentary texts, such debate includes critical accounts of a presumed generic decline of programme quality. Based on the premise that we cannot fully understand media content without studying the conditions of its production, this thesis examines the development processes for television documentary making links between structure, agency and text. The thesis focuses, therefore, on the central research question of how production structures and commercial imperatives constrain or enable producer creativity in independent production companies. This includes firstly, the effects on the everyday practices concerning the development of documentary texts, and secondly, how they materialise in the created media texts.

[12] See chapter 3 for a description of the development process and its key actors.

By focusing on the analysis of everyday production practice, this thesis aims to contribute to the emerging field of media production studies. The importance of researching production is based on the fact that it determines what kind of texts are available for consumption and it does so without the direct input of audiences. Hence, production sets boundaries for the interpretation and use of media texts which makes it important to further our understanding of production processes, conditions and constraints, and their effects on the media texts that are being produced. In so doing, it provides important insights into what it means to work in media production and helps us to understand how media practitioners experience their work. Furthermore, the thesis seeks to fill a research gap in the academic study of documentary. So far, documentaries have been approached predominantly from a cultural and film studies perspective. This kind of research is concerned with the analysis of existing documentary films and programmes. The study of production, however, can provide new insights into the causal relationships that determine the final shape of a documentary programme and identify reasons for representational particularities. The analytical focus of this study lies on project development, which offers an under-researched and under-analysed area in media research. In this stage of the production process all basic characteristics of a television programme are determined which guide the subsequent realisation of the programme. An analysis of this production stage further sheds light on what influences the selection process for new programme ideas. It provides information not only about projects that are successful and gain a broadcasting commission but also about those ideas that are rejected and therefore not made available to audiences. These creative decisions are made in a specific economic context, which is presumed to be highly influential and to involve the potential for tensions between commercial and artistic/creative objectives. My analysis focuses on the materialisation of such tensions with the aim to discuss critically the consequences of the recent commercialisation of the television industries in Germany and the UK. Both countries have large television industries that play an important role for the national economy. The developments of commercialisation and increased economic pressure and competition described here have had significant impact on the production cultures and output in both countries which has stimulated their selection for this research.[13]

[13] A more detailed discussion of the comparability and characteristics of the broadcasting structures in both countries is included in chapter 3. I address differences and similarities between the two countries in my research findings throughout the analysis chapters 4 to 6 and draw careful conclusions in chapter 7.

Theoretical framework

On a theoretical level, this thesis combines approaches from different traditions in media research. In chapter 2 I review the relevant literature that has influenced the formulation of specific research questions, the choice of methodology and focus of analysis. I discuss existing theoretical concepts and empirical work from a cultural industries perspective, combining political economy and cultural studies approaches in the specification of the analytical framework of this thesis. In particular, I outline the main arguments of the structure-agency-debate, which forms the theoretical background of the thesis. My interest within this debate is directed at the study of creativity-commerce tensions and their reification in documentary development. Finally, a review of documentary scholarship contributes criteria for the analysis of representational issues, in particular, authenticity and social function. Following the review of relevant existing research and theory, I then divide the complex, general research question into three sub-questions which are operationalised in the empirical study my arguments are founded on.

Empirical study

The secrecy and lack of transparency of project development processes and decisions combined with a lack of previous research in this area have prompted an ethnographic and exploratory methodological approach. In the tradition of media production studies, which are concerned with the research of production culture and to which this thesis aims to contribute, I have applied a combination of participant observation and interviewing to approach my research object empirically. In total, I have spent five months as a participant observer in two independent production companies, one in Great Britain and one in Germany, where I was working as a researcher in the development department whilst observing everyday events, conversations and actions. I also interviewed the executives and development workers in both companies and collected documents about the proposed programmes. Chapter 3 explains the methodological design of my research and argues that an ethnographic approach is the most suitable method to address my research questions. It includes a discussion of the strengths and limitations of this approach and reflects on the research experience. In this chapter I further describe the processes and actors involved in documentary development and provide information on the selection and profile of case studies for this research.

Research findings

I have analysed the empirical data collected during the fieldwork on three levels. Firstly, on an inter-organisational level that focuses on the relationship between broadcaster and independent production company. Secondly, on an individual level that is concerned with the values, opinions and experiences of the workers within the production company. Thirdly, on a textual level that explores the representational trends within the documentary proposals the workers develop. Chapter 4 is concerned with the first level of analysis. It describes the characteristics of the broadcaster-independent relationship and discusses the institutional responses of independent production companies to the structural setting. It finds an overwhelming conformity and self-restriction in the development activities and decisions of independent companies, one that is rooted in the structural economic dependency of independents on broadcasters. It further describes how independents use social contacts and industry status in order to cope with their dependency by improving their relational position. Chapter 5 focuses on the tensions arising from such commercially conformist behaviour, in relation to creative ambitions on an individual level. It describes how professional values and informal reflexivities both comply with and resist commercial influence and what this means for the individual experience of development work. Chapter 6 centres on the consequences for the documentary texts that are being developed under these conditions. It identifies several tendencies and strategies in development that are shaped by commercially induced risk aversion, on the one hand, and the need for commercial success, on the other hand. These representational tendencies reveal certain elements of standardisation and a trend towards entertainment instead of social impact. Chapter 7, finally, provides a conclusion of my study that sums up the central findings with regard to culture-commerce relations and generic transformation and relates them to the original research questions. It further discusses the comparative element of this study and the international dimension of independent production alongside the implications of my work for further research.

2. Theoretical Foundations and Research Questions

In the following I outline the theoretical background of this thesis and the academic debates it draws upon and contributes to. In particular, I will focus on those theoretical approaches and concepts that have informed the choice of this thesis' research subject and guided the formulation of its research questions. Further reference to relevant literature is made in conjunction with the discussion of my research findings in chapters 4 to 6 based on the themes that emerged in the analysis.

Following a brief discussion concerning the importance of researching the cultural or creative industries, I position my research on the middle ground between political economy and cultural studies approaches to researching and assessing cultural production. In agreement with researchers in media production studies (e.g. Toynbee 2008, Born 2000), I argue that the research on media production and practice is vital for understanding the form and content of cultural products – in this particular case, television documentaries. A central theme in this context is the analysis of the relationship between structure and agency, in particular the opportunity for creative and alternative (media) expression. The recent neoliberalisation, marketisation and commercialisation of the cultural industries spark new questions concerning, for example, the nature of the relationship between commerce and culture/creativity. Most television production studies focus on the creation of single programmes and particular attention has been paid to the production of news media and to labour conditions in the television sector. There is hardly any examination of development processes of television content prior to actual production and little contemporary examination of documentary production. In documentary studies, on the other hand, one can observe a severe lack of interest in production practices and what influences them. Instead, the topic is predominantly approached from a film studies perspective with an explicit focus on the representation and analysis of single texts. Some scholars link documentary representation to structural context with a focus on concerns for documentary output as a result of the commercialisation and commodification of the television sector. Such concerns are often connected to normative generic values of authenticity, truthfulness and social or educational impact that are associated with the social functions of the documentary genre.

In my analysis I discuss how these values materialise in the personal and professional values of documentary-makers and what impact commercially guided project development has on the textual preferences and choices made. Therefore, in the tradition of media production studies, my thesis links the analysis of organisational production structures with the individual experience of programme-makers and the resulting textual choices and selections in order to explore whether the new broadcasting ecology constrains or enables the expression of individual creativity in the creation of television documentary. The specific research questions that emerged from the reviewed literature and that guide the analytical interest of this research are detailed in the final section of this chapter.

2.1. Cultural Industries Research

Since the publication of Adorno and Horkheimer's (1977/1944) famously critical account of the "Culture Industry", academic interest in cultural production has only intensified. Alongside changes in cultural production and consumption, the analysis of these processes has also altered. Scholarship in cultural production has moved away from Adorno and Horkheimer's elitist understanding of culture and one-dimensional critique. Instead the variety and diversity of different cultural forms are recognised and scholars have extended their research focus to popular culture in addition to classic art forms. The shift from the singular term to the notion of cultural and later creative industries illustrates the rejection of a presumed unity and converse acceptance of diversity and specificity within varying forms of cultural production and their structures and practices (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 16).[14]

Nevertheless, the analysis of cultural production, especially from a sociological political economy perspective, has retained a strong critical focus due to the importance that is assigned to cultural industries based on their role in the production of social meaning. The definition of culture is a contested and debated issue ranging from broad anthropological conceptualisations of culture as a way of life to a narrow focus on artistic expression. Based on Williams, Hesmondhalgh claims that the common use of the term cultural industries is based on a definition of culture as "the signifying system through which necessarily (though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored" (Williams 1981: 13). He de-

[14] See Hesmondhalgh (2007), Hartley (2005) and Caves (2002) for comprehensive and critical discussion of the cultural industries, their characteristics, frameworks and debates.

fines cultural industries therefore as those "institutions (mainly profit-making companies, but also state organisations and non-profit organisations) that are most directly involved in the production of social meaning" (2007: 12) Hesmondhalgh distinguishes between "core" and "peripheral" cultural industries depending on their mode of production and reproduction. Core industries are characterised by the industrial production and circulation of texts while peripheral industries apply semi-industrial or non-industrial methods in the reproduction of symbols (ibid.: 12-13). Broadcasting media are situated at the "core" of the cultural industries alongside other industries such as publishing, advertising, video and computer game industries, film industries, music industries, and internet content production who are all "centrally concerned with the industrial production and circulation of texts" (ibid.)

In the post-Fordist information society the cultural industries have gained in social and political significance. In a society where people spend more money and time on leisure and identity-building consumption and where the production and distribution of information have become significant economic, political and cultural activities, symbol-making becomes a process of important influence. Economic value is assigned to the cultural industries based on expectations of increased revenue and economic growth and transformation. This instrumentalist and at times celebratory view is taken up by policy-makers as well as academic scholars, who argue that cultural industries create additional employment opportunities, facilitate the regeneration of local and regional economies (Florida 2002, Evans and Shaw 2004, Lloyd 2006) and advance social inclusion (Reeves 2002). This belief has motivated regulatory intervention involving de-regulation and privatisation but also public support for businesses and industry training (for a review of these developments in British policy see Hesmondhalgh 2008).[15] Combined with the rise of neoliberalism and its emphasis on markets (as self-regulating guarantors of innovation and progress) this has led to a reorganisation and further commodification of cultural production which in turn inspired critical research of the changed industrial setting. An increase in economic pressure and competition on national and international markets, as well as changes in organisa-

[15] It has also led to in a shift of terminology from cultural to creative industries in UK policy (DCMS 1998). Garnham (2005) argues that this is not merely a shift in terms but related to changes in theoretical and political discourses in the context of the information society and its emphasis on intellectual property and knowledge industries. The new conceptualisation includes industries like software-production and architecture whose products are not primarily symbolic but have a high degree of functionality. In this thesis I employ the term cultural industries to stress the centrality of symbol-production, i.e. the creation of texts, in their nature.

tional structure and ownership, challenge traditional production techniques and practices with consequences for the produced texts. Hesmondhalgh (2007) offers a comprehensive discussion of the organisational, socio-cultural, technological and policy changes (and consistencies) surrounding the cultural industries. He argues that the analysis of such changes and their consequences for cultural (including media) production matters for three reasons:

(1) because the cultural industries "are involved in the making and circulating of products, that is, texts, that have an influence on our understanding of the world" (ibid.: 3),
(2) because they manage and circulate symbolic creativity (ibid.: 4) and
(3) because they are "agents of economic, social and cultural change" (ibid.: 6) due to the increasing importance of symbolic creativity and information for social and economic life.

Studying cultural production allows us to make statements about the historical development of how symbol-making is organised and circulated. It enables us to examine claims about the importance of the cultural industries for social and economic developments including, for example, the transition to post-industrial or post-modern societies in which cultural industries are perceived as a model for the economic and organisational transformation of other industries. It also allows us to investigate alternative perspectives which claim that cultural industries are becoming more like other industries while losing their distinctiveness as an economic sector (ibid.: 3-8).

To summarise, we can say that studying the media (including television) is relevant because they shape the way we think about the world, our societies and ourselves through the production and circulation of cultural texts. Studying the production of these cultural texts helps us to understand how and why media products take their particular form. My research is interested in the effects of commercialism and commodification in the television industry on this process. It is in particular interested in the consequences for symbolic creativity and social responsibility in documentary programme-making.

Between Political Economy and Cultural Studies

There are different theoretical approaches with different normative perspectives, objectives and foci on how to assess media communication. Two particularly influential critical approaches or "overarching traditions" (Cottle 2003: 7) in this area are political

economy and cultural studies. Of course these are not the only approaches and to reduce media and communications research to these two traditions would be a simplistic dichotomy. The purpose of this discussion is not, however, to provide an overview of all existing research traditions and theoretical approaches to media and cultural industries research. This has been done elsewhere (see for example Hesmondhalgh 2007). The distinction between political economy and cultural studies is made here to position my own thesis in the field of exploration, as I will use theoretical concepts and empirical results from both traditions to compare and explain my research findings.

Political economy focuses on studying the regulation, production and distribution of media content with a particular attention to economic forces. In contrast to the organisational sociology of culture, which tends to take a neutral, matter-of-fact approach to the analysis of organisational structures and conditions, political economy is based on a more critical normative evaluation of the "cultural economy" that is influenced by Marxist traditions. Basically, political economists explore how and why the media and their organisational structures may or may not serve the interests of the powerful. The growing importance of media in modern society has increased academic interest in developments in the media industries and their consequences for society. In particular, political economists discuss issues of ownership, control and power based on the premise that those who own the media exercise power through the control of ideological messages embedded in media communication. They investigate how such ideological expression leads to the reproduction and reinforcement of existing (power) structures. However, political economy has been accused of economic determinism. Studies in this field mostly focus on macro-structures and are less concerned with specific texts or the actual day-to-day production practice. Whilst they make an invaluable contribution to our understanding of the impact of organisational, economic and power structures, they provide little explanation for specific textual tendencies and often neglect the possibility of subjectivity and individuality in media production.

Cultural studies approaches to the media, on the other hand, focus predominantly on textual representation and their consumption albeit often also from a critical perspective. An important contribution of cultural studies has been the erosion of distinctions between high and low culture and the establishment of popular culture (formerly so harshly criticised and belittled by Adorno and Horkheimer) and everyday culture as worthy and important research subjects. Cultural studies emphasise the impact of

cultural discourses and the subjectivity in the creation of meaning (Cottle 2003) but do so at the expense of studying structural influences on media organisations including economic structures, which may impact on individual expressions of creativity. Research in this tradition focuses, therefore, on the textual analysis of media representations and the reception process which takes precedence over studying their production. This has contributed greatly to our understanding of the construction of social meaning and the dissemination of ideological messages but it tells us less about why representations take their specific form.

There are a range of different research interests and approaches in both traditions but in general "cultural studies and political economy claim to share the same critical evaluation, yet focus on different objects of study" (Meehan 1999: 150). This different focus becomes apparent when considering it in accordance with the "circuit of culture" as developed by du Gay, Hall et al. (1997) based on Johnson's (1986) adaptation of the economic circuit of capital. The circuit of culture includes five mutually influential cultural processes through which meaning is created in society. These processes are production, representation/text, consumption/reception, regulation, and identity. Political economy studies focus predominantly on production or regulation whilst cultural studies explore matters of representation or consumption. Du Gay argues,

> that meaning-making processes operating in any one site are always partially dependent upon the meaning-making processes and practices operating in other sites for their effects. In other words, meaning is not simply sent from one autonomous sphere – production, say – and received in another autonomous sphere – consumption. Meaning-making functions less in terms of such a 'transmission' flow model, and more like a model of a dialogue. (1997: 10)

Accordingly, any studied cultural text or artefact must pass through this circuit "in order to be adequately studied" (du Gay, Hall et al. 1997: 3). To assess all of these elements in a single study involves substantial methodological challenges and resources. However, it is not possible to realise such a comprehensive approach in the context of a thesis such as this. Instead, I connect two of these cultural processes, which are often studied separately: production and representation. In so doing, I combine approaches from political economy and cultural studies, including their critical perspectives. The aim is to connect political economy's focus on organisational structures with cultural studies' emphasis on subjectivity and text in order to provide

an in-depth understanding of why media texts have their specific form.[16] With this objective, this thesis is intended as a contribution to the growing field of media production studies which have similarly focused their attention on media production practice and the combined analysis of media structures and texts.

2.2. Studying Media Production

Surprisingly little attention has been paid to media production on an empirical level compared to the examination of organisational and economic structures of media systems and the study of media texts and audiences. With the exception of work on television news, television production is an "underdeveloped area of inquiry" (Corner 1999: 71). There are some noteworthy exceptions to this "general dearth of production studies" (Messenger Davies 2006: 21), which have informed the research interest, methodology and theoretical approach of this thesis. Following a wave of sociological production studies in the 1970s, scholars have recently begun to focus their attention increasingly on the study of cultural production processes on a micro level. The majority of such studies deal with journalistic news production but there are several analyses which have focused on the production of other film and television genres as well as music, publishing and internet content production. As a result 'media production studies' has now emerged as a separate field of academic inquiry within media and communications studies (cf. Mayer et al. 2009, Holt and Perren 2009).

In this context, Born (2000) and Toynbee (2008) argue for the precedence of production over consumption in media studies. Toynbee criticises the overemphasis on audience research which is rooted in the premise of weak media effects that originate in the subjective interpretive qualities of the audience. He argues that even though the reception process is individualised and influenced by external and subjective factors, the audience nevertheless only reacts to and interacts with content that is made available to them. This means that it is the production process that sets limits on interpretation and use of media. Born argues similarly that "production is processually and temporally prior to consumption; it conditions the television text, and in this way it sets limits to and conditions consumption" (2000: 16). Toynbee's argument is based

[16] For several decades scholars have debated the potential for dialogue and integration of both approaches. See Meehan (1999) for an overview and discussion of this debate. For a discussion of the integration of political economy and cultural studies with regard to the cultural industries see Babe (2009)

on Thompson's typology of forms of communication (1995: 81-118). Thompson distinguishes between (1) face-to-face communication and (2) mediated communication (for example through telephone and letter) which are both dialogical and directed at specific others. Mass communication via television on the other hand is what he calls (3) mediated quasi-interaction. In contrast to the other two forms, this form of communication is one-directional; it is a monologue that originates from media producers and is directed at the audience. Feedback from audiences to media producers is time-delayed and does not enter into dialogue. They are (usually) not consulted over content and form of media products.[17] Furthermore, mediated quasi-interaction is a communication from one to many, from the producer to the television audience, which "implies hierarchical producer-audience relations: a privileged few have the capacity to speak and show to the many" (Toynbee 2008: 269). This is not to say that the study of consumption, audiences and textual analysis are not as important to make sense of cultural products and the creation of meaning but it makes a strong argument for the empirical study of media production. However, we also need to take into account the economic structures and organisational behaviour in media production, since

> [p]rocesses of production are themselves cultural phenomena in that they are assemblages of meaningful practices that construct certain ways for people to conceive of and conduct themselves in an organizational context. (du Gay 1997: 7)

Structure and Agency

If, as argued, producers determine the content and form of media messages, it is necessary to ask what influences their work, in particular "how production is organised and what shapes its output" (Toynbee 2008: 269). Toynbee substantiates the claimed relevance of this question as follows:

> Producer-world relations pose the essentially objective character of the media. However, if producers treat things in the world, then by the same token they can make falsely objective texts. This may be inadvertent or, more rarely, intentional (i.e. some form of deception). In either case it is often the result of the influence of powerful interests. (ibid.: 277).

The examination of the relationship between structure and agency therefore constitutes a central theme in the study of media production. At its heart lies the question of

[17] Of course, media organisations carry out a substantial amount of market research with regard to audiences in order to identify consumer preferences and behaviour. Results of such research do have an impact on the priorities of these organisations; they do affect rarely, however, the production of individual programmes directly.

whether organisational and power structures set the boundaries for individual agency or whether it is agency that shapes social reality. This includes questions from a political economy perspective of how economy and ideology influence production processes, and questions from a cultural studies perspective that focus on agency and authorship and how they determine media texts (Messenger Davies 2006: 22). Elliott's examination of the production process of a documentary series, for example, is based on the premise that there is a relationship between "artistic and cultural forms and social structure and process". His study thus aims to "identify and analyse this relationship by examining the actual process of artistic and cultural creation" (1972a: 8). Different theoretical positions exist with regard to the primacy of structure or agency. Structuralist and functionalist theorists build on Durkheim's view that social structures pre-date individuals; they prioritise structures as determining the parameters in which agents are able to act. Other approaches, especially in a cultural studies context, place the emphasis on agency based on Weber's proposition that society only exists through individual agency. They argue that human action is driven by autonomous, individual choices and that structures are created through agency.

Such binary views of the primacy of structure or agency have given way to more complex conceptualisations that consider structure and agency as mutually influential and dependent factors.[18] Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue that the relationship between structure and agency is dialectical, suggesting that people are caught in a perpetual loop: creating social reality whilst they themselves are being formed and constructed by society. However, this conceptualisation does not engage with the specific nature of human agency and how exactly structures determine it. Giddens' (1976) structuration theory offers an enhanced approach by introducing the concept of "the duality of structure". Structuration describes the process in which social structures are constantly reproduced in social interaction whilst human agency is shaped by social structures. However, Giddens argues that "[s]tructures must not be conceptualized as simply placing constraints upon human agency, but as *enabling*. This is what I call the duality of structure" (ibid.: 161 emphasis added). The idea of structures being both enabling and constraining is an important one that departs from the overly deterministic and one-sided demonisation of structures that is present in many Marxist and political economy studies on media production. Again, however, the actual nature of human agency is not further discussed.

[18] With regard to the subject of this thesis, see for example Wolff's (1993) discussion of social structure and artistic creativity.

These approaches do not say much about how the interdependent influence of structure and agency materialises on a micro level in actual cultural practice. Toynbee (2008) refers to Bhaskar's (1998) theory of structure and agency as a useful way to assess the agency of media producers. Bhaskar rejects Berger and Luckmann's conceptualisation of agency and structure as elements of a single dialectical process, proclaiming it "illicit". He argues that if human agency occurs within pre-existing structures, it cannot "create" society but rather "reproduce or transform" it (1998: 33-34):

> Society is both the ever present *condition* (material cause) and the continually produced *outcome* of human agency. And praxis is both work, that is, conscious *production* and (normally unconscious) *reproduction* of the conditions that is society. (ibid: 34-35, original emphasis)

When analysing human agency we must also ask about the reasons and causes behind the actions taken. Human practice depends on society to be meaningful; structures enable and constrain this agency but they never fully determine it. According to Bhaskar, human agency, including the unconscious reproduction of structures, is "intentional, yet also limited by the opacity of social life" (Toynbee 2008: 274). This means that individuals act on the basis of reason and particular intentions including beliefs, desires and expected consequences of actions. These intentions, however, might be obscured by "sources of opacity in social life" such as unconscious motivation, unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences (Bhaskar 1991: 75). This concept of opacity is helpful in explaining reproductive forms of human agency.

Bourdieu (1993, 1996) offers a cohesive theoretical approach to structure and agency, based on his conceptualisations of field, habitus and capital. Fields are divisions of society: structured spaces with their own rules, values and power relations. Habitus can be understood as a system of dispositions shaped by structural conditions, applicable to both individuals and groups of people. Where field and habitus meet, agency results. The ability of individuals to act according to habitus within fields is determined by their available capital (be it economic, cultural, social or symbolic), however the distribution of capital is uneven within fields (Bourdieu 1986). The proposition of this concept of capital helps to clarify the relationship between broadcasters and independents. The latter's power position is significantly weaker than the one of their negotiation partners, the commissioning editors, whose economic capital manifests directly in production contracts and budgets. Independent producers employ other forms of capital in their strategies to counterbalance that power bias in

order to strengthen their power position and therefore to increase their chance for receiving a commission (see chapter 4).

The relationship between structure and agency lies at the core of the admittedly still relatively small body of production studies. The influence of economic and social structures and their role in the dissemination and reproduction of dominant ideology is a central area of inquiry for production research of news journalism. Tunstall (1971), Golding and Elliott (1979) and Tuchman (1978), for example, all explore the structural and ideological influences on the production of news content, their "perceived constraints" (Golding and Elliott 1979: 123) and the resulting "construction of reality" (Tuchman 1978: 182). Many of these analyses focus on the influence of structures and pay less attention to the potential of human agency. One example of such an approach is Schlesinger's (1992) study of the impact of institutional culture and ideology on the content-related decisions of newsmakers at the BBC. Based on Althusser's conceptualisation of "ideological apparatuses" (1971), whereby the media are part of a system that disseminates and normalises capitalist ideology, Schlesinger argues that ideology (unconsciously) shapes journalists' judgements of newsworthiness through the acquisition of certain skills and expertise, thus reproducing existing power structures. Although this is certainly true, it neglects the potential for change and innovation through human agency.

Other scholars focus more on such dimensions of agency, often linked to notions of professionalism and authorship. Burns (1977), for example, explores structural forces in the BBC and their influence on production. He observes a shift to professionalism based on public service values and a high influence of trade unions within the BBC in reaction to structural changes, notably the new commercial competition through the establishment of ITV. In her study of documentary-makers in the UK, Dover (2001) refers to a "practitioner community" with professional values that may come into conflict with broadcasting structures. Similarly, professionalism has emerged as an influential theme in the analysis of my own fieldwork (see chapter 5). Professionalism explains (some of) the intentions, values and reasons behind the individual agency of documentary-makers, but it is also a source of Bhaskar's opacity that disguises the reproduction of existing structures. Caldwell's (2008) examination of Hollywood film and television workers explores different forms of agency. He is concerned with the ways in which producers operate, how they interact and network, and how they (self-)reference and reflect on their work. One of the most revealing production studies with regard to the relationship between organisational and economic structures and

human agency on the individual level is Born's ethnographic study of the BBC (2002, 2004). Born describes significant structural changes within the institution under the leadership of director-general John Birt, with substantial effects on production practice. But she also observes ambivalence, reflexivity and even resistance toward the changing structural conditions among her research participants. Born's conceptualisation of reflexivity, which is discussed in more detail in chapter 5, presents a form of agency with the potential for structural alteration. This argument proved valid in my research context, and my findings showed similar tendencies among independent documentary-makers (see chapter 5).

As this review of existing scholarship has shown, the relationship between structure and agency is a fundamental issue in the study of media production. The long debate about this relationship has evolved from deterministic approaches to a complex interactive conceptualisation (with greater explanatory power). In accordance with the theoretical conceptualisations and empirical findings outlined above, a study of media production such as this doctoral research project must therefore:

(1) pay attention to both social structures and human agency (in the case of television production this includes production structures and individual creativity in the creation of television content),
(2) focus not only on the constraining but also the enabling qualities of structure,
(3) recognise that human agency is based on conscious intentions which may be thwarted by opacity.

Creativity/Culture and Commerce

An important theme of structure-agency relations in the study of cultural production is a focus on the relationship between commerce/capital and culture/creativity. This focus originates in sociological work on cultural and artistic production and it is the overarching theme of this research. It builds on the premises that commercial and artistic/creative values and objectives are often in contradiction, and that this can create tensions or conflicts in the process of cultural (including media) production. We need, therefore, to ask what the premise of creativity-commerce tensions implies with regard to television production.

Commercial goals play a crucial role in the industrialised corporate structure of the sector. Television networks (including public service broadcasters) and independent production companies follow corporate logic and commercial objectives in their company activities and decisions, essentially with the goal to increase their financial profit. The success of cultural products is difficult to measure but commercial success in television commonly refers to above-average audience ratings. High audience ratings represent a greater market share which in turn means higher advertising rates. Naturally, higher ratings are more popular with advertisers because they suggest that more people are exposed to advertising messages. Consumer sovereignty is the predominant guiding factor for commercial broadcasters in the current broadcasting ecology, however public service broadcasters, who are publicly funded, also depend on audience popularity to serve as a justification for the existence of public service broadcasting per se. If no one (or hardly anyone) was watching a public service channel, then why should the general public pay for the production or acquisition and transmission of its programmes through a license fee? However, broadcasters with a public service remit have additional programme objectives to meet which need to be balanced with commercial imperatives. This includes educational and informational content which is usually less popular with regard to audience ratings. Other forms of success include positive and extensive press coverage and the award of festival and television prizes. They provide evidence of high quality in programming in a way that audience popularity does not, necessarily. Rather, it is commonly associated with populist and entertaining content, less so with challenging and artistic representations. Further commercial factors that impact on independent television production include high production costs for original programming, sinking production budgets at broadcasters and a high number of competitors. Regulatory support has been introduced to ease the financial pressure for independents, for example, in the form of national and European production quotas or the British Terms of Trade regulation, which transferred copyright for independent commissions to the producing company. Yet despite these efforts the independent sector, and especially small and medium-sized companies, suffers from a general undercapitalisation which is increased by the necessity to pre-finance production costs. Finally, the "unequal distribution, and asymmetric power/value-structure of the key organisations and networks" (Pratt and Jeffcutt 2009: 7) are of particular interest in the analysis of structural influences.[19]

[19] I expand further on the role and nature of the economic structures in the television industry with a focus on the situation of independent production companies in chapters 3 and 4.

The commercialisation of the television industry has facilitated the commodification of its programming. Nevertheless, television programmes as cultural products are associated with artistic and creative expression. The common understanding of creativity behind this expression is still widely influenced by romantic ideals of artistic work. In this context Boden distinguishes between an "inspirational" and a "romantic" view of creativity (2004: 14). The inspirational view sees creativity as a mysterious, even superhuman, quality. It is built on the idea of divine inspiration outside the realm of human determination and influence that an artist has to experience in order to create. The romantic view is less extreme, nevertheless, it claims that creativity is at least exceptional as artists are gifted with specific innate talents. Negus and Pickering (2004) discuss such perceptions of creativity within their specific cultural and historical contexts. They provide a detailed historical trajectory of the changes in the (Western) conceptualisation of creativity with its initial link to divine creation and its following shift in meaning in the course of secularisation during Renaissance, Romanticism and Enlightenment (ibid.: 1-9). Wolff (1993) also discusses various theoretical approaches to art and creativity. She argues against the view that artists work best in isolation from society, detached from social life and often in opposition to dominant social values and practices, as a product of the 19th century Romantic notion of the artist. Although a marginalised position in society can be a useful vantage point from which to describe society, it is not a necessary a condition for artistic creation (ibid.: 10-12). Romantic notions of art demonstrate further a focus on authorship that involves an emphasis on the personality and individuality of the artist. This perception runs the risk of overemphasising individual agency in an environment such as the television industry where collaboration, division of labour, shared authorship in project teams and industrialised production structures are fundamental. As argued above, creativity as human agency cannot be defined as independent from these external conditions. To understand creativity as a self-contained characteristic on an individual level is therefore not sufficient. Rather, an examination of creativity needs to include a consideration of the specific contextual conditions that impact on the individual development and expression of artistic creativity. Based on Sartre, Wolff argues accordingly that,

> a more thorough investigation of an author's work involves not only locating him or her in the appropriate social and historical structures, but also examining the specific personal, familial and biographical influences. (1993: 20)

Romantic notions of creativity and art are still very widespread in general belief, but the academic analysis of creativity in the context of creative labour and media production research has progressed from the myth of single independent artistic creation and emphasised the cooperative and structurally embedded nature of cultural production. Television programmes, for example, are the collaborative result of production teams. Nevertheless, concepts of authorship and individual, artistic expression – which in the case of documentary are predominantly linked to the director or producer-director of a programme – remain valid categories for an analysis of creative expression that help to assess agency in relation to structures.

The examination of creativity-commerce relations is based on the interaction and presumed contradictions between commercial imperatives and 'artistic' elements in the process of creation (cf. Ryan 1992). In particular, capitalist objectives of capital accumulation, profit maximisation and cost savings are perceived as contradictory to goals of artistic self-expression, individualism and aesthetics. If creative expression is partly rooted in individualism and agency but strongly affected by structural (including commercial) factors, then we need to ask whether these two elements have different priorities with regard to content production. And if this is the case, then which influence dominates with regard to the content and form of the created product.? There are different positions concerning the relation of commerce and creativity. They range from critical approaches, assuming strong commercial constraints, to perspectives that perceive commerce as a condition for creativity. Meanwhile, others reject the distinction of commerce and creativity altogether as inadequate for dealing with the complex entanglement of both elements (cf. Negus and Pickering 2004: 46-47). Certainly, simple dichotomies do not describe adequately the complexity, flexibility and ambiguity of the production processes. However, to presume a mutually influential relationship, as outlined in the previous section with regard to structure and agency, helps us to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between creative expression and commerce.

In his detailed examination of capitalist cultural production, Ryan observes that commerce (or capital) cannot make artists completely subservient to economics because symbol creation remains ideologically centred on the expressive individual artist (1992: 41). This creates difficulties for capitalist enterprises:

> As historically constituted, however, the artist is a named individual with unboundable creativity and talent. As a social object, therefore, artists exist in opposition to capital and present capitalists with major difficulties in incorporating them in the production process as labour power. (ibid.: 28)

Therefore, symbol creators possess a relatively high degree of autonomy in their work practice when compared to other workers (see also Banks 2010). Autonomy is understood as the capacity to act as the author of one's own actions and free from the constraints of economic, political and religious power. Within cultural production this autonomy is particularly influential in what Ryan (1992) calls the creation stage of cultural production. He argues that corporate control of the creation stage (which includes the conceptualisation and realisation of a cultural product) is relatively loose. It is within other stages of cultural production, in particular reproduction, distribution, marketing and exhibition (i.e. circulation), that corporate management maintains a much tighter grasp of control. The creation stage consists of various processes beginning with the conceptualisation of a new cultural product. This part of the production process is referred to as project development. As mentioned before, my study investigates the specifics of creative control and commercial impact in the project development of documentary production. I will argue that the 'loose' control of the creation stage is further tightened in the development phase compared to the actual realisation of a programme.

Nevertheless, loose control does not mean a total lack of control. In order to manage the uncertainty of the creative process, corporate attempts are made to control the creation stage. Management seeks to, firstly, reduce the costs involved in the artistic creation process, and secondly, to predict and organise the creative outcome of this process. Symbol creators are often overseen by "creative managers" (ibid.) who act as intermediaries between creative staff and commercial orientations of companies. In the case of television production, commissioning editors at broadcasters and (executive) producers at independent companies fulfil these roles, although they are still to some degree involved in the creation process in the form of editorial decision-making or even programme-making. From Ryan's perspective, creative managers function as an instrument through which corporations bureaucratise and rationalise the creative stage of production. Among other things, they have advanced the formatting of cultural products in order "to cope with high levels of risk in the sector" and "to minimise the danger of misses" (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 23, see also Ryan 1992: 144-184). With regard to television production, formatting can take place, for example, through the use of star system, genre and serial production (cf. Hesmondhalgh 2007). The findings of my study show that formatting is also a significant influence and guiding factor in the creation of new documentary programmes (see chapter 6). Formatting leads to standardised products that are recognisable, familiar and create and meet specific expectations among audiences. This has implications for the crea-

tivity of television texts (cultural products) as it is considered and expected to be the source of "new, surprising and valuable" ideas and artefacts (Boden 2004: 1). As Ryan argues,

> [t]he cultural object, the original artwork, as constituted through the structures of art, is valued for its originality and uniqueness. Widespread consumption under conditions of commoditisation brings familiarity with its contents thereby undermining the characteristics which made it attractive to potential consumers in the first place. (Ryan 1992: 28).

In order to be (commercially) successful with audiences, cultural texts depend, therefore, on creativity, originality and innovation whilst many other sectors of capital accumulation tend to require rationalisation and standardisation of production and circulation. This is a key way in which cultural production differs from other sectors of the economy. In the cultural and media industries, innovative, original products are therefore not only an artistic but also a commercial objective. Effects of commerce on creativity therefore do not have to be exclusively constraining; rather they may facilitate and support it. Echoing Giddens' duality of structure, economic and organisational structures are thus both constraining and enabling. This fundamental contradiction is at the centre of creativity-commerce tensions and this thesis explores how it materialises in a specific production context.

Some accounts of the cultural industries emphasise commerce's enabling potential in a celebratory way. Creativity's connection to innovation and innovation's economic value present an attraction for policy-makers and economists who see creativity as a source for economically exploitable innovation. According to neoliberal arguments, creativity thus serves as guarantor for innovative cultural products, which in turn carry the potential for commercial success and thus stimulate the economy. Banks speaks of "the creative fetish" (2007: 70) that is based on celebratory and optimistic accounts such as Florida's (2002). He claims "creativity is now presented by policy makers and firms as a kind of holistic therapy, an all-conquering remedy to soothe the more injurious aspects of modern economic life" (Banks 2007: 71).[20]

The political idealisation of creativity in public discourse is strengthened by the emphasis on individual self-actualisation in contemporary society. Creativity is not only relevant for textual products; it is also very attractive to workers as was confirmed by

---

[20] Yet, as argued by Pratt (2004), it might be the elusiveness of creativity as a notion combined with traditional views of artistic genius that make it such a useful strategy for managers and policy-makers.

LEEDS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

the research participants in my study. It has to be noted, however, that there is a division of labour in cultural production, including television, and not all occupations are "primary creative" (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 64). My study engages in issues of creativity and commerce, hence the research focuses on the work practice of those workers who are directly involved in the creation stage at independent production companies, in particular, production workers and owners/executives. A growing body of media production research focuses on questions of cultural/creative labour[21]. Such work is interested in the issue of creativity in terms of both motivation and the experience of cultural workers on a micro level.[22] Some of these studies adopt an approach based on Foucault's concept of governmentality and the "technologies of the self", according to which "workers/subjects are trained to accept and reproduce for themselves their subordination" (Banks 2007: 42) in the search for self-actualisation and self-realisation. To work creatively thus becomes an important motivation for many people to enter and remain in the cultural sector even at the cost of (self-)exploitation, as Ursell (2006) illustrates for the television industry. Such perspectives on cultural labour neglect the potential of free individual agency. Instead, they imply that workers' behaviour is shaped by public discourses leading ultimately to the reproduction of existing structures. This thesis is not primarily concerned with questions of labour, however: if to work creatively is a highly-ranked ambition for individuals working in television, then it is necessary to examine the actual experience of creative work and to ask in what way it is enabled or constrained by organisational and economic structures.

To summarise the discussion of existing literature above, the centrality of the relationship of commerce and creativity for media production research becomes evident. However, other accounts – mainly from a business perspective – deny the existence of conflicts between creativity and commerce. Roberts (2009) argues that the sociological assumption of tensions in this relationship is an exaggerated view and that instead corporate and creative objectives are congruent, or at least join together in harmony. But to conclude that a lack of open confrontation and the acceptance of corporate objectives among creatives are proof for the non-existence of creativity-commerce tensions is a flawed argument. They are much more likely an indication of

---

[21] Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010), Ursell (2006), Blair (2001) and Lee (2008) for example are concerned with the labour conditions and experiences in television work.

[22] See Blair (2001, 2003) and Ursell (2000, 2006) for analysis of the labour market and conditions in film and television industries. Dover (2001) and Lee (2008) offer accounts of the labour conditions encountered by documentary-makers.

the overpowering influence of commercial imperatives and the acceptance of industrial and commodified production cultures at the expense of individual artistic expression.[23] My research findings clearly demonstrated the existence of (substantial) creativity-commerce tensions and I adopt in this thesis a critical social science perspective that

> primarily understands creativity as a contested political and social process, one where conflicts of interest and struggles for recognition are intrinsic and where the management of creativity is inseparable from the wider politics of labour and the structural contexts within which firms now operate. (Banks 2007: 72)

At the same time, artistic autonomy causes difficulties for corporate attempts to control the creative process, which is intensified by the corporate dependency on original and innovative cultural products:

> [A]rtistic labour personifies a demand for personal autonomy in the workplace and the high value of creativity and originality, which provides a material basis for resistance by artistic workers to subordination and control, and against which capital has to struggle. (Ryan 1992: 104)

The resulting "dilemma" between commerce and creativity can take various forms and involves complex relations. Elliott gives examples of such dilemmas in his discussion of media organisation and occupations and suggests that

> [t]he dilemma may involve a distinction between high and low culture, between professional or crafts standards and commercial judgement, between self-regulation and financial inducement, between self-monitoring and serving an audience, between using one's talent for a purpose and having them used for none except the survival or commercial success of the organization for which the work is done. Just as the dilemma is more complex than a simple dichotomy, so studies have suggested there are more complex adaptations to it than the polar opposites of alienation or acceptance (1977: 148)

Existing research in media production analysis demonstrates clearly the importance of corporate organisational structures. It has also gathered evidence as to forms of agency in television and film production. But it has also been shown that the relationship between commerce and creativity is a complex and ambivalent one. My thesis follows this traditional focus on the relationship between (commercial) production structures and (creative) agency of television producers. This interest is grounded in

[23] In addition, it is necessary to critically assess the information provided by research participants. Roberts gathered his data through interviews; the alleged harmony may as well be an expression of collegial good-will for the sake of successful collaboration as is so typical, for example, in marketing interviews with creatives and actors during the promotion of Hollywood films. For a discussion of television workers' dependency on good working relations and the suppression of conflict see Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2008).

the intrinsic contradictions of corporate, industrialised production of creativity. As the discussion of theoretical approaches to commerce and creativity above has shown, an analysis of creativity-commerce relations in media production needs to:

(1) examine the individual expectations and experiences of television workers with regard to creative autonomy,
(2) set individual creativity in a wider context and identify the dominant economic and organisational influences on the creation of new products,
(3) assess the created texts (i.e. programme ideas, suggestions and proposals) with regard to originality and standardisation (e.g. formatting).

Creativity and Commerce in Studies of Television Production

As mentioned above, creativity-commerce relations in media production are a central focus of television production analysis, especially in view of the recent re-structuring and commercialisation of the television industries (see chapter 1). Grindstaff (2002), for example, discusses commercial influences on talk show production. She argues that the pressure to generate audience ratings, to be more popular than the competition, leads to the manufacture of emotional displays by talk show guests on screen. Grindstaff applies Hochschild's (1983) concept of "emotional labour" to the production workers in their relationship with talkshow guests. She describes how commercial pressures to achieve the required dramatic performance on screen can clash with the personal and artistic views of the observed workers. My results have shown a preference for the extraordinary in the choice of documentary contributors and content in reaction to commercial success pressures, which relates to Grindstaff's observations (see chapter 6).

Another important study, and particularly relevant to this thesis due to the choice of its subject, is Silverstone's (1985) observation of the production process for a BBC *Horizon*[24] documentary. He examines the influence of production structures on creative autonomy and individual artistic expression by shadowing the producer/director of a single programme in this series. Through mapping the intentions of the programme-maker, following the production process and assessing the completed programme, Silverstone demonstrates the structural influence of production processes

[24] *Horizon* is a long-running documentary strand on BBC 2 that focuses on issues of science and nature.

and procedures (shaped amongst other things by economic conditions) and genre conventions. Originally aiming to create a "different kind" of programme that distinguished itself from the other films in the series, the producer-director reflects on the final programme as being typical and similar to other films in this particular strand:

> Despite every intention to break from a mould of *Horizon* film-making which is dependent on the logic and the pace of the spoken word, sync. words and words of commentary, on an argument or a case being presented, considered, refuted and confirmed, he has found himself making just such a film. The structure has emerged like a volcanic island rising from the sea, suddenly visible as though preformed. (1985: 140).

This result indicates the high degree of influence structural conventions and norms have on individual cultural workers and how human agency reproduces existing structures. Formatting certainly plays an important role in this context, but other influences may materialise unconsciously, without the creator in question being entirely able to explain how it happened, thus echoing Bhaskar's concept of opacity (see above). As will be shown in chapter 6, formatting according to strand is of increasing importance in contemporary documentary production. It guides artistic expression, even – perhaps especially – at the development stage.

Dornfeld (1998) also studies the production process of television documentary, in this case a short series produced in the US. His analysis focuses on questions of hierarchy and creative control and problems of collaboration and shared authorship. He observes the influence of commercial imperatives and the serial format and its conventions for aesthetic choices. But Dornfeld also notes a potential for agency that is contrary to structural conventions and stresses the dualism of their relationship. He observes that the series' producers

> deliberately and explicitly chose to go against some of these aesthetic norms and accept others, decisions that both opened possibilities for the series and constrained the producers in certain stylistic ways. (1998: 44)

Other studies that include the examination of producer autonomy include Gitlin (2000), with regard to television producers, and Cantor (1971), with regard to Hollywood film producers. In particular they assess the relationship between television networks and producers with a focus on control and creative autonomy. Tunstall's (1993) study of television producers also focuses on questions of producer autonomy. Based on his analysis of different television genres such as news, current affairs, documentary, comedy, sitcom, game shows and sport, he stresses the specificity of practices and constraints in each genre. This means that the analysis of

influences of and responses to commercialisation in television production need to be related to the generic form of representation.

2.3. Studying Documentary

As established by Tunstall (1993), production structures and processes in television are genre-specific. Television genres are defined predominantly according to their content, for example in overarching categories such as drama, comedy, news, current affairs and documentary as well as in sub-genres such as Western, horror and comedy within the drama/fiction genre, for instance. As this study focuses on documentary, this section discusses academic work on documentary and central debates in this research tradition, which inform the genre-specific features of my research questions. Documentary is a genre with various subgenres and -categories that is difficult to define because documentaries can be extremely diverse in subject matter, form and style, and their character and definition shift over time (Nichols 2001). Most of the literature on documentary approaches its subject from a film studies or cultural studies perspective and focuses on issues of textual representation through the analysis of documentary films and programmes.[25] A large part of documentary scholarship concerns the definition and the aesthetic, ethical and political characteristics of documentary as a genre. It often approaches documentary from a historical perspective, chronicling the evolution of the genre in form of typologies. Scholars use elements of canonisation and approach genre theory through the analysis of single, exemplary film texts that are considered typical, innovative, or of particular high standard/quality. There is a distinct lack of literature concerned with the (empirical) analysis of documentary production. My thesis aims to illuminate this side of documentary and contribute to the closure of this research gap. As I link the study of production practice with representational issues, a discussion of the literature concerned with the documentary text is relevant in order to identify central issues of debate.

Matters of Genre

Genres are categorised according to narrative and aesthetic characteristics and conventions. A very influential classification of documentary is offered by Nichols (1991,

[25] Some research has focused specifically on documentary audiences although to a lesser degree than in other television genres such as news or soap operas. See, for example, Hill (2007) and Austin (2007).

1994, 2001) who distinguishes different "documentary modes" according to narrative voice and aesthetic style which he continues to develop and redefine. They include expository, poetic, reflexive, performative and participatory modes. Barnouw (1974) also developed a typology of documentary voices based on aesthetic characteristics and producer intention. They include categories such as advocate, explorer, chronicler, observer and poet. Rotha (1952), on the other hand, outlines an "evolution of documentary" where he distinguishes between naturalist, realist, news-reel and propagandist traditions. However, Bruzzi criticises such typologies as imposing "a false chronological development onto what is essentially a theoretical problem" (2000: 2). She opposes Nichols' claims that there is a chronological order of his modes, an evolution from primitive to complex and a "progression towards introspection and personalisation" (ibid.). Independently from whether documentary programmes fit comfortably in these categories, the modes themselves are not exclusive but rather interact and overlap as Nichols acknowledges himself (1994: 95). For this reason, Bruzzi questions the purpose of genealogical tables (2000: 2). I agree with Bruzzi's critique of the problems chronological accounts entail, however I believe that such categorisations can also be illuminating. Although they use different characteristics to distinguish documentary types, there are of course overlaps and similarities in the theoretical typologies. Upon placing them next to each other, changes in the documentary genre become evident and new emerging features are highlighted. Furthermore, they offer useful descriptions and categories for the analysis of documentary texts and underline the complexity and elusiveness of genre descriptions.

Textual genres are not fixed but always in a process of transformation. They are formed by conventions that evolve and change over time, whereby new developments will be included in the stylistic repertoire whilst others are discontinued. Television texts apply characteristics and conventions from various genres by borrowing and recombining them and thus may not be allocated easily to one genre alone. Such generic hybridisation has become a feature of documentary over the last decades (cf. Nichols 1994, Corner 2006). It is related to a general change in television output due to the increased commercialisation, competition and audience fragmentation in recent years and the resulting search for innovation and popularity. As a result, documentary is borrowing and adapting characteristics of other genres while at the same time documentary aesthetics are introduced to factual and even fictional genres. These developments lead, as Corner argues, to an "aesthetic reconfiguration" of the genre:

> Documentary work is undergoing a slow aesthetic reconfiguration within the shifting generic profile of television at the same time as documentary methods are adaptively applied to an expanded range of factual output. (Corner 2006: 95)

Hybridisation is a common phenomena in television documentary. Consider, for instance, the adoption of narrative construction, borrowed from reality television, by setting up a challenge, a competition or 'game' for documentary participants (Kilborn 2003). It is also evident in the introduction of dramatised reconstructions, especially in history and science documentary, or in the "nosy sociability" of docu-soaps, drawing from soap-operas and talk shows (Corner 2000b: 687). The increasing blurring of genre boundaries is often critically received and linked to concerns about the truthfulness of documentary representation. The introduction of fictional elements and the widespread use of dramatisation and reconstructions, for example, sparked a passionate debate about fakery and consequent loss of truthfulness associated with the documentary genre (Winston 2000).

Practitioners in the field of documentary-making do not apply the categorisations of documentary theory mentioned above. However, genre distinctions do play an important role in television practice. They are used by schedulers to structure and plan programme schedules and they help audiences to orientate themselves in those schedules and might even have an influence on their selections (Gehrau 2001). Documentary as a broadcasting category is differentiated in various subcategories. These are typically linked to a programme's subject matter, for example, history, natural history (including animals), science, human interest and society, religion, arts and culture. In addition, practitioners distinguish between different documentary forms present in the broadcasting culture such as single or 'one-off' documentaries which can vary in length between 30 and 90 minutes, observational series, also called docusoap, and formatted series that contain forms of construction such as challenges and competitions. All of these forms are included in the broad understanding of documentary for the purpose of this thesis.

Representation of Social Reality

At the heart of discussions about documentary as a genre lies the (evaluative) analysis of its textual representations concerning, for example, class, gender, ethics and the representation of social reality (Nichols 2001, Rosenthal 1988). I will focus on the last of these in this thesis. Although distancing themselves from the actuality and brevity of journalistic current affairs and news reporting, documentaries claim to be

about 'real life', about truth and authenticity. This is a shared value and common ground among the various definitions and genealogical tables of documentary discussed above, but the actual way in which reality is to be represented is subject to intensive debate. The different positions, regarding how events and people are represented adequately, have centred around the notion of documentary authenticity as a truthful representation of reality (see for example, Rotha 1952, Williams 1980, Hohenberger 1988, Nichols 1991, Hattendorf 1994, Kilborn and Izod 1997, Arriens 1999, Winston 2000, Ward 2005).

A typical way to address the relationship to reality and to define documentary is based on the distinction between fiction and non-fiction programming. Non-fiction programmes are those that depict events and people who have a profilmic "real-world existence" (Ward 2005: 7). Debates surrounding realism[26] are based on the acceptance that the real world exists,

> either as an objective fact for people to look at, or as a set of possibilities which they construct through their intelligence and their labour, or as the product of their imagination, or, most plausibly, as a combination of all three. (Williams 1980: 1)

It is now generally recognised that pure objectivity in the portrayal of the profilmic world is not achievable as every film in itself presents a selected view of reality, which is further shaped through montage in the editing process. Ideals of non-influence and naïve realism are widely criticised on the basis that, as Bruzzi argues,

> a documentary can never be the real world, that the camera can never capture life as it would have unravelled had it not interfered, and the results of this collision between apparatus and subject are what constitutes a documentary – not the utopian vision of what might have transpired if only the camera had not been there. (2000: 7)

This creates tensions between aspiration and potential, "between the documentary pursuit of the most authentic mode of factual representation and the impossibility of this aim" (ibid.: 6). Ward describes this as the dilemma of

> how to deal with and understand something that quite clearly is attempting to represent reality (or some part of reality), but as it does so, uses specific aesthetic devices. A commonsense suggestion is that the aesthetics somehow distort or change the reality being represented. (2005: 1)

[26] See Williams 1980 for an overview of realist positions and a selection of relevant excerpts by filmmakers, critics and theorists.

Major concerns with regard to authentic representation and the use of aesthetic devices include, for example, the omission and misrepresentation of facts and personal views through selection and editing, and whose agenda and interests are represented in the film. On the other hand, visual and narrative techniques such as staging of entrances, insert shots and cut-aways, editing montages, and off-screen commentary are recognised as standard techniques in documentary practice. They are genre conventions that are related to the nature of the medium and to production practicalities.

However, views on what conventions and degree of influence on the recorded events are acceptable vary greatly. They range from the seemingly mere recording of reality to interaction between film team and contributors. So-called reflexive documentaries (cf. Nichols 2001, Bruzzi 2000) even draw specific attention to the filmmaking process. They aim to make the producer's influence on the media text visible to an audience by, for example, addressing difficulties and choices in the production processes in the programme or by including images of the production team and the shooting process. Prominent examples of the different attitudes toward filmmaker influence in documentary culture are the cinema verité movement in France and American direct cinema. Often wrongly equated, they are based on different premises with regard to the filmmaker's influence on reality. Cinema verité filmmaking relies on the intervention of the filmmaker and the interaction between him/her and the film's participants. Direct cinema filmmakers, on the other hand, aim to depict reality as if the camera were not present; they reject any influence on or staging of the depicted events and people. Both traditions have an influence on documentaries shown on contemporary television screens, which illustrates the continued parallel existence of different approaches to representing reality. Observational forms of documentary such as docu-soaps, for example, are descendents of the direct cinema tradition aiming at (apparent) neutrality. Films in what Nichols (2001) calls the "participatory mode" of documentary, on the other hand, use methods of interaction that derive from cinema verité. In those films the personality of the filmmaker and the responses of the depicted people play a central aesthetic and narrative role. Well-known examples of contemporary documentary-making in this tradition are films by Michael Moore, Louis Theroux and Nick Broomfield.

As argued above, authenticity does not and cannot mean unaltered or even objective truth, as filmmaking is always a process of (creative) manipulation that involves a multitude of subjective decisions and selections, shaping and framing the representation. However, as Aufderheide claims, "we do expect that a documentary will be a fair and honest representation of somebody's experience of reality" (2007: 3). It is this special relationship with reality and the trust in its truthfulness that defines the importance of documentary, as it is "part of the media that help us understand not only our world but our role in it, that shape us as public actors" (ibid: 5).

Documentary in Transition: Changing Structures and Functions

Truth claims and the perception of the genre's special relationship with reality are connected to producer intentions and the perceived role of the documentary genre in society. The latter are based on ideals of social impact, meaning some sort of effect on society. Corner (2000a, 2002) offers a useful typology of such "classic social functions" of documentary, which are connected to particular aesthetic methods. These include firstly, "the project of democratic civics", for which documentary provides "publicity and propaganda for dominant versions of citizenship". Such programmes rely extensively on commentary; they are inspired by a particular intention and seek specific audience impact. Secondly, documentary functions as "journalistic inquiry and exposition" grounded in the idea of reportage and associated with notions of objectivity and neutrality. It presents "possibly the most extensive use of documentary methods on television". And thirdly, Corner distinguishes "documentary as radical interrogation and alternative perspective" that originates in independent cinema movements and whose discourse attempts a criticism and a correction of other accounts of society in circulation (2002: 259-260).

These dominant functions of documentary are related to social intentions and ambitions among programme-makers, which originate in genre ideals such as education, social progress and 'giving voice' to ordinary people. These values have accompanied the documentary genre from its beginnings. John Grierson[27], for example, who is credited with applying the term "documentary" to a specific cinematic form, saw film as a type of social and political communication that provided a mechanism for social reform and education. He considered documentary, because of its non-fictional na-

[27] See Winston (1995) for a detailed discussion of Griersonian documentary and its impact on documentary-making up to today.

ture, to be particularly suitable for this purpose, and his thoughts and aspirations have influenced British and international documentary-making ever since. In Germany, the tradition of the *Kulturfilm* that was focusing on transmitting educational messages had a comparable impact on documentary. Further influences in this vein include Dziga Vertov's theory of "Kino-Glaz" (cinema eye) that saw the best use for the film medium in the recording of actual events, which has had a strong influence on realist documentary traditions.[28]

The transformation of the television system in the course of neoliberalisation, deregulation and digitalisation has sparked a new interest in the production context of television documentary and non-fictional programming in general. Moving away from a primary concern with aesthetics, documentary television has recently become the subject of sociological as well as critical analysis (Corner and Rosenthal 2005: 3). Central debates focus on how the documentary genre is being transformed as a result of commercialisation and commodification of television content and it also discusses the role and situation of television networks and the independent production sector with regard to documentary. This debate is conducted predominantly in trade magazines for documentary such as *Broadcast*, *DOX* and *Reel Screen* that present views from documentary directors, producers and broadcasters, using specific examples from their production practice. As mentioned earlier, academic consideration of documentary largely neglects the production context, except for practice accounts in form of interviews with practitioners (for example, in Rosenthal 1988, Rosenthal and Corner 2005).

However, some documentary scholarship links concerns about representational quality with changes in production structures. In the late 1990s, several authors began to discuss changing production conditions, often claiming negative consequences for the documentary genre and the decline of 'serious' documentary (cf. Nichols 1994, Kilborn and Izod 1997, Mullan 1997). They observed a reduction in production budgets and broadcasting slots for documentary that was connected to a new focus on entertainment content. This entertainment focus, it has been argued, was motivated by an intensified objective to achieve high audience ratings in an increasingly competitive broadcasting environment. Such observations were linked to the emergence of new, more 'entertaining' forms of documentary, in particular docu-soap and docu-

---

[28] For further discussion of these traditions see documentary anthologies and histories such as Barnouw (1993), Barsam (1992) and Zimmermann (1991).

drama, which became popular with broadcasters/schedulers. This was followed by intensive debate of the impact that the emergence of reality television had on documentary representation and hybridisation (Kilborn 2003 and 2008, Dovey 2000). More positive accounts note a 'documentary-boom', especially in the cinema (Austin 2007). Such debate continues to flourish and new issues have been added to the discussion (cf. Beattie 2004, Austin and de Jong 2008, Rosenthal and Corner 2005). Concerns persist about a potential decline in traditional documentary as a result of the commercialisation and commodification of television content that caused a shift toward entertainment and consumer orientation. Furthermore, there is speculation about the effects of digitalisation on the production system and technology, including flexible and affordable production equipment and the possibilities of computer generated imaging. Optimistic accounts celebrate the development of new distribution platforms in the form of digital (niche) television channels, the internet and online television; however, its economic worth for documentary-producers remains to be confirmed.

These accounts are based mainly on the discussion of economic macro-structures and on textual analysis. So far, there has been little interest in the examination of micro-structures of production and their effect on textual representation aside from interviews with exemplary filmmakers. Only recently, a few production studies[29] have turned their attention to these issues. Dover (2001) examines the professional identity, beliefs and practices of documentary programme-makers in British television. She studies the changes in the practitioner community and how they interact with structural and ideological changes in the broadcasting industry. Lee (2008) focuses on labour conditions and the precarity of working in independent documentary production. He reports that his research participants claim a reduction in programme quality compared to a previous, different production culture, and this echoes the quality concerns of documentary scholars. Sills-Jones (2009) looks at the industrial and formal development of history documentary in the UK between 1982 and 2002 and explores the impact of structural change on documentary form from a political economy perspective. He analyses the effects that changes in the political economy of television have had on the production of history documentary, and the effect these changes in production have on the form of history documentary. Some of the findings of these authors are echoed in the results of my own research, in particular, the exis-

[29] These studies have mostly been carried out in the form of doctoral research projects which may well be connected to the time-consuming nature of the ethnographic approach of media production analysis.

tence of a professional identity with specific values, perceptions of constrained creativity and the (nostalgic) perception of a better past as described by Dover and Lee (see chapter 5). Furthermore, I observed an editorial preference for exceptional and extreme content that parallels Sills-Jones' (2007) notion of the "big discourse" in history documentary production where 'bigger is always better' (see chapter 6).

Critical concerns about diminishing programme quality and the decline of traditional forms of documentary are inspired by normative values of social function (see above). According to Corner, "much discussion of the threat to 'documentary' carries the ring, if not the explicit claim, of a protectionism, one that is finally aesthetically and socially conservative" (2000a: 6). He proposes that we reconsider instead the concept of documentary in the context of an altered television culture and economy. Corner poses the question as to whether documentary is still a helpful category for assessing the changes in non-fictional television content, and in particular with regard to "the new links between popular knowledge and audiovisual experience" (2002: 258). He suggests that the trend toward entertainment and popularity in documentary adds a new, fourth function to the classic social functions of documentary, that of "documentary as diversion" (ibid.: 260). This includes forms of popular factual entertainment in which

> [p]ropagandist, expositional, or analytical goals are exchanged for modes of intensive or relaxed diversion – the primary viewing activity is onlooking and overhearing, perhaps aligned to events by intermittent commentary. (ibid.)

In contrast to the social functions of documentary, this type of documentary has a stronger commodity character, which is a valuable and desirable feature for broadcasters in a commercialised television industry. The three classic social functions have a greater use-value than exchange value. Documentary as diversion, on the other hand, includes forms that are high in exchange value, "strategically designed for their competitive strength in the television marketplace" but less clear in their use-value (2000a: 4). Reflecting on such developments, Corner suggests that we have entered a post-documentary culture that requires broader conceptualisations of documentary and the need to accept the new range of 'lighter' factual programming. He argues that,

> the term needs pressing back toward the broader category of "documentation" from which it initially sprang (...) In doing this, we are not only going from narrowness to breadth, we are being descriptive rather than evaluative. We are trying to re-locate the rich, generically ambitious (in some versions, rather preposterous) idea of documentary within the bewildering range of practices now available for depicting the real on screen, including the screen of the computer. (2002: 258)

A shift toward diversion does not mean the complete disappearance of 'serious' documentary but it "certainly had the effect of reworking the identity of this output both within television's generic system and within the viewing habits and expectations" (Corner 2000a: 4). 'Serious' documentary is no longer the dominant form of the genre, which raises questions about the effects such developments have for the professional identity of documentary-makers. In chapter 5 I discuss practitioners' attitudes toward these developments and note the continuing importance of social impact ideals.

This review of the existing literature on documentary has highlighted several areas in need of inquiry. The primacy of textual analysis neglects the production context and the way in which structures impact on the content and form of documentary texts, focusing instead on genre theory and history. Textual analysis helps to identify and describe generic transitions and continuities, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to find the reasons for these developments. In some cases generic changes are linked to macro-structures of the television system, but those links are not based on the empirical study of production processes. Central issues of debate concern the generic evolution of documentary, its social and entertaining functions and the realism and authenticity of its representation. These are relevant issues to investigate because, as established in the beginning of this chapter, media products contribute to our understanding of the world. The non-fictional character of documentary and its claims to authenticity and social value have implications for audiences' perception of social reality and the constitution of social meaning. A bond of trust exists between producer and viewer (Beattie 2004) that is based on audiences' expectations of the truthfulness of documentary representation.[30] However, as illustrated, documentary has experienced generic hybridisation and new populist, entertaining forms of documentary have emerged whose primary purpose is not a social but an entertaining one. A study of documentary production that aims to link production practice with the generic development of documentary and evaluate the impact of commercialism must therefore:

[30] However, as Hill (2007) points out, audiences are certainly able to distinguish between different forms of factual programming, and they adjust their expectations of authenticity accordingly – for example, in the form of scepticism toward reality television. However, the traditional perception of documentary as a serious, informative and educational genre continues to persist.

(1) consider contemporary generic developments in the context of the traditional social functions of documentary in order to assess changes and continuities in the genre,
(2) analyse values of documentary practitioners concerning the authenticity and social functions of documentary texts and link these to questions of agency,
(3) discuss in what way commercial imperatives interact with the social functions of documentary in everyday production practice.

2.4. Research Questions

As outlined in the introduction of this thesis, put simply, my research queries why contemporary television documentaries take the form they do. In order to meet this objective, it is necessary to examine the common values and practices of documentary producers through an analysis of the production process. A review of the literature concerned with, firstly, media (including television) production as a process in a particular structural setting and, secondly, documentary as a television genre, has revealed analytical themes which have guided the research interest of this thesis. Structure and agency, creativity and commerce and documentary form have emerged in this context as central areas of tension and potential conflict. Based on the discussed literature, there are three premises that form the starting point of my analysis:

1) Structure and agency are interdependent. Structure is at the same time a condition and a result of human agency whilst agency in turn produces and reproduces social structure.
2) Commercial and industrialised cultural production in the cultural industries context is shaped by intrinsic contradictions that carry the potential for tensions between culture/creativity and commerce.
3) Documentary as a television genre is in a state of transition with regard to its functions and forms whereby traditional social functions yield to those of diversion/entertainment.

It is my intention to link these issues in a media production analysis in order to obtain direct empirical data that can verify macro level claims about television and documentary based on the study of micro level practices and causalities. So far, media production analysis is a relatively small – if not entirely neglected – area within media and communications research; many researchers complain of a "dearth" of media

production studies. Nevertheless, previous studies in this field have provided in-depth insights into different television production cultures that significantly further our understanding of how and why television programmes are created in a particular way and demonstrate convincingly the value of such an approach. This thesis is intended as a contribution to this research tradition.

In contrast to existing production studies about documentary, which have focused on the analysis of the complete production cycle of a single programme or programme series, I chose a broader unit of analysis, that is, a specific stage of production. My research focuses on the project development stage of documentary production, during which new programme ideas are conceived (see the following chapter for a description of the development process and its key actors). This choice is made for two reasons. Firstly, studying different kinds of programmes makes sense in view of the diversity of the documentary genre and it supports claims of typicality concerning my findings. Secondly, the analysis of the development of programme ideas – including not only those that are actually getting produced but also those that are rejected or abandoned – provides insights into how individual creativity is constrained and enabled during idea conception.

Much of the existing production research focuses on the processes and structures within broadcasting networks, especially in news production analysis. Interest in the independent sector is rare and often guided by a focus on the conditions for creative/cultural labour. My thesis focuses on the processes and conditions within independent documentary companies who are faced with specific constraints in the current broadcasting system (see chapter 4). Their structural dependency on broadcasters combined with pressures of competition make independents a particularly worthwhile research subject when exploring tensions between creativity and commerce.

The overarching research question of this thesis asks what impact the commercialised production structures of contemporary television have on producer creativity with regard to everyday production practice and the generic development of documentary. Following the review of existing theory and research concerned with similar (or not so similar) questions it is possible to specify this general question in order to operationalise it in an empirical case study. I have therefore divided the main research question into three sub-questions, which concern three levels of analysis:

1) In what way do commercial structures in the television system constrain or enable human creativity in documentary development within independent production companies?

This question concerns the inter-organisational level of analysis or, in other words, the relationship between independent production company and television broadcaster. In order to answer this question we need to identify the commercial influences on the development process and ask how independent production companies react to them as corporate institutions on a micro level.

2) In what way does human agency within independent companies consciously or unconsciously resist or reinforce commercial imperatives and structural conditions?

This question focuses on the individual/subjective level and, in particular, on the experience of television workers in independent companies. It asks how workers evaluate and respond to the production setting they operate in and to the company's institutional behaviour. In order to understand what guides their actions and perceptions, we need to investigate the values and opinions the workers hold.

3) What are the consequences of this setting for television documentary, firstly, as an original and authentic representation of reality, and secondly, with regard to the genre's social functions?

On a textual level this thesis asks how influences of commercialism and commodification materialise in the creative choices made in independent project development. It focuses on two particular issues concerning documentary representation: the traditional values of truthfulness and authenticity, and the social significance or even impact assigned to documentary. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to identify dominant representational trends in work practice and relate them to these values.

3. Research Object and Methodology

In the previous chapter I have specified the theoretical foundations of this thesis and positioned my research within academic theories and debates. This chapter focuses on the research object and the methodology chosen for the empirical part of the thesis in order to provide background information on the situational and methodological context in which the research data were obtained. The first section of the chapter describes the development stage in documentary production, outlining process and key actors. I then focus on the chosen ethnographic approach, discussing its strengths and limitations. I argue that such an approach is the best way to answer the research questions of this thesis and give reasons for the particulars of the research design, such as the choice to become an active participant in the field. Furthermore, I address the comparative, multi-national element of the research design and describe difficulties encountered during the fieldwork. In the final section of this chapter I sum up the key facts of the empirical design and provide a description of the selected case studies for this research, pointing out the structural similarities and differences between the two cases.

3.1. The Development Stage in Documentary Production

Every film or television programme passes through a process of various production stages. They might differ in extent and order but they are more or less consistent for any production. These stages involve project development, pre-production, production (principal photography) and post-production. Ryan (1992) refers to these processes as the "creation stage" of cultural production, which is characterised by relatively loose corporate control. Project development involves the conception of a programme idea[31] and the development of a programme concept, outline or proposal based on initial research. Furthermore, in this part of the production process the funding and distribution of the proposed programme is arranged and contracted, for example, in form of a commission from a broadcaster. During pre-production, the practical details for the programme are determined including, for example, research, scripting, casting and the planning of the shoot including schedules, locations and any required permits and props. The production stage is the realisation of these plans

[31] The term programme is applied here rather than the term film in order to emphasise the thesis' focus on television production and on non-fiction content.

in the filming process. Post-production finally processes the recorded material and finalises the programme. This includes editing, sound design including music, and the addition of visual elements such as graphics, titles and animations. The outcome of this process is a complete and final copy of the proposed programme. The production or "creation" stage is followed by reproduction, the production of identical copies, and distribution of the programme including marketing, publicity and the transmission of a programme on television, online or in the cinema. Hesmondhalgh combines these processes of cultural production under the term "circulation", a part of cultural production that is submitted to tight managerial control (2007: 24).

Media production studies that explore documentary production processes have predominantly focused on the complete production process of a single documentary programme (Silverstone 1985) or series (Elliott 1972a, Dornfeld 1998). They are interested particularly in creative decisions and practices during pre-production, filming and editing. Such analyses provide valuable insight into the different influences that are at work during the production of a documentary, but they tell us little about why the programme was selected for realisation in the first place. As they follow the production of an already commissioned programme they outline the development of the studied programme only briefly without much attention to the negotiations or conflicts this process might have involved. However, development processes are embedded in specific structural conditions of television production, which raise questions about power and control. In a broadcaster-publisher system television networks commission parts of their production from independent production companies, thus providing them with not only with production funding but also with a distribution platform. The power of decision involved in such commissioning lies with the broadcaster, and a high number of independents compete for the production contracts that represent the economic base of their operations. This setting[32] suggests structural constraints with regard to the creative work done at independent companies and makes project development a particularly interesting area of investigation with regard to creativity-commerce relations. It raises questions about what influences the creation of new programme ideas, which projects are selected for commission or rejected and for what reasons.

[32] For a detailed discussion see chapter 4 on the structural conditions of the broadcaster-independent relationship.

Within media production studies there is a severe lack of research regarding the decisions and selections made in the project development phase. Only research concerned with news journalism has paid closer attention to the selection of news content often based on theoretical concepts such as gatekeeping and news values (cf. White 1950, Gieber 1964, Shoemaker 1991, Bruns 2005, Schudson 2005). With regard to documentary production, development remains an "under-analysed and under-estimated" stage in production research as observed by de Jong (2008: 139) and confirmed by my own review of the existing literature. This presents a crucial research gap because of the high cultural and economic importance project development has for independent television production. First of all, particular content is selected to be made available to a television audience. Furthermore, the general features and characteristics of a programme are specified that determine the subsequent production process. Finally, development carries a high economic value for independent media producers, as it is essential for securing production contracts and thus enables production activities. In the following, I discuss the development of television documentaries at independent production companies in more detail and describe the central processes and key actors involved.

Processes and Procedures

As mentioned above, project development is the initial phase of the production process during which *ideas* for television documentaries are conceived and further developed – or not. This includes brainstorming activities, *research* about proposed topics and potential contributors[33] and the identification and approach of possible funding bodies and distribution platforms. If a project idea is selected internally for further development, a documentary *proposal*, also referred to as treatment, is written based on further and more in-depth research. This proposal is then submitted to a potential funding source, which in the researched production context are predominantly television broadcasters. In the case of independent documentary production in Great Britain and Germany, production funding is provided predominantly through a production

[33] Contributors, or participants, of a documentary in the understanding of this thesis include what Nichols calls "social actors" (2001: 5) and Grindstaff refers to as "ordinary" and "expert" participants (2002: 70). Generally, they describe people without celebrity status and media professional experience who contribute to a documentary programme due to their personal experience or professional expertise. They may appear as on-screen contributors in front of the camera or support the production as off-screen informants. Increasingly, celebrities and presenters are chosen as documentary contributors. A discussion of this trend is provided in chapter 6.

contract with a broadcaster but it may also involve – to a lesser extent – public film funding and pre-sale distribution deals. On some occasions a *trailer* for the proposed programme is produced in order to better sell the programme idea to potential financers by providing them with a visual impression of the proposed programme. Commissioning editors at television networks select projects that interest them from the *submissions* they receive from independents and encourage the respective company to further develop the topic. Alternatively, they also might approach independent companies with more or less specific development requests. Independent producers[34] then enter into *negotiations* with these financiers and distributors regarding issues such as format, style, budget, licensing rights/copyright and delivery date. In this process, substantial alterations of the original proposal may but do not have to occur. If the negotiation is successful and a project is commissioned for production, the specific terms for the production are finalised in the *production contract*. The elements of this process do not necessarily take place chronologically. Rather, they overlap and are carried out repeatedly depending on the reaction of broadcasters. In addition, a company has always several projects in development, which are at different stages and new ideas are sought continuously. Once a production contract is closed (or is very likely to be), the project enters the pre-production stage and is moved within the internal organisation of the company from the development to the production department.

Although the elements of the development stage are quite clear, there is little information on the exact procedures and strategies in this process as project development is particularly secretive: only the positive end result, a commission or production agreement, is made public. Rejections and alterations of proposed programmes, however, are hardly transparent for both academic researchers and the general public. The development process itself is characterised by negotiations and decisions that are made behind closed doors and for which personal contacts and networks are extremely important.[35] As previously mentioned, the development stage of documentary production is of particular research interest as it is decisive in three aspects. By selecting an idea for development and realisation, producers (and commissioning

[34] In using the term producer, I generally refer to those individuals in independent production who participate in the creative processes of documentary development and production unless specified differently. Within documentary production this includes professional roles such as executive producers, producers, directors, producer/directors, assistant producers and researchers.
[35] Chapter 4 describes in detail the significance of social contacts for successful independent documentary development based on the research findings.

editors) perform an important gatekeeper role, as they decide which content is made available for audience consumption in the first place. Secondly, in negotiation with other agents participating in the development process, decisions about the narrative and formal presentation of the proposed documentary are made which are crucial for the successive production process. Although alterations in content and style will take place in the course of the production in particular during the shooting and editing stage, the initial frame and subject matter of a new documentary is determined during project development. Decisions in the development stage concern, for instance, the choice of topic, contributors, storyline, and representational mode. Finally, project development is a production activity with great commercial importance for producer and production company, as only the successful commission of the next production secures the continuation of the production process and thus the economic survival of the production company and its workers.

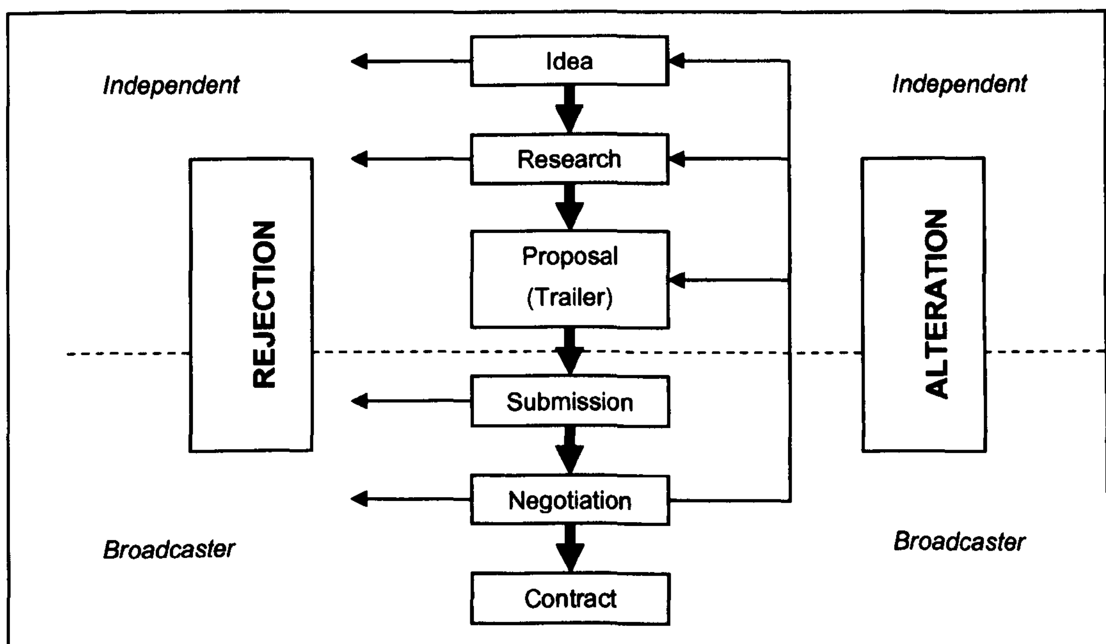

Fig. 1: The Development Process

Key Actors

Specialisation, division of labour and teamwork are central characteristics of cultural production (cf. Hesmondhalgh 2007, Ryan 1992) and particularly valid in television production. Any television programme is the creation of a team of practitioners who are specialised in particular elements of the production process for which different technical and creative skills are required. This includes for example camera operators, sound recordists and editors but also directors, producers and researchers.

Various people are involved at various stages of the project, each contributing to the final product. A number of key actors play a part in the development of new documentary projects in the independent sector. These actors are positioned in three fields: (1) at independent production companies, (2) at television broadcasters and (3) in the general public.

Firstly, there are the management and (employed or freelance) creative/production staff in independent production companies such as executive producers, Head of Development (HoD), producers, directors, as well as assistant producers (AP) and researchers. These different professional roles are ranked in an internal hierarchy with regard to decision power and degree of creative input. The Head of Development is in charge of the company's overall development activities. S/he fulfils a supervision role and decides about the resources spent on development. The HoD sets tasks and priorities, in particular, which project to follow up and what content to research. These decisions, in particular those concerning project priorities, are largely made in cooperation or at least in agreement with executives, including CEOs and company owners, who have the final say about the department's activities. Decisions in development concern the future of the company, which explains and justifies the executives' need for supervision and control. The HoD furthermore allocates the work tasks among the team members, determines timescales and deadlines, and interacts and networks with commissioning editors jointly with the executives. S/he has a high level of creative input, not only by selecting project ideas, but also by developing a creative vision for the final programme and expressing it in form of a written programme proposal. The main task of researchers and APs in development is to find information and "people", that is, sources and potential contributors. They work, to a certain extent, independently within a specific brief and report their research results to the producers, directors and HoD. As is the case with the rest of the development team, researchers and APs have the opportunity to suggest and defend new programme ideas, but they have no influence on whether their ideas are followed up. Development producers and, if involved, directors possess a higher degree of autonomy and influence on creative content. Based on the information provided by researchers and APs they make selections about the angle and specific content of a suggested project and write programme proposals.

The number of people working in a development team and in what role differs greatly between companies. Unlike broadcasters and superindies, which have development departments for factual and factual entertainment programming of substantial size,

independent documentary production companies are predominantly small or medium-sized enterprises (SME), which cannot afford such an expense. However, the acknowledgment of the importance of development work for the overall development of the company is increasingly recognised by these organisations and they have begun to allocate budgets and employ staff dedicated specifically to the development of new projects (Preston 2002: 6) – although this might only be a single person. In other companies development is carried out as a secondary work role performed by executives, production staff and freelance writers/directors in addition to their production-related tasks. The specific composition of the development teams observed in this research is described in the last section of this chapter.

A second set of actors is situated at television broadcasters, the main financier of independent documentary production. Again various actors in different roles and with different hierarchical power are relevant here. With regard to direct interaction with independent production companies, the central figures are commissioning editors who are in charge of specific broadcasting slots. They are themselves subordinate to channel controllers and schedulers but act as direct representatives of a broadcaster when dealing with independent companies. Finally, a third group of actors outside the production company and the commissioning institution is important for development work. They are members of the general public who act as sources of information during the research of a programme idea or are approached as potential contributors/participants in a proposed programme, and, last but not least, there are particular audience groups that are targeted by the commissioning channel. The latter influence documentary development indirectly through the audience rating targets that producer and commissioner are aiming for whilst sources provide essential information and contributors are important with regard to their (potential) on-screen performance and the access they provide to the subject of a proposed documentary.

This thesis is interested in the perspective of independent producers and hence focuses in its analysis on these actors and their views and (work) experiences. Of course, their actions are determined, to some degree, by actors and structures outside their organisation. Due to the thesis' focus on creativity-commerce relations, the relationship between actors at broadcasters and those at independent companies is of particular interest. This relationship and its implications for the activities of workers in independent companies are the subject of chapter 4, and chapter 5 focuses on the values and opinions of development actors within an independent company.

	Relationship	**Broadcaster**	**General Public**
Independent • Executives • HoD • Development team (Producers, APs, Researchers	*Direct* [36]	Commissioning Editors	Sources and Contributors
	Indirect	Controllers and Schedulers	Television Audience

Tab.1: Key Actors in Project Development

3.2. Media Ethnography

Following a long period of dominance of quantitative research methods, social scientific research has experienced a "qualitative turn" (Jensen 1991). This led to a significant increase in the application of qualitative research methods – although quantitative methods continue to dominate in academic research (Jankowski and Wester 1991). Both methodological types have their specific advantages and shortcomings, and a large body of literature discusses and compares the two. The choice of method in any research project depends eventually on the research question and the research subject. Media products including television programmes are relatively easy to access for research purposes, being analysed predominantly through forms of content and discourse analysis. Surveys, document analysis and statistical data on the other hand can provide information about the structural conditions of the television industry concerning, for example, ownership and policy. But an examination of these materials tells us little (if anything) about the processes and practices involved in creating media texts. Media products are distributed on a mass scale but their creation is largely an insider affair about which we have little information or data. Media production research aims to fill this research gap and to make the invisible visible. It seeks to understand how meaning is created and in order to do so it explores the cultural practices of a particular professional community.

[36] The relationships of independent producers with commissioning editors and sources/ contributors have the most direct influence on the activities of independent producers and specific attention is therefore paid to the analysis of these relationships. The methodology chosen for this research project is particularly equipped to study the nature of their influence in the observation of everyday practices.

Ethnographic methods have been applied to analyse these questions and forms of observation and in-depth interviewing have emerged as the two primary methods of media production analysis (Newcomb 1991). Increasingly, they have found their way from the anthropological study of exotic foreign cultures into sociology, psychology and cultural studies and the study of our own society, cultures and sub-cultures. Participant observation has been applied in order to examine various occupational or social groups, such as cocktail waitresses, factory workers, the homeless and hospital patients (see Spradley 1980 for examples). Researchers interested in media work, including the media production studies discussed in the previous chapter, adopted this approach. In the 1970s, a number of ethnographic studies were dedicated to the sociological research of media production, the majority of which focused on the production of news content/journalism (Tunstall 1971, Tuchman 1978, Golding and Elliott 1979, Gans 1980, Fishman 1980). However, in the following years media ethnography was employed mainly in audience and effects research but the study of media production has on the whole been neglected until recent years. In the last decade more and more researchers have turned to the analysis of production processes especially in the context of the emergence of online news production (cf. Bruns 2005, Paterson and Domingo 2008), which has caused Cottle (2000) to speak of a "second wave" of ethnography in the newsroom. This observation can be extended to some degree to the study of other media products and genres although news production research continues to dominate the field.

Media Ethnography as Intensive Research

Like any method, ethnographic research designs have their own advantages and disadvantages but they are particularly suitable, so it is argued, for the examination of social practices – such as media production. Paterson claims that "only ethnographic methodologies derived from anthropological and sociological traditions can come close to provide an adequate description of the culture and practice of media production, and the mindset of media producers" as they provide "the possibility of observation – informed by theory – of the social practices of cultural producers" (2008: 2) In this process, Cottle argues, such studies

> help to reveal the constraints, contingencies and complexities 'at work' and, in so doing, provide the means for a more adequate theorization of the operations of the news media and the production of the discourses 'at play' within news media representations. (2007: 2)

Cottle talks specifically about news production but his argument is certainly as valid for the ethnographic study of other forms of media production, including television documentary.

Ethnographic research is expected to answer certain types of research questions and to provide in-depth data of a specific field of interest. It is a method that is part of what Sayer (1992, 2000) calls an "intensive" research design. Borrowing the terms from Harré (1979), Sayer distinguishes between intensive and extensive research, both of which have different functions with regard to research data and results. Rather than just being a matter of "depth versus breadth", the two research designs "ask different sorts of questions, use different techniques and methods and define their objects and boundaries differently" (1992: 242). Intensive research is concerned with exploring causal processes in a limited number of cases. Extensive research, on the other hand, aims to identify "common properties and general patterns of a population as a whole" (ibid.). Typically, intensive research applies qualitative methods including participant observation and un- or semi-structured interviews, whilst extensive research tends to rely on quantitative methods such as survey questionnaires and statistical analysis. Intensive research inquires into how a process works and what agents (individuals, groups and institutions) actually do. It thus provides a "causal explanation of the production of certain objects or events" by studying the actual connections between actors (ibid.: 243). In comparison, extensive research designs lack in explanatory power. They produce descriptive representative generalisations, search for common patterns and analyse the distribution of certain characteristics or processes (ibid.).

Media production research aims to find out how and under what conditions media products are created and why they take their particular form. It is concerned with the activities and opinions of media producers and what influences them, hence the natural choice of methodology is an intensive approach. The research questions of this thesis are concerned with questions about the role and importance of social structures, the expression of human agency and their causal relations. An ethnographic approach, in particular a combination of participant observation and semi-structured interviews, is most likely to provide this kind of information. Due to the lack of previous research, media production studies of this kind are to some degree explorative. As researchers try to understand the causal relations in the field they are studying they might have to readjust their premises and questions. Intensive research offers such flexibility with regard to sample, research design and research questions which

can all be adjusted throughout the data collection process (in contrast, for example, to a written survey that has to be fully specified in advance and may thus predetermine the final results to some extent).

However, there are of course disadvantages to intensive research designs. Most importantly, they lack representativeness and generalisability in their findings due to the small sample that is studied. In order to make comparisons and generalisations, we need to examine a larger number of individuals and need, consequently, to restrict the number of defining properties. However, when trying to understand causalities, "it is often not clear to what extent each attribute is causally significant to each individual" (ibid.: 241). Hence, it makes more sense to study a large number of properties of a small number of individuals. But a lack of representativeness with regard to the research results does not mean lack of validity of its casual explanation. As Sayer argues,

> although at the level of concrete events the results may be unique, in so far as the intensive methods identify structures into which individuals are locked and their mechanisms, the abstract knowledge of these may be more generally applicable, although it will take further research to establish just how general they are. (ibid.: 249)

It is important to stress that extensive and intensive approaches are not competitive techniques but need to be seen as complementary. For example, intensive research can provide exploratory and explanatory findings; it may disclose new connections or causes which can then be verified and made generalisable through extensive research with a representative sample. This thesis follows an intensive research approach and studies its research object through a combination of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. It is based on the analysis of two case studies which are described in further detail in the final section of this chapter.

Participant Observation

For the reasons outlined above, an intensive research design is best suited to answer the thesis' research questions in this relatively unexplored research field. Participant observation and interviewing were chosen as research methods, because they offer particular advantages for the purpose of this research. The aim of this thesis was to study the relatively closed community of independent television producers with a focus on a particularly secretive phase of the production process. During the development stage, the project ideas, the related research and funding negotiations are con-

fidential. Personal contacts and networks are of great importance and there is little written documentation of development processes. Once a commission has been secured and a production contract has been closed, information about the content of the programme in question and the involved producers becomes available, but how the production agreement was reached is not transparent. This process is difficult to access with quantitative methods such as surveys or content analysis. Observational methods, on the other hand, are a suitable way to understand how a specific community works through the study of its everyday practices. An observation of the development process offers the researcher the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of decision-making processes, negotiations, and power structures at work, without being filtered through the perception and expression of the informants as it might be the case in interviews or questionnaire surveys. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to experience the examined social setting and community at first hand and thus increase his or her understanding of the informants' world (see Spradley 1980). This encourages flexibility of response to new or unexpected lines of inquiry that emerge during field work. This focus on everyday practices is a suitable way to answer the research questions this thesis asks about the relations between commercial structure and creative agency, because the everyday

> is the place where structure and agency meet, where the micro- and the macro-perspective converge, where this tension between change and stability most clearly finds an expression. To be able to trace this ambivalence, it is argued, researchers need to engage with everyday life directly. He or she needs to become part of the everyday that is being researched. This can only be achieved through ethnographic work. (Hartmann 2008: 252)

The observation of everyday practices can take different forms in research practice. For the purpose of this thesis I decided to take on the role of a participant-observer who not only observes but also interacts with the observed individuals and is involved personally in the activities of the studied culture. My 'professional' position in the field was that of a researcher in the development department. This decision was largely determined by the particular setting in independent documentary production and applied with the intention to reduce researcher effects and increase access to people and information.

Bruyn (1970: 307) emphasises the dual nature of the participant's role and claims that the "scientific" and "cultural role" of the observer coexist and complement one another. Awareness of this issue is necessary in order to balance the two perspectives, especially when the level of participation is high. The dual role of researcher and participant in the examined culture can cause another problem, as the actions

and communication of the observed people may be altered due to the presence of the researcher and their conscious awareness of the research project, causing so-called observer effects. Because of the high level of personnel fluctuation and flexible working structures such as short-term contracts and freelance work in television production, the practitioners are used to working with a variety of people. A new researcher within the company, a position that is also relatively low in the professional hierarchy, will only receive little attention in the beginning of the observation period as Grindstaff noted about her role as a production assistant and intern in talkshow production (2002: 280). On the other hand, the low rank in the internal organisational hierarchy makes access to high-profile staff and meetings more difficult (ibid.).

As this research project is concerned with the development stage of documentary production, most of the processes and practices I aimed to observe take place in an office environment with frequent changes in staff members. In this setting an observer is a lot less obtrusive than as, for instance, an additional member to a small film team, as Silverstone (1985) and Dornfeld (1998) experienced. Observer-effects can never be eroded fully but the more time spent in the field, the more natural the relationships formed with the studied individuals which reduce the obtrusiveness of the situation. However, a passive observer would stand out significantly in an office with much of the activities involving telephone and e-mail communication and internet research. Being part of the production team – or, in this case, the development team – provides the researcher presence with a justification beyond the research project. My participatory role prevented my presence in the office from standing out as something unusual and working on current projects offered me useful starting points for questions and conversations. In my researcher role note taking was an everyday activity and passed unnoticed, justified in the office context. Furthermore, as a participant-observer the researcher is involved in the work tasks and in this professional capacity needs, logically, to be granted access to documents, communication and meetings, which provides an exclusive insider perspective. Because of my participation in actual projects I had natural access to project-related documents and communication. On the other hand, the roles of worker and researcher may be difficult to combine in the field. The participant-observed may also be "constrained by having to carry out a job of work and thus being less mobile or flexible in what they could pursue" (Hansen et al. 1998).

Participant observation has been criticised, not only for the potential influence of the researcher's presence in the field on the observed events, but also for the subjectivity

of its data collection process that relies on the personal perceptions and experiences of the researcher during the observations and their recording in field notes. There is, therefore, a need for the ethnographic researcher to be reflexive and to acknowledge his or her own position "within the research and the causal relationship between the research process and the causal relationship between the research process and the findings generated" (Dover 2001: 64). However, the acknowledgment of this subjectivity does not mean that it is impossible to make valid claims about the world (Couldry 2000a: 13). Triangulation with data gathered by other methods is one way to reduce any distortion due to the researcher effect. The ethnographic approach chosen for this study provides scope for such triangulation. It combined the observation of and participation in the research field, firstly, with informal conversations and semi-structured interviews with the research participants and, secondly, with information provided by documents and artefacts including e-mail communication, programme proposals and research documents. Document analysis provides information about the course of development for single programme ideas and illustrates how the creative product, that is, the documentary text, is shaped by production practices.

Oral accounts in form of conversations and interviews with the research participants offer the possibility to gain multiple perspectives on the research topic which may complement or contradict the material derived from observation. In so doing, they can present a validity check for the results of the observation process or add further background information. In addition, developments, change and continuity over time can be addressed and sudden unexpected leads in the interview can be followed up. Observation offers insight into a particular moment in time, little can be said about changes and continuities and long-term developments. Admittedly, it permits an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the researched culture but, nonetheless, it is a short-term snap-shot of this culture at one specific time. Interviews offer help with this problem by providing additional, complementary information on how interviewees have experienced the development over time. A central concern regarding interview methods is the reliability of the interviewees and the difference between what people say and what they do. Their answers may be deviant from the truth for various reasons, whether unwittingly or not. In combination with observation it is possible to counter-check answers received in an interview and possibly identify gaps between informants' perception and actual events. The comparison of observation and interview results can, therefore, help to reveal the forces of opacity at play among television workers.

Multi-National and Multi-Sited Ethnography

Ethnographic media production research is located within specific physical sites (for example, Burns 1977, Schlesinger 1992 and Born 2004 all focus on production practices and structures within the BBC). Traditional ethnographies tend to focus on one research site, but increasingly there are ethnographic media studies, predominantly in audience research, which access multiple sites and multiple national contexts. Marcus (1995) states a need and trend to multi-sited and mobile ethnography instead of single sited of intensive investigation. He argues that it provides different viewpoints that are crucial to a critical engagement with the research object and helps to relate the researched site to the macro-structures of a larger system. Lee (2008) refers to social trends of mobile and individualised life-style including flexibility in employment patterns to account for his mobile ethnographic approach of documentary practitioners. The television workers he studied are employed as freelancers or payees on short-term contracts for multiple employers, that is, production companies or broadcasters. He therefore opted for a multi-sited interview strategy that was independent from a single (institutional) site.

I am interested in activities of institutions, that is, independent television production companies, and in the individuals working within this particular institutional setting, which is why I have connected my research to the particular physical site of a production company. In this respect I follow the traditional one-sited research design. However, I am further interested in the impact of specific national structures, and the growing internationalisation of television programming, production and reception gives this question a topical relevance. So far, there is hardly any cross-country research in the field of media production available. Most comparative, international media research is dedicated to media systems (Hallin and Mancini 2004 is a particular influential example), audience effects research and the analysis of media texts (for example, with regard to the international format-trade). My thesis presents an attempt to study media production processes across national borders in order to identify differences and similarities. Great Britain and Germany serve as case studies for this research project and I carried out fieldwork in one company in each country. The choice of these particular countries has practical reasons, such as the possibility to gain access to research sites and language barriers, but of greater importance are the specific characteristics of these two production cultures.

They both encompass a high degree of comparability in broadcasting and commissioning system particularly with regard to market size, importance of public service broadcasting and the level of documentary output. They have a strong cultural connection, but also they show national particularities in their production context and documentary culture. Broadcasters in Great Britain and Germany operate currently in a broadcaster-publisher model acquiring a large part of programmes from outside producers (Baumann 2002).[37] They represent the main funding and distribution bodies for independent documentary programmes and have, consequently, a great influence on independent documentary production, which has informed the research focus and questions of this thesis (see previous chapter). In both countries the television industry is characterised by the duopoly of commercial and public service broadcasting. The latter is particularly important for independent documentary producers, as public service broadcasters commission most of the originally produced documentary programming in a bid to meet their broadcasting remit. The similarities in the broadcasting system between the two countries originate in the fact that the German broadcasting system was modelled on the British system. Following the Second World War, regional public service broadcasters were founded in the Western zones of Germany whose organisational and funding structure, societal purpose and editorial orientation/remit were modelled on the BBC (Hickethier 1998, Wilke 1999). An important difference is the extension of the public service remit to some of the commercial broadcasters in Britain who, in result, show more documentary than those commercial networks who are not bound to such a remit including all commercial broadcasters in Germany (Zoellner 2002). Therefore, most of the observations about broadcasters made in the empirical part of this thesis concern public service broadcasters as they are the main production partners for independents. In course of the recent (neoliberal) changes in television industries and the resulting increase of economic pressures, these structures and conditions have been altered drastically both in Great Britain and Germany. In both countries economic integration has caused the creation of large multi-national media conglomerates that have the potential to dominate the market whilst connected developments such as the reduction of financial security and the high level of competition amongst media workers have placed additional pressure on the individual.

[37] In the UK, this model was actively supported by the creation of Channel 4. In Germany, the emergence of private, commercial broadcasters in the 1980s introduced the broadcaster-publisher model. See chapter 1 for a fuller discussion of these developments.

Nevertheless, there are also differences in the economic and regulatory structure, which are described in further detail in chapter 4. They include a federal PSB structure in Germany against a centralised organisation in the UK, the economic support of the independent sector through regulation in Great Britain and its comparable absence in Germany, and a greater influence of neoliberal values in the UK. Furthermore, the relations between the two markets are of relevance. The research findings confirm a perception of British documentary producers as trendsetters and innovators in the international practitioner community, which is largely influenced by the positive international reputation of the BBC and also Channel 4 (see chapter 7). Throughout the analysis (chapter 4-6) I will return to the question of how and whether these structural differences materialise in the everyday practices in documentary development.

The research of multiple sites does not make the results representative but it emphasises and explores the complexity of the research field and can provide further insight and explanation. A multi-sited ethnography with several case studies cannot provide the same comparative quality as extensive quantitative research designs but they give an indication of similarities and differences in causal relations within the studied field. The chosen case studies are two companies with similar characteristics (see below) that are fairly typical for the independent documentary sector. This has provided me with the opportunity to compare the impact of different structural conditions to some extent.

The Research Experience

Although offering a unique insight into the research field and a thick description of the studied phenomena, the ethnographic research process also presents several practical and methodological difficulties for the researcher. Compared to other research methods, it is very time-consuming, with a long and intensive fieldwork process which requires extensive institutional and personal resources. This is one reason for the relatively small amount of extended ethnographic research in media studies. My fieldwork was carried out as part of a doctoral research project which provided me with the time to spend several months in the field. I spent ten weeks in each of the studied companies after which point the observation seemed to have reached a saturation point. I witnessed the development of dozens of projects about a variety of subject matters from idea creation to successful commission or – as it is more often the case – rejection or postponement. I researched required information for projects in development, took part in several development meetings and conversed with com-

pany workers. All of these experiences provided an intensive impression of the researched environment. However, as mentioned above, it is difficult to make statements about long-term developments in the research field. Conversations and interviews with the research participants provided some comparison to production conditions in the past and predictions of future developments.

The value of professional experience

When resources for an extensive fieldwork period are available, access to the research site is the second major concern of ethnographic investigation and difficulties in gaining such access are discussed in media production research (cf. Schlesinger 1980, Silverstone 1985, Tuchman 2002, García 2004, Batabyal 2007, Puijk 2008, Paterson and Zoellner 2010). There is little literature about unsuccessful access negotiations but a small-scale survey among media ethnographers has attempted to explore this issue (Paterson and Zoellner 2010). According to this study, two of the most common reasons to refuse a researcher access to production companies are, firstly, time and therefore economic concerns for the research participants, who will need to invest part of their personal and professional time to participate in the research process, and secondly, concerns about the research content and a potential negative publicity for the participants or the disclosure of confidential information (ibid.).

The research participants of this study also expressed such concerns. In both case study companies, economic considerations proved to be decisive and were a reason for hesitation concerning collaboration, although the executive producers, who acted as gatekeepers in matters of access, expressed general sympathy to the research project. This included especially the time the company workers would have to invest in addition to their professional duties in order to answer the researcher's questions, participate in interviews or give detailed explanations. This seems to confirm Lindlof's argument that the commercial nature of a research site impacts on access decisions. He argues that the gatekeeper (the person with the ability to permit access) can (and typically will) ignore or turn down the researcher's request if the organisation perceives it has little to gain and much to lose:

> The more an organisation or group is accountable to the public – usually conceived in terms of a public service mandate – the more likely it is to treat the researcher's inquiry with seriousness, and even welcome it in some cases. Commercial institutions usually keep their guards up very high, perceiving proposed research as an intrusion into the proprietary nature of their activities. (1995: 107)

When contacting the British case study – the first research site – in my role as academic researcher, access was denied straight away on these grounds. In order to overcome such hesitation and make the research more acceptable for the production company as a corporate business I offered free labour as a participant-observer in exchange for access.[38] However, free labour is readily available in the current broadcasting industry, especially in low hierarchy and low experience positions such as internships and traineeships. Therefore, I highlighted my usefulness as a worker on the basis of my previous professional experience in documentary production[39], which served as an additional incentive: the organisation did not only gain a free of charge worker but also an experienced one, who did not need to be extensively trained in order to do valuable or useful work. Finally, I used personal contacts with intermediaries in the field, that is, documentary professionals, to support my access request. Their recommendation proved decisive in being granted an initial meeting to discuss research collaboration. This suggests the general importance that personal contacts have in the television industry, echoing the observations of, for example, Baumann who reports that in the television labour market in Germany and Great Britain, employment and cooperation decisions are predominantly made on the basis of familiarity (for example, due to previous collaboration) or recommendations of trusted intermediaries (Baumann 2002). Following the experience of access negotiation with the British case study company, I adopted a similar approach from the start in the German case and access was granted without hesitation.

Previous experience as a practitioner carries positive and negative implications for the ethnographic research process. On the one hand, it can enable access, estabish trust with the research participants and provide an insider perspective on the explored issues that can help the researcher to better understand and interpret the observed events. On the other hand, such experience may lead to a decrease in scholarly distance through a potential loss of objectivity and stronger researcher effects due to increased intimacy with the research participants.[40] It has been argued that distance is necessary to objectify the observation and to balance insider and outsider perspective (Spradley 1980, Dornfeld 1998). However, a knowledgeable researcher

---

[38] Dornfeld adopted a similar strategy using the offer of free labour as an added „incentive" for gaining access. (1998: 19, 22)
[39] Following my MA I worked in independent television production for four years in the roles of researcher, assistant producer and production manager.
[40] See Paterson and Zoellner (2010) for a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of professional experience in media ethnography.

has advantages over a researcher who has little or no knowledge of the technical processes involved, as the latter's observations might be limited or their meaning misunderstood (Newcomb 1991). I found my previous experience, which I have to stress was limited to approximately four years, extremely useful not only during access negotiations but also to relieve some of the strain of the participatory researcher role. Furthermore, it made it easier to follow the workers' conversations as I was familiar with specific vocabulary and processes involved in the production of a television documentary. Rather than being tempted to 'go native' I found that my professional background enabled a certain distance to the field. However, I also have to note that I ensured that my professional background was not congruent with the research object. I chose case study companies who, including their staff, were unknown to me personally, and I studied project development which is a process I have been involved in only marginally and about which I only received occasional second-hand testimony from former colleagues. In other words, I possessed some initial knowledge of the observed sector that aided access, observation and interpretation but at the same time I was unfamiliar with the observed processes and people, thus permitting a fresh and open approach to the field.

Awareness and self-consciousness among research participants

The participatory approach and my professional experience facilitated access in both case studies to a higher degree than the academic purpose of my research, as they dispersed concerns about time for training and explanation that might have to be invested and increased producers' trust in the researcher not to disclose confidential information. Nevertheless, a general positive attitude towards the research project on the part of the researched producers and the willingness to support are essential criteria for successful access. There are many parallels between ethnographic research and media production processes (as stated, for example, by Silverstone 1985, Dornfeld 1998, Grindstaff 2002) and a particular similarity with documentary filmmaking in its aim, if nothing else, to describe and understand specific cultures and the role of individuals in society. Parallels between documentary production and ethnography exist not only in their subject matter but also in the processes involved, such as the observation, recording and interpretation of human behaviour, and in the principles applied in these processes, such as originality, impartiality and ethics.

Researchers are tempted to anticipate a generally positive attitude among documentary producers towards their ethnographic quest assuming sympathetic support due to this likeness. In practice, producers are often not that forthcoming. After having

tried unsuccessfully to gain access to documentary producers at the BBC, Silverstone for example describes how he felt "perhaps a little irritated with a group of people who spent their entire professional lives depending on others giving them access" but who in turn did not grant access to themselves (1985: 200). Dornfeld makes a similar observation in his study of a public television documentary series in the US. He thought it "ironic that documentary producers who relied on their subjects' willingness to expose aspects of their life to an observer with a camera and recorder were unwilling to expose their own work practices to an observer with a notebook" (1998: 20).

The producers I talked to acknowledged the similar nature of the two roles, in particular with regard to dependency on access, and even named it as an argument for their decision to support the research. As a consequence, they demonstrated a general willingness to cooperate in observation and interview and made themselves very approachable to me. On the other hand, the parallels of collection, selection, interpretation and, especially, publication of information carried out by researchers and media producers alike sensitise the latter to the research process and lead to high awareness and self-reflexivity when producers are themselves the study of observation. This in turn can have potentially negative consequences for the research process with regard to authenticity of interview statements, restriction on publication and passive resistance by withholding information and issues of hierarchy. In addition, television workers occupy a relatively high status in the social structure; they are well educated and hold "significant cultural power and status" (Dornfeld 1998). Their knowledge of "what academics do" further contributes to the self-consciousness of the research process and, combined with the social status and economic success, causes them potentially to conceal information or deny access (Radway 1998).

In my case studies, participants' self-consciousness became apparent both in the semi-structured interviews with producers, occasionally in everyday observation and in the comparison of the data gathered on these different occasions. Interviewees seemed (quite naturally) more guarded in their choice of wording during the recorded interviews. Their knowledge of observation and interpretation processes made them generally cautious in their answers, since they were aware that their statements would serve as evidence. Such awareness can lead to concealment or alteration of information and opinions. For example, two junior workers in one of the companies voiced direct criticism of company procedures and priorities during a lunch break rather than in their interviews. Similarly, remarks by executives and HoDs about the

relationships with commissioning editors were a lot more balanced and content in the interviews. Due to the very artificiality of the interview situation, interviewee awareness can never be prevented fully. It is possible, however, to reduce the attention a researcher draws to her/himself during the observation. Elliott (1972a) describes how producers met him with suspicion when he attended meetings as a passive observer, taking notes but not taking part in the conversation. He stresses that acceptance in the field is helped by sharing common experiences. Dornfeld, clearly, on the other hand experienced positive effects from taking up an active participant role:

> The ethnography of office work, in which subjects' primary activities are speaking on the phone and typing on computer keyboards, leaves little room for productive observation without conspicuously disturbing their work. (...) My revised stance as participant *and* observer afforded me a role in the production that made my visits to the office much more purposeful, provided me greater access to information, and resolved what sometimes felt like a duplicitous presentation of self. (1998: 23)

I felt also that my participatory role aided my research purpose, as I have described above. But despite my quick acceptance and immersion in the field, it became obvious that research subjects were quite aware of my observation and note taking as they occasionally commented on or inquired about my research during the fieldwork. They asked what my research was about, whether my stay in the company was useful, and joked about my note-taking and being observed. They reacted with a mixture of humour and slight concern to being the subject of research. Shortly after the start of my observation a development producer commented half-jokingly, "So you are observing us ... we were all worried about it." (field notes UK) The longer the observation went on, however, the less frequent such comments became as my presence and activities became part of the professional routine and my role as a work colleague preceded my role as an academic researcher. Such a sense of collegiality contributes further to a sense of equality between researcher and researched that creates openness on the side of the research subjects; it helps to build trust and closer relationships with the actors in the field and facilitates subjects' willingness to take part in an interview.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Self-consciousness of the research process is closely related to producers' concerns about the interpretation and publication of research findings which are rooted in anxieties about bad publicity and the exposure of confidential issues. Again, the familiarity with the processes of selection and public representation induces caution on the producers' side about the potential (mis)use of information through the researcher in a publication. The main reason for this sensitivity lies in the precarious nature of

independent documentary production. Companies specialised in this area are usually medium-sized, they operate in a financially under-funded environment and their success in securing commissions with broadcasters depends partly on their relationships with commissioning editors, which in turn are influenced by the company's image and status within the television industry. Their dependency on successful development, that is, on obtaining a commission, leads them cautiously to protect their programme ideas from competitors. Ideas as such are not protected through copyright and there is a risk of a promising idea being picked up and realised by someone else. Secondly, it makes their relationships to commissioning editors highly valued resources that have priority for independent companies and need to be maintained and protected.

For these reasons ethnographic research in television such as this is often constrained by requirements for anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity was a condition for access in both case study companies. This included the identity of the company and its workers, which meant that name, location and previous broadcast credits cannot be disclosed in publication. I chose not to use pseudonyms for the observed practitioners but instead I refer to their professional role within the company and nationality in accordance with my analytical focus. In some cases I have omitted gender, professional rank and nationality of the participant in question in order to ensure anonymity. Sensitivities about relations with broadcasters and the public representation of the company can impose further restrictions on the researcher. A researcher's position within the organisational hierarchy of a company strongly influences the kind of information s/he gathers (Dornfeld 1998: 24). My low hierarchical role in the organisational structure made me, just as Grindstaff experienced in her research of daytime talk shows (2002), nearly "invisible" in everyday production processes and facilitated an unobtrusive observation. On the other hand, this low position in the hierarchy excluded me to a certain extent from information, especially with regard to communication with broadcasters. Contact with commissioning editors is restricted to workers in executive roles that are high in the company hierarchy. This element of development work was not made directly accessible to me in my low-hierarchy role as researcher in the development team.[41] My participation in the company's work life as a development researcher, however, offered me some advantage as it was necessary for producers to pass down information about commissioning

[41] Dornfeld (1998) describes similar problems accessing elite information especially in meetings and correspondence despite generous access conditions.

editors' opinions and requests in order for me to continue my work on a specific project for the company. Furthermore, the HoD and executives shared the results of their communication with editors generally with the rest of the team, whose reaction I could observe, and they also addressed this issue in the interviews. Although the open office layout in both companies made it easier to follow the general conversation flow, sometimes, specific information could not be obtained. In addition, producers failed occasionally to pass on information from e-mail communication or meetings with commissioning editors although access to these sources was originally confirmed.[42]

I have argued that ethnographic methods, in particular, participant observation including interviews, are best suited to answer the research questions of this thesis. They permit direct and in-depth access to and the experience of the studied culture, that is, the key actors and processes of documentary development, and offer multiple perspectives and data verification through the triangulation of different kinds of data. Through ethnography it is possible to make claims about the causal relations of structure and agency in documentary development. Active participation in the research field and previous professional experience of television production were helpful for securing access to the sites, building relationships with the research participants and obtaining relevant data. As with any method, there are also limitations to the chosen research design such as researcher subjectivity, observer effect and need for distance to the field. I have discussed these methodological constraints above and described my efforts to reflect on and reduce their effects. Intensive research such as this relies on the in-depth exploration of a small number of cases, which renders representativeness and generalisation of the research findings impossible. However, this does not make the research findings invalid as "necessary relations discovered will exist wherever their relata are present, e.g. causal powers of objects are generalizable to other contexts as they are necessary features of these objects" (Sayer 1992: 243). It is, therefore, important to have a closer look at the selected case studies and their characteristics. The following section will describe the specifics of the two studied companies and summarise the facts of the research design.

[42] I was promised that I would be included in or would receive copies of e-mail correspondence with commissioning editors with regard to commissioning decisions for informational purposes, as long as I did not quote directly from them. In reality, I received little information about these communication flows, in one case even despite follow-up requests. To what extent this was intentional or accidental is difficult to judge.

3.3. Case Studies

As mentioned above, I spent ten weeks of participant observation as a researcher in project development in each a British and a German production company. Fieldwork was carried out between February and April 2008 in the UK and between October and December 2008 in Germany. My role as a participant included most notably the research and writing up of background information and the research and communication with sources and proposed contributors, but the suggestion of new programme ideas was also invited (and at times even requested). In my role as an academic researcher I kept daily field notes during the observation, which I expanded at the end of every day. I kept a log of the developed programme ideas and details about their progress and eventual outcome (rejection/abandonment, alteration or commission) and collected a substantial number of programme proposals at various stages of development. In addition, I carried out semi-structured interviews with the workers involved in project development, in total ten people in both companies. The interviews were recorded and transcribed[43] and although I adapted my questions for every interviewee there were certain questions that were consistent in all of the interviews, allowing thus for a certain degree of comparison between responses. In the British company, I recorded regular interviews with the HoD to update me on developments in the development department that I could not witness directly. In the Germany company these kinds of updates were provided through informal conversations with the HoD.

The structural characteristics of the two selected companies are similar in many respects and as such typical for many of the independent companies specialised in television documentary. Similarity and typicality of the research sample provide some scope for comparison of the two sites and allow careful claims about the typicality and validity of the research findings. For reasons of anonymity I cannot disclose the specifics of the companies in full detail but it is possible to describe their general features. Similarities exist in ownership structures, internal organisational and hierarchical structures, size and location. Both companies are fully independent and are not subsidiaries of a larger company or a broadcaster. They were both founded by a group of documentary-makers who now maintain an executive or partner role in the

[43] The interviews in the German company were held in German language and the quotations used in this thesis were translated by the author into English based on the interview transcripts.

company. In the German case these founding partners continue to direct programmes whilst their British counterparts are acting predominantly as (executive) producers. Aside from large independent corporations, so-called superindies, factual programming in the UK and Germany is produced largely by small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) such as the two case study companies. There is a small number of permanent staff including the executives and company partners, administrative and technical staff (around eight to 15 people) and a larger pool of freelance and short-term workers, which can reach up to 20 to 30 or more additional people including production staff, directors, camera operators and editors. Both companies are located outside of the main media cities such as London in Great Britain and Munich, Cologne, Hamburg and Berlin in Germany.[44] Therefore, they do not benefit from the media infrastructure and proximity to broadcasters in these locations, but in both cases a local broadcaster resided in the same city with which the companies had close relations.

The companies were founded eight and seventeen years ago and are by now well established in their respective television markets. They produce factual programmes for nearly all national broadcasters as well as some subscription-based niche channels such as National Geographic, Discovery and the History Channel. In Germany this includes predominantly public-service channels such as ARD, ZDF, Arte and the regional public-service broadcasters. The British company produces for public-service broadcaster BBC and (the advertisement-funded) Channel 4 as well as for commercial broadcasters with public service remit such as ITV and Five. This confirms the importance of public-service broadcasters as a funding and distribution body for independent documentary production in contrast to commercial broadcasters without such remit. In the German case, the company carried out international co-productions and applied for public funding in addition to fully funded productions for single broadcasters. The British company relied chiefly on the latter and on international sales of their programmes as sources of income.

With regard to the textual output, that is, the documentary programmes the companies produce, there are slight differences in content but less in form. Both companies produce what can be defined as documentary (in contrast to other factual programming such as reality television or factual entertainment shows), both in form of single

[44] About two thirds of all independent production companies are located in London, and over 80 % of all independents are located in one of the four named German cities.

programmes and series. British documentary series tend to have a high number of episodes (in case of observational series this can be over 20) whilst German series are mostly multi-parters of two to four or five episodes. It is difficult to pin down the profile of such a production company as it is constantly changing and the types of programmes they produce may differ substantially depending on what projects are commissioned. However, there is some consistency. The British company began its operation with the production of single, access-based documentaries. Over the years it expanded its production and, increasingly, is producing observational series following for example members of a particular profession. The subject matters of their programmes are predominantly, although not exclusively in society, human interest, crime (topical and historical) and animals. The German company began originally with shorter journalistic current affairs programmes but moved fairly quickly into longer forms of documentary. They produce principally single and multi-part documentaries as well as some docu-dramas. Their subject matters lie in the area of history, science, culture and society.[45]

The size and composition of development teams in SMEs can differ widely, but they tend to be small and involve the use of interns in order to reduce the financial resources required for their activities. In both companies a Head of Development (HoD) is employed who coordinates and supervises the activities of the team. In the British case there was an atypical amount of staff working in development during the time of observation. Normally, the development department would be staffed with the Head of Development and a development researcher assisted regularly by unpaid interns. During the observation period however, the team consisted of the HoD assisted by a development assistant producer (AP) and a researcher (myself), and a second development producer (DP), who worked part-time and was assisted by one development researcher. All of these were interviewed for this study alongside three executive producers of the company. In addition, there was a flow of students from a regional college who assisted the development team during unpaid two-week placements. The local funding body and a broadcaster were subsidising two and a half of the positions temporarily, which was the reason for this relatively large team. As a result of this unusual size the team worked on a very large number of programme ideas simultaneously which supplied additional material for the observation and more

[45] The description of the company profile's is based on statements of the companies' practitioners in interviews and on the companies' websites as well as on a review of their previously produced programmes.

interviewees and provided further information on hierarchical structure and team relations. The German development team was substantially smaller and thus more typical for companies of this size. It consisted of the HoD and one (unpaid) intern, whose role I took up during my fieldwork. In contrast to the British company, unpaid internships were much longer and had to last at least six months, which turned the consequentially better trained intern into a useful asset for the company. The interviewees in the German company hence all had a high level of seniority and included the HoD, the CEO and one of the founding partners of the company who is also one of the company's directors[46]. On some occasions, when urgent deadlines had to be kept, another researcher who had worked previously in development was recalled to help out. This was also the case in the British company. Except for the HoD there is a high fluctuation of staff in the development department, due largely to the short-term nature of current television employment and workers' ambitions to be involved in programme-making. However, during the fieldwork period the teams' composition remained consistent. The majority of workers come from white middle class backgrounds and a relatively high number of female staff was involved in the overall production processes. Many of the research participants have university degrees but increasingly junior workers have graduated from media and film studies degrees whilst senior workers tend to have a degree in different subject areas. As mentioned above, it was a condition of my research access that the case study companies and the research participants were kept anonymous. I therefore have anonymised their names and the names of broadcast programmes they have produced. When providing examples from my fieldwork either in form of observations or interviews, the research participants are quoted as follows:

Exec Prod	Executive producer (different participants in this capacity are labelled alphabetically A, B and C)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer (also an executive role)
Dir/Par	Company partner and (film) director (also an executive role)
HoD	Head of Development
Dev Prod	Development producer
Dev AP	Development assistant producer
Dev Res	Development researcher

[46] By director I mean the director of a programme/film and not the director of a company.

All British interviews were carried out in March and April 2008, all German interviews in December 2008. I have indicated the nationality of the participants by use of the initials UK (Great Britain) and D (Germany). Field notes are also referenced with national initials to identify the case study they originate from. As several of the examples provided in the following analysis chapters are based on a summary of developments over a longer period, I have not included dates in the field note references. All British field notes are based on observations in the case study company between February and April 2008, all German field notes were created between October and December 2008.

In chapter 2 I have outlined the theoretical framework and influences of my thesis and specified the research questions that emerge from this discussion. In this chapter I have discussed the methodology I have applied to answer these questions. I have described the specifics of the empirical part of my thesis and the particular context it is situated in, and argued that an ethnographic approach is a well-suited method to address the research questions of this thesis. Like any empirical method, ethnography has certain shortcomings and I have attempted to limit their influence in my research design. In order to improve access to the field and reduce the effect of the researcher's presence, I have employed a participatory approach and made use of my professional background in television production. Overall, the research experience and the depth and quality of the data gathered in this process confirm the value of an ethnographic approach for the study of media production. As the following chapters, which discuss the analysis of my empirical data, will show, ethnographic production studies provide the opportunity to gather in-depth data about the inner workings of media organisations and about the opinions, values and experiences of media producers. My results complement other studies in this small but growing field of inquiry. In particular, my research contributes to our understanding of the relationship of culture and commerce in media production and of the ways in which commercial structures enable or constrain individual creativity. By studying the production of documentaries, this thesis focuses on a largely neglected area within documentary studies. It adds a new perspective and new insights to the debate about the development of the documentary genre, which is so far based predominantly on the discussion of programme output. Of course, my results also open up new questions for future research, and generalisation through other methods, as well as the related analysis of other forms of cultural/media production, would be valuable developments. These issues will be addressed in the conclusion of this thesis (chapter 7).

4. Institutional Responses to Structure: The Broadcaster-Independent Relationship

In this chapter I focus on the first of my research questions and discuss how commercial production structures affect the creative autonomy of independent producers on an inter-organisational level. Therefore, I focus in particular on the relationship between independent production companies and broadcasters and argue that independent producers[47] on the whole seem to accept commercialism as a guiding principle of their work. This acceptance is enforced by a power deficit among independents in their relations with television networks. Combined with the economic pressure of undercapitalisation and increased competition, these characteristics lead to an overall conformity of independent project development to broadcasters' commercial requirements. I aim to move beyond the binary views of political-economy approaches, which perceive the activities of cultural producers as regulated and instrumentalised by the mechanisms of the television industry through internalisation[48], and consider commercial influence as per se negative whilst idealising and overemphasising a romantic ideal of artistic autonomy. Rather, I side with Dover who argues that the "inter-dependent relationship between cultural producers and the cultural industry is more complex" and that "individuals manage the apparent contradictions of being a creative individual within a commercial industry" (2001: 177). In this chapter I focus on the institutional compliance with existing structures. The following chapter explores the tensions and resistance these structures evoke.

The first part of the chapter describes the nature and structural conditions of the broadcaster-independent relationship in the project development stage. The main part of the chapter is dedicated to independents' institutional responses to commercial production structures in their relations with commissioning editors. In particular, I discuss firstly, the impact of economic forces on work priorities in independent project development and state a tendency for self-restricting creative conformity to broadcaster preferences among independents. Secondly, I focus on the way in which independents cope with this situation. I show how they improve their relatively power-less status in the production structure through the establishment of social relationships

[47] Rather than referring to a professional rank, I use the term independent producer for all (creative) workers in independent production companies. When I refer to specific individuals within the case studies, they are named with their work role and hierarchical rank.
[48] See, for example, studies on news production such as Tunstall (1971) and Gans (1980)

and industry reputation. The final section provides a summary of my findings and links them to the following chapter.

4.1. Structural Conditions of Independent Project Development

The (Economic) Value of Creativity and Project Development

Development is an essential element of cultural production, as without it cultural products would stagnate and fail to evolve or not be created in the first place. It is, however, also an economic requirement for the financial survival of independent production companies as commercial businesses. Commissioning contracts present the main funding source for independent companies. However, to obtain a commission is a task that is only achieved with difficulty and practitioners acknowledge widely that rejections of developed programme ideas by broadcasters are extremely common, if not the norm. According to the British Head of Development, there is an alleged ratio across the whole of the British television industry that 100 submitted programme ideas are rejected for every idea that gets commissioned. He considers that the case study company is 'not far off' this figure with 80 submissions per one commission and one of the executive producers rates that ratio more favourably at 70:1. This does not mean that 70 or 80 ideas are submitted to the same commissioning editor to get one commission in a particular slot. Rather, they describe the overall ratio of whole development activities in the case study company.

This uncertainty of commissioning success makes it difficult for SMEs in the television sector to make long-term plans with regard to their business activities. Frequently, they finance their activities from one production to the next. A study of the British independent production sector for television states that "[v]ery few interviewees felt that they could make any assumption about their company' finances more than six months into the future – even companies which had existed for a decade or more with steadily increased revenues, or those with a returning series commissioned for some years to come." (Preston 2002: 3). According to one of the British executives, this remains a pressing issue even for a fairly successful company like their own:

> We could run out of work in 12 months, so development is really quite important and I think for us development works on two levels. (...) What development does for us internally, it gives us, gives [Exec Prod B] and I, it provides momentum to the process of what we're doing, means that when we go and see people [i.e.

> commissioning editors] we got other ideas, we got thoughts, ideas; it kind of galvanises the process for us. (Exec Prod C, UK)

This statement further stresses the fact that continuous development of new programme ideas and their submission to television networks perform an important representative role for the company in addition to gaining commissions. To submit new programme ideas regularly to commissioning editors helps the company, as one executive producer claimed, "to get noticed" and "to stay in the eye of the commissioning editor". If commissioning editors are familiar with a particular company and perceive it as a source of plentiful new ideas, they are more likely to consider commissioning this company with the production of a programme or to approach it with development requests. The following statement illustrates the value of the development team for the overall operation of the company:

> [The development team] play a really important role in the presentation of the company, they keep us in the eye of the commissioning editor, the commissioning editors keep on getting ideas from us and you know, whether they want it or not. (...) little by little they're going to create a platform where we will get commissioned. That's why they are so important, that's why no-one is saying, well, you know, you only got two commissions in the last two months. Why worry about it because they're doing a vital role for everything else. (Exec Prod A, UK)

At the same time, development presents a considerable financial strain on independent companies' resources as all development activities are generally funded by the independents themselves up until the point when a production contract is signed.[49] Independent production companies develop a high number of projects at the same time but as only a few projects are successful in gaining a commission whilst the majority of programme suggestions is rejected. The development team is dedicated to develop continuously new programme ideas and target broadcasters to keep the cycle of commission and production running as described in the following quotation:

> What the development department does, is helps you roll with the knockbacks. Ok, that one's gone, so what else can we do. Where else do we go, who is the

---

[49] However, even though the production costs are confirmed once a production contract is closed, the commissioned company still has to pre-finance most of the production as broadcaster budgets are paid out in instalments in accordance with the production schedule. For example, in many cases the full budget is split in three equal parts to be payable before principal shooting commences, after principal shooting is completed and the final rate to be paid after the delivery of the final programme. This practice of pre-financing represents a considerable financial strain for the cash-flow in independent production companies and requires a certain amount of free capital which in turn can only be achieved through organisational growth and increased production. However, the more the company produces, the more capital is required to pre-finance the projects. The cycle repeats itself and the cash-flow problem continues to place financial pressure on the company activities.

> next commissioning editor that we target. And it might take us six months to get something. (Exec Prod B, UK)

Therefore, much time and resources are spent without being recouped through a production budget that is funded by a broadcaster. Consequently, companies attempt to economise their development activities and to reduce the resources spent, as I will illustrate below. This economic context is highly relevant for the way in which independent practitioners react to commercial constraints in the television industry with regard to the creative decisions made in development.

According to Pratt and Jeffcutt, in the context of increased competitiveness and commercialisation, creativity and innovation have been configured "as sources of competitive advantage" under what has been termed "new competition" in contrast to "old competition" which reacted to challenges in the economy through cost reduction (2009: 3). Although this claim is slightly overstated and simplistic in view of the complexity of industrial (cultural and non-cultural) production, it draws attention to a shift in managerial responses to the challenges of a competitive globalised economy. Instead of (or in addition to) leading price wars, corporations use branding, image and novelty to gain an advantage over their competitors and sell more of their products. As a cultural industry, television relies on the production of creative and innovative programming in order to stay competitive and have a chance at economic success in a multi-channel, multi-platform media landscape. At the same time, cultural production is a notoriously risky business that involves a substantial degree of uncertainty with regard to the commercial success of its products (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 18-20). This contradictory situation entails potential tensions between creativity and commerce as discussed in chapter 2. On the one hand, creativity is considered an organisational asset with economic potential and relevance, which is an argument for the commercial support of creativity and innovation. On the other hand, creative products carry an economic risk that is contradictory to commercial imperatives and can lead to constraints upon creativity for the sake of commercial success. Development is at its core a creative process not the least insofar as it is concerned with the conception of something creative, original and innovative – but, as described above, it also carries substantial commercial importance for a production company. Its main objectives are the creation but also the 'sale' of new programme ideas in the form of a production (and/or distribution) contract. It is therefore fair to assume that the increase in competition and commercialism and their economic imperatives influence the level of creativity in development activities.

Creativity is not only an important economic factor of television production, it also presents a central motivating factor for television workers as was confirmed by all the research participants. Development work offers workers a particular opportunity for creativity as it is concerned with coming up with ideas and creating a whole programme concept around these ideas. This HoD describes the satisfaction he gains from the creative work that is specific to project development compared to working on the production of a specific programme:

> I enjoy coming up with ideas that I like. There's nothing more soul destroying than spending days and days and days on an idea and not being able to create it into an idea into a workable film. And the flipside is that there is nothing more exciting than working on a proposal, working on an idea that you just get and it feels really exciting, really brilliant and really fun. So I think that's the thing that grabs me more than anything else. And, yeah, I think it's, it's the freedom to kind of be creative and to not - or to be creative on so many different levels and so many different areas with so many different ideas. It's not just, you know, I'm not just doing three months on one programme and that's my life. It's, if I'm bored of something, I can do something else for a day. (HoD, UK)

Of course, not all work tasks in project development are creative; rather, we can observe a clear division of labour within development teams. Some development activities are considered more creative than others such as coming up with ideas, shaping them into a programme and writing programme proposals. For this reason, they carry a particular attraction for workers. Less creative tasks involve background research of facts and potential contributors and keeping records of the progress of a project including research results. The extent of creativity within work responsibilities is linked to the hierarchical position of development workers with more senior workers doing the creative, conceptualising work and junior workers providing the necessary research. The latter are, however, invited to contribute ideas and they hope to receive the opportunity for creative conceptualisation, writing and decision-making with time as they gain more experience and (hopefully) rise in the organisational hierarchy. It is the influence of commercialism on those first, more creative tasks that I am interested in with regard to priorities, constraints and limitations.

Structural Dependency and Commercial Competition

In the development process, independent producers have the power to select specific content for mass media exposure and to offer a public platform for specific contributors and issues. They determine which content is made available to the audience and how this content is presented. In so doing they perform essentially, a filter or gatekeeper role (Shoemaker 1991, Bruns 2005, Schudson 2005), which offers the practi-

tioners substantial power to participate in and shape media and public discourse. However, this power of selection is split within a broadcaster-publisher system where independent producers compete for the attention of commissioning editors and a production contract that will secure the continuous survival of the company as a business. A power bias exists in favour of commissioning editors who make the final decisions about whether a commission is granted or not. It submits independents to significant economic and editorial dependency and limits their power of selection. Their dependency is structurally grounded in the structure of the broadcaster-publisher system, as they need to secure the interest, approval and (financial) commitment of a broadcaster in order to realise their proposed programmes and to fund their existence. This enables commissioners to exercise substantial creative control over broadcasting content. They do not only make selections from programmes suggested by independents, they also determine editorial preferences which serve as guiding principles in project development (see the following section) and may insist on specific alterations of proposed programmes. Consequently, the workers in independent production companies, including the executive producers, are constrained in their choice of subject matter, style/format and contributors for the programmes they develop. Such commissioner involvement in production presents an area of tension for independent producers as has been observed in a study carried out by The Research Centre for Television and Interactivity in Glasgow: "While the independent sector acknowledges that commissioners need to exercise editorial responsibility, there is disagreement over the extent to which this should occur, to whom, and at what stage in the production process" (Preston 2003: 8) At the same time commissioning editors are themselves in a dependent position with schedulers gaining more and more influence over creative content.[50]

The introduction of the broadcaster-publisher system has stimulated an enormous expansion of the independent sector with hundreds of companies[51] who compete for a comparatively small number of programming opportunities, which means that financial resources are spread thinly across the sector. This high level of commercial

[50] The internal power structures of broadcasters are extremely important for the kind of programmes commissioning editors require but they are not the subject of this study. For an insight in the internal workings of a broadcaster see, for example, Born's (2004) in-depth study of BBC departments. For the purpose of this thesis, I focus on the perspective of independent producers and the demands they encounter in their relations with commissioning editors. Since scheduling and commissioning decisions are usually not made transparent for producers, they have limited knowledge of how and why these demands are shaped in a particular way and to what degree commissioning editors are themselves constrained in their decisions.
[51] Over 800 independent production companies in the UK (Ofcom 2008:184).

competition increases the economic dependency of independents and further strengthens the power of commissioning editors. Commissioning editors can select their preferred projects out of a multitude of programme suggestions. But the amount of proposals they have to evaluate in order to make such a selection is so substantial that an informed choice is difficult to make. Commissioners have a tendency, therefore, to rely on 'preferred suppliers', production companies that they trust to deliver the kind of programme the editors are looking for. Independents are highly aware of this fact as the following statement illustrates:

> I read somewhere recently that each commissioning editor has an average of only five to six companies, independent companies they work with. I don't know if that's true or not but it means for me to get on the wavelength of a BBC arts commissioner I need to knock someone else off the list. Or I need to do something, so I need a breakthrough film to become an accepted arts provider. And it's just hard to get the opportunity, how do you, how can I get, how can I get through this, how can I get over the hurdle. So if there is a frustration, it's broadening out at the moment, history, arts, music, we'd love to make and we think we would make very well but we're not yet on the list. (Exec Prod A, UK)

These figures are confirmed by the aforementioned mentioned report on television commissioning which states that the many of the interviewed commissioners had "close, regular contact with between 5 and 15 companies" (Preston 2003: 5) According to the editors, the reasons for a preference for a limited number of suppliers included a better, "deeper" creative relationship and "smoother" work relations with independents over the course of time as well as the logistical impossibility to "keep in close touch with a larger number of suppliers" (ibid.) Intense competition for the attention of commissioning editors is visible in both national contexts. The German HoD considers competition, which she describes as "too many fish in the pond", as the main problem for independent companies. A commissioning editor told her that editors receive around 400 to 500 programme suggestions per week, a number that is beyond what a single person can read and respond to.

Competition is not only relevant for independent production companies but it is also a crucial factor for television networks. In a multi-channel and multi-platform environment, broadcasters compete for audience shares and revenue in a highly fragmented market. For commercial broadcasters who compete for advertising revenue or subscription fees, high audience shares have always been foremost in mind, an important consideration which in turn affects content production. Over the last few decades, even public service broadcasters have focused increasingly on ratings as a means to legitimise their existence in a neoliberal production ecology that elevates competition and consumer sovereignty to guiding principles. By their nature, creative

products carry a higher risk of commercial failure than other types of product. This fear of failure leads to risk aversion in broadcasters' commissioning strategies with consequences for the innovative quality of television documentary. One interviewee expresses it in the following terms:

> I'm not sure that some of the films we made in the past would be commissioned today. I think that the real search for ratings and success at BBC and Channel 4 is greater than ever. [...] I talked to a BBC commissioning editor not long ago, and I asked him the straight question, 'What are the three things you want a film to achieve?', and he said 'Ratings, ratings and ratings.' [...] It's a pretty cut-throat time in the industry and none of them is going to take a risk on a programme that they think might work, maybe it won't. [...] Commissioning editors have to prove to their boss that this will work. And that's reducing the number of risks they take and it's reducing the type of documentary that they'll commission. (Exec Prod A, UK)

Compared to other genres with higher financial investment and return potential, the populist trend in documentary production is smaller yet significant. The search for big hits that dominates other forms of cultural production, such as the Hollywood film industry and large parts of the music industry, is not quite as severe in documentary production but it is nevertheless a guiding principle in project development. Under the pressure of competition and the need to generate revenue, producers are driven to rely more and more upon familiar formulas in the production of cultural texts (Ryan 1992). This is a trend that is not limited to documentary but one that spreads across all television genres. This is not to say that all commissioned programming lacks originality or innovation but it is argued that risk aversion and the related preference for familiarity have significant consequences for the content of newly developed documentaries (see chapter 6).

Regulatory Support for the Independent Sector

The introduction of commercial broadcasting and additional television channels provided additional distribution platforms for independent producers. However, despite the increase in channels, the hours of original programming that are commissioned have not enlarged at a proportionate rate and production budgets have stagnated or decreased, especially in the area of documentary as this practitioner describes:

> There is a lot less money, there are a lot fewer slots, the programmes you do make are repeated a lot more – they got this brilliant now, instead of being a repeat it's a narrative repeat which means if you weren't watching it at 9 o'clock on Thursday evening, you can watch it at 7 o'clock on Saturday because you might catch it better there. So, they kind of excuse that, that is not a repeat, it's a narrative repeat, we're giving a second chance to watch it. – So there is a lot less, a lot,

> lot less money. And the budgets will continue going down for as long as they can obviously going down. You know, Five at the moment are talking about films that would have been a 120 k an hour for three, four years ago now kind of coming up 90, a 100. And it is really hard, it's really hard to get a 140 thousand pounds for a documentary for an hour when it used to be hard to get 190. (HoD, UK)

The high number of independents who compete for a limited number of transmission slots increases the economic power of the broadcasters. Legislative intervention in the context of creative industries regulation has attempted to improve the economic situation of the independent production sector over the last two to three decades.[52] This occurred not only on the national but also the international level, as for example, in the European Union's "Television Without Frontiers" Directive which states in Article 5 that: "Broadcasters must also reserve at least 10% of their transmission time or 10% of their programming budget for European works from independent producers." (1989/1997: n.p.) On a national level, different support mechanisms are in place in the UK and Germany. Elbing and Völzkow (2006) argue that the British independent production sector receives substantially more governmental support through media regulation than its German equivalent and has thus a structural advantage. Indeed, several policies have recently come into existence in the UK that provide specific economic support for independent producers whilst the relationship between broadcaster and independent is less regulated in Germany.

With regard to independent production quotas, for example, all main terrestrial channels in the UK (BBC1, BBC2, Channel 4, ITV and Five) are subject to quotas for outside commissions as outlined in the 1990 Broadcasting Act. Independent producers are guaranteed commissions of 25% of all first-run programmes with an additional 25% of programmes at the BBC open for commission to either in-house or independent production in the so-called *Window of Creative Competition* (WoCC). In addition, there are regional quotas that facilitate commissions to production companies outside the London area. Nevertheless, production quotas only indicate a percentage and not an absolute amount of programming hours. The actual hours commissioned will depend on the overall amount of first-run programming transmitted by a broadcaster. Furthermore, quotas are not genre-specific or evenly spread over television's generic output. Broadcasters may commission a much higher percentage of entertainment programming (including factual entertainment) than serious documentary.

[52] In the following, I do not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of all legislation and policy that influences the broadcasting system and production activities. Rather, I will focus on specific regulations and developments that have proven particular influential for the situation of independent production companies.

A second recent regulatory move that proved highly influential for British independents was the establishment of the so-called Terms of Trade following the Communications Act 2003. Under the Terms of Trade, independent producers are granted the copyright to their productions – including commissioned programmes, which are fully funded by broadcasters who in turn receive a broadcasting license – and are free to exploit license rights abroad. The British case study company is very active in promoting their programming abroad and cooperates with an international distributor. The revenues of foreign sales support the company's economy and are used, for instance, to acquire technical equipment or finance project development. One of the executive producers describes the economic importance of this regulation for the company's economic success as follows:

> Terms of Trade came under an act of Parliament, the Broadcasting Act 2002, which meant that whereas up to then any broadcaster held on to the rights and the copyright and after that it meant that production companies held the copyright. That means that prior to 2002, you know, we made films for BBC, ITV, Five, Channel 4, they would sell it and if we were lucky we would get some small share of the net profit of that down the road. Now we own them, we sell them and we give a small percentage of the profit to the broadcaster, it is completely turned on its head. So that means the money that we can make from our programmes, from the intellectual property that we have is enormous compared to what it would have been five years ago. So, [*Cutting Edge* documentary] [53] is a one hour for Channel 4. Since it's been transmitted has probably made us in the region of 50,000 pounds. We have to give 15% of that to Channel 4, of the net costs, we keep the rest and can put it in development or the infrastructure or new equipment or whatever we want to do. We couldn't have done that five years ago. (Exec Prod A, UK)

Undoubtedly, this kind of support has had positive effects for the independent sector by securing a minimum guaranteed production volume and providing them with an additional revenue opportunity through international sales. As a result, the British independent sector has experienced a process of restructuration and concentration marked by the emergence of several large independent corporations. These 'superindies' possess substantial economic power. They have the capital to pre-finance large-scale projects and balance income losses, and they possess the resources to produce across genres, to employ high-profile creative talent and to invest into the (international) marketing and distribution of their programmes. For these reasons, superindies are attractive collaborative partners for broadcasters and their power in this relationship has undoubtedly increased. They receive the explicit attention of

[53] Programme titles in interview quotations and field notes have been removed for reasons of anonymity. *Cutting Edge* is a prestigious prime-time documentary slot at Channel 4 with a social and human interest focus.

commissioning editors and are more likely to receive commissions. However, compared to these few large corporations there is also a large number of small- and medium-sized companies with narrow specialisms and much less capital at their disposal such as the two companies observed for this research. For these companies, the legislative support has brought some improvement but it does not outweigh independents' economic pressures and power deficit. Furthermore, they have to compete with the new superindies and their resources, which again intensifies commercial competition.

In the German broadcasting system, public service and independent production are also included as requirements in relevant legislation, such as the Rundfunkstaatsvertrag and Landesrundfunk- oder Landesmediengesetze, but there are no production quotas in place. This does not necessarily imply that independent production is less prominent in German television schedules. They exceed the EU-requirement of 10% but there is no specified amount or percentage of broadcasting hours that is guaranteed for independent commissions. With regard to copyright and licensing rights, German independents hold much less power than their British counter-parts since all fully commissioned programmes include a full transfer of all rights to the broadcasting network. The only opportunity for independents to retain some licensing rights (IP rights) arises if the production in question is a co-production or there is public film funding involved. German independent producers criticise the lack of union organisation compared to the influence such organisations have on the British television sector, including, for example, the trade association PACT[54], which played a substantial role in negotiating the Terms of Trade. Nevertheless, many documentary-producers are sceptical about implementing regulations such as the Terms of Trade in the German broadcasting legislation, including the Head of Development and the CEO of the German case study company. They presume that an introduction of a similar agreement in Germany would mean a reduction of production budgets, as broadcasters would not agree to such a deal, otherwise. This would be a poor trade-off in the eyes of these practitioners because, firstly, it is already difficult to fully fund their productions, and secondly, they are doubtful about the economic value of such a policy in

[54] The Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television (PACT) is the UK trade association representing and promoting the commercial interests of independent feature film, television, digital, children's and animation media companies. According to its website, PACT "offers a range of business services to its members, actively lobbies government organizations at local, regional, national and European level and negotiates minimum terms with the major UK broadcasters and other content buyers" (Available from: https://www.pact.co.uk/Homepage/).

the German television context as only a minority of projects are actually suitable for international distribution for reasons of language and subject matter.

Governmental support in Germany focuses less on business support for production companies than is the case in Great Britain. Rather, support structures take the form of subsidy funding for specific projects through public film funds.[55] Most of these additional funding regulations limit the rights a funding broadcaster can obtain and require that independent companies retain some rights to exploit abroad in order to recoup funds for the funding body. This opens up additional revenue opportunities for independents and strengthens them economically:

> The funders say, we want to strengthen the independent producers and therefore we limit the rights the broadcasters get. The broadcasters only get the license rights, only get the funding money if they limit them to seven years. In principle, the funders fill the gap that is created because capital building is not possible on a grand scale. (HoD, D)

Public funding plays a smaller role in the development stage of programme production as usually, only projects that have secured broadcaster commitment already are eligible for application. In order to secure such commitment development work has to be carried out at the independent's expense which illustrates again the financial burden development work involves. There are few funding opportunities specifically for project development. An important exception is the European MEDIA Slate Funding, which offers independent European production companies development funding for drama, animation and creative documentaries.[56] German producers, including the case study company, make intensive use of this funding opportunity.

The conditions described above illustrate the commercial pressures that independent producers experience on a structural level. It can be argued that legislative support provides British independent producers with structural advantages in the relationship with broadcasters. Nevertheless, their production reality is still dominated by the eco-

[55] German producers for documentary rely heavily on such subsidies for the realisation of projects with greater creative ambition and higher production value in addition to the production budgets they receive from the broadcasters. They do not only make use of regional and national funding bodies (such as the Filmförderungsanstalt) but also European funds (like the MEDIA Programme) and international agreements. In the UK companies may receive funding to support their business structure from the UK Film Council and regional screen agencies but there are few project-specific funding opportunities for documentaries. This behaviour could be observed in both companies. In the German case, for example, the company submitted a regional and a European funding application during the observation period whilst the British company received funding from their local screen agency and broadcasters to employ development workers on a fixed-term contract.

[56] For further discussion of the EU MEDIA Plus Programme see Henning and Alpar (2005).

nomic pressures of competition, which place (small- and medium-sized) independents at a strategic disadvantage. The decisions of both commissioning editors and independent producers are influenced by the financial precariousness of the industry. Cost-saving, competition, rating success and risk aversion guide their development activities and may come into conflict with artistic/creative ambitions and objectives on a subjective level. There are always constraints in the production of cultural products, especially in the current industrial context; it would be naïve to presume otherwise. However, instead of a simple dichotomy of 'good' autonomy and 'bad' structure, it is necessary also to pay attention to the enabling qualities of structure with regard to creative autonomy for independent producers. In the following I focus on the way commercial imperatives impact on the relationship between broadcaster and independent and how independent producers react to the structural constraints placed upon them.

4.2. Staying in Business: Conformity and Commercial Success

Predominantly, development work in independent companies follows a commercial logic. It aims at obtaining production contracts and securing the economic continuation of the company's production activities. In order to do so, independents act as service-providers for broadcasters, guided by the premise to 'give the commissioners what they want'. As I describe below, this is a reasonable rationale from a managerial, commercial position but it creates a situation that includes creative restrictions, which can lead to tensions between the personal preferences of independent workers and the organisational activities of their company.

Orientation to Broadcaster Preferences

The purpose of project development is to develop new programme ideas and sell them to broadcasters. As outlined above, this is a highly competitive process with relatively small chances for success. In order to increase these chances, independent producers act as a kind of service provider for television networks. They research the preferences of their targeted clients, the commissioning editors, both on a corporate/institutional and individual level and cater their development according to these preferences. The British HoD, for example, considers research of and orientation to broadcaster preferences the central responsibility of his job role:

> [My job is] to come up with ideas, ideas that will work, ideas that commissioning editors want. Knowing what the commissioning editor wants, and trying to second-guess what they want. Knowing what other companies are doing so that we can kind of spin our ideas to make [them] stand out a little bit more (...) [E]ssentially, we are selling to them, so we need to know what they want and we have to do it effectively. (HoD, UK)

Slot requirements are institutionally determined and it is the responsibility of the commissioning editor to ensure that commissioned and broadcast programmes meet these requirements. Slot requirements need to be consistent with the channel profile, which is branded increasingly to gain and maintain viewers' attention in a multi-channel environment. Caldwell discusses the importance of branding in the American film and television sector. He stresses that by "[r]eferring not simply to product or company names, titles, or the trademark designations created by marketers and advertisers, the ideal brand expresses a more holistic identity to the viewers and consumers" (2008: 245). Branding is not only applied to the overall channel but also to its single programming elements. Most documentary strands have a particular profile with regard to content and style that provides a certain degree of consistency and creates and fulfils audience expectations.[57] Consequently, editors expect independents to research their requirements and suggest only "suitable" programme ideas as these executive producers describe:

> You make sure that all the proposals are written up nicely and are very targeted for what they want because we've been to commissioning editors who are furious that they've wasted an hour with someone come pitching ideas that are clearly not relevant or appropriate for that strand, and they said, you've been clearly not been watching my programme, nothing makes them more annoyed. I remember seeing [strand editor] at *One Life*[58] who's raging about the fact that someone came and pitched a history documentary to him. He said, I don't do history, if you've ever watched One Life, you know, a story unfolding in front of your eyes, a contemporary story. (Exec Prod A, UK)

---

[57] This following statement by a British executive illustrates the audience-focus of broadcasters' branding strategies: "I think the branding thing is a really important thing for all the broadcasters now, they, you know, they look at things like [an observational animal documentary series the company produces] does very well because it does 5 days a week for 4 weeks and holds and builds an audience. And that's what it's about for them really. It's kind of making people switch on the following day and switch on the following day and switch on the following day. That's why there is so much more stripping of programmes now than there used to be. It's this sort of sense of familiarity about wanting to know what is in the schedule for the viewers because people no longer appointment view on ITV and BBC. You know, people used to kind of say, I see what's on BBC or ITV now and that was it. Increasingly, that just doesn't happen. Channel 5 struggles because they haven't got any appointment viewing, they haven't got anything on there, which [makes] people go, 'I've got to see that tonight, it's on Channel 5'. Nobody ever turns on and say, 'I see what's on Channel 5'." (Exec Prod. C, UK)

[58] *One Life* is a BBC 1 documentary strand that aims to reflect life in modern Britain focusing on human experience and emotion. The strand was suspended in 2008 and its continuation seems unlikely at the time of writing.

> If you suggest the wrong thing four times then the other one [commissioning editor] of course gets the impression, 'they don't inform themselves about me or about what I do. I am not taken seriously and get the whole time environmental and ecological topics and I hate [these topics] abysmally and I don't know why this company keeps [coming with these suggestions].' That can grow into an aversion and they say, 'Oh no, them again.' (Dir/Par, D)

With this objective in mind, independents only select those project ideas for further research, development and submission that meet broadcaster preferences. These preferences concern format (for example, series or one-off programme), subject matter (for example, history or contemporary, domestic or international, human interest or investigative), the targeted audience of a broadcasting slot or strand, the overall profile and codes of practice of the channel in question and any kind of personal interests, likes and dislikes commissioning editors might have with regard to subject matter or type of story. Although there are overlaps and similarities, each commissioning editor and broadcasting slot has their own specific requirements. Who determines these predetermined requirements of content and form? Undoubtedly, schedulers and their commercial objectives have gained prominent influence on the identity of broadcasting slots in the context of the aforementioned channel branding and audience targets. Commissioning editors complain that they have little creative freedom in the determination of programme requirements but are under severe pressure to satisfy these demands as this statement by a British commissioning editor illustrates:

> What we have is responsibility and no power. We don't possess true creative power as we are too removed from the producer. But we have an awful sense of responsibility that we have to deliver what we promised our channel management. (quoted in Preston 2003: 4)

Independents pay close attention to the related slot requirements and the differences in channel identity and target audience; as projects ideas that do not meet these criteria are not viable from a commercial point of view since commissioners will not consider them for production. The following statement by the German CEO illustrates how fundamental/central this is as a guiding principle for the development activities of an independent production company:

> In development it's completely idiotic to say, 'Well, I think this topic is interesting, I want to make a film about it.' Total idiocy. One shouldn't even think like that. You have to think about what broadcaster, what slot, what fits into that slot and there are slot descriptions and we try to develop something that fits. (CEO, D)

The requirements differ greatly between broadcasters and between different slots at the same broadcaster. Programme proposals are therefore 'packaged' differently in each case in order to meet these preferences – even if the proposals are based on

the very same idea. For example, during the fieldwork period the German company developed a programme about the environmental, social and economic risks of thawing glaciers and permafrost as a result of climate change. They submitted the programme to the German broadcaster ZDF with an emphasis on the disastrous consequences for humanity opening the proposal with a catastrophe-scenario. The company also submitted the project to the European development funding programme MEDIA and the HoD briefed the director who was rewriting the programme proposal by stressing that the funder does not like projects that are too commercial but rather prefers something more "artistic" with potential for cinema distribution. This example highlights the consumerist attitude at broadcasters in contrast to a more artistic approach to documentary at public funding bodies such as film councils and screen agencies (UK) and *Filmförderanstalten* (D). Another example of the specificity of broadcaster requirements became apparent during a lengthy brainstorming meeting in the British company. The team was developing ideas for observational documentary series for the channels Five and National Geographic UK. Although both broadcasters wanted a similar style (observational) and format (series), and have a similar (male) target audience (that likes "boysy" topics), there were substantial differences. In contrast to Five (and interestingly to National Geographic USA) National Geographic UK clearly expressed that they would not consider constructed and formatted programme suggestions or programmes that involved presenters. In addition to slot requirements, there are also the personal preferences of commissioning editors that independent developers need to take into account. For instance, in another brainstorm meeting dedicated to observational series ideas for Five, the development team had to factor in that the commissioner disliked programmes about animals and hospitals.[59] In the German company a commissioner's personal involvement in the slow food movement led to the decision to include this issue as part of the programme even though the HoD did not consider it "new enough" to meet the focus of the programme on food trends in the 21st century.

In practice, to comply and conform to broadcaster requirements is not as straightforward as it might sound. First of all, the practitioners need to identify the specific requirements and preferences of the particular broadcasting slot they target. For that reason, they research the previously commissioned and transmitted programmes in

---

[59] Interestingly, it was decided to also include a series about a hospital in the bundle of programme suggestions despite the commissioner's dislike in the hope that excellent access, the drama and the variety of potential storylines may convince the commissioner otherwise.

this strand to identify formal characteristics and subject matters that have already found the approval of the commissioning editors. Furthermore, they study trade magazines such as *Broadcast* in the UK to gain information about recent commissions and statements from commissioning editors. Commissioners also publicise what they "are looking for" in talks at industry events, film festivals and in the programme descriptions and press releases on the networks' websites. Nevertheless, independents report problems in their attempt to cater project development to broadcasters' demands. Practitioners complain about a lack of specific slot descriptions. "It's a bit like a secret science (*Geheimwissenschaft*)", claims the German HoD. The CEO of the same company describes it as a "guessing game". According to the experiences of the executives and HoDs who have extensive contact with commissioning editors, the latter are often not specific about what they want or even, so it is claimed, "don't know what they want". They make vague or misleading statements about their preferences or might change their minds altogether. Furthermore, the language used in related publications is often riddled with marketing phrases that promote the particular programmes or strands with terms such as "surprising", "ambitious" and "high impact", which offer little specific guidance for independent producers. A general lack of transparency within television networks and a lack of decision power among commissioning editors who have to satisfy their superiors and depend on the decisions of controllers and schedulers, obscures further the identification of slot criteria. Misinformation or the lack of information with regard to broadcaster preferences promotes frustration among independents because it causes an unnecessary expense of resources:

> There is one or two recently where we put a lot of time and energy because we believed exactly what they said their needs are and then we found out later on that realistically it probably isn't. For whatever reason they were giving us a slightly false impression of what their needs were and we've gone and wasted a lot of time writing things up and following leads. When you spend time doing one thing, something else suffers, doesn't it. And that can be frustrating, you want them to be absolutely honest and straight, don't think they're lying to you but somehow you know it's not the most practical advice sometimes. (Exec Prod A UK)

According to the German HoD, guidance and information about broadcaster preferences are more specific and better communicated in the UK than those of their German equivalent. A particular notable exception, in the HoD's opinion, is the online commissioning guide "4Producers" at Channel 4[60]. This provides contact details for commissioning editors for particular genres and schedule slots, a description of the

[60] http://www.channel4.com/corporate/4producers.

existing slots or strands, including previous programmes, statements from the associated editors and FAQs, as well as general documents such as agreements, guidelines and procedures. An attempt to remedy this lack of specific information in Germany is a publication by the association of documentary-makers, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Dokumentarfilm, which lists all documentary broadcasting slots in German television, both at public-service and commercial channels. The document was published in 2008 and took over two years to complete. Its listings include the thematic description of the slot, the available budget and the percentage of original production versus repeats and acquisitions. Although broadcasters have contributed differently to the publication, some revealing more information than others, it is still an important resource for independent producers. Comparable resources exist in Great Britain. One example is the *Televisual Handbook* (2010) that includes, among other things, contact details and short interviews with the commissioning editors at the main broadcasters.

Acceptance and Self-Restriction

The fact that, increasingly, broadcasters publicise their requirements as well as the establishment of electronic submission systems for programme proposals in the UK, for example at the BBC and Channel 4, can be interpreted as a recognition of the commodified nature of television production. They emphasise and reinforce the service-nature of the relationship between broadcaster and independent where the broadcaster-publisher becomes a client whose demands are to be met. The overall attitude of the research participants toward this situation is one of general acceptance. Not only do they recognise the service-character of their work, they focus their work priorities and activities explicitly in accordance with what (they think) broadcasters want. Being successful in meeting broadcaster preferences is considered not only a commercial achievement in this competitive industry, but it also provides a sense of work satisfaction. Executives, especially when they are partners and part-owners of the company, have particular personal involvement and investment in the company's fortune which coincides with the company's commercial objectives:

> [T]he thing is, if it's your own company, you get a thrill out of virtually everything you do, because we just enjoy making a success of it. (...) I really loved doing [a wildlife series] and it's something that I probably naturally wouldn't watch. (Exec Prod B, UK)

In the case of small and medium-sized independent production companies for documentaries, the founders, owners or business partners typically are experienced programme-makers. They have to merge their creative roles with managerial responsibilities of running their company as a business. As "creative managers" (Ryan 1992) they exploit and control the creative process for economic purposes, which may come into conflict with their priorities and preferences as programme-makers. In many cases, this has led to a separation of management and creative roles in the independent sector[61], which was also the case in the two case studies. In the British case, the three executives had split their roles with one of them looking after the company as a business whilst the other two executives are more directly involved in the development and production of programmes. This 'managing' executive describes how this was a natural result of the success and expansion of the company:

> We started to get ideas commissioned, so quickly turned into a production company but we were still hiring ourselves out. Then it reached a point after about 18 months, two years where we could stop hiring ourselves out and just work on our productions. And then it grew to a point where it was very hard to keep making the programmes ourselves, and I got the short straw so I run the company. I do do some development and I certainly do, I look after the international and secondary sales. But I run the company, I oversee the finances, and all the deliverables, I oversee all the contracts and the business affairs and the staffing. (...) [The other two executives] have a hand in making films, certainly getting them commissioned and the exec roles still have this creative link. I have that less and less. (Exec Prod A, UK)

Similarly, the CEO of the German company was a former programme maker who is now fully responsible for the business management of the company whilst the other business partners/co-owners of the company still had the opportunity to executive produce and direct programmes. The producers perceived this separation as an advantage in their relations with commissioning editors. By separating business from creative negotiations, "other people deal with the arguing and the to-ing and fro-ing about who gets what, who gets what license" which can provide some sense of independence with regard to creative elements of the production and work against feelings of being "completely under the influence of the person that's feeding you" (Exec Prod C, UK). However, despite fulfilling managerial responsibilities very effectively and being excited by the process, this kind of work holds less attraction and value for

[61] According to the Research Centre for Television and Interactivity in Glasgow the independent production sector in the UK suffers from a lack of efficient management structures. From an organisational/economic point of view, they stress the importance of clear executive structures and division of managerial and creative tasks for commercial success (see Preston 2002) but neglect the consequences for the quality of programming that is produced.

many practitioners than the creative aspects of programme development and production and, as the quotation above illustrates, can be perceived as the "short straw" of independent production. This separation of roles is an organisational expression of the potential conflicts between creativity and commerce and shows that practitioners themselves perceive the two as having separate objectives. Whilst they recognise that they are commercially dependent, they separate this side of their dealings with broadcasters from negotiations about creative decisions in order to avoid a similar sense of dependency. The separation of management and creative roles in independent production presents a kind of reversal to other post-Fordist organisational trends that blend management with creativity. They re-classify management as a creative activity which divests creative work of its "privileged status" thus "recasting" creative workers as "ordinary labour" and submitting them to "the same conventional forms of rational, bureaucratic management as other employees" (Banks 2007: 80). Whilst this is, to some degree the case in both observed companies, the double identity of creative-turned-manager can also counteract the conformity to the creative demands of commodification by referring instead to reflexive values as they are discussed in the following chapter.

The reason for independents' widespread conformity to preferences of broadcasters is rooted in the acceptance of commercialism as a guiding principle along with its potential creative constraints and limitations. Independent production for television is, ultimately, a commercial enterprise and it is recognised as such by the workers in this sector. They are highly aware of the precariousness of their existence and their main objective is "to stay in business", thus offering independent practitioners employment and income opportunities. Even though this often involves a sacrifice of personal creative preferences, producers predominantly display for the most part an attitude of passive acceptance. They sum up the overall nature (and priorities) of their work activities under the notion of commercialism and market pressure, for example, in statements such as "that's just how it is, it's an industry" (CEO, D) and "at the end of the day it's a kind of proper business and it has to be run in a commercial way" (Exec Prod C, UK). In this context, the sheer fact of producing a set number of broadcasting hours becomes more important than meeting individual aesthetic aspirations as is described by this producer:

> [M]ost indies [independent production companies] are vulnerable because they do a specific niche, a very specific type of programming, and for it to work here, we need to kind of [have an] economy of different kinds of programmes really. And this is why this [weekly factual live show] thing is really important to us. Alright, people might say, 'Well that's not the coolest slot on earth'. Actually, we gonna do

> a really good programme, it's gonna have lots of proper documentary in it, it's gonna have interesting people in it – it's one of the relatively few places in British broadcasting now where you get an hour of TV every week to yourself. And that's fantastic for us. (Exec Prod C, UK)

In their attempt to please commissioning editors, independents exclude all those ideas from the start that they consider to have limited chances for commission. Despite the general acceptance of the industrial and commercial nature of their work, this orientation can come into direct conflict with the personal preferences and opinions of the practitioners. Such creative self-restriction clearly became evident in the observation, for instance, during brainstorming meetings of the development teams. In those meetings reasons for the internal rejection of a suggested idea included (aside from practicalities of realisation) the requirements of a particular broadcasting slot, the potential to raise audience interest, cultural sensitivities that might lead to lower audience ratings, as well as the personal interests and "likes" of individual commissioning editors. Project ideas that centred, for example, on issues such as transgenderism or paedophile rehabilitation were rejected straightaway on the grounds that they were known to "rate badly" or were too "risky" when it came to attracting the attention of an audience. A British executive producer who is in charge of project development, suggested a film about an attempt to rehabilitate paedophiles. She felt that this would be an exciting and innovative film project with potential for social impact, but when suggesting the idea informally to commissioning editors they discarded it on the grounds of controversy:

> You know the media is obsessed with Madeleine McCann[62] and so on but if you actually want to do a sensible, serious, but interesting and jaw-dropping, you know, and shocking film about a possible solution, I think they'll say, 'It's just too serious, it's too heavy, people don't want to, people don't want to know'. But I relate to that, because when I'm at home in the evening, I rather watch *Location, Location, Location*[63] as well. I really understand it, it's just that when you come across a topic that you feel passionate about and you really want to make that film and you know you can make a great film, it is very difficult when you come up against that wall of people just saying, it's too dark. (Exec Prod B, UK)

Although this executive expressed disappointment about this lack of interest, her personal view had to be subordinate compared to projects that – although maybe not arousing her personal interest and passion – have a higher probability of commission. Her criticism indicates creative tensions between work role and personal preferences

[62] The producer refers here to a case of child-kidnapping of 3-year-old British girl Madeleine McCann from a holiday resort in Spain in 2007 which was widely publicised in UK media and gained an enormous amount of public and media attention.
[63] Presenter-led property programme at Channel 4.

and reveals a separation of these two identities with respect to creative selections and decisions made in development. The following statement from the German CEO describes the company's self-understanding as a commercial actor and service provider for broadcasters and stresses the secondary role of personal interest and preference:

> [F]irst of all it's a business and one has to try to sort of serve his business partners as well as possible; and that is something one needs to be able to do to begin with. That's also an art in itself, I'd say. I am already happy when I manage that. What I am interested in personally, that's an altogether different matter. (CEO, D)

Such a distinction between personal interest and the commercial orientation of their work activities and priorities is particularly pronounced on the managerial level in independent companies. In both of the studied companies, the executive producers/partners were former filmmakers or producer/directors themselves. As executive producers their main objective becomes the creation of programmes that meet the broadcasting requirements whilst the type of documentary and its subject matter are, correspondingly, of a slightly lower order of priority. Employed or contracted workers on the other hand focus on their own professional development and have different creative ambitions as this British executive describes:

> When you're looking at your career in isolation as a producer-director you want to do films which are individually stamped. When you are actually a director of an independent company, you sort of relax from that a little bit and you're happy to say, 'We're a broad-based, mainstream factual programme maker'. (Exec Prod C, UK)

In both national contexts the most prominent feature in independents' reactions to their structural position in a broadcaster-publisher system with high levels of competition is the large extent to which they seem to accept and comply with commercial imperatives. As a result they act, on an organisational level, as service providers. They aim to supply broadcasters with products that meet the latter's expectations and demands. They hence conform their development activities to what broadcasters request. This is not problematic when understanding independent production companies solely as commercial businesses and reducing their purpose to financial success. However, the service-character of independent production becomes an issue when one considers the nature of their products and the argument that competition and deregulated markets would result in product innovation and satisfy the consumers' (in this case television audiences') needs and preferences. If independents conform to broadcaster preferences and only select and develop those ideas that meet preconceived profile characteristics, then this creates a risk of form- and content-

related familiarity and homogenisation and a lack of innovative and diverse programme suggestions:

> The best editorial idea for many commissioners has become almost redefined as the idea which best fits the channel's available slot and budget. This definition runs some risk of resulting in programming which simply mirrors that which have been successful before. (Preston 2003: 3)

The consequences of the commercially motivated compliance with broadcaster preferences for the developed programme ideas are the subject of chapter 6. In the final section of this chapter I will focus on how independent companies cope with their power deficit and their dependency on broadcasters.

4.3. Improving the Odds: Personal Relationships and Industry Reputation

Independent companies are, nonetheless, not completely at the mercy of the broadcasters. Their relationship is not one-dimensional. In fact, there are two prominent ways for independents to deal with the restrictions placed upon them and to improve their position in the broadcasting structure: (1) by establishing and maintaining social networks and personal relationships with commissioning editors and (2) by building a track record/portfolio of completed productions and assembling a positive reputation beyond personal acquaintances within their industrial sector.

Television and film production rely strongly on personal networks as has been shown by Baumann (2002) in his examination of the labour market in Great Britain and Germany. When employing staff, media companies and broadcasters rely predominantly on "restricted access", which means they prefer to work with people with whom they have worked before (and presumably have had positive experiences with) (ibid: 31). When selecting personnel they do not know personally, producers rely on "intermediaries" who recommend other people based on their positive reputation (ibid: 32). Elliott (1977) also stresses the importance of personal contacts and networks throughout the whole production process of documentaries. He describes how producers rely on previous personal contacts when selecting production staff and contributors, and when researching information. The relationship between commissioning editor and independent producer is based on the same principle as decisions about granting a commission are made – to a large extent – on the basis of personal acquaintance, recommendation or reputation, provided the idea fits the targeted broadcasting slot. A proposal by an unknown independent producer will likely be disre-

garded or overlooked whilst an experienced and successful independent, who is personally known to a commissioning editor, has a much higher chance to be considered for a commission. In addition, personal contact with commissioners provides independents with better opportunities to research, specify and fulfil broadcaster preferences. Other scholars have stressed the importance of professional status and reputation for the creative autonomy of programme-makers. Dornfeld (1998) identifies the reputation of media workers and the perceived quality of their work as a main factor that constrains and facilitates their actions and strategies. He further describes how the reputation of all the individuals and organisations participating in a production raises the overall status of the production itself for example when negotiating access (ibid: 177). Schlesinger (1992: 153) also observes how a high 'status' through hierarchical position or a track record can offer a newsmaker more independence and control over his work for example in regard to choice of topics.

Bourdieu's conceptualisation of forms of capital offers a useful way to understand the role of social relationships and industry reputation in television production. As outlined in chapter 2, a person's position of power in a particular social field determines their capacity for action. This power can be exercised and enhanced through various forms of capital that a person or a group of people can possess. Personal relationships with commissioning editors can in this context be understood as forms of social capital, that is, social contacts, connections and networks, whilst industry reputation is a form of symbolic capital, which describes the social status and the degree of prestige and respect attributed to a social actor and his/her opinions and actions. Both social and symbolic capital can be converted into economic capital when they lead or contribute to closing a production contract whose budget represents the source of financial profit for an independent company. Thus, they provide independents with a structural advantage compared to other competitors and alter their capacity to act within their field. However, whilst using the characteristics of the system for their own advantage, in addition, independents reinforce these structural features. In the following I describe how independents build social relationships and industry status and why this is important, and I discuss the implications for the work carried out in the development department.

Becoming a Preferred Supplier: The Value of Reputation and Trust

First and foremost, personal relationships and track record are strategies designed to enable and advance contact and communication with commissioning editors. An in-

dependent company and their programme ideas need to gain the attention of commissioning editors in a highly competitive environment. As mentioned initially, editors (need to) rely on companies they are familiar with and whom they trust with the production of a satisfying programme in accordance with the broadcaster requirements when having to select from a vast number of potential suppliers. According to one executive producer, this concerns "trust in terms of your kind of financial integrity as a company, trust in terms of your editorial integrity, and I suppose trust in terms of just the technical delivery of the materials. I mean, it's not just a matter of, 'That's a great idea'." (Exec Prod C, UK) The importance of trust in this context is rooted in the high risks and costs involved in television-making and the uncertainty of the result with regard to commercial success. Therefore, commissioners "need to know that their film is going be in safe hands" (HoD, UK). Only if commissioning editors have confidence in a production company will they entrust the independent with larger projects and higher budgets.

To gain this trust, independents need to establish contact and build a personal relationship with commissioning editors, which is not easily achieved and a process that requires continuous (financial and personal) investment over years. The industry has created "collective spaces" and "ritualized interaction" (Caldwell 2008) that facilitate networking and the exchange/sale of ideas as well as programmes. Initial contact can occur in the more formal frame of industry events, sales markets and film festivals.[64] These include "meet the editor" sessions, which facilitate one-to-one contact between commissioners and independent producers, pitching sessions, in which independent producers pitch new programme ideas to a panel of commissioning editors, and general networking opportunities.[65] The CEO and HoD in the German case study attended international events and festivals much more frequently than was the case in the British company. The reason for this lies in the different approach to the international television market that is partially influenced by the national context. The British company produces their programmes fully funded for British or international broadcasters and later exploits them internationally under the Terms of Trade. They attend locally organised and national get-togethers but do not consider the attendance of

[64] Of particular relevance for independent documentary-makers in Europe are annual events such as the World Congress of Science and Factual Producers, the MIPDoc Market in Cannes, and the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA). In the UK, the Sheffield Doc Fest and the BRITDOC Film Festival are particularly influential as are international documentary film festivals in Leipzig and Munich in Germany.

[65] See Caldwell (2008) for a detailed discussion of such "trade rituals" in the film and television industry.

festivals and large industry events worthwhile in their current production context. In the German case, the company produces fully funded programmes for single national broadcasters without retaining any licensing rights as well as subsidised (international) co-productions. For the latter type of production, they consider a presence at international markets an important networking opportunity.

In both cases, however, on a day-to-day basis, continuous direct communication with commissioning editors, by e-mail, telephone or to "just go for a drink", played the most important role for establishing a closer relationship with these decision-makers. Executives in both case study companies claimed that most of their commissions result from this personal contact. Direct communication with commissioners places independent producers in a pole position compared to other competitors across the sector who do not have such access to broadcasters. It provides them with information about the needs and wants of commissioners and channels 'straight from the horse's mouth' and enables them to cater their development closer to such preferences. The following statement reflects the importance personal contacts have for commissioning success:

> [W]e have five, six people working in development but you'll have seen that quite a high percentage of what we get commissioned comes from just a personal contact with a commissioning editor. (...) Where that end [the company's development team] becomes very important is the new work, and the donkey work of putting the proposals together and making them work. We want more ideas to come out of there, we want more ideas to come out of the staff but it's still a fact that quite a high proportion of the programmes we get commissioned are from the commissioning editors we know, that we've met, that we meet regularly and say 'what more do you want, what's coming up now'. (Exec Prod A, UK)

Nonetheless, this type of access to commissioning editors is only available to relatively few independent suppliers and is a product of persistence, performance, and luck. In her study of television commissioners Preston observes that

> [p]rogrammes tend to be commissioned on the basis of conversations, over time, between commissioner and indie, rather than from the unsolicited proposals which have been the mainstay of some indies' practices. In the past these conversations led to a perception that decisions were taken in favoured clubs frequented by a broadcasting elite. (2003: 5)

Whether due to favouritism or not, a new, unknown company will find it difficult to gain the attention and time of commissioners unless they are recommended by intermediaries or have proven their ability "to deliver" through the production of good programmes. This way of 'finding work' parallels developments on the television labour market which have gained more attention from academic researchers in the course of the growing interest in cultural or creative labour, especially the position of

the freelance cultural worker. Baumann (2002) and Blair (2001) for example, describe how workers in the television and film industry rely on previous successful collaboration or the recommendation of intermediaries to gain work contracts. In a way, independent production companies function as a kind of 'freelancer' for broadcasters who depend on their reputation and personal contacts for obtaining work in the form of production contracts.

Despite being the ideal outcome, however, obtaining commissions is not the only objective of development activities. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, continuous development and submission of new project ideas to commissioning editors contribute further to the maintenance of the broadcaster-independent relationship. Therefore, even failure and rejection of a developed project serve a purpose by promoting and presenting independent companies to broadcasters, helping them to get noticed and to nurture a personal relationship with commissioners – or, as the research participants described it, to be "on the radar of people", to be "seen at the table":

> You can't separate the notion of the presence that ideas give you. Just because they don't all get commissioned doesn't mean they're not valuable to you in some shape or form, because they give you a place at the table. (Exec Prod C, UK)

Both case study companies were established several years ago and are now in a position where they have close contacts with several commissioning editors at different channels and have produced documentaries and factual programmes for most national broadcasters, especially public service networks. In both cases the founders of the companies had worked as producers and directors for a broadcaster prior to their 'independence'. In the first years, they used the contacts and trust they had gained through their previous work for the broadcaster to get commissions. Those initial commissions then lead to successful programmes that met the commissioners' expectations, which makes the latter more likely to entrust future budgets to what they perceive as 'capable' hands. The following statement describes this process for the British case study:

> It was very hard to begin with, no-one really wanted to see you, we had no track record to speak of. We made a lot of films at YTV between us [i.e. the company founders] before, so that got us in at ITV. After that it was just hard work building contacts, and then making a film for them. The first *One Life*[66] was quite hard but once you've done that you wave it like a flag next time: 'I've already done one of

[66] Documentary strand at the BBC which has been discontinued in 2008.

> these', you know, 'I'm fine'. So you're impressing people all the way along the line. (Exec Prod A, UK)

Successful collaboration between broadcaster and independent on a commissioned project and the development of a personal relationship facilitate each other whilst increasing the overall status of the independent in the industry. Over time, the programmes an independent company produces build a portfolio or track record of their work, similar to the portfolio careers[67] of individual workers, and they obtain a reputation with regard to the quality of their 'services'. This is a crucial factor for success in a "trust-based, personal relationship-driven nature of the commissioning process" (Preston 2002: 5). The following statement illustrates the importance of a positive reputation and its influence across the whole commissioning community in the documentary genre:

> If possible, you should know all the commissioning editors somehow, because [you need] to be known for quality and on-time delivery and so on. Because, if you make a big mistake and for example somehow [mess up] – because the editors talk among themselves. It's a very small business and everybody knows everybody. (HoD, D)

In addition to informal personal communication among commissioners and independents, reputation is disseminated through other channels that make the achievements of independents (and broadcasters) visible and acknowledgeable. The quality of previously produced programmes, their audience, festival or award success, are publicised and commented on in newspaper, trade press and online publications. With regard to project development within television as an industrial sector, trade publications have a particularly high influence. They publicise information on broadcaster preferences, recent commissions and production statistics and contribute to the public image-building of broadcasters and independents alike.[68] The UK publication *Broadcast* is one important example of relevant trade publications. During the fieldwork period the magazine published the annual *Indie Report 2008,* which mentioned

---

[67] Some of the scholarship on the film and television labour markets has focused on this particular aspect of project-based work, notably Candace Jones and Helen Blair (Blair, Grey and Randle 2001, Blair 2001, 2003, Jones 1996, Jones and DeFillippi 1996, Jones and Walsh 1997).

[68] Caldwell explores in detail the "reflexive" and "self-realizing" qualities of such forms of communication in which "the industry speaks to itself about itself" (2008: 35) and argues that this is not only a top-down process but that "practitioners and artisans also produce and circulate deep critical texts among themselves, and they do so for very different reasons than companies tiered lucratively inside of giant conglomerates" (ibid.). This form of critical individual reflexivity is the subject of the following chapter. In this section I focus on the promotional purpose of publicity.

the case study company several times positively and listed it among the top ten suppliers of factual broadcasting hours. The Head of Development and the executive producers were excited about this coverage and it was included in the news section on the company's website alongside news about awards and record audience ratings the company's programmes had received. Similarly, the German case study company used a ranking among the top 100 production companies worldwide in the international documentary magazine *Reel Screen* in funding applications to illustrate their high industry status. Further status-building aspects, especially in the German case, are a presence on international sales markets and the realisation of international co-productions as the HoD describes:

> It has a lot to do with prestige. If you are co-producing a lot, you simply have higher prestige. If you are at the markets, then you are also in the good books of the broadcasters here. If you are able to obtain third-party funds you are simply better than the classic *Auftragsproduzent*[69]. (HoD, D)

Implications for Development Practice

A high reputation, track record and a network of commissioning contacts based on (positive) personal relationships clearly improve the conditions for project development in an independent company and ease economic and competitive pressure. Three advantages became particularly apparent: (1) increased commissioner attention and likeliness of commission, (2) role reversal in which the supplier (independent) is approached by the client (broadcaster), and (3) access to new commissioning opportunities through career moves of editors. In the following I will describe how these advantages become evident in production practice.

Independents who are personally known to (and liked by) commissioning editors gain **more attention for their programme suggestions** from these editors and are more likely to gain a commission – potentially, even if a project idea is slightly outside the usual preferences. A track record further facilitates contact with and interest from commissioning editors they do not yet know personally. Both case study companies are well established, they are well known and have a 'name' in the industry. They rely on a network of commissioning editors with whom they have worked on previous projects and find it "quite straightforward" to approach new editors. The overall communication with commissioning editors also flows more easily with shorter response

[69] The term "Auftragsproduzent" refers to an independent company that only produces commissioned projects that are fully funded by a single broadcaster.

times and includes the disclosure of additional background information – explaining, for example, reasons for rejections or outlining programme ideas the broadcaster is looking for. However, to be a member of what the German HoD describes as a "buddies' network" does not guarantee that an independent will automatically receive more commissions. Nevertheless, their ideas will be seriously considered and – due to their privileged communication with commissioners – they are able to cater their development closer to the broadcasting slot and commissioning editor in question. It should be noted that both companies are at present in a comparatively fortunate position with regard to broadcaster relations, however, this was not always the case and the producers emphasised the amount of time and work it took to get to the position they are in now and the different "set of rules" this new position entails:

> I remember the early days of us pitching stuff and never hearing a thing back or being told you've got to go through a commissioning, you know, through the online commissioning, whereas now, nobody ever says 'put it on e-commissioning'. I mean, you definitely have that sense that there is one set of rules if you're small and you haven't made anything, and there are ways of keeping smaller indies away from commissioning editors. And then once you proved yourself, suddenly it all becomes a lot easier. And they ask to see us, you know. (Exec Prod B, UK)

Overall, development work in a high-status company involves slightly less effort and commissions are easier to obtain. For example, on one occasion during the fieldwork period, one of the British executives suggested a film project by text message to a commissioning editor he had already produced several programmes with. It was a project about a male nurse who killed people in his care and after several years, he had now been sentenced. Just hours later, the HoD received a text message from the editor in question confirming the commission of the programme without even having received a written proposal. A crucial reason for this fast and informal success was the fact that the editor is very familiar with the case study company and was sure that the company could deliver the necessary police access and a "good" programme on the basis of their previous productions and collaboration. During the observation in Germany, the company received a commission for a science-documentary about the future of food for Arte. The proposal had to be put together hastily in order to meet internal deadlines at the broadcaster and the HoD found that the proposal could have been of better quality. She felt that the commission was granted less on the basis of the new programme proposal than on the basis of a previous production for the same slot about the future of sport that the company had produced earlier that year and that was well received by broadcaster and audience alike.

High industry status and personal contacts play a comparable role when funding bodies other than broadcasters are concerned such as public funding institutions and distributors. A company with a track record is seen as more likely to complete a project to a satisfying standard successfully and thus to enable the funder to recoup their financial investment. Consequently, companies use their achievements, such as festival and television awards, to promote their company in funding applications. Again, personal relationships with contacts inside these institutions can provide relevant background information that enables producers to target their development activities more accurately to the current institutional requirements and preferences.

Direct and improved access to commissioning editors and the establishment of trust has led to an important change in the general development strategy of both companies. Rather than investing time (and money) into extensive research and the creation of elaborate and comprehensive programme proposals to be submitted to broadcasters, both companies now write increasingly only short paragraphs that outline a programme idea in order to find out whether it raises any interest with a commissioning editor. This is not an exclusive change, rather both forms of submission exist in parallel but there is a numerical increase that indicates a general shift. This development researcher describes this short-cut submission process as follows:

> What tends to happen now is rather than sticking everything into a proposal, [the HoD] will just float ideas past commissioning editors and give them paragraphs and send them a quick e-mail saying 'how about this', rather than putting a huge amount of work into it. And then they'll go, 'yeah, write something up for us' and that is the stage when you write it up. (Dev Res, UK)

After being in the business for eight years, the British company was just starting to employ this new strategy. In the German case, the company had existed for 17 years, and they had started this shift in their output some time earlier. The fact that the acting HoD has been with the company for ten years and had established close relationships with commissioning editors played another important role for being able to adopt this new strategy. The German CEO describes the economic logic behind the new strategy:

> I try to be more efficient. I think we have sometimes invested too much in development before contacting a broadcaster for the first time. That is complete nonsense, sometimes a three-liner is enough for a commissioning editor to know whether he (sic) doesn't want it or whether he is interested. You don't have to research for weeks and put a huge text together. I wouldn't do this anymore today. (...) To some extent I only pitch ideas nowadays. (CEO, D)

In addition to easier access when approaching commissioning editors, independents may also experience a further change of their development role as a result of high-industry status and commissioning contacts. Instead of merely chasing broadcasters, they are in turn approached by the networks and asked to develop proposals for specific programme slots. This again increases their commissioning chances and therefore reduces the economic risk of development work as, firstly, the broadcaster will have approached only a few trusted companies with this development request – thus reducing the competition – and, secondly, because initial broadcaster interest in the general topic is already established. Again, due to their networks and status, both observed companies were in the fortunate position to be approached by broadcasters in this form of **role reversal** on several occasions during the fieldwork period. An executive producer describes the economic and emotional relief this different form of development presents compared to 'cold calling' submissions:

> When you start off, you're being driven by ideas and you're throwing ideas over the wall and you're hoping that someone on the other side will pick them up. And you have no relationship with those people. So, you're relying entirely upon the quality of the idea or the access that you got in that idea for them to go, 'I take a risk on that.' We're fortunate in that we've been able to move ourselves into a place where we're probably – the phrase that they use is a kind of preferred supplier. It doesn't actually exist to be a preferred supplier but we've got relationships now with people in London where they actually come to us and say, 'What about this, would this work?' Channel 5 came to us to say, about [name of commissioned programme], saying 'We have 20 slots, can you fill them? What would you put in them?' Well, that's a whole easier proposition than sitting on the outside throwing ideas above the wall. A whole lot easier. And it has taken quite a – it's kind of like pushing a car that is not working and it's really quite hard to get that thing just to start moving. But when you actually get it moving, it starts to roll. (Exec Prod C, UK)

Additionally, close affiliation with commissioning editors may offer **new commissioning opportunities** as editors take their contacts, including preferred suppliers, with them when they change position. This occurs more regularly in the UK than in Germany where commissioning editors hold their positions often for many years, in some cases on permanent contracts, and only move within the institutional hierarchy whilst editors in British television change their position more frequently and also move from one channel to another. When in charge of a new broadcasting slot, editors tend to rely on those companies for ideas whom they have worked with in their previous position, offering thus an opportunity to expand their production portfolio and to develop different kinds of programmes with regard to topic and style. The British case study company, for example, had received a relatively high number of commissions from a particular commissioning editor they had worked with for a couple of years. When the

editor moved from BBC to Five and back, this opened new opportunities and led to commissions for broadcasting slots the company had not previously worked for:

> Before we would have been given a fairly junior commissioning editor to talk to, nowadays, we've been around sufficiently long and the people that we know have gone up their career path, you know. Our biggest benefactor is Jay Hunt and she is about to be BBC 1's Controller (...) She asks us to do things, we deliver on them, she asks us to do things and we deliver on them. But she's gone from BBC, well, she commissioned [programme title 1], she commissioned [programme title 2] just before she left, she went to Five and commissioned [programme title 3]. She's now going back to BBC as BBC 1 controller – now for us to have the ear of the BBC 1's Controller is brilliant. (Exec Prod A, UK)

Track record, industry reputation and personal relationships with commissioning editors offer independent suppliers substantial economic advantages in the development stage of production. Firstly, they increase the chances of economic success in the form of a commission as commissioners will pay closer attention to the company and their programme suggestions and are more inclined to collaboration. Secondly, close relationships with broadcasters provide independents with a deeper knowledge of commissioners' preferences, which enables them to cater their development activities more closely to the requirements, again making a commission more likely. Thirdly, all of this reduces the resources spent on development, it can make this part of the production process more efficient and reduce the financial strain on the organisation.

On the other hand, industry reputation and company profile, as well as commissioner networks, can be restrictive on a creative level because the necessary specialisation limits the kind of programmes a company is perceived as being able to produce. Several of the interviewed practitioners described these limitations: As they were "not known for" certain topics or forms of programming, such programme suggestions would not gain the same attention and trust from broadcasters. Similarly, by working with a network of commissioning editors, companies' are limited to the specific kind of programming these particular commissioners are looking for. In order to access different kind of broadcasting opportunities, independents would have to build a new relationship with relevant commissioners, which is how this HoD explains the lack of science and history programmes in their output:

> It's because of who we know. We do develop little bits of history and little bits of science but our commissioning editor friends, the people who we get to talk to, the people who we get meetings with, the people who are likely to commission from us, don't commission specialist factual. So, you know, aside from Louise Dillon who is the Current Investigation Network (...) and she also commissions for the History Channel. (...) Aside from Louise who we know, we wouldn't develop any other history ideas or science ideas because we don't know anyone. We'd have to

> build that relationship again whereas we can go with a documentary to anyone of four or five different people. They're gonna believe us that we can do it because they worked with us before. They're gonna give us time, they're gonna sit down and brainstorm an idea. It's gonna be a conversation as opposed to us going to some person who we don't know [saying], 'hey, here's an idea, what do you think of this?' (HoD, UK)

Finally, the reliance on informal networks, personal relationships and status favours only those independent companies who are experienced, well-established and have managed to survive years of economic struggle while newcomers will find the relationship-driven nature of the industry a significant entry hurdle. Superindies are therefore in a particularly advantageous position. But the smaller, younger, less experienced and less connected a company is, the harder it is to achieve commissioning success. At the same time "trade stories" (Caldwell 2008) and the belief in the success of quality, that is, that "a good idea" has always a chance to be recognised, embody the promise of reward being achievable if one is willing to work hard and play the game.

4.4. Economic Dependency and Creative Constraints: The Specificity of Development

The analysis of the development stage provides answers to the question of why certain projects are selected for production and why others are never made available to audiences. As established in the first section of this chapter, decreased funding and increased competition have intensified the commercial pressure for all actors in television production. Broadcasters battle for the greatest share of the fragmented audience and focus closely, therefore, on commercial success. They use branding and scheduling techniques to gain and maintain audiences. These orientations are passed down to independent production companies who are structurally dependent on broadcasters. Independents themselves are driven by commercial considerations in the generally undercapitalised documentary sector. Their primary goal is to secure a production contract. In order to increase the likeliness of this event, they develop new programme ideas in close orientation to broadcaster preferences as they have the power to decide about what project ideas will be produced. Such commercial conformity reproduces existing structures and constrains independents' creativity, as it restricts the kinds of programmes they develop. Programmes are created based on the specifications of relatively few people at the commissioning broadcasters, which risks a lack of innovation and variation in the programme suggestions. The responsibility for this behaviour cannot be allocated to the individual; rather it is a rational insti-

tutional response to a structural setting. Accordingly, independent producers see themselves largely as acting in a framework they can do little about and accept production structures as fixed arrangements:

> Well, certain things you just can't change. And certain structures you can't change. You can't change much about the fact that in general you get some 60,000 Euro for 45 minutes in German television. (...) And accordingly, there are tight boundaries set [for what you can do] but that also means that you can of course also beat that. (HoD, D)

Independents cope with their dependency by trying to increase their influence on commissioners' creative decisions. In order to do so, they aim to cultivate personal relationships with commissioners, become a trusted and desired collaborator for broadcasters and build a positive industry reputation and track record. If successful in this respect, independents gain better access to commissioners, greater bargaining power and the opportunity for negotiation over the content and form of proposed programmes. They are still required to meet the formal and aesthetic preferences of a targeted broadcasting slot but they have a greater chance of overcoming commissioners' hesitations and convince the latter to place trust in the creative abilities of the independent supplier. They may be able to exercise greater creative freedom, therefore, with regard to their choices of the specifics of a proposed documentary programme such as subject matter and storyline, contributors, locations and narrative mode. Thus contacts and track record may lead ultimately to increased creative autonomy and agency in the development process. On the other hand, by improving their own position within the structure, independents do not alter but rather support the existing structures. Broadcaster preferences remain the dominant influential factor in this process which risks a lack of innovation and variation in the developed programmes.

On the whole, independents accept the commercial limitations and their lack of decision power in project development based on the assumption that they will have greater creative control over the form and content of the proposed programme during the production stage, where they will have the opportunity to realise their own artistic vision without too many (more) compromises. Once a production contract is secured, there is a slight power shift in the relationship between independent and broadcaster as the latter relies on the first for the delivery of a suitable programme. No longer do commissioners possess the bargaining tool of withholding cooperation and, ideally, they work collaboratively with independents during the production process. This distinction is important in evaluating the commercial influences on programme produc-

tion. As discussed in chapter 2, tensions between creativity and commerce have long been the subject of academic theory and analysis. Previous research in the area of television, and more specifically, television documentary, focuses mainly on the analysis of either the production process or textual representation of documentary. However, the greatest commercial influence on television programmes occurs during the development stage where, firstly, only a handful of 'suitable' project ideas are selected from a pool of thousands of ideas, and secondly, the general characteristics of a programme-to-be are determined.

It has to be noted that commercialism as a guiding principle in commissioning and programme production must not have, necessarily, a negative influence on the produced programming. Neither broadcasters nor independents aim to create a bad or inferior product. In accordance with neoliberal and market theory, the need to excel over competitors in the sector has also stimulated innovations in television documentary. On the other hand, a focus on commercial success in the form of large audience ratings can create homogenised programming that is orientated to previously successful formulas in an attempt to recreate and plan the notoriously uncertain demand (Hesmondhalgh 2007, Caves 2002, Ryan 1992). The issue is to establish which of these tendencies dominate. Concerns over the potential success of a programme are particularly important at the development stage of production. Commissioners are hesitant to spend substantial funds on the production of new programmes unless they can be fairly certain that it will be a success according to the specifications of their channel and broadcasting slot. Commissioners' own professional future depends on their decisions and they have to answer for failure within their broadcasting organisation. All of these factors make the development stage more susceptible to commercial influence and constraints in comparison to the other stages of the production process. This means that the relatively loose control of the creative stage through broadcasters is somewhat tighter than in other stages of the production process (see chapter 2). This includes their shaping of independent development activities through creative preferences in content and style, and their decision about whether to order the realisation of an idea is, of course, the ultimate control mechanism. Nevertheless, independents do have creative input in this process; they determine the specifics of an idea and can submit innovative, original ideas. To what extent these are successful is another avenue of enquiry.

As I have shown, it is extremely difficult for small and medium-sized independents to achieve commercial success in the form of a commission. It requires substantial sub-

ordination, conformity and creative restraint from independent programme developers but even if all these conditions are met, success remains uncertain. This poses the question of why producers enter and remain in this production sector and compete for production contracts if their existence is so precarious and their creativity constrained by editorial specifications. The small profit margins in documentary production, of reportedly 7% (Thomas 2008), indicate that capital accumulation cannot be the only objective for independent producers. Small and medium-sized companies, as are typical in documentary production, suffer most since they do not have the opportunity to counterbalance their income with other productions such as superindies, which produce content across multiple genres. In the next chapter I suggest that independent documentary-workers are not motivated solely economically in their goal to gain a commission and produce a programme for transmission on national television (although all research participants were keen to stress the centrality of commercial considerations). Rather, broadcast commissions raise the status of the company in the television industry, provide publicity and, most importantly, are a demonstration of personal professional achievement. After all, programme-production is the practitioners' *raison d'ètre* and television programmes are the final (and only) product of their work efforts.

To summarise, it can be said that independents are subject to structural constraints due to their economic dependency on broadcasters. Furthermore, it became apparent that the development stage is subjected to greater control than the production stage, although control is still looser than in other phases of the cultural production process such as distribution and marketing. However, independent producers make use of the characteristic features of the broadcasting system in order to cope with their structural dependency. They form social relationships and use their status and reputation to improve their position within the commissioning system. In so doing, the structural disposition is altered and independents can gain additional power to act within their field of production. This form of agency supports independents in their pursuit of economic success, but it ultimately reinforces existing structures and only benefits a few companies.

However, the relationship between creativity and commerce is not quite as simple and restrictive as the dependency between independent and broadcaster suggests. Despite the apparent compliance with broadcaster preferences at the cost of creative self-restriction, practitioners are not serving, necessarily, just those in power. They have their own values of programme quality, which might well be contrary to the pref-

erences of commissioners and schedulers at television networks. In fact, independent workers are questioning production structures and conditions to some extent and reflect critically on production processes and the programmes that are produced under these conditions. However, they may not push for what they perceive as quality but rather keep their opinion to themselves and accept what commissioners want, because they aim to avoid conflict in their relationship with the broadcaster. In addition, any changes and improvements might involve extra costs and resources for the company. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, commercial conformity has a guiding influence on the development activities of independent producers. However, as I show in the next chapter, critical reflection also plays a critical role for the way in which independent producers carry out and evaluate their work. Chapter 5 focuses on the subjective level of the practitioners involved in project development. It discusses the occupational and personal values of practitioners within independent production companies and their individual reactions to commercialism and creative constraints.

5. Responses to Creativity-Commerce Tensions: Professionalism, Craft and Critical Reflexivity

In the previous chapter I have shown how commercialism impacts on and directly shapes the priorities and activities of independent production companies on an inter-organisational level. The latter are largely compliant with commercial imperatives and explicitly conform to broadcaster requirements. Furthermore, they invest in networking and reputation with the aim of improving both their chances for commercial success and increasing the extent of their influence on editors' creative decisions. In this chapter I discuss how practitioners reflect on this adjustment and adaptation to the conditions of commercialism and explore their capacity for counter-action. I focus on the subjective responses to the organisational setting and aim to answer the second research question of this thesis that asks in what way human agency within independent companies consciously or unconsciously resists or reinforces commercial imperatives and structural conditions. Although workers accept and even reinforce commercial imperatives in the development stage, this is not necessarily an unproblematic and conflict-free process for them. The data collected in this study show that independent television workers adhere to a group of attitudes that are perceived as occupational or professional values. These values have a reinforcing function by encouraging the workers' compliance with commercialism. At the same time independent producers are highly aware of the creative constraints the commercial production setting entails and reflect critically on these conditions.

The first part of this chapter reviews the role that industry-specific perceptions of professionalism and craftsmanship play in this context. I will show how a focus on professional execution as a demonstration of competence serves to legitimise creative compromise and helps producers, on an individual level, to displace or dissolve aesthetic or ethical conflicts of creativity and commerce. Secondly, the chapter discusses practitioners' critical evaluation of the production setting and their sense of value and purpose concerning their occupation. The fieldwork revealed in particular the importance of informal reflexivity among the workers that is informed by generic values of authenticity and social relevance in documentary representation. The relevance of informal reflexivity and values of professionalism and craftsmanship for the argument of this thesis lies in their ambiguous role for television practitioners' reactions to creativity-commerce tensions. Reflexivity and professionalism impact on the choices and decisions made in development with regard to what content is selected for further

development and which ideas are excluded from this process. One the one hand, they are constituent for the production of programmes of high quality, variation and diversity. On the other hand, they may also further the acceptance of and conformity to commercial constraints in these areas.

5.1. Professional Execution: Quality Measurement and Detachment Strategy

Although they are conscious and reflexive of the commercial framework and its creative limitations, the research participants did not seem to be completely disappointed and disillusioned with their work. Instead they showed understanding and acceptance of commercial imperatives and took professional pride in meeting structural requirements and delivering a good product – even if that meant the sacrifice of their personal and aesthetic opinions. This support of institutional behaviour on an individual level is grounded in a sense of professionalism among the workers. In the following I focus on the role of professional identity, ideology, values and conventions, as conceptualised by Philip Elliott (1972b, 1977) and argue that a shared sense of professionalism and related production values can help practitioners to ignore or resolve creativity-commerce tensions and provide a sense of fulfilment through doing 'good work'.

Although not professions in a strictly academic sense[70], documentary-makers demonstrate certain characteristics of professional identity such as shared rules of conduct, general standards of behaviour, a common technical language and a sense of vocation.[71] Dover similarly refers to a "practitioner community" in her study of British documentary production, one which shares values of creativity and documentary craftsmanship that consists of a "conglomeration of a number of skills" (2001: 192). On the other hand, as Tunstall (1993) observes in his study of British television producers, television workers have not tried to professionalise in a "classic" way, for ex-

[70] Unlike traditional professions such as medicine and law, television production as an occupation is not based on a fixed body of knowledge that workers have to obtain through formal qualification; however, there are certain codes of practice in the broadcasting industry, which provide guidelines for the activities of television workers. There is no single professional body or a fixed set of qualifications that officially regulate entry into the television industry, although there are internal and external regulators who monitor production activities and television output, and different kind of associations exist who lobby for the rights of various kinds of television workers.

[71] See Elliott (1972b) and Goode (1957, 1960) for a discussion of such characteristics.

ample, by regulating and controlling newcomer entry to the sector. Rather, it has become easier for workers to switch between different job roles, departments and genres in the course of the de-unionisation of the television industry.[72] They have not set up "qualifying associations" or a single body to represent television workers. Instead, such organisation of television workers is limited and fragmented into several associations.

Tunstall further argues that television workers lack "clients" of the kind other professions such as doctors, lawyers or teachers claim to serve since television producers are predominantly concerned with the production and less with the consumption/reception of media content (1993: 203). Although this is undoubtedly true, one could argue, however, that in recent years and in the course of increased commercialisation, commodification and economic pressure, the concept of serving a client has gained in importance, although with a different focus. Rather than being guided by ambitions of serving the general public, independent television workers aim first of all to please their broadcaster-client through conformity to and compliance with channel and slot preferences. Nevertheless, practitioners also demonstrate a public-service orientation that is considered constitutive for their professional identity. As illustrated below, they share ambitions of social impact, realism and press freedom. They aim to serve the public by providing truthful and relevant images of reality, which is related to ideals of public service broadcasting and the documentary genre.

Television workers do not openly insist on or fight for the recognition of their professional status in wider society, but an underlying sense of professional identity and conduct is evident. Sennett argues that "we share in common and in roughly equal measure the raw abilities that allow us to become good craftsmen" (2008: 241). However, some of us end up specialising in a particular area and Sennett argues for the value of such specialisation, as it permits for the acquisition of specialised skills and the production of high-quality work. Celebratory accounts of the new participatory culture in media production, which has been facilitated by digital technology and is particularly widespread in news and film production, ignore the value of specialisation and uncritically praise our alleged equal ability to produce media content. However,

[72] By this I do not mean to say that it is easy to obtain work in the television industry. Instead, the opposite is the case as Blair has demonstrated vividly for the film and television industry (Blair 2001, 2003, Blair, Grey and Randle 2001, Blair, Culkin and Randle 2003). The reason for this lies in the oversupply of labour in the television sector, which is partially facilitated by the lack of regulated entry qualifications and the related reliance on personal networks.

such an attitude diminishes the special status of television workers as experts of their craft and contradicts Sennett's wider argument. Television workers hence aim to distinguish themselves from amateurs in order to legitimise and set apart their work. Burns (1972) found in his study of BBC staff that the notion of professionalism as the opposite of amateurism was widespread, supporting claims to expertise and good work.

Practical and legal training, industry experience and adherence to codes of conduct distinguish television workers from non-professionals, provide them with status and prestige and legitimise their actions. The distinction from amateurism includes formal elements such as whether programme-making is the main occupation of a person and whether the productions one has worked on have broadcast credits, for example, on television or in the cinema. But it also and more importantly concerns the acceptance and internalisation of professional behaviour and values. Workers assign high value to the professional expertise that separates them from amateurs. This became apparent, for example, in the attitude development workers in both companies displayed toward programme ideas that were suggested by members of the public. The workers mostly consider these suggestions a "waste of time", as they are not suitable for television production and require polite replies to the people who suggested the idea containing an explanation of why the idea is being rejected. Their dismissive attitude is based on arguments concerning the quality of an idea and its suitability for television production, which refers both to the probability of gaining a commission and to how the subject matter might be visualised in a documentary programme. One director even claimed that "in ten years I have not read anything sensible" among such programme suggestions. Workers argue that non-professionals lack the skill to see what constitutes a (good) television programme and whether it will have a chance for realisation in the broadcasting system. The fact that one finds a topic interesting does not mean that it will make an interesting programme. In this context workers refer to professional values and conventions of programme production that are only accessible to those with the relevant industry/professional experience and which concern, for example, narrative perspective, visualisation and feasibility of realisation within contemporary production structures.

Status and reputation (as discussed in chapter 4) play an important role in being recognised as a professional (non-amateur) player among industry peers. By being part

of a company that has obtained industry status, the latter is transferred onto the self-understanding and external perception of television workers as professionals.[73] Furthermore, an increase of institutionalised media training in the form of media-related degrees and diplomas contributes to a sense of professional identity although there are no standardised and generally recognised ways of training and qualification. This development contributes to a generational shift in the educational background and training for television workers. In the past many of them were career changers (often from journalism but also from occupations outside the media) who in many cases came accidentally to documentary-filmmaking. Today, a much higher percentage of the young workers joining production companies are graduates from media or film studies degrees who pursue pronounced ambitions of working in television. These differences could be observed with regard to different generations of workers in both case study companies. In this context, it has also to be noted that senior practitioners without media degrees are often sceptical about the actual contribution such degrees make to prepare industry entrants for the reality of work practice. The following quotation offers a good illustration of this scepticism:

> And the industry is poised in such a funny way now because, because the people entering the industry are coming from mass degree courses. Some are ill prepared, some are better prepared than others, but generally you have so many people starting at this end of the process, all trying to filter into the industry. And it's actually quite difficult to pick up people who are, who've got the right focus and the right drive because - I think it's an absolute scandal that the government is making people go on degree courses for film studies and media studies and cultural studies. It's about the financing of the university and colleges. It's got nothing to do with whether the industry needs them, nothing to do with the quality of the people entering the industry. (Exec Prod C, UK)

Many senior workers seem to prefer or at least appreciate the traditional craft-related concept of learning on the job, of learning by doing, that is, through practical experience. For example, during an informal chat in the office with the German HoD and another researcher the latter posed the question of how to best progress in the industry and improve oneself. The HoD advised to, first, listen closely, second, think about what questions to ask, third, observe, fourth, learn from example and copy what other people do: "As my violin teacher used to say, you need to steal with your eyes and your ears." (field notes D). The traditional principle of learning through practice is still widespread and continues to be of significant importance in current television produc-

[73] Of course, such self-understanding as media professionals can also be found among workers outside the mainstream television industry who are involved, for example, in alternative filmmaking structures and media skills training. For the purpose of this research I focus on workers in the commercial independent television sector and their particular traits of professionalism.

tion. However, compared to past decades, there has been a substantial decrease in practical training opportunities in the form of apprenticeships and traineeships that were common at the ITV companies and the BBC.[74] Combined with tendencies towards multi-skilling and de-skilling (see below), this has fuelled concerns about a reduced quality of training and the craft skills junior workers obtain, which in turn is presumed to have a negative impact on programme quality.[75]

What does this sense of professionalism among television practitioners imply for the relations between commerce and creativity in documentary practice? According to Elliott, "adopting a professional identity has an impact on thought and behaviour through the development of distinct professional ideologies" (1972b: 132). Rather than applying the term ideology in a Marxian sense, however, professional ideologies in this context can be understood as the "belief systems developed within the profession through which the practitioners make sense of their work experience" (ibid.) including conflicts deriving from creativity-commerce tensions. Different ideological perspectives can exist within the same occupation. On the one hand, they might express themselves in the form of critical informal reflexivities that imply the possibility for change, conflict and innovation. On the other hand, they may encourage and legitimise the adherence to professional standards and conventions that can pre-empt executive control as they help to (self-)regulate practitioners' activities and create cohesion within the practitioner community. In the following, I discuss this ambivalent function of professionalism in documentary development. I argue that a shift in the conceptualisation of television professionalism supports commercial tendencies in content production and dissolves creativity-commerce conflicts through emotional detachment from the created product.

Values and Conventions of Professionalism and Craftsmanship

Professional values in television production combine elements of professional self-regulation and characteristics of traditional craftsmanship. Some of these standards are formalised and documented in broadcasting regulation and the codes of practice issued by broadcasters and media regulators such as Ofcom in the UK and the Lan-

[74] This is not to say that such opportunities do not exist. Both broadcasters continue to run traineeship programmes and similar structures are in place at the public service broadcasters in Germany.

[75] See Lee (2008) and Paterson (2008) for concerns about a loss of craftsmanship and related fears of diminishing programme quality among British television workers.

desmedienanstalten in Germany. Others are based on more informal agreements and practiced traditions that have developed over time. Workers find it difficult to put these values and standards into words: "They are the things that you just know. It's really hard to recite them." (HoD, UK) Professional conventions concern among other things:

- Legal and ethical considerations and regulations (codes of practice and common sense)
- Quality of service (relationship with broadcasters)
- Quality of execution (production values and conventions)

Legal and ethical concerns

Legal and ethical conventions regulate and provide guidance for how television workers should operate as professionals. They include guidelines about what can be shown on television, which protect the privacy and intellectual property of the people participating in a programme and the safety of television workers. The *Ofcom Broadcasting Guide* (2009) for example, includes sections on the protection of under-eighteens and privacy, on requirements of fairness, impartiality and accuracy, and on accepted representations of crime and religion. In addition, broadcasters create their own codes of practice that need to be met by independent producers such as the BBC's *Code of Practice* (2004) and the *Richtlinien* of German broadcasters and funding bodies. Aside from technical requirements, licensing rights and public service remit, these concern the omission and the misrepresentation of facts and personal views and the lobbying of particular views requesting balance, impartiality and accuracy from their programme-makers. There has been a tightening of regulation in the past decade, partly influenced by sensitivities surrounding accusations of fakery in documentary.[76] This resulted in additional regulation and an increase of paperwork in the form of risk assessments, health and safety forms, consent forms, shooting permits etc. Although this creates additional tedious work tasks for practitioners, they

[76] Most recently, in the so-called 'Queengate' affair in 2007, British independent RDF Television and the commissioning BBC network were harshly criticised for 'faking' documentary footage. In a press trailer that promoted a 'fly on the wall' documentary (produced by the superindie RDF Television for the BBC) it was suggested, wrongly, that Queen Elizabeth II had stormed out of a photo session. Non-linear editing created this impression in the attempt to make the trailer look more dramatic. In the aftermath of the public outrage following this revelation BBC 1 controller Peter Fincham and Stephen Lambert, RDF Media chief creative officer, resigned. It sparked a large public debate about the authenticity of documentary representation. The differing positions and escalation of this debate are presented in detail in the media trade magazine *Broadcast* in the period from July to October 2008. For a detailed discussion of previous scandals surrounding fakery in documentary representation see Winston (2000).

accept codes of practice out of necessity and because they ensure a certain ethical standard, prevent abuse of the communicator role and bestow "more integrity and credibility" (Exec Prod A, UK) on the created programmes. The following statement sums up in what way the work of independent producers is influenced by this form of regulation:

> There are two main categories; there is the basic legal framework, contempt and defamation and things like that. (...) We can't libel anyone and defame anyone, but it's more the Broadcasting codes that restrict us. There is quite a strict set of broadcasting codes, much more strict than for newspapers or magazines, to what you can and can't do in terms of showing people on film if they don't want to be, people caught in shot, that you have to get consent forms or whatever. You have to make sure that you have done everything. So there is quite a lot of paperwork in terms of the broadcasting codes of conduct, how we behave, how have we got that material. A few years ago, you could go with the police on a raid on a suspected drug dealer's house, you could go in the house with them, you could film what you wanted. And only if that person, whose house it was, said 'get out, I don't want you', you'd go out at that point, you could use everything that you shot up to this point. Now that's getting much tighter as to what you can and can't do and what you show of material, and how you've got it, especially now that there are all the claims of fakery. I think everyone is just on a red alert, make sure that you can justify everything that's going into a programme, that you have not engineered a situation, that you've not lied or faked. It has to all be above board. (Exec Prod A, UK)

In the development stage, workers need to take legal and ethical concerns into consideration when communicating with sources and potential contributors and developing new ideas in order to assess the viability of their realisation. For example, filming in schools, prisons and in courtrooms may impose restrictions on what the workers will be able to record. Producers further have to comply with the regulatory framework of libel and contempt. But additional ethical concerns may arise with regard to textual representaton and its potential consequences for sources and contributors. In these considerations, personal and professional ethical values may come into conflict. Although the professional ethical requirements are met, individual workers might evaluate ethical concerns differently based on their personal values. For instance, one development worker had difficulties when researching contributors for a programme about child-drinkers. She feared that television exposure would not benefit the children in question but could have potentially harmful consequences. She feared that rather than helping them and making a positive contribution to people's perceptions about society, the portrayed children could be perceived as "crazy freaks" (Dev Res, UK). Workers are aware of the general content of guidelines and codes of practice but in day-to-day practice they apply a more workable principle of common sense and honesty: "I think, generally, being honest, having common sense and being nice to people and being up-front with people stops you landing in any legal or ethical crap."

(HoD, UK) The justification on grounds of honesty and informed consent can also serve as an excuse for what some people might critically perceive as privacy intrusions or exploitation, as the following example illustrates:

> In the afternoon I talk with a development researcher about my conversations with sources and potential contributors. To research and communicate with them is a central element of my role in the company as development researcher. I mentioned that it is a pleasure to talk to people who are genuinely willing and interested in talking to me and who even called back. During previous research for another project that involved sensitive accusations about adoption practices in the UK, reactions had been much more hostile, suspicious and dismissive. The researcher expresses similar sentiments and mentions a similar conversation she had with another worker at the company who remarked, "I feel like I spend my life persuading people to do something they don't want to do." (field notes UK)

Professional Service

Professional value is further attached to providing a high-quality service for commissioning broadcasters. This value is born out of the economic situation in which a reputation for high-quality delivery is a necessity for the collaboration with broadcasters. Independents need to be known as reliable suppliers of content in order to present a lower economic risk in the eyes of commissioners, which establishes trust and makes a commission more likely (see chapter 4). Quality service includes the delivery of programming within time and budget limitations, the adherence to technical specifications and legal and ethical obligations as outlined above, as well as meeting promises and expectations with regard to programme content and aesthetics. According to a British executive, this kind of professional behaviour and collaboration had caused the company to be perceived as "very reliable quality providers of volume" for broadcasters:

> I think, that's what people know us for, is that we – I don't want to sound like I'm blowing our own trumpet too much, but I think we make life easy [for commissioners]. I think when a lot of companies deliver that kind of volume[77] there are lots of teething problems, there're lots of problems to get the format right, or there're technical problems or legal problems or whatever. And I think where we sort of have really worked hard on doing is just delivering without a problem and really some high quality. (Exec Prod B UK)

When developing new programme concepts workers therefore need to consider the practicality and feasibility of a programme idea to assess whether a high-quality delivery would be achievable. This includes technical practicalities such as production costs and available broadcasting budgets, as well as the duration of production and

[77] The company had produced several seasons of a long-running observational series each with over 20 episodes for the BBC. They had then expanded the production of such high-volume documentary series for Five and were targeting further broadcasting slots with serial formats.

realistic delivery date. Economic tensions consequently have an effect on what independents can realise with regard to production value, as this executive describes:

> When we first made a couple of *Real Crimes* for ITV[78], you knew you get a 150,000 pounds for them. You had a healthy budget to be able to make [the programme]. And that would go out at 10:30, it's unusual for them to go out at 9 o'clock, more like 10:30. Then they moved the news, so that all the *Real Crimes* had to go out after 11 o'clock at night. They didn't want to spend a 150,000 pounds on programmes at 11o'clock so they come down to 100 [thousand]. So they cut by a third and obviously that affects the quality of what you can make. You haven't got as much money to put into it to make it as look good, for a long research period, for a long edit. (Exec Prod A, UK)

Professional Execution

This quotation illustrates how structural conditions can impact negatively on production values and programme quality. The quality of execution combines narrative and technical conventions with concepts of craftsmanship. Rather than focusing on the quality of independent production as a service to broadcasters, these occupational conventions and values concern the production value and aesthetics of the documentary text itself and the related characteristics of doing good work. It is difficult to identify such values as conceptualisations of quality are varied and complex. Academic research dedicated to quality assessment of television programming has emphasised this complexity:

> Acknowledging the normative nature of quality assessment, most discussion about and research into television programming quality avoids simple, definitive answers. Rather, the present academic focus is on trying to delineate and describe a range of possible types of quality by identifying culturally relevant and influential ideologies, value systems, professional standards, and normative communication models which underlie such conceptions. (Shamir 2007: 322-3)

As a result, different typologies and normative conceptualisations of television quality have been developed and co-exist in academic scholarship. Such approaches may be based on a canon of texts that are considered to be of exemplary quality or to have particular aesthetic or ethical characteristics. Other approaches focus on the perception of quality among television professionals. They include quality criteria that echo the ones that have been observed in this study. Mulgan's (1990) typology, for example, consists of seven types of television quality, some of which have also been identified among the research practitioners. They include quality in terms of production values, quality as an aesthetic particular to the television medium, quality as truth-telling and fairness, quality as diversity, and the promotion of communal values

---

[78] *Real Crime* is an ITV documentary strand that commissions programmes about unsolved or well-known crime cases.

and social integration. Similarly, Mepham (1990) develops a concept of quality that draws upon the values of diversity, usability, and truth-telling. Such conceptions of quality programming among practitioners are relevant for their production practice. In other words, perceptions of what makes a good programme influence perceptions of what it means to do good work as a programme-maker.

My fieldwork revealed several characteristics of producing quality work, in other words, criteria that ensure a high production value in the eyes of the practitioners. Four of these characteristics proved to be of particular importance. They include, first of all, (1) an *investment in research*. In accordance with journalistic values, a programme idea needs to be well researched, different perspectives and opinions on the issues need to be explored, potential contributors need to be identified and approached, and facts about the issues in question need to be gathered and verified. The quality of research is directly related to another production value that concerns ambitions of (2) *originality and innovation* with regard to story and contributors.[79] Practitioners aim to create programmes that show viewers something new, or tell a story in a new and interesting way. Access to stories and people plays an important role in this context and exclusivity of this access helps a documentary to distinguish itself from other programmes and attract the interest of commissioners and audiences alike. Workers aim to find contributors who are not just "statement-givers" but rather "people who have something to tell (...) people with their own story, with life experience (...) who simply have a presence." (Dir/Par, D) However, as discussed in detail in chapter 4 and 6, originality is hard to achieve for developers in a risk-averse commissioning environment that is first of all focused on commercial success. Another highly significant production value concerns (3) the *investment in technical craftsmanship* in the form of skilful use of technical equipment such as camera-work, editing and sound design, and narrative and style conventions (at its most basic, this includes stories with a beginning, middle and an end, a particular argumentation that can be developed, or events that unfold over time and that can be accompanied with the camera). Such skills and equipment are of less importance during the development process but need to be taken into account with regard to practicalities, possibilities and costs for the proposed programme. During development, they need to be catered to commissioners' expectations and broadcasters' technical requirements but they play a bigger role for the shape of the final programme during the actual produc-

[79] See chapter 6 for a discussion of these values with regard to the developed programme ideas.

tion stage. Nevertheless, they are important for an understanding of quality in production practice. The research participants value programmes that are "nicely shot and edited" and "visually interesting" often more than artistic auteur documentaries. A final quality value is (4) the dedication to *truthful representation and social values* that is discussed further in the section on producer reflexivity below. It is an important influence on the way practitioners approach development research as they aim to ensure that the information they include in their programmes is correct and comprehensive.

Multi-skilling and production value

Changes in the production culture have had an impact on professional skills and craftsmanship in documentary production and, consequently, on the production values of the produced programmes. Digital technology has made equipment cheaper, lighter and the filming process more flexible. The use of CGI and visual effects has provided new opportunities for documentary visualisation. However, instead of providing practitioners with more creative opportunities, for example, by investing in more production time, technology has been made servant to the commodification of the production process. Rather than working with a crew of specialists, production teams get smaller and practitioners are expected to take on various roles combining skills in directing, recording and editing. This tendency for multi-skilling is particularly evident in the British production context where teams of director/producers and assistant producers handle the organisation, research and filming of a programme and in many cases also the editing. In Germany, the traditional separation of roles between director, camera person, sound recordist and producer is still more prevalent and their specific expertise is recognised and valued. It can be argued that demands for multi-skilling reduce the quality of work with regard to production value and essentially lead to deskilling, because practitioners have to spread their activities over so many areas that there is little opportunity to develop any in-depth artistic and technical expertise. This development relates to Braverman's (1974) concept of "scientific management", in which he argues that reductions in labour force and skills and the consequent "degradation of work" lead to the deskilling of the work force.

This development can contribute to the negative comparison of contemporary programming-making to that of a pre-commercialised era. One British executive producer describes how the deunionisation and flexibilisation of the television sector made it possible for people to switch between different professional roles, genres and employers and how technological development has improved production conditions. However, he also claims that commercialism, technology and demands for multi-

skilling have lead to deskilling and a loss of creative and technical knowledge among practitioners, which impacts negatively on the production value, i.e. quality, of a programme. He uses the example of sound recording to illustrate his point. Sound recording used to be a separate specialism and valued craft in television production including documentary, in recent years, however, camerapersons or assistant producers are expected to take on this role in addition to their own responsibilities to save production costs. In the course of this development, the recognition of sound recording as a craft has diminished and relevant training alongside it:

> When I first started working in TV, which was like 20 years ago or something, then the industry was heavily unionised. What that meant was that you had absolute dreadful kind of bad practices at one end of overtime and various other things. On the other hand, they were also the guardians of health and safety, to a degree wages and basic craft, because it was so rigorously defended by the union. So, you couldn't be a director unless you got a director's ticket, you couldn't get a director's ticket unless you've done a series of training courses and so. (...) What happened was, we got rid of the unions, technology comes flying in, we got much more accessible equipment than we ever had, which is fantastic. Along the way we've thrown away some of the basic craft skills of making TV, so that sound is now a secondary thought for everybody and actually it's such a creative tool. (...) Silence and not silence is an absolute creative tool. We're so used to having a Z1 [camera] or something and recording it and then cutting and cutting and cutting it and basically taking the rushes and just basically degrading it until you've got something that is the right length but actually not working that material, not making it, not moulding it and not taking ownership of it. (...) [P]eople come from college, are 23, 24, 25, they can use a Z1, but it's the technology that's driving them, it's not the creativity of it. It's not the use of the pictures and the sound, it's actually the ability to just to put the tape in and get the machine to, get in focus and so on. (Exec Prod C, UK)

These findings echo other observations in media production research. A connection between multi-skilling, deskilling and a loss of programme quality was also made by the practitioners in Lee's study of the independent documentary sector in Britain (2008: 242-244). Similarly, Cottle and Ashton (1999) and Avilés et al. (2004) note the negative effects of multi-skilling on news journalists. However, the same producer acknowledges that something that is "old-school doesn't necessarily make it better" and he expresses his appreciation of the skill and quality of contemporary documentary programming. Nevertheless, he warns of a reduction in aesthetic quality by an over-reliance on technology and a disregard of traditional craftsmanship:

> I think that's a really telling thing for us at the moment that it's easy to kind of go like, well, it's not what it used to be, and actually there is so much really fantastic telly about as well. There are some really great things, but the things that we got rid off, that people no longer kind of take as being important are there for good reason. Crossing the line in television is a really important thing, because if I watch the Big Questions on Sunday morning they have consistently over six months they crossed the line with the cameras. What that means is, I look at the presenter, I'm thinking this guy is looking that way, actually, he is looking that way, so where is he looking. And as a viewer I'm completely disorientated by the proc-

> ess. And if I am, then the viewers are. There is good reason for it. If I ask people here [workers at the company] what crossing the line is, no idea, absolutely no idea. (Exec Prod C, UK)

In the eyes of independent practitioners, high production values assure a product of better quality, but at the same time they require substantial investment in the form of time and financial resources, which need to be carefully balanced with the financial strain of development activity on companies' resources. Budget cuts and a generally precarious financial situation in independent production lead to cuts in development time and funding, which has implications for the quality of the work carried out. It can lead, for example, to superficial research and the reduction of artistic ambition in the conception of new programme ideas by limiting shooting time, the number and variety of locations or the inclusion of costly archive material. As has been illustrated, conceptions of programme quality influence what practitioners perceive as doing good work. Their conceptions of quality are in turn influenced by the practitioners' professional values and conventions that have been described in this section. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the role professionalism plays for the work practice of documentary-makers. In particular, I focus on how these professional values relate to commercial imperatives to further explore the overall question of how individual values relate to commercial structures and objectives. I will argue that the adherence to professional values and conventions can reinforce the existing structure by creating job satisfaction and emotional detachment that keep workers content with their work reality, but that it can also create tensions for the individual workers as their occupational ideals clash with commercial constraints.

Professionalism as Demonstration of Competence: Doing a Good Job

Elliott (1977) adapts his aforementioned concept of professional ideology to television work and argues that the adherence to professional standards and conventions can pre-empt executive control and create cohesion within the practitioner community, helping thus to (self)regulate documentary producers. The first two sets of professional value discussed above – legal and ethical self-regulation and the provision of a high-quality service to broadcasters – support the commercial discourse and its materialisation in commodified television production by aligning independents' values and ambitions with broadcaster requirements and commissioner preferences. As these values are passed on from older to younger generations of television makers, they reinforce broadcasters' structural power by associating professional behaviour with a service culture. In so doing, they support the structural economic dependency as they

steer independents toward catering their development in accordance with broadcasters and funding bodies' agendas, rather than following their own choices and ambitions for documentary content. In the current competitive economic climate broadcasters are risk averse and populist in their commissioning decisions. To conform to their preferences carries, therefore, a risk of limited creativity, diversity and innovation in television documentary.

The quality of execution, on the other hand, plays a more ambivalent role with regard to creativity-commerce tensions in independent production. Production values are first of all expressions of "quality-driven" craftsmanship that separates itself from commercial intentions. Sennett defines craftsmanship as "the skill of making things well" (2008: 8) that involves more than just manual skill and technique but also commitments to and judgements about work quality. Committing oneself to a set of production values and conventions in television production can be understood as an expression of a craftsperson's desire for quality, that is the "desire to do a job well for its own sake" (ibid.: 9). As craft workers, television practitioners can be rewarded with a sense of pride in their work if they achieve 'good work' measured against production values. This desire to do good work encourages financial sacrifices, such as a reduction of financial profit and "squeezing out" additional funds from production budgets, in order to meet quality standards. However, the scope for financial investment is limited in the undercapitalised sector and, as a result, workers have to cope with reductions in craft values, which can lead to creativity-commerce tensions between production value and commercial orientations. Dover (2001) observed that the shared values of creativity and craftsmanship among documentary-makers can come into conflict with the demands of a commodified broadcasting culture. She describes how the creative values of a "documentary culture" contradict the commercial demands and restrictions of the "broadcasting culture". My research participants displayed similar genre-related values and reported a comparable dissatisfaction with the conditions surrounding their work for and with broadcasters. However, I disagree with Dover's simplifying binary of 'good' artistic documentary culture versus 'bad' commercial broadcasting culture. Rather, I perceive documentary as one constitutive part of the commercial and public-service broadcasting culture whose production is marked by contradictions with regard to creativity and commerce. Similarly, I understand the studied practitioners in independent production companies as integrated into the television production culture but with a particular generic specialisation. This specialisation involves particular aesthetic and ethical values which may or may not come into conflict with commercial requirements.

On the other hand, practitioners can avoid such creativity-commerce tensions by focusing on professional execution with an emphasis on craft and technical skills at the expense of ambitions concerning the social value of their work (further discussed below). Producing a programme in accordance with professional standards and conventions, as described above, is perceived as achieving success as a professional. It legitimises the work of practitioners and provides them with the sense of doing good work. This confirms Elliott's argument that claims to professionalism in media production are based on routine competences that enable practitioners to adjust to differences between occupational ideal and work reality. He notes that

> [p}rofessionalism in media occupations therefore is adapting to the dilemmas of role conflict by which skill and competence in the performance of routine tasks becomes elevated to occupational ideal. The competence involved is that which suits the organizational nature of the medium at the particular time, so professional excellence is valued as much by executives and administrators as by the craft group." (1977: 159)

In this process, independent producers need to adjust to the demands of the production structure and make compromises with regard to programme quality in the form of production values. This ability to adjust to and adopt the industrial framework in work practice has in itself come to be considered a trait of professionalism and good work. Again, this is not a new development nor is it restricted to the television industry. Faulkner (1985), for example, makes a similar observation in a study of the music recording industry where the ability to cope with creative structural restrictions was viewed as professional competence and skill. As a result, commercial restrictions are re-defined as challenges one seeks to master or as problems to which one seeks a solution. This attitude disguises and distracts from the structural problem of the production setting as independents focus on demonstrating their ability to cope with its pressures, instead of aiming at structural change and improvement of their position. In this respect, professionalism and the adherence to professional standards including quality of service and execution function as a source of opacity (Bhaskar 1991) in television production, which supports the service-character of independent production and leads to the reproduction of the structural setting. Economic forces further ensure that producers do not deviate from dominant professional standards as otherwise they are likely to come into conflict with their broadcaster clients and suffer economic consequences (Elliott 1977: 150). In the case of independent production, this carries the risk of losing out on commissions, since a lack of adherence to the professional values described above will most likely result in the rejection of programme ideas by commissioning editors. This presents an economic risk that most independent producers cannot take for the sake of artistic self-realisation. Elliott takes a critical stance

toward this issue and argues that structural conditions have a highly restricting effect when it comes to alternatives to and deviations from existing standards. He claims that workers responses and solutions to the creativity-commerce dilemma will only be successful if they are supported by (because compliant with) the organisational structure:

> [N]o matter how complex the adaptations which communicators make to the dilemma, the end result in terms of output will vary only if the adaptation is supported by the organizational system in which the communicator is working. (ibid.)

My research findings do not support such an exclusively negative approach but they confirm that responses to creativity-commerce tensions that are based on professionalism and ambitions of doing good work have an overall reinforcing function with regard to structural conditions. It has to be noted that Elliott's work is written in the context of a quite different broadcasting structure than today. He expressed concerns about elitism, cultural dominance and lack of diversity that originated in a response to the dominance and monopoly of the BBC. Since then this monopoly has been broken, although the BBC still has a prominent influence on the British broadcasting landscape and impacts on perceptions of programme quality. The current production system of multiple competing commercial and public service broadcasters is driven by competitiveness and commodification rather than by values of a particular social class. However, I agree with Elliott in that adherence to professional standards and conventions can be understood as a kind of defensive move that helps to prevent artistic frustration and creative conflict through processes of emotional detachment and referral of responsibilities, as discussed in the following section.

Professionalism as Detachment Strategy: Form over Content

The economic tightening of the independent production sector and the commercial orientation of broadcasters have reduced opportunities for independents to fully explore and expand their creative potential and continue to do so. Hence, individuals need to compromise and to some extent even abandon professional production values and reflexive values. This can create a dilemma for television workers between their subjective ideals concerning documentary and the service-driven character of their work. The results are negative psychological consequences for practitioners, and frustration and dissatisfaction with their work. A professional identity helps workers to cope with this dilemma. My findings are in agreement with Elliott's argument that professionalism supports a displacement or re-interpretation process that helps workers to cope with the dilemma. He claims that by relying on professional stan-

dards, practices and values, practitioners "may distance themselves from the content and disclaim responsibility for the message" (1977: 151). This provides them with the opportunity to distance and detach themselves emotionally to some degree from the cultural product they create (Hall 1977: 344) and thus avoid any conflict, distress or dilemma in their work context. Form, then, becomes more important than content for creative decisions, which feeds into concerns about a decline in documentary quality as outlined in chapter 2.

In order to avoid emotional conflict, practitioners rely on professional conventions, as described above, to measure and defend the quality of their work, whilst their personal views of what makes a good documentary become secondary. This earlier cited interview quote illustrates how practitioners refer to industrial values when assessing the 'quality' of a programme they are involved in:

> [M]ost indies[80] are vulnerable because they do a specific niche, a very specific type of programming, and for it to work here, we need to kind of [have an] economy of different kinds of programmes really. And this is why this [weekly factual live show] thing is really important to us. Alright, people might say, 'Well that's not the coolest slot on earth'. Actually, we gonna do a really good programme, it's gonna have lots of proper documentary in it, it's gonna have interesting people in it – it's one of the relatively few places in British broadcasting now where you get an hour of TV every week to yourself. And that's fantastic for us. (Exec Prod C, UK)

Reference to generic form elements of "proper documentary" and "interesting people" is made here as indication of what is perceived as a good programme. The tone of the quotation reflects a sense of defensive justification for the commissioned programme against accusations of it lacking social relevance. It is legitimised, firstly, on economic grounds, and secondly, with regard to professional production values. By focusing on a professional execution, responsibility for a lack of social relevance and impact of a project idea can be disclaimed and it still "makes a good programme". This reduces potential dissatisfaction with working conditions and frustration over the creative decisions that are taken.

Professional detachment has a particular function in the project development stage. It serves as a form of emotional self-protection and helps practitioners to overcome frustration and disappointment in their work. In contrast to production workers, who are contributing to the realisation of a single or a series of commissioned pro-

[80] 'Indie' is a common term in television production, it is an abbreviation for the longer notion of 'independent production company'.

grammes, development workers work simultaneously on multiple and very different projects all of which have uncertain chances of ever being realised. The low commissioning rates of programme suggestions[81] mean that developers have to cope with intense and repeated rejection of their work. They may disagree with the reasons for these rejections and reflect critically on the structural conditions or their work (see below), which could cause emotional tensions. There is a particular risk of frustration when workers show personal interest and involvement in a specific programme idea and invest efforts and emotions into its development. Interpreting the high level of rejections as a characteristic of their profession helps workers to accept it and emotional detachment in order to avoid conflict and frustration is considered professional behaviour in this context. Development workers need to be able to "handle" rejection and criticism and are advised by colleagues "not take it personally". Resilience is named, therefore, as an essential skill for development workers; they need to "be able to bounce back" and to deal with "knockbacks", because:

> If you don't like rejection, [development work] can leave you in a very difficult place psychologically. To a degree, it's a thankless task, because people don't see it as having a lot of glory, unless you get a kind of commission. There're relatively few moments when you get decent commissions [that] are balanced with an awful lot of moments when it's disappointment. And often that disappointment is not, because your idea is flawed or your presentation has been rubbish, it's just because actually the channels are now so prescriptive, that they don't, that there is no realm for it. (Exec Prod C, UK)

The more experience workers have had in the industry, the more they seem to harden against rejection and perceive it as (sometimes irrational but nevertheless matter-of-fact) normality and "part of the job". The HoDs in both companies, who handle all development projects and are in direct communication with commissioners, are often the first recipients of the news that a project has been rejected. They claim

---

[81] As mentioned in the previous chapter, according to industry rumour, the rejection rate for programme proposals in the UK amounts to roughly 100 submissions to one commission. In the UK case study company, the HoD estimated a success ratio of 1:70. This does not mean that 70 ideas are submitted to the same commissioning editor to get one commission in a particular slot. Rather, they describe the overall ratio of whole development activities in the case study company. Producers tend to submit not only one project idea but several ideas in a bundle (either briefly outlined in a paragraph, or in a more elaborate programme proposal). Often the ideas are united under a certain theme that a commissioning editor expressed interest in; on other occasions they are submitted as a group of different stand-alone programmes, in order to give a commissioning editor more variety and choice. In the German case, the rejection ratio was estimated at 1:20 by the HoD. This difference in numbers is partly based on different submission strategies, as in the UK more ideas were submitted in a bundle including multiple ideas for programme seasons. The German company dealt with less ideas at the same time (but there were also less development workers than in the British company) and the CEO and HoD first established whether there was a general commissioning interest for their programme suggestions before developing them to submission stage. This is a strategy that the British company was beginning to adopt.

to be little affected by rejection through a commissioner even if they are in disagreement with the decision: "If I cannot change it, then I won't trouble my head with it", argues the German HoD, for example. She claims that it "doesn't hurt" her to exclude certain elements of a project idea or abandon the whole project altogether, even if she has a personal interest in it or disagrees personally with a new direction taken (field notes, D). Asked about how he feels about rejection, the British HoD claims to be "over it now", indicating that this attitude took time to be fully developed. This does not reduce the passion these practitioners dedicate to their work, but they are able to cut their losses objectively and move on without too much emotional suffering. Junior workers on the other hand showed more disappointment and frustration over having done work for nothing when a project is rejected. Quite naturally so, one might argue, as they carry out most of the groundwork for projects in development such as researching facts and background information and building relationships with potential contributors. Emotional detachment and distance from the programme content in the case of rejection is harder to achieve when workers develop high personal investment or attachment to a topic, for example, when the idea is their own brainchild or when they are convinced of the value or worthiness of the programme. One development researcher had invested a lot of work in a programme idea about surrogacy. The development had gone on for some time, a broadcaster had expressed interest and more in-depth research had been carried out. Personally, the researcher was very convinced of the quality and worthiness of the project idea but was aware that it was also becoming a "problem" for her, as she was really keen on seeing this project realised: "I am really getting my hopes up; I really want it to be commissioned." Personal attachment increases anxiety over the outcome of one's work efforts, as the greater the hope for a positive outcome the greater are the chances for disappointment and frustration. Professional detachment helps television workers to emotionally manage creative constraints, alterations and rejection that are inflicted by commissioning editors. Workers thus elude – to some extent – conflicts with the industry's commercial orientation by referring to seemingly objectified professional and production values. At the same time, distancing themselves from programme content reduces practitioners' responsibility for the produced programme and can lead to complacency and ultimately to a lack of committed effort to innovation and variation.

The adherence to these particular professional conventions supports the compliance of independents on an institutional level and the service-nature of their work. As I have described in the previous chapter, independent television workers are aware of the strong commercial influences in their industry. They show acceptance or at least

open recognition of commercial business logic with regard to their activities, which supports their commercially compliant behaviour. Professional values, on the other hand, obscure the fact that they support conformity and reinforce structural conditions. Instead, professionalism is associated with claims to independence and autonomy from the social elites, which is particularly relevant due to the public nature of the products television workers produce and the impact they have on social discourse. Professionalism legitimises and elevates the work carried out, and it creates shared standards of what makes a good programme and what it means to do good work. Professional values and conventions create, therefore, a basis for work satisfaction and help to avoid or resolve creative tensions with the commercial structure of television production. They function hence as a source of opacity that disguises how independents actions conform to and support structural conditions and instead reinterprets and values this conformity as professional behaviour. Nevertheless, professional values, conventions and traditions may also be autonomous from and contradict what is commercially desired, and create tensions and conflicts between work ideal and reality. In the following, I focus, therefore, on the critical and reflexive qualities of professional and personal values and discuss in what way they might inspire agency that can reshape and reform existing structures.

5.2. Counter-Discourses of Informal Critical Reflexivity

Workers in independent production companies are not only aware of (although largely compliant with) the increased commodification and commercialisation of the television sector, they are also highly critical toward the constrained conditions they experience, based on their individual and professional aesthetic, political and ethical values. Such reflexivity can be understood as a form of agency that carries the potential for change and innovation in television production. The following statement, for example, critically evaluates the lack of opportunities for creative self-actualisation in TV-programme-making as a result of commercial prioritisation among commissioners and schedulers:

> I think [that] as a filmmaker, you want to be a kind of individual, high-end creative person. In truth most TV nowadays is quite, kind of homogeneous. It's branded across how many days, how many weeks and so on. And so the opportunity to do anything that is actually distinctive and individual is in the hands of a relatively small number of people in the industry. (Exec Prod C, UK)

During fieldwork observation, it became evident that practitioners do not always accept the creative restrictions that accompany their role as commissioned suppliers of

media content readily. Frequently, they level criticism at commissioning editors' decisions and preferences and express feelings of disappointment and frustration. For instance, the British case study company was approached by the BBC with a development request for a season of single documentaries about body image, which is a subject area that has already seen a lot of exposure in factual programmes on British television and proved its popularity with the audience. This request is an example of the advantageous position of the company, based on their industry reputation personal commissioning contacts (see chapter 4). Since the initial interest of the broadcaster was already established – and the first hurdle of project development, therefore, already overcome – the project received high priority and the whole development team was brainstorming and researching ideas. Aiming to create original and interesting programming, they searched in particular for issues that they considered new, which means issues that had not yet been addressed in the high number of previous factual programmes about body image and related issues. The company then submitted a bundle of programme ideas to the BBC commissioner. These included rarely addressed issues, such as the practice of skin bleaching within the Asian community and the challenge of living with prosthetics, alongside topics that were rather familiar and had featured more frequently in broadcasters' schedules, such as eating disorders and weight issues. When the commissioning editor's feedback arrived by e-mail several days later, the Head of Development shared its contents with the rest of the team who were keen to hear the results. The broadcaster had decided to centre the season around "issues of weight, eating and mental health", which caused great disappointment and disagreement among the development workers. All the ideas the development team considered more interesting and innovative were rejected whilst their programme suggestions about "skinny young men" and anorexic old people, essentially a new angle to a very familiar topic, were chosen for further development by the commissioner. The workers criticised the decision on the grounds that it lacked the originality and innovation television documentary should offer – which are qualities that are not only valued by the practitioners but also by broadcasters who request original and innovative programming from independent programme proposals. After several minutes of discussion and mutual disagreement with the decision, the HoD eventually ended the conversation with the words, "she is a commissioning editor and she can say what she wants", which illustrates the dependency on commissioning editors and the limits or ineffectiveness of extensive criticism (field notes UK).

On occasions such as the one described above, which occurred repeatedly throughout the observation period in both companies, it became apparent that the observed practitioners were far from being content in their service-provider role as the executive arm of a commissioners' creative agenda. Rather than accepting the decisions and preferences of commissioning editors uncritically, they proved to be an informally contested area for the workers. Practitioners exercise critical thinking and reflexivity toward their own work realities, whilst at the same time showing acceptance of the economic imperatives involved in running a business. Almost on a daily basis, the observed team members would discuss television and cinema documentaries both in their professional capacity during work-time and in some of their private conversations. In these conversations, team members not only demonstrated a capacity to form judgements about what production standards had been achieved, they also revealed a formal and aesthetic awareness in their ability to critique storylines, character and topic selection as well as a wide range of stylistic and formal issues based on personal and professional values and opinions. Such critical reflexivity concerned not only content- and style-related decisions of commissioning editors but also the critique of general working conditions concerning, for example, problems in the communication and collaboration with broadcasters including slow responding time and contradictory or vague information, as well as financial insecurity and precariousness for individual workers and the company as a whole through project-based work.

Reflexivity became a central term in the social theory debates in the 1990s. Theorists such as Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) conceptualised reflexivity as individual "self-monitoring" and "surveillance" practices in the context of increasing individualisation, choice and uncertainty of modern life. In a society with dissolving structures and greater choice in shaping one's life, greater responsibility is placed on the individual. Flexible work patterns, self-employment and portfolio careers, as they are typical in television production, are just some examples of such tendencies. Surveillance in the sense of 'information-gathering' is then required to build up knowledge based upon which individual choices can be made (Webster 2006: 206). However, when it comes to analysing the impact or role of reflexivity on a micro level in cultural production, these approaches have been criticised as to too abstract to be applied in actual sociological contexts (McRobbie 2002), incoherent with regard to differing conceptualisations (Born 2002) and their explanatory power as limited by its focus on reflexivity as a *general* human or historical condition (Caldwell 2008). In the context of this research, I distance myself, therefore, from such approaches to and understanding of reflexivity. Instead, I apply a less individualised and instrumentalised view that

refers to issues of agency and its relation to structure. It is based on conceptualisations in media production research, such as Born (2002, 2004) and Caldwell (2008), which differ from the understanding in social theory debates. Rather, they focus on practitioners' reflections on their work practice and what consequences this carries for structural and textual change.

Caldwell discusses the use of self-reference by workers in the Hollywood film and television industry. He argues that reflexivity "emerges as part of both corporate macrostrategies and human microstrategies" and "operates as a creative process involving human agency and critical competence at the local cultural level as much as a discursive process establishing power at the broader social level" (2008: 34). Caldwell observes that the industry "now constantly speaks to itself about itself" and he analyses the reflexive artefacts and deep texts that are created and circulated in this process both by corporations and within the practitioner community. This 'industrial reflexivity' can have multiple directions, functions and intentions; it is neither 'good' or 'bad' as such but may support and reinforce existing power structures as well as stimulate critical reflection and eventually social and cultural change and innovation. Industrial reflexivity can present itself as top-down guidance or even instruction through the publication of broadcaster preferences and slot requirements, either formally at industry events, in trade press or websites or through informal, personal communication. Furthermore, it affects the image and reputation of both broadcasters and independents through critical reviews of their products, their company history and success in trade press, rankings, and news and fan media. Both of these processes have been discussed in the previous chapter. In this section, I focus on the more critical and empowering potential of reflexivity on a subjective/individual level. In so doing, I apply Born's notion of 'informal reflexivity' as applied in her study of the BBC (2002, 2004).

Like Caldwell, Born understands reflexivity as both structural and a dimension of agency that refers to increased 'self-monitoring' and 'self-reflection' by collectives and institutions as well as individuals (2002: 67). She distinguishes between, firstly, disciplinary forms of 'institutionalised reflexivity' such as the audit and accountability culture at the BBC under Director General John Birt (1993-2000), and secondly, "voluntary, informal reflexivities" among BBC staff members toward institutional developments and discourses that are "driven by professional ethos, by ethical, aesthetic and political concerns" (ibid: 81). This second form of reflexivity is what I examine in this section with regard to practitioners' responses to commercial constraints. In particular, I focus on the relations between a counter-discourse of commercially con-

strained creativity, which originates from values concerning genre-specific quality, and a shared sense of a mythical 'better' past in the practitioner community. These reflexive elements are of particular relevance for the argument of this thesis, as they carry the potential or are themselves an example of resistance against the commercial domination of the sector. They contribute to the emergence of counter-discourses to commercialism, in particular, the perception of commercially constrained creativity in the current broadcasting ecology, ambitions of social impact and the belief in a mythological (better) past.

Counter-Discourse of Commercially Constrained Creativity

Born shows how the capacity for "informal reflexivity" among BBC staff contributed to a counter discourse of reactivated Reithianism, that referred to the commitment to quality, integrity and serving the public under BBC Director General John Reith and was directed against the managerial audit culture established under John Birt (ibid.: 81-82). Although this counter-discourse was subordinate in the discursive hierarchy of the institution, it co-existed, nonetheless, alongside the managerial audit culture and carried oppositional potential. Similar characteristics became apparent in my observation. The research participants' awareness of and critical reflection on commercialism, its influence on the development process and the disproportional power of commissioning editors – as described in the example of the BBC body image season above – create a counter-discourse of commercially constrained creativity. In other words, independents perceive their position (correctly) as creatively constrained by the commercial requirements of television broadcasters and the power deficit in their relationship with commissioning editors – and they reflect critically on this situation. This discourse emphasises feelings of powerlessness among producers in response to structural constraints, but it also expresses significant criticism of these constraints. Such critical awareness can lead to forms of resistance and attempts to circumvent or overcome creative constraints. As it is the case in Born's study, this discourse is subordinate to the discourse of commercial enterprise and success that guides and motivates the institutional activities of a production company. However, the existence of critical counter-discourses describes in itself a form of agency. It creates a sense of unity among the workers in an independent company and an underlying feeling of 'us' (independents) 'against them' (broadcasters/commissioning editors) that fuels attempts to resist creative domination through broadcasters. In this context, workers criticise broadcaster decisions; they feel that they work hard to realise a good, interesting and worthy programme idea in spite of ignorant (even incapable)

commissioners whose decisions they perceive as being blinded by commercial objectives, in particular, the achievement of high ratings. On the other hand, the counter-discourse of constrained creativity is split as workers both at junior and senior levels also seem anxious (1) to express their (professional) understanding of the commercial and hierarchical pressure that commissioning editors experience and have to react to, and (2) to demonstrate appreciation for the practical necessities of industrial commodified television production. Criticism toward commissioners' decisions is frequently voiced and shared by independent workers, but at the same time they try to be reasonable and realistic in their critical remarks. They show understanding of the commissioners' perspectives, but they are also resistant and insist on their own views as the following statement illustrates:

> Q: Do you disagree with some of the feedback that you get from commissioning editors?
>
> Oh, all the time. (laughs) But generally, they kind of - I suppose sometimes they're right. Sometimes you can kind of see why they said what they said, other times you just think, you haven't read the idea, you don't understand what it means, you're talking out of your arse. Yeah, sometimes you can sort of see. I mean, a lot of times they have good reason for turning it down. They commissioned something like it the other day or it's not quite the way the strand's going at the moment or it's too controversial or it wouldn't rate or whatever. With [programme suggestion about paedophile rehabilitation], I think, when it came back from the BBC and they had huge arguments about it in-house, about the fact, 'we shouldn't be giving airtime to these people' and this kind of thing. Our response to that was, 'well, if you're arguing about it in-house then it's gonna create a brilliant public debate'. That's a reason for doing it and they saw it as completely the opposite. (HoD, UK)

Occasionally, feelings of disappointment and frustration over a rejection or misguidance through commissioning editors may lead to emotional outbursts. Such strong emotional reactions are the exception but, nevertheless, the HoDs in both case studies, who carry the main weight for the company's project development and are direct recipients of broadcaster rejection, expressed their feelings more crudely on a few single occasions. This happened, for example, when they had invested much work in a particular project encouraged by the explicit interest from a commissioning editor just to eventually receive a rejection on grounds they found hard to agree with.

When shifting the focus from the inter-organisational relationship between broadcasters and independent companies to the individual workers, it becomes apparent that commercial conformity is not as straightforward or uncontested as the overall development activities and priorities of independent companies might suggest. Instead, practitioners have their own conceptualisations of what comprises good documentary programming that may come into conflict with commissioning editors' preferences.

Therefore, the next question we need to ask is what these conceptualisations of 'good' programming are founded on. Quality is an evasive and complex concept and perceptions might differ widely between different people and institutions. Hybridisation and the blurring of boundaries in the documentary genre make genre-specific conceptualisations of quality even more difficult. Furthermore, closely associated with concepts of quality is the notion of taste. Taste is perceived as something subjective and individual, and it is traditionally claimed that 'de gustibus non est disputandum' – there is no accounting for taste. This perception implies that debates about quality cannot be resolved. However, I argue that conceptualisations and criteria of what makes a good documentary are present among the research participants that go beyond personal taste. On the one hand, these are production values that focus on technically skilful execution linked to craftsmanship and professionalism. As I have discussed above, they might reinforce and reproduce existing structures and constraints. On the other hand, there are views of programme quality that involve a variety of aesthetic, ethical and narrative values that are influenced by genre traditions of documentary and that can be the subject of creative tensions. My observation revealed an understanding of high-quality documentary that is associated with particular form and content elements such as one-off, feature-length format and an in-depth exploration of issues that are of socio-political significance and that may raise viewers' awareness. All of these characteristics rely on a production culture that is contradictory to the present-day commercial broadcasting climate. They require in-depth research and long production periods and are often of a demanding and challenging nature in their content. Such requirements contradict commercial orientations of cost-saving and entertainment and make the commission of such projects unlikely, creating thus tensions between commercial demands and creative aspiration. The reason for this understanding of quality documentary lies in what Corner conceptualises as the classic social functions of documentary and their typical aesthetics (see chapter 2). Basically, this involves the objective for the programme to have some sort of significance for society or even impact on public discourse and human agency. This is not to say that workers dismiss entertainment and diversion as a function of documentary, but programmes with a social purpose continue to rank high in workers' perceptions of high-quality documentary. In the following, I focus on two particular values associated with documentary's social functions, that is firstly, realism and authenticity in documentary representation, and secondly, social impact or relevance in documentary content.

Celebration of Realism and Social Impact

Values of realism and social impact in documentary production are linked to "reflexivities of genre" that are connected to the historical trajectory of documentary and "characterized by particular aesthetics and ethics" (Born 2002: 83). Genre-specific discourses are themselves "subject to collective reflection, to reproduction and reinvention" (ibid.), which carries implications for the generic innovation of documentary. They concern aesthetic, ethical and political characteristics such as authenticity and the degree of producer-influence on the filmed situation, the use of re-constructions, talking heads and CGI, and the relationship with sources and contributors. These reflexive discourses address both cultural and social values. The first concern aesthetic quality and the creation of something that is beautiful, interesting and different for its own sake, while the latter refer to the idea of making a contribution to a wider public good, in the case of documentary, by making people aware of what is going on in society. Many different views and conceptualisations of cultural and aesthetic values exist within the practitioner community, but with regard to its social value two particular characteristics of documentary were valued by all of the observed workers: documentary's relationship with reality and its potential for social impact.

Realism

As I have discussed in chapter 2, documentary is considered to have an authentic and truthful relationship with the social reality it portrays. This does not mean the representation of an objective truth and unaltered reality and the denial of a programme-makers creative influence. Rather, authenticity and realism describe aesthetic choices made by programme-makers with the intention of creating a representation that is grounded in social reality and rejects fakery, misrepresentation and extensive construction. All research participants emphasised the representation of reality, the "real-life connectedness" (Kilborn 2008: 143) of documentary, as a central positive value of the genre and a prominent reason to enter and remain in this field of media practice. One development producer sees the quality of realism in the fact that one cannot "fake it". Her attraction to documentary is founded on the fact that "it's about real people and real stories and it makes you think about life and other people's lives" (Dev Prod, UK). She continues:

> I don't think you can ever fake reality. I don't think, you can make it up. I couldn't make up somebody that's as good as the people that we actually talk to, ever. Maybe you can, when you're a writer of fiction, but I've never, I've always found that what you read, it never rings true. People say the weirdest stuff and there's something completely different about reality that is so unpredictable and you just

> couldn't make it up half of the time. (...) Actually, I think it *means more* – because you can make anything up, can't you? (ibid. emphasis added)

Other workers used notions such as "it is not made up", "you can't fake it", "you know it really happened", "truth is stranger than fiction" and "you can't bend reality" to describe this quality of documentary. Dover considers this "celebration of reality" as "integral to the documentary-making profession" and as a feature that distinguishes documentary-makers in their self-understanding from other television producers (2001: 184). Being grounded in social reality seems indeed to be a normative feature for documentary producers that is connected to their professional identity and is a central if not essential generic characteristic of documentary for audiences. Due to the importance of real-life-connectedness as a defining characteristic of documentary, it can be argued that it will remain a relatively stable feature of this genre even with generic hybridisation and formatted construction in reality TV on the rise. One may conclude that creative conflict with regard to this value is generally less likely to occur, and it therefore presents a "safe" value to rely on. This opens up the question of whether what we see here is actually a pseudo-consensus that displaces creativity-commerce conflicts by focusing on a characteristic that is constitutive for the documentary genre and, therefore, not likely to be contested or challenged by commercial imperatives. Realism as a general criterion therefore presents a convenient value that is recognised across the whole industry. However, the sheer fact of representing reality does not necessarily make this representation meaningful, and the specifics of this representation remain contestable, as practitioners' and theorists' views differ on how reality is or ought to be interpreted in documentary representation.

In documentary development, the realism convention is a determining factor for the complete development process. First of all, the issue, person or location that inspired a programme idea need to exist in profilmic reality. The corresponding background research for each idea is aimed at collecting fairly comprehensive information on the subject matter in question, from various reliable sources, including divergent opinions and perspectives. Finally, the written proposal might contain some degree of interpretation of the researched information, but the facts of the matter remain unaltered. It is highly important that the featured contributors/sources and case studies exist in real life to provide evidence for the proposed programme. This practical understanding of realism is further enforced by ethical demands in broadcasters' codes of practice, broadcasting legislation and the public service remit. Nonetheless, the boundaries of realism have shifted and elements of construction have become increasingly ac-

cepted within documentary, as my observation of the development process has shown. These elements are often borrowed from reality TV formats and include, for example, the arrangement of a kind of competition or a swap of living context. Furthermore, creative selections in development are aimed at creating dramatic and extraordinary content that (hopefully) will appeal to audiences, providing thus a dramatically enhanced and distorted version of social reality.[82]

Impact

A second influential generic value that influences workers' creativity in addition to real-life-connectedness is the idea of social impact. Documentaries often investigate a specific argument or raise awareness of a particular issue in order to make statements (and judgements) about reality and the state of our society. Particularly vivid examples of this potential are the long-standing traditions of advocacy, propaganda and activist documentary-making. The sub-genre of 'social documentary' is dedicated explicitly to achieving social impact and cultural and social change. Such traditions correspond to the social functions of documentary and genre traditions, as described in chapter 2. Their ambitions of providing publicity for citizenship, journalistic inquiry, radical interrogation and alternative perspectives hold less value in a broadcasting environment that is focused on entertainment and popularity as a result of commercialisation. Hence, creativity-commerce tensions are to be expected with regard to such values. The increase of the fourth function of documentary, documentary as diversion, at the expense of its social functions, is evidence of the shift in the intentions behind documentary production. Nevertheless, the idea to achieve some sort of impact upon the audience is still very present among documentary producers.

Impact is an important concept in the academic debate about and analysis of media products, and 'social impact studies'[83] are dedicated to exploring this issue in depth. Impact refers to changing the personal opinions, knowledge or even actions of media audiences, but it is highly debatable whether this kind of impact is actually achieved or can be achieved at all. With regard to the potential impact of documentary programming, opinions are split between celebratory assumptions of high-impact models and critical positions that are sceptical about the actual achievability of impact in social reality. The first include views such as the one expressed by John Downing who

[82] For further discussion and examples of the textual tendencies concerning case studies and content in project development see chapter 6.
[83] See Belfiore and Bennett (2009) for a review of this debate.

claims that media activism "lights a flame that, like some trick birthday cake candles, obstinately refuses to be doused" (2001: 392). Documentary scholar Brian Winston, on the other hand, is firmly critical of such views. He is sceptical about the actual impact documentaries may achieve and asserts that, "the underlying assumption of most social documentaries – that they shall act as agents of reform and change – is almost never demonstrated. (...) [A]ny expectation of documentaries changing the world is unfair, if not absurd, and is certainly simplistic" (Winston 1995: 236-7). Actual effects of documentary probably lie somewhere between these two polarised positions. However, my research is not dedicated to audience research and the effects or influences documentaries may have for their viewers. Rather, I am interested in the views that producers' hold with regard to this issue. Those views are related to expectations, assumptions and desires rather than to actual proven media effects.

The research participants share ambitions of social impact and name documentary's potential effect on audiences as a central factor for their motivation and pleasure of being involved in the production of this particular genre. The thought of "changing people's perception" and "making people think" provides them with work satisfaction and the feeling of "making a difference". Workers name objectives such as altering audiences' views of the world, countering prejudice and ignorance, and working on press freedom as motivating factors and ultimate work goals, as described in the following statements:

> I've made films in the past that I think were worthwhile. Proper, worthwhile. People would have watched them and thought, 'I've seen the world differently'. I think, people who watched [programme title][84] see the world differently actually, but, you know, in terms of social, economically differently, but there is not many of those around these days. (Exec Prod B, UK)

> The aspect that one is working on press freedom, I still think that is a great thing and I think it is sad that ultimately the projects that are exciting, they are happening every ten years – Well, not every ten years but they are happening once in a blue moon. We are doing one right now, the history of the Russian mafia, where we are co-producers. These are the projects that really excite me and where I say, this is the reason for me not to leave this field. (HoD, D)

Such passion drives many documentary-makers to proceed in this area of production, even if this involves compliance with commercial imperatives and battling against severe economic pressure. However, the extent of their ambitions seems reduced compared to traditional social ambitions of auteur documentary-makers. One director

[84] This quotation refers to a documentary the company had produced for the Channel 4 strand *Cutting Edge*. It explored the life and motivation of women for whom custom-made life-like baby-dolls take up the role of a child.

describes that dedication to the representation of social issues requires certain personal and financial sacrifices that are generally not compatible with the commercial interests of industrial television production:

> There are many auteur films or at least some, which really have a strong social impetus or social justice impetus or something like that. They subordinate everything else in favour of this film or project. It can keep them occupied for years and then it isn't important how much money one earns with it. (Dir/Par, D)

Dissociation from auteur and advocate filmmakers is fairly typical among television documentary-makers and became apparent in several conversations with the research participants. This suggests that social ambitions have to some extent been eroded or diluted, and it raises the question of whether social impact has become an empty or at least vague or soft value, replacing the traditional sense of social impact with a pseudo-meaningfulness regarding the social value of their work. This development is supported by commercial commissioning tendencies. Commissioners are known for not wanting to be "too political" and social impact is generally not encouraged in the contemporary commissioning landscape in the UK and Germany as it is presumed to repel television audiences. Instead, they show a preference for documentary as diversion. Some single documentary strands still exist that are dedicated to social functions, but their number has been substantially reduced over the last decades.

However, working on what they perceive to be 'high-quality' or 'social impact' productions offers workers the opportunity for immaterial rewards through the feeling of doing relevant work. As became apparent in the interview quotations mentioned above, these opportunities are relatively rare, especially in the current commodified broadcasting landscape. Nevertheless, they still seem to present a prominent motivation for independents to stay in this industry sector despite the artistic frustration it can entail (including a high degree of rejection). Producers accept certain constraints of the system for the sake of realising a production they consider important and socially relevant even if this occurs rarely or involves creative compromise because it provides them with a sense of fulfilment, satisfaction, achievement and freedom of expression. The "sense of social responsibility" (Corner 1996: 2) that is associated with documentary, dating back to Grierson's educational objectives for documentary, still seems to be very much alive even in a commodified and commercialised production environment. Nevertheless, the fairly small number of opportunities to create films that provide this form of satisfaction compared to the dominance of commercial influences and considerations may create a dilemma for practitioners between "using

one's talents for a purpose and having them used for none except the survival or commercial success of the organization for which the work is done" (Elliott 1977: 148).

According to the interviewed workers, this dilemma has increased in the current competitive broadcasting ecology. Overall, the producers acknowledge that projects that offer the opportunity to realise social aspirations are rare in the current broadcasting environment. They claim that "worthwhile" documentaries were increasingly a thing of the past that occurred "once in a blue moon" and suggest that innovative and risk-taking programmes of the kind that have been produced and transmitted in the past would not be commissioned today. These observations were generally made by practitioners with several decades of professional experience. They had past experience of producing single feature-length documentaries under less commercial pressure, which they regarded as being more daring in content and form than most of the present-day documentary programming. They expressed, consequently, regret at the loss of such programme-making opportunities and were disappointed about the recent changes in production practice. Junior members of the team, on the other hand, with only a couple of years of professional experience, expressed no such regrets although they also demonstrated beliefs in the social worthiness and educational potential of documentary. The following section is concerned with the practitioner perception that the conditions for documentary-making were better in the past, which feeds the counter-discourse of constrained creativity in the current broadcasting culture. I argue that this perception is to some extent created by a shared mythological past that reflects critically on contemporary commercially motivated changes in television production, based on the view that production conditions have worsened.

Perceptions of Change

In order to understand informal reflexivities in independent production including critical attitudes towards commercialism, we need to ask how practitioners perceive and evaluate changes in the production culture. As became apparent in the statements above, workers perceive the opportunity to gain social impact with the programming they develop and produce as substantially reduced in comparison to conditions experienced in documentary production prior to neoliberalisation, deregulation and increased competition. In her study of the British documentary sector Dover observes that documentary-makers are bound together by a "shared sense of mythological past" (2001: 207) in the form of a common documentary programme-making culture.

This perception relies on a shared history of exemplary documentaries of outstanding quality that is closely connected to conceptualisations of the documentarist as auteur and artist. This mythological past is created and maintained in educational and academic institutions and derives from literature about documentary film rather than documentary created for television (ibid.). However, practitioners do not refer to a canon of excellent films with regard to their practice. The research participants never referred to great documentary filmmakers in the production context or in the interviews, instead, reference and comparison were mainly made to contemporary (television and cinema) documentary programming. Nevertheless, the association of auteur and art film was present in their ideas of 'classic' and 'high-quality' documentary, although it did not necessarily match their personal preferences, especially with some of the senior workers. By extending Dover's understanding of a mythological past beyond the aesthetic and including practitioners' perceptions of the changed production culture, its contribution to the aforementioned counter-discourse of commercially constrained creativity becomes evident. Workers criticised the present production conditions including budget cuts, reduced broadcasting opportunities for documentary in general and certain types of documentary in particular, such as the one-off feature length auteur film, and the increased competition in the independent sector, all of which have a negative impact, in their opinion, on the aesthetic and social value of the programming that is getting commissioned today.

In the debate surrounding the development of documentary, the current production culture is often juxtaposed with allegedly better conditions in the past including the provision of more time and money to develop and produce programmes. It is claimed such past conditions were facilitated by a less commercial production climate that provided producers with greater freedom, experimentation and innovation in their programme-making and that such programming would no longer be commissioned today (for commercial reasons). In television practice and in literature about broadcasting history, this is often referred to as the "golden age of television" that offered better production conditions (with regard to available budgets and time frames for example) and, consequently, higher production value. This is, however, an idealised and simplified view. These claims run the risk of nostalgic idealisation and glorification of television history whilst downplaying the achievements of contemporary documentary programming. The latter include, for example, the present-day openness toward all sorts of subject matter and reduction of moral and educationally pa-

tronising concerns about what audiences can be shown[85] as well as technological developments that have influenced storytelling and style of documentary. Television representation has in many ways become more liberal with regard to what can be depicted on screen where hardly anything is considered unsuitable *per se,* although sensitivities, ethics and political correctness certainly need to be taken into consideration. Secondly, programming has become more diverse with regard to styles of representation, which is also related to technological developments and an expanding corpus of television programmes. On the other hand, it can be argued that television production today is far more self-restrictive, but less on political or cultural grounds than for economic reasons as I have shown in chapter 4. Producers are submitted to tighter deadlines, budgets and are under pressure to create commercial success, all of which limit the opportunities for experimentation, exploration and risk-taking in contemporary television production.

My data suggest that, with the changes in the commissioning culture, the idea of impact in television documentary has shifted from the political to the personal. Rather than aiming to change social and political systems, producers aspire to change people's perceptions about each other, advocating understanding and tolerance. Of course, there are exceptions to this tendency, especially on the cinema screens, where recently several films were dedicated to exposing negative social and political conditions concerning, for example, war, poverty, environment and social injustice.[86] Some of these films make their way eventually onto the television screens, but they are not typical for the majority of television documentary compared to the political ambition of television documentary-makers in previous decades. The statement by this executive producer gives an example of the changed conceptualisation but continuing importance of social impact in recent years:

> One of the first films I made at *First Tuesday*[87] was (...) at the time of the South Africa Apartheid era. South Africa were hanging more people than anywhere in the world, sometimes seven at the time. And it was just a figure in a newspaper, that was it, and how do you get behind that, how do you tell the personal stories, what does that mean, what makes people care about that. And we went out and filmed secretly in South Africa with the families of those who were being hanged that week. What I hoped for that was that it would show people, bring to life the

---

[85] As, for example, the kind of restrictions Mary Whitehouse aimed to impose on the BBC in the course of her 'Clean Up Television Campaign'.

[86] Recent very successful examples for such films are *Black Gold* (2006), *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004) or *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004).

[87] *First Tuesday* was a monthly documentary strand at ITV that focused on social issues and current affairs. The strand ran from 1983 to 1993 and was broadcast on the first Tuesday of the month.

> human tragedies behind it rather than just a blank line in a newspaper or report. And I think the South African government was embarrassed by that, they froze the death penalty the week that that [programme] went out, and they never, I don't think they ever brought that back in[88]. And that film kind of coincided with a new era in South Africa, de Klerk was in power, so maybe it had nothing to do with it but it just felt as though that was a great way of telling people what the true story was, the [UK case study company] equivalent in a way would be a very different film but we went to make a film about a family who were in the newspapers branded as Britain's weirdest family, yeah, sex-changed men who were bringing up this little girl and when we got there, actually, the little girl was remarkably happy and nice and balanced and very, very supportive in encouraging of her family. So far from being a kind of a condemnation of Britain's weirdest family [it] turned into a plea for tolerance and understanding for her family and I thought that is what TV should do. I was very proud of that because it turns expectations on its head, I guess. (Exec Prod A, UK)

Potential for Resistance and Change?

I have argued that various informal reflexive discourses co-exist in television production alongside the dominant discourse of commercialism and (financial) accumulation. The reflexive values and beliefs, these discourses are based on, are in themselves discursive, ambivalent, variable and non-exclusive. They are negotiated within the practitioner community and the fieldwork for this research suggests that there are differences among documentary workers with regard to their (reflexive) values, depending on their personal background and beliefs, on the kind of professional training they have received and on the amount of industry experience they have gathered. Nevertheless, values of realism and social impact, which are rooted in genre traditions of documentary, were important to all research participants. One could refer to these social ambitions as a kind of modernist perspective of social progress and improvement that is still prevalent among documentary-makers. Such values tend to be inconsistent with the values of a commodified and commercial broadcasting industry that is primarily interested in the creation of popular content. As a result, various counter-discourses emerge that reflect critically on the commercialisation of the industry and the particular constraints this implies for independent producers. The research participants experience their working conditions as restrictive with regard to social values and feel that the current commercialisation, popularisation and commodification of television is limiting the opportunity to achieve such impact. This discourse of commercial constraint is further enhanced by a discourse that is building on

---

[88] This is probably a slight overestimation of the programme's impact but this perception is a good example for the high impact potential documentary-makers may assign to the genre.

perceptions of declining production conditions in comparison to a somewhat idealised past.

The belief in these counter-discourses encourages doubt in the commercial values of television production. They hence increase the potential for creative tension and conflict but they also create the conditions for change. Although these critically reflexive discourses are subordinate to commercialism, they show, nevertheless, that there is more going on than one-sided and uncontested conformity and subordination to structural constraints. Reflexivities may create resistance to commercialism, stimulate change and innovation. Because, "if aesthetic and ethical reflexivities are central to creativity, and if the conditions for creativity bear on their possibility" as Born claims (2002: 87), then this particular production environment also carries the potential for aesthetic innovation. In other words, if production structures allow for or even provide the possibility of critical reflexivities among independent producer then they also enable individual creativity. Although the existence of aesthetic reflexivity alone does not guarantee aesthetic innovation, it can be argued that it represents in itself a form of agency. Informal reflexivities, as well as the standards and values of professionalism, in documentary production are created and shaped by structural developments and individual actions alike. They are subject to individual and collective reflection and frequently submitted to change, evolution or even deconstruction thus carrying the potential to break with established structures and conventions. In a way, television producers can be conceptualised as what Antonio Gramsci (2006) calls "organic intellectuals". In contrast to "traditional intellectuals", who perceive themselves (wrongly) as autonomous from society, organic intellectuals emerge 'organically' from their social group. They recognise their position in supporting dominant social groups and structures just as my research participants were aware of their compliance with commercial constraints. At the same time they (may) use their position to articulate the experience of not only their social group but also other, subordinate or suppressed groups and help to develop a social consciousness. Such a purpose echoes the social values of documentary-makers and their hope for social impact. Motivated by giving people a voice and impacting on audiences' perceptions of the world, they may use their privileged role as mediators and gatekeepers to express the experiences, opinions and conditions of dominant as well as minority groups.

Reflexivities, as the ones discussed in this chapter, form consequently an important cultural and social counterbalance to commercial orientations with regard to motivations, ambitions and intentions of programme-makers. They show that the position of

independent television workers is a complex and ambivalent one that cannot simply be described as succumbing to the requirements of a new broadcasting ecology. On the other hand, this raises the question of what happens when conformist behaviour is contrary to the subjective aesthetic and ethical values of the practitioners. How is reflexivity expressed in the work context and in what way does it influence or inspire forms of resistance? In both case study companies, direct action against or conflict with broadcasters was relatively rare in development work. However, a common re-action of practitioners to creativity-commerce tensions is the informal criticism of pro-duction conditions and broadcasters in conversations with peers, as described above. Another typical response are expressions of humour and (self-)irony when talking about experiences of rejection and failure, work difficulties like tight deadlines and resistance from sources, and a lack of sophistication and social impact in programme content. The latter became clearly evident, for instance, on occasions such as the following:

> During the lunch break the workers talk about the experiences of a crew who had just returned from shooting material for an observational animal series. One of the stories they followed involved an elderly lady whose dog had been stolen. The team was able to witness and film when the dog was found and reunited with his owner. The emotional value of this storyline will be "great" for the series and reso-nate well with viewers. Hence, the PD refers to this story ironically as "TV gold" and his AP joins in and remarks in an ironically over-enthusiastic tone: "We pro-duced award-winning television, I'm telling you, award-winning television" (field notes, UK)

Ironic and sarcastic comments in reference to the formalised and populist orientations and preferences of broadcasters are a common feature in development work. For example, during a development meeting the team was brainstorming ideas for an observational series for Channel Five. After discussing various ideas, one develop-ment producer comments on the restrictive properties of the populist preferences at the channel. To the amusement of the rest of the team, he sums up the challenges that lie in what the channel wants with the question "How can you cross Wildlife with Homes and make it boysy?" (field notes, UK). Aside from commercial requirements and constraints, practitioners are also reflexive about their own conditions as workers within an independent company. (Self)exploitation, high workload and lack of (ade-quate) financial rewards are commented on through jokes, irony and sarcasm. In the German company for example, several of the junior workers and interns have second jobs outside the media industry in order to support themselves financially.[89] When

[89] All internships within this company were generally unpaid and had to last at least six months. As there are always enough candidates that are eager to join the industry, the HoD

one junior worker mentions during a small social gathering after hours that she has a new part-time job in catering that pays ten Euros an hour, other junior workers are impressed by this, apparently, high amount. One of them asks for the contact details and the HoD jokingly exaggerates, "This is more than any job here [pays]." (field notes, D)

Irony, teasing and gallows humour emerged as central features of workers' communication at the workplace. They illustrate and express practitioners' critical awareness of commercial restrictions both with regard to programming content and with regard to working conditions and function as a release for tensions that amount in everyday work reality. Their sometimes open and sometimes indirect criticism represents their resistance against constraining conditions, but it is also accompanied by an undercurrent of fatalism in the sense of 'this is how it is, one cannot change it but only learn to deal with it the best way'. However, 'dealing with it' implies not only conformity but also compromise and negotiation, suggesting that independents have some sort of influence over creative decisions, which carries the potential for change and the implementation of non-commercial values.

5.3. Ambiguity and Competing Values

This chapter has focused on the individual level of independent television production and the subjective experience of television workers. In order to analyse the resisting or reinforcing function of human agency with regard to commercial structures and imperatives, I have discussed how workers evaluate and respond, firstly, to the production setting they operate in, and secondly, to the company's institutional behaviour as described in the previous chapter. In order to understand what guides their actions and perceptions, I have examined the values and opinions the workers hold. The fieldwork data revealed that agency is driven by the complex interplay of ambivalent and competing values that both resist and reinforce commercial structures and conditions. On the one hand, commercialism instigates creative conformity and self-restriction among independent producers, which is supported by professional values. On the other hand, practitioners also reflect critically on the production setting, leading to the development of a counter-discourse of commercially constrained creativity.

---

sees no need to pay them following a market logic of supply and demand. Interns therefore had other part-time jobs to pay for their living. In some cases their working week at the production company only entailed four days in order to provide them with the opportunity to earn some money in another job.

For the individual producers, this "disjunction between the heroes and ideals of an occupation and the reality of the work situation" (Elliott 1977: 148) makes it more likely that they will experience emotional conflict and creative frustration in their work. However, although they are aware, conscious and reflexive of the commercial framework and its creative limitations, practitioners do not seem to be completely disappointed or disillusioned with their work. Two influences have emerged as particularly important in shaping values of quality, worthiness and good work among practitioners, in addition to personal artistic, ethical and political views. They include a conceptualisation of professionalism in documentary practice that encourages the adherence to professional standards, and genre traditions of documentary that emphasise its particular social value and influence the professional self-understanding and ambitions of programme-makers.

I have shown how a professional identity and the consequent adherence to professional values and conventions support and legitimise the conformity to broadcaster demands and preferences by creating a shared understanding of quality. It does so by disguising commercial conformity and re-interpreting it as 'good' professional work, reducing thus the potential for tensions with regard to creativity and commerce and dissatisfaction with the reality of the occupation. Adherence to professional values, such as ethical and legal considerations, high-quality service and a shift in professional production values toward the perfection of technically skilful execution, serve as indicators for programme quality in the eyes of the practitioner community and the commissioning editors. It raises the status of independent producers in the relationship with broadcasters and increases the likeliness of obtaining a commission, serving thus the company's commercial interests. On an individual level, motivated by the development of a professional identity combined with the belief in career advancement and the ambition of being recognised and valued as a television professional, workers are inclined to accept and comply with commercial constraints without being necessarily aware of the fact. Awareness of such compliance and potential dissatisfaction with the fact can be dispersed by the emotional detachment that is associated with professional behaviour and quality. By focusing on professional execution and delivery, producers may distance themselves from the content of the product they create, which helps them to avoid creative, aesthetic, ethical and emotional conflicts. Emotional detachment serves hence an important psychological purpose by helping workers to cope with disappointment, lack of success and rejection in their every-day work. This defensive move can have negative consequences on practitioners' work motivation and performance, as they are less attached and probably

less passionate about the projects they work on and could fail to develop programme ideas to their full potential.

Successful adjustment to framework structures and their requirements has become a valued professional characteristic that legitimises practitioner's actions as professional conduct and provides them with a sense of achievement, pride in craftsmanship and the feeling of having done "good work" – or at least the best work possible within existing production structures. In this process, dominant and accepted professional production values are largely reproduced and reinforced. These tendencies do not necessarily result in programming of lower standards. In fact, the focus on high-skilled delivery has led to many well-shot, well-structured and well-edited documentaries that are also commercially successful. However, skilful execution can be separated from the demands of originality and innovation. For example, a formatted programme may be well-executed, nice to look at and show dramatic developments, but it will be produced according to a preconceived narrative structure and visual style presenting the audience only with variations of the same story, rather than taking risks and experimenting with different issues and visual styles.

Nevertheless, professional production values can be contradictory to commercial imperatives and require creative compromise in the production process. The heightened precariousness of their existence and the consequent service orientation of independent producers has increased the need for such compromise and led to a priority shift in production values. Furthermore, the commercially motivated shift toward popularity and entertainment in television programming, including documentary, limits any kind of social impact the workers might aim to achieve. As a result, practitioners focus predominantly on the quality of execution as a demonstration of professional and technical competence and skills. Creative ambition and social intention, on the other hand, seem to have become less important or, at the least, their specifics have changed as practitioners no longer seek social change and organised response to certain issues in society. Rather, they aim for awareness among audiences on a personal level as an outcome of their work. This shift is particularly evident among practitioners at a senior level, who value documentary programmes that offer high production value with regard to technical execution and visualisation over more artistic or auteur approaches to documentary. A decline of the vocational character[90] and

[90] On the other hand, the sense of vocation is still prominent among television workers and instrumentalised for exploitative work structures. By labelling television work as a vocation,

traditional public service values in documentary production has also been observed by Lee (2008) for the independent production sector. Nevertheless, as Lee notes and my results regarding practitioner reflexivity confirm, commercially contradictory values have not completely disappeared. Normative concepts of social impact and public service persist among producers but they are only rarely implemented in project development unless they coincide with broadcaster preferences.

Nevertheless, the professional identity of being a documentary-producer for television does not only support and re-enforce commercial compliance. It can also be a source of values and reflexivities that provide creativity, innovation and variation in television documentary. First of all, the notion of professionalism also includes claims to independence from economic and managerial considerations. Sennett notes that the use of the term professional originates in a self-understanding of being "something other than just employees" (2008: 246). Elliott considers professionalism in television production as a potential source for "variation", as "it is both a claim to autonomy and to a link with high culture and the activities of status elites, and so it becomes an independent source of pressure moving cultural production in that direction" (1977: 168). This suggests that professionalism still has a positive contribution to make to our media culture, but it is questionable to what extent professionalism has met this potential for independence and variation. Elliott perceived the "predominant form of professionalism" at the time, he wrote his piece, as "simply routine competence in the skills necessary to produce media culture" (ibid.: 167). My research findings indicate a continuing reliance on routine competences and practices, in particular, a focus on legally compliant, high-quality execution within the parameters of the existing production framework.

More important for variation and innovation are, therefore, reflexive perceptions of workers about the conditions and worth of their work, which are grounded in professionalism, in genre traditions of documentary and in personal and professional values. Informal reflexivity within independent companies shows that practitioners are very well aware and critical of the conditions they operate on. Critical and humorous comments by the workers, as described in the examples provided in this chapter, illustrate their critical reflexivity toward structural constraints and how they (may) op-

---

workers are expected to make sacrifices with regard to financial reward, security and work-life-balance: "This is not a 9 to 5, it's not a job. It's actually, it should be a vocation, you should be excited about the process." (Exec Prod C, UK)

pose workers' own preferences and views, especially with regard to the diversity, originality and social impact/relevance of selected topics. They criticise a lack of opportunity to make programmes of social relevance that might have the potential for some sort of positive impact on society. The idea of social relevance or impact of a programme idea plays an important role in informal reflexive discourses within the documentary practitioner community. It links contemporary documentary-makers to longstanding genre traditions and normative ambitions of education, investigation and advocacy. However, these values have been diluted, related ambitions diminished and normative conceptualisations are treated with suspicion. As a result, practitioners aim for less of a revolutionary than a soft impact on society with vague ideas of wanting to make people think, which are easier to realise in the existing production framework than higher ambitions of social change. Instead of promoting social change, they aim to raise awareness for grievances. Nevertheless, on those relatively rare occasions when practitioners work on a project they consider "worthwhile" and socially relevant, they are rewarded with a sense of fulfilment, satisfaction, achievement and freedom, which supports work motivation and makes the need for the acceptance of commercial and populist constraints during the development and production of other types of programming tolerable.

As mentioned above, professional competences and reflexivities also carry the potential for creative innovation. They are in flux and always being redefined, both by the broadcasting institutions and by the practitioner community. This in itself arguably offers an opportunity for creativity, innovation and change. The negotiation of professional production values, for example, is influenced by workers' reflexive counter-discourses to commercialism. These discourses are expressions of the fact that workers are not just simply serving those in power. Rather, they are questioning what is going on to a certain extent and demonstrate critical awareness of negative conditions and commissioning trends, creating thus said counter-discourses. The critical questioning of production values and conditions is a form of agency that offers the potential for resistance and the development of alternative types of programme. While reflexive discourses inform the development of professional values, the latter also shape reflexive discourses including those that oppose the principles of commodification and popularity. At the same time they may also function as a kind of safety-net and prevent conflicts between reflexivities and commercial constraints when reflexive values, in particular those of social relevance and impact, are repeatedly overruled and rejected by commercial considerations.

On a final note, it has to be stressed that social, cultural and professional values are not evenly and equally spread among practitioners. Educational institutions[91] and literature play an important role in the establishment and nurturing of such values through professional experience and training. Other important influences are expressions of institutional reflexivity as discussed by Caldwell (2008) and last but not least the documentary programming that is available to (current and prospective) practitioners as reference and example. All of these factors contribute to the perception of a mythological past and may cause tensions between the commodified production culture and workers' values. In this respect, a generational difference between newcomers and workers with many years of experience in the sector became apparent. The latter have been socialised in their professional practice with reflexive values of realism and social impact, and due to their long-term experience in the industry they are better equipped to compare current production trends with past conditions and traditions. However, the more managerial responsibility practitioners have, the less emphasis they place on creative self-realisation in comparison to commercial success. A natural result, one might argue, of turning from (self-)employed practitioner to executive with investment in and responsibility for the commercial success of an independent company. This corresponds to the separation of personal and professional ambition and interest among managing creatives as discussed in the preceding chapter. Junior workers in their 20s, on the other hand, have been brought up on a heavily formatted television documentary diet. This raises the question to what extent they will be able to create innovative and creative programming beyond formatted structures and narrative conventions. Compared to more senior workers, they lack the direct experience of other forms of documentary and other forms of production and express, consequently, less criticism and regret at current developments in television documentary. This facilitates a shift in reflexive and professional values and suggests that culture-commerce tensions in this generation of documentary-makers may be less pronounced. This corresponds with findings by Lee, who observes generational differences in the independent production sector with regard to the awareness of changes in production values, as "older workers have an earlier reference point to previous production values and conditions, whereas younger ones are more completely immersed in the contemporary, more commercial values" (2008: 239).

---

[91] See Dover (2001) chapter 2 and 7 for further discussion.

However, a growing number of new entrants to the sector are graduates from media and film studies degrees, who may encounter classic documentaries in their studies that differ in content and in style from contemporary television documentary. This provides graduates with alternative aesthetic options of how to present issues in documentary form. In addition, they may encounter critical views and opinions about the commercialisation and commodification of television in the course of their training – or, alternatively, justification and celebration of these tendencies – which can encourage or diminish reflexive counter-discourses. In addition, a strong culture of on-the-job training and mentoring continues to have a strong foothold in the television industry. It allows programme-makers to pass their personal or institutional values and opinions on to the next generation and thus re-produce them. In order to save costs, the scale of apprenticeship and mentoring arrangements has been greatly reduced, but they remain typical for large national broadcasters, especially those with a public service remit, who (are obliged to) consider practitioner training to be one of their responsibilities. In the UK, for example, the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 offer 12 to 18 month traineeships during which trainees gain experience in different departments and work roles at the network, and in Germany, the ARD stations and ZDF run a similar programme called *Volontariat*. The graduates of such institutionalised training are not guaranteed employment following their training, which provides the broadcaster as an employer with non-committal flexibility and cheap labour. On-the-job training in the independent sector occurs mainly in the form of internships. As a result of the commercial pressures in the sector and the oversupply of people aiming to enter the industry, these internships are generally unpaid and require a certain financial investment from new entrants. It remains to be seen in what way changes in media training and consumption will affect the programming television workers create, once this new generation has reached senior level at independents and broadcasters and 'old-school' practitioners have been fully replaced. Hence, when discussing television practitioners' ability to indulge in reflective conjecture about the 'state of documentary', the number of years spent working in the industry need to be taken into account with regard to the constitution of informal reflexivities.

As has been shown, development workers' values and ambitions regarding the quality of their work are ambiguous and contradictory. Workers' behaviour on a day-to-day basis cannot be described in simple dichotomies of either acceptance or rejection of commercial imperatives, of doing good or bad work. Instead, we see a mix of both forms of behaviour. Certainly a substantial compliance with commercial objectives can be observed that significantly impacts on and guides independent development

activities. At the same time, practitioners have some degree of agency in work roles, involving critical reflexivities and professional standards. In the following chapter I evaluate the consequences that these values and the commercial production framework have on textual representation.

6. Representational Tendencies in Documentary Development

In the previous two chapters I have focused on structural conditions surrounding project development in independent production companies and on the nature of agency in this kind of work in relation to these conditions. As became apparent in the observation of the development activities of independent television workers, the overall institutional response to commercial pressures and the uneven distribution of resources and decision power in the broadcaster-publisher system is an overwhelming conformity to broadcaster requirements, which in turn are shaped by commercial and economic considerations. This conformity is supported by a general acceptance of the capitalist and industrial nature of the television industry. However, this is not the only position that exists among independent documentary-makers. On an individual level, the research revealed a mix of ambiguous and contradicting values that guide the opinions and actions of these workers. They are shaped by professional identity, generic traditions of documentary and critical reflection on work conditions and experience, which may come into conflict with commercial orientations. In this final section of my analysis, I turn my attention to the media texts that documentary producers in independent companies develop, in order to answer my third research question. I am interested in the way, in which these competing values influence the programme ideas and proposals independent development workers create, and how commercial influences of the production setting manifest in the creative choices of development workers. In particular, I focus on the implications for the innovation and authenticity of documentary.

Firstly, I discuss attempts to limit the economic risk of cultural production that is based on the uncertainty of the commercial success of cultural products, including television programmes. Such attempts include a reduced understanding of originality, as commissioners seek to repeat previous successes, which results in an increase in familiarity and a lack of innovation with regard to documentary content. In order to provide the newness that is nonetheless expected by audiences, producers reframe and repackage familiar issues by providing them with a new angle. I then focus on development tendencies that are aimed at providing producers with a competitive advantage including exclusive access, and extraordinary and exceptional content. They are intended to gain audience attention and increase the popularity of the conceived programmes but can have a problematic relation to documentary authenticity.

Formatting and serialisation are further economically motivated attempts to control the economic risk of commercial uncertainty by adapting previously successful programme types. In addition, they offer the opportunity for cost saving and a higher degree of efficiency in programme production through repetition, which explains their high popularity with television networks. Furthermore, formatting has implications for the authenticity or realism of documentary, as it involves a certain degree of construction. These tendencies are not completely new, rather, they have been a part of television documentary for a long time. New however, is the extent to which they are applied, which in turn may involve limitations for the development of the television documentary genre as a whole. Nor are they, of course, exclusive developments that negate the existence of intellectually challenging, creatively innovative and socially committed programming, but I do argue that these tendencies dominate contemporary documentary development with possible negative effects on the variation and diversity of the genre.

6.1. A Culture of Risk Aversion: Commercialism and Programme Originality

Innovation and originality are central characteristics in cultural production that are expected and valued by consumers or recipients of cultural products and which rely on creativity as a condition for their existence (Pratt and Jeffcut 2009: 3-4). The search for originality and innovation based on positive associations is a defining principle in documentary development. The research participants emphasised its importance by making it the very first demand for any new programme idea that was suggested. "Has it been done before?" and "What is new about it?" are the crucial first questions development workers ask when assessing a new programme idea. It has to be "new" and "original", and its subject should not have been addressed in another, earlier programme in this genre – at least not addressed recently and in the same way, as it is very difficult in our highly mediated society to find a topic that has not received *any* previous media exposure in some form or another. Furthermore, true originality is a difficult concept as something strictly new and innovative will by definition not be recognised as such but rather dismissed as not jibing with current standards. Negus and Pickering argue accordingly, that

> [c]reativity is obviously associated with newness, but knowing what is significantly new may require guesswork as much as mature judgement. Any recognition of innovation is also usually made in retrospect, in ways which are subject not only to vested interests and institutional values, but also, as those interests and values are contested, to further historical modifications of critical response. (2004: 9-10)

In the practice of documentary development, as in most areas of cultural production, originality is therefore interpreted as a kind of newness or novelty, as creating something new within existing boundaries. On a practical level, this re-definition of "originality", which is the term used by the practitioners[92], is decisively more achievable and workable. In documentary programming, it involves, for example, telling a story from a different perspective, to reveal previously unknown facts or experiences, and the general idea of bringing audiences into contact with something they did not know.[93] As Toynbee (2000) explains in his analysis of social authorship and innovation in the music industry, this involves recombination rather than outright originality. Boden (2004) and Gitlin (2000) also refer to the unfamiliar combination of familiar ideas as a form of creativity. But recombination may also be a way to create new content with minimal variation, implying limited opportunity for original work. Another central generic value of documentary I focus on in this chapter is truthful representation and a commitment to authenticity as described in chapters 2 and 5. Documentary always has been and still is bound to the idea of recording and representing some form of reality, and documentary authenticity is understood as a realistic depiction of social reality beyond naïve realism and the assumption of non-influence. Based on the thesis' research focus on creativity-commerce tensions, I concentrate on the question of whether commercial influences hinder or encourage innovation, originality and authenticity.

When a new idea is selected for further development, part of the initial research is to find out what programmes have already been produced on the topic. Also, when targeting a particular broadcasting slot, research is conducted into what has previously been transmitted in that slot, in order to develop something that is different enough to count as new yet similar enough to the programmes commissioners were previously satisfied with. Exclusivity is an important criterion for originality and, if another com-

---

[92] When I refer to originality in the following I therefore do not refer to the abstract ideal but the practical interpretation of 'something new'.

[93] What audiences do with the media content they are offered and how they appropriate it is a different matter which is widely debated in audience research. For a detailed study of audiences of factual television programmes see, for example, Hill (2005, 2007) and Austin (2007).

pany is working on a similar idea, this naturally impacts on the development priorities. To be the first to receive a commission is the decisive factor in this context, and if the competing programme has already been commissioned, the project is usually abandoned. However, if a commissioner has expressed interest and the competing company is also still in the uncertain development stage, this might actually give the project a higher priority. Developers may speed up development with the aim to beat the competition to submission and, ultimately, commission. This occurred on one occasion in the German company: When researching background information for a short series on food and eating culture in the 21st century that had already received initial interest from a commissioner responsible for an Arte broadcasting slot, I came across another independent company developing a programme about the same topic. This discovery prompted the HoD to change her development strategy. Rather than spending more time on the development and submitting a proposal for MEDIA Slate Funding as she had originally planned, she decided to speed up the research process and to submit a proposal as soon as possible. Instead of aiming at producing the programme on an international scale, she targeted the Arte broadcasting slot with a more local focus pertaining to locations and contributors and with fewer episodes, in order to make the programme feasible in the available budget.

In order to identify popular forms of content, independents and commissioners monitor the production activities within the factual genre across the television industry. Executives, who are the creative decision makers with regard to the overall activities of a company, naturally need to be informed about commissioning trends, programme successes and failures, but there is a general sense that television workers should be aware of current developments in television. Above all, it is the role of the HoD to be aware and keep track of recent commissions and broadcasts of documentary programming. When new ideas are brainstormed in development meetings, the HoDs rejected suggestions regularly, based on the fact that a recent programme had already covered the particular or a similar topic. It seemed that this was the case with the majority of programme ideas, which shows how difficult it is to do something new in the contemporary multimedia environment and its growing a body of programming.

Uncertain Demand and Risk Aversion

The professional value of originality among documentary practitioners coincides with the commercial interests of broadcasters who seek new ways to attract viewers' attention and create interest in their programming. Supported by both professionalism and commercialism, the pursuit of originality, therefore, should determine development decisions and provide abundant variation in programme content. Independents and commissioners do indeed agree on the fact itself and consider newness a precondition of any programme idea, but the personal perceptions of what is actually new or new enough may differ. These perceptions are strongly influenced by the level of risk in the television industry. By their nature, creative products have a relatively low success rate and carry a higher risk of commercial failure than other types of product, because "audiences use cultural commodities in highly volatile and unpredictable ways" (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 19). Often, they use cultural products in order to express their individuality and to distinguish themselves from others (Garnham 1990: 161), and, as a result, fashions and tastes may change suddenly and unpredictably and new types of product become popular. Uncertain demand has a high economic significance for cultural producers as Caves describes:

> There is a great uncertainty about how consumers will value a newly produced creative product, short of actually producing the good and placing it before them. It might meet acclaim and bring in revenue far exceeding its cost of production, or it might find few customers who place any positive value on it. If the creative product is costly to produce (a movie, rather than a painting), producers will try however they can to learn whether buyers' valuations will be high or low, before all of the product's costs have been incurred. (2002: 2-3)

Predictions of audience success and attempts to influence its chances are of central importance in the development process and determine the decision about what programmes to invest in. In an effort to control the economic risk of this decision, commissioning editors show a decidedly risk-averse behaviour. In the name of profit maximisation and capital accumulation, the research participants argued, commissioners shy away from daring and experimental ideas. They orientate themselves to past successes and model their present (and future) activities accordingly. Consequently, commissioning editors are looking for a new *version* of something that has already been well established and proven popular. It is difficult to assess the potential audience interest in a proposed project with little or no prior media exposure, which often leads to the rejection of such content. The reliance on the 'tried and tested' is

particularly apparent in the commissioning of history and science documentaries, where anything outside the classic and instantly recognised has little chance of being accepted. One producer observed:

> They have this phrase called BNR, everything is BNR, which stands for Big Name Recognition. That means, if I go along with a story, a fascinating, brilliant, new, different story, but it's about someone they won't have heard of in history they won't commission it. If it's a new angle on Hitler, on Tutankhamen, on any of the major, on Napoleon, on Duke of Wellington then they consider it but you have to have Big Name Recognition. (Exec Prod A, UK)

As described in chapter 4, commissioning editors are themselves subjected to substantial internal and external economic pressure and cannot afford to "get it wrong'" High audience ratings have become their main objective, which reduces their willingness to take risks. In an attempt to ensure a programme's success with regard to audience ratings, they tend to avoid, therefore, experimentation in programme content and are less daring with regard to innovation in form and style, preferring the familiar over the original. Such risk-averse behaviour was observed and criticised in the late 1990s (for example, Kilborn and Izod 1997, Moran 1998, Barnett and Seymour 1999) and has been continuously criticised by producers and academics since. The executive producers in the observed companies, who have been working in factual television and documentary for up to 20 years and more, claimed that the economically motivated risk aversion among commissioning editors has increased over the last decades. They argue that this has limited the scope of contemporary documentary compared to programming in the past, as described by this director/company partner:

> It depends on the particular willingness of a commissioning editor to take a risk whether you can try out something that is a bit more unusual aesthetically or try out a different narrative approach. (...) [T]he willingness of the commissioners and channels to try out things and topics is sinking more and more. The spectrum of topics, in my opinion, is clearly shrinking. They rely on safe stories, seemingly safe stories, that have had rating success in the past and think this represents the topic, the age or audience structure of a channel best. And many ideas are completely omitted because they can't be formatted in the way the channels want. They have their particular slots and they think or they know, that the audience is waiting for this or that and it will react in such a way. If you don't tell an adequate story in this subject area or don't tell the story in the same way as other stories that are usually shown in that slot, then there is a heightened risk for which commissioners might have to answer for within the channel hierarchy. And, in short, most of them don't fancy that. (Dir/Par, D)

Instead, commissioners rely on the copying and modelling of successful programmes. There is a conscious pursuit of reproduction in programme content and aesthetics. This restricts originality/newness to the specifics of a particular programme, whilst the general idea, style and even narrative structure remain the same

and follow a familiar formula. In the responses of the independent sector to the conflicting demands of originality, innovation, risk aversion and consumer sovereignty, four development tendencies became particularly evident, which I will focus on in more detail in the remainder of this chapter. These strategies are based on several intentions. They attempt to reduce risk and uncertainty with regard to commercial success, and they are intended to reduce costs in development and production processes. At the same time they are tools that are, to some extent, employed to achieve originality, authenticity and social impact. They include in particular:

- To find/identify a new "angle" on a familiar topic, i.e. the narrative perspective or spin on a topic. This, although not actually exploring a completely new issue, may offer the potential for new insights.
- To secure (ideally exclusive) access to stories, contributors or locations. By definition, this may serve to provide originality, and it offers producers a competitive advantage.
- A preference for the extraordinary and extreme in the developed content as a result of a focus on popularity and entertainment. This preference can offer audiences insights into a familiar world, but it may also distort the perception of social reality.
- An accelerated growth of formatting and serialisation in order to reduce costs and gain the loyalty of audiences through regularity, familiarity and formatted expectations. However, this also implies potential standardisation and homogenisation of television content.

Repetition and Familiarity: "Something like ..."

The creative restrictions that independent producers experience as a result of the popularity aspirations of broadcasters and the extent to which they apply these restrictions in their work became all too apparent during the observation of independents' development activities. As discussed in chapter 4, commissioners base their creative decisions on a project's potential to gain high audience ratings. Independents accordingly restrict themselves in their work and exclude project ideas that concern issues that, as experience had shown, "rate badly" or were too "risky" with regard to attracting the attention of an audience. In their attempt to increase the likelihood of their projects being commissioned, independent producers follow broadcasters' risk-averse behaviour and adhere to territory that is relatively familiar in their development activities. They therefore develop programme ideas that are modelled on other previously successful and well-received programming with regard to issue,

storyline or style. The British company developed, for example, an idea for a programme about a man who bought a ski resort, hoping to lead it to new success. This story had similar 'ingredients' to those in another recently broadcast and widely publicised short series called *Willie's Wonky Chocolate Factory* (Ch4, 2008), which followed the personal and business struggles of a man who bought a cocoa farm in Venezuela and set up a chocolate factory in Devon:

> If it feels like what a channel wants at the time, then we'll try and not emulate it, but take elements of it or the way they've done things and use that. Sometimes it's quite nice to give people a reference point. It can also work against you sometimes, too, but generally, if you can say, [its] like *Willie's Wonky Chocolate Factory*, we follow a man who paid a Frank to buy a ski resort in Belgium. It's like *Willie's Wonky Chocolate Factory* with snow. (...) You got the same setting up a business, up to your ears in debt, not knowing what you're doing, all that kind of thing. It's not actually the same film or the same series. (HoD, UK)

In many cases, commissioners openly request independents to develop "something like" or "similar to" another previously successful programme. Both companies were approached with development requests for 'sequels' to a previous successful programme by the company. The British HoD described how commissioners from various broadcasters approached them: "They came to us and said, can you do [programme title][94] 2? Bring us the same thing but different. So, if something's working for them, they want the same thing but different." (HoD, UK) A similar situation arose during the German observation. The company had produced a two-parter on sport for a series with a science focus on technical developments and predictions for the 21st century for ARTE, which was very well-received by the audience and well-liked by the broadcaster. The latter then approached the company with the request to develop a second, similar two-part programme for the same series. The company decided to focus the follow-up programme on the issue of food and closely modelled the details on the previously produced programme, including a narrative structure of six to seven separate 'chapters' or stories per episode and the combination of human interest and cutting edge science in these stories. The HoD declared that they aimed to make the programme "as similar as possible" to the previous one, because it was well-received and because it had provided the production staff with practical experience that would be useful for the smooth running of the next production.

[94] This title refers to a *Cutting Edge* documentary on Channel 4 (2008) which had featured widely in the press and received high audience ratings.

Such requests for repetition and reproduction in content and form were not only expressed in reference to the companies' own productions. Rather, other programmes are used as reference points or even models for development requests by broadcasters. One such example was the request of regional public service broadcaster NDR in the German case study. The company was asked whether they could produce a six-part travel series on Russia, which is one of the company's areas of expertise. This series was to be a follow-up to a series about the USA and the commissioners expected a similar kind of programme following the same narrative conceptualisation and employing the same narrative and visual tools. Reproduction of content is further facilitated by the fact that developers rely heavily on other forms of media content when they are conceiving new programme ideas. When researching new ideas, development workers turn to print media like newspapers and magazines, online publications and even other broadcast media to look for interesting stories that have gained public attention and that could be developed into a documentary programme.

These examples show how what has previously been successful tends to be favoured over the innovative but unpredictable. Originality is a persuasive argument when justifying why an issue deserves mass media exposure. However, it becomes redundant when it is limited to slightly altered reproduction of the familiar. Risk-averse commissioning, which focuses predominantly on familiar issues and aesthetics in the search for rating success, can stifle artistic creativity and contribute to a lack of variation or standardisation in the programme ideas independent producers develop. This contradicts the neoliberal promise that intensified market competition will act as a guarantor of innovative programming. Instead, such practice risks repetition, predictability and lack of diversity, reducing documentary's potential to educate and inform.

Risk aversion with regard to programme originality can lead, therefore, to the overexposure of familiar stories and issues, but it may also offer new insights and revelations. This is a further expression of the inherent dilemma of the commercial broadcasting setting. On the one hand, broadcasters are risk-averse and prefer the familiar and predictable, on the other hand, they require programme suggestions to be original and new. These contradictory tendencies need to be managed by independents, leading to programme suggestions with different degrees of familiarity. The research data show that programme originality is a contested area that involves a commercially guided balancing act between newness and repetition. Practitioners reflected very critically on the risk aversion among commissioners and the lack of opportunity

to create something 'different' to the usual. However, they show understanding of the economic pressures broadcasters are under and even acknowledge their own economically motivated complicity in this process. This is apparent in the following quotation from a German director/company partner.

> Well, one has to say that the channels are not the absolutely evil ones. That is a kind of process, because the more you format or the more you want to supply certain things, of course, the more the suppliers react to that. For example, we filter out ideas at the outset where we think from the start, this is a nice story, it's a great thing, but completely impossible to place here or there for various reasons. You could try, but the probability is relatively low or it's a fifty-fifty chance, and why should we spend so much time on it? So you'd rather leave it, and it's a shame about the story in a sense. (Dir/Par, D)

As outlined in chapter 5, workers do frequently disagree with commissioners' choices, in particular when they perceive a rejected idea as relatively new and the ideas preferred by the commissioner as overly mediated or, as the practitioners expressed it, "done to death". Consequently, they have to cope with significant disappointment and emotional conflict. The workers in the observed companies voiced such criticism in their office environment, but open conflict did not arise in the communication with the commissioning editors where the tone always remained cooperative rather than confrontational. Commissioners' power to make the decision whether or not to provide a subject matter with media exposure stands unchallenged, although independents might use their industry status and reputation in the attempt to negotiate and alter commissioners' views, thus, showing forms of agency, based on their own reflexive values.

Risk-averse restrictions with regard to programming content are not only a problem of diminished variation, but they may also come into conflict with values of social relevance and impact, as discussed in the previous chapter. In the popularity and entertainment-focused commissioning climate, programme ideas about 'serious' issues with social or educational ambition are less likely to be selected for production. However, risk aversion and social relevance are not mutually exclusive, especially if a serious, social or political issue is believed to stimulate public debate and receive wide attention from audiences and other media. This relates to a general focus on the exceptional, which is further discussed below. Nevertheless, more often than not such ideas are perceived as carrying very little audience potential: an idea might be worthy but not popular, which (in most cases) will disqualify it from commission. This points to the contradictory demands in the commissioning cultures of broadcasters, as "they want the kudos of doing the big, amazing sort of Grierson winning film, but

essentially they don't want to take the risk with the audience." (Exec Prod B, UK) For example, during the fieldwork, commissioners rejected ideas as "too political" or "too dark". This has serious consequences for the subject variety available in contemporary television documentary, especially with regard to the representation of social issues. Hence, independent suppliers feel that the potential for social impact that documentary carries to some extent is sacrificed for 'lighter' topics, as this executive describes:

> I mean, basically, they don't want anything dark, and that's what I find very difficult. I get it as well, why they don't want to do that, but there you are, you see all around you all these really, really intractable social problems and issues and you want to do something. You know, like the film [title][95], and you just know, no-one would that touch with a barge-pole now because they would just say, 'It's too dark'. It trips off their tongues too easily: 'Oh, it's too dark.' Now, why is it too dark? (Exec Prod B, UK)

My research data indicate that programme originality is perceived as a fundamental professional value for documentary producers that guides processes of idea generation. At the same time, practitioners seem to have a flexible understanding of what such originality entails, justifying reliance on familiar issues with the difficulty or impossibility to develop genuinely new content and reducing originality to elements of newness, to finding "a new take" on a familiar topic, as this worker claimed:

> I think, one thing we all got to remember is that there's nothing really new on telly. If you keep trying to find the newest thing, which will probably only happen once in a blue moon, you're gonna feel very disappointed. And I think what you gotta try and do is just learn to tweak certain ideas, so that they match. I think my problem is that I'm constantly trying to look for that, you know, really new thing and I get very frustrated with research in terms of how can this be different from everything else and then it's all the same. (Dev AP, UK))

I do not argue that all documentary programming that is currently commissioned is based on the reproduction of the familiar, but it is certainly a dominant trend – although no programme idea would be commissioned without a certain degree of newness. Gitlin describes how television makes use of the familiar and provides minimal newness through slight variation or recombination of familiar elements in his discussion of television spin-offs, copies and recombinations (2000: 63-85). The prominence of familiarity echoes the concerns of Adorno and Horkheimer's (1995) critique of the culture industry, which they perceive as marked by the familiar, conventional

---

[95] The producer refers here to a film about drug addiction in former mining communities she directed in 2004. She considers this as an example of the positive contribution documentary can make to social discourse.

and sameness. And indeed, there is a high degree of repetition in contemporary television schedules and a reduced amount of variation and difference. Such developments oppose the traditional normative value that is assigned to difference and subjectivity in media theory. As Caughie describes:

> The question of difference and singularity was always there for 'classical' film theory as an underpinning, whether acknowledged or not, for the valorization – and particularly for the legitimation as 'progressive' – of a popular culture which is produced as product and circulates as commodity. (1991: 7)

Such positions are based on the assumption that difference is sought out by consumers in order to set themselves apart from others and to express their individual sense of identity. This becomes more difficult the less distinct cultural products are. Documentaries are less a tool of fashionable self-expression; rather, they are supposed to present the diversity and plurality of our world alongside the existing differences in opinion, culture and condition. If documentaries have a high degree of similarity or, as will be shown below, focus predominantly on being entertaining, they neglect that generic purpose and make documentary representation less valid for how audiences perceive the world.

6.2. Angle: "A new way to look at things"

As the quotations above illustrate, practitioners are (critically) aware of the risk-averse limitations when it comes to programme originality. Their challenge is to find the right balance between repeating what is popular and exploring something that is new and unknown to (most) audiences. As a result, they search for relatively unknown aspects of already explored topics to recast the latter as new. Originality therefore often lies less in the idea or issue itself than in the way it is addressed or presented. In this context, the term "angle" was frequently used by the research participants. A different angle to a familiar topic can explore new aspects of the topic, which legitimises a project idea as original. An angle provides a programme idea with a certain perspective on the portrayed issue; it may involve the representation of a particular argument, viewpoint or even spin with regard to a programme's subject matter. Just as any other form of film and television production, documentary filmmaking always involves creative selections and decisions that frame a particular issue and therefore the reality they portray in a specific way. As discussed in chapter 2, documentaries are neither literal nor objective but rather creative depictions of the real world, and creative decisions tend to be subjective and made from a certain perspective (Chaney and Pickering 1986: 30). This 'perspective' can be referred to as

the angle of a programme. The term 'angle' describes, therefore, a particular way of looking at a topic that offers a focal point or guideline for the narrative structure of the programme. Although they are based on the same narrative principles of storytelling as fiction films, documentaries often display a specific argument or raise awareness from a particular viewpoint or perspective, in order to make statements (and judgements) about social reality. This is enhanced by the long-standing traditions of advocacy, propaganda and activist documentary-making that are linked to ambitions of social impact, as described in the previous chapter. The angle provides a programme idea with a purpose, a predetermined message or meaning, and serves as reason and justification for the production of this particular idea. Following the question of originality and newness, any idea suggested for development is therefore probed for its relevance and purpose, and it is asked "Why does it matter?", "Why do we want to make a programme about this and what exactly is it about?" Furthermore, a clear programme angle supplies a marketable outline for advertisers and audiences. This allows the programme to be packaged, marketed and promoted by broadcasters within their existing commercial genre framework, reproducing established genre expectations in this process. Within this framework, unconventional programme ideas whose approach might not be that easily framed and fitted into existing categories run the risk of being rejected. As a narrative tool, angle is best related to the theoretical concept of framing that describes a process of social construction and contributes to media's symbolic authority (cf Couldry 2000b).[96] An issue can be viewed from different perspectives and framing selects some of these perspectives and, therefore, conceptualises the issue, offering some sort of interpretation. This conceptualisation is entered into the public discourse and may or may not have effects on the audience or the general public. From this perspective, documentaries are forms of communication that provide an issue with a certain meaning, and television producers act as gatekeepers in this process selecting both issues and perspectives for dissemination to audiences.

[96] There are a high number of empirical studies that analyse the framing of particular issues in the media, concerning for example war, conflict and terrorism, violence but also public life, celebrity culture and sexuality. Such research is particularly prominent in textual analysis of news products and the study of news production, see, for example, Gitlin (1980), Gilboa (2002), de Vreese (2003), Norris et al. (2003), Entman (2004), Johnson-Cartee (2005) and Kent (2006) for recent examples.

Interestingly, there is no equivalent for the English term 'angle' in the German production context. Nevertheless, narrative perspective has the same significance for the development process and the same questions of purpose and reason are placed onto an idea. However, this development convention is less formalised and not referred to with a particular term. Nonetheless, it is perceived as a necessary requirement of any idea even though it is not expressed as explicitly as in the British case, where remarks such as "What is your angle on this?" and "We need to find another/a new angle"" were routine. To identify the angle of a programme includes consideration of how and in what context its issues will be portrayed and what aspects or sub-issues will be presented in the programme. Typical questions asked, in order to identify or create a programme angle, are for instance: is there a problem, fault or conflict and can it be fixed or can somebody be blamed; or is there a new, topical development, a scientific discovery or an anniversary of a historical event that offer cause for a re-examination of a well-known issue. To find a new and exciting angle to a project is an essential requirement in project development, as every programme suggestion needs to have this 'special perspective', whether it deals with a familiar or genuinely new issue. Let us return to the example of the development for the already mentioned season on *Body Image* for the BBC in the British case study to illustrate this point. One sub-topic for this series was 'Tweenagers' (children between childhood and adolescence around the age of ten to 13 who are not yet teenagers in the traditional sense but start acting like them) and their relation to their own body. The assistant producer and the intern, who were asked to research this particular topic and to find a new angle, that is, new concerns or new ways to present them, found this a particularly difficult task. They came across a lot of interesting and related issues, but they all had been the subject of previous television documentaries or other factual programmes already. The angle on other ideas for this series, on the other hand, was clear from the start. For example, one idea was to discuss pregnancy weight and weight loss as part of the female body image. The Head of Development had one particular angle in mind: How are ordinary women affected by and how do they attempt to comply with widely published examples of celebrities who lose pregnancy weight in very short time after giving birth? The HoD's interest was centred particularly on women who go to extreme and even dangerous lengths in order to conform to the perceived ideal, for example, by over-exercising or extreme dieting therefore implying a focus on the negative effects of celebrity culture. Another programme idea concerned the well-known issue of anorexia. Here the new angle on this widely publicised topic was to focus on a different group of people than usual, in particular, on young men and elderly women, in contrast to the typical focus on girls and young

women (field notes UK). On the one hand, one can argue that these examples are an illustration of the media's self-referentiality and an indication for a growing homogenisation and standardisation of content that creates just more of the same. On the other hand, a new perspective can affect the public perception of an issue and add new arguments to the public discourse, and have thus an innovative quality. In that respect, even a limited understanding of originality can provide practitioners with some sense of social relevance in agreement with their generic values that were described in the previous chapter. However, in most cases this takes the form of a slimmed-down version of social impact. Instead of revealing and investigating social and political grievances in order to instigate social change or at least reflection, newness can provide knowledge, information and insights into other cultural and social contexts. The research participants' ambition was to provide audiences with a new experience, after which they would say, "I didn't know that".

To define the angle of a programme idea is a tool of development practice that helps to find a balance between a preference of the familiar and the search for originality and innovation. A new perspective on a familiar issue can disguise the fact that the developed content is just more of the same, but it can also provide genuinely new insights. The question is which of these purposes dominates the overall output. The observation revealed that both effects occur. Producers were driven to find new issues to portray, but the content preferences directed their ideas to a large extent into well-explored areas. It cannot be said that all practitioners are content with such a limited understanding of originality and the reproduction of familiar content and aesthetics. They criticise the lack of innovation and experimentation but this does not change the fact that they predominantly adhere to broadcaster requirements in their work practice as described in chapter 4.

6.3. Exclusivity: The Value of Access

Documentaries tell stories; they are made with and about people. Case studies therefore form another narrative and aesthetic convention of documentary development and an essential element of development research. As with originality and angle, "case study" is a frequently used term in the development department, and the research of case studies is one of the central work tasks. It describes real people whose personality, experience, life story or professional capacity is important if not constitutive for a programme's narrative. Case studies are a narrative necessity of traditional documentary storytelling. The contributors of a documentary are its main

material (in natural history documentary, animals can be considered as contributors and case studies). Through them documentary-makers achieve personalisation that provides viewers with the possibility for identification and emotional attachment, thus increasing their engagement with a programme. Personalisation as an aesthetic principle is not exclusive to documentary but is applied in other forms of factual television programming such as news journalism (Tunstall 1971, Galtung and Ruge 1965) and game and talk shows (Grindstaff 2002). Therefore, it is important to ask how commercial considerations impact on the selection of case studies and how these selections relate to values of innovation, originality and authenticity.

Case studies, i.e. contributors and their stories, are selected according to several criteria. First of all, they serve as illustrations and examples for the issues portrayed in a programme. Therefore, they need to meet particular content requirements (for example, specific characteristics, experiences, behaviour), as described below for the BBC *Body Image* development. In addition, documentary-makers have certain preconceptions about desired personal qualities of contributors, including being "a good talker" and being able to express oneself well, coherently and freely. Furthermore, contributors should "look good on camera", have "strong opinions", "confidence" and a "good story to tell". During the development stage, case studies serve as examples for the kind of people who will be featuring in the proposed documentary. In many cases the people approached during the development research process are not actually in the final film, if it is commissioned, even though they might be included in the written proposal and their stories are suggested to the commissioner. In accordance with the values of realism and authenticity, it is crucial that these people exist and that their stories and experiences are true and not fictional. As a development assistant producer explained to an intern who had just joined the development team: 'We just have to prove that the cases are not made up, that they really exist' (field notes UK).

A project idea will be abandoned, if this commitment to realism cannot be met and no case studies can be found – either because they do not exist, or because they do not agree to appear on camera. This occurred in several cases in both companies, for example, when a researcher failed to find people for a programme idea about DIY dentistry, featuring people who treat their own dental problems. There had been newspaper articles on the issue that gained a commissioner's interest who then approached the company with a development request. In another case, a researcher was looking for case studies of parents who are jealous of their children. This was an

idea that the team was quite keen on and which possessed a high degree of originality in their eyes. Unfortunately, there were no real-life examples to be found in both of these cases. In most other cases, direct and even indirect testimony of matching cases advanced the further development of an idea. Again, returning to the example of the *Body Image* season, one project idea that gained the interest of the commissioning editor was a programme on the loss of pregnancy weight, internally called *Babyfat*. In my role as development researcher, I was asked to research and contact case studies for the behaviour the film aimed to portray: ordinary women who went to extremes to lose their pregnancy weight as soon as possible after giving birth, even if this involved a health risk. I spent several days researching case studies publicised in the media and contacting a variety of sources ranging from pregnant women, postnatal groups, internet forums and hospitals to celebrity fitness trainers. Only the latter could give me actual examples of people they met or heard of, who had exhibited such behaviour, but within the few days spent on research I did not manage to find someone who admitted to it personally. Mediated case studies on the other hand were easier to find online and in newspapers and magazines. But the events portrayed by these sources had usually taken place in the past and were completed. A documentary project, however, relies on processes that are still evolving to accompany and portray them with the camera. Nevertheless, the results of my research were considered evidence enough to proceed with the development of the idea and to produce a programme proposal that included some of the cases and stories I had collected during research.

Case studies present a long-standing generic convention in documentary. However, the prominence that they have gained in the current commercial production context is new. Case studies received a new significance through a focus on exclusivity and access and through a preference for the extraordinary. In accordance with the demand for originality, potential contributors to a documentary should generally not have had any or only rare previous media exposure, except for celebrities, professional presenters and experts. These case studies might be just that – examples or evidence of specific facts, actions or developments – or they can be at the core of events, around which the whole project idea and storyline evolves. In the latter case, the realisation of a programme depends to a great extent on access to and cooperation with specific individuals. Exclusivity here acts as a potential basis of originality. It offers an argument for the production of a programme, bears attraction for audiences and provides material for marketing. This executive describes the importance of exclusive access as follows:

> At first you work with keywords or with a general outline of the topic, then you have to deliver something specific and write down what exclusive access you have for the topic, which people can be interviewed, where can it be filmed – the keyword exclusivity has become more and more important today. It is decisive to have exclusive access to people, to locations or even archive material, so that you have something where the channel, the commissioner and also the filmmaker can still say, I have something special here. Because, of course, many topics resemble each other in the end or deal with similar areas, and distinction and exclusivity becomes even more important, I think. (...) The more personal you can let someone talk, someone who provides his photo archive or takes you with him to very personal questions, whether it's the life and death of his children or something else. Or exclusive footage from a sunken submarine or the last minutes on board the ... whatever. So this is of course also very crucial. (Dir/Par, D)

Exclusivity was, therefore, an important criterion for project development. During the fieldwork period in both companies, programme ideas were developed around exclusive access to previously restricted archives. In the German case, this concerned the archives of a former psychiatric institution dating back to the 1950s, in the British case, it was an underground bunker with various archival materials including film footage from the NHS and various banks. The exclusive access gave these projects a certain degree of novelty and thus increased their commissioning chances. Consequently, it was a decisive factor in selecting these ideas for further development and submission to a broadcaster. Although ideas themselves cannot be protected legally, development contracts can guard the exclusivity of access to a particular person or location. This occurred, for instance, in the British case study when the team needed to ensure that essential contributors for a programme would be available for production. On one occasion, such a contract protected the company against the attempts of a competing independent to secure the participation of a contributor they had "signed up" for the development of a documentary on surrogacy for Channel 4's strand *Cutting Edge*:

> A producer from another independent company calls and explains that the commissioning editor for *Cutting Edge* is insisting on this particular person and hence they depend on her participation. However, the contributor plays an important role for the company's programme proposal and they insist on her contractual commitment, as exclusivity makes this person a more desired contributor and to use her in two programmes in the same strand would contradict the value of originality and hence endanger the chances for commission. In a slightly tense phone conversation, the development producer in charge of the project tries to explain the company's insistence on their competitive advantage: "There is just no way they want the same contributor in two programmes ... In the whole history of *Cutting Edges* there has been no two programmes with the same contributor, has there? ... [The contributor] is getting bombarded and she signed a contract with us for filming ... There is a conflict of interest and she made her decision ..." (...) "We have our development commission on the basis that [the contributor] works with us ... No, we are still in development ... That's the natural course for documentary ... as soon as we have the go ahead ... it sounds like you are under a lot of pres-

> sure to get [the contributor] but she signed a contract. ... I don't really want to talk about the project ... but that is where we are at ... we'll let you know ... all the best" (field notes UK)

The development producer keeps the situation calm and friendly, she speaks up but manages to close the conversation on good terms. At the same time, she is arguing from a position of strength. In particular, she emphasises two elements in this discussion: First, the fact that the company has a signed contract with the contributor (i.e. we are holding the cards) and second, the fact that the company has received development money for this particular project (i.e. this is a serious project for us with good chances for success, which we cannot afford to compromise or give up). In turn she expects the other producer to accept these facts as reasons why there cannot be any collaboration in this matter.

Truthfulness in the selection of contributors is a crucial condition for the authenticity of a documentary programme that remains valid in a commercial production context, and fakery or pretence are not acceptable in the practitioner community. Exclusive access with regard to locations, contributors and their stories meets the requirements of originality and helps independents and consequently broadcasters to stand out against the competition; it provides them with a marketable advantage and attracts audience attention. Truthfulness and exclusivity are not the only considerations when selecting case studies for a new programme. Increasingly, contributors are selected for their extreme or extraordinary qualities in order to increase audience attraction, which corresponds to another influential development trend, the preference for extraordinary, exceptional or extreme content that is discussed in the following section.

6.4. Extraordinariness: Seeking Audience Attention

Angle and exclusivity can provide a mixture of originality and familiarity in project development that satisfies practitioners' professional values and, at the same time, serves commercial interests. Another reaction to the commercial and competitive pressures of the current broadcasting climate is a preference for entertaining and popular programming in television schedules. As I have described in chapter 2, Corner (2000a) observed a growing emphasis on entertainment, which he felt had reworked the identity of documentary output within television's generic system in the 1990s. His claim was that documentary increasingly serves as a diversion for audiences, rather than offering a social function. Documentary as diversion meets broadcasters' intentions of providing entertaining and popular programming in a bid to in-

crease audience figures. One development trend emerged during the observation that is directed at achieving this effect: the preference for the exceptional, extraordinary and extreme in the content and form of the developed ideas. I argue that in the attempt to gain the viewers' attention in a competitive multi-channel, multiplatform environment, television documentary has moved away, to some extent, from the traditional intentions of education and information of documentary towards a more entertaining, attention-grabbing, hybrid approach to the genre. Celebrity contributors and presenters are one tool to get this additional bit of attention, another are ordinary contributors with extreme attitudes, behaviour and lifestyles.

Such a concern with the extraordinary is not in itself a new phenomenon and our society's current obsession with celebrity culture is just one example of its potency. Attempts to make a programme appear more dramatic, entertaining or in any other way more appealing to an audience – and therefore to the commissioning editor – can stimulate the manipulation and potentially cause unethical treatment of the documentary text. Grindstaff (2002) gives an example of such manipulation in her study of daytime talk shows. Decisions with regard to the show topic, the selection of guests and the way they were briefed by the production staff were made with the aim of producing a more exciting, interesting and entertaining show to catch and hold the viewers' attention, even if this involved a misrepresentation of real events. The question is whether a similar behaviour can be observed amongst documentary producers. The pressure on producers to develop a competitive project with commissioning potential forces them to frame the subject of a documentary, in order to appeal to commissioning editors and their targeted audience. Many years ago, Elliott (1972a) described how programme-makers were placed under some pressure to inject entertainment elements into factually-oriented programming. Among other things, he observed that, in selecting their subjects, producers favoured high-profile experts and celebrity contributors over ordinary people in the attempt to stimulate audience interest (ibid.:105-107). Celebrities, usually in the role of presenters, are still used to provide a programme idea with something special, something extraordinary that is intended to entice viewers, as I will discuss below in further detail. However, today we have reached the point where those selected for media exposure, even 'ordinary' contributors, are expected if not required to display extreme and bizarre behaviour or to recount extraordinary life stories. The extreme characters and actions portrayed (or exhibited) in factual entertainment programmes, reality formats and "confessional television" (Dovey 2000) have extended the limits for the exhibition of intimacy on television screens. The audience has grown accustomed to a 'freakshow' culture, the extreme

displays of intimacy and the confessional nature of 'first-person television' (ibid.), and expects such displays as part of factual television content. The growing demand for projects to be more interesting, entertaining, special or extreme in content and form, in order to gain audience attention, presents a significant shift in television documentaries. In contrast to a more traditional conception of the documentary genre where the focus lies on ordinary people and situations (Chaney and Pickering 1986), recent television documentary shows an **emphasis on the extraordinary, exceptional and extreme**.

The development preference for the extraordinary became frequently apparent during my observation where ideas, stories and characters allegedly had to be "big enough", "headline grabbing" and "extreme" in order to appeal to commissioning editors. This trend was apparent in both case studies but seemed to be of greater importance in the British production context. Researchers were asked to find contributors who were "extreme"; and superlatives such as the worst jobs, the weirdest behaviour, or the biggest buildings guided brainstorming and research processes. Other requests included making a programme "more colourful", "more exciting", and to find or provide a dramatic climax, a "blowoff". This became apparent, for instance, during a brainstorm meeting for an observational series for British broadcaster Five, during which the focus on exceptional content as well as production practicalities, such as the short delivery schedule (three months production time for ten hours of programming), proved crucial for the selection of ideas[97]:

EP A: Demolition sounds good.
AP: I'm sceptical. I couldn't reach anyone [on the phone], I am not sure there is enough in the topic.
EP A: Extreme Cleaning - to do it right, it takes a year.
R1: To deliver in June would not be realistic. The problem are legal barriers like families and councils, it would take a few months.
EP B: Maybe we don't need to look for great content but for good characters. We cannot afford to hang around and wait for things to happen. How about dangerous professions? I am not worried about Discovery, what did the BBC do?
EP A: Maybe we introduce a presenter? I didn't think of Extreme Cleaning as that extreme, rather like a clean-up after big events.
(...)
EP B: I want it to be dead obvious and straightforward for Five.
(...)
R2: Extreme Homes, Extreme Locations?

[97] The following is a non verbatim description based on hand-written notes taken during the conversation during the brainstorming session. EP A = Executive Producer A, EP B = Executive Producer B, HoD = Head of Development, AP = Assistant Producer, R = Researcher.

EP B: But how to get an hour out of it? I think you need action, you will rely on characters a lot at this point.
AP: Extreme renovation? Is that too similar to other property programmes?
R2: Britain's Best Homes (Five) has no action.
EP A: We need a short research period, we need a lot of action, colourful characters and the rest is casting. For Extreme Homes you need a lot of research.
(...)
HoD: How about a school obs doc? The problem will be to get permission [for filming].
EP A: Could it be too boring? Who wants to see it?
R2: How about Mystery Diner?
Everybody in the group likes this idea.
HoD: How about doing something with mystery: Mystery Diner, Mystery Shopper, etc.
EP A: Can you do it in the time? We have to make a schedule, when do you have to start editing?
HoD: We have from Monday three months till the end of June.
EP A: We need minimum three weeks to cut one hour. We will have to start editing in a week. I have the slight suspicion that with less production time, they have to give us less money. With this schedule, we can't do anything formatted, only an obs doc [observational documentary].
HoD: So Demolition isn't going to happen.
AP: There is not enough to fill ten hours in the time we have.
R1: It is the same with Extreme Cleaning.
HoD: So, we stick with the Kings Cross building site and hospitals.
(...)
EP A: How about the weirdest hotels in UK, who told me about the one served by robots?
EP B: The weirdest, most expensive...
R2: There is a whole range.
EP A: We could find eight of them.
HoD: It has to be in UK because of the overlap with Rough Guides (Five). They are doing weird things abroad, like what to do when you don't want to do the usual tourist stuff.
(field notes UK)

Many of the ideas that were selected for further development had a certain degree of "weirdness" about them and often involved extreme human reactions or behaviour. They dealt with addictions, crime, human tragedies, sex and disease. Extraordinariness emerged repeatedly as a desirable feature for commissioning editors that independents aimed to meet. It was either directly requested from a broadcaster or existed as an intrinsic quality of a channel's profile. For example, the British HoD explained that human interest programmes for Channel 4 have to be more "extreme" with regard to the portrayed actions, much more so than for the BBC. For ITV projects on the other hand, he "has to put on his celebrity hat" since celebrity- and presenter-led documentaries are a preference of the network. Returning once again to the example of the development for a BBC *Body Image* season, the broadcaster's preference for extraordinariness became visible in the commissioning editor's (e-mail)

feedback on the programme ideas, which the company had previously submitted. The commissioning editor inquired whether there was any way of making the subject matter and contributors for a documentary on "size zero men" (young men aiming to achieve a currently fashionable "thin look") more "extreme" or whether a celebrity could guide through the film (field notes UK). Another project idea for this series had a particular extreme angle. The aforementioned programme idea *Babyfat* focused on extreme measures (implied unhealthy) to lose post-natal weight, following celebrity examples reported in the media. The commissioning editor suggested to look for a pregnant woman who is "doing a Nicole" referring to celebrity Nicole Richie who two weeks after giving birth was photographed in public looking as slim as before her pregnancy (field notes UK). As part of my participatory role as development researcher I was then asked to research "extreme" case studies for the programme. This meant finding women who had lost the weight gained during pregnancy in a (potentially unhealthy) short time, for example, through extreme dieting or exercising. As described in the previous section, it proved difficult to find specific examples of this happening in real life, indicating that such occurrences were actually rather atypical amongst the ranks of ordinary people. It was only when I made contact with some celebrity personal trainers that I was eventually alerted to some real-life examples.

As mentioned above, case studies or contributors serve as 'prototypes' for potential contributors and function, therefore, as evidence for the authenticity of the proposed programme content. The disproportionate focus on the exceptional and the resulting biased selection of contributors can, however, undermine any claims for typicality and authenticity that the programme may have. It may also lead to members of the audience drawing false conclusions about social and cultural norms. Certainly, the representation of the special and unusual can offer the viewer an encounter with and understanding of the Other, but at the same time, the emphasis on the extraordinary runs the risk of turning this representation into a **spectacle**. Debord argues that "in societies dominated by modern conditions or production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles" (1983: 7). Rather than just collection of images, a spectacle is "a social relation between people that is mediated by images. The spectacle cannot be understood as a mere visual deception produced by mass-media technologies. It is a worldview that has actually been materialised, a view of a world that has become objective." (ibid.: 7) Debord suggests that spectacles in all of their particular manifestations – news, propaganda, advertising, entertainment – create a "separate pseudo-world", a "dominant model of life" that justifies the conditions and goals of the existing system (ibid.: 7-8). He links these arguments to a critique of

commodity fetishism and consumer culture that use spectacles to transmit their values. Kellner (2003) updates Debord's abstract notion of spectacle on a more concrete and contemporary level. He focuses on media spectacles, which he defines as "those phenomena of media culture that embody contemporary society's basic values, serve to initiate individuals into its way of life, and dramatize its controversies and struggles, as well as its modes of conflict resolution" (ibid.: 2). He analyses actual sports, political, technological and cultural spectacles and discusses their impact on consumerist behaviour and the shaping of identities and values.

Wood and Skeggs make similar arguments in their examination of reality television. In contrast to optimistic views of reality television's democratising potential, they argue that class affiliation and inequalities are systematically reproduced in the "a historical and spectacular approach to social life" (2008: 189) that is taken in these kinds of programmes. They analyse how drama and spectacle are produced through contrived social scenarios, the choice of contributors and symbolic imagery provoking situations that showed contributors struggling for control, "making them appear as completely incapable and inadequate". However: "Rather than locating the forces that put them out of control as social, coping becomes instead a test of a person's individual capacity." (ibid.: 190) This echoes a diminished perception of social impact among practitioners that is more about description than explanation. Yet, the nature of my research makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the depth and nature of social analysis within the produced programming, as it focuses on the conceptual stage of production rather than on the analysis of completed documentary programmes. Nevertheless, the trend toward the spectacular and exceptional in documentary development contributes toward a shifted or distorted emphasis within textual representation similar to the one described by Wood and Skeggs, including the neglect or ignorance of minority issues and other less well-known voices in society. It influences the audience's perception of what is typical, normal, permissible or desirable social interaction. This is not to say that documentary representation is aimed at an unachievable objective and neutral ideal, but it can and is expected to provide an authentic reflection of the diversity of our world (see chapter 2).

Not only are producers focusing their creativity on spectacular content, audiences in turn have grown accustomed to expect the display of extremes, which also has had an impact on television contributors. This can impact on their behaviour in front of the camera whilst producers in turn aim to create or capture emotionally charged moments of tension, conflict or despair. Hill observes, accordingly, that the "focus on

emotions has become a trademark for many factual programmes, where the premise is to observe or put people in emotionally difficult situations" (2007: 15). Hill does not discuss this development critically, others, however, link it to questions of authenticity and truth. Kilborn discusses the "performance requirements" for television contributors and describes how factual entertainment programming relies on the **performance** ability of its participants who are selected according to "dramaturgical criteria" (2008: 148). Langer (1998: 49) also argues that "ordinary people" have to show themselves to be "extraordinary" and "remarkable" in order to qualify and be selected for television coverage. Bruzzi (2000) makes similar claims about the increasing importance of assessing the potential performative qualities of contributors, especially in recent factual formats. Nichols acknowledges the growing tendency for on-screen performance by filmmakers and presenters by adding a "performative mode" to his typology of documentary modes[98]. The performative mode emphasises the "subjective and affective dimensions" of the portrayed reality, thus underscoring its complexity (2001: 131). It stresses the subjectivity of experience, including the filmmaking process, and can introduce an autobiographical note to the programme, thus echoing the reflexive individualism of contemporary society. At the same time, performances in documentary often involve the on-screen interaction and direct engagement with the programme's contributors, which corresponds to Nichols' "participatory mode" in his ideal-type classification. Bruzzi summarises both modes in her understanding of the performative documentary, which she broadly distinguishes in "films that feature performative subjects and films that are inherently performative and feature the intrusive presence of the filmmaker" (2000: 155). Both of these types of films feature what I refer to as extraordinariness as part of their performative quality. Exceptionalism and extraordinariness are dramaturgical criteria and to overly rely on them can contribute to a biased selection of documentary's traditionally 'ordinary' contributors who are required to display exceptional characteristics. In other programmes, where such extraordinariness through the portrayal of 'ordinary' contributors is hard to achieve, for example, in history and science programmes, it is still possible to make an issue exciting by finding an 'extreme angle' (the biggest experiment, the last of its species, the newest scientific research results) or to use a well-known presenter or celebrity to "guide" the audience through a programme.

[98] In addition to the expository, poetic, reflexive and participatory mode, see Nichols (1991 and 2001) for definitions and discussion.

To employ **presenters and celebrities** in front of the camera is a particularly common trend in British documentary. Well-known personalities as presenters or contributors are recognisable, offer identification and serve as an attraction for audiences in the current celebrity culture. Although "fairly new", according to the British executives, it is a very prominent characteristic in contemporary British documentary programming and (consequently) an explicit orientation in the development of new programmes. The use of an on-screen presenter as an aesthetic and narrative tool has developed from journalistic traditions of on-screen reporters and the performer-based tradition of *cinéma vérité* where the filmmaker consciously interacted with the subjects in front of the camera. According to this executive, involving a presenter or celebrity increases the chances of receiving a commission and, if programme and personality are popular with viewers, a re-commission:

> If you'd like to work that way, you could just draw up a list of eight or ten celebrities who any broadcaster would commission, and then you sit down with them for a couple of days and say, 'What's important to you?' And I'll go away and have a look at these and see if we can do something. *Robbie Coltrane's B-Roads of Britain* [ITV]. Would any commissioner in the country have said, 'I will commission you to do a series of Britain's backroads'? No. Robbie Coltrane in a flash car travelling the B-roads and meeting people as he goes, well yeah, then that's in. So the presenters make a big difference. It's not necessarily in everything and it's not vital in some areas, but in those kinds of things it really helps, certainly on ITV. (Exec Prod A, UK)

However, he is sceptical as to the actual value of this device in securing audience interest, linking its commercial success instead to promotional and marketing activities:

> Well, they [commissioners] will tell you that it will bum without a celebrity, a celebrity brings it alive, people see it at the EPG[99]. It will be *Pick of the Day* with a big cut picture of Robbie Coltrane. It will be picked out, people will be aware of it, because it's a big name, they will trail it in the week before. For all those reasons it will be a success, it's a self-fulfilling prophecy, isn't it? It's a success because you promoted it as a success. (Exec Prod A, UK)

To involve presenters and celebrities, therefore, becomes a priority for British documentary development. The case study company already had a history in involving presenters but had placed recently an even higher priority on developing programmes with celebrities (especially for ITV and Channel 4) and other less well-known presenters. During the observation period, the team discussed and researched several such projects. For example, they searched for celebrities to front a

---

[99] EPG is the Electronic Programming Guide on digital television that provides programme title as well as a very brief summary of the programme.

programme on adoption and discussed programme ideas created around the particular personality of a presenter or celebrity contributor. A substantial amount of time was spent in building up an author and journalist, who had written a book on ecological scams, as a possible presenter for programmes on similar issues. He was selected because of his expertise in the subject area and not because he was a well-known figure in the public eye. This is an example of the growing importance of narrative connection between presenters and the documentary subject to justify their involvement:

> Presenters are important but they're used very differently. The BBC won't use presenters unless they think that they have some knowledge of the subject that they're doing. (...) [A] celebrity talking about something they don't know, will not work. So, ideally it's something that they care about and can talk articulately and passionately about. (...) [W]e don't go looking for celebrities, we go looking for the idea. And if there is a celebrity that is very appropriate for it we might consider putting it in, but we are having to look at ways now, where we will go and look at celebrities and say, what could we do with them. It is a different way in. (Exec Prod A UK)

To build up a successful presenter requires substantial investment from the company and specific skills from the presenter, in order to make the performance “work” on screen. These include the memorising of lines and movements, interviewing and interaction with the public. In the above mentioned example, the previously untrained presenter found it at first difficult to adjust to these requirements during a development taster shoot, which was supposed to give commissioners an impression of both the proposed programme and the personality of the presenter. He had difficulties remembering his lines and grew nervous when having to act toward the camera in a public space surrounded by other people. The investment in the training of a new presenter presents an economic risk for a company, but if a presenter is well-liked by a broadcaster, his or her participation in a proposed programme can improve the chances for a commission and thus justify the initial investment of time and resources. Nevertheless, such difficulties are another factor in pushing toward using media-trained celebrities in documentaries in contradiction to longstanding traditions of documentary and their focus on ordinary people. Celebrities already have on-screen experience and confidence in this kind of performance, which offers a ‘safer’ option and requires less initial investment, although the fees for their participation might increase the financial strain of production.

The focus on presenters and celebrities is much less pronounced among German documentary producers. However, this does not mean that exceptional content and extraordinariness are not a strong determinant in German television documentary.

For example, the research participants developed a science documentary about the future of the earth's glaciers. In their proposal for the German broadcaster ZDF, they stressed the threat to planet's ecosystem through melting glaciers and permafrost and the dramatic consequences for mankind. In this context, highly-regarded experts and scientists served as extraordinary contributors, similar to the practices of the television producers observed by Elliott (1972a). Nevertheless, there is a lack of presenter and celebrity culture in television documentary. German broadcasters aim to copy the success of British presenter-led programmes, but it is seems that German audiences do not receive these programmes with the same enthusiasm. The reasons for this might be a general cultural difference in the celebrity culture and a lack of suitable presenter personalities as the research participants suggest:

> They [broadcasters] try it again and again and what I watch, I think, doesn't work properly and I think, this is indeed a difference between the Anglo-Saxon journalism model and the German or continental model. I don't thing that this really works here. If there were really great presenters – but it's being tried again and again. Now the ZDF wants to do something with [name or presenter], the news woman, and with us about the Catholic church. (...) So this is another attempt and maybe it is also a process of education, to say that generation that is coming after us, that is growing up with this stuff, that for them it is completely natural at some point. If you hammer it in often enough, they will like it. (Dir/Par, D)

Although there is a tradition of using presenters in journalism and current affairs reportages, the use of celebrities for this purpose is entirely new to the German broadcasting landscape. The research participants acknowledge that involving famous or well-known personalities who people like to watch can have a positive effect on viewing figures and offer identification and personalisation. At the same time, they question the narrative justification and reason for doing so. Although the German research participants are critical about and not convinced by this development, they predict that "it will probably work eventually" although it were "not so German". They see this trend predominantly (and correctly) as a means to an end, as an economically motivated marketing and promotion tool rather than an aesthetic evolution of documentary as a genre.

The excessive use of presenters in documentary is one feature of programme formatting, which I focus on in the following section. Presenter-led programmes are following a particular narrative form that contributes to programme standardisation. Furthermore, presenters often offer particular views and interpretations but they do so predominantly with an emphasis on their subjective experience and emotions. They lead the narrative in a particular way that leaves less room for alternative interpretation. As already mentioned, the preference for exceptional content can further present

a problem for the realism claim of the documentary genre. Although still portraying real events and people, the preference of broadcasters and independents for high-profile contributors including presenters runs the risk of misrepresenting our social and cultural reality as a whole. By selecting the extreme and the exceptional and special as a general benchmark and focal point of documentary representation, they can potentially distort viewers' perceptions of what is typical, normal and acceptable behaviour and agency. One traditional focus of documentaries, to provide an insight into various areas of society and the way the 'ordinary person' lives, seems to lose importance in comparison. Topics or people that are considered not exciting or dramatic enough have, therefore, a lower chance of being selected for production.

> I think what's a shame is that subjects always have to be really entertaining and have a big headline that grabs you in and sometimes other stuff, which could be really interesting, isn't touched because it's a bit too heavy and it's not jolly enough. And that's a shame because I think people can still get a lot out of meaty subjects done in the right way. (Dev Prod, UK)

Debord (1983) holds critical views on spectacles and criticises their use for the purpose of reinforcing existing structures. A focus on the extraordinary and extreme creates such a spectacle, which supports and reinforces the central role of entertainment in television programming. It is a guiding principle in documentary that can limit its social function and create instead representations of reality that function solely as distraction in Corner's (2002) post-documentary culture, by providing voyeuristic pleasures, and creating astonishment and disbelief. As in the reality TV programmes studied by Wood and Skeggs (2008), these kinds of programmes often do not intend to analyse the social forces behind the extremes they portray in greater depth. In many cases, especially when using celebrities, experts and people in the public eye as audience 'bait', programmes run the risk of staying on the surface of the portrayed issue and being content with recording extraordinariness for the sake of entertainment. Nonetheless, as I mentioned before, it may also introduce audiences to new experiences and views of the world.

Elements of extraordinariness within a project idea are perceived clearly as increasing its commissioning potential. Therefore, development workers tend to seek out the extreme and unusual in their new ideas and, in so doing, support this already influential tendency. This leads to a further blurring of genre boundaries between documentary and other factual forms, in particular reality TV formats, and has an influence on what viewers associate with and expect from television documentary, especially with regard to the authenticity of the genre. The preference for the extraordinary is motivated primarily commercially, as they aim to stand out from their competition and to

increase audience popularity, rather than it being a personal or professional value for documentary-makers. However, most workers seem to have no problem with this focus on the exceptional. In line with the company's priority of serving broadcasters' preferences, workers adapted their idea creation accordingly and generally accepted channels' preferences for celebrity or presenter involvement as current fashion. However, especially researchers and junior producers commented on the difficulties in searching for the extreme (and by definition atypical), because it is harder to find matching case studies and direct access to stories, as I experienced myself when researching for the above-mentioned programme on pregnancy weight. Occasionally, the workers expressed personal distaste for the focus on extreme behaviour and the popularity-seeking involvement of celebrities, both of which have increased over the last years, according to the research participants. Such a critical attitude became apparent, for example, in a development meeting that featured ideas for an environmental documentary in combination with a celebrity presenter couple who would have to do some ecological "clean-up" task with the help of their privileged social connections. An assistant producer, who himself had a science background, felt personally attached to ideas about environmental issues and considered them a highly important issue that deserved media attention. Obviously, he was annoyed with the celebrity angle on the programme, bursting out "I fucking hate this" after the meeting. He was disappointed about the involvement of celebrities, which he perceived as a distraction from the actual environmental issue that only served the purpose of raising audience interest instead of emphasising social relevance. He explained that "the reason why we choose celebrities is because they are people in the public eye", presuming that "people need this connection" (field notes UK). Aside from personal taste, a focus on the extreme can also cause tensions with ethical and professional values of documentary-makers. This was the case for a researcher who was asked to find child alcoholics. She expressed criticism of this idea and assigned responsibility to the broadcaster Channel 4 who had approached the company with this particular development request and who "wanted the extreme like always". Aside from the difficulty of gaining access to such children, the researcher feared sensationalism and harmful consequences for potential contributors (field notes UK).

The motivation behind the preference for the exceptional and extraordinary is primarily economic. Extraordinary content is supposed to stand out from other programming in a competitive, multichannel television landscape and is intended to attract viewers to the programme and the channel. It is a theme that features in the other three conventions discussed in this chapter. It can serve as the angle of a programme idea,

providing novelty and a narrative focus. It is also a feature in the selection of case studies and contributors who are chosen on the basis of their extraordinary characteristics. Finally, it is a feature of formatted programming where it can help to increase the attraction for audiences who have grown accustomed to the predictable nature of formatted storylines.

6.5. Formatting and Serialisation: Cost Reduction through Formulaic Production

Another important aspect in the relationship between originality and the reproduction of the familiar is the increased formatting and serialisation of television programmes. Formatting relies on the use of standardised narrative and aesthetic structures and frameworks. Newness and variation only occur in the specifics within this framework concerning predominantly the choice of contributors and locations. This process combines the desire for the reproduction of previous successes with cost reduction and greater control over content. Again, these objectives are motivated by risk aversion and the attempt to control the popularity and the commercial success of a proposed programme. Under the pressure of competition and of the need to generate revenue, producers and broadcasters employ standardisation techniques to increase economic efficiency of development and production processes. They rely more and more on familiar formulas in the production of cultural texts that have previously proven successful with consumers/audiences (Ryan 1992). Programme formats are produced according to particular standards concerning form and content. They are aimed at creating and fulfilling specific audience expectations and thus increasing audience loyalty through familiarity and predictability. Formatting is a common feature in all forms of cultural production that plays a central role not only in television but also publishing and the music industry.

Hesmondhalgh (2007: 23-24) distinguishes three crucial means by which **formatting** can be achieved in cultural production. This includes firstly the use of authorship and the star system where names of star writers, producers and performers are associated with a cultural text with the goal to increase consumer interest and even create a fan community that ensures continuous interest in the texts such 'stars' create or are involved in. On the other hand, such stars do not just suddenly emerge; they are built up, marketed and promoted over time. With regard to documentary, there is no such tradition or culture as the Hollywood star system. However, there used to be, and still

are, well-known documentary directors whose names attract press and audience interest. Although the relevance of authorship has been reduced in contemporary commodified production, there are still some names that are also recognized outside the practitioner community, for example, Nick Broomfield, Michael Moore, and David Attenborough. However, all of these are authors who also appear in front of the camera, carrying particular performative qualities (see above) that are registered with and possibly sought out by an audience. Similarly, the development focus on the extraordinary and the related trend to involve celebrities is a form of formatting that makes use of a star system that exists beyond the genre itself.

Hesmondhalgh identifies genre as a second means of formatting in the cultural industries. Distinctions such as 'crime novel', 'R&B album' and 'romantic comedy movie' "operate as labels, not unlike brand names, which suggest to audiences the kinds of pleasure which can be attained through experiencing the product" (2007: 23). In television, practitioners distinguish various genres that are not universally identical but tend to group similar types of programming together. In the area of factual programming, genre distinctions exist for example between 'talk-show', 'game show', 'news broadcast', 'reality TV' and 'documentary'. Documentary again has various sub-forms that help producers and viewers to differentiate between different types of programmes on the basis of content, for example, history, science, art and human interest; or form, such as observational series, presenter-led programme and docu-drama. Just like associations of stardom, genre can be used to market and promote a programme in a particular way.

A third means of formatting cultural production distinguished by Hesmondhalgh is serialisation. He observes the serial form as a central feature of the publishing, the film and the music industry and it is, of course, also a crucial tool of television scheduling. Similarly, Havens refers to matters of form in his discussion of television formats that is based on the term's use in international programme trading. He notes that, "[f]ormats identify programmes based upon their frequency and length, including episodic series; one-time events, one 'one-offs'; and miniseries, or series with a small number of episodes" (2006: 41). Havens combines this formal differentiation with the notion of genre that is based on content, such as comedy and drama, animation and real-life-event. Serialisation is a traditional feature of other television genres, in particular, drama, news and show programmes, but in recent years it has become an influential feature of documentary scheduling and, consequently, for the production of

documentaries. Its main purpose is to create audience loyalty, as viewers return to the channel to watch the next episode to find out how the story continues.

In the course of commodification, formatting has gained more and more importance in the television industry. As an industry term, **format** refers today predominantly to a type of programme with a set of specific narrative and stylistic characteristics. In the attempt to "temper the chaos of the market" (Ryan 1992: 178), cultural production has been standardised and rationalised and previous programme successes are used as templates for new programmes. In addition to the sale of finished programmes, these templates are traded on the global television market place, providing additional revenue for copyright holders.[100] Moran defines a format accordingly as "the total package of information and know-how that increases the adaptability of a programme in another place and time" (2006: 6). This production 'manual' includes information on storyline and characters; it can also establish specific stylistic rules. Reality television proved particularly successful in the development of internationally adaptable programme formats, as becomes apparent in the success stories of observational series *Wife Swap* (Ch4) and reality game show *Big Brother* (Ch4), which was franchised in over thirty countries (Mathijs and Jones 2004: 1). The international success of such adaptations has had a spill-over effect on the conceptualisation of documentaries at broadcasting networks, supporting a growing tendency for formatting.

In documentary practice the term *formatting* refers to a broader understanding of standardisation. Rather than relying on a fixed rule-book and creating an exact reproduction of a previous programme down to the last detail, documentary formatting employs sets of production standards and conventions. They include, for example, certain narrative formulas, such as identifying a (socio-political) problem and offering either solution or blame, following a journey (both literally and spiritually) and observing the everyday life of particular professions or social settings. Other formatting trends refer to stylistic conventions and trends such as the use of "talking heads" (on-camera interview statements), camera movement and editing. Broadcasting slots can be more or less strongly formatted and there are different (and contradictory) requirements from networks. To some degree, this echoes Ryan's broader understanding of formatting as "the combination of structuring principles underlying the creative stage of production and its manifestations" (1992: 150). The following statement

[100] See Steemers (2004), Moran (2006) and Havens (2006) for a detailed discussion of global television formats and the international programming trade.

gives some examples for such format patterns that need to be taken into account by independent producers:

> Reportages often function according to a certain principle. These '24 hours with the tax fraud investigator' or '24 hours at the hairdresser's' are classic formats where you can substitute principally everything. (...) These are the classic formatted things and there are certainly also stylistic things and you always have to [think of them] in the edit: That you only have a certain time available to draw people [viewers] into a story and that latest after, I don't know, a minute or one-and-a-half there should be the first on-screen interview or people will get nervous. And these things are part of formatting and the topic-related formatting, that you rely more on certain topics or areas and maybe rather omit others and that you orientate yourself strongly on statistics, audience ratings and these kinds of things. (Dir/Par, D)

According to the research participants, formatting has substantially increased in television production including documentary over the last years. This CEO claims that the "profile" of television has changed with consequences for the generic identity of documentary:

> Well, what do you call documentary, and of course there are more docutainment or – I don't know how I shall call that, but the classic documentary film simply exists less and less in television. 90 minutes are only shown after midnight anyway. And there are all of these other documentary formats that are running. That's just how it is, because television is an industry – the profile has changed. (CEO, D)

There are several economic advantages of formatting that facilitate its increased implementation in the commodified television culture. The basic idea of a format is to re-use the same or a similar idea and only change the specifics, for example, contributors and locations. This implies a reduction of production costs, compared to the cost-intensive development of single originals that require new specific research, often in very different fields, and a singular narrative approach. Formats come with particular creative constraints and determine project development with regard to what kind of story will be told, in what way, and what kind of contributor to look for.[101] The lower reproduction costs of formats and the value of production experience make formatting an attractive concept for broadcasters and independents alike. Furthermore, formats are produced predominantly in serial form, which allows the production of more volume for less cost, providing more hours of programming per commission to fill television schedules. **Serialisation** in the field of documentary is common in the British production culture, which features a high number of long-running observational series with up to 20 episodes, especially with a focus on wildlife and emergency services,

[101] See Ryan (1992, chapter 5) for an overview of the historical development of formatting and its role in the rationalisation and bureaucratisation of the creative workplace.

and short series of two to five episodes. Topical "seasons" are another scheduling tool, unifying several single programmes under the umbrella of one theme. During the observation period, the British research participants worked on ideas for observational series for Five and National Geographic, they developed several ideas for a BBC season on body image and for a season on adoption for Channel 4. In Germany, observational series do also exist, but they often have fewer episodes than their British counterparts.[102] Short series/multi-parters are especially typical for programmes with high production value, such as blue-chip documentaries about history and science. Serial production has a particular economic value for independent producers, as it provides long-running continuous production activity. This proved to be a decisive factor for the development priorities of the British company. The company originally started off with producing one-off documentaries but then expanded their production activities to observational series. One executive describes the importance that this move has had for the overall company development by avoiding fluctuations in the cycle of development and production:

> [When] we started, all we wanted to do was one-off documentaries, personal access-documentaries and we still do that, but in order to keep a strong and growing company you need more, you need quite a lot of people in. We found in the first couple of years, you would have quite a lot of work, two or three one-off documentaries and then there would be a gap and you would have nothing, and then there would be another. There was an awful up and down about it and it was clear that the only way to do it would – you needed a series, ideally, that would run and therefore allow you to keep the people here, as many of the people as you could and cut out this awful up and down of the financial cycle. So now we have what I would call (...) observational documentary series. (Exec Prod A, UK)

Cost saving is not the only reason for the popularity of formatting and serialisation among television commissioners. Its commercial motivation is also based on presumed **audience expectations and responses** to formatting. Serial production has always been used to ensure continuous or repeated consumer interest. Episodes are scheduled at the same day and time of the week, binding audiences through recognition, regularity and habit, as this German CEO states: "Apparently, they [the audience] want to watch a particular programme at a particular time. There is lots of research about that and one has to abide by that. And preferably recognisable." (CEO, D) Television formatting with regard to genre and series provides the audience prior to consumption with particular associations and expectations about the kind of prod-

[102] This is not the case however with regard to reality television formats which are often (wrongly) advertised as docu-soaps (an observational documentary format with little or no construction) in German television programming.

uct in question. Viewers, as well as commissioners, know "what they'll get" from a new programme, if it fits within well-known formatting structures. Strands in the schedules of television channels, i.e. regular broadcasting slots with a particular profile and thematic focus, fulfil a similar purpose. They have a particular profile with regard to content and form that carries predictability and recognition value similar to a format and long-running series, so that viewers know what type of programme and what kind of content to expect. For documentary, such strands have been and continue to be very important. They are a traditional way of uniting single programmes despite very different subject matters, as they are typical for documentary. Strand profiles and requirements are, consequently, influential factors that guide independent development activities as described in chapter 4. Well-known examples for such long-running strands are *Cutting Edge* on Channel 4 (challenging programming in the area of human interest), *Horizon* (science documentary) and *One-Life* (human interest and a story with unfolding events – currently discontinued) at the BBC. In Germany, documentary strands include ZDF's *37°* (human interest focusing on important turning points, challenges and personal developments in the lives of individuals) and *ZDF Expedition* (science and history documentaries with international focus and high production value) and *Der Dokumentarfilm* on ARD (a rare strand for classic one-off feature-length documentaries without a specific focus on content). As has been shown in chapter 4, independents research these profiles and focus their development activities in accordance with the strand's requirements, because only programmes that fit this particular profile and its requirements will be commissioned and transmitted.

The formulaic nature of formatted programmes in form and content provide producers furthermore with greater control over the production process, as they only exchange the particulars of a programme and not the overall structure, approach or even subject matter. In contrast, observational series, which are although also produced in serial form and follow particular aesthetic format conventions, offer a producer less **control over the depicted events**. In classic observational documentary, the producer does not interfere intentionally with the *vor-filmische Realität* (the pre-filmic reality that exists prior to filming, cf. Hohenberger 1988), i.e. the producer does not consciously change the situation of the contributors who are filmed in the programme. S/he might follow contributors doing their job or preparing for an important event in their lives such as an exam, an operation, or a family reunion – events that would also have taken place without the programme being produced. In contrast, formatted programmes, often construct a specific setting in which contributors have to act and

react. In this setting, narrative strategies can be created, for example, a swap of private or professional roles, a task or a physical challenge that contributors have to face. In *Wife Swap* (Ch4) for instance, women (preferably from contrasting social or ideological backgrounds) swap families for two weeks, in *The Apprentice* (BBC1) young professionals compete for a high-paid managerial position and have to succeed in several tasks, whilst in *Brat Camp* (Ch4) misbehaving teenagers are sent to a training camp where we watch their attempts to cope with the challenges of life in the wilderness in order to change their anti-social attitudes and behaviour.

As an element of formatting, construction provides producers with greater control over the recorded events. They might even induce events and developments to gain further dramatic tension and jeopardy in a relatively short time period and avoid an extended production period. Such **elements of construction** dominate especially in reality television, as the examples above illustrate, but they increasingly find their way into documentary. In the course of this development, construction has become more acceptable for documentary-producers, in contrast to an ideal of non-influence on the recorded reality. This may involve certain elements of confrontation or competition that ensure emotional conflicts and narrative climaxes on screen. When faced with tight delivery deadlines and budgets, producers "cannot afford to hang around and wait for things to happen" (field notes UK) and they may turn to elements of construction to make the realisation of a programme more manageable. Such created-for-TV settings (Kilborn 2008) contribute to the blurring of genre boundaries between documentary, reality television and other forms of factual programming (see Nichols 1994). Whilst both companies employed certain elements of formatting, in the British case study there seemed to be more willingness in developing serial programmes that contained some element of construction. For example, when brainstorming for observational series for Five, the development team came up with various ideas that involved a task, challenge, journey, competition or swap. On the other hand, when brainstorming ideas for observational series for National Geographic in the same meeting, executives and the HoD stressed that the broadcaster did not want to receive ideas that involved construction: 'Nat Geo is not interested in anything arranged by us, they don't like formats and presenters' (non-verbatim, field notes UK).

Another important economic aspect of formatting, which has been briefly mentioned above, is its central role in the **international programming trade**. The sale of either completed programmes or programme ideas provides rights holders with additional revenue. Their formulaic nature makes it easy to reproduce and adapt them in a local

context, and their exceptional success with audiences is a crucial incentive for broadcasters. In addition, series are "easier to sell" than one-off programmes, either as a package of one-off films under a theme or as a multi-episode series, since buying in bulk spreads the financial risk of the acquisition (Exec Prod A, UK). The structural advantage British independents have due to the Terms of Trade (see chapter 4) makes them more focused on the international programming trade. Combined with a reputation for innovative and high-quality factual programming (mainly because of associations with the BBC) and the global dominance of the English language, British independents have an internationally advantageous position compared to their German counterparts. On the other hand, the higher intensity of neoliberal values and competitive pressure in the British production culture facilitates a greater focus on formatting, serialisation and extraordinariness for commercial reasons and advances the erosion of classic one-off documentary forms. The latter however are still perceived as a benchmark of documentary and are valued as high-quality expressions of the genre. Therefore, they still form a focus of independents' development and production activities:

> If you look at the work we now get, most of it is this big blocks of work from the broadcasters who are trying to fill their schedule and that's [titles of observational series]. For old time sakes we're still trying to do some current affairs and some documentary 'cause we think it's important to the perception of the company, that people perceive that we don't just have a factory that is turning out hour after hour of TV. (Exec Prod C, UK)

Formatting is one area where broadcasters' particular preferences materialise, guiding the idea generation at independent companies. We therefore need to ask what the practitioners' attitude toward formatting is and in what way it affects the generic understanding of documentary and its relationship to reality and social impact. In the British company, the term was mainly equalised with constructed, arranged events and perceived as a tool of documentary that they could make use of. This indicates a change in the generic perception of documentary. In the German context, the notion was used rather to refer to narrative and stylistic conventions in programme production and less to the construction or staging of events. The latter are mostly associated with reality television and perceived as untypical, even unacceptable, for documentaries. The German executives claimed that reality television involves different storytelling tools that require a certain kind of creative worker with 'openness' toward such formats and the particular skills required to create them:

> You need different people who, how shall I put his, who so-to-speak are more open towards such formats and have a certain affinity or skill and creativity to engage in something like this and to try such things. (...) We are not really the kind of people who work that way, that you are partly in front of the camera, how to find and interview such people, and how to structure such programmes. If we were to decide that this is a direction we want to go in, then we all would have to – we see it a lot and we can imagine how to do it, know maybe more how to approach this than someone with no idea at all – but for us, who are making classic documentaries in the widest sense, this is new territory. (Dir/Par, D)

This different and more traditional attitude toward documentary and formatting could echo or even result from the national commissioning culture and respective broadcasting slot preferences, but to attempt to answer this question would exceed the scope of this research. A comparative programme analysis and an examination of the values and attitudes of commissioning editors would provide further clarity on this issue.

The increase in formatting of television documentary sets boundaries for the creativity of development workers. It requires them to think along well-trodden paths and focus on finding a new way to combine familiar elements and conventions, rather than coming up with something different and original. Again, the research participants showed an ambivalent reaction to these constraints. They were not critical about the existence of strands as such, including their requirements and conventions. In fact, they focus their development on these requirements as part of their commercial compliance (see chapter 4) and they also acknowledge the value of recognition that strands offer to television audiences. Rather, they were worried about the reduction in documentary strands that reduced their chances for regular production. Similarly, they acknowledge the financial advantage of producing serial formats as they offer cost advantages in the production process and provide the company with more air time on television, thus making a positive contribution to the industrial reputation of a company. To some extent, even elements of construction are accepted as a new feature of television documentary, especially in the British production context. This difference might be partly influenced by the fact that documentary and reality formats, which are developed in the UK by public service broadcasters BBC and Channel 4, are sold predominantly to commercial broadcasters in Germany (either as original programme or programme concept). Commercial broadcasters Pro7, RTL and VOX for example are hosting localised versions of *Wife Swap (Frauentausch), Come Dine with Me (Das Perfekte Dinner)* and *Supernanny*. However, documentary as a genre is widely associated with public service values, and German producers differentiate their production activities from commercial formatted programming. Other characteristics of

formatting are perceived in a less positive light. Practitioners criticise the repetition and standardisation of formatting with regard to how a story is told, because it limits the artistic tools they can use and leaves little or no room for experimentation and for trying out something unconventional or unorthodox. The research participants related this development directly to risk averse commissioning and financial pressure, as the following statement describes:

> I am completely realistic about broadcasters. What is possible there is coupled with a lot of restrictions. It is heavily formatted, the budgets are clearly arranged and there is essentially no willingness to take any risks. And where should it come from, eventually, it is not rewarded. Everybody wants to get as much market share as possible and that is done best with tried and tested formats, that's how it is. I wouldn't call it interesting. (CEO, D)

However, within the stylistic conventions of formatting there is still scope for innovation, authenticity and social impact. As Hesmondhalgh observes, formatting does not necessarily have to act as a constraint on creativity and a decrease in programme quality (2002: 71). Producers differentiate between high and low quality formats based on their personal values concerning the documentary genre, including issues of social relevance and impact. In other words, formatting is acceptable, as long as it creates a 'good programme' in the eyes of the practitioners. For example, this British executive was keen on developing a "big fact-end format series" similar to other formats that dealt with issues of social relevance:

> Like, what's it called, *Faking It*, something like that. Like *The Secret Millionaire*. Something like that, very, very clever. Or, the other thing I'd really like to get off the ground was one of the slightly more sort of social change formatted big fact-end series. It's too obvious to say that you like to have done *Jamie's School Dinners,* but I'd like something better, something like *The Woman Who Stopped Traffic*. So we got ideas like *Attack of the Clonestores*. So you set up, there is a mission at the top and you can do a series of interventions, but they are not of the sort of: It's Day 4 therefore so and so-and-so have to do so-and-so to follow the rules. You set up the great big premise at the top and you just watch it unfold. I'd love us to something like that. (…) I mean, I'd be interested in a sort of an intelligent swap programme like sort of, you know, to find the next spin on that would be difficult but *Faking It* type as opposed to *Wife Swap*.[103] (Exec Prod B, UK)

[103] In *Faking It* (Ch4), volunteers swap their job temporarily for another. They are removed from their normal life and have to learn and master a new skill within four weeks to a level that fools a panel of expert judges. In *The Secret Millionaire* (Ch4) millionaires go undercover in deprived areas to find someone who deserves their financial help. *Jamie's School Dinners* (Ch4) is a series in which celebrity chef Jamie Oliver aims to improve the deplorable state of British school dinners and *The Woman Who Stopped Traffic* is about the crusade of a woman to convince three British towns to go car-free for one day. *Wife Swap* (Ch 4) follows women who exchange their lives, homes and families. *Attack of the Clonestores* refers to a programme idea developed by the British company that focused on the rise of large chain

The German HoD, who is very informed about and interested in the British television market, showed a similar ambiguity in her attitude toward formatted programmes. When asked what kind of programmes she would like to produce, she referred to the kind of programming Channel 4 broadcasts as a positive example but then adjusted this statement by differentiating between programmes of different quality. In particular, she was critical of the focus on extreme and aggressive behaviour:

> I mean, their [Channel 4's] bread and butter is *Big Brother*. I really would not want to do that. And I also would not want to do *Wife Swap*. At least not in the way it is practised where you set people on each other or something like that. The original idea that is coming from the documentary department at Channel 4 or the factual special department, the original idea of these swaps, I thought, was absolutely brilliant. But what it was formatted into, it's completely formatted. That, for example, is something where it is a blessing that things move a bit slower here. This whole extreme setting-people-on-each-other stories where you hear horror stories from British producers. Something like this I haven't come across over here. (HoD, D)

Both of these statements show a negative attitude toward programmes such as *Wife Swap* in its present form, which is an illustration of the time-specific nature of innovative products and its cycle of innovation, exhaustion and renewal. Anything that is new and provocative will be absorbed by mainstream culture if it is successful and the innovative character of cultural products is therefore always temporary. *Wife Swap*, for example, was originally promoted and received by critics with hopes for social education and improvement through the encounter of opposite values and behaviour by the participating families. It proved to be very popular with audiences, not least because of the entertaining qualities of family drama and conflict. As a result, the programme format was sold internationally, ran for seven years in the UK (2003-2009) and inspired many programmes with a similarly arranged set-up. In the course of this reproductive cycle, the innovative quality of the format is exhausted. The predictability of a formatted structure offers producers more control over the produced content, but it can also impact negatively on audience interest as frequent repetition reduces the novelty of the original idea. In reaction to this development, producers aim to create a higher degree of emotional tension and drama to revive interest in the programme, which can (and often does) involve displays of extreme personalities, attitudes and behaviour (as was the case with the later seasons of *Wife Swap*) or more extensive forms of construction, for example, in the form of games and chal-

---

stores at the expense of smaller local businesses with the ambition to prevent or even reverse this process in certain areas.

lenges. Such tendencies are received critically by the research participants. They show a sceptical attitude toward sensationalism and spectacle, as they seem contrary to the traditional documentary values of education and information. As evident in the two statements above, practitioners do not distance themselves from formatting as such, but they criticise the extent of formatting across the generic output. The research participants expressed appreciation of entertainment value, and they were particularly positive about "worthy" formats that involved some sort of social or political ambition in its conception, for example, with the aim to (critically) portray and improve social relations and conditions. For this British development producer, for example, constructed programming was acceptable as long as it provided the opportunity for some sort of social impact and education:

> Well, I suppose I'm a bit bored of some of the reality TV stuff. I mean, some of them I really like and I think they're worthwhile like, *Brat Camp*[104]. Things like that, I think, it doesn't matter that it's a construct, because you've still got people who are really going through something and they're on a journey, and you can see a sort of transition and how they learn something. And how they come out of it, having changed at the other end in some way. And its quite moving and it still feels real to me. But some of them, I think, it's a bit getting slightly tired of that format. (Dev Prod, UK)

Such traditional documentary values are increasingly utilised by broadcasters in their attempt to renew factual formats, which have, by now, lost much of their initial innovative quality. A development producer describes this shifted orientation as follows: "They seem to want stuff that is formatted but isn't obviously formatted, so it feels a bit more like a documentary. Like *Secret Millionaire*, it's actually a construct, isn't it, but they like it to feel like it's really happening and it's a documentary." (Dev Prod, UK) Formatting is certainly a well-established characteristic of the factual television culture and it will not disappear. Rather, research participants predict that it will become even more important for documentary production in the coming years. However, although formatting involves a significant degree of repetition, standardisation and lack of experimentation, it is not stagnant but evolves and changes in reaction to commercial imperatives thus bearing the potential for generic innovation.

---

[104] In *Brat Camp* (Ch4) misbehaving teenagers are sent to a training camp where their attempts to cope with the challenges of life in the wilderness, that is aimed at changing their anti-social attitude and behaviour, are observed.

6.6. Commercially Induced Standardisation and Innovation

This chapter has focused on the consequences the commercial production structures of television have on the textual products that are being created in documentary development. It was previously argued that commercial imperatives impact strongly on the orientations and priorities of development workers, but that they create a dilemma between attempting commercial success and creating original, innovative yet authentic programming. On the one hand, original and innovative programmes are desired and required in order to stand out against competitors in the commercial landscape and to attract greater audience shares. On the other hand, fear of failure due to the uncertain market demands and audience responses and structural financial precariousness cause commissioners and independents to act in a highly risk-averse manner. This chapter explored how the culture of risk and risk aversion manifests itself in cultural practices and priorities. It showed how commissioners – and through them independents – tend to avoid experimentation and the trying out of new approaches and styles. Instead they rely on familiarity in form and content, orientating themselves by reference to previously successful/popular programmes. Certain production conventions have been established in response to balance these competing demands. Their effects on the documentary texts that are being developed in independent companies are ambivalent as on the whole they contribute to programme standardisation but they also offer some space for innovation. These tendencies are direct expressions of commercial influence on the development process, whose consequences confirm concerns about a decline of documentary with regard to certain traditional genre values. However, they can also contribute to the evolution and renewal of the documentary genre, which emphasises the enabling possibilities of commercialism. The question is which of these tendencies are the dominant influences in project development and my fieldwork suggests that familiarity and diversion prevail over a challenging application of the above described development priorities. What does this mean for the innovation and authenticity of documentary?

The development tendencies and values discussed here – familiarity and reproduction, angle and exclusivity, extraordinariness and formatting – are predominantly the result of financial considerations. They facilitate the rationalisation and standardisation of the development process and its textual output, thus making project development more cost-effective. Further, they are used in order to control the risk and uncertainty of television production. The reproduction of familiar formulas in content and style and the increase of serial production are measures specifically introduced in an

attempt to increase control over the programme content and to predict and improve its potential for commercial success. This has restrictive consequences for artistic creativity in the development process, which Ryan summarises as follows:

> By transforming the production of originality into a process governed by company-advocated rules, formatting serves to rationalise the otherwise arbitrary and idiosyncratic play of imaginative creativity and routinely steers artists toward repetition of the particular cultural forms in which companies have invested. To the degree that corporations have been successful in this production strategy, it drives the creative stage of production further towards its structural subordination to the imperatives of accumulation. (1992: 178)

Creatives in independent companies are therefore encouraged to think along familiar lines and to create programmes that are similar to previous successes, rather than making a genuinely new contribution to the media content on offer. This restriction of agency is supported by the commercial compliance independents show toward broadcaster preferences in their development activities (see chapter 4). However, one also needs to recognise the difficulty in achieving true originality, especially in our contemporary media saturated society. Although risk aversion motivates a preference for the familiar and formulaic, programme ideas still have to be new or novel to some degree in order to justify their realisation and to attract audience interest. Originality, in a practical sense, can be achieved through a new angle or exclusive access to contributors and stories, even when a familiar topic is being addressed. Such approaches may provide new insights, perspectives and knowledge that correspond to traditional values of the documentary genre. However, novelty might also disguise the fact that a programme is just a superficial variation on a familiar theme. Especially when the programme structure is highly formatted, form may become more important than content, including the selection of particular contributors. This contradicts the social values of documentary-makers (see chapter 5) who place high importance on the selection of contributors and story. According to the research participants, especially at senior level, social impact as a generic value has lost its value with commissioners. It is associated with a character of seriousness and didactic dullness that is perceived to carry less commercial potential than programmes with an entertainment focus. Consequently, social impact is of less importance in commissioning decisions and textual choices in documentary development.

My research findings indicate that development is driven instead by a focus on extreme and exceptional content, including a celebrity and presenter-focused culture and a greater degree of formatting involving construction and serialisation. These developments were particularly apparent in the British production and commissioning

culture, which is arguably more competitive and commercially orientated than the German broadcasting culture despite the strong influence of public service broadcasting in both countries. The shift toward 'social purpose' in formatted documentary is also a trend that emerged firstly in the UK. My observation indicates that there is also a progressive potential of commercialism, which continuously requires new ideas, trends and fashions. The German research participants perceive British programming as particularly innovative on a global scale which is paired with great regard for the traditional reputation of the BBC for high-quality programming – although Channel 4 also proves to be highly influential, especially in the field of factual and documentary programming. In contrast, they claim that German television is not particularly innovative, and note that programme innovations, including factual formats, are primarily exploited by commercial broadcasters who do not have a long-standing tradition in documentary.

However, commercial influences do not only impact on the degree of innovation in documentary, furthermore, they have consequences for the authenticity of documentary representation. Documentaries tell their stories through the eyes of people. Documentary contributors offer viewers personalisation and identification with an issue, they support and illustrate the narrative flow of a story and are an essential visual as well as narrative element of any programme. The choice of contributors is intended to further the understanding and illustrate the relevance of a programme's subject matter. The closeness to 'real' and 'ordinary' people and providing an insight into their lives have always been a strength of the documentary genre. However, lately programmes have placed a more voyeuristic and exhibitionist spotlight on their participants. The growing orientation to extraordinary and extreme content alters the traditional focus on ordinary people, on "the man in the street", whose participation is based on their personal experiences rather than social status, fame or expertise. As illustrated above, the preference for the exceptional and the extreme is evident in the choice of both celebrity and expert contributors as well as 'ordinary' people participating in a documentary programme. As I have argued, this preference has implications for the representation and (presumably) the reception of social reality through documentary. The traditional documentary values of realism and an authentic representation of social reality might be compromised in this process by a disproportionate shift toward the exceptional yet untypical. This development has implications for what Keith Beattie refers to as the "documentary contract" between documentary-maker and the viewer (2004: 11). He argues that

> [t]ruth claims reflect a tacit contractual agreement or bond of trust between documentary producers (whether an individual filmmaker or a broadcasting institution) and an audience that the representation is based on the actual socio-historical world, not a fictional world imaginatively conceived. (ibid.)

This 'agreement' is of crucial importance for documentary developers. Nichols (2001) considers the relationship with the audience and how reality is presented to them as a central ethical issue of documentary production. Practitioners ensure through detailed research and fact verification that the stories and contributors they propose to portray in a programme exist in this form in reality. The question is, however, what kind of social reality is represented as a result of the choices made concerning the selection of contributors, issues and locations of a programme. As argued above, the disproportional focus on extraordinariness can distort "viewers' reception and interpretation of the work as an accurate and verifiable depiction of the world" (ibid.: 13). Extraordinary content does represent certain aspects of social reality, it is not fictional but inspired and illustrated by real-life examples. It may also offer new insights into previously unknown cultures. However, the potential risk of this new textual emphasis lies in its proportional representation in comparison to the reduced media exposure of people, issues and developments that are considered less popular by producers. Rather than being perceived as exceptions, extraordinary contributors may thus influence viewers' perceptions of appropriate and desirable social interaction and achievements. Of course, extreme content does not necessarily encourage such wide reaching social consequences, viewers may well just enjoy the entertaining and voyeuristic qualities of this type of programming without perceiving or expecting it to be typical of society or having relevance for their own life. Nevertheless, the general focus on the exceptional and extreme may encourage a potential misrepresentation of social reality.

The development conventions discussed in this chapter are not exclusively the result of commercialism and commodification. Angle and access to contributors, for example, are themselves traditional genre (and thus professional) conventions that are constitutive elements of the documentary narrative. Formatting and a focus on extraordinariness also have a long history in television, especially in other genres. New is, however, the intensity with which they are employed in contemporary documentary production. Financial and competitive pressures for audience success have caused broadcasters and independents to focus on the commercial exploitation of these conventions for the sake of popularity. This new emphasis presents a shift in the intentions, motivation and ambition of television broadcasters, away from traditional public service values toward a consumer-orientated populist approach to commissioning. As

a result, the application of the described conventions can diminish documentary's social functions and erode its potential for social education, criticism and change. These developments can come into conflict with professional and social values of documentary-makers, as described in chapter 5, causing the research participants to reflect critically on these practices. However, similar to their critical attitude towards commercial compliance, they rarely translate this criticism into direct action. In fact, they perceive the textual conventions of contemporary television documentary as structural features over which they have no influence and which they have to accept and conform to as 'part of the game' if they want to achieve a broadcast commission. This compliance is supported, furthermore, by professional routines and practices (see chapter 5) and the need to rationalise development and production in view of the financial undercapitalisation of the sector.

However, there are limitations to the success of programming that is exclusively intended to be popular and entertaining. The novelty of entertainment, formatted predictability and superficial exploration of the exceptional and extraordinary wears off quickly after too much repetition and reproduction. Audiences use culture to surprise themselves, they continuously expect it to be new in content and form, forcing cultural production to innovate, excite and change. In other words, what is popular one day might be old hat the next. Such a change in popularity creates the need for the renewal and evolution of cultural forms from a commercial perspective, which can prevent or at least limit the increasing standardisation of programming and the production of more of the same. Reality formats are one example of this cycle of innovation, exhaustion and renewal. Here, the initial innovative form has reached saturation point and fresh and new ideas are required to maintain viewer interest on a large scale. Initially promoted as social experimentation before turning into voyeuristic entertainment in the course of large-scale reproduction, reality formats have become too familiar and predictable for viewers. A new approach (or angle) to such formatted programmes has become apparent in the observation, involving the borrowing and adaptation of traditional social values of documentary. Social relevance and the desire to facilitate social change and betterment[105] make formatted programmes more "worthy" and acceptable for documentary practitioners. To work on programmes with such social and educational ambitions, however small, can provide practitioners with

[105] Again, I would like to stress that such intentions do not reveal anything about the actual perception, appropriation and possible effects on the audience which are an entirely different issue.

a sense of work satisfaction and professional worth. They do not view the described textual conventions as negative when they help to gain audience attention and provide an issue that they consider important with additional exposure. Nevertheless, they are critical of tendencies to use formatting, celebrity contributors and exceptional or extreme content solely for entertainment and popularity purposes. Such critical reflection can result in creative tensions for the individual workers, based on their ethical, personal and professional values. Again, workers use humour, sarcasm and irony to deal with the dominance of formulaic and extreme requirements and content and the tensions they might create on a subjective level.

In summary, it can be noted that commercial structures have a substantial influence on the particularities of textual decisions. They support the reproduction of familiarity at the cost of originality and innovation, instigate a preference for entertainment at the expense of social impact and relevance, and they encourage extraordinary content at the cost of balanced representation of social reality, which has consequences for the trust viewers place in the authenticity of documentary representation. At the same time, television documentary depends on originality and innovation, on providing viewers with relevant and enlightening content, in order to be commercially successful. Commercialism does not hesitate to make use of such traditional generic values to achieve popularity but at present entertainment focus and formatted production still work well for broadcasters. Hence, they tend to dominate other development trends, especially in the British production culture. It is only when they begin to lose their attraction for the audience that the commercial structure will shift its textual values and preferences.

7. Conclusion

This thesis has provided a detailed account of the structures and processes of project development in independent production companies. By focusing on this particular stage of the production process, it aims to understand how and under which conditions contemporary television documentaries take their particular forms. In other words, it is interested in the creative decisions and selections of documentary development. In so doing, the thesis investigated what influences and shapes the work activities and priorities of independent developers in the increasingly commercialised television industry. In particular, it inquired whether and in what way production structures and commercial imperatives constrain or enable producer creativity. This stipulated the analytical focus on issues of structure, agency and text. This primary research question was divided into three sub-questions: 1) In what way do commercial structures in the television system constrain or enable human creativity in documentary development within independent production companies? 2) In what way does human agency within independent companies consciously or unconsciously resist or reinforce commercial imperatives and structural conditions? 3) What are the consequences of this setting for television documentary, firstly, as an original and authentic representation of reality, and secondly, with regard to the genre's social functions?

These questions were addressed on three analytical levels: firstly, on an inter-organisational level with reference to the relationship between independent production company and television broadcaster, secondly, on a subjective level with regard to the individual experience of development work, and finally, on a textual level, relating to the creative preferences and choices in development. The previous chapters, which were concerned with the analysis of empirical data, discussed these issues in detail, revealing mechanisms of influence and their consequences. In this concluding chapter, I synthesise the results of this analysis, discuss the links between them and highlight the critical points that have arisen. I focus firstly on the implications of the analysis for understanding the relationships between culture and commerce. In so doing, I confirm the contradictory relationships between both elements, describe the resulting tensions for television workers and discuss the consequences of a consumer-driven commissioning culture. Secondly, I draw careful conclusions about the development of documentary as a television genre based on my empirical results, which suggest a continuing erosion of certain documentary traditions altering thus the generic characteristics of television documentary. The chapter continues with a discussion of the comparative dimension of this study, which indicates a certain interna-

tionalisation of production, despite national specificities, and hints at the general (and seemingly growing) importance of the international programming trade. In the course of my analysis, further questions have emerged and the need for continuing research in this area has become clear. Therefore, in the concluding section of this chapter, I discuss the implications of my research for future work and some of the theoretical and methodological issues that need further attention.

7.1. Culture and Commerce in Documentary Development: Giving the Audience What it Wants?

As the discussion of my fieldwork results has shown, there is no simple answer to the question of how commercial structures and individual agency relate to each other. Rather, it became apparent that creative work in documentary development is shaped by ambivalent values and attitudes, inherent dilemmas and tensions. Obviously, independent production companies are commercial businesses that have to make the economic success of their enterprise a central objective of their activities. Their structural economic dependency within the broadcaster-publisher system and the high level of competition have led to a service-driven self-understanding, according to which broadcasters are considered clients whose preferences need to be met in order to be commercially successful. As I have shown in chapter 4, independents' power-deficit in the relationship with broadcasters is particularly influential in the development stage of production. This leads to a strong orientation towards – and compliance with – broadcaster preferences and therefore restrictions on the creative work carried out. For television broadcasters, commercialism leads to an increasing emphasis on the search for profits and the principle of consumer sovereignty. This in turn encourages a focus on entertainment and popularity as guiding principles in project development. Fear of economic failure in the uncertain business of cultural production leads furthermore to risk aversion. All of this results in a commissioning culture that is marked by a lack of experimentation and a preference for the familiar in programme content as described in chapter 6. On the other hand, innovation and originality are essential criteria for the success of cultural products. To encourage and enable creative and innovative development work is therefore both a commercial imperative and a declared objective of television production. This contradicts the constraining qualities of commercialism and creates a dilemma for television workers.

When examining the overall activities of an independent company, we observe the predominant tendency to comply with broadcaster preferences rather than with their own. This behaviour is motivated by the economic necessity to obtain a production contract in a highly precarious and competitive production environment. Independent companies make use of the existing broadcasting structures to increase their chances to achieve such economic success, by establishing close social relationships with commissioning editors and building a reputation and track record within the television industry. Although this increase of social and symbolic capital has a positive effect on commissioning chances, it seems to have little impact on the creative freedom of independent companies. Commissioning editors retain their decision-power and with it a strong influence over the creative content that is being developed. This situation changes once a contract has been closed and the commissioner her/himself becomes dependent on an independent supplier to deliver the commissioned programme. In the development stage, however, the structural inequality of broadcasters and independents is particularly pressing. It reduces the creative input by independent actors to some extent, as they pre-select and reject content based on estimations about the preferences of broadcasters, even if this means restricting or opposing their personal creative preferences.

However, what is the problem with conforming to broadcaster preferences? After all they are intended to distinguish one broadcasting slot from another and to provide audiences with necessary guidance in a multi-channel landscape. My claim is not that the programme ideas of independents are of higher quality than those by commissioners. The problem lies rather in the fact that a very limited number of people, mostly located at a television network, dominate the creative directions new programme development will take. This reduces the diversity of the creative input in development and thus contradicts the argument that independent production will ensure fresh and innovative ideas beyond the traditions and orientations of broadcasters. The neoliberal argument that competition will have a positive effect on the degree of creativity and innovation in cultural production fails at least partially, because financial precariousness and competitive pressure motivate independents to cater even closer to broadcaster preferences in order to increase their chance for a commission. One could argue that broadcasters, after all, select from ideas that are suggested to them by independent suppliers. While they often determine a certain subject matter, the specifics of a programme are still developed by independents. And although this is certainly true, it does not change the fact that independents develop ideas predominantly within certain boundaries and in accordance with certain criteria that are pre-

determined at a broadcasting network. Furthermore, as I have described, broadcasters only work with a limited number of independent companies and, again, this reduces the number of creative minds that get access to broadcasting time.

Secondly, conformity to broadcaster preferences is problematic because of what shapes and determines these preferences. According to the research participants, broadcasters are guided in their creative decisions mainly, if not exclusively, by audience ratings. Ratings serve as indications of an alleged demand for a certain kind of product. Adhering to the dictate of consumer sovereignty in increasingly market-driven economies, this presumed demand is one of the main factors in determining what commissioners are looking for. A second influential factor, especially for documentary, lies in public service obligations which are based on values and objectives beyond market shares. Obligations such as providing informative and educational content, to offer minority voices a platform and to reflect social and cultural diversity do not necessarily correspond with the demands of popularity. As public service broadcasters are increasingly under threat in the current commercial climate, they need to balance carefully the demands of public service remit with those of commercial success.

Why then should commodification and consumer sovereignty in television production be questioned? Could one not argue that consumers 'purchase' cultural goods based on their individual needs and desires and that, therefore, the popularity of certain television programming should be encouraged as this is "what the audience wants"? Caldwell argues in his study of the film and television industry in the US that this executive "lie" is used as an excuse for a lack in innovation and experimentation:

> Business executives claim only to 'give the public what the public wants,' and they use statistical measures, box office and ratings to 'prove' this adage. This management house rule allows executives to effectively deflect social criticisms. Yet the business practices examined (...) suggest just the opposite. They show just how carefully both corporate and employee identities are constructed, managed, and solidified in management practice. The result of this obsession with external and internal branding is that the studios/networks roll out the same sort of films/series that they have always rolled out. (2008: 273)

Similar points are made by Baker who argues that "media markets can be expected not to provide audiences with 'what they want' in any economically relevant sense of that notion" (1997: 316) because of the nature of media products as public goods that can be consumed by anyone without reducing its availability to others. What is neglected in the promotion of consumer-choice as a guiding factor for content production is the fact that consumers can only make choices from programming that is

available. Keat (1999: 94/5) describes how market logic represents consumer *judgements* about their choices, expectations and experience of cultural goods as *preferences.* This obscures the fact that these judgements are dependent on consumers' engagement in social practices and on the availability of cultural goods. In other words, consumers might not know what they are missing and broadcasters may falsely rely on familiarity at the cost of innovation and diversity in their commissioning practice.

There is, however, another aspect that needs to be taken into account when discussing the relationship of creativity and commerce in television production. It concerns the experience of media production as creative work on a micro level. The behaviour of independents as organisations, i.e. their conformity to broadcaster preferences, suggests a straightforward top-down influence from broadcasters and a lack of creativity-commerce tensions. However, when turning our attention from the inter-organisational to the subjective level, it becomes apparent that the situation is far more complex. As individuals, television workers share ambivalent values with regard to their work conditions and the quality of work they produce. An important unifying but nevertheless ambiguous concept in production practice is a shared sense of professionalism. In some regard, the research participants showed great acceptance of the commercial rationale. They tended to see matching pre-determined preferences as a trait of professional service. Their professional identity as television workers offered practitioners the opportunity to distance and detach themselves emotionally from the product they created. This helped to resolve tensions between occupational ideals and work reality and thus to prevent or downplay dissatisfaction with their work. Professionalism functions thus as a source of opacity in this process that disguises compliant behaviour. It averts creativity-commerce tensions and (unconsciously) reproduces the service-nature of independent production and its inherent inequality and uneven power structures.

At the same time, the professional identity of television producers and documentary-makers includes values that are clearly in competition with commercial compliance. Professional conventions provide a quality standard or production value that, relatively, is independent from commercial objectives, reliant instead upon aesthetic and technical conventions and techniques. Such professional standards legitimate the work that practitioners carry out and provide them with a sense of achievement and work satisfaction. In addition, the concept of professionalism implies independence from political and (to some extent) economic forces and is associated with providing

an independent public service. When this production value is compromised for economic/commercial reasons, for example, because the project does not fit the preconceived criteria of broadcasters or when a commissioner demands substantial changes, this can cause significant tensions and conflicts for the television workers. Creative decisions that could cause such conflicts include the rejection of ideas independent workers perceive as worthwhile or the dismissal of their narrative or aesthetic choices and suggestions. Consequently, practitioners perceive themselves as being under pressure and constrained by the commercial conditions of the production culture and feel that, due to this, their compliance with broadcaster preferences and decisions is enforced rather than willing – despite showing a general understanding of the commercial necessities of an independent company as a business. If not resolved through the professional value of delivering a quality service or professional distance to the cultural product, research participants voiced open criticism and frustration or made humorous and sarcastic comments, which showed all too clearly that they are highly aware and critically reflexive of their working conditions and the constraints they experience. It has been argued that the existence of such reflexivities is a condition for creativity and as such for aesthetic innovation (chapter 5). Thus, professionalism and reflexivity present forms of agency that have the potential to alter existing structures and produce new structural conditions. The absorption of successful programme innovations into the mainstream is just one example of this. This copying of innovative elements creates potentially new standards and structures that producers have to adhere to, adding to or replacing existing ones. Such innovation of course does not necessarily present an improvement and enrichment of generic culture. Nevertheless, informal reflexivity and professional values can encourage creativity and innovation within the existing boundaries of television production. After all, innovative creative programming can often lead to commercial success and as such is highly desirable – but only as long as it conforms to broadcasters' requirements.

As I have described in the preceding analysis chapters, the field of documentary production is marked by competing and contradictory values, perceptions and objectives. Echoing the existing literature on the subject, the relations between structure and agency are complex and interdependent, and the dilemma between creativity and commerce in cultural production is confirmed. On the one hand, the commercial broadcasting system constrains human agency in the form of individual creativity and encourages and rewards agency that reproduces the existing structures. On the other hand, it provides the conditions for differing values and reflexivity among television professionals which bear the potential for aesthetic innovation and structural adjust-

ments. However, the question that needs to be asked is: which of these tendencies dominate the creative decisions made in documentary development? My empirical results suggest an imbalance in favour of cost-efficient standardisation of production at the expense of creative experimentation. In other words, commercial interests dominate the development of new programming with a preference for cost-effective standardised programming that relies on familiarity in order to re-create previous ratings success. Consequently, commercial structures and their focus on presumed audience demand tend to constrain rather than enable creativity in documentary programme development.

I argue, therefore, in agreement with Keat (1999: 95), that markets alone cannot be relied upon for the adequate provision of cultural goods. I claim that commercialism and markets are not sufficient to stimulate a varied and innovative evolution of television genres such as documentary, and that audiences have a limited choice with regard to the type of programming they may or may not watch. I do not argue for an idealistic independence from commercial influence or for abolishing markets altogether. The question is rather in what way spaces for innovation, experimentation and diversity in documentary production and development can be ensured in a commercialised broadcasting ecology. According to my results, the extreme competition and economic pressure experienced by independent companies increase their dependency on broadcasters and essentially limit the scope of creativity and innovation in project development. Based on my research findings, I agree with Keat's (1999, 2000) suggestion that we should adjust our understanding of markets and retain flexible with regard to intervention and support. He suggests that we should think

> in terms of 'market boundaries', of possible reasons either for excluding certain social institutions and practices from the market or for supporting their operation outwith the market, yet without thereby rejecting its overall merits as a way of organising economic production. (1999: 92)

Protection from the market through various forms of state intervention (as, for example, in the form of regulatory support as described in chapter 4) is then justified if "being subject to the logic of commodity production would be inappropriate, damaging" (ibid). I argue that this is to some extent the case with television production; and existing regulation, funding structures and public service obligations correspond to my view that support beyond market structures is necessary to enable the creation of high quality, diverse, pluralistic and innovative programmes. Again, I would like to highlight that I do not claim that all existing television programming is of inferior quality due to existing production structures. My intention is rather to point out those ten-

dencies within these structures that limit individual creative expression and facilitate the reproduction of familiar content.

7.2. Entertainment versus Social Functions: Decline or Evolution of Generic Traditions?

Aside from the production experience, this thesis is also interested in the consequences of the production setting and its inherent tensions between creativity and commerce for the genre of television documentary. It is not my intention to make definite quality judgements about all the programme ideas that are currently in development, but certain worrying tendencies have emerged from the fieldwork, which, I believe, are worth critical attention. I have addressed above the reduced understanding of originality and the preference of familiarity, in other words the generic reproduction, in documentary development that can result from commercial success pressure and risk aversion. This implies a risk that standardised and predictable programmes may be produced, which offer only slight variations of familiar themes and narrative structures. Other attempts to control the commercial success of television documentaries include preferences for exclusive and extraordinary content in a bid for audience attention. However, if everything is – or at least is being promoted as being – exceptional, then the extraordinary becomes rapidly ordinary and familiar, losing its initial attraction in the process. Furthermore, this preference has implications for the authenticity of documentary representation as a traditional generic value. Instead of providing a truthful representation of social reality, it may distort perceptions of what is typical in society. Finally, another effect of economic imperatives is the rationalisation and cost-saving of the development (and production) process – both at independent companies and television networks. This can encourage a preference for formatting and serialisation, which again contributes to programme standardisation and overlaps with a reliance on the reproduction and recombination of familiar elements that have proven or are presumed to be successful with audiences.

All of these tendencies and preferences in the development of documentary programming are passed from broadcasters on to independents, as the latter try to provide content that matches what networks seek in accordance with the overarching principle of commercial conformity. As commercial institutions, independents have little reason to digress or deviate from these preferences since meeting them will impact positively on their chances for economic success in the form of a production

contract. Further, they offer the possibility to reduce the costs and increase the efficacy of development activities within independent companies. Consequently, this limits the probability (and appeal) of deviant agency and contributes instead to the reproduction of structural conditions. Nevertheless, critical awareness among independent production workers of these limitations of creative expression, and the existence of competing cultural and social values, bear the potential for change. Such competing values concern, firstly, authenticity and real-life-connectedness, and secondly, the potential social functions of documentary. Raising people's awareness, revealing injustice and stipulating social change may all be worthy intentions for documentary-makers, but they do not tend to be very attractive to audiences, which is why social functions are not a priority for broadcasters when it comes to documentary. Such serious documentaries and their focus on political and social conditions and ordinary people have a reputation for being boring and overly didactical in style. This reputation is based partly on the projected fears of programme-makers. The introduction of entertainment as a new function of documentary works against this image, but it also creates an artistic dilemma for programme-makers. Their professional identity as documentary-makers binds practitioners to social values and ideas of worthiness with regard to documentary representation. At the same time, they perceive themselves as television workers who (merely) deliver a service in a commercially driven industry. As a way out of this dilemma, independent workers focus on the professional execution of their work with regard to technical and aesthetic skill and production value. This focus provides them with a sense of doing good work and it is less likely to create any conflict with broadcasters, who desire such production value as quality standard. In this process, form becomes more important than content and the potential for social impact is further diminished.

What does all this mean for television documentary as a genre? Are we actually witnessing the decline of genre traditions as many voices claim? Or are these developments merely characteristics of a generic evolution? Genres are always changing and evolving, and often this change is received critically and perceived as a threat to cherished traditions. Practitioners' shared sense of a mythological past with reference to production structures and generic culture contributes to a nostalgic evaluation of past conditions. In the eyes of the research participants, they compare favourably to the contemporary production setting, for example, with regard to available broadcasting slots, production budgets and schedules and the willingness to experiment. Thus, practitioners perceive the commercial constraints of their work as factors that prevent high-quality work and neglect classic 'serious' forms of documentary. And it cannot

be denied that the economic conditions for documentary producers have significantly tightened. The subsequent financial adjustments in the design of proposed programmes have led to reductions in shooting time, staff, equipment and locations, which reduce the production value of a programme.

On the other hand, we see a greater freedom pertaining to the issues that can be discussed and the images that can be shown on television screens. Furthermore, genre boundaries have blurred as documentary has adopted and rearranged features of other television genres and *vice versa*. As I discussed in chapter 2, documentary is already a genre that is difficult to define and several competing positions exist concerning this issue. The blurring of genre boundaries contributes to this difficulty and thus to a "weakening of documentary status" (Corner 2002: 263), but it also creates innovative and interesting forms of representation. Nonetheless, the lack of a clear definition of documentary, compared for example to drama and news, and its overlap with other factual genres impede a normative evaluation of the developments and tendencies analysed here. I return, therefore, to Corner's (2000a, 2002) conceptualisation of documentary functions that has already guided my research questions and informed my data collection and analysis. The development tendencies I have identified in my research confirm a shift from social to entertainment functions. Not only has documentary obtained a new function of diversion, but also this function seems to dominate over the others in terms of quantity and priority – even though documentaries are still being promoted as being of educational and informative value. Thus, I agree with Corner (ibid.) that we need a broader theoretical conceptualisation of documentary, which includes 'lighter' versions of the genre, if it is to remain a meaningful defining category. In documentary practice, this has happened already. The research participants demonstrated a broad understanding of documentary and showed openness and acceptance toward features that are traditionally incongruent with classic 'serious' documentary and its social functions (but also critical reflection on these features). These include, for example, the construction of social settings and emphasis on the spectacular and entertaining. In this new, broader understanding, the traditional serious forms of the genre alongside their social values, which have so far dominated the public, professional and academic conceptualisations of documentary, stand next to other 'lighter' forms of documentary programming.

The research participants did not perceive the trend toward diversion as negative *per se* and I agree with them. The problem is rather its disproportionate growth and the related substantial reduction of other serious forms of documentary. Documentary is a genre that is characterised by its wide range of topics and aesthetic tools. To reduce its presence to familiar, extraordinary and entertaining programming, and to neglect its social functions for commercial reasons, means to limit the genre's potential – provided one considers aesthetic diversity, social significance and authenticity to be desirable qualities of documentary representation. The research participants believe that it is possible to combine entertaining functions with some degree of social relevance and worthiness. But to achieve this to a satisfying standard, further intervention is needed that relieves economic pressures and encourages generic diversity. Existing public service obligations in the UK and Germany provide an important corrective to commercial, market-led commissioning, but these obligations are coming under severe commercial pressure and this means that they are losing importance in terms of overall television output. The fieldwork indicated generational differences with regard to education, training and experience, which may be the expression of a shift in values and self-understanding of documentary-makers that depart from ambitions of social impact and authorship. To answer this question exceeds the scope of this study and further research is needed to study the generational specificities of television workers.

Although this discussion might sound highly critical, I do not claim that these are the only tendencies in television documentary or that they necessarily lead to a loss in programme quality. Documentary as a genre should evolve and change, but I suggest that we might face a reduction in variation and a loss or replacement of traditional documentary forms as a reaction to the increased commercial focus of television – particularly, with reference to the erosion of regulatory protectionism and support of documentary through the public service remit. It has to be stressed again that in the British and German context television broadcasters are important funding partners for all forms of documentary, not only pertaining to full commissions but they are also important co-funders who enable the production of festival and cinema films.

7.3. Beyond the National Context: International Standardisation?

Another dimension of my research concerns the comparison of two national contexts. Although not strictly speaking a comparative study in the classic sense of the word,[106] the project nevertheless compared the structural conditions and agency of television producers based on case studies in Great Britain and Germany. As I have described in chapter 3, there is a great degree of structural similarity between the two production contexts and case studies. The industries in both countries are similarly organised, including a broadcaster-publisher system, a competitive independent production sector and the dual existence of public service and commercial broadcasting, and they have undergone a comparable process of commercialisation. At the outset of this research, I expected a greater degree of nationally specific differences in the two cultures, but the comparative dimension revealed mainly strong similarities. My empirical results show an overwhelming parallelism regarding observed practices, values and opinions. This fact can be explained to some extent with reference to practicalities of production and a certain organisational logic of production processes that are specific to this type of cultural work and medium. But this does not fully account for the great similarity in the specific activities and priorities of the studied development departments. Rather, the reason lies in the similarity of the structural conditions of television production in both countries. These include: dependency on broadcasters; general undercapitalisation and financial precariousness; the high level of competition that independent production companies are subjected to. Such factors lead to a similar focus on commercial success at the expense of creative autonomy among independent producers. This suggests an internationalisation and standardisation of media production processes that is linked to the internationalisation of media ownership and content.

Only few national specifics emerged during the fieldwork relating to textual preferences. They concerned presumed audience tastes, for example, a lack of interest in celebrity- and presenter-led programming in Germany compared to the UK, and of course a domestic focus on national issues, locations and contributors. Nevertheless, the general representational tendencies in development work were the same. However, there are some national differences in economic structure, regulatory support

[106] Ethnography is not a sufficient methodology to draw representative empirical comparative conclusions but it can hint at similarities and differences between research settings and make claims toward the typicality of such observations.

and international positioning that also impact on the priorities of independent companies. The German research participants claimed that there was a greater degree of commercialisation and competition in British television production, and indeed the British television system was subject to commercial competition, neoliberal deregulation and the dictate of consumer sovereignty at a much earlier stage and in a more intense way. This could explain the more entrenched focus of British independent producers on entertaining and exceptional context and the greater degree of formatting and serialisation in documentary. On the other hand, one German participant claimed that the British setting was more open to innovative content and would encourage experimentation in order to be competitive and commercially successful, in comparison to the more conventional and conservative commissioning preferences in Germany. Such a personal perception is hard to verify but this statement addresses another important international dimension of documentary production: the international validity of genre-related values. It was not only the structural conditions and actions of independent producers that were highly similar in the two observed settings. The generic values of documentary that were discussed in this thesis (including authenticity and social impact) also proved to be a significant factor for the actions, opinions and beliefs of practitioners across national borders. They form a shared basis for judgements made about the quality of documentary programmes and are an illustration of documentary-makers' general attention and orientation towards international developments in their genre. International exchange is a long-established tradition of documentary culture that has been nurtured in the festival and cinema culture. In this context, the international reputation and position of nationally produced programmes on the global television market is relevant for independent producers as well as broadcasters. This is also the area where we can see the biggest difference between the two countries.

The UK has a long-standing reputation for innovative and high-quality documentary programming on the international documentary scene. This is mainly influenced by the international distribution of acclaimed BBC programmes, but Channel 4 programmes have also claimed a position of high regard, especially in the area of documentary. This status places British producers under the obligation to maintain their reputation and puts them under pressure to produce original programming of outstanding quality. This requires experimentation, attention to the unfamiliar and a willingness to take risks and try out something new – all of which are considered to be positive characteristics of television production in the context of this thesis. In general, foreign interest swings more in favour of British programming than German productions, even if it has a domestic and national focus. Consequently, the direction of

influence between the two countries is quite one-sided with German producers following British programme developments more closely and German broadcasters attempting to reproduce successful British documentary trends. The widespread international adaptation of British factual formats is just one example of this tendency. All German research participants expressed a clear view of the UK as the biggest innovator in documentary, holding (more or less) detailed knowledge of British developments in television and cinema documentary. Conversely, knowledge of German and other international documentary programming was widely absent in the British company except for a handful of successful festival films.
This difference in international status is of economic importance for independent producers and broadcasters. International reputation, whether it is based on the merits of a specific single organisation or obtained through association with a particular national context, serves as symbolic capital that increases the likelihood of programme sales, international commissions and co-productions. Again, British programmes have a structural advantage compared to German productions when it comes to such forms of funding and revenue. Not only does their positive reputation facilitate sales and co-productions, but they also have an advantage based on language and cultural proximity that creates additional distribution opportunities, especially in countries such as the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. British independents have a particular interest in international distribution. The previously discussed Terms of Trade regulation permits them to retain the international licensing rights for the programmes they produce. Hence, all revenue from the international sales of these programmes benefits the independent company (after distribution costs are deducted).

By contrast, independent producers in other countries, including Germany, have to transfer all rights to the commissioning broadcaster who then has the opportunity to distribute the programme internationally. The only opportunity for German independents to retain some international rights is through an international co-production, in which licensing rights for the funding broadcasters are limited to their national territory. Producers welcome co-production opportunities for various reasons. For example, German budgets are generally lower than British ones and co-productions can offer the means for higher production value and more creative options. On the other hand, co-productions are far more complex, difficult and time-consuming in their development, production and financing structure. International co-productions, especially with festival distribution, raise further a producer's industry status – which seems to be of less importance for British television documentary producers. German

documentary producers and broadcasters are, therefore, more open to international co-productions, which offer an entry into the global television market and film festivals (if a topic is suitable, that is, of interest to trans-national audiences). By contrast, they perceived the British television market as relatively closed with a tendency to "make everything themselves". They considered it "improbable" to sell to or (co-)produce with British broadcasters (unless it is a programme about the Second World War) (field notes D).

This discussion of the international dimension of television production confirms the overwhelming impact that commercialisation and commodification have on the activities of independent producers. It highlighted some of the differences that exist between the different national contexts examined in this thesis, but essentially the findings confirm the prominence of commercial objectives and the influence of commercial structures on the actions of independent companies. They are motivated by the search for additional revenue on international markets and adapt to the existing structures and opportunities. Again, industry reputation proved to be an important factor for the success of independent producers, similar to its function in the national production context. Further comparative research is needed to explore these issues in more detail, but overall, the multi-national dimension of this research illustrates the importance of structural conditions on the national and international level for the activities and priorities that can be observed in national independent development work.

7.4. Implications for Future Research

This thesis cannot provide final answers to questions of creativity and commerce in media production. Instead, it presents an empirical investigation of a particular area of cultural production that describes and analyses the causalities, procedures, values and opinions in the development of new documentary programmes. In so doing, it contributes to a body of media production studies that are concerned with questions of structural influence on producer agency and helps us to better understand how media texts take the form they do. But of course, as with any empirical research, there are also limitations of this study and further questions have arisen in the course of fieldwork and analysis. In the final section of this chapter I discuss, therefore, the implications my research has for further work in this field and suggest several areas of inquiry that need further attention.

The ethnographic approach proved an appropriate choice to access the cultural practices this thesis is interested in. It offered an insider perspective and direct access to cultural practice and gathered a rich account of the values, opinions and actions of individual producers. By linking this information with structural conditions of the television system the study provides an in-depth evaluation of the complex interplay between structure and agency. However, there are also some drawbacks that are connected to the chosen methodology. As with most empirical work, my results are specific to a particular research context. They are concerned with one particular area of cultural production, and the conditions and causalities of television production might differ greatly from those in other cultural industries. However, by comparing the results of research in different forms of cultural production, it is possible to identify such similarities and differences. This helps us to get a broader picture of the cultural production sector and to identify the specificities of cultural production, firstly, compared to other forms of industrial production, and secondly, with regard to the particular characteristics of the different industries this sector consists of. To carry out such a cross-industry comparison was not the objective of this study; my research was limited instead to the television sector. But my findings provide material for a broader theoretical discussion about the cultural industries. Some important work has already been undertaken and several scholars discuss the similarities and differences across different cultural industries (cf. Miège 1989, Hesmondhalgh 2007, Mayer et al. 2009, Pratt and Jeffcutt 2009 and Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010), but further work is needed to better understand the complex interplay of influences that shape cultural production. Furthermore, my findings are specific to the national conditions that exist in the British and German television industries. Similarities with other national contexts that possess comparable structures are very likely, but they cannot be extended to contexts with other characteristics. For example, an observation of the independent documentary sector in the USA would paint a very different picture based on the different funding and distribution model, for which television plays a significantly smaller role than in Great Britain and Germany. Nevertheless, as the preceding discussion has illustrated, the multi-national, multi-sited research design provided data for conclusions about the role of structural conditions on a trans-national level. More comparative or multi-national research is required to assess and evaluate the effects of the differences and similarities in the cultural production of different national contexts.

My results provide a comprehensive and detailed picture of the studied production culture, but the small size of the research sample is a central limitation of observational research methods. Their findings are not representative and cannot be generalised based on the size of the studied sample. My results are nonetheless valid because they are based on the study of a typical setting. This provides valuable information about the causalities at work in the research field and gives indications of how different actors will behave under similar conditions. Nevertheless, further qualitative and quantitative research based on my findings is required in order to make generalised statements that are empirically representative for the whole production sector, for example, in the form of a quantitative survey among a larger sample of practitioners across the industry. In addition, the data gathered in this study provides detailed information on the conditions, activities and opinions at a particular moment of time. Little can be said about long-term changes and continuities and this is a general shortcoming of existing production research, due to the evolving nature of the subject. It must be noted, however, that recollections and comparisons expressed in the research interviews did provide some information about the perceived changes in production practice. Yet, in order to assess the temporal development of the production sector comprehensively, longitudinal research is required that revisits the sector regularly over a longer period of time. One rare example of such coveted research is the *Television Industry Tracking Study* carried out by the British Film Institute that collected data from 450 production workers between 1994 and 1998.[107] Another possibility to address developments over time is the comparison with past production studies that were carried out in a media culture quite different from the commercialised broadcasting industry of today. However, the number of such studies is small and it is difficult to match the particularities of the research samples of the time in order to provide comparative data. Nevertheless, reference to such previous work can provide some confirmation or contradiction of contemporary claims about the effects of historical developments in media structure and culture.

Aside from methodological limitations, additional questions emerged during data collection and analysis. The substantial influence that commissioning editors, their tastes, preferences and requirements exert over independent development requires us to pay closer attention to what is going on at television broadcasters. So far, we have little knowledge about the way in which creative decisions are made at televi-

[107] Several publications emerged from this study, see http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/research/academic/past.html for further information.

sion networks. Except for some notable exceptions (especially Born 2004), there is little production research that is concerned with commissioning processes. Studies within television networks are concerned mostly with the production processes of specific departments (often this is news production) and much less with the relationships broadcasters have with other actors in the industry. One reason for the dearth of such research is the difficulty to obtain access for observational or other inclusive research. Whilst commissioning editors and other workers at television networks might be willing to take part in an interview, it is much less likely that they will grant access to internal meetings and communication for reasons of confidentiality and publicity. A network can hardly retain anonymity, even if this is possible for its staff. However, institutions with public service status should permit academic examination of their work as a matter of principle, based on their obligation and accountability to the general public.

The significance of public service values for media production is another area of interest that requires further empirical work. Several scholars, mainly in the area of news production research, claim that these values have – as originally designed – a positive impact on television content. My data also indicates a positive relation between public service remit and a diverse and thriving documentary culture. Nonetheless, a specific analytical focus on public service is required to investigate how these values affect creative expression in production practice. Such research would provide important arguments in the debate about the future of public service broadcasting, which at present is informed predominantly by organisational analysis and quantitative programme analysis. Data about the impact of public service values on everyday production practice and its creative decisions could provide new insights about the value or worth of public service ideals for the diversity and quality of television programming. I suspect that such research would reveal further arguments for the continuation of public service broadcasting as a corrective or at least alternative to commercial broadcasting and the dogma of consumer choice.

Another area of research that will require further investigation involves alternative forms of funding and distribution and their significance for independent producers. Public subsidies, festivals and online distribution are just some examples of different platforms and partners for independent production that impact on production practice. There is much speculation about their worth but little empirical examination of their impact and value. Finally, my research suggested that there might be a generational split or shift among television workers with regard to training and professional values,

as educational opportunities and the television culture that media producers are socialised with have changed. Whether this is the case and what the implications are for production culture are questions that call for additional research concerning the identity of television workers and their conceptualisations of genre and programme quality.

7.5. Change and Opportunity

Cultural change is always accompanied by various expectations, suspicion and fears. Commercialisation processes in the broadcasting industries and the related restructuring and change of the production sector form no exception. They have been met with fears and concerns about the production conditions for media producers, about programme quality and public service values and about the future of the documentary genre. And although practitioners to some extent idealise past conditions, it cannot be denied that production conditions have altered considerably and at least some of the critical concerns about this process have been validated. The television workers of today operate in a new economic climate that is driven largely by commercial imperatives rather than by social and public service values. Instead of exploring the social and cultural potential of their creative expression, they are (and have to be) concerned with audience ratings and commercial success. As a result, creative conformity and (self-)restriction for economic reasons dominate the development of new documentaries.

Although (most of) the structural changes in the broadcasting industry are permanent, the related adaptations of the documentary genre are "neither irreversible nor necessarily negative" (Dover 2001: 269). Alternative responses to commercialism require non-conformist agency from programme-makers and commissioning editors. Developments within the practitioner community, such as increased organisation and communication of programme makers and the production of programmes outside the established structures of television and cinema through individual investment, private or public sponsorship and often with extensive use of new communication and distribution technologies online, are examples of such alternative agency. The research participants expressed a desire for such alternatives, but the present structural conditions are less than supportive of any change that does not serve economic objectives. It is therefore evident that we are justified in questioning critically the commercial pressures in contemporary television production and their effects on programme-makers and the texts they produce. Television workers have adapted in complex

ways to the commercial setting. Although they comply in their work practice with commercial imperatives, they also seek to maintain their identity and legitimisation as documentary-makers. They are consequently critical of the conditions they are subjected to and to some extent even of their own work. The foundations for nonconformist agency thus exist already in independent production but this leads rarely to active resistance. Alternative agency is instead a much more informal and subtle affair. Fieldwork observation indicates a shift in practitioners' conceptualisation of documentary. They employ a broader concept of documentary that includes new entertaining forms of the genre as well as traditional social and cultural values. Such generic evolution needs to be recognised but without losing sight of critical developments that lead to homogenisation and standardisation instead of diversity and innovation in programme content and form.

While the chosen methodology provides data about a particular moment in time, this thesis does nevertheless make an argument for change having occurred – not only with regard to production structures but also with regard to the nature of the created texts. Practitioners' interview statements and existing literature on documentary provide information on the nature of television documentary in pre- or early neoliberal periods that permits careful comparison with the here discussed production culture and its products. As argued above, the thesis provides evidence for a transformation, a shift in the kind of programmes that producers develop as a result of an increasingly commercialised production culture. In particular, this involves a shift away from social purpose and intention toward entertainment and diversion which confirms the observations and predictions of scholars such as Corner (2000a, 2002) and Kilborn (2003, 2008). In the course of this shift producers move away from a predominantly artistic approach toward the documentary genre that has dominated the focus of documentary literature and our understanding and expectations of documentary for a long time (see chapter 2). Combined with commercial imperatives, this shift has altered the character of the majority of the created programmes. Most notably, this involves a shift from ordinariness to extraordinary, extreme and exceptional content and a limited conceptualisation of originality that presents itself in an increase of familiarity encouraged among other things by forms of formatting (see chapter 6). This development clearly demonstrates a change in comparison to programmes produced in a early or pre-neoliberal setting. It indicates how increased commercialisation contributes to the generic change I described above.

Based on the results of the observation, most of the new programmes are developed with this commercialised entertaining focus, which raises concerns about generic diversity and quality. The aim of this critique is not to restrict documentary to its serious social and political form. Rather, I argue for maintaining the aesthetic and narrative richness that this genre has to offer and suggest that documentary's social functions could be linked to characteristics of more entertaining forms of the genre. My data suggest that the present commercialised production structure does not create sufficient opportunity for such diversity. On the whole, it can be argued that commercialism and the related economic pressure, precariousness and competition in independent television production largely constrain individual creativity, experimentation and innovation, although it can also have a certain enabling impact. An important opportunity for change lies in the return to ideas of public service instead of supply and demand, which, as I have established, is a flawed concept with regard to cultural products such as television programmes. Television workers' self-understanding as professionals could support such a shift in values and, indeed, the research participants all demonstrated a sense of social responsibility and pride with regard to their occupation and an appreciation of the generic variation and social functions, documentary has to offer. They showed ambitions for achieving social impact, in one form or another, and a desire to do work that is meaningful and worthwhile.[108] Asked about the biggest problems of their work practice and the changes that would be required to improve their situation, they named three main difficulties that impinge upon the quality of the produced programmes: First of all, economic insecurity in the form of undercapitalisation and competition, secondly, a lack of broadcasting opportunities for serious, one-off feature-length, non-formatted programmes, and thirdly, the general unwillingness of commissioning editors to take risks in their creative decisions. All of these are ultimately the result of the current economic structure of the sector. How

[108] An example for the importance and value that documentary-makers assign to such forms of documentary programming was the public campaign to save the BBC4 broadcasting slot *Storyville* from drastic budget cuts. *Storyville* is a rare exception in the commercialised broadcasting landscape offering a platform for socially-orientated investigation and exploration often with international content and even origin. In August 2007, the strand's annual budget was to be reduced by over 50%, equalling 25 less commissions for independent documentary producers per year. This cutback stimulated a passionate though unsuccessful response in the form of the *Save Storyville Campaign* initiated by filmmakers and supported by the Directors' and Producers' Rights Society (DPRS) in the UK (Thompson 2008). Their protest was supported by the international documentary-community, showing that documentary producers are concerned about present developments beyond their national context and that these concerns are based on the same values. The cuts went ahead despite these objections, which illustrates that practitioners', at least when it comes to documentary, need further support to counter such developments.

could these conditions be improved and the realisation of already existing creative values enabled?

One possible way to limit the constraining effects of economic structures and encourage greater creative agency is continuing and increased political intervention. The existing political support of cultural production has proven essential for a creatively diverse cultural output. In the case of documentary production, political support systems such as the existence of public service broadcasting, independent production quotas and financial subsidies play a crucial role in enabling artistic freedom and creative opportunity. The establishment of similar additional regulatory and financial support structures could grant independent producers and broadcasters with partial independence from market forces and thus could provide them with greater freedom to realise their creative vision. However, such protectionist intervention is highly unlikely in the context of the current neoliberal economic climate in Great Britain and Germany which has led to numerous cuts in cultural spending[109], and documentary programming is certainly not a high-ranking priority in the eyes of policy-makers. Nevertheless, it is important to identify potential areas of influence that could alter or soften the current commercialised nature of the television economies in Great Britain and Germany as described in this thesis. At the same time, this production analysis has demonstrated clearly that the impact, which existing commercial structures have on the creative expression of documentary-makers and on the diversity and quality of the created programming, is highly ambivalent. Certainly, many high-quality documentaries are being produced both in Great Britain and in Germany today and many of those are facilitated by the forces of commercial competition. Similarly, individual and professional attitudes and values about documentary – and thus individual agency – may support commercial structures or encourage creative resistance against such structures and their requirements. This thesis does not aim to condemn existing documentary programmes as being of inferior quality in general, far from it. Rather, its critique concerns matters of balance and proportion with regard to the diversity, originality, innovation and social functions of documentary. Overall, commercially induced restrictions and constraints outweigh the enabling features of structure and agency leading among other things to an overemphasis on entertainment at the expense of the social potential of the documentary genre. At present, most documen-

[109] This includes for example the abolishment of the UK Film Council (which invested in the development and production of British films) and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council in 2010 under British culture secretary Jeremy Hunt.

tary-workers operate in a constrained and dependent setting which encourages creative self-restriction and risk-aversion. This will have to change, in order for these practitioners to not just to make the best of it, but instead make the best they can.

Bibliography

ADORNO, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979/1944) The Culture Industry: enlightenment as mass deception. In: J. Curran, M. Gurevitch and J. Wollacott (eds), *Mass Communication and Society*. London: Edward Arnold, pp.349-83.

ADORNO, T. and M. Horkheimer (1995) *Dialectic of enlightenment.* New York: Continuum.

ALTHUSSER, L. (1971) *Lenin and philosophy and other essays.* London: New Left Books.

ARRIENS, K. (1999) *Wahrheit und Wirklichkeit im Film. Philosophie des Dokumentarfilms.* Wuerzburg: Koenigshausen und Neumann.

AUFDERHEIDE, P. (2007) *Documentary: a very short introduction.* New York: Oxford University Press.

AUSTIN, T. (2007) *Watching the world. Screen documentary and audiences.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

AUSTIN, T. and W. de Jong (eds) (2008) *Rethinking documentary. New perspectives, new practices.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

AVILÉS, J., B. León, K. Sanders and J. Harrison (2004) Journalists at digital television newsrooms in Britain and Spain: workflow and multi-skilling in a competitive environment. *Journalism Studies.* **5**(1), pp.87-100.

BABE, R. (2009) *Cultural studies and political economy: toward a new integration.* Lanham: Lexington Books.

BAKER, E. (1997) Giving the audience what it wants. *Ohio State Law Journal.* **58**(2), pp.311-417.

BANKS, M. (2007) *The politics of cultural work.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

BANKS, M. (2010) Autonomy guaranteed? Cultural work and the "art-commerce relation". *Journal for Cultural Research.* **14**(3), pp.251-269.

BARNETT, S. and E. Seymour (1999): *A shrinking iceberg travelling south… Changing trends in British television: a case study of drama and current affairs.* London: Campaign for Quality Television Ltd.

BARNOUW, E. (1974) *Documentary: a history of the non-fiction film.* New York: Oxford University Press.

BARSAM, R. (1992). *Nonfiction film: a critical history.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

BATABYAL, S. (2007) Dilemmas of ethnographic research: the practitioner/academic's quandary. *'Minding the Gap': Reflections on Media Practice & Theory*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford

[online]. [Accessed 2 October 2007]. Available from: http://journalhosting.org/meccsa-pgn.

BAUMANN, A. (2002) Informal labour market governance: the case of the British and German media production industries. *Work, Employment & Society.* **16**(1), pp.27-46.

BBC (2004) *Code of Practice. BBC's dealings with independents for television programmes commissioned by the BBC* [online]. [Accessed: 12 June 2010]. Available from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/tv/business/code_of_practice.pdf.

BBC (2010) *BBC iPlayer. Online monthly press pack: January 2010.* [online]. [Accessed: 21 August 2010] Available from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/bbcinternet/img/Publicity_pack_January_10.pdf.

BEATTIE, K. (2004) *Documentary screens. Nonfiction film and television.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

BECK, U. (1992) *Risk society: toward a new modernity.* London: Sage.

BECK, U. and E. Beck-Gernsheim (2001) *Individualization: institutionalized individualism and its social and political consequences.* London: Sage.

BERGER, P. and T. Luckmann (1967) *The social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

BHASKAR, R. (1991) *Philosophy and the idea of freedom.* Oxford: Blackwell.

BHASKAR, R. (1998) *The possibility of naturalism: a philosophical critique of the contemporary human sciences.* 3rd ed. London: Routledge.

BLAIR, H. (2001) "You are only as good as your last job": the labour process and labour market in the British film industry. *Work, Employment and Society.* **15**(1), pp.149-169.

BLAIR, H. (2003) Winning and losing in flexible labour markets: the formation and operation of networks of interdependence in the UK film industry. *Sociology.* **37**(4), pp.677-694.

BLAIR, H., Grey, S. & Randle, K. (2001) Working in film: employment in a project based industry. *Personnel Review.* **30**(2), pp.170-185.

BLAIR, H., N. Culkin and K. Randle (2003) From London to Los Angeles: a comparison of local labour market processes in the US and UK film industries. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management.* **14** (4), pp.619-633.

BODEN, M. (2004) *The creative mind: myths and mechanisms.* 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

BORN, G. (2000) Inside television: television research and the sociology of culture. *Screen.* **41**(4), pp.68-96.

BORN, G. (2002) Reflexivity and ambivalence: culture, creativity and government in the BBC. *Journal for Cultural Research.* 6(1), pp.65-90.

BORN, G. (2004) *Uncertain vision: Birt, Dyke and the reinvention of the BBC.* London: Secker & Warburg.

BOURDIEU, P. (1986) The forms of capital. In: J. Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education.* New York: Greenwood Press, pp.241-258.

BOURDIEU, P. (1993) *The field of cultural production: essays on art and literature.* Cambridge: Polity.

BOURDIEU, P. (1996) *The rules of art: genesis and structure of the literary field.* Cambridge: Polity.

BRAINARD, L. (2004) *Television: the limits of deregulation.* Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner.

BRAVERMAN, H. (1974) *Labor and monopoly capital: the degradation of work in the twentieth century.* New York, London: Monthly Review Press.

BRIGGS, A. (1961-1995) *The history of broadcasting in the United Kingdom.* Vol. 1-5. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BRUNS, A. (2005) *Gatewatching: collaborative online news production.* New York: Peter Lang.

BRUYN, S. (1970) The methodology of participant observation. In: W. Filstead (ed.) *Qualitative methodology: firsthand involvement with the social world.* Chicago: Markham, pp.305-327.

BRUZZI, S. (2000) *New documentary. A critical introduction.* London: Routledge.

BUNDESAMT FÜR STATISTIK (n.D.) *Einkommens- und Verbrauchsstichprobe (EVS). Ausstattung privater Haushalte mit Unterhaltungselektronik am 1.1.2003 und 1.1.2008* [online]. [Accessed 18 August 2010]. Available from: http://www.destatis.de.

BURNS, T. (1972) Commitment and career in the BBC. In: D. McQuail (ed.) *Sociology of mass communications: selected readings.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, pp.281-310.

BURNS, T. (1977) *The BBC: public institution and private world.* London: Macmillan.

CAIN, J. (1992) *70 years of broadcasting.* London: BBC.

CALDWELL, J. (2008) *Production culture: industrial reflexivity and critical practice in film and television.* Durham, London: Duke University Press.

CANTOR, M. (1971) *The Hollywood TV producer: his work and his audience.* New York: Basic Books.

CAUGHIE, J. (1991) Adorno's reproach: repetition, difference and the television genre. *Screen.* **32**(2), pp.127-153.

CAVES, R. (2002) *Creative industries: contracts between art and commerce.* London: Harvard University Press.

CHANEY, D. and M. Pickering (1986) Authorship in documentary: sociology as an art form in mass Observation. In: J. Corner (ed.) *Documentary and the mass media.* London: Edward Arnold, pp.29-44.

COILLINS, P. (2003) *Culture or anarchy: the future of public service broadcasting.* London: Social Market Foundation.

CORNER, J. (1996) *The art of record: a critical introduction to documentary.* Manchester, Manchester University Press.

CORNER, J. (1999) *Critical ideas in television studies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CORNER, J. (2000a) *Documentary in a post-documentary culture? A note on forms and their functions* [online]. [Accessed 12 November 2009]. Available from: http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/changing.media/index.html.

CORNER, J. (2000b) What can we say about 'documentary'? *Media, Culture and Society.* **22**(5), pp.681-688.

CORNER, J. (2002) Performing the real: documentary diversions. *Television and New Media.* **3**(3), pp.255-269.

CORNER, J. (2006) 'A fiction (un)like any other'? *Critical Studies in Television.* **1**(1), pp.89-96.

CORNER, J. and A. Rosenthal (2005) Introduction. In. A. Rosenthal and J. Corner (eds) *New challenges for documentary.* 2nd ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp.1-13.

COTTLE, S. (2000) New(s) times: towards a 'second wave' of news ethnography. *Communications.* **25**(1), pp.19-41.

COTTLE, S. (2003) (ed.) *Media organization and production.* London: Sage

COTTLE, S. (2007), Ethnography and news production: new(s) developments in the field. *Sociology Compass.* **1**(1), pp.1-16.

COTTLE, S. and M. Ashton (1999) From BBC newsroom to BBC newscentre: On changing technologies and journalist practices. *Convergence.* **5**(3), pp.22-43.

COULDRY, N. (2000a) *Inside culture: re-imagining the method of cultural studies.* London: Sage.

COULDRY, N. (2000b) *The place of media power: pilgrims and witnesses of the media age.* London: Routledge.

CRISELL, A. (2002) *An introductory history of British broadcasting*. 2nd ed. London, New York: Routledge.

DCMS (1998) *A new cultural framework*. London: HMSO.

DE JONG, W. (2008) Developing and producing a feature documentary: the case of Deep Water. In: T. Austin and W. de Jong (eds) *Rethinking documentary. New Perspectives, new Practices*. Maidenhead: OPU, pp.135-151.

DE VREESE, C. (2003) *Framing Europe: television news and European integration*. Amsterdam: Aksant.

DEBORD, G. (1983) *The society of the spectacle*. London: Rebel Press.

DORNFELD, B. (1998) *Producing public television, producing public culture*. Princeton, N.J., Chichester: Princeton University Press.

DOVER, C. (2001) *British documentary television production: tradition, change and 'crisis' in a practitioner community*. PhD thesis, Goldsmiths College, University of London.

DOVEY, J. (2000) *Freakshow: first person media and factual television*. London: Pluto.

DOWNING, J. (2001). *Radical media: rebellious communication and social movements*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

DU GAY, P. (1997) Introduction. In: P. Du Gay (ed.) *Production of culture, cultures of production*. London: Sage, pp.1-10.

DU GAY, P., S. Hall et al. (1997) *Doing cultural studies: the story of the Sony Walkman*. London: Sage.

ELBING, S. and H. Völzkow (2006) Marktkonstitution und Regulierung der unabhängigen Film- und Fernsehproduktion - Staat, Verbände und Gewerkschaften im deutsch-britischen Vergleich. *Industrielle Beziehungen*. **13**(4), pp.314-339.

ELLIOTT, P. (1972a) *The making of a television series: a case study in the sociology of culture*. London: Constable.

ELLIOTT, P. (1972b) *The sociology of the professions*. London: Macmillan.

ELLIOTT, P. (1977) Media organizations and occupations: an overview. In: J. Curran, M. Gurevitch and J. Woollacott (eds) *Mass communication and society*. Beverly Hills: Sage, pp.142-173.

ENTMAN, R. (2004) *Projections of power: framing news, public opinion, and U.S. foreign policy*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press.

EVANS, G. and P. Shaw (2004) *The contribution of culture to regeneration in the UK: a review of the evidence*. London: DCMS.

FAULKNER, R. (1985) *Hollywood studio musicians: their work and careers in the recording industry*. Lanham: University Press of America.

FISHMAN, M. (1980) *Manufacturing the news*. Austin, London: University of Texas Press.

FLORIDA, R. (2002) *The rise of the creative class: and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. New York: Basic Books.

GALTUNG, J. and M. Ruge (1965) The structure of foreign news. The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crisis in four Norwegian newspapers. *Journal of Peace Research*. **2**(1), pp.64-91.

GANS, H. (1980) *Deciding what's news: a study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

GARCÍA, E. (2004) Online newspapers and the labyrinths of access. *2nd Symposium New Research for New Media: Innovative Research Methodologies*, Tarragona, Catalonia [online]. [Accessed 15 May 2007]. Available from: http://www.makingonlinenews.net/docs/garcia_nrnm2004.pdf.

GARNHAM, N. (1990) *Capitalism and communication: global culture and the economics of information*. London: Sage.

GARNHAM, N. (2005) From cultural to creative industries. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. **11**(1), pp.15-29.

GEHRAU, V. (2001): *Fernsehgenres und Fernsehgattungen: Ansätze und Daten zur Rezeption, Klassifikation und Bezeichnung von Fernsehprogrammen*. Schriftenreihe des Medien Instituts Ludwigshafen. Vol.18. München: Fischer Verlag.

GIDDENS, A. (1976) *New rules of sociological method: a positive critique of interpretative sociologies*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Polity.

GIDDENS, A. (1991) *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the late modern age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

GIEBER, W. (1964) News is what newspapermen make it. In: L. Dexter and D. Manning White (eds) *People, society, and mass communications*. London, New York: Free Press of Glencoe, Collier-Macmillan, pp.173-182.

GILBOA, E. (ed.) (2002) *Media and conflict: framing issues, making policy, shaping opinions*. Ardsley: Transnational Publishers.

GITLIN, T. (1980) *The whole world is watching: mass media in the making and unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley, London: University of California Press

GITLIN, T. (2000) *Inside prime time*. Berkeley, London: University of California Press.

GOLDING, P. and P. Elliott (1979) *Making the news*. London: Longman.

GOMERY, D. and L. Hockley (eds) (2006) *Television industries*. London: British Film Institute.

GOODE, W. (1957) Community within a community: the professions. *American Sociological Review*. **22**(2), pp.194-200.

GOODE, W. (1960) The profession: reports and opinion. Encroachment, charlatanism, and the emerging profession: psychology, sociology and medicine. *American Sociological Review*, **25**(6), pp.902-914.

GRAMSCI, A. (2006) Hegemony, intellectuals and the state. In: Storey, J. (ed.) *Cultural theory and popular culture: a reader*. 3rd ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, pp.85-91.

GRINDSTAFF, L. (2002) *The money shot: trash, class, and the making of TV talk shows*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

HALL, S. (1977) Culture, the media and the 'ideological effect'. In: J. Curran, M. Gurevitch and J. Woollacott (eds) *Mass communication and society*. Beverly Hills: Sage, pp.315-348.

HALLIN, D. (2008) Neoliberalism, social movements and change in media systems in the late twentieth century. In: Hesmondhalgh, D. and J. Toynbee (ed.) *The media and social theory*. London: Routledge, pp.43-58.

HALLIN, D. and P. Mancini (2004) *Comparing media systems: three models of media and politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

HANSEN, A., S. Cottle, R. Negrine and C. Newbold (1998) *Mass communication research methods*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

HARRÉ, R. (1979) *Social being: a theory for social psychology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

HARTLEY, J. (ed.) (2005) *Creative Industries*. Oxford: Blackwell.

HARTMANN, M. (2008) Media ethnography. Method, methodology or research. In: N. Carpentier et al. (eds) Researching media, democracy and participation. Tartu: Tartu University Press, pp.251-261.

HARVEY, S. (2000) Channel Four television: from Annan to Grade. In: E. Buscombe (ed.) *British television and a reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.92-117.

HATTENDORF, M. (1994) *Dokumentarfilm und Authentizitaet. Aesthetik und Pragmatik einer Gattung*. Konstanz: UVK.

HAVENS, T. (2006) *Global television marketplace*. London: BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE.

HENNING, V. and Alpar, A. (2005) Public aid mechanisms in feature film production: The EU Media Plus Programme. *Media Culture and Society*. **27**(2), pp.229-250.

HESMONDHALGH, D. (2007) *The cultural industries*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

HESMONDHALGH, D. (2008) Cultural and creative industries. In: T. Bennett and J. Frow (eds) *The Sage handbook of cultural analysis*. London: Sage, pp.552-569.

HESMONDHALGH, D. and S. Baker (2008) Creative work and emotional labour in the television industry. *Theory, Culture and Society*. **25**(7-8), pp.97-118.

HESMONDHALGH, D. and S. Baker (2010) *Creative labour. Media work in three cultural industries*. London: Routledge.

HICKETHIER, K. (1998) *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*. Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler.

HILL, A, (2007) *Restyling factual television. The reception of news, documentary, and reality genres*. Abington: Routledge.

HILL, A. (2005) *Reality TV: audiences and popular factual television*. London: Routledge.

HOCHSCHILD, A. (1983) *The managed heart: commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley, London: University of California Press.

HOHENBERGER E. (1988) *Die Wirklichkeit des Films. Dokumentarfilm. Ethnographischer Film. Jean Rouch*. Hildesheim: Olms.

HOLT, J. and A. Perren (eds) (2009) *Media industries: history, theory, and method*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

HOOD, St. (ed.) (1994) *Behind the screens. The structure of British broadcasting in the 1990s*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

JANKOWSKI, N. and F. Wester (1991). The qualitative tradition in social science inquiry: contributions to mass communication research. In: K. Jensen and N. Jankowski (eds) *A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research*. London: Routledge, pp.44-74.

JENSEN, K. (1991). Introduction: the qualitative turn. In: N. Jankowski and K. Jensen. *A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research*. London: Routlegde, pp.1-11.

JOHNSON, R. (1986) What is cultural studies anyway? *Social Text*. No.16, pp.38-80.

JOHNSON-CARTEE K. (2005) *News narratives and news framing: constructing political reality*. Lanham, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

JONES, C. (1996) Careers in project networks: the case of the film Industry. In: M. Arthur and D. Rousseau (eds) *The boundaryless career: a new employment principle for a new organizational era*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp.58-75.

JONES, C. and K. Walsh (1997) Boundaryless careers in the US Film industry: understanding labor market dynamics of network organizations. *Industrielle Beziehungen*. **4**(1), pp.58-73.

JONES, C. and R. DeFillippi (1996) Back to the future in film: combining industry and self-knowledge to meet career challenges of the 21st century. *Academy of Management Executive*. **10**(4), pp.89-104.

KEAT, R. (1999) Market boundaries and the commodfication of culture. In: L. Ray and S. Sayers (eds) *Culture and economy: after the cultural turn*. London: Sage, pp.92-111.

KEAT, R. (2000) *Cultural goods and the limits of the market*. London, New York: Routledge.

KELLNER, D. (2003) *Media spectacle*. Routledge: London.

KENT, G. (2006) *Framing war and genocide: British policy and news media reaction to the war in Bosnia*. Creskill: Hampton Press.

KILBORN R. and J. Izod (1997). *An introduction to television documentary: confronting reality*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

KILBORN, R. (2003) *Staging the real: factual TV programming in the age of Big Brother*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

KILBORN, R. (2008) Playing the reality card: factual TV programming for a new broadcasting age. *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*. **56**(2), pp.143-151.

LANGER, J. (1998) *Tabloid television: popular journalism and the 'other news'*. London: Routledge.

LEE, D. (2008) *Precarious creativity: working lives in the British independent television production industry*. PhD thesis, Goldsmiths College, University of London.

LINDLOF, T. (1995), *Qualitative communication research methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

LLOYD, R. (2006) *Neo-Bohemia: art and commerce in the postindustrial city*. London: Routledge.

MARCUS, G. (1995) Ethnography in/of the world system: the emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. **24**, pp.95-117.

MATHIJS, E. and Jones, J. (2004) Introduction: *Big Brother* International. In: E. Mathijs and J. Jones, J. (eds) *Big Bother International. Formats, critics and publics*. London: Wallflower, pp.1-8.

MAYER, V., M. Banks and J. Caldwell (eds) (2009) *Production studies: cultural studies of media industries*. New York, London: Routledge.

MCPHAIL, T. (2002). *Global communication: theories, stakeholders, and trends*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

MCROBBIE, A. (2002) Clubs to companies: notes on the decline of political culture in speeded up creative worlds. *Cultural Studies*. **16**(4), pp.516-531.

MEEHAN, E. (1999) Commodity, culture, common sense: media research and paradigm dialogue. *The Journal of Media Economics*. **12**(2), pp.149-163.

MEPHAM, J. (1990) The ethics of quality in television. In: G. Mulgan (ed.) *The question of quality*. London: British Film Institute, pp. 56-72.

MESSENGER DAVIES, M. (2006) Production studies. *Critical Studies in Television*. **1**(1), pp.21-30.

MIÈGE, B. (1989) *The capitalization of cultural production*. New York: International General.

MORAN, A. (2006) *Understanding the global TV format*. Bristol, Portland: Intellect.

MULGAN, G. (1990). Television's holy grail: seven types of quality. In: G. Mulgan (ed.) *The question of quality*. London: British Film Institute, pp. 4-32.

MULLAN, B. (1997) *Consuming television: television and its audience*. Oxford: Blackwell.

NEGUS, K. and M. Pickering (2004) *Creativity, communication and cultural value*. London: Sage.

NEWCOMB, H. (1991) The creation of television drama. In: N. Jankowski and K. Jensen. *A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research*. London: Routledge, pp.93-107.

NICHOLS, B. (1991) *Representing reality: issues and concepts in documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

NICHOLS, B. (1994) *Blurred Boundaries: questions of meaning in contemporary culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

NICHOLS, B. (2001) *Introduction to documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

N.N. (2010) *The Televisual Handbook*. London: Televisual Media.

NORRIS, P., M. Kern and M. Just (eds) (2003) *Framing terrorism: the news media, the government, and the public*. London: Routledge.

OFCOM (2008) *Communications Market Report 2008* [online]. [Accessed 12 February 2009]. Available from: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/market-data/communications-market-reports/cmr08.

OFCOM (2009) *Ofcom Broadcasting Guide* [online]. [Accessed 12 June 2010]. Available from: http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/codes/bcode.

OFCOM (2010a) *PSB Report 2010* [online]. [Accessed 12 June 2010]. Available from: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/reviews-investigations/public-service-broadcasting/annrep/psb10.

OFCOM (2010b) *Overview of UK television market. PSB Report 2010: information pack* [online]. [Accessed 12 June 2010]. Available from:

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/broadcast/reviews-investigations/psb-review/psb2010/overview1.pdf.

PAPATHANASSOPOULOS, S. (2002) *European television in the digital age*. Oxford: Polity.

PATERSON, C. (2008) Introduction: why ethnography? In: C. Paterson and D. Domingo (eds) *Making online news: the ethnography of new media production*. New York: Peter Lang, pp.1-11.

PATERSON, C. and D. Domingo (eds) (2008) *Making online news: the ethnography of new media production*. New York: Peter Lang.

PATERSON, C. and A. Zoellner (2010) The efficacy of professional experience. *Journal of Media Practice*. **11**(2), pp.97-109.

PATERSON, R. (2008) The television labour marketing Britain. In: J. Tunstall (ed.) *Media occupations and professions: a reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp.203-213.

PRATT, A. (2004) The cultural economy: a call for spatialized 'production of culture' perspectives. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. **7**(1), pp.117-128.

PRATT, A. and P. Jeffcutt (2009) Creativity, innovation and the cultural economy: snake oil for the twenty-first centure? In: A. Pratt and Jeffcutt, P. (eds) (2009) *Creativity, innovation and the cultural economy*. London and New York: Routledge, pp.3-19.

PRATT, A. and P. Jeffcutt (eds) (2009) *Creativity, innovation and the cultural economy*. London and New York.

PRESTON, A. (2002) *Risky business: inside the indies. Regional TV independents and the challenges of growth. Executive Summary* [online]. Glasgow: The Research Centre for Television and Interactivity. [Accessed: 06 March 2009] Available from: www.researchcentre.co.uk.

PRESTON, A. (2003) *Inside the commissioners: the culture and practice of commissioners at UK broadcasters. Executive Summary* [online]. Glasgow: The Research Centre for Television and Interactivity. [Accessed: 06 March 2009] Available from: www.researchcentre.co.uk.

PUIJK, R. (2008), Ethnographic media production research in a digital environment. In: C. Paterson and D. Domingo (eds) *Making online news: the ethnography of new media production*. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 29-41.

RADWAY, J. (1989) Ethnographies among elites: Comparing discourses of power. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*. **13**(2), pp.3-11.

REEVES, M. (2002) *Measuring the economic and social impact of the arts: a review*. London: Arts council of England.

RENOV, M. (1993) *Theorising documentary.* London: Routledge.

ROBERTS, J. (2009) Revisiting the creative/commercial clash. Decision-making during product development in the television industry. *Annual MeCCSA conference*, January 2009, Bradford. Unpublished.

ROSENTHAL, A. (ed.) (1988) *New challenges for documentary.* London: University of California Press.

ROSENTHAL, A. and J. Corner (eds) (2005) *New challenges for documentary.* 2nd ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

ROTHA, P. (1952) *Documentary film. The use of the film medium to interpret creatively and in social terms the life of the people as it exists in reality.* 3rd ed. London: Faber and Faber.

RYAN, B. (1992) *Making capital from culture.* Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

SARIKAKIS, K. (2004). *British media in a global era.* London: Arnold.

SAYER, A. (1992) *Method in social science: a realist approach.* 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

SAYER, A. (2000) *Realism and social science.* Thousand Oaks, London: Sage.

SCHLESINGER, P. (1980) Between sociology and journalism. In: H. Christian (ed.) *Sociology of the Press and Journalism.* Keele: University of Keele, pp. 341-69.

SCHLESINGER, P. (1992). *Putting "reality" together: BBC news.* Reprint. First published in 1978. London, Routledge.

SCHUDSON, M. (2005) Four Approaches to the Sociology of News. In. J. Curran and M. Gurevitch (eds) *Mass Media and Society.* 4th ed. London: Hodder Arnold, pp. 172-197.

SCHWARZKOPF, D. (ed.) (1999) *Rundfunkpolitik in Deutschland. Wettbewerb und Öffentlichkeit.* Vol.1 and 2. München: dtv.

SENDALL, B. et al. (1982-2002) *Independent television in Britain.* Vol. 1-6. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

SENNETT, R. (2008) *The craftsman.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

SHAMIR, J. (2007) Quality assessment of television programs in Israel: Can viewers recognize value? *Journal of Applied Communication Research.* **35**(3), pp.320-341.

SHOEMAKER, P. (1991) *Gatekeeping.* Newbury Pak and London: Sage.

SILLS-JONES, D. (2007) A return to the 'big' discourse: interviewing history documentary makers. *Networking Knowledge: Journal of the MeCCSA PGN,* **1**(1) [online]. [Accessed: 02 October 2007]. Available from: http://journalhosting.org/meccsa-pgn.

SILLS-JONES, D. (2009) *History documentary on UK terrestrial television: 1982-2002*. PhD thesis, Aberystwyth University.

SILVERSTONE, R. (1985) *Framing science: the making of a television documentary*. London: British Film Institute.

SPRADLEY, J. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

STEEMERS, J. (2004) *Selling television: British television in the global marketplace*. London: British Film Institute.

STUIBER, H. (1998) *Medien in Deutschland. Vol. 2: Rundfunk*. Konstanz: UVK.

EUROPEAN COUNCIL Directive 89/552/EEC "Television Without Frontiers" (1989/1997) [online]. [Accessed: 08 May 2010]. Available from: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/audiovisual_and_media/l24101_en.htm.

THOMAS, L. (2008) ITV Productions to make fewer docs. *Broadcast Online*, 03/11/07 [online]. [Accessed : 05 November 2007]. Available from: www.broadcastnow.co.uk.

THOMPSON, J. (1995) *The media and modernity: a social theory of the media*. Cambridge: Polity.

THOMPSON, S. (2008) Thompson urged not to 'emasculate' Storyville. *Broadcast Online*, 20/08/07 [online]. [Accessed: 13 September 2007]. Available from: www.broadcastnow.co.uk.

TOYNBEE, J. (2000) *Making popular music: musicians, creativity and institutions*. London: Arnold.

TOYNBEE, J. (2008) Media making and social reality. In: D. Hesmondhalgh and J. Toynbee (eds) *The media and social theory*. London: Routledge, pp.265-279.

TUCHMAN, G. (1978) *Making news. A study in the social construction of reality*. London: The Free Press.

TUCHMAN, G. (2002) The production of news. In: K. Jensen (ed.) *Handbook of media and communication research: qualitative and quantitative research methodologies*. Florence: Routledge, pp.78-90.

TUNSTALL, J. (1971) *Journalists at work: specialist correspondents: their news organizations, news sources, and competitor-colleagues*. London: Constable

TUNSTALL, J. (1993) *Television producers*. London: Routledge

URSELL, G. (2000) Television production: issues of exploitation, commodification and subjectivity in UK television labour markets. *Media, Culture and Society*. **22**(6), pp.805-825.

URSELL, G. (2006) Working in the media. In: D. Hesmondhalgh (ed.) *Media production*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, pp.133-172.

VPRT (n.D.) *Private Fernsehangebote in Deutschland* [online]. [Accessed 18 August 2010] Available from: http://www.vprt.de/index.html/de/market/article/id/10/section/2/subsection/9/?page=1.

WARD, P. (2005) *Documentary. The margins of reality*. London: Wallflower.

WEBSTER, F. (2006) *Theories of the information society*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.

WHITE, D. (1950/1964) The gatekeeper: a case study in the selection of news. Reprinted in: L. Dexter and D. Manning White (eds) *People, society, and mass communications*. London, New York: Free Press of Glencoe, Collier-Macmillan, pp.160-172.

WILKE, J. (ed.) (1999): *Mediengeschichte in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

WILLIAMS, C. (ed.) (1980) *Realism and the cinema: a reader*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with the British Film Institute.

WILLIAMS, R. (1981) *Culture*. London: Fontana.

WINSTON, B. (1995). *Claiming the real: the Griersonian documentary and its legitimations*. London: BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE.

WINSTON, B. (2000) *Lies, damn lies and documentaries*. London: British Film Institute.

WOLFF, J. (1993) *The social production of art*. London: Macmillan.

WOOD, H. and B. Skeggs (2008) Spectacular morality: 'reality' television, individualisation and the remaking of the working class. In: D. Hesmondhalgh and J. Toynbee (eds) *The media and social theory*. London: Routledge, pp.177-193.

ZIMMERMANN, P. (1991) Vom Kulturfilm zum Fernsehdokumentarismus. Zur Periodisierung der Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films. In: H. Kreuzer and H. Schanze (eds) *Bausteine II. Neue Beiträge zur Ästhetik, Pragmatik und Geschichte der Bildschirmmedien. Arbeitshefte Bildschirmmedien. Heft 3*. Siegen: Universität-GH-Siegen, pp.33-37.

ZOELLNER, A. (2002) *Der dokumentarische Film im deutschen und britischen Fernsehen 2000: Eine vergleichende Programmanalyse*. MA thesis. Leipzig: Universität Leipzig.

Filmography

Big Brother (2000-2010) Channel 4.

Black Gold (2006) Documentary. Directed by Marc FRANCIS, Nick FRANCIS. speak-it.

Brat Camp (2003-2007) Channel 4.

Darwin's Nightmare (2004) Documentary. Directed by Hubert SAUPER. Mille et Une, Coop 99, Saga.

Das Perfekte Dinner (Come Dine with Me) (since 2005) VOX.

Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004) Documentary. Directed by Michael MOORE. Dog Eats Dog.

Faking It (2000-2006) Channel 4.

Frauentausch (Wife Swap) (since 2003) RTL2.

Jamie's School Dinners (2005) Channel 4.

Supernanny (since 2004) RTL.

The Apprentice (since 2005) BBC1.

The Secret Millionaire (since 2006) Channel 4.

The Woman Who Stopped Traffic (2008) Channel 4.

Wife Swap (2003-2009) Channel 4.

Willie's Wonky Chocolate Factory (2008) Channel 4.