

Jewel in the Crown

The Nobel Banquet Broadcast as Co-Construction

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Abstract

This study explores the aims of the Nobel Banquet broadcast, produced by the Swedish public service company SVT and the Nobel Foundation. The study suggests that the programme can be viewed as a co-construction of science and media, and that the Nobel Foundation has three primary purposes: 1) to teach the audience about science; 2) to honour the laureates; and 3) to maintain and increase the status of the Nobel prize. SVT, for their part, has two main purposes: 1) to teach their audience about science, and 2) to entertain. The aims of the Nobel Foundation and SVT may seem disparate, but they are interrelated. At the same time, the subtleties between the entities create a tension that develops through mutual negotiations. The study ends with a discussion of two unexpected findings: 1) the shared, yet essentially differently-grounded aims of both parties to inform about science, and 2) the fact that their scientific content has increased in both absolute and relative terms over the years, a finding that questions notions of a continuous mediatisation of social institutions.

Keywords: Nobel prize, Nobel banquet, television, science communication, entertainment

Introduction

Each year, on the 10th of December, Nobel Day is celebrated in Sweden. Nobel Day is the culmination of several weeks of activities, during which radio, television and web media present narratives of successes in the natural sciences, linked to the Nobel Prizes in physics, chemistry and medicine.¹

The Swedish public service company, Sveriges Television (SVT), airs Nobel Prize events all day, culminating in the concluding Nobel Banquet, an evening-long live broadcast interspersed with background material and short pre-recorded interviews with the laureates.² The Nobel Foundation, an independent, non-governmental organisation founded in 1900, hosts the evening. The foundation is the sole owner of the fortune that Alfred Nobel left behind upon his death. Nobel Media AB, a company affiliated with the Nobel Foundation, owns the media rights.

The guests of honour at the Nobel Banquets are, of course, the laureates and their families, but they make up only a fraction of the approximately 1,300 people who dine in the Blue Hall of the Stockholm City Hall. The Swedish royal family, including the king, queen and their three children with partners, sits at the head table with the Nobel

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laureates and their partners. Other famous people from politics, business, culture, science and other societal realms also attend. All are dressed in full, formal gala wear. Candles and stunning flower arrangements adorn the tables at which the three-course dinner is served. The climax is the large dessert parade, complete with music and fireworks. In other words, the broadcast depicts a grandiose celebration of science.

The televised Nobel Banquet is a genre hybrid, mixing the genres of science communication and entertainment (Ganetz 2015). It thus combines aspects of award-winning research *and* entertainment, including interviews with the chefs about the food, comments on dresses, musical divertissements and the festive dessert parade. While the televised Nobel Banquet places a strong emphasis on entertainment, it also contains a great deal of information about science, including interviews with prize winners, pre-recorded reports from their workplaces, interviews with Swedish researchers working in the award-winning fields and the laureates' acceptance speeches. These elements have a more informal tone than the televised award ceremony, and can be described as popular science, in that they offer scientific information that is not addressed to professionals (Eriksson 2016).

The Nobel Banquet is not the only science and Nobel Prize-related programme aired in connection with the award ceremony. For the Nobel Foundation CEO, the banquet is a rather insignificant part of the foundation's work to strengthen the Nobel brand and spread science (Interview 1 February 2013). For example, in 2010, the broadcasts began on December fifth with reports about the Nobel prizes, followed by daily 45-to-60-minute broadcasts until Nobel Day, when the television broadcasts began with the Nobel Prize Award luncheon and continued late into the night with the Nobel Banquet. Even after Nobel Day, Nobel-related programmes are aired until December 15th, including the programmes "Nobel Week Dialogue", "Nobel Minds" and the "Nobel Prize Concert". SVT thus invests heavily in the Nobel Prize and science for almost two weeks in December. It also holds press conferences in October when the Nobel Prize winners are announced.

Nevertheless, the Nobel Banquet is the programme that draws the biggest audience, and the programme that Nobel Media's creator and former CEO calls the "jewel in the crown" (Interview 18 October 2013). It differs from any other annual Swedish television programme, both in scope – almost five hours of live broadcast – and in content, with its mix of science and entertainment: A viewer can one moment listen to information about advanced science, then a moment later, be informed in detail about the queen's dress. The programme raises a number of questions. Why does SVT spend five hours of prime-time television on this event, airing a three-course dinner mixed with science and ending with dancing? Why is the Nobel foundation interested in voluntarily airing this, in theory, private party?

This study investigates what the two actors behind the production, SVT and the Nobel Foundation/Nobel Media, aim to accomplish. What do they emphasise as the main reasons for broadcasting the banquet on television? Which goals do they share and when do their interests diverge? Are there any historical changes in this regard? Finally, how do the two parties view their cooperation?

Theory

Until quite recently, there was very little critical research on the Nobel Prize, especially the scientific prizes. Previous research approached the Nobel Prize from other perspec-

tives (e.g. Altman 1978; Zuckerman 1996; Feldman 2000; Lindahl 2001; Norberg 2001; Joseph 2002), and a critical perspective on the science awards and their relationship with the media was lacking, with two main exceptions: Mulkay (1984) has studied laureates' acceptance speeches during the banquets from a social-interaction perspective, and Källstrand (2012) has studied representations and interpretations of the Nobel Prize in the press between 1897 and 1911.

However, a special issue about the Nobel Prize was recently published in the journal *Public Understanding of Science* (2018). The included articles present much needed critical perspectives on the Nobel Prize. One of the articles discusses how Nobel Prize winners are depicted in British television (Gouyon 2018). The author emphasises that representations of science and scientists are the outcome of an interplay of cultural and institutional factors, which is also the starting point for this article.

One of the institutional factors causing lively discussion in media research in the last decade is the process of mediatisation. Hjarvard (2008) points out that the media play an important role in the circulation of knowledge and interpretation of science. He emphasises that a number of people have knowledge of various phases in the history of evolution that has been formed by films or by BBC documentary series, like "Walking with Dinosaurs". Moreover, with reference to Weingart's well known article (1998), Hjarvard notes that "the media also are an arena for public discussion and the legitimisation of science" (2008: 108). The televised Nobel Banquet is an example of this, as the banquet serves as a way to strengthen the status of the Nobel prize. However, the question whether there are any nuances in the process of mediatisation concerning the Nobel Banquet remains? I will return to this question in the final discussion.

This study is part of a larger project exploring the relationship between television and the Nobel Prize. The analysis is based on an interest in science as symbolic communication and the Nobel Banquet as a representation of science, that is, as a meaningful text. It therefore does *not* focus on how scientific findings as specific content are disseminated to the public via media, which is often what interests scientists.

Media and science have always had a complicated relationship (Nelkin 1995, Dunwoody 2014). In the science community, there is an idea of science communication as bound to the transmission model of communication, which implies a one-way flow between senders, messages and receivers. During this study, I often heard the interviewed scientists saying that what should be investigated is how well and accurately journalists convey scientific results to an (ignorant) audience.

There are also researchers who think science communication is not important, such as physicists in Johnson and colleagues (2014), who stated that science communication is "sort of soft", or feminine. Representatives from the media, on the other hand, often find scientists difficult to interview and science hard to make news of (Nelkin 1995). Perhaps most importantly, the two sides tend to have different ideas about what is important in science communication: "Scientists favour a kind of service model of journalism, expecting journalists to help them promote scientific goals and interests. Based on their professional norms, journalists, at least verbally, insist on distance from the objects they report, on their independence and on a watchdog perspective" (Peters 2014: 77).

Today, the aforementioned transmission model is increasingly challenged, and in the field of science communication, the model has been widely criticised. (For example, Bucchi (1998) pointed out early that the model is outdated.) Today, we speak instead

about the meaning-creating model, a model with links to the original meaning of communication, the Latin *communicare*: To make something in common and to make it common by sharing it with each other. Communication in this sense is understood as an interplay between participating actors, as a way of reaching shared meanings or beliefs (Carey 1992). The central role of *dialogue* is therefore emphasised, and this is also how the televised Nobel Banquet is understood in this study, namely as the result of dialogue between two parties: SVT and the Nobel Foundation.³

According to Dayan and Katz (1992/1994), the Nobel Banquet broadcast can be understood as an annual media event that follows a standard narrative model, including *a contest, conquest and coronation*. The narrative of the Nobel Prizes begins with a contest between various researchers concerning the solving of problems. This is followed by the conquest for prizes. The final coronation at the award ceremony is the final celebration (the banquet, which mixes science and entertainment).⁴ In this model, the media plays an important role by expressing loyalty to the organisers; the media “upholds the definition of the event by its organizers, explains the meaning of the symbols of the occasion, only rarely intervenes with analysis and almost never with criticism” (Dayan & Katz 1992: 8) – something I will return to.

Nick Couldry (2003) has criticised Dayan and Katz’s notion of the media event, arguing against their understanding of the media industry’s role in such events as merely “depicting reality”. According to Couldry, the media themselves work to *construct* the event. Thus, while Dayan and Katz, according to Couldry, examine a media event in terms of its reflection in the media, Couldry places more emphasis on how the media construct such events.

There is, however, perhaps, a third way to understand the relationship between media and science in the Nobel Banquet; the banquet might also be interpreted as a *co-construction* involving both the media and the scientific community (Ekström 2004). Obviously, the media construct the banquet, but since scientists dominate the Nobel Foundation and Nobel Media AB owns the broadcasting rights to the event, it is also influenced by the scientific community.

Above all, rather than studying its texts as some kind of autonomous units, this article focuses on science *contexts*. In the field of science communication, researchers often highlight the importance of analysing the context of what is said, written or depicted:

Our approach to science communication is [...] to pay careful attention to the connections, contexts and meanings at play within any instance of communication. We cannot take for granted phenomena such as “science”, “the public” or “communication”; rather, we will be interested in how meanings of these things, and others, are constructed in particular contexts and at particular moments. (Horst & Davies 2016: 47)

Bucchi (1998) likewise highlights the importance of studying science contexts and asking questions such as: How is science framed? How does an audience perceive the place where communication occurs? How is the role of the media perceived? In other studies, I have discussed how the celebrity-scientist is created through the intimating ability of television (Ganetz 2015), and I have used the Swedish queen’s body as a lens to discuss what the Nobel Banquet broadcast says about science, *inter alia* in relation to gender and space (Ganetz 2017).

Materials and method

The Nobel Banquet broadcast dates back to 1950 (six years before the official start of Swedish television), when the prize ceremony and five minutes of the banquet were shown via television at two separate locations to specially invited guests (Lemmel 1999). In 1959, a longer, 45-minute live version of the banquet at Stockholm City Hall was broadcast, and in the 1980s, the banquet's duration was further lengthened. Today, the broadcast lasts more than five hours. Except for 2007, when the advertising-funded Swedish channel TV4 held the broadcasting licence, SVT has always broadcast the banquet directly from the Blue Hall of Stockholm City Hall.

This article is primarily based on close analyses of more than 80 hours of broadcast footage. With the exception of the 1959, 1963 and 1970 banquets, all other banquets are available for viewing in the Swedish Media Database. Given the length of each broadcast (in recent years, roughly five hours), every second broadcast from 1976 to the present day was examined, equalling a total of 24 banquets. The banquet constitutes one of SVT's oldest programme formats, which allows for comparisons of the way science has been regarded and represented over time.

For this particular study, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with prominent figures within the Nobel system, as well as individuals at SVT who have worked on the banquet's television coverage. In all, eight persons were interviewed, four from the Nobel system and four from SVT. This article uses citations from the CEO of the Nobel foundation, the former CEO who established Nobel Media AB and a former, very active member of one of the Nobel Committees. From SVT, citations are used from one of the most experienced producers of the Nobel Banquet and one of the most longstanding presenters.

In order to deepen understanding of the televised Nobel Banquet, I have also used so-called "paratexts" (Gray 2010), other related texts surrounding the main televised text that is not separable but a part of the same event. These are, in this article: press-releases from Nobel Media, the website of the Nobel Foundation⁵, literature mentioning the Nobel Banquets and other documents that in some way concern the banquet.

The methods used are distinctly qualitative. I watched the 24 Nobel Banquets and took notes constantly, comprising more than 100 pages. For this article I searched for sequences in the television broadcasts that concern the relationship between science and the media, not least in a historical perspective. After identifying such sequences, in-depth interpretative analysis was applied. This analysis gave me a more general understanding of how co-construction between science and media can be conceived. The interviews all concentrated on the narrower questions on which this article focuses: The relationship between the Nobel Foundation and SVT and their aims in broadcasting the Nobel Banquet. All interviews were transcribed and approved by the interviewees.

The method of interpretation was contextualising textual analysis, in which the broadcasts, interviews and paratexts were analysed in relation to the time, society and culture from which they originated. The focus was thus on how meaning was made in the interaction between the intratextual and extratextual levels of the televised banquets.

What does the Nobel system want to mediate?

The Nobel Foundation's information officer discovered in 2000 that the foundation did not own the rights to the moving images and sound at Nobel events: "They did not own

the rights to their own story”, as she expressed it. Below, this is further discussed by the former CEO of Nobel Media:

[...] although SVT has, for many years of course, been doing a great job in airing both the award ceremony and the banquet [...] it was still SVT, the public service, who owned the rights to the material! [...] We hadn't thought of how the image of the prize, how important the image of the prize was... not just on TV. How to use so to speak... different media platforms to enhance that image in a positive way [...]. The board of the Nobel Foundation then found it essential that the foundation itself could exert a greater influence over the events one was actually the creator of (Interview 18 October 2013, author's translation).

Consequently, Nobel Media AB was established in 2004 as an affiliated company of the Nobel Foundation, with the task of producing and developing rights connected to the Nobel Prize in the areas of television, web production, distribution, publishing and events. According to their website, the company has the following main purposes: Developing Nobel programmes and finding new formats, increasing international distribution of Nobel programmes and strengthening control over Nobel programmes to protect the Nobel Foundation's trademark and immaterial rights. Nobel Media finances itself through partnerships and sponsorships and no “Nobel money” from the original donation is used.

According to the former CEO of Nobel Media, the television broadcast of the banquet, among other programmes, is based on mutual trust between SVT and the Nobel Foundation. Nobel Media expects certain banquet elements to be included in the broadcast – elements that they edit and produce as a programme called “Nobel Highlights”, which they post online. A typical programme, such as the 2011 banquet, included the following elements: Entrance fanfare, entrance of the head table, presentation of its guests (e.g. the laureates and the royal family), toasts for the king and Alfred Nobel, the three divertissements and, in connection with the last one of these, the large dessert parade, the breakup from the tables, pictures from the dance in the Golden Hall and the final picture of Stockholm's town hall in the snow. The more science-oriented elements consisted of interviews with representatives for each Nobel Prize and the laureates' short acceptance speeches. These elements lasted roughly 1 hour and 29 minutes.

In SVT's much longer broadcast of the Nobel Banquet, there are essentially three types of science communication. In the first type, the Nobel Prize winners have the floor (e.g. the acceptance speeches and the pre-recorded interviews). Secondly, journalists report about the praised research. Thirdly, other researchers are interviewed about the Nobel Prize-winning research or related issues. As shown above, the last two types are not represented in the Nobel Foundation's programme, which focuses exclusively on the Nobel laureates themselves.

So, what is the intention of televising the Nobel Banquet, according to representatives of the Nobel Foundation? Both the foundation's CEO and the creator of Nobel Media emphasise that the banquet is only part of a larger context consisting of all the science and Nobel Prize-related programmes aired in connection with the award ceremony. The Nobel Foundation's CEO says the banquet's primary purpose is to pay tribute to the laureates, and that mediating it makes a bigger impact. At the same time, he emphasises that it also provides knowledge about science: “It is clear that the impact of the tribute is getting bigger if it happens [in] public rather than private. Then I think, of course,

people see some glamour and entertainment, royalty, and both together, but they also get some science as well” (Interview 1 February 2013, author’s translation).

So, who are “they” who watch the Nobel Banquet on television? Roughly 1,162,000 Swedes watched the 2017 broadcast, or 12 per cent of Sweden’s population. The same trend has been true for years: More women than men watch the banquet, and the oldest age group (60+) is the largest. Basic data about age and gender is all we know about the viewership, however, there is no available information about their education, class, ethnicity or geographical locations. Nor is it known *why* the audience is watching or, more importantly, *how* the audience assimilates the scientific content and *how* the programmes are perceived and interpreted.

Although the dissemination of knowledge about science is stated as an important purpose, the Nobel Foundation seems rather uninterested in presenting science in the banquet context, judging by the edited programme available on its website. The Nobel Foundation CEO instead appears to mention prominently that the banquet is designed to pay tribute to the laureates, so why celebrate science this way at the banquet? Why is the celebration coupled with a grandiose and glamorous public gala, in which Swedish royals and Swedish and other international cultural and social elites participate? Since the Nobel Banquet is a private party organised by the Nobel Foundation, there are really no binding reasons either to televise it or to invite guests. In theory, the Nobel Banquet could be a dinner solely for the representatives of science, without a media presence.

It is important to note the context in which the Nobel Prize exists, i.e. the surrounding society and culture. In descriptions of science, contradictory rhetoric often is used: Science is said to be independent of society, yet it is constantly emphasised that it is important to that same society. The enhancement of autonomy serves as an argument that scientific facts are free from cultural or social influence, while the societal relevance of research always must be proven. The latter is a key aim of the banquet: The presence of the royal family (and other social and cultural elites) proves that science is important and rightly has a high status and a central societal position.

This is not a controversial statement. The Nobel Foundation’s CEO speaks of the Nobel Prize as a trademark that must be protected and “beefed up”, as he puts it (Interview 1 February 2013). One way to strengthen the brand is to emphasise, symbolically, its social importance by producing a celebration of science in which cultural and social elites participate. A former member of one of the Nobel Committees notes:

The royal family spreads glory to the public... So when they see physics, chemistry and physiology or medicine mixed with the royal family, there will be an effect, I think. The royal effect! [...] I think the royal family is a tool to raise the status of the prize. (Interview 10 October 2013, author’s translation)

This is a difficult balancing act, however. The Nobel Prize must preserve its reputation as an independent prize, awarded by qualified scientists, while simultaneously having a foundation dependent on the society and culture that surrounds it. It is apparent that the banquet is directed at the latter, while the other, more science-oriented programmes are aimed at the scientific community and interested laypersons. Nobel Media’s former CEO expresses this as follows:

From the Nobel Foundation’s point of view, I think there has always been a balancing act, involving being a detached private foundation on the one hand and

just as you say, the Nobel Banquet is actually a private party where the foundation decides who to invite. And at the same time, they have strong links with the more official Sweden and the importance of... the Nobel Prize's reputation and status and... yes, to some extent, integrity, just in relation to official Sweden. (Interview 18 October 2013, author's translation)

Within the scientific community, however, there is some dissatisfaction with the banquet's "glamorisation" and "celebrification" aspects (Ganetz 2015), despite the fact that the banquet's scientific content has gradually increased over the years. I will return to this fact later. The "glamorisation" is attributed to the (major) influence that television has over the banquet broadcast. One common opinion is that the broadcasts should include more about science and less about dresses. This pressure from the scientific community is something that Nobel Media must deal with. The former CEO of Nobel Media puts it this way:

This somewhat uncompromising attitude is something that has characterised... the conversations and discussions during the years, just in relation to... between the science community and, in the first instance, the Nobel committees. [...] And... media there... the media company in particular, Nobel Media, has stood in between. And tried to compromise in such a way that both parties will be satisfied. [...] Yes, and it has not always been easy! (Interview 18 October 2013, author's translation)

The Nobel system thus has three principal aims for television broadcasts: 1) to celebrate the laureates; 2) to teach the audience something about science; and 3) to strengthen the status of the prize. These goals are in line with established and rather traditional views on the purpose of science communication, which can be summarised as: a) the audience acquires knowledge, and b) the audience should learn to appreciate science (cf. Gregory & Miller 2000). Teaching people to appreciate science involves creating a tolerance for the tax-financed resources that are the foundation of scientific research, something that the scientific community is very aware of.

What does the television company want to mediate?

As shown in the aforementioned summary of the banquet programme on the Nobel Foundation's website – which shows what the Nobel Foundation wants to get out of the broadcast – it is dominated by entertainment elements, and the scientific content is not significant. SVT, however, sent out a total of four hours and 40 minutes, over three hours more than the programme shown on the foundation's website.

So, what does SVT use to fill up the programme time? It is striking that research and science get so much broadcasting time, especially in the twenty-first century. For example, in 2011, the hosts talked about the prizes, while the camera regularly swept over the head table. Researchers attending the banquet were interviewed about the prizes, and Nobel laureates themselves were interviewed and introduced, filmed in their homes and at their workplaces. Certainly, these elements were layered with features about the menu, interviews with a stylist about "the three most exciting dresses", features about the flower arrangements, and comments about the royal jewellery and dresses. Nonetheless, the programme was clearly dominated by research and Nobel Prize-oriented elements,

even though no critical questions were asked. It is clear that an important goal of SVT, shared with the Nobel Foundation, is to teach the audience something about science.

The early broadcasts did not include many scientific features, instead emphasising the entertainment elements. For example, in 1977, the Nobel Banquet was broadcast as part of the programme *Nöjessverige (Entertainment in Sweden)*, and during the 68 minute long broadcast of the banquet in 1979, there were no scientific elements or conversations at all. The banquet was also broadcast as part of the entertainment programme “Razzel” as late as 1983. If Nobel Prize winners were interviewed, it was mainly the laureates in literature. Only at the end of the 1980s did science slowly become more central, for several possible reasons. One is that the Nobel Foundation, under CEO Stig Ramel, became interested in the Nobel Banquet’s media image. Ramel wanted to broaden interest in the Nobel brand and realised that this broadening included, among other things, television. He took several steps to make both the award ceremony and banquet more “television friendly” (Ramel 1994). With Ramel’s interest and involvement in media-related issues, the Nobel sphere exerted more influence over the production.

Another reason why science became more visible in the Nobel Banquets from the late 1980s may be that SVT suddenly had competition. During this period, the cable television industry grew in Sweden, and it became possible to see foreign satellite channels. This meant that it became more important to emphasise public service in relation to the advertising-financed channels. SVT’s distinctive character trait is public broadcasting, and their primary mission is public service. This is how an SVT employee perceived today’s Nobel Banquet:

Presenter: The Nobel Banquet is a public service! I think, in the Nobel Banquet... there is the core of public service.

Author: Explain.

Presenter: There is the breadth; you can attract people who are interested in the queen, and the queen’s jewels, and what dresses the women wore, and maybe ... a bit interested in the food and the feast and the splendour and all that! And then we will fool them! When they get all this, they think they’ll have... pastries! Then you serve them some crispbread in between the pastries too [laughter] in the form of scientific research! And that’s the core I think in public service, being able to be broad, but also have content. I think that’s why SVT wants it [the banquet], it’s a true public-service project. Spot on! It has width and there’s a core, it’s not just entertainment. (Interview 7 March 2014, author’s translation)

Niklas Lindblad hosted SVT’s Nobel Banquet programme from 1987 to 1993. With photographer Pawel Flato, he published a book (Flato & Lindblad 2000), which is one of the few works that mentions the role of television at the Banquet. Flato and Lindblad argue that the television coverage has changed over the years: “In the early 1970s, the shadows of the student riots and the ’68 movement fell over the management’s view of what the viewers’ license money should be used for” (Flato & Lindblad 2000: 67). In the television realm, a long-running annual broadcast of an academic dinner and a handful of speeches was not that important; one year, SVT even declined to air it (as the Eurovision Song Contest took up all the network’s economic resources). On television, the Nobel Prize had low status until the Nobel Foundation asked a U.S. television

company to take over the production (Flato and Lindblad does not reveal which company or when). Then, according to Flato and Lindblad, SVT woke up: “As science became increasingly glamorous, it became clear that something extra was needed to make this event glorious. The splendor attracted the media, which increased its coverage, and then the snowball effect was a fact. Greater attention demanded increased television efforts, more TV gave increased attention” (Flato & Lindblad 2000: 71).

These observations about SVT’s increasing interest in the 1980s correspond with, for example, the 1994 banquet. That year, the whole banquet was broadcasted for the first time. SVT’s broadcast ran from 6:30 to 11:00 pm, with only one interruption for the news. The Nobel Banquet has been aired in this time block annually ever since, but in 2007, something happened that surprised the world of Swedish television: The advertising-funded Channel TV4 took over the broadcasts for reasons stated in a press release: Nobel Media sought renewal of the programme, as well as new sponsorships. The press release also said that no commercial breaks would disrupt either the award ceremony or the banquet. Instead, TV4 would seek sponsors. As an SVT employee acidly commented: “Five hours without advertising interruption... it was the only evening that ever happened” (Interview 27 February 2014). The collaboration, which would have lasted for three years, was cancelled in advance, with the following reason given by Nobel Media:

It has come to the attention of Nobel Media and the Nobel Foundation that the broadcasts in China from the 2007 Nobel Prize Award Ceremony were censored. This was made possible by licensing agreements between TV4 and third parties which diverge from the terms and conditions stated in Nobel Media’s agreement with TV4. (Press release 25 April 2008)

An unofficial explanation of the contract termination circulated, however, alleging that the Nobel Foundation was unhappy with the high volume of entertainment elements, as well as their “vulgar” nature. An SVT employee explains: “That’s why TV4 capsized, because they did not have it... the feeling for it, because they pushed the entertainment perspective too hard” (Interview 7 March 2014). The banquet then returned to SVT the following year.

This story shows how delicate the balance between science and entertainment is within the Nobel Banquet, explaining SVT’s more recent efforts to highlight science in the programme – even more so than the Nobel Foundation’s own programme, which, to a large extent, primarily pays tribute to the prize winners and strengthens the Nobel brand. The fact that science is highlighted is, of course, also dependent on the people involved in the production. It should be emphasised that those involved in the broadcasts who were interviewed for this article indicated great enthusiasm and respect for the assignment. There is a clear willingness to highlight science even in the glamorous and festive context of the Nobel Banquet.

SVT’s intent with the Nobel Banquet broadcast is not merely to enlighten the audience about what science does, however, but also to entertain. Even though science can be entertaining in its own way, the producers are aware that it may not be what attracts *millions*:

Producer: In fact, it is the royalty that attracts the greatest interest.

Author: Mm, so it is not science?

Producer: No, but science can benefit from the interest in the royalty. (Interview 27 February 2014, author's translation)

It is therefore possible to understand SVT's definition of entertainment partly as a concentration on famous people, preferably from the royal family (Ganetz 2017). One SVT employee even said the queen must be shown on the screen at least every 15 minutes during the five-hour broadcast. Another part of the entertainment concept involves features about the menu, dresses, flowers decorating the hall, the after dinner dance, and so on.

Conclusions and discussion

In summary, let me return to the initial research questions. First, what is emphasised by the two parties as the reason for broadcasting the banquet on television? SVT's objectives are 1) to entertain, and 2) to provide information. The aims of the Nobel Foundation are 1) to celebrate the laureates, 2) to teach the television audience something about science, and 3) to strengthen the status of the prize.

Second, how do the two parties view their cooperation? The short answer is – in an ambivalent way. SVT is keen to maintain its editorial freedom while at the same time being dependent on the Nobel Foundation's good will to continue sending “the jewel in the crown”. In turn, the Nobel Foundation is dependent on SVT to reach out to society in order to enhance the status of the Nobel brand while at the same time ensuring that it is done in the “right” way, that is, both glossy and worthy.

Thirdly, which goals do they share and when do their interests diverge? The first SVT objective does not interest the Nobel Foundation, and SVT has little interest in increasing the status of the Nobel Prize. However, SVT contributes – maybe unknowingly – to celebrating the laureates' prizewinning research by not asking any critical questions about it. It is striking that no critical questions are asked about science and its relationship to society or politics. This seems to have been true since the first years of the Nobel Prize, according to Källstrand (2018). He stresses that this is in agreement with Dayan and Katz' (1992) claim that in media events, the media are loyal to the basic message of the organisers. The result is a one-dimensional picture of science as a successful function that only contributes to humanity in the best ways possible.

I want to conclude by discussing two striking themes in my material: 1) the joint ambitions of the two parties to teach the audience about science; and 2) an intriguing aspect of the historical changes over time during the 60 years I studied.

Teaching science

As stated above, there is a common aim shared by both the Nobel Foundation and SVT, which is to teach the audience about science. Even though both parties are in agreement here, the contexts are different and related to otherwise differing aims of both parties. I have already pointed out that the Nobel Foundation's ambitions with the banquet are also to honour the laureates and increase the status of the prize, and that this, along with teaching science, is in line with a traditional and rather old-fashioned view as to the purpose of science communication, summarised as the audience 1) acquiring knowledge and 2) learning to appreciate science (cf. Gregory & Miller 2000).

Viewed another way, one can say that the Nobel Foundation's purpose in the Nobel Banquet is to evoke awe for science as a foundation for the public's *trust* in scientific authority (Borchelt & Nielsen 2014). This may be a wise strategy, according to Neidhardt (1993), who argues that the mediation of science is awash in difficulties, including the fact that today's specialised scientific language is difficult for a layperson to understand. He wonders how the audience could be expected to accept and trust what it cannot understand:

When people cannot understand, they have to believe. And whether they believe or not is a matter of trust. Trust is on a social level the compensation for communication deficiencies on a cognitive level. What science, therefore, permanently has to do in order to find acceptance for its messages is to construct and stabilize a social stock of generalized trust. (Neidhardt 1993: 348)

Instead of a public understanding of science, Neidhardt proposes trust as an alternative understanding – but not under just any circumstances: “Science will have to prove itself by efficiency and integrity” (Neidhardt 1993: 349). If trust does not arise, mistrust can be used constructively to guide scientists, developing a socially acceptable science. Thinking along the same lines as Gregory and Miller (2000), it suggests that science communication (communicating knowledge) cannot be fulfilled by television, while, on the other hand, the second purpose (to legitimise science) is what, *inter alia*, televised science communication can strive to achieve.

The goal of SVT, on the other hand, is not to increase audience trust in science, but to inform about science in an entertaining way. To “solely” entertain is not in line with Sweden's core values of public service. As stated on the SVT home page: “Our vision is to contribute to a more inquisitive, informed Sweden. Our aim is to create content that engages, entertains and enriches – in the service of the public.”⁶ It is therefore important to justify the time spent on entertainment – namely that the audience learn something through it, that television viewing can be useful (cf. Radway 1984). Scientific information is hence needed in relation to the programme's entertaining dimensions, as an assurance to viewers that they not only enjoy themselves, but also learn something, and that it is, therefore, socially acceptable to watch the programme and also enjoy the entertaining parts. The fact is that the didactic elements are intertwined with the entertaining elements, i.e. both the pastry and the crispbread are baked with the same flour.

Mediatisation

As shown in my analysis, one of the most striking changes over time was that the scientific content in the broadcasts of the Nobel Banquet has increased, contrary to what the science community seems to believe. The Nobel Banquet has not always been a pronounced co-construction, as stated above. As noted above, scientific content during the broadcasts was minimal in the early years, but has gradually increased, partly because the Nobel Foundation has tightened its grip on the rights, taking a more active role. In the interviews with SVT employees, it is evident that the Nobel Foundation has ideas, such as about the choice of programme leaders. It also may like or dislike the fashion features. For a while, television cameras were not allowed much contact with the head table, and there was also a ban on interviewing people other than guests at the party.

To emphasise that the Nobel Foundation was now in command of the media rights, it was announced in Nobel Media's first press release (20 September 2004) that after extensive negotiations with several television producers, Nobel Media had ultimately chosen SVT "to be principal producer of the first series of Nobel programmes for 2004-2006, whereby they also will continue to be one of the world distributors". The word "chosen" is essential here, as it indicates that SVT could no longer see itself as Number 1, and that it was now Nobel Media that controlled the production of Nobel-related programmes. However, the control did not prove to be total, as experienced by the Nobel Foundation in the debacle with the advertising-funded channel, TV4, in 2007.

Presenter: Yes... The Nobel Foundation thought they could play out... they thought that here we have a market with two equal parties [TV4 and SVT], so they were obviously mistaken [laughs]. So... they might have had too great expectations about what they could get out of it... They have also changed their attitude very much and become much more impelling, and like having their own agenda and making demands and... want more in other ways. In a way that is...

Author: With Nobel Media...?

Presenter: Yes, exactly, with the creation of Nobel Media. They... are like... a pressure group that's quite... yes... editorially doubtful, I think, so from the other side, from TV's point of view, they're very pushy! (Interview 7 March 2014, author's translation).

This development is all the more interesting in light of the discussions about the scope of mediatisation. The gradual move toward increasing the scientific community and the Nobel Foundation's influence over the television broadcasts is contrary to a definition of mediatisation that emphasises media's gradual and increasing influence over institutions. For example, Stig Hjarvard (2013: 13, italics in original) uses the term mediatisation to characterise "*a condition or phase in the overall development of society and culture in which the media exert a particularly dominant influence on other social institutions*". Hjarvard argues that mediatisation can be seen as a bilateral process in which the media, on one hand, increasingly develop into an independent institution with its own logic to which other institutions need to adapt. On the other hand, the media have developed into an integral part of other institutions, such as politics, work, family and religion, as more and more of these institutions' activities are linked to both interactive and traditional media (Hjarvard 2013). This is not the case, however, with the Nobel Banquet during the investigated period of the mid-1970s to today. Instead, the influence of television on the Nobel Banquet broadcasts weakened.

This does not mean that mediatisation has not affected the Nobel Banquet at all. First, the Nobel Banquet has been broadcast since 1959 and is now a stable ingredient in the television schedule; thus, it also is integrated into the medium. Second, there has been some adaptation to the media. Stig Ramel, for example, agreed to several changes in the banquet to make it more "television-friendly". For instance, each award winner's acceptance speech was shortened to three minutes (Flato & Lindblad 2000).

Nevertheless, it is striking that the Nobel Foundation, in the past four decades, has not been affected by mediatisation in the way that other entities such as politics, have, but has rather tightened its grip on the format. There are several possible explanations

for this. First, the Nobel Prize brand is so strong and has such high status that the Nobel Foundation has the economic, political and cultural power required to resist the media's dominance. Second, the Nobel Foundation's media strategy has been of great importance, going on the offense through the creation of Nobel Media. Third, the relationship between media and the science community has played a big role. Nelkin (1995) has noted that accuracy is high on scientists' lists of how they want their research communicated; they want popularised versions of science to reproduce facts faithfully. Given that this wish has not been met, there is great suspicion in the scientific community toward the media. This suspicion and unwillingness has created less-than-cooperative interviewees, thereby creating science journalists who are remarkably deferential and uncritical when interviewing scientists. Nelkin (1995) also claims that science journalists are heavily dependent on the science community, trusting interviewed scientists to convey real facts without questioning anything the scientists offer. This is not surprising, considering that scientific concepts are rarely included in the formal education of journalists. Nelkin (1995) has argued that the closeness of science and journalism has produced a false representation of science, one that ignores the uncertainty and insecurity inherent in scientific facts. In short, the media are dependent on the science community more than other institutions, which means this community can, more than other institutions, dictate the conditions of cooperation, as seems to be the case with broadcasts of the Nobel Banquet, during which critical, hard-hitting questions are rarely asked.

This does not mean that science is never questioned in the media. Science journalists ask important questions about scientific responsibilities, accountability, ideologies and the social priorities that govern research-policy decisions. Tensions amid these societal entities are inevitable, and the maintenance of these differences is necessary if each area is to fulfill its unique social role (Nelkin 1995), however, this is not, to a large extent, done during the Nobel Banquet broadcast, which provides a celebratory and uncritical perspective, combined with entertaining elements that merge into one entity. Neither the tributes that the science community presumably wants, nor the entertainment that viewers are assumed to want, nurtures trust in the media's investigative claims, or trust in scientific integrity and neutrality.

Notes

1. The Nobel Prize in Literature and the Nobel Peace Prize have different, non-scientific profiles, while the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel was instituted in 1968. My focus here is on the science prizes.
2. The televised Nobel Banquet is the part of the Nobel broadcasts with the largest audience. With an average audience of 1.2 million viewers, it is by far the most popular part of the whole Nobel Day, with almost twice as many viewers as the prize ceremony itself.
3. A third party could also be added, namely the science community, because this group has much influence on the activities of the Nobel Foundation and dominates the award-winning committees in physics, chemistry and medicine, as well as the board.
4. The coronation could also be called a consecration, using Bourdieu's term for cultural honours or awards. The role of a Nobel Prize in the scientific community more generally could be analysed in terms of cultural production, habitus, field and academic capital, applying a more sociological approach in the spirit of Bourdieu (1993), however, this study instead focuses on the work of cultural representations and meaning-making processes.
5. <https://www.nobelprize.org>
6. <https://www.svt.se/aboutus/>

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