CULTURAL JOURNALISM
in the Nordic Countries

Nete Nørgaard Kristensen
& Kristina Riegert (eds.)

NORDICOM
Cultural Journalism in the Nordic Countries
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What Is Cultural News Good For?

Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish cultural journalism in public service organisations

Heikki Hellman¹, Leif Ove Larsen, Kristina Riegert, Andreas Widholm & Silje Nygaard

Abstract
This chapter compares how Nordic public service media institutions (Finland: YLE; Norway: NRK; Sweden: SVT/SR) define and interpret their remits regarding cultural news. Relying on policy documents, interviews with managing cultural news editors and a sample week's broadcast and online cultural news output, the results show distinctive national differences in the ways cultural news is conceived, the resources and organisation of the cultural news desks, and differences in news content during the week studied. The countries are most similar in their broad popular culture offering, and by that fact that all the companies provide broader cultural news coverage on their websites than in their broadcast versions. However, the distinctions between the online and offline platforms are less clear than those between the three countries. So, despite the commonalities of the Nordic media model, the values and practices of cultural journalism show enough differences to warrant further study.

Keywords: Nordic media model, cultural news, public service broadcasting, cultural journalism, online cultural news

It has been claimed that while there is "a striking variety as to funding, content and market prominence" among European public broadcasters (Thomass, Moe & D’Haenens 2015: 184), the Nordic countries remain "the stronghold of the public service tradition" (Syvertsen et al. 2014: 71). The strong position and popularity of state-owned and public service broadcasting institutions (PSBs) is one of the key qualities of the Northern European democratic corporatist media system (Hallin & Mancini 2004, Strömback, Ørsten & Aalberg 2008) or the Nordic media model (Syvertsen et al. 2014, Lund & Berg 2009). Another common feature is the broad readership of newspapers, which has guaranteed a strong omnibus press with diverse content (Syvertsen et al. 2014), including comprehensive cultural coverage (Jaakkola 2015b, 1993; Kristensen & From 2011, Larsen 2008).

However, the media systems, as classified by Hallin and Mancini (2004), are not internally homogenous. The obvious similarities, explained by social, cultural, and

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political parallels, often blind us to the differences within the media systems, reflecting the subtle distinctions in social, cultural, and political development. For example, although the Nordic countries share a highly-professionalised journalism culture (Alva et al. 2016), journalistic standards and practices and news values between countries may differ noticeably (Hanitzsch et al. 2011). Thus, although they may have generously funded PSBs, highlighting their status as major national news providers, these institutions may be organised very differently and promote distinct journalistic values and work practices. Similarly, there appears to be different emphases and orientations across the countries. For example, cultural journalism studies in Denmark and Finland demonstrate a blurring of boundaries between cultural and lifestyle journalism, with service-oriented coverage of the cultural and artistic sphere increasing (Jaakkola 2015b, Kristensen & From 2011) and there is evidence that in Sweden cultural journalism is more societally oriented and appears to include a broader set of potential topics such as political and societal ideas and events interpreted through a ‘cultural filter’ (Riegert, Roosvall & Widholm 2015: 781).

This chapter compares how journalists in the public service institutions of three Nordic countries – YLE in Finland, NRK in Norway, and SVT and SR in Sweden – define and interpret the cultural dimension of their public service obligations when it comes to cultural news. We focus on newscasts only, i.e. cultural journalism in specific cultural news bulletins or news included in the general newscasts. Excluded here is the extensive general cultural programming like literature programmes, cultural documentaries, and magazines. We contextualise the breadth and focus of their news coverage by briefly describing the institutionalisation of cultural news in each company, as well as examining how cultural news editors conceive of their respective purposes. Since the organisations analysed have applied a broad cross-media strategy, we also address the question of what kind of news content they produce on their websites and how online news differs from their broadcast news provisions. To facilitate the national and platform comparison, the chapter analyses a sample week of cultural news content and utilises interviews, all of which will be related to policy and organisational contexts.

Earlier comparisons of Nordic PSB’s have focused on legitimacy and regulation (see Larsen 2014, Moe & Mjås 2013), funding (see Engblom 2013) or media markets (see Lund & Berg 2009, Ohlsson 2015), whereas their broadcast contents have been compared at a very general level only (see Hujanen, Weibull & Harrie 2013, Lund & Berg 2009). The slim tradition of cultural journalism studies, then, has two limitations. First, almost all studies are nationally oriented, thus representing ethnocentrically formed concepts of culture (for exceptions, see Janssen, Verboord & Kuipers 2011; Lund 2005). Second, research has mainly concentrated on newspapers (see Jaakkola 2015b, Janssen 1999, Janssen, Verboord & Kuipers 2011, Kristensen 2010, Larsen 2008), whereas broadcast cultural journalism has been paid scant scholarly attention (see Honkavaara 2001, Mikkulainen 2009, Vik 2008). Thus, by combining the perspectives of cultural journalism studies and studies on public service broadcasting, we make the first effort to investigate the cultural news offerings of the four Nordic PSBs from
WHAT IS CULTURAL NEWS GOOD FOR?

a comparative perspective. Bridging the gap between these two perspectives hopefully casts light on both the differences between the public broadcasting institutions and the differences in nationally rooted interpretations of cultural journalism, thus enabling a more elaborate understanding of the Nordic media model.

Public broadcasters and cultural news in Finland, Norway, and Sweden

Culture is a contested concept in cultural journalism (see Kristensen & From 2011) – and so it is in the provision of PSBs. Typically, PSBs have a general obligation to produce, create, develop, and maintain culture and art as well as catering for minority cultures. This obligation is documented in European regulation, national legislation, public service agreements, as well as in various company-level statements. Despite this strong normative expectation to provide for democratic, social, and cultural needs that are not met by the market, the regulation concerning their cultural obligations is not necessarily very specific. Some of the institutions make detailed statements about their cultural strategy while others are more laconic (Moe & Mjøs 2013, Ohlsson 2015, Syvertsen et al. 2014). General cultural obligations urge the PSBs to provide some form of news in the guise of topical coverage of the cultural field and the arts. Without going into detail about the public service cultural provisions in each country, this section presents the four public broadcasters and describes how cultural news is organised and scheduled by them.

Even at the organisational and regulatory level, the analysed PSBs show distinct differences. The companies are solely owned by the state and publicly funded. However, whereas the traditional licence fee has survived in Norway and Sweden, Finland switched to a wholly tax-based system in 2013. Organisationally, Finland and Norway have addressed the public service obligations through one firm, whereas Sweden has allocated different services to no less than three companies. The PSBs are responsible, with slightly divergent wordings, for the provision of versatile and comprehensive television and radio programming and online offerings for all citizens under equal conditions, with special measures required to reach the functionally challenged and minority populations. They are expected to support democracy as well as to produce, create, and develop culture and art in their respective countries. However, regulations and obligations tend to be more detailed in Sweden and Norway than in Finland. The organisations also differ in the way they are administered and supervised (Lund & Berg 2009, Moe & Mjøs 2013, Ohlsson 2015, Syvertsen et al. 2014).

Finland’s national broadcaster Yleisradio (YLE) operates four television channels and six radio channels, complemented by extensive online services available at yle.fi. In addition to national programming, the company provides over 20 regional radio stations and regional news from eight districts. In television, YLE’s channels accomplished a 43 per cent share of viewing in 2015, while in radio its share reached the 50
per cent landmark. YLE TV1 and YLE Radio Suomi are the most popular television and radio channels in Finland, with shares of 26 and 34 per cent respectively. The YLE website, reaching 34 per cent of the population weekly, is one of the most popular in Finland (YLE 2016a).

Over the last few years, and despite its strategy to make culture “available to all Finns, including people who do not have the possibility to participate in events” (YLE 2016b), YLE has narrowed its topical cultural offerings. In the 1990s, the company first increased the number of cultural items in news bulletins (Honkavaara 2001), and in 2001 it introduced a special newscast Kulttuuriruutiset, scheduling it late at night on TV1 and in the prime time of the digital YLE24 channel. Since YLE24 was suspended in 2007, the daily five-minute cultural news provision was scheduled as part of the 6:00 p.m. newscast on TV1 (Milkkulainen 2009). A similar five-minute special newscast was scheduled on YLE Radio 1. However, by the end of 2011 these thematic news bulletins were cancelled, and cultural issues are now routinely merged with the general news both in radio and television. The YLE TV1 6:00 p.m. newscast allocates cultural items a regular five-minute slot, representing a similar extension allotted to business and sports news and produced by the YLE news and current affairs division. The lack of specialised cultural news bulletins is partly compensated for by two culturally oriented current affairs magazines – Kultakuume (Gold fever) broadcast on weekdays on YLE Radio 1 and KulttuuriCocktail on Wednesdays on YLE Radio Puhe and on TV2. However, these programmes don’t provide news issues.

Norway’s Norsk Rikskringkasting (NRK) consists of three national TV channels, 14 national radio channels and the website nrk.no (NRK 2016a). NRK1 is Norway’s biggest TV channel with a market share of 31 per cent in 2015. The total market share of NRK’s television channels is 41 per cent and radio channels 64 per cent, and as with the YLE website in Finland, the NRK website is among the most popular in Norway (NRK 2016b).

NRK’s recent annual report stresses the ambition to reach a larger audience and to increase the audience’s interest in culture, saying that the company wants to treat “broad culture with curiosity and narrower culture with openness” (NRK 2016b). In NRK’s organisation, similar to YLE, the production of cultural news is subordinated to the news division of NRK. The editorial unit for culture and debate is located in the Department of Magazines and Debate and also includes a desk for digital debate. The culture and debate unit has five journalists and produces cultural news primarily for nrk.no, but also for the other NRK platforms including Kulturvytt, the main news programme for culture on radio, on air since 1993 and broadcast every ordinary weekday at 8:03-8:30 a.m. on NRK P2. In 2004-2009, Kulturvytt was also broadcast on TV, but was shelved and cultural news was integrated into the evening main news programme Dagsrevyen at 7:00 and 9:00 p.m. on NRK1, with cultural items being typically placed at the end of the newscast.

The Swedish public service group is organised as three separate companies under the umbrella of a public foundation. The educationally oriented Utbildningsradion
WHAT IS CULTURAL NEWS GOOD FOR?

(UR) is not discussed here. Our focus is on Sveriges Radio (SR) and Sveriges Television (SVT), which retain significant audience shares despite increasing challenges by commercial media conglomerates. SR maintains a 76 per cent audience share, whereas the two national channels, SVT1 and SVT2, have together a 36 per cent audience share. SR has four national and 28 local channels with six web/digital channels, whereas SVT has seven national digital terrestrial channels and SVT World (SR 2016, SVT 2016b).

In Sweden, both SVT and SR emphasise what is called their cultural duty to "monitor, mirror and critically scrutinise various [...] types of cultural events in Sweden and in other countries [...] and to provide programming from different cultural arenas and parts of the world" (SVT 2016a: 31, SR 2015: 63). In SVT, this is done through news, magazine programs, cultural profiles, live event coverage, debates, and documentaries. Cultural news is broadcast five days a week (Monday to Friday) in the form of specialised cultural news programmes produced by the cultural desks. On television, Kulturhytorna is easily identified by a purple-coloured backdrop shown for the duration of the 8- to 13-minute news bulletins presented by a specific cultural news anchor following the 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. Aktuellt news programmes. A similar pattern can be seen in SR, where cultural news is presented in a specific cultural news program, Kulturnytt, broadcast nine times a day Monday to Friday, and in a short version on Saturdays. These specialised programme structures secure the status of cultural journalism in the broader news flow and the editorial independence of the cultural desks. The partition between general news and cultural news is even more clearly accentuated in SR where cultural topics are almost exclusively reserved for the cultural news programmes, providing more critics and many more minutes of cultural journalism a week than SVT. SR's cultural desk produces news for three different stations, P1, P2, and P4, whereas SVT utilises a more open strategy, reflected for example in the output of Sweden's largest television news programme Rapport at 7:30 p.m. on SVT1, which sometimes, yet not systematically, draws on news produced by the cultural desk (see Roosvall & Widholm 2016). SR's Kulturnytt was launched in 1980, whereas SVT's Kulturhytorna started in 2000, so the former has a longer tradition of cultural news. In fact, SVT did not have a separate cultural news department, permanent cultural reporters, or daily mandate to cover cultural issues before that.

The inspection above indicates that the way cultural news is organised offers different solutions. While both SR and SVT have specialised news bulletins for cultural issues, NRK has substituted general newscasts for specialised ones in television, whereas YLE has renounced special cultural news bulletins in both radio and television. Differences can be detected in resources too. The cultural news desk at NRK, working directly for Kulturnytt on radio, but producing cultural news for all NRK platforms, consists of only five journalists, and the cultural desk at the YLE newsroom has nine journalists. The cultural desk at SR alone includes around 35 full-time journalists, with half of them working directly for Kulturnytt and some working also in Gothenburg, Malmö, Umeå, and Jönköping. SVT's cultural desk employs 25 journalists, with four
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Working exclusively on the web and another four as photographers/web editors. That said, most of the journalists work on both the web and broadcasting bulletins. Recently, the web hired two new specialist reporters in 2016: an entertainment reporter and a media industry reporter. This comparison indicates that SR and SVT are far better resourced than their Finnish and Norwegian sister companies.

The company level choices in allocating resources to cultural news are expected to result in differences in the volume and breadth of news coverage, although both NRK and YLE compensate for their small cultural newsroom size by using contributions of other news departments, including regional branches and foreign correspondents, but processed by the cultural newsdesk.

Comparing cultural journalism: data and analysis

In order to investigate the degree to which the concept and content of cultural journalism, as interpreted by the established Nordic public service broadcasters, coincide and whether they are similar or distinct across national boundaries, we carried out a small-scale comparative study of their news supply and complemented it by interviewing the cultural editors of the four institutions analysed. We pose three research questions:

- How do culture editors in the Nordic public service institutions define and justify their cultural news provision?
- Do the Nordic public service media institutions differ from each other in their cultural news supply?
- Does broadcast cultural news supply differ from online news supply?

In order to reply to the first research question, we interviewed the cultural editors of the four public service institutions. A semi-structured thematic interview focused on the definition of culture applied by each newsroom, the organisation of the culture desk, the perceptions of the interviewees on the use of journalistic genres and foreign news material, the choice of platform, and the relationship with the audience. The interviews were 60 to 90 minutes long and were taped, but only selectively transcribed. In a case study like this, interviews were treated as testimonies of the public service news practices, i.e. as "more or less honest, objective and accurate description of the aspect of reality the researcher is studying," similar to the "way we conceive of a testimony in court" (Alasuutari 1995: 51).

In order to reply to the last two research questions, we sampled the cultural news output from one random week (week 47, 16-22 November 2015) on three different platforms – radio, television, and the web. The sampled broadcast newscasts represented the major cultural news bulletins or, if no specialised news programmes were provided, the main prime time news programmes both in radio and television. As to the analysis of online offerings, we focused on the cultural news sites of the companies
only. This means that we deliberately excluded the various online sites of culturally oriented programmes broadcast by the PSBs. The analysed newscasts and news sites are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sampled public service newscasts and news sites (week 47, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>PS institution</th>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Newcast</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>News site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>YLE</td>
<td>Radio, Yle Radio 1, Yle Radio, Suomi</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>20 minutes, cultural news included</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Television, TV1</td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>30 minutes, cultural news included</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Television, TV1</td>
<td>8:30 p.m.</td>
<td>25 minutes, cultural news included</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>yle.fi/kulisat/kulttuuri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>NRK</td>
<td>Radio, NRK P2</td>
<td>8:03 a.m.</td>
<td>27 minutes</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Television, NRK1</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>45 minutes, cultural news included</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Television, NRK1</td>
<td>9:00 p.m.</td>
<td>10 minutes, cultural news included</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>nrk.no/kultur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>1:05 p.m.</td>
<td>13 minutes</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>[9:00 a.m.]*</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>sverigesradio.se/kultur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SVT</td>
<td>Television, SVT2</td>
<td>approx. 6:13 p.m.</td>
<td>13 minutes</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>[9:00 a.m.]*</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>svt.se/kultur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For Sweden, the online platform was downloaded at 9 am each morning.

In order to identify differences between broadcasters and platforms, the items were analysed in terms of the following variables: length, genre, topic, actors, geographical region, geographical site, and the geographical relations of each news item. Previous studies on Swedish cultural journalism (Riegert, Roosvall & Widholm 2015, Roosvall & Riegert 2017, in this volume) indicate that journalists in Sweden have a particularly broad definition of culture that is not limited to aesthetic fields, but can bring in any topic and analyse it through its cultural implications. In order to find out whether
broader societal issues are covered from a cultural perspective, we also coded for whether the news content included discussions of aspects of the following societal values and norms: gender and sexuality, racism and ethnicity, class and economic inequality, religion, and democracy and freedom of expression.3

The week that was chosen for empirical analysis was expected to be a random week. However, it turned out that on Friday November 13th, three days before the start of the empirical study, one of the worst terror attacks in France since the Second World War took place, with coordinated suicide bombings and mass shootings in cafés, restaurants, a music venue, and a football stadium in Paris. Altogether 130 people died and many hundreds were injured. The attacks took place on what were referred to in the media as soft targets, or cultural targets, and can be put into the context of the terrorist attacks on the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris and a cultural centre in Copenhagen earlier the same year (see Kristensen & Roosvall 2017, in this volume). Even though this means that the chosen week does not fully represent everyday cultural journalism, the attacks provide a further opportunity to assess the extent to which cultural news negotiates with or includes these types of hard political news in their offering.

The content analysis included 469 items in total, of which 151 were broadcast news items (83 on radio and 68 on television) and 318 were online news articles. Among the analysed items, 113 were from Finland, 173 from Norway, and 183 from Sweden (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Number of cultural news items published (week 47, 2015)](image_url)

Since our analysis builds on one week’s sample only, the results should be interpreted with prudence when it comes to their generalisability. No statistical testing was applied. The chosen method provides a cross-section depicting the state of the art of public service cultural news in the winter of 2015-2016 in the three Nordic countries. This overall picture will be compared to recent Nordic research on the historical and contextual developments of cultural news provision. These trends include increasing managerial control of cultural news desks (Hellman & Jaakkola 2012, Kristensen &
From 2011), increasing popularisation of cultural news content (Jaakkola 2015a, Kristensen 2010, Larsen 2008), increasing dominance of journalistic logic over the aesthetic in the general framework of cultural journalism (Hellman & Jaakkola 2012, Hovden & Knapskog 2015, Jaakkola 2015b), and related to this, a decreasing specialisation of cultural journalists (Hovden & Knapskog 2015, Jaakkola et al. 2015).

The chapter proceeds in accordance with the research questions as follows. First, we focus on the cultural news provisions of the four institutions, as defined by the culture editors. Second, we analyse the similarities and differences in the cultural news coverage in the three countries analysed. Third, we make an excursion into how the PSBs address major societal and political issues and in particular how they reacted to the terror attacks in Paris in their cultural news output, thus elaborating the political and international dimension of cultural journalism. Finally, we compare broadcast and online news coverage and discuss whether cultural journalism on different platforms shows media specific characteristics.

The concept of cultural news according to the editors

As demonstrated by earlier chapters in this book and several studies in European countries (e.g. Jaakkola 2013, Jasssen 1999, Jasssen et al. 2011, Kristensen & From 2011, Larsen 2008, Lund 2005, Reus & Harden 2005), cultural journalism, particularly in newspapers, has gone through major changes during the last decades. First, the space devoted to arts and culture expanded up until the early 2000s, indicating an increased demand on both soft and interpretative journalism, which addressed the increasingly individualised interests of a fragmenting audience (Knapskog, Iversen & Larsen 2016, Plasser 2005). Second, the concept of culture has become broader and more inclusive, expressing divergence from the earlier high culture dominated coverage, which was exclusive by nature and served the function of categorising artistic products. Another dimension of the broadening of cultural journalism is its ‘journalistic’ function (Jaakkola 2015b: 62) – meaning its convergence towards other beats of journalism – as expressed by the increasing coverage of political issues and the tendency to find hard news in the field of culture.

Although public broadcasters have a specific cultural mission they, like newspapers, aim to address the broadest possible audience, which can be expected to result in an increasingly comprehensive concept of culture and a broad employment of journalistic genres. In this section, the concept of culture, the degree of specialisation, and newsroom practices, as applied in the Nordic public broadcasting institutions, are discussed on the basis of interviews with culture editors.

Although there are differences in how culture is defined in each news organisation, all four PSBs appear to understand culture broadly. In addition to arts, culture in all four public broadcasting institutions covers a wide range of cultural and, in particular, lifestyle phenomena, including media industry news, games, fashion, food culture,
interior design, and urban phenomena. While the channels manager of NRK P2, Ole Jan Larsen (2016), stressed that cultural journalists should report events across the whole spectrum of their field, he also underlined that cultural journalism should not be limited to quality discussions of cultural products. Instead, it should make cultural content relevant and available to those parts of society that are not deeply embedded within the cultural sphere. According to the interviews, this view appears to be shared by all four broadcasters.

However, unlike the culture editor of YLE, the editors at NRK, SR, and SVT explicitly highlighted broader social and political issues to which culture and the arts refer. According to Katarina Svanevik, the head of Kulturhypeterman at SVT, cultural journalists should find alternative and reflective ways of storytelling, which connect to broader cultural and societal implications. Aside from the traditional cultural subject areas, events that relate to ethical issues and freedom of expression are also important cultural news, according to Svanevik (2016). Similar to SVT, the intersection between cultural and societal issues is at the core of SR’s cultural journalism, aimed at providing a “global cultural coverage”, contributing new knowledge about “multicultural Sweden” and depicting “burning” societal issues relating to, for example, the migration crisis in Europe and its cultural expressions (SR 2015: 63).

The difference between YLE and other broadcasters suggests that the Finnish institution limits its concept of culture to the interesting phenomena in arts and lifestyle and that, unlike in Sweden, broad political issues and topics are only seldom addressed from the cultural angle. This reflects a general tendency in Finnish cultural journalism (Hellman, Jaakkola & Salokangas 2017, in this volume). Illustratively, YLE’s cultural news is situated in a division called Culture and Phenomena, NRK’s cultural news in the Culture and Debate division, and at SVT in the Culture and Society division. Accordingly, Hege Duckert (2015), the head of culture at NRK, and Ole Jan Larsen (2016) of NRK P2, both place significant emphasis on cultural journalism’s function as an arena for debate and discussion.

Including political and societal issues in cultural news may reflect the need to make them harder, i.e. comparable to general news (Reus & Harden 2005), or to increase the professional legitimacy of cultural coverage. For example, Hanna Thorsen (2016), head of debate and cultural news at NRK, considers cultural journalism a part of the traditional news journalism, complying with the ordinary news criteria, which highlights relevance and significance as central values. According to her, the degree of conflict the news story entails is also regarded as a particularly important criterion in order to attract interest from the public. Katarina Svanevik (2016) noted that, as the newcomer to news, Kulturhypeterman needs to demonstrate to political news reporters the importance of culture for diversity and democracy, but also must maintain a critical approach to its aesthetic subject areas. Kulturhypeterman does not shy away from entertainment news, but tries to take a critical perspective on the industry – even its mother company SVT’s engagement in the Eurovision Song Contest. In Finland, culture appears to be positioned differently. Cultural news is needed in
order to aestheticise the newscast and to upgrade its dramaturgy with hard and soft news balancing each other. As Satu Nurmi (2016), head of cultural news at YLE says, "They want us to provide more than the usual things, we are expected to have higher professional standards in terms of structure, visuality, et cetera. They expect us to do some experimentation too".

Varying approaches to reviewing and specialisation

All interviewed editors tend to consider cultural journalism to be a part of general news journalism, drawing from its methods and repertoire. Although the demarcation line between cultural news and ordinary news can seem unclear, cultural journalism has one generic speciality – the central role of reviews – that is not shared by other beats (Jaakkola 2015b, Janssen 1997, Kristensen & From 2011). However, here the Nordic public broadcasters show distinctions in their newsroom practices. While the use of criticism is argued for by the editors at NRK, SR, and SVT, YLE declares that reviews are not made, whether offline or online. NRK employs literature, film, and music critics, thus wishing to "contribute to the public discourse about cultural content", as Hege Duckert (2015) puts it; whereas, YLE's Satu Nurmi (2016) justified the lack of reviews by noting that, "Reviewing would require a systematic, continuous coverage, which is out of the question with our resources". Compared to the culture pages in major newspapers (see Jaakkola 2015a, Larsen 2008), broadcasters are more selective in their provision of criticism. For example, SVT's Kulturhytarna carefully chooses the acts reviewed in order to serve different fields of arts and different parts of the country equally.

Perhaps explained by the small size of its cultural desk, YLE's reporters are not expected to be experts (see also Honkavaara 2001, Miikkulainen 2009) in the sense that cultural journalists were traditionally specialised representatives of the different fields of the arts (Howden & Knapskog 2008, Jaakkola 2015b, Kristensen & From 2011). Thus, they represent the more recent trend of journalistic professionalism in which generalist journalistic values dominate (Jaakkola 2015b, Jaakkola et al. 2015). Generalist, mainstream news values guide the NRK news desk too (see also Vik 2008); consequently, reviews are commissioned from in-house cultural journalists of the Cultural Division. In contrast, the journalists at the SR and SVT cultural news represent a higher degree of specialisation, with mandates to cover issues in literature, music, film, media industry, etc. In 2010, SR instituted a position called cultural correspondent in order to better cover events in terms of global culture.

The way the news topics are chosen depend on the degree of autonomy of the newscast. If the news bulletin is specialised, like Kulturnytt on SR or Kulturnyheterna on SVT, it is natural that the cultural desk alone decides on how the daily news flow should be structured and presented. Cultural news aims to scrutinise the field of culture in a general sense in such a way that it helps people make decisions in important cultural
and societal debates. Against that background, Mattias Hermansson (2016), head of culture at SR, sees Kulturnytt as the “democratic beacon” of the entire cultural desk.

In Finland, where no specialised cultural news bulletins are provided, the situation is a bit different. The choice of topics is mostly based on the ideas developed in editorial meetings or pitched by the reporters. As there is usually only one cultural item on radio and television main newscasts, the choice is made by the news producers. For example, the culture desk pitches its main news item for the 8:30 p.m. newscast on YLE TV1, whereas the culture editor together with her news producers decide independently the cultural items for the 6:00 p.m. newscast on TV and on the website.

There are also differences in how the Nordic public broadcasters address their cultural news. Most of the items appear to be targeted broadly, i.e. to a general audience. However, while the YLE culture editor highlights human interest and lifestyle topics that potentially attract the viewers of the main national TV newscast, Kulturnytt on Norwegian radio is located between an hour of hard news and political debate and a two-hour magazine programme exploring in-depth issues in society and science, thus signalling seriousness and underlining the profile of NRK P2 as an elite audience radio station (Larsen 2004). On television, the cultural news in all three countries is placed after the hard news and before the sport news and the weather forecast, and are thus being ascribed the role of a transition from the serious and important to the mundane.

The latent democratic potential of cultural journalism is strongly emphasised by Hege Duckert of NRK (2015). As cultural experiences are not evenly distributed among different groups of society, the public broadcaster has the ambition of providing access to cultural content for the general public. Due to the need for broad appeal, cultural journalism cannot be exclusively entangled with cultural phenomena per se. This is solved by SR in Sweden by offering differing modes of address. A mix of local and national content, often with a folksy touch, characterises P4, SR’s largest channel, whereas P1 is SR’s highbrow station and is specifically devoted to news, current affairs, and culture, and P2 is oriented towards classical music. Also, cultural news programmes vary in length as well as orientation and are adapted to fit the specificities of each channel identity and its specific audience preferences. Accordingly, the P4 audience gets short and light cultural news, whilst those listening to P1 are served longer and more complex content.

Our analysis based on the interviews of the cultural editor indicates that the concept of culture applied by Finland’s YLE in many ways differs from the concept of the other three Nordic PSBs. First, although all news desks highlight a broad, non-elitist concept of culture, it is SR and SVT that particularly aim to cover social and political issues from a cultural angle, while NRK also wishes to provide its cultural coverage as a forum for general debate. Second, different approaches are mirrored in the choice of genre, with SR, SVT, and NRK providing not only news, but also views genres and even reviews, whereas reviewing is not included in the repertoire of YLE. Third, although all news desks, according to the interviews, share the pressure to provide hard news, it is again YLE that appears to focus on a softer, more human interest oriented
approach, which perhaps echoes an aim to develop cultural journalism as service journalism (Eide & Knight 1999).

Cultural news offering: differences between countries

According to earlier research, a major shift in cultural journalism over the last few decades is the gradual popularisation of content. In newspapers, this has appeared as a decline in classical music and a simultaneous increase in popular music, while other popular forms of art such as film, media, and even computer games have gained more attention on the culture pages (Jaszkola 2015a, 2015b). According to Larsen (2008: 324) however, popular arts have "not displaced the traditional coverage of high culture but rather supplemented it".

As the Nordic PSBs have been given special obligations in the preservation, production, distribution, and promotion of culture it does not come as a surprise that cultural issues have an established position in their newscasts and online news sites. In this section, we concentrate on the differing news orientations between the three countries on the basis of our content analysis.

The findings confirm both the broad approach to culture, as declared by the culture editors, and the popularisation of content. As Figure 2 shows, popular arts – popular music, media, games, and film – represented an average of 50 per cent of the cultural news, constituting the top three fields of coverage in the combined offerings of the four public broadcasters during the week that was analysed. This is somewhat less than Norwegian newspapers (Larsen 2008) but slightly more than Danish and Finnish.

![Figure 2](image)

**Figure 2.** Distribution by topic of public service cultural news in Finland, Norway, and Sweden (per cent)

*Note: Number of articles: Sweden 183, Norway 173, Finland 113.*

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newspapers (Kristensen & From 2011, Jaakkola 2013) were found to devote to popular culture. This suggests that public broadcasters have followed the general popularisation of topics in cultural journalism in their attempts to address a general audience. Often these popular cultural items also include a celebrity aspect. For example, yle.fi published an online article reporting that Hollywood star Charlie Sheen has caught HIV, while SVT’s Kulturnyheter had stories during the week about Björk’s 50th birthday.

Among the classical high arts, literature thrives the most, accounting for 11 per cent average share of the public broadcasters’ cultural output respectively. The scant coverage of classical music perhaps best illustrates the popularly oriented mode of access of public service cultural news. Compared to newspapers, as analysed by Jaakkola (2013, 2015a) and Larsen (2008), even literature appears to suffer in the broadcasters’ offerings.

However, there are also differences between the three countries as to which fields of culture they focus upon. For the Swedish public broadcasters, the top three topics are popular music, film, and debates on ideas, whereas for NRK it is media, film, and popular music, and for YLE it is drama, popular music, and media. Sweden is the only country covering debate on ideas, with items published both on broadcast and online platforms. Norway focuses clearly more than the other countries on media and games, whereas Finland devotes significantly more attention to drama than the other two countries. Finland also differs from Sweden and Norway in its scant coverage of film, whereas Norway gives clearly less publicity to visual arts than Finland and Sweden. As discussed below, the majority of cultural news items in our sample are domestic in origin. Consequently, differences may reflect the random offerings of the domestic news scene during the week sampled.

Although almost half of the cultural news content of all the broadcasters analysed can be categorised as news stories or short news, the use of the various journalistic genres also shows differences between the countries. The top three story type categories for the offerings of SR and SVT were news stories, newflashes, and reviews, whereas NRK’s most common genres were news stories, reviews, and feature stories, and YLE’s were news stories, newflashes, and interviews. SR and SVT provide a higher share of short news items, whereas the reporters of YLE do clearly more interviews and launch interviews. Reportage and feature stories are clearly favoured more by NRK and YLE than by SR and SVT. The great proportion of short news in the journalistic repertoire of the Swedish broadcasters is reflected by the fact that they offer the greatest number of items altogether, perhaps explained also by the existence of two different news organisations. On the other hand, NRK lagged only slightly behind the Swedish broadcasters in the number of items, while on average it provided the longest broadcast news items.

Comparing the use of genres by broadcasters to the generic repertoire of the cultural pages in newspapers is not necessarily worthwhile, since broadcast and newspaper journalism employ different, media specific forms of presentation. However, research has applied categories that are largely applicable to both media. For example, the
review has generally been considered a “constituent and profiling genre” of cultural journalism (Kristensen & From 2011: 159), and in Nordic newspapers reviews have typically been devoted a share that fluctuates between 10 and 30 per cent (Jaakkola 2015a, Kristensen 2010, Larsen 2008, Lund 2005). In NRK’s offerings, reviews took a 17 per cent share and in the combined offerings of SR and SVT, a 15 per cent share. As already confirmed through interviews, YLE has resigned from reviews completely, whereas the Finnish newspapers tend to devote a larger share of their cultural output to criticism than the Scandinavian press.

In conclusion, the Nordic PSBs showed both similarities and differences in terms of topics and genres. Popular arts or media and cultural industries dominated the coverage of all newsrooms, but most visibly at NRK. YLE gave most attention to the traditional high arts. NRK and YLE preferred soft news genres, i.e. reportage and feature, whereas SR and SVT were more topical and published a lot of short news. The results suggest that PSB cultural news in the Nordic countries provide a somewhat different news agenda with different emphases than the press in the respective countries.

Excursion: Cultural news in the globalised world

Previous studies (see Roosvall & Riegert 2017, in this volume) have indicated that cultural journalism in Sweden has a particularly broad definition of culture and aims at addressing general news topics from a cultural angle. Similarly, our interviews indicated that culture editors highlighted the role of cultural journalism as a provider of alternative, reflective views on current events in comparison to those provided by mainstream news bulletins.

The studied period was marked by the terror attacks in Paris that took place some days prior to our sampled week. Due to differences in the definition of culture as well as in the traditions of cultural journalism practices, the extent to which the attacks affected the news coverage differed between the Nordic countries, with Swedish PSBs standing out from their Finnish and Norwegian companions.

As shown in Figure 3, the geographical scope of the Swedish coverage was much broader than the coverage in Norway and in Finland in particular. While one-third of the cultural news provided by the Swedish broadcasters had their focus outside Sweden, the figure for Finland was one-twentieth. Aside from the European character of the Paris attacks, this international orientation reflects the Swedish PSB’s mission to cover culture outside Sweden as well as Swedish cultural journalism’s broad interest in political and societal issues.

How cultural news reacts to a dramatic event, such as the attacks in Paris, may depend on the degree of autonomy of the cultural newscast. In principle, if there is an independent, separate news bulletin, such as Kulturnytt in NRK and SR or Kulturyheter in SVT, there are liberties and space provided for applying a cultural approach to world events. In Finland, where cultural news is included in general newscasts, the
attacks were not covered as a cultural item at all. On the contrary, hard news appeared to substitute for cultural offerings during the week and there were less cultural items broadcast than usual. Due to the cultural news traditions of avoiding political issues, YLE left the analysis of the Paris events completely to hard news specialists.

As noted above, the Swedish PSBs devoted more news items to topical debate and ideas than the other countries. Although this is first and foremost due to the radio coverage, which had a stronger focus on the political and ethical implications of the Paris attacks than SVT, the online material for both SR and SVT echoes the broadcast attention to this topic. This should also be related to what we deemed to address norms and values – issues of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, democracy and freedom of expression, and religion – in the news coverage. As shown in Figure 4, norms and values were problematised in as much as 49 per cent of the cultural coverage of the Swedish broadcasters, whereas only 10 per cent of the Finnish and 13 per cent of the Norwegian cultural news addressed these issues. Given the spe-
specific situation after the terror attacks, it was democracy and freedom of speech that received most of the attention in Sweden, but the online news also put particular emphasis upon aspects such as gender and ethnicity/racism. In this context, a noteworthy result is that the problematisation of religion was almost non-existent in the coverage in all countries.

Cultural news offerings: differences between platforms

Although European and national legislation often restrict the online activities of the public broadcasters (Donders & Moe 2011), Nordic PSBs have all been allowed a strong presence on the Internet, and they use online options in order to enhance their traditional broadcast services (Syvertsen et al. 2014). In addition to the provision of programming either via live streaming or as a catch-up service, YLE, NRK, SR, and SVT all provide a broad service of news on the web, including cultural news. Against this background, the following section focuses upon potential differences between offline and online platforms when it comes to the news topics and genres of cultural journalism.

As expected, the number of news items provided on the website is greater than the number of broadcast items. In Norway and Sweden, the broadcasters offered approximately twice as many topics online than offline. In Finland, the number of online items was triple the number of broadcast items. Digitalisation, convergence, and growing mobility have dissolved many technology-specific boundaries across the whole media sector, and Nordic public broadcasters appear to apply slightly differing strategies. For example, while YLE in Finland clearly prefers providing its news first and foremost online and has developed a lot of online-only news material such as portraits and features, SR and SVT in Sweden utilise a broader multi-platform strategy, and the news is produced simultaneously for online and offline consumption. Although neither of the two produce large amounts of online-specific news, content may appear online first since websites offer more flexibility compared to traditional scheduled broadcasts.

Typical of all broadcasters was that they publish content on multiple platforms, including online and specifically targeted radio stations. A growing challenge is to reach the younger digital consumers who prefer the more open features of online and social media platforms rather than traditional broadcasts in radio or television. A central feature of online platforms is that they combine traditional formats (e.g. the provision of entire newscasts) and text-based formats including images, video, or sound. However, when it comes to news topics there are no signs of a growing online specificity in cultural news. As shown in Figure 5, differences between offline and online platforms are moderate or even non-existent. Small differences can be discerned in the coverage of literature, which gets slightly more attention online than offline. An opposite distribution can be seen for visual arts, perhaps explained by the fact that
visual arts fit particularly well with the visual representational logics of television. Debates on ideas appeared mainly in the Swedish news, but it is clear that this topic gets a larger proportion of the news offline than online.

As for the journalistic genres used, news stories are clearly characteristic of the online platform (36 per cent of the stories provided), whereas feature/reportage is the most common genre in broadcast (21 per cent). Short newsflashes are also more typical of offline rather than online platforms. These figures are, in fact, partly surprising. One could expect that unlimited space online would allow for a more varied generic output including short news, interviews, and feature stories. Pure interviews are relatively scarce, yet more common online than offline. Due to the need for visual dramaturgy, SVT, for example, has subsumed the interviews into its news items and critic's reviews and in the coverage of cultural events.

One would expect that the online environment is perfectly suited to commentary and analysis, either in print or video format. However, in our sample commentaries were far more common offline than on the web. On the other hand, a great majority of the reviews published by NRK were only published online. Although SR and SVT published approximately as many reviews offline as they did online, in relative terms the review holds the strongest position in the radio broadcasts.

Interestingly, in some cases it is radio that provides the best place for in-depth cultural journalism. This is true, for example, with NRK's Kulturrett, which does include a news bulletin, but the major part of the programme consists typically of a few longer stories on topical issues and reviews. This, of course, is made possible by the fact that the programme has a separate slot in the schedule and sufficient airtime.
clear than between the three countries, suggesting that the news values and newsroom practices are not platform-based. The three Nordic countries show differing choices in their news emphases and journalistic approaches which appear to emanate from distinct national mandates of cultural journalism, i.e. differences in what is expected of cultural journalism.

Whether public broadcasters should provide specialised news bulletins for culture is a matter of choice. On the one hand, separating cultural issues into its own newscast emphasises culture as a specific and important field of society, requiring special competence and separate news criteria. On the other hand, a separate news bulletin may also signal a marginalisation of cultural news, representing a niche interest, particularly if scheduled unfavourably as was the case in Finland. Notwithstanding the aforementioned, we are doubtful about integrating cultural issues into the general newscasts. While it consolidates their status as a mainstream field of coverage equal to political, business, and general news, it may also result in applying generalist news criteria, an inability to recognise cultural issues as news, and a watered-down version of cultural journalism (Hellman & Jaakkola 2012). If autonomy is emphasised as a central value in cultural journalism, the independent Kulturrutti model is definitely preferable. This, however, requires resources as the examples of SR and SVT suggest.

Our analysis indicates that although all three countries represent the democratic corporatist or Nordic media model, and although their PSBs are close relatives, the values and practices of cultural journalism show distinct differences. Studies of culture pages in newspapers have indicated that a characteristic of cultural journalism is its balance between the journalistic paradigm and the aesthetic paradigm (Hellman & Jaakkola 2012, Jaakkola 2015b, Sarrimo 2016) and that cultural journalists have a position as intermediaries between the world of journalism and the world of culture (Hovden & Knapskog 2015). This is true of the cultural coverage by the public broadcasters too, but the four companies analysed appear to be located at different points on the continuum, with SR and SVT being nearer to the aesthetic end, YLE standing nearer to the journalistic end, and NRK situated somewhere between.

Notes
1. Heikki Hellman is currently serving on the Board of Directors at the YLE.
2. The interviewed persons were: Sato Nurmio, head of cultural news, YLE; Marie Liljedahl, editor of cultural news, SR PI; Mattias Hermansson, head of culture department, SR; Katarina Dahlgren Svanvik, editor of cultural news, SVT; Hege Duckert, head of culture, NRK; Hanna Thorsen, head of debate and cultural news, NRK; and Ole Jan Larsen, channel manager, NRK P2. The number of interviewed persons varied across the countries due to differences in the organisation of cultural news coverage.
3. All of these variables are not fully analysed here.
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