To Go with the Flow and to Produce It

The P3 Head of Music's Work in Practice

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The role of popular music in public service radio has attracted much attention in Danish public debate throughout the last 20 years. Often, in national newspaper debates and on social media, attention has been drawn specifically to the Head of Music (2003-2016)[1] at the Danish Broadcasting Corporation's (Danmarks Radio or DR in the following) radio channel P3.[2] His role as an influential figure in Danish musical life has been the subject of many speculations, though no substantial contemporary research has been done in this particular field of practice. Inspired by anthropologist Annemarie Mol's practice theory and philosophy about ontologies as being 'brought into being, sustained, or allowed to wither away in common, day-to-day, socio-material practices' (Law and Mol 2002, 6), I explore in this chapter the everyday practices of selecting music for P3.[3]

The following ethnography about The Head's daily practice of selecting and encoding music for P3 is mainly based on two qualitative interviews with The Head: a conversation in October 2015 and one in June 2016. These two conversations were

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[1]   In the following just referred to as 'The Head'. Even though it is no secret who the characters in this chapter are, I have for ethical reasons chosen to give my informants names that are distinct from their personalities. I have chosen names that refer rather to their position in the organisation in the hope of bringing the study onto a more general discussion of agency in networks of music selection practices in Danish public service radio.

[2]   P3 is a DR radio channel aimed at a young Danish audience. It is a popular music channel equivalent to BBC Radio 1.

[3]   I would like to thank DR for kindly letting me into the corporation to study the contemporary practice of popular music planning and programming. Had it been a private/commercial radio station, I am not sure I would have been able to obtain the same degree of access.

part of a greater fieldwork in DR conducted in the years 2015-2016 in connection with my PhD project. In this period I also attended a meeting of the playlist committee with The Head and four P3 radio hosts. I interviewed several DR employees of relevance to P3's music programming practices, and I did field observations for two months in the P3 editorial section, following two young host talents training to become P3 hosts (see also Registration of Interviews towards the end of this chapter).

My specific interest in daily work practices as a focus for cultural analysis and an ethnographic research topic was prompted by my experience from working with cultural production for many years.[4] Through these years of practical experience, I gained much respect for the complexity of processes of organising cultural production. My experience as a practician in this field encouraged my academic focus on infrastructure and organisation as practical phenomena. Hence the practice-oriented approach to understanding aspects of music programming on P3 in this chapter.

I have sought to adopt an 'empirically sensitive' style of writing (Law and Singleton 2013, 490), as I value Hastrup's notion of trying to have 'reality […] *in* the text and […] not just seen through the text' (Hastrup 1988, 17, original emphasis).[5] I strive to bring a sense of reality into the text by working with notions of sensibility and situatedness in my own perception and mediation of the field. In short, this means that I attempt to use a descriptive style which hopefully, from time to time, will communicate a sense of the place, relations, atmosphere, light, air, feelings, sounds, tensions, smells and so on, as the situation plays out.

The first part of the chapter deals with my presumptions about DR, my entering into the corporation and my meeting The Head for the first time. Inspired by actor-network theory's (ANT) notions of sensibility and with the help of Professor of Anthropology Cathrine Hasse's methods of 'surprising practices' and theory of the 'learning participant observer' (2011; 2015),[6] this first part explores perceptions of agency and corporate thinking in The Head's everyday work practice.

The second part of the chapter provides detailed descriptions of some of the actual hourly, daily and weekly procedures, processes and reasoning pertaining to The Head's practice as head of music. By describing different actors (Latour 2005; Ingold 2011) and technologies in the daily practice of handling and maintaining P3's

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4   When I started work on my PhD thesis I came directly from a position as administrator for a Danish touring theatre company, which I had held for seven years. Before that I had worked for DR as a freelance researcher doing two qualitative research projects on 'The use of media among Danes with immigrant backgrounds'. Before that I had written an ethnomusicological master's thesis on the reception of the Danish rap group Outlandish.

5   All quotes originally in Danish have been translated by the author.

6   I will expound on these notions as the chapter progresses.

music profile in corporate networks around DR,[7] the chapter wishes to 'complexify' the discussions and questions concerning agency in daily work practices in complex organisations, in this particular case around the P3 Head of Music. 'An actor acts […] but nobody acts alone', writes ANThropologist Annemarie Mol (2010, 256). Mirroring an ANT heterogeneous worldview, the chapter suggests that the practice of programming music for contemporary public service youth radio should be seen as a mesh of complex processes involving humans, things, politics, corporations and technologies of all kinds.

By looking at the networks surrounding P3's Head of Music and using the corporation of DR as an example, the chapter attempts to prepare the ground for further theoretical work on everyday actions and decisions made in ordinary work situations in organisations and corporations dealing with music radio production. The ethnography is first and foremost meant as basic research in a highly debated, but nevertheless under-researched practice field. Hopefully, it will facilitate further studies. However, I will also propose two specific questions which I will reflect on within this chapter: First, how can we possibly begin to do cultural studies of practices of music radio production in times of new media and rapid technological development? Second, how can we consider and discuss ideas of human agency in complex organisations such as the network of humans and things involved in the practice of planning music for the radio?

Hero or Villain? Myths About the Head of Music and DR

The Head of Music for P3 has held this position for 13 years. He is entangled in public myths and narratives about power abuse, overly-friendly connections with the music industry, inadequate maintenance of DR's public service obligations, nepotism and a supersized ego. When I first started my enquiries into him, looking into journals and articles, I immediately bumped into critical narratives about the man and the institution in which he was embedded: 'We [musicians] have been educated into ridicule, and we do not stand a chance, because a very small group of people decide what must be played on the radio', musician Sofie Guillois Larsen wrote in the newspaper *Politiken* on 28 August 2013. Two years later, on 26 February 2015, Nana Jacobi, musician and singer, published an article in the same newspaper about her experiences of being excluded from a very narrowly defined mainstream genre

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7   Following Hasse (2011; 2015), technology is here understood in a broad sense: as things, humans and categories that help direct the spaces in which we act and enact.

environment and male-dominated music industry: 'P3 is still the only radio channel where Danish music can get wings. For 10 years now The Head has been the man who has had the final word when it comes to what music is to be played on P3, that is, who is to have a career as a musician or not'. Also in 2015 the musician and debater Henrik Marstal criticised DR for its opaque selection procedures: 'Every year the Danish music industry releases much more music than P3 could possibly play. Thus, some prioritisation is required. The problem is that nobody has ever had the opportunity to learn what lies behind these prioritisations' (Marstal 2015).

Also within the field of research, complaints have been made about the closedness of DR as an institution. For example, as expressed in *Politiken* on 25 December 2014, 'The media researcher from RUC, Michael Bruun Andersen, thinks that DR has become far more closed than earlier – not just towards other media, but also towards researchers' (Benner & Brovall 2014). Within my own field of research, cultural anthropology, the only other aesthetically oriented enquiry into a public service institution that I have been able to find is music anthropologist Georgina Born's *Uncertain Vision* from 1996, where she describes her attempts to get access to the BBC as a military intervention: 'I planned assaults on several fronts, and finally broke through the defenses' (2005, 16).

Last but not least, the stories and rumours surrounding The Head were also embedded in relevant parts of my personal network. Here I encountered a discourse that pictured DR as closed and excluding and The Head as powerful and unreachable. Both private and professional connections typically asked me whether I thought I would be allowed into DR. I heard many stories about researchers who had been denied access. The musicians I knew told me stories about how The Head played golf with the directors of the big music companies, and that he was so vain that 'if you could make it look as if he had "invented" you, then he would take you all the way and secure your future'. I spoke to a friend who had once been his colleague. She advised me to be strategic, because, as she put it, '[h]e is not interested in developing this or that; he just wants to be himself and make radio' (preliminary informal enquiries in my personal network 2014).[8]

Furthermore – besides these myth-like and sometimes demonising stories of power abuse – The Head also seemed to be entangled in fetishising narratives about his admirable powers, his 'gut feeling' when it came to finding new music and his 'magic touch' that could transform dust into gold. He seemed to be highly successful within DR evident from (at that point) a rising number of P3 listeners. In 2009 the Danish business newspaper *Børsen* referenced a poll where The Head was appointed the most powerful man under 40 within the Danish music industry ("Danmarks

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8   See list of interviews at the end of the chapter.

mest magtfulde mænd” 2009). Likewise, headlines like ‘The Head – powerful head of music’ (Sommer 2014) were not unusual.

A Practice Perspective: ANT and Empirical Sensibility

Power is fascinating. The flourishing stories about the power and mystique ascribed to The Head’s person and position as Head of Music at P3 were what initially made me curious. I was intrigued by the debate referred to the above, which, to me, seemed to be a caricature of a powerful man. This caricature appeared to be central to the recurring and stagnant discussions between the institution of DR and the public critics of P3’s music programming.

The stories of The Head and his power in relation to Danish musical life also filled me with scepticism. From many years of working in cultural organisations, I knew that narratives of power are thrilling stories to tell to others. Likewise, they are thrilling when they concern you personally. I had the impression that stories of power were sometimes used to distribute agency to certain positions in a system and remove it from others or even to blur the location of real agency and influence in the system. Moreover, I often found power narratives working as self-fulfilling prophecies: The more often stories about apparently powerful individuals or positions were told, the more powerful these individuals or positions became. It was my experience that underneath these narratives of power and of heroes and villains, things were organised slowly through complex processes over time – processes that often involved many different and sometimes invisible actors in complex networks.

My scepticism concerning the polemics of the public debate and the stories of The Head’s power made me want to ‘be there’, to see it with my own eyes. It strengthened my desire to ‘break through the defences’, to use the words of Born, to gain insight into DR’s music selection practices from within the boundaries of the institution. I wanted to pursue the case of The Head and lay bare some of the complexities implied in his daily practice. The point being, as referred to in the introductory quote by Annemarie Mol, that actors act, but they do not act alone – nobody acts in isolation; everyone is part of wider webs of people and things and meanings (Mol 2010, 256).

Inspired by Geertz’ idea of ‘thick description’ (1993) and what one could call post-ANT scholars (Gad and Jensen 2010) such as Mol, John Law and Vicky Singleton, and considering anthropology a way of being in the world, ‘a sensibility, a set of empirical interferences in the world, a worldly practice, or a lively craft that cherishes the slow processes of knowing rather than immediately seeking results or closure’ (Law and Singleton 2013, 485), I set out to explore the everyday practices of selecting music for the DR radio channel P3. What kind of ‘truth-making’ (Mol 2014, 2) was going on there, and with which technologies were these truths enacted on a daily

basis? Stressing the notion of sensibility and using an anthropological investigation design inspired by Hasse's ideas of 'surprises' and 'learning processes' as special focus points in the field (Hasse 2011; 2015), I set out in my newly acquired position as anthropologist to explore how ontologies are enacted in the day-to-day handling and maintenance of P3's music profile and which technologies (in the widest possible sense) help direct the spaces in which these ontologies are enacted? I wanted to go beyond the stories and myths about The Head and look at all the actors – things, people, values, thoughts, tools – involved in The Head's practices of compiling the weekly playlist of one of the most popular radio channels in Denmark.

The Head: Ideas of 'Structural Identity', Corporate Thinking and Questions of Agency

It took me nearly a year to get near The Head and to schedule the first interview. To get to that point, I conducted a number of interviews with different DR employees. So, when I was waiting for The Head in the lobby on 10 June 2015, it was not the first time I visited the buildings. The lobby of DR was big and airy and filled with light from the skylights and glass facades that made up the outer walls. The inner walls of the new buildings, which since 2008 had housed the old and (for many) honourable institution, were made of soft, cold grey concrete (that fancy, silky style of concrete that is used widely in modern buildings), and the floors were made of shiny grey tiles. There were at least 20 metres from the ground floor to the ceiling. Nevertheless, the acoustics of the room were very comfortable and soothing. It seemed to me a neatly designed and crafted building. I sensed excellent craftsmanship combined with a heritage of Nordic architecture and design – the light, the air, the raw materials – and it had both a kind of freshness to it and a calming effect.

When I stood there waiting – on this particular day – I was more nervous than on my previous visits to the institution. Most likely I was affected by all the stories and rumours I had heard about The Head, but I was also excited that I had come so far and was about to meet the apparently 'most powerful man in Danish music life'. Next to me, a man in a suit was waiting. He was looking at his phone. I took my phone out and started looking at it to appear busy and professional. I looked up once in a while to keep an eye on things. Many people passed by me going up or down the escalator, being 'swallowed up' by the institution or 'spat out' of the revolving doors facing the small canal that runs between the two DR buildings. Finally, I saw The Head come down the escalator to fetch me, sending me a warm and friendly smile.

I ascribed a great deal of agency to The Head before I even met him. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, agency is 'the office or function of an agent [that is, "one who is authorized to act for or in the place of another"] [… or] the capacity,

Picture 1: *The lobby and reception at DR. Photo taken on the escalator going up to the first floor.*

condition, or state of acting or of exerting power'.[9] This understanding of agency as twofold – as acting, but also as acting on behalf of something – is central to my concern in this chapter with The Head's actions as part of his daily practice as well as the technologies he acts in relation to.

Cultural anthropologist Robert Desjarlais describes agency as acting on behalf of multiple relations and sums up the meaning in the who, what, why, how, where and when questions concerning action:

> How do people act? What are the means of action specific to a person, a group, an institution, or a social setting, and how do these ways of acting differ from person to person, place to place, and time to time? What orientations to time, language, and social interaction accord with these ways of acting? What are the cultural, pragmatic, and political forces that tie into diverse forms of personal agency? (Desjarlais 1996, 201)[10]

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9   https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/agency, accessed 30 June 2017.

10   Thanks to anthropologist Kristine Ringsager for directing my attention towards Desjarlais.

Before I met The Head, he was – in my imagination – a very powerful actor with a lot of who, what, why, how, where, and when action centred in his person; the agency I ascribed to him was to a great extent related to his person.

When I met him, he appeared smaller than I had expected. I found him to be looking young and mild, with blond hair and slightly red appleish cheeks. He had a kind of little brother look, I thought. My nervousness transformed slowly into a strange kind of excitement as we stood there close together – the P3 Head of Music and I, the anthropologist – ascending on the escalator from the ground floor up to the first floor. I had arrived, finally, and despite my damp hands everything started out fine. 'Thank you for spending time on this', I said to him while still on the escalator. He replied that I was very welcome, and that he found my project interesting. He added that he 'liked to participate in research projects'. He was actually quite human, I thought, but what had I expected? A non-human? (The Head 2015).

The few words spoken on the escalator made me relax for, I think, a couple of reasons. First, he was real, he was human, and he seemed friendly. The supersized and magnified pictures of him were instantly punctured. Second, he seemed to make an effort to accommodate me by talking to my 'structural identity' as a researcher.[11] Structural identity is, according to Hasse, the implicit expectations tied to a social category:

> [W]e have expectations of how people should behave and talk because they occupy a social role tied to a structural identity along with the social category tied to this identity. We more or less implicitly assume a structural identity, named by a social category like priest to determine a person's foreseeable acts as located in practiced places and in relation to other people. (2015, 100)

On the escalator he appeared to make an effort to create a kind of symmetrical relation between what he conceived of as our two 'structural identities': him, the P3 Head of Music, and me, the cultural anthropologist. Maybe it was a friendly gesture, maybe it was just a coincidence, but it did make me relax.

We got off the escalator and turned left for the P3 section, but he stopped me before we came to the offices of P3, suggesting that we could sit in the sofas in the hallway. I was a bit surprised and a little worried for my recording, as the noise level in the hallway was quite high. 'That's fine with me', I said. I sat down on a grey sofa and started to mount my gear for interviewing. He probably wanted me on more

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11   Any talk of 'identity' or other kinds of 'realities' in this chapter adheres to a constructionist understanding of the world as constantly produced and reproduced through discursive categories and performative perceptions of worldly phenomena. Hence the use of citation marks here.

'neutral' ground than in his private office until he had gotten to know me better, I thought. Fair enough. We started off with some informal chatting about children, childcare and so on. He told me he had two boys of three and five, and I earned some cheap points by telling about my twin boys, at the time aged one and a half years (The Head 2015).

Cultural Learning and My First Misstep

As a participant observer in my investigation of DR radio production practices, I have worked with the concept of learning processes as a method for doing culture analysis in institutions. Hasse has, as mentioned above, developed an approach to participant observation centred on the notion of 'surprising practices' and the 'learning participant observer' as being in a 'process of cultural learning' (Hasse 2015, 23). Hasse's notion of surprising practices implies a methodology that involves the anthropologist's own learning processes while doing fieldwork in institutions. Handling my data material in order to analyse the culture of the institution DR I focused on moments of surprise, embarrassment or just my own slight adjustments of behaviour as a cultural being and a newcomer to the institution: 'Culture can be understood as something we do, while we learn to create connections between materiality and meaning in social and physical spaces', Hasse writes (2011, 69). By considering myself as learning to adjust to the organisation, learning how to create connections between materiality and meaning in the spaces around The Head, I hoped to get a sense of what technologies (in the wide sense described above) helped organise the spaces of The Head's lifeworld in his daily practices. Hasse's theory about the 'learning participant observer' is about 'learning in a space that is "topologically fluid" (Ingold 2011b, 64) yet frictioned by expectations in organised ways' (Hasse 2015, 24). Hence, through fieldwork I hoped to get a sense of the expectations that governed and organised the daily handling of music on P3.

I began the interview by enquiring into the fluid space between us, and I was only at my opening question when I had my first surprise and episode of personal learning. After having introduced him to the concept of semi-structured interviews (Rubow 2003) which alternate between very broad and general and very narrow and specific questions, respectively, I asked him my standard opening question, which I thought somewhat innocent: 'What is music to you?' The question seemed at first to make him a little confused; he looked around the room. Then, as if suddenly deciding, he responded in a clear and somewhat ironic tone of voice: 'Music to me is when someone plays instruments and sings at the same time!' (The Head 2015). He then clapped his hands, pretending to be standing up, wanting to shake my hand while saying somewhat ironically: 'That was easy! Thank you very much for your time. Bye bye!' (The Head 2015). At that moment I must admit – despite his mild

and friendly appearance and the apparent joking tone of his voice – I was taken by surprise. I panicked a bit, and my brain worked hard. How could I wriggle myself out of this situation with my honour intact, do a proper interview and establish a good relation? Surely he was joking, but this particular joke made my heart beat fast.

Hasse elaborates on the concept of structural identity: 'To be given the structural identity as a physics student [at the time doing a study in a physics department] is not the same as being recognized as one' (2015, 100), and later she states: 'To get a structural identity that ensures access does not necessarily mean generating a way to fill out the social role that is accepted in the long run. It is an entry point' (2015, 102). I had gained access to The Head's world and had, by him, been given a 'structural identity' as 'researcher'. Would I be able to live up to the expectations he tied to the social category of 'researcher'?

I decided to go with the joke and then swiftly changed tracks and concentrated on showing an interest in the very concrete and specific details of his work practices. Apparently, he was not into this kind of 'reflective' approach to understanding his practice, so after laughing with him over what I learned was an unsuitable question in this context, I steeled myself and posed the next question in my most clear and confident voice: 'So if you were to see yourself as a craftsman, a carpenter, for instance, what tools do you work with in your daily practice of managing the music profile of P3?' This question seemed to have a whole other tone in our fragile relationship, and this time his response showed personal commitment. I was learning in situ, and from then on the interview went smoothly. We talked about the details of encoding and preparing music for the system and about the precise practices he performed as part of his daily routines as Head of Music. He went into details about both the thinking tools and the physical tools he found important in his practice. Several times during the interview he – to my surprise – expressed his appreciation of 'real research work like the kind of work you [in the plural] do' (The Head 2015). I ended up in his private office taking photos of the different interfaces of his working computer, and left DR with an open invitation to come back.

His ironic and what I felt to be a testing response to my first question gave me a small shock. It surprised me and made me adjust or nest my own behaviour (Hasse 2015, 212). I learned instantly what behaviour was appropriate in my relationship with The Head, and subsequently the situation fuelled a great deal of reflection and sharpened my attention in particular directions: When talking to me – a researcher, a representative of the public, or however he thought of me – The Head did not find it at all relevant to connect his own personal feelings, taste and ideas of music to his work practice and his position as P3 Head of Music. He gave me what I found to be the most general/rational definition of music and implied in both body and spoken language that he did not want to go down that reflective, 'personalised' alley. This first moment of surprise and 'cultural learning' directed my attention and curiosity

towards The Head's own perception of agency in his role as P3 Head of Music at DR. He did not act on behalf of a 'you' (as in 'what is music to you?'), but instead on behalf of … of what?

The Head Entangled in the Corporation of DR

The two organisational anthropologists Christina Garsten and Anette Nyqvist describe the corporation as a key entry point for anthropological interest in organisations. They describe the corporation as 'any collective of individuals who act as one unit for one or several purposes' (2013, 5), meaning that the corporation is a company or group of people authorised to act as a single entity.[12] Garsten and Nyqvist furthermore state that the corporation (considered one legal person) is the most dominant organisational and institutional form of our time. They continue to describe the corporation:

> Through the production and dissemination of corporate ideology and normative ideals, it powerfully shapes the ways its members – its employees – think and act. It also moulds public discourse and practice through its public relations and marketing efforts, and contributes to the ideological transformation of the individual from producer to consumer. The limited liability joint-stock company [the corporation] has become an agent par excellence of cultural production and, as Sahlins would have it, a site of cultural production. A thorough understanding of the corporation as an organisational form is essential if we want to understand the workings of organisations, and their implications for the lives of people. (2013, 5-6)

It was only much later, during my second interview (but third encounter) with The Head, that I was able to transform the immediate experiences and reactions into valuable reflection with regard to understanding The Head's working conditions and his daily practice in the corporation. We were sitting in his office chatting about the different procedures. He talked while looking at the computer screen. I tried again to get some facts on the table: Who were the actual people that made up his network? He seemed reluctant to name the people around him, his colleagues. I would, for instance, ask, 'So when you make these decisions about changes, with whom do you discuss them? An editorial board or something?' 'Yes!' he would say. Nothing more. Silence. After more silence, I would say, 'I spoke to the editor of music-related content; would she be in this group?' The Head: 'Yes, if it concerned P6 and P7 of which

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12 As explained by Garsten and Nyqvist, this practically means that the corporation is considered by the law as one person, as a separate legal entity (2013, 5).

she is editor'.[13] Silence again. The silence was demonstrative; he did not take the bait I put out for him. A little later I tried again: 'So I have done a bit of research', I said, deciding to challenge him a bit: 'Your Right Hand calls himself Selector Expert on his Instagram profile. What does he do here?'[14] Leaning back in his chair, breathing a little heavily (a little tired?), he answered: 'He schedules P3 and then he backs up all the music databases'.

Being here for the third time now I wondered seriously about his silence and reluctance to give me the names of the people in his network. Then it occurred to me: Maybe it was because he did not find the titles, the 'who is sitting where', relevant – just as he had refused to acknowledge the relevance of his own person in responding to my very first question. Maybe it was just indifferent talk to him. Maybe he did really think of himself and his colleagues as small cogs in a large machine. This would explain why he avoided questions concerning persons and personality.

My new theory concerning his motives for not giving me any names – that he simply did not find it relevant – was strengthened later in the conversation. I tried to ask him the same question differently: Could he explain the production process of a track? I was surprised when he, with no hesitation whatsoever, willingly explained (though still without mentioning any names):

> People in the music industry or the publishers know that we have editorial meetings every Thursday. Before that, we have a deadline. Tuesday at 12 a.m. if the music is to be aired on Friday. The members of the playlist committee, at that point, will have the music sent via a link where they can hear the music. Then the playlist committee meet on Thursday to decide what we want to play. Then I tell the Discotheque what we want. They code it very scantily and send it back to us with a small amount of code. Then we fine-code it in *Selector. [The author asks,* 'Who are "we"'?] My Right Hand starts, and then I finish. I decide what categories it should start out with. (The Head 2016)

Now, starting to get a sense of what I would describe as The Head's 'corporate thinking', I retrospectively recalled his response when I had coincidentally used the word 'curatorial': 'Anyone who comes in here and use the word "curating" gets a bullet in

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13   P6 Beat is a digital/DAB channel that plays rock/grunge/experimental popular music. P7 Mix is a digital/DAB channel that plays MOR (middle of the road) popular music.

14   The Head had a colleague who helped him with scheduling and setting up the scheduling software *Selector*. Here I call him The Head's Right Hand. In the conversation with The Head I called him by name. *Selector* is the name of the computer software used by The Head for music scheduling. He brought the software with him when he came to DR in 2003 from a position at one of the largest local Danish radio stations, ANR.

their head'. I was surprised by his directness. He actually seemed annoyed. Showing my surprise, I asked him if he could expand on that remark:

> Curating; then we just put in a person, a human, and then we call it 'curated'. Then we have put on a fine hat and we say, 'My god, it is curated! So someone really … so it is not a machine; it is a real person who has done this!' Or we could say, 'We have some values, we have a format, we have some ambitions, we have some … and from this we create our format'. (The Head 2015)

It appeared to me that The Head, also when it came to his colleagues and his working environment, enacted agency as something closely tied to ideas of being part of a corporate ideology and organisation inhabited by 'structural identities' rather than to ideas of personality. He stressed the organisational network and positions within this network, rather than the persons inhabiting the positions, as relevant to the music programming practice. The Head described his practice as Head of Music as a practice or a craft made up from a network of 'values', 'formats' and 'ambitions', what I will later describe as some of the various actors in his everyday network comprised of organisational structures, rationalities, categories, measurements and technologies. It was indicated already in the very first minutes of our first meeting, but it nevertheless took me three personal encounters with the man and two months of participant observation in the organisation to *actually* (maybe) understand on a broader organisational level that he – the P3 Head of Music – met me – a researcher from the University of Copenhagen – as an employee of the Danish Broadcasting *Corporation*. He served here as just a small part of a greater puzzle, inhabiting a 'structural identity' as Head of Music in a larger network of actors. If I was to do my anthropology in this foreign territory, then I had to learn to 'think with the same thinking tools as the natives', as Hasse puts it (2011, 105). If I was to learn to think like The Head, I had to learn to think corporately. I had to sharpen my attention to an understanding of the processes of music programming as part of a larger corporate endeavour, that is, among other things, as a craft made up of a network of different positions, ambitions and technologies supporting the overall corporation.

The Head in a Network of Actors

The Head rejected notions of him as a strong and powerful actor in the field. Instead, he drew attention to the networked character of his practice. He willingly named positions in the network and stressed the meaning of the network and the overall corporate ambitions of the network, but was unwilling to assign agential significance to particular actors. In the following section, I will describe what I learned were

some of the important actors in his daily practice, but first I will elaborate on my understanding of an 'actor' using the terminology of the ANT (as) sociologist Bruno Latour. Latour resolves the subject-object divide in order to consider practices as made up from whole assemblages of interwoven actors, human as well as non-human:

> [N]o science of the social can even begin if the question of who and what participates in the action is not first of all thoroughly explored, even though it might mean letting elements in which, for lack of a better term, we would call non-humans. (2005, 72)

Actors are, according to Latour, human as well as non-human 'actants' that make a difference in relation to other agents' actions:

> By contrast, if we stick to our decision to start from the controversies about actors and agencies, then *any thing* that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor – or, if it has no figuration yet, an actant. Thus, the questions to ask about any agent are simply the following: Does it make a difference in the course of some other agent's action or not? Is there some trial that allows someone to detect this difference? (2005, 71)

In the following section, I will describe a chain of actors in The Head's network. Due to the scope of this chapter, I have picked out a few actors who will be addressed under the following headings: 1) rationalities and technologies, 2) ideas of flow and the creation of flow through the software *Selector*, and 3) the idea of P3 as a mainstream format.

Selector: Rationalising the Practices of Music Programming

When I asked The Head during our first meeting to explain what means and tools he used in his daily practice, he answered by explaining the reasoning behind his choice of using music controlling and the scheduling software *Selector*.[15] There are, he said, mainly two reasons to be considered: On the one hand, he said, choosing and encoding the music from a centralised position is a way to produce cheaper radio:

> [T]here is some rational logic in the way radio is produced today, compared to the way it was done in the 1980s–1990s, where the DJs spent a lot of time preparing for the programme and did the … uh … planning themselves. (2015)

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15   The phenomenon of 'music scheduling' is called *musikstyring* in Danish. *Musikstyring* translates directly into 'music management'. I have chosen to use the English 'music scheduling' throughout the chapter instead of 'music controlling', which is also widely used.

He told me that the DJs themselves used to select music for their programmes, fetch it from The Discotheque,[16] put it in order and mark the starting point (for the vocalist) and the mix point (where to end the number and start something else) of each track. These two 'points' were important for the DJs to know if they were going to be able to create the right flow. This was – according to The Head – a very time-consuming practice compared to today. Now both the selection and coding of each track are done centrally, once and for all, by The Head using the computer software *Selector*. Then the computer selects what music will be played on an hourly, daily or weekly basis. Finally, The Head looks through *Selector*'s choices (at least for the day parts) to make sure they are okay.

I will return to the coding of tracks later. For now, it suffices to say that the most obvious effect of the introduction of *Selector* appears to be the centralisation and reduction of the number of human actors involved in the network responsible for putting together the weekly playlists. The practice of selecting and encoding music, which was previously done by the station's various DJs (maybe 20-30 different people), a music library (the Discotheque) and a cardboard system (keeping track of rotations), is now done by mainly two actors: The Head of Music and his computer software, *Selector*.

On the other hand, he said, music scheduling is a way of using technology to help you create a distinct channel format and thereby give the listeners precisely what they (according to the corporation) expect. He explained:

> On the other hand, there is also … it gives … the potential that you can create a more distinct format. […] You create a closed universe by having a centred music profile that goes from here to here [indicating with his hands]. Whatever is outside this, we do not touch. Also not as DJs, because it blurs the message according to what kind of a radio station P3 is. You know, you cannot play both Mozart and Metallica. […] What we know through Medieforskningen [DR's department for media research] and through common knowledge is that people want to use radio like, for example, McDonalds or NOMA.[17] You do not go to NOMA and expect to get hotdogs. Or what if you came into McDonalds and could not get fries, because it was Tuesday, and Tuesday was salad day! It is all about the expectation to … that you have some expectations of a product or a media … There just have to be what you want, when you want it! And for this purpose music scheduling is very effective. (The Head 2015)

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16   The Discoteque is the place where all the music is stored. Before the digitisation of music this was the place where all music artefacts were physically stored, as in a library. Now there is mainly one man keeping the digital database in order.

17   Danish Michelin restaurant famous for its New Nordic cuisine.

More listeners (via predictable formats and a good flow) at lower costs (via less DJ preparation) was what The Head presented as the reasons for using the music scheduling system that he manages. Not only was the number of agents and actors reduced when music scheduling was introduced; *Selector* also seemed to enable the (now fewer) actors to *create* an overall distinct and demarcated music universe based on notions of the stereotypical P3 listener in order to fulfil their *expectations*, to give the listeners 'what they want, when they want it'. It seemed that *Selector* made quite 'a difference in the course of other agents' actions' and hence was an important actor in The Head's daily practice. It made a difference as a central tool in the course of The Head's actions, just as it made a difference for music and the listeners of the channel.

I will in the following section take a closer look at how *Selector* acted in the network of actors that made up The Head's daily work practice of creating this distinct music universe, giving the listeners 'what they want, when they want it' through music scheduling. I will look at the concept of flow and how flow was created (how tracks are coded and prepared in *Selector*) and at how the distinct P3 music format was conceptualised, created and obtained (according to which criteria tracks were continuously selected for the playlist) in the daily work practice.

Production of Flow via Selector

When I met The Head for the third time, we sat in his office in the editorial section for P3, P6 and P7 and the persons in charge of the music events KarriereKanonen[18] and P3 Guld.[19] This was on the first floor. Downstairs, on the ground floor, were the production teams of the specific radio programmes and the big P3 studio. I was familiar with the layout, as I had done two months of fieldwork there, following two newly recruited host talents. Now I was back on the top floor. The Head's office had solid walls on one side (behind us). In front of us was a desk and a computer. The walls behind the computer – in front of us – were made of glass. The Head's office was literally a glass box located in the middle of the P3 editorial office. We could – if we wanted to – look directly at the P3 employees at work outside the office (The Head 2016).

But we did not look out much. We looked at his computer, mostly at the interface of *Selector*. *Selector* is a music scheduling software produced by the company RCS Sound Software. It was launched in 1979 and, according to the company, is one of the best-selling scheduling tools in the world:

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18   *KarriereKanonen* (The Career Canon) is a yearly event/competition where upcoming artists compete for air play and for being coached in their careers as musicians/bands.

19   P3 Guld (P3 Gold) is a yearly concert event where the most popular artists perform and some receive awards, e.g. 'Band of the Year', 'New Name of the Year' and so on.
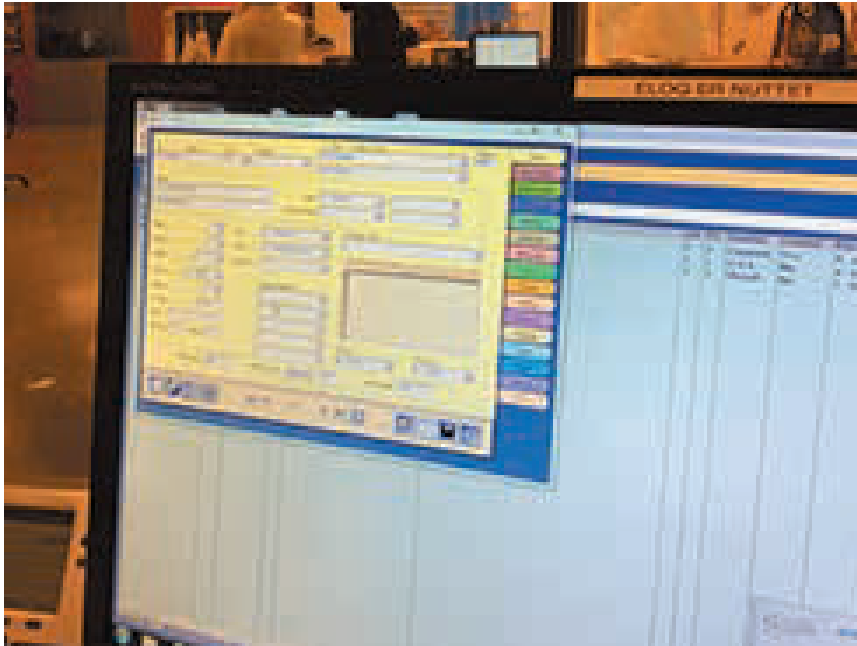
Picture 2: *The Head's computer screen showing the interface of a track in* Selector *and the glass wall between The Head's office and the editorial section of P3 music and radio.*

> When it comes to creating great music logs, stations demand a common need for consistency, variety, balance, and control. *Selector* delivers consistency in the mix, variety in the flow, balance in the log and control in the entire music library. For over 27 years, the best radio stations have been using *Selector* to schedule their music. (RCS 2017)

Working in *Selector*, The Head turned on some music that rang loudly from the speakers. He turned it off very quickly. His fingers moved swiftly over the keyboard, and he steered the mouse with unconscious precision, as he clicked himself in and out of the different interfaces on the screen. One moment he was using *Selector*, looking at categories and setting the parameters for the track in question, the next he was using the software Dalet to edit the track. The track he was working on was 'All We Know' by The Chainsmokers featuring Phoebe Ryan. He talked – thinking out loud – while he worked. 'So, is this a track that we wish to open with? No, it isn't'. He ticked off the category 'N' under 'Opener' in the *Selector* interface.[20]

I asked him how he knew that this was not an 'opener'? 'Because of the jingle … try and listen to how this sounds'. He then played the P3 jingle: 'D... D... D... DET MAN HØRER, ER MAN SELV. Det her er P3!' ('W... W... W... WHAT YOU HEAR IS WHO YOU ARE. This is P3!'). The jingle appeared loud and voluminous. Immediately after the jingle he again played the intro to the track by The Chainsmokers. It had an electric guitar as the only instrument, and even though a great deal of chorus

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20   The following pictures illustrate the categories and infrastructure of the software. They do not show the actual action happening in the described field experiences.
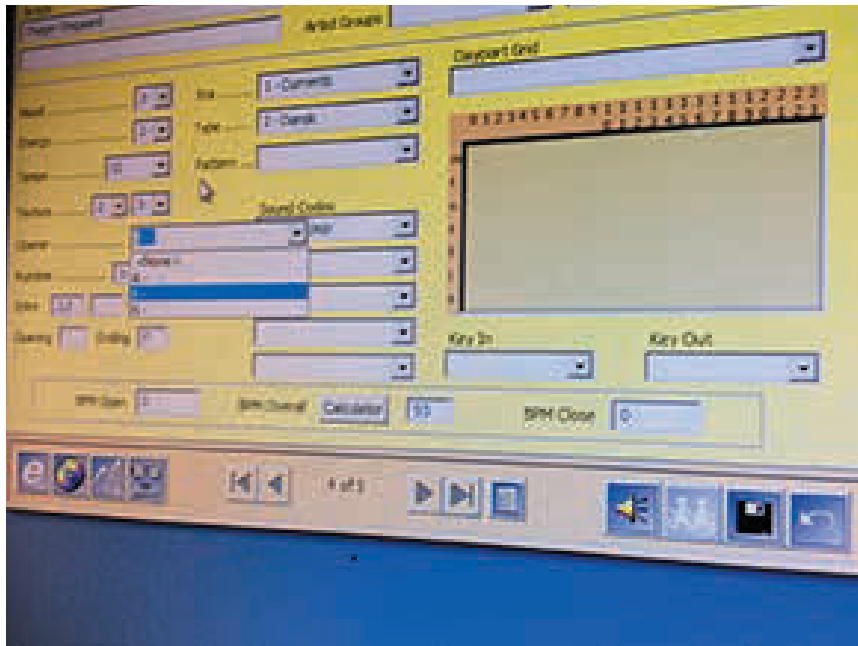
Picture 3: *The interface of* Selector*, showing the various possibilities for categorising the track as an 'opener' or not.*

and delay (effects) were added, it sounded rather 'thin' compared to the jingle we had just heard. All of this took less than 15 seconds. 'It simply feels too tinny, too thin, compared to what has just been, right?' he asked rhetorically, though he had already moved on clicking and ticking off more boxes on the screen. 'Oh, it is a question of texture, right?' I asked. 'Yes, texture', he replied. 'Texture … *tekstur* [he repeated it both in English and Danish … tasting the word]. I do not know what it is called in Danish: *tekstur*? Yes. It simply has to be more voluminous' (The Head 2016). To be able to classify as an 'opener', a track's texture thus had to correspond with the P3 jingle to allow an adequate flow between jingle and track.

According to Jody Berland, flow is often treated as the 'natural condition' of format radio. She describes how flow is most often perceived as format radio's indifferent wallpaper of continuous music and sound:

> The assumption that more or less continuous music is the ideal programme content for radio rests on the equally convenient assumption that radio listeners are mainly not listening very closely and that this is the 'natural' condition for radio communication. Thus the flow of music/commercials/talk offered by format radio has become inseparable from the mental image of wallpaper which shadows the concept of 'secondary medium'. (1990, 231)

Talking to The Head, I learned that the creation of flow on P3 was sought through adequate scheduling of tracks. This scheduling relied on cooperation between the software *Selector* and The Head (as well as his Right Hand and the Discotheque) in what I considered a rather complex process: I learned from The Head that every

track had its own scheme within *Selector*. Here you could appoint different values to the track and index it according to different categories/library sections. Afterwards, you could set up rules for how *Selector* should make the track act and react (according to the previous coding) in relation to other tracks and in relation to the hourly, daily and weekly time schedules (The Head 2016).

If flow is conceived of as the 'natural condition' of format radio, then *Selector* claims to be a music scheduling tool for creating flow in accordance with the tracks' 'natural demands', as described by RCS Sound Software:

> The RCS patented goal-driven demand-based scheduling engine in *Selector* is like no other music scheduling program. You create a station, design clocks, enter and code your tracks, and then *Selector* will schedule them according to their natural demand. You're still in control because you can adjust overall rotations, sound and flow with simple to use attribute sliders. Improve your station with just a few clicks then sit back and watch *Selector* create schedules that reflect your changes. (RCS 2017)

'You create a station, design clocks, enter and code your tracks', RCS writes (2017). So did The Head, and judging from the speed of his work, he was good at it. An equilibrist, I might say. When I asked how he was able to overcome what seemed to me a big workload, he told me that it took him around two minutes to 'do' one track. I will come back to the creation of 'the station'[21] and what I conceive of as the shaping of 'the station's' music format. In the following section I will elaborate on the practices of creating flow through the practice of designing clocks and coding tracks.

The Clock and the Libraries

The clock was used as an overall structuring tool for fashioning, hour by hour, the station's programme of the day. Every hour was scaffolded, so to speak, by The Head. Here each hour of broadcasting was cut up into slots of approximately 2-3.5 minutes each (see picture 4):

The picture above shows a clock for the P3 programme *Gandhi* ranging from 9 to 10 a.m. on Monday morning. The grey parts illustrate music slots, the red part is the news slot, the purple parts are the spot slots (advertisements and announcements) and the blue parts are the blocks in which the programme hosts speak. At a quarter past and a quarter to the hour the 'i1' marks indicate the station ID, that is, most likely a P3 jingle. The letter and number (D1, P1, U1, O1, and so on) indicate

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21   P3 is not a station, but a channel. Still, P3, with its unique profile among several DR channels, could, in the terminology of RCS Sound Software here, be understood as a 'station'.
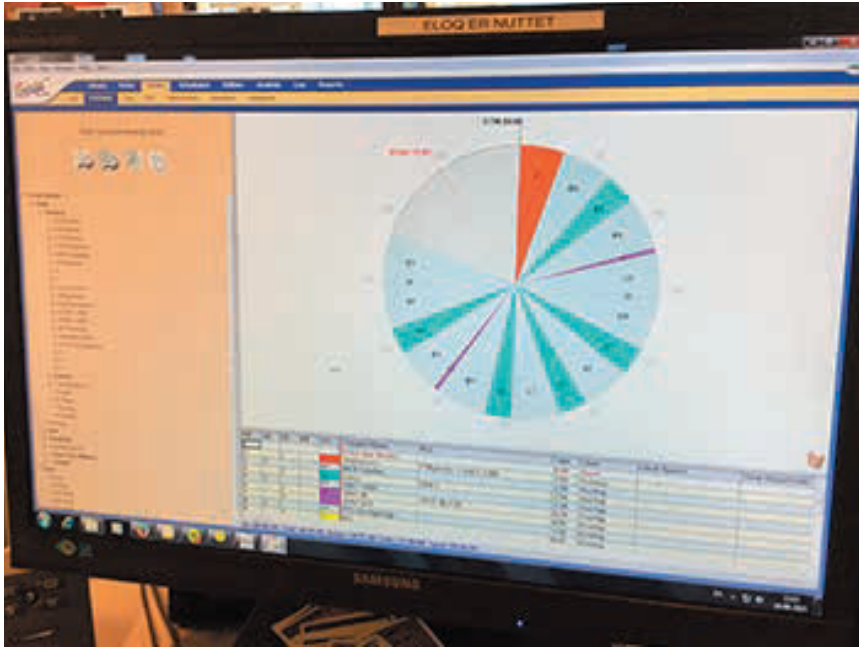
Picture 4: *A 'clock' in* Selector.
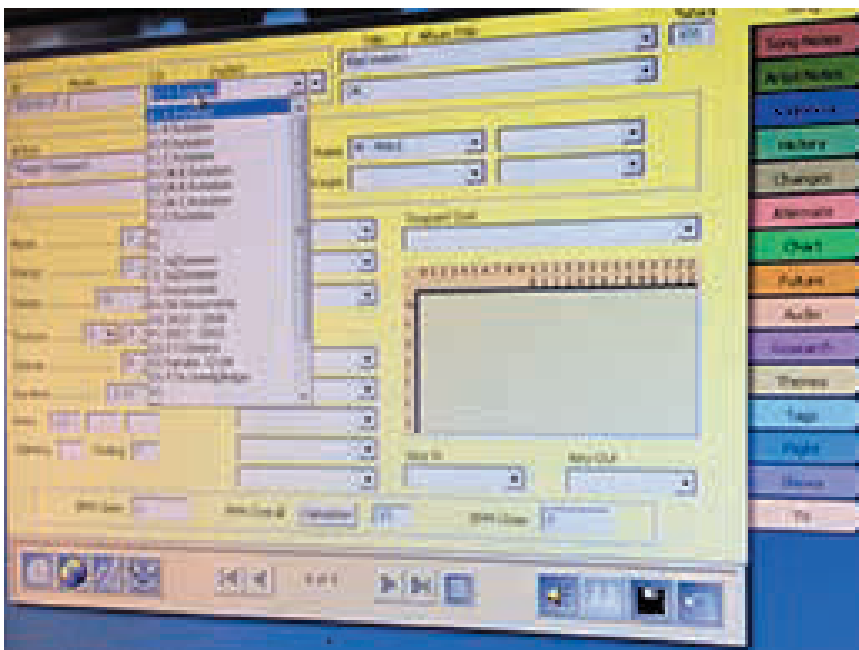
Picture 5: *The different catego-ries/libraries into which each track is grouped.*

the category/library of the track. All the tracks in the library have been grouped into overall categories, as seen in the picture below:

When The Head talked about 'openers', he was referring to tracks that can follow a jingle and create the desired flow. If we presume (looking at the clock, picture 4) that the jingle comes after the news and a quarter past and a quarter to the hour, this tells us that the D1 ('D1 DK B rotation' in picture 5), the O1 ('O1 2012-2008' in picture 5) and the C1 ('C1 C rotation' in picture 5) in this particular clock are all

tracks that initially have qualified as 'openers' and therefore correspond texture-wise to the P3 jingle. 'All We Know' by The Chainsmokers featuring Phoebe Ryan do not qualify as an opener and will therefore not be selected by *Selector* to be played at these particular times of the hour.

So, flow was created on an hourly basis premised on the scaffolding of the hour. The Head created the recipe for the given hour, according to music categories (what he finds suits the particular programme), and *Selector* selected the music following his prescriptions. But flow was also created via coding of each track according to specific parameters in order to control how the tracks succeeded each other. I will illustrate the coding of tracks in the following section. In this chapter, I will only touch briefly – in the end – on some of the overall rules for creating music logs (repetition, gender representation, and so on). First, however, I will direct my attention towards the work practices of appointing values to each track via different parameters *and* the practices of creating the channel format of P3 (which The Head described as mainstream).

Coding of Tracks

Back in his office working with 'All We Know' by The Chainsmokers featuring Phoebe Ryan I enquired into the track's texture, which was a parameter for coding tracks in *Selector* (see picture 6). I asked, 'How would you categorise this track in the category "Texture"'? 'One', he said, while clicking around on the screen, and continued:

> And here one always exaggerates a bit, because otherwise suddenly everything is between two and four. And then in principle, everything is possible. Because we have as a rule that there cannot be more than a two-step jump between tracks succeeding each other. So, if a track ends on five in texture, then it has to be followed by a track that has four or three in texture. Otherwise the shift will be too abrupt, right? But if all tracks are categorised as two, three or four, because you think, 'Oh, but you *can* hear it'. Right? And so forth … So one has to be a little more rigid and say, 'Well, but how many instruments are there?' Right? There is one instrument here. Therefore, texture is one, right?[22] (The Head 2016)

I will get back to the practice of avoiding abrupt shifts between tracks by making it a general rule not to allow 'more than a two-step jump' within the same category.

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22   When doing the final coding he actually ended up giving 'All We Know' a two in texture, and not a one like he said he would. So he decided that the texture is thin, rather than barely there (see picture 6).
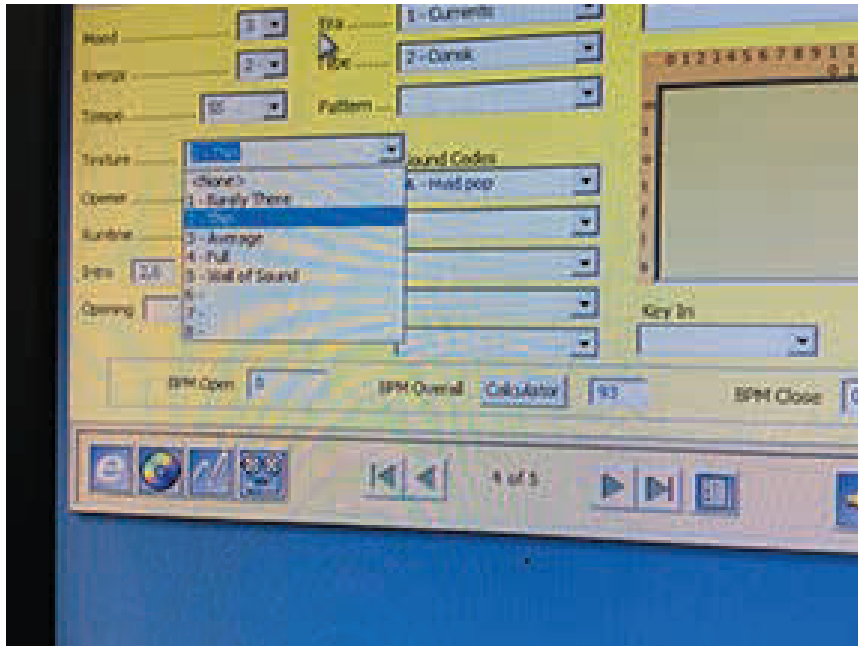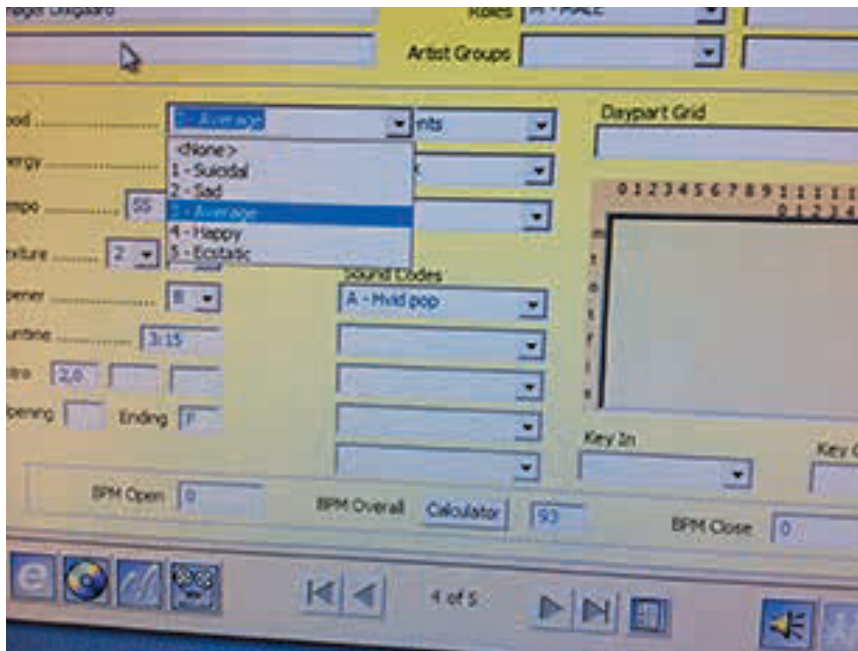
Picture 6:
*Options for cate-
gorising the track
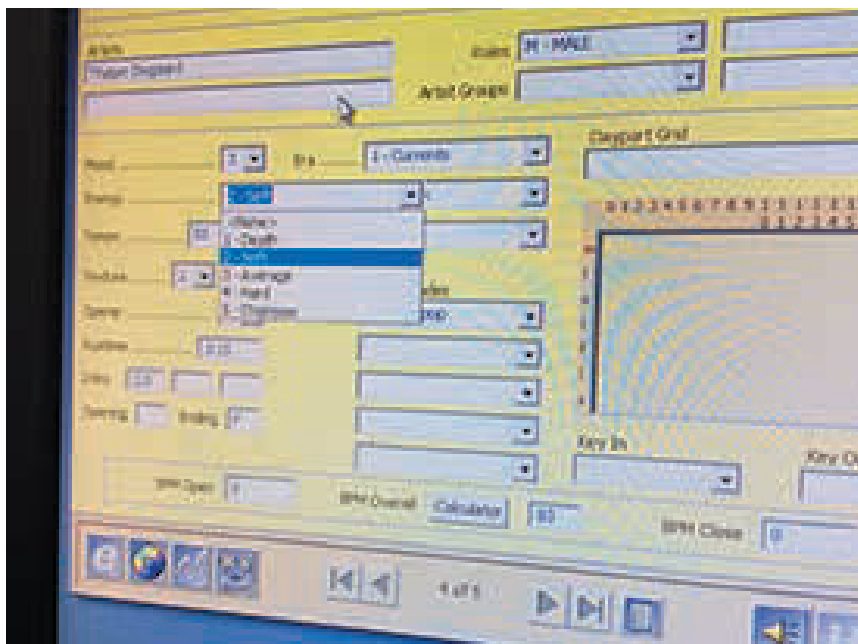according to the
parameter 'tex-
ture'.*

Here I am interested in how The Head categorised the specific track in relation to the five-part spectrum. He seemed to indicate that the human mind can be tempted to categorise all tracks as two ('thin'), three ('average') and four ('full') in the spectrum of five possible choices (because you 'think' you can hear the difference, as he said). By placing the tracks in the middle categories, you would enable the software to pick from all tracks. So he encouraged the use of the entire spectrum from option one ('Barely There') to option five ('Wall of Sound') in order to not make 'everything possible', as he stated, and to create variation. In the act of coding the specific track, there was a concern for the software's ability to create variation on more overall levels. He did indeed, I thought, administer a complex practice that demanded a great deal of knowledge about and overview of the capacity of the software.

Another parameter concerning incoming tracks was the mood of the track. He told me that the mood parameter indicated the mood of the track within a spectrum of, again, five possibilities (1-5; see picture 7):

> So one is called 'suicide', and five is called … uh … 'rage'. So, Katrina and the Waves' 'Walking on Sunshine' would typically be a five in mood, right? It is really sort of happy happy, right? While 'Nothing Compares to You' by Sinéad O'Connor would typically be a one. Because … it is disruptive. You know this is where the track is actually disruptive in terms of doing your job or driving your car … you know that it really does something to you when you hear it. (The Head 2015)

Another parameter indicated the 'energy' of the track (see picture 8). 'How much energy is there in the track?' he explained. 'Here again Katrina and the Waves would be a five, while Sinéad O'Connor would be a one' (The Head 2015).

Yet another parameter indicated the 'tempo' (see picture 9). 'So you use tempo … tempo codes. How many beats per minute does the track have? Is it slow-slow, medium-slow, medium-medium, medium-fast, fast-fast etcetera?' (The Head 2015).

Picture 9:
Options for cate-
gorising the track
according to the
parameter 'tempo'.

Picture 10:
Options for cate-
gorising the track
according to the
parameter 'sound
codes'.

Another parameter that enabled the software to create the right flow was the category 'sound codes' (see picture 10). I asked him what rules were important to set up for the machine to create the right flow. How about, for example, concerns about gender representation? Instead of explaining about gender he directed my attention to the sound codes, which he described as important:

So we say, 'Please see to it that there will not be two urban tracks in a row, for example, with sound codes. [...] With the outer positions/the periphery of the scale, you can only have one, right? But with what we just call ordinary pop music, there can be, like, three in a row … right? But with hip-hop and reggae or something very distinct like that, like real hip-hop, only one and then something else! But with that [gender] we are a little looser. (The Head 2015)

Creating the P3 Universe: The Mainstream

What The Head called the channel's universe – which he several times termed mainstream – seemed important. It appeared that his associations (conscious or unconscious) in this respect influenced the choices he made during his daily practices of coding and categorising music for P3. For example, when he described the setting of a track's 'tempo' on P3, he described the coding of the track as always relating to an overall notion of the channel's format:

> It [the setting of a track's tempo value] is not a generic one. It is very dependent on the fact that something that would be characterised as 'medium-medium' on P3 very well could be categorised differently on P7. [...] You have to decide: Is it the tempo that is important for this channel? Or is it the energy of the track? Or is it the sound code? You could say that on P7 'Walking on Sunshine' would be a rock track, while on P3 it would be a …. 'soft rock' track. (The Head 2015)[23]

The Head used notions like the 'channel's DNA' and the 'channel's plexus' (*hjertekule*) when explaining the practices of creating the channel's 'universe':

> The way you do it concretely is [...] to say, 'All right, where are our borders? What kind of field is it that we operate within? Then what is the heart inside it? What kinds of bands and artists do we know of that the audience is passionate … uh … interested in?' Preferably a big audience. And then when you have your centre, your heart, your DNA, then you can draw some lines from that and say, 'If Nirvana is a part of the plexus of P6, should we not then also play some Pearl Jam? Or maybe we should look at other grunge things? If The Smiths is a DNA band in the P6 universe, what other Indie music was there at that time, and how did it sound? And so on. In that way you build your *library*, you call it. (The Head 2015)

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23   He used the slang expression *pøllerock* as slang for soft rock. Directly translated *pøllerock* is poo rock.

When referring to P6 (and partly P7), he seemed to adopt a rather traditional way of thinking about genre expectations (as described above). His thinking about P3 was slightly different. Here he expressed a different understanding of the channel's so-called universe. When choosing music for P3, he seemed to be more concerned with the individuals or the archetypes of the music than with genre:

> These days it is more about artists [earlier it was about genre]. So what kind of archetype is the artist? Is it that sweet girl? Is it that bad boy? How many bad boys are currently there? […] Is there always a bad boy, and is there always a sweet girl? It is very much like narrating a fairy tale. You know like … archetypes. There are not a lot of different stories within the mainstream. You can always take it back to … you know … archetypes. You very rarely think, 'Okay, this is really a purple unicorn! This is different!' Otherwise, it is just reproductions of archetypes! Having practised this for many years I can go in and say, 'Okay – are there any artists in this, are there any producers, is it the right time? … What will happen after two more tracks? Is the mainstream even interested in them? Or is it some kind of culture box environment that will only bear fruit after 10 years? (The Head 2015)

The idea of the mainstream referred not only to The Head's personal perceptions, shaped by many years of experience in the field; it is also a concept that was fed and sustained by another system or network of actors. The mainstream, according to The Head, was something that was negotiated in a larger, interconnected network of actors within musical life and the music industry:

> I see it very much as synchronous movements, you know, there is something out there. There is an environment; there is a need. It is very much all interconnected. One reacts to energies throughout musical life, you know. It is very rare for the purple unicorn to come flying into the mainstream. (The Head 2015)

The P3 Network of Humans and Things

From one system to another. From a network composed of a man and a piece of computer software in a public service broadcasting corporation to a network enacting ideas of the mainstream created by various actors in the popular music industry. It seemed to me that the position as P3 Head of Music was all about being in and sustaining existing networks, going with the flow of these, while at the same time keeping the (main)stream flowing.

In the sections above, we have seen a lot of 'interaction' in a network of relations between The Head, *Selector* and various pieces of music. Considering his many choices

concerning the daily creation and maintenance of the *Selector* database, the choosing of tracks, the coding of tracks to create flow and the setting up of clocks, The Head was indeed, in Latour's words, an 'agent that made a difference' for *Selector*'s capability to organise and schedule the music when it came to deciding which music would be broadcasted and how it was contextualised in order to meet the expectations of the P3 audience. However, the many choices made as part of The Head's daily practice were made in close connection with various technologies, materialities, cultural models and strategies:[24] The Head interacted with the software *Selector*, and *Selector* then organised and scheduled music based on notions of it being a tool creating 'consistency, variety, balance and control', on a form of scheduling that referred to the tracks' 'natural demands' and thus, 'by just a few clicks', created the desired station. To do this, the software organised the tracks in a certain infrastructure (e.g. five options of choice in all categories) using certain categories (e.g. mood, energy, tempo, texture, opener, era, type, sound code, and so on), certain descriptive pre-sets (e.g. in mood: suicidal, sad, average, happy, ecstatic) and certain scaffolding for organising time (e.g. the clock). The Head interacted with particular tracks and with common perceptions of various tracks' enactment of genre as well as channel formats. Furthermore, he and *Selector* interacted with the musical materiality or 'texture' of the P3 jingle that seemed to be a given anchor point (probably made by a DR corporate branding unit) when it came to the textural character of the channel's flow.

Besides these tangible technologies and materialities, The Head interacted with cultural models – mental technologies, one might call it – that seemed to govern his daily practice:

1. Associations of the P3 universe as mainstream (as made up of archetypes of bad boys and sweet girls) in relation to the more genre-defined channel formats of P6 and P7.
2. Ideas of flow as the natural stylistic aesthetics of format radio.
3. An overall corporate strategy of attracting and retaining listeners by giving them 'what they want, when they want it!'

All these very different technologies may be regarded as actors in their own manner (in terms of having agency in the situation), again presupposed by other actors in other networks. So, in the Latourian sense, The Head was a dominant actor who, on the one hand, in his daily practice played a leading role in selecting music for P3. On the other hand, it could be argued that he – as an actor in a complex network of

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24   Hasse introduces the notion of 'cultural models' as the invisible models through which we think and which point out directions for our actions in practices (2011, 96).

relations – was merely a puppet on a string conditioned by wider arrays of technology, corporate rationalities or cultural models nourished, for example, by the music industry, software producers, DR strategies and Danish public service policy. He was an actor who acted, but he did not act alone (Mol 2010, 256).

Doing Contemporary Cultural Studies of Music Radio Programming

I started out by drawing a picture of a contemporary Danish public debate focusing on The Head as a powerful gatekeeper determining which music is played on P3; the most listened to channel in Denmark. My initial concern was to clear away the magnifying pictures of The Head and the stiffened debate and begin to understand the practice of music radio production in a contemporary cultural studies perspective, and whether this is even possible in a time of rapid technological development within both media and music.

The empirical study suggests that attempts at investigating P3's music radio should embrace the complexity of the daily practice of music scheduling, as a practice made up of relations between various human and non-human actors, all possessing agency. The first step in this process of embracing complexity is, according to media and cultural studies scholar Jeremy Wade Morris, to leave behind previously predominant focuses on 'cultural intermediaries' (Bourdieu 1984) and of 'curating' as a solely human, person-dependant activity:

> Just as the term cultural intermediaries has referred almost exclusively to people, we tend to think of curation as a distinctly human capability as well. Romantic ideals around the nature of music and the intimacy of personal taste heavily structure the discourse around recommendation services and their various differences (Steiner 2012). (Morris 2015, 456)

Here Morris seems to agree with The Head, who firmly rejected my use and understanding of the word 'curating' as a person-dependant activity. Instead of focusing on 'cultural intermediaries' as 'meaning-making workers that mediate both consumers' experiences of cultural goods and producers' understandings of their target audiences' (Morris 2015, 447), Morris (and The Head) suggests looking at the *processes* of intermediation and adopting an algorithmic perspective, where 'devices and non-human actors can play an equal if not more important role than traditional cultural intermediaries' (Morris 2015, 450).

Sociologist David Beer likewise suggests looking at the algorithmic aspects of culture production when studying contemporary circulations of popular culture (2013). He encourages cultural studies to 'appreciate the part that algorithms now play in cultural formations', as 'this [appreciation] tends to be absent in cultural so-

ciology and cultural studies, where taste formations tends to be understood as being the product of social networks, friendship groups and even class positions' (2013, 10).

Hence, to answer my first question, a route to further enquiry into the daily practice of music radio production might be to supplement studies of 'social networks, friendship groups and class positions' with studies of how other technologies exert agency. For example, one might follow Morris' and Beer's call to look at algorithmic culture production – as an aspect of music radio production.

Questions of Agency in Complex Networks of Music Radio Production

Though it would be nice to end this chapter on this note of widening the perspective of studies of music radio production, I am not entirely satisfied, as this perspective – in my mind – raises other important questions. Namely, how humans can, in fact, a) be seen to make a difference in the world, and b) be attributed responsibility for their actions in corporate practices. We saw how The Head rejected any notion of a 'you' in the question 'What is music to you?' I personally understand his reaction, as I have often used the same reasoning when dealing with external relations in my former position as theatre administrator. Within the idea of net*work*, understood as cooperation between many different entangled actors, it is tempting to leave the 'you'/'me' out of the equation and consider practice as a flow of meaning and action somehow determined by all the (other) actors implicated.

Mirroring this reflection on how to consider agency in networks, STS scholars Gad and Bruun Jensen describe how ANT has repeatedly been attacked for its apparent dissolution of independent actors with morality and intentions in a 'play of forces' in which no change through human intervention seems possible (2010, 61). But what if we look at The Head's practice? How is the 'you' enacted here? In the following section, I will attempt to reflect on such questions relating to notions of human agency in networks such as those of DR's music radio production.

'Only Human': Skilled Practice Involves Developmentally Embodied Responsiveness

We were in our third meeting. The Head turned up the volume and leaned back in the seat of his office chair.

> I'm only human after all. I'm only human after all.
> Don't put the blame on me. Don't put the blame on me.
> ('Human' by Rag 'n' Bone Man 2016)

The track 'Human' by Rag 'n' Bone Man sounded from the loudspeakers. Everything seemed relaxed this time, and we seemed comfortable with each other and with the situation. 'This is a fantastic track!' he said. I felt that this was the first time he made a personal statement. The words were accompanied by music with a raw southern state blues feeling to it. He found the track swiftly on Spotify and was now playing it for me to illustrate what he meant by the notion of a 'purple unicorn', which had come up in our meetings. He used it as a description of something new and unique that provides what he had earlier described as the 'spice of gravy'. As he stated in our previous talk, 'You usually say that for a hit to become "a hit", it has to be the right track by the right artist at the right time!' (The Head 2015). This particular track, 'Human' by Rag 'n' Bone Man, was selected as 'P3's Uundgåelige' ('P3's Unavoidable', week 37). It was announced on 12 September 2016 on DR's website under the headline 'Sensitive soul from British macho man' and presented on P3's Facebook page with the words, 'If you do not already know Rag 'n' Bone Man aka. Rory Graham, NOW is a good time to start listening to him'.

In the office, the music continued with Graham's rough voice singing 'I'm no prophet or Messiah. Should go looking somewhere higher', and The Head told me that this is a purple unicorn, because it is:

> out of format, you could say. It is a kind of 'white man's blues'. It is a fantastic track! You would not expect P3 to be on top of a track like this one, right? Because it is really old-fashioned in a way, right? It is very different from that Chainsmokers we heard before, right? […] I like it when you can get … you know people between … it is people between 12 and 20 years old who are streaming, right … when you can get them to listen to music like this, right? [Author: 'Yes, it is very old-school']. Yes. It is just timeless. (The Head 2016)

'I'm only human, I make mistakes. I'm only human, that's all it takes', the music went on, while we talked a bit about the bass and some of the details of the track. I began to feel that the enthusiasm I expressed in our conversation about 'Human' was a bit false, as the Rag 'n' Bone Man track did not have the same effect on me, as I sensed it had on The Head. I did not disagree with The Head: This was an interesting and well-produced track, but I would never cherish it the way I sensed he did, calling it 'timeless'. To me, the track was filled with timely significant characteristics. I did follow his description of the track as 'white man's blues', but I had never favoured that style in particular. I just could not match his enthusiasm, even though I tried to, and (to my own disappointment) I think I said something – unintended – that somehow signalled to him that we did not share taste here, because after a while he showed less enthusiasm, and the situation became a bit awkward.

What I am trying to illustrate here relates to The Head's choice of 'Human' as 'P3's Uundgåelige' and the enthusiasm that came into play, when he talked about it as a purple unicorn and the 'spice of gravy'. I sensed that here – in The Head's enthusiasm, which was somehow related to the knowledge and taste he had built up over the years – lay a potential for innovation, a drive that made P3 something else than ordinary 'gravy', as we know it from, for example, commercial hit radio.

As an approach to considering questions of agency in networks, the anthropologist Tim Ingold introduced his idea of the 'SPIDER' as a way to reflect on how living organisms act in networks. SPIDER stands for Skilled Practice Involves Developmentally Embodied Responsiveness. The SPIDER lives, according to Ingold, in a 'webwork' or 'meshwork'. Skilled practice is seen as a particular person's unique responsiveness, which has developed through years of personal experience:

> SPIDER's world is a tangle of threads and pathways; not a network but a meshwork. Action, then, emerges from the interplay of forces conducted along the lines of the meshwork. It is because organisms are immersed in such force fields that they are alive. To cut the spider from its web would be like cutting the bird from the air or the fish from water: removed from these currents they would be dead. Living systems are characterized by a coupling of perception and action that arises within processes of ontogenetic development. This coupling is both a condition for the exercise of agency and the foundation of skill. Where ANT, then, stands for actor-network theory, SPIDER – the epitome of my own position – stands for the proposition that skilled practice involves developmentally embodied responsiveness. (Ingold 2011, 64-65)

Relating to Ingold's notion of the SPIDER, I would like to consider the 'embodied responsiveness' of The Head. This responsiveness is unique to The Head and his entanglement in radio production networks, and in the example above it was what made him go for the Rag 'n' Bone Man track and helped create this hit, this particular story of success. In this case, it would, following Ingold's point about the behaviour of the SPIDER, have made a difference if, for example, I (as unlikely as it may sound) was put in the position as Head of Music. Despite the powerful field of network relations, I would not enact 'timelessness' and 'purple unicorns' the same way he did. I would have made other choices, and I would have talked about things in different ways. I probably would not have chosen the Rag 'n' Bone Man track. I probably would not have recognised its hit potential (as the right track by the right artist at the right time), and I would not have been able to contribute, as did The Head, to this particular story of success. Maybe then, just maybe, Rag 'n' Bone Man would not have performed at Roskilde Festival in the summer of 2017.

However, in my experience, the particular 'embodied responsiveness' of The Head did not *only* relate to his position or 'structural identity' as Head of Music in

the given public service network of radio production. It also related to other kinds of culturalisations or qualifications resulting from years of working and existing in other practices. For example, his experience with commercial radio did seem to help him bring forward what some would call neoliberal logics or reasoning in the most natural way – treating listeners as customers, whose expectations should be met. Another example may be the 'developmentally embodied responsiveness' related to his many years of practice as a 'man' in society. Certainly the character of this responsiveness, connected with his practice of being a gendered body in society, was not consciously enacted,[25] but most probably unconsciously enacted through what I – with my developmentally embodied responsiveness of a 'woman' – would consider to be deprioritisation of issues of gender diversity and setting up unnecessary juxtapositions of, for example, 'quality in culture' and 'musicality' versus 'gender diversity in culture'. Let me develop this point empirically:

The Head told me about the prioritisations concerning setting up rules for each track. With regard to the coding of the tracks' actions and reactions in relation to each other, The Head described two different categories of rules: unbreakable rules and breakable rules, that is, rules that simply have to be obeyed every time and rules that are breakable in the sense of being outspoken ambitions rather than strict terms to follow. The most important (I sensed) unbreakable rules concerned artist separation and the timespan before a track can be played again. Another unbreakable rule, described earlier, was the rule about creating a good flow by not 'jumping' more than one step in, for example, texture value between tracks. Yet another unbreakable rule is not to allow tracks with 'distinct sound codes' to succeed each other.

The question of gender was also a pre-setting in the software that had to be ticked off for each track. Though gender was a focus point in the software, it was a so-called breakable rule:

I actually think that we have 'role' [male/female] as a breakable rule. You know: 'Please do not play four women in a row, please do not play four men in a row. If you can, please throw in a track by another vocalist in between the four tracks', right? If it cannot do that: Well, well, no harm done, right? There is probably a man singing in the choir if there is a female lead or the other way round, right? […] Well, it is more … the sound. […] I mean … there are also a lot of … it is more the musicality of it all. (The Head 2015)

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25 The Head actually seemed concerned about gender questions, and he took the recurring criticism of the channel in terms of gender aspects very personally. Hence, the following is not a critique of P3's handling of gender questions as such, but rather a wish to point out how 'developmentally embodied responsiveness' can also be seen with advantage to include more aspects of life than just professional music and radio-related aspects.

The question of gender diversity seemed somehow to be a blurred area and something which, to some extent, was addressed by The Head, when he looked through the lists every day:

> It is also a bit like … when you look through what the machine has suggested for the hour and think, 'Okay, this looks alright', but then start thinking, 'Okay, so … so … so gender comes before quality? … So we really need a worse track here, because now we have just had two men in a row? No, I think not! But when you look at it and think, 'Right, there are only women during this hour. We will change that slightly'. (The Head 2015)

I would – being me, with my life and personal history (as a female musician, born and raised in a feminist environment) – have had another approach to the question of gender. If I were in his position, I would (as inappropriate as that might seem in the network) probably develop a thorough notion of gender and make gender diversity a priority. Furthermore, I would probably have the software redesigned to perform better as a tool able to handle issues of gender diversity.

My point here is rather simple and in keeping with Ingold's notion of agency above, as conditioned by a coupling of perception and action. It seemed like it did matter in some contexts who occupied the position as Head of Music. For good or bad, along the lines of web- or networks, choices were made every day, every hour, every minute. Those small choices, prioritisations and formulations to some extent (some would say obviously) depended on the subject position, the s̲killed p̲ractice involving d̲evelopmentally e̲mbodied r̲esponsiveness. But skilled practice is not acquired in just one field of practice; it cannot be isolated and relate to one system or network only. The skills of the living organisms (in this case, me and The Head) in the networks result from their participation in many different networks through life. The Head's 'embodied responsiveness' (as well as mine) included various kinds of culturalisations through different practices – also culturalisation or skill-making that did not relate strictly to public service music radio production.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was not to arrive at a list of results or conclusions, but rather to interrogate the slow processes of knowing, as suggested in the quote above by Law and Singleton (2013, 485). My aim was to do a sort of 'de-black boxing' of the practices surrounding music selection and programming on P3 in the corporation of DR, and to delve into some of the myths mentioned in the first part of the chapter; myths about DR's closedness and allegations concerning The Head's power

and misconduct of his position. But still, I would like to sum up and reflect on some of my initial assumptions.

First, I gained access to P3. It took some time and demanded patience on my part, but I was never met with anything but openness and curiosity. I was met with seriousness, professionalism and a sincere interest in radio research in a time of rapid technological development. Along the way, I had to abandon my initial assumption of DR as closed and afraid of being researched.

Concerning The Head and the many allegations surrounding his person: I found him to be a man of the corporation. He held a central position and stood out as an important actor in a large web of other important actors concerned with the daily practice of creating the P3 music profile. Still, aside from The Head and his helper *Selector*, what stood out to me as a main actor in this web was the governing corporate strategies about rationalising the production practice (e.g. by using music scheduling software) and attracting more listeners at lower costs. *Selector* seemed to be an instrument that could be adjusted according to corporate expectations to the channel format. The bottom line formula seemed rather straightforward, as expressed by The Head:

> A few music tracks played a lot [i.e. a high degree of familiarity] generate large numbers
> of listeners, but a short listening time. More variation in the tracks [i.e. a low degree
> of familiarity] generates fewer listeners, but a longer listening time. (The Head 2015)

So when setting up the algorithm for *Selector*, one of the underlying questions could be: What kind of radio listening do we wish to generate on this channel? Do we want many different listeners listening for a short period of time or few listeners listening for an extended period of time?

Besides unravelling the contemporary everyday work practices of selecting and programming music on P3, my research took me onto a parallel track of investigating questions of agency in complex networks. It could be argued that questions concerning The Head's agency in the P3 network were both a complex and delicate matter that concerned 'developmentally embodied responsiveness' on several levels. If agency is to 'act on behalf of someone or something', as stated earlier, it seemed that The Head's agency and actions were related to various skills or a skilled expertise developed through a life of experience with being entangled in complex networks of different actors.

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