



Creating Information Infrastructure for Transnational Co-operation in Television: Nordvision in the 1960s–1970s

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What is the future of Nordvision, pondered a meeting of Nordic television professionals in 1969.¹ Public service broadcasting companies from four countries—Danmarks Radio (DR, Denmark), Norsk rikskringkasting (NRK, Norway), Sveriges Radio (SR, Sweden) and Yleisradio (YLE, Finland)—had begun the Nordvision co-operation in 1959 to organize television programme exchange and co-productions; Iceland’s Ríkisútvarpið (RÚV) joined in 1966. Nordvision enabled television companies to make efficient use of their resources by sharing programmes and production costs, which was particularly important in the early years of television when the companies had limited capacity for programme production. A decade after its birth, however, Nordvision was facing if not a crisis, at least a sense that it needed to clarify its purpose and reconsider its ways of operating. Television was no longer an emerging new medium but had grown into the major mass medium of the era. The need for Nordic programme exchange seemed less now that public service broadcasting companies had more

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resources for their own productions. SR and YLE had launched second television channels, which in Sweden in particular led to competition between channels.² Young programme makers with radical ideas had entered television. The world was changing too, and Nordvision had to consider how to respond to current events such as the Prague Spring.

As a response to these concerns, Nordvision set up a committee, informally called the Dyfverman committee, to formulate aims for the co-operation and to evaluate and redesign working practices within Nordvision. The committee produced a 29-page report which became the basis for developing Nordvision.³ In this chapter, the committee report and discussions around it serve as material for studying how institutions build transnational networks. In particular, I explore how Nordvision developed “information infrastructure”⁴ that would support transnational collaboration in television. By information infrastructure I here mean the infrastructure Nordvision used for internal communication. Following Alexander Badenoch and Andreas Fickers’ work on transnational European infrastructures, I understand infrastructures here as “composed as much of institutions, routines and discursive practices as of material artefacts”.⁵ A central infrastructural basis for Nordvision was the television network that enabled the transmission of programmes across borders and was used for Nordvision and Eurovision programme exchange. However, Nordvision work also required other kinds of infrastructure. Nordvision co-operation depended on a complex information infrastructure consisting of face-to-face meetings, letters, reports, statistics, telephone calls, telexes and videotapes. Through discussing Nordvision’s efforts to develop its internal communication, I consider how television contributed to the making of the “Nordic region as a mediated region”,⁶ not by analysing how Nordicness was represented on television screens but by focusing on the behind-the-scenes work of developing Nordic co-operation networks in television.⁷

Methodologically, my approach is inspired by recent work in media history that has shifted the focus from media content towards questions of technology and materiality.⁸ My aim is to contribute to historical studies of media production and distribution by discussing the practices and media technologies required in developing a transnational co-operation network such as Nordvision.⁹ The turn of the 1960s and 1970s offers useful material, as when Nordvision looked for a new direction, it had to reflect on and make visible its habitual working routines. My approach is inspired by Cait McKinney’s work on the “information activism” of late

twentieth-century US lesbian feminists. McKinney emphasizes the role of information in the formation of new publics and draws attention to the routine work with mundane media technologies that go into building alternative information infrastructure, such as newsletter networks. Defining “information as the object that moves through the application of specific media practices”, McKinney bases her methodology on “following information as it moves ... to see the infrastructures that quietly get it where it needs to get”.¹⁰ While my material is different from McKinney’s—Nordvision was not an activist network but a network of publicly funded broadcasting institutions—I find this approach useful also for studying Nordvision’s operations. A key problem for Nordvision was how to ensure efficient exchange of information that would support Nordic networking in television production and distribution. This chapter discusses the practices, media technologies and information genres¹¹ Nordvision relied upon, based on archival sources from the Nordvision files in the YLE archives.¹² The files include documents produced by all companies participating in Nordvision exchange, written in Scandinavian languages (Swedish, Danish, Norwegian). I read the Dyfverman committee report in relation to documents from the preceding and following years to trace how Nordvision members defined challenges relating to Nordic co-operation and attempted to solve them.

Given Nordvision’s long history and importance for public service television in the Nordic countries, there is surprisingly little previous research on it. An early exception is Ulf Jonas Björk’s article “Nordvision on Swedish Television: The Rise and Decline of a Regional Programme Exchange”. Björk focuses on Nordvision’s significance for Swedish television in the early 1960s, and as the title suggests, presents the history of Nordvision as a narrative of failure: while the leadership of Swedish television hoped that Nordvision would become an important source of programming and promote the understanding of Scandinavian languages, television viewers were critical of Danish language programmes in particular, the value of Nordvision exchange as a source of programmes soon diminished and Swedish television turned to American and British imports instead.¹³ This narrative is, however, misleading, as Nordvision remained active beyond the early years of television and is today an integral part of public service media production in the Nordic countries.¹⁴ Nordvision’s annual report describes 2020 as the “second-best year in the partnership’s history in terms of the number of Nordic co-productions”, with 2200 programme episodes co-produced.¹⁵ Nordvision’s Secretary General

Henrik Hartmann describes Nordvision as “one of the best and most successful examples of Nordic cooperation in the cultural sector” and “more vital, more comprehensive today than ever before”, citing rising numbers of programme exchange and the importance of Nordic co-production for financing programme projects.¹⁶ Nordvision has even been credited as one factor behind the recent international success of Scandinavian drama series: research on the European Commission’s support for television fiction between 2014 and 2020 found that Scandinavian countries were exceptionally successful in obtaining funding, which researchers saw as a result of the decades long institutionalization of co-production relationships within Nordvision.¹⁷ My aim in this article is not, however, to evaluate Nordvision in terms of success or failure, but to describe some of the work that has gone into building this network of Nordic television organizations.

“PRACTICAL *NORDISM*”

For Nordic public service television professionals in the late 1960s, it was clear that the motives for Nordvision collaboration were not only economic, but also “cultural-political”.¹⁸ Nordvision promoted a sense of cultural affinity between the Nordic countries, continuing work that had begun on the radio in the 1930s.¹⁹ The directors general of the public service broadcasting companies stated in 1969 that “programme collaboration between the Nordic radio organizations forms an important part of the cultural collaboration in the Nordics, and beyond the economic-practical aspects of collaboration must be considered to have independent cultural-political value”.²⁰ This statement guided the Dyfverman committee, but Nordvision members also had to figure out how to articulate Nordicness with their values and practices as television professionals.

The leadership of public service television was not motivated to develop Nordvision just because they valued Nordic community but also for strategic reasons. The inter-parliamentary Nordic Council (est. 1952) developed co-operation in the field of culture in the 1960s, for instance setting up a Nordic culture fund and prizes for Nordic literature and music. The Nordic Council was also interested in television, and in 1966 proposed launching a joint second television channel for the Nordic countries. The Nordvision meeting opposed the idea and argued that developing Nordvision co-operation was a better option.²¹ In his opening remarks for

a discussion about the future of Nordvision in 1969, SR's Nils Erik Baehrendtz raised the issue of the Nordic Council's interest in television, pointing out that thus far it had been possible to argue that broadcasting companies managed Nordic co-operation in a satisfactory manner. "It must be seen as important that radio companies maintain the initiative in this area through an active willingness to co-operate so that political and other initiatives from the outside are avoided as much as possible", Baehrendtz emphasized.²² The Dyfverman committee report avoided mentioning the Nordic Council, but it too raised the prospect of political pressure as a motivation for maintaining active co-operation, writing: "A significant decline in Nordic TV exchange would certainly bring to the fore more radical political initiatives".²³ Through active Nordic collaboration, television professionals sought to guard their autonomy and avoid more intrusive political interference.

Beyond these practical considerations, the leadership of Nordic public service television sought to define the value of Nordvision and Nordicness for their work. "One should not be Nordic just because that is the way things should be", as Baehrendtz reflected.²⁴ In defining the significance of Nordvision, the Dyfverman committee drew on contemporary ideas concerning electronic media's ability to foster connections across physical distance.²⁵ The committee report outlined a historical narrative of the development of Nordvision, starting from early idealism: "This was practical *Nordism*. Millions of people who had reacted with indifference to Nordic-minded [nordistiska] calls and done very little to train their ear for neighbouring countries' languages would, thanks to television's ability to illustrate and to combine benefit with pleasure, widen their horizons and be drawn into the Nordic community". Although these hopes had been complicated as audiences grew less enthusiastic about Nordic programmes, the committee maintained that the "driving force" behind Nordvision was the idea that television "can let Nordic countries talk to each other across borders". The committee emphasized that Nordvision programmes should not offer "neighbouring countries' voices ... as an echo of our own" but recommended a greater openness to programmes that would help viewers understand differences between the Nordic countries.²⁶ In this way, the committee sought to solve the problem of audience disaffection with Nordic programmes by giving a positive value to difference.

Apart from using television to encourage communication across national borders, Nordvision members were interested in producing good

television. In the 1969 discussion about the future of Nordvision, Baehrendtz commented that while Nordvision co-operation in entertainment and theatre in particular had produced many successes, lately programmes had also caused “public storms”. DR’s Lauritz Bindsløv emphasized that the public wants “good programmes regardless of whether they are Nordic or not” and “reacts strongly” if it is offered poor Nordic programmes. The challenge was to find a “middle ground between politicians’ wish for Nordic programme exchange and viewers’ wish to get good programmes”.²⁷ The discussion gave television audiences a central role in defining the value of television and positioned broadcasters as champions of viewers’ interests.

The challenge then was how to align Nordicness with quality. The Dyfverman committee agreed that audiences were right to demand quality, but argued that quality should not be seen in purely formal terms: one should not compare Nordic crime series, for instance, with “Anglo-Saxon” productions. “Quality is not just a question of form”, the committee emphasized, arguing that there was a “Nordic community of interest and hence a Nordic market”, which meant that programmes could be successful in the Nordic region even if they could not be sold elsewhere. Thus, the committee concluded that in choosing Nordvision programmes, instead of “quality” one should look for “qualities”, among them “Nordic characteristics” and the specific characteristics of individual Nordic countries.²⁸ In this way, the committee attempted to frame Nordicness as a quality in itself.

Nordvision discussions reflect a hopeful sense that Nordic co-operation would work well, if only the methods were right and the participants had enough information about each other’s activities. In the discussion about Nordvision’s future, Baehrendtz argued that “Nordvision co-operation is necessary also in the future as an instrument to produce more and better programmes”. He suggested that occasional failures were “not Nordvision’s fault” but caused by faulty methods. For instance, companies did not always have satisfactory information about interesting programmes produced in other Nordic countries.²⁹ In another meeting in 1969, NRK’s Otto Nes regretted the lack of Nordvision broadcasts on current topics, arguing that “we should keep each other better informed about our current plans and be more agile”.³⁰ The challenge for Nordvision was then to develop “new and more effective methods of collaboration” and sharing information.³¹

A COMPLICATED MACHINERY

At the end of the 1960s, there was a feeling that the habitual working practices of Nordvision, which derived from the late 1950s, needed to be updated. Writing about this period in his chronicle of Nordvision a decade later, YLE's Ville Zilliacus emphasized that Nordvision was not an "organization", but rather "a kind of machinery working according to a shared order, 'a way of working'".³² By calling Nordvision a kind of machinery, Zilliacus stressed Nordvision's difference from formally set up organizations such as the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). At the same time, the language of machinery also expressed a desire for efficiency and rationalization. According to Zilliacus, Nordvision needed to "rationalize [tehostaa] that complicated machinery with which programme offers had been dealt with in such an inadequate manner".³³ The basis of this machinery was Nordvision's regular schedule of meetings.

Nordvision could build on a "Nordic meeting apparatus" already established for the radio.³⁴ Upon this foundation, public service broadcasting companies developed a very active meeting culture, which by the late 1960s could seem excessive. Zilliacus notes that "in 1968, in addition to three Nordic director general meetings, three juridical and three technical meetings and two Nordic seminars, there were as many as 221 different conferences and meetings at different sectors and levels".³⁵ The main events for Nordvision were the three annual Nordvision meetings; the Dyfverman committee proposed a slightly lighter schedule of two Nordvision meetings and four planning meetings per year.³⁶ The Nordvision meetings had around 20 to 30 participants, mainly people in leadership positions regarding television programming. Companies took turns hosting Nordvision meetings, which were held at varying locations so that delegates got to know the country beyond the capital city. YLE's schedule for the 1965 meeting in Helsinki, for instance, included a day of screenings followed by two full days of meetings.³⁷ As television professionals attended these events several times a year, they would get to know their Nordic colleagues well.

Nordvision co-operation cut through all television programme production departments. As well as the main Nordvision meeting, there were group meetings for the programming areas entertainment, theatre, children and youth, culture, music, news, sports and film. Generally, the groups met once or twice a year (sports less regularly). The meetings were extensive: for instance, the children and youth group met twice a

year for four days and the culture group twice a year for three days.³⁸ At the meetings, delegates discussed plans for programme projects and attended screenings. The main Nordvision meeting discussed reports from the group meetings and approved or rejected their suggestions. All areas of programme production were thus in regular contact with corresponding departments in other Nordic countries. Yet, there was a sense that information should be shared more effectively to stimulate co-operation. To this end, Nordvision set out to improve its documents and communication.

DEVELOPING PAPER DOCUMENTS

Nordvision collaboration depended on a variety of written documents such as reports from meetings and seminars, statistical reports, memos outlining working routines and forms for co-production agreements. As literary scholar John Guillory argues, paper documents in information genres, such as form, memo and report, have been central modes of writing in modernity. Written documents have played an essential role in the management of the modern office or bureaucracy.³⁹ Nordvision documents were typed (in the case of statistics, drawn) on paper and copied for distribution. They were used to guide future work and eventually archived. Underlinings and comments in YLE's archived copies show that they were actively used and not just stored away. Developing the quality of these paper documents was a key concern as Nordvision sought to make its internal communication more effective. Here, two key types of documentation, reports from meetings and the weekly newsletter, are particularly illustrative.

The minutes of Nordvision meetings were traditionally comprehensive. In the 1960s they included, for instance, a detailed description about discussions concerning recent Nordvision programme exchange, with commentary about how individual programmes had been received by the public and the press in different countries as well as delegates' personal opinions about the programmes. The Dyfverman committee recommended that the extensive reports from Nordvision meetings be replaced by minutes limited to decisions and recommendations. The minutes should also be prepared during the meeting in question, so that they could be signed off before the delegates' departure.⁴⁰ The committee wanted to make the meeting reports more efficient by focusing on actions and ensuring their fast completion.

The quality of reports of group meetings remained an on-going concern for the main Nordvision meeting. In 1972, the Nordvision meeting stipulated that reports from group meetings should be concise, with a separate page for recommendations, and available within two weeks of the meeting.⁴¹ Still, the quality of the reports raised criticism. In 1973, for instance, the Nordvision meeting expressed satisfaction with the increased activity and “clear and informative reports” of the culture group, but complained that the entertainment group should give a fuller description of their meetings.⁴² The following year, the theatre group was asked to use “more concise phrasings”, and the news group was instructed to add a list of decisions and recommendations at the beginning of the meeting report.⁴³ As Guillory argues, informational writing can be seen as an “expression of control”.⁴⁴ Through instructions concerning meeting reports, the television leadership represented in Nordvision meetings sought control over the departmental heads represented in the group meetings. The instructions followed the stylistic norms of informational writing in modernity, which require concision and clarity, relying on the belief that brevity leads to clarity.⁴⁵ However, the desire for “fuller information” also expressed an anxiety that concise reports could lead to missing out important information and perhaps losing control.

The weekly newsletter was a new form of sharing information proposed by the Dyfverman committee. The committee felt that the current pace of planning hindered programme exchange particularly in departments such as culture, as many documentary programmes were tied to current events and suffered if programme exchange was delayed. The committee argued that “rich and timely information” about programme offerings on a weekly basis would activate the exchange of cultural programming and also improve the news departments’ opportunities to make use of current material.⁴⁶ As a schedule-based medium, broadcast television produced programmes for a specific moment in time.⁴⁷ Thus, Nordvision needed to figure out how to organize collaboration so that programmes could be exchanged in a timely manner.

The weekly newsletter was an attempt to solve this problem of timeliness. The newsletter was to include “definite offers” about four weeks before the programmes would be broadcast.⁴⁸ It had a set format, featuring information about programme offers for the week in question, Nordvision programmes broadcast the week before, Nordvision programmes about to be broadcast the following week, and new offers for the future. At the instigation of the Dyfverman committee, a Nordvision

secretariat (based at YLE for the first five-year period) was set up to coordinate co-operation, and the newly appointed Nordvision secretary was responsible for compiling the newsletter. The secretary emphasized that the letter could only fulfil its function if everyone followed the timeline conscientiously: information about offers had to be sent to the secretary via telex by Thursday noon. The secretary would then send copies of the letter via airmail to each company, where the local Eurovision office could distribute them on Monday morning.⁴⁹ Thus, the success of the newsletter depended on various media technologies such as the possibility to use telex and make paper copies and a fast and reliable postal service.

Not all departments were eager to adapt to the newsletter format, however. A Nordvision meeting in 1972 complained that the children and youth departments needed to finally add their offerings to the newsletter alongside everyone else.⁵⁰ The following year, the meeting again discussed the children and youth departments' "attitude" towards the newsletter and once more requested that the departments use it, appealing that this was the only way RÚV could be informed about programme offerings in time.⁵¹ The children and youth departments, in fact, collaborated very actively based on their shared "child-centred, democratic agenda" which envisioned children's television as a proponent of equality and emancipation.⁵² Indeed, the Dyfverman committee found that Nordvision collaboration within children and youth programming had been excellent.⁵³ It seems that the children and youth departments saw no need for a formalized newsletter, as they had already developed other ways of working together that suited them. Nordvision's attempts to rationalize its operations did not necessarily serve the needs of every programme department.

MEDIA FOR THE FAST EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

To achieve the efficient exchange of information necessary for television co-operation, Nordvision also worked with media other than paper documents. For instance, face-to-face meetings were complemented by telephone meetings. Nordvision had use of a four-way telephone connection, which enabled programme departments to hold teleconferences. The connection was not necessarily perfect, as illustrated by the Danish secretary's remark at the end of a telephone meeting: "It was very difficult to hear YLE."⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the telephone was useful for fast exchange of information. The news departments held daily telephone conferences to discuss which footage each broadcaster wanted to receive for their

evening news. Others, like the theatre departments, rarely conversed on the phone, only if there was an acute matter to discuss.⁵⁵ The telephone enabled the immediate communication necessary for the news exchange, whereas theatre departments, with their slower production schedule, had less use for the telephone.

Programme departments made use of the affordances of the telephone in different ways. The culture departments, which held a phone meeting every month, reflected that the meetings enabled the exchange of “fast information but at the same time participation is for practical reasons so limited that at times you do not have a chance to take a current project forward”. The children and youth departments, for their part, differentiated between the “official information” communicated through the Eurovision offices which handled programme traffic between the companies, and the exchange of “mutual information” characterized by “the lively telephone contact between the departments”.⁵⁶ The phone’s association with “mediated but intimate exchange”⁵⁷ shows in the children and youth departments’ way of differentiating between their lively telephone communication and “official information”.

At the end of the 1960s, an acute question for Nordvision was how to arrange opportunities to preview programmes in a timely manner. According to the Dyfverman committee’s historical narrative, Nordvision exchange consisted initially of live broadcasts, which meant that the “receiving countries opened their airtime to elements from neighbouring countries”. Any praise or criticism for Nordvision programmes was thus also directed at the sending country. With the possibility to tape programmes, the simultaneous transmission of programmes became less important and receiving broadcasters could increasingly choose which programmes they wanted to receive. This also meant that they had to take responsibility for any criticism Nordvision programmes received from the public. Moreover, whereas Nordvision exchange had offered a way of supplementing the limited domestic programme production in the early years of television, the situation was reversed by the end of the 1960s, when programme departments had “limited room in the television schedule and needed it for their own productions”.⁵⁸ Instead of scarcity of programmes, television producers now faced a scarcity of slots in the television schedule. For these reasons, the committee wanted to organize Nordvision co-operation in such a way that receiving broadcasters were able to select programmes that worked for them. Here, the ability to preview programmes was important.

Screenings were held at Nordvision meetings, and the theatre departments also arranged screenings in between meetings. In addition, programmes could be sent for previewing, but this did not function as well as could be hoped. In their comments to the Dyfverman committee, the entertainment group in particular complained that it took far too long to get programmes for previewing and stressed the need for a small tape format which would facilitate the circulation of viewing copies.⁵⁹ In its report, the committee noted that great difficulties in arranging opportunities for viewing programmes hindered smooth programme exchange. One possible solution was to preview programmes via the television network; this was the method used by the EBU for its screenings, but the use of the network was prohibitively expensive for Nordvision. Newly developed light videotape formats enabled the fast circulation of programmes, but the lack of shared standards had stood in the way. The committee was therefore pleased that the technical departments of the Nordic broadcasting companies had recently agreed to adopt the same videotape format, Ampex I-inch tape. The committee stressed that companies should not let “economic or other obstacles” stop them from acquiring the necessary technology, as the ease of circulating programmes would reduce the costs of screening Nordic programmes. Effective collaboration required technical standardization, but the unequal resources of the companies could slow this process—so far, DR planned to buy 15 Ampex players whereas YLE had budgeted only two.⁶⁰

TENSIONS BETWEEN BUREAUCRACY AND CREATIVE WORK

In developing Nordvision, one question was to what extent co-operation should be centrally coordinated. In a Nordvision meeting in Mariehamn in 1969, one participant argued that the goals of Nordvision needed to be discussed by programme makers in the spirit of workplace democracy, while some took the view that Nordvision co-operation should be directed from above, as producers did not value Nordic co-operation sufficiently.⁶¹ For their part, programme makers voiced concerns that Nordvision bureaucracy would hinder creative work. The same Mariehamn meeting heard a report from the culture group which criticized Nordvision’s attempt to come up with themed programming. The group “saw theme-based programmes as cumbersome”, complaining that the process of programme development “from proposal to acceptance by the NV [Nordvision] meeting” was “deathly for the inspiration of the producer”

and led to less topical programmes. The culture departments emphasized the importance of personal contacts, as illustrated by an SVT-TV2 employee whose job involved travelling, forming personal contacts and staying up to date with developments in other Nordic countries.⁶² For the culture departments, these kinds of personal contacts among television professionals were valuable, whereas the formal process of getting programme ideas accepted by Nordvision could stifle creative work.

The Dyfverman committee took the side of programme makers. It reflected that in meetings with programme groups it had encountered a fear of a “Nordvision superstructure and increased bureaucracy, which would work against the spontaneous participation you wish to see from producers and groups”. The committee’s conclusion that “Pan-Nordic directives have proved to be sensitive things” has been highlighted in the copy in the YLE archives.⁶³ The committee emphasized that Nordvision activities should primarily be initiated by programme departments, secondly by programme leadership and only in the last instance by Nordic organs. The committee recommended “avoiding formalizing intercourse more than absolutely necessary”.⁶⁴ Yet, the committee’s attempts to rationalize Nordvision’s operations could be in tension with creative television work. As we have seen, people working in programme production were not always eager to adapt to the working routines proposed by the Dyfverman committee.

Nordvision participants questioned what kind of information was actually useful for television production and programme exchange. Statistics were a key information genre for Nordvision. Produced first by DR’s Eurovision office and later by the Nordvision secretariat, statistics tracked the volume of Nordvision programme exchange and the proportion of each broadcaster’s participation. The Nordvision meeting followed the numbers closely, and a fall in the activity would be a cause for concern. The value of statistical information was also questioned, however. In an evaluation of departmental meeting practices in 1971, the theatre group reflected on the value of information for creating good television:

Meeting participants inform themselves in the broadest sense about each other’s problems in production, programme policy and other matters, which among other things leads to them being able to ... make better programmes about each other. The programme group sees this [activity], which naturally cannot be read from statistical figures, as perhaps the most important in further coupling the concept Nordic with the concept of quality.⁶⁵

The group called for the sharing of information not just about practicalities necessary for programme exchange and collaboration, but also about experiences and policies, arguing that this kind of information leads to better quality programmes. It emphasized that the benefits of sharing information are not visible in the statistics produced about Nordvision exchange. These views point to a tension between the formal way information about Nordvision collaboration was presented and programme makers' ideas about their work.

Concerns about the value of statistical information appeared even in formal Nordvision documents. The 1973 statistical report concluded with a section titled "General reflections" where the report's anonymous writer (perhaps Nils-Börje Storbom, who was the Nordvision secretary at the time) mused that the statistics do not really offer anything new: "We already know that NV exchange is growing in all NV countries". The author concluded with a set of open questions, such as: "why are NRK's and YLE's programmes the least popular in Norden?"; "why is music exchange declining despite music's international language?"; "why is the phrase force-feeding used in some NV contexts?" and "why are we afraid of Nordic public storms?" The author reflected that answers could be found in "programme politics, economy, technology or quality"—factors that statistics could not easily illustrate.⁶⁶ These reflections broke the impersonal tone expected from a statistical report to ask difficult questions about Nordvision co-operation.⁶⁷ The report's author suggested that statistical information about Nordvision exchange did not get you far in understanding the actual problems of Nordic co-operation. The burst of questions reflects a feeling that information was not enough.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed how institutions build Nordic networks by looking at how Nordvision developed its information infrastructure at the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s. Building a transnational network of television institutions required a complex information infrastructure consisting of face-to-face meetings, telexes, telephones, videotape and paper documents such as reports, statistics and newsletters. It also entailed engaging in debates about working practices, media technologies and what kind of information was useful for television work. A period of transition when Nordvision re-evaluated and refashioned its ways of working together brings to light challenges and ways of dealing with them. These

challenges rose in part from the *political* context, as public service broadcasting companies faced parliamentary pressure to show that they were capable of active Nordic co-operation. Nordvision had an ideological task to promote Nordic community, and one tension within Nordvision concerned how to articulate this task with participants' *professional* understanding of television, such as ideas concerning quality in television, the value of audience opinion, and the practices of creative work. The *medium-specific* qualities of television created their own challenges, as the pace of transnational co-operation could seem too slow to produce such topical programmes as were expected of television. *Institutionally*, tensions also arose between the wish to direct Nordic co-operation from above and programme departments' desire for autonomy. Moreover, *technological* changes required Nordvision to reconsider its working practices, as taped programmes replaced live transmissions as the most important form of programme exchange, requiring a faster exchange of information and new possibilities for previewing programmes. The story of how Nordvision developed its operations at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s sheds light on the "taken-for-granted practices of the analogue media era", which as Nick Hall and John Ellis note, is fast receding from memory.⁶⁸ These practices built the foundation for institutional Nordic co-operation in television, which remains active in the digital era.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Susanna Paasonen, Laura Saarenmaa, Peter Stadius and the editors of this volume for comments and support.
2. "Nordvisionen i framtiden", appendix to: Sveriges Radio, "Nordvisionsmötet i Sundsvall den 24–26 februari 1969", Ref. 2360, The Oy Yleisradio Ab Archive, Central Archives for Finnish Business Records, henceforth YLE:ELKA.
3. "Rapport och förslag ifråga om Nordvisionsutbytes samarbetsformer februari 1970", Ref. 2360, YLE:ELKA. The committee members were Henrik Dyfverman (SR), Jan Frydenlund (NRK), Bendix Madsen (DR) and Lars-Peter Ringbom (YLE).
4. Cait McKinney, *Information Activism: A Queer History of Lesbian Media Technologies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 7–8.
5. Alexander Badenoch and Andreas Fickers, "Europe Materializing? Toward a Transnational History of European Infrastructures", *Materializing Europe: Transnational Infrastructures and the Project of Europe*, eds. Alexander Badenoch and Andreas Fickers (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan 2010), 10.

6. Jonas Harvard and Peter Stadius, "A Communicative Perspective on the Formation of the North: Contexts, Channels and Concepts", *Communicating the North: Media Structures and Images in the Making of the Nordic Region*, eds. Jonas Harvard and Peter Stadius, 3rd ed. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 1.
7. To clarify, when I call Nordvision a network, I mean that it was an organ within which Nordic broadcasting institutions maintained relationships and worked together, not a television network like CBS or NBC, for instance. Through Nordvision programme exchange, television companies could broadcast live or taped programmes from other Nordic countries on their national channels, largely free of charge to the receiving broadcaster.
8. For example, Nick Hall and John Ellis, eds., *Hands on Media History: A New Methodology in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Oxon: Routledge, 2020); Andreas Fickers and Anne-Katrin Weber, "Towards an Archaeology of Television", *VIEW: Journal of European Television History and Culture*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2015), 1–6.
9. Cf. Badenoch and Fickers, "Europe Materializing?", 4.
10. McKinney, *Information Activism*, 9, 10.
11. John Guillory, "The Memo and Modernity", *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 31, no. 1 (2004), 108–132.
12. The collection is stored at the Central Archives for Finnish Business Records (ELKA).
13. Ulf Jonas Björk, "Nordvision on Swedish Television: The Rise and Decline of a Regional Programme exchange", *Scandinavian Studies*, vol. 70, no. 3 (1998), 325–336.
14. On the subject of the active Nordvision collaboration in children and youth television in the 1960s and 1970s, see Helle Strandgaard Jensen, "Scandinavian Children's Television in the 1970s: An Institutionalisation of '68'?", *Strenæ: Recherches sur les livres et objets culturels de l'enfance*, no. 13 (2018).
15. Nordvision, *Annual Report 2020–2021*, <https://2020eng.nordvision.org/> (accessed 28 January 2021).
16. Henrik Hartmann, "Nordvision: The Power of Sharing: The TV and Media Partnership", *Public Service Media from a Nordic Horizon: Politics, Markets, Programming and Users*, ed. Ulla Carlsson (Gothenburg: Nordicom, 2013), 107–108.
17. Cathrin Bengesser and Kim Toft Hansen, "Scandinavian Success as European Policy Dilemma: An Evaluation of Creative Europe's Funding for High-end Television Co-productions", paper presented at NordMedia Conference, 18–21 August 2021.
18. "Nordvisionen i framtiden".
19. See Hemstad in this volume.

20. "Ur protokollet från radiochefsmötet i Köpenhamn 7–8/11 1969", appendix I to "Rapport och förslag", 1970.
21. Danmarks Radio, "Nordvisionsmøde i Vedbæk 23–25 maj 1966", Ref. 2360, YLE:ELKA.
22. "Nordvisionen i framtiden".
23. "Rapport och förslag".
24. "Nordvisionen i framtiden".
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26. "Rapport och förslag".
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28. "Rapport och förslag".
29. "Nordvisionen i framtiden".
30. Sveriges Radio, "Nordvisionsmötet i Sundsvall den 24–26 februari 1969", Ref. 2360, YLE:ELKA.
31. "Nordvisionen i framtiden".
32. Ville Zilliacus, *Pohjoisvisio 20 vuotta* (Helsinki: YLE, 1979), 16. Zilliacus participated in establishing and developing Nordvision as YLE's director of television programming (1957–1969) and director of foreign service (1970–1979).
33. Zilliacus, *Pohjoisvisio 20 vuotta*, 16.
34. Zilliacus, *Pohjoisvisio 20 vuotta*, 3.
35. Zilliacus, *Pohjoisvisio 20 vuotta*, 15.
36. Zilliacus *Pohjoisvisio 20 vuotta*; "Rapport och förslag".
37. Yleisradio, "Dagordning", Ref. 2360, YLE:ELKA.
38. "Rapport och förslag".
39. Guillory, "The Memo and Modernity", 113–114. For document as a genre, see also Lisa Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).
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41. Ríkisútvarpið, "Referat frá Nodvisionsmötet i Laugarvatn 15–16 juni 1972", Ref. 2360, YLE:ELKA.
42. NV-sekretariatet, "Referat från Nordvisionsmötet i Fredriksdal 29–30 november 1973", Ref. 2360, YLE:ELKA.
43. Yleisradio, "Referat från Nordvisionsmötet i Tammerfors den 5–6 juni 1974", Ref. 2360, YLE:ELKA.
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45. Guillory, "The Memo and Modernity", 122–126.
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49. N.-B. Storbom, "Nordvisionens veckobrev", 2 December 1970, Ref. 2360, YLE:ELKA.
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61. Yleisradio, "Nordvisionsmötet i Mariehamn 6–8 oktober 1969", Ref. 2360, YLE:ELKA.
62. "Nordvisionsmötet i Mariehamn 6–8 oktober 1969".
63. "Rapport och förslag".
64. "Rapport och förslag".
65. "Referat från Nordvisionsmötet i Imatra 18–19 november 1971. Bilaga 2. Utvärdering av NV-mötesverksamheten", Ref. 2360, YLE:ELKA.
66. "NV-verksamheten sedd ur statistiska synvinklar", appendix 1 to: Yleisradio, "Referat från Nordvisionsmötet i Tammerfors den 5–6 Juni 1974", Ref. 2360, YLE:ELKA.
67. Cf. Guillory, "The Memo and Modernity", 114.
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