

About quality

The film industry's view
of the term quality

Om kvalitet
SYNEN PÅ KVALITETSBEGREPPET
INOM FILMBRANSCHEN

Preface

Wift's wish is that this publication will contribute to a deeper discussion regarding change and revitalisation within the field where our members are active. In our earlier publication "Doing what one always does", Eva Mark found in her analysis that most decisions in the film industry are made on a basis that is hard to define; many of the interviewees referred to their "gut feeling" without making it clear to themselves that it is mainly based on the established practices in the industry and unchallenged notions.

With this new research project we want to analyse perceptions regarding the term quality, especially since quality, or the threat against it in different discussions in the industry, has been seen as an obstacle for women's participation. We seek in this publication the answer to the question *how* and *where* a term like quality is given its meaning. We asked Jenny Lantz from The Stockholm School of Economics to conduct a study of the notion of quality in the film industry in order to highlight and problematise this notion. We have seen such a study as a necessity in order to deepen and advance the positions in the current discussions.

The situation for film is defined at the intersection between artistic and commercial activities. Everybody agrees that one wants quality, but the films also have to appeal to cinema and TV audiences. It emerges in the study that this is perceived as a conflict and it creates a large space for the term quality depending on where in the industry the player is. It also makes the definition fluid. One reason for this is that there is a clash of interests in the industry between forces for profitability on one hand and art on the other. The friction between art and commerce can when at its best be stimulating, but for the structure of the industry as a whole the result is an advantage for the commercial view. Artistic quality is seen as erratic, arbitrary and unprofessional, while commerce is clearer since it can be measured in audience numbers and ticket revenue.

It is clear from Jenny Lantz's study that the term quality can be used to hide and maintain existing power structures. The decision makers have the preferential right to interpret quality. To assess quality is seen as part of their competence. It is important to keep the debate about the term alive and make sure that there is space for different parallel interpretation in order for the definition not to be used as a tool for treating some groups, women for example, unfairly.

We thank the Dramatic Institute's research and development department which has made the survey possible as well as Gothenburg University, Framtidens Kultur and Doris who have given financial support to the work and hope that the publication will be used as a basis for discussions and conversations.

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Jenny Lantz is doctor of economics at The Stockholm School of Economics. Her doctor's dissertation was called Taste at work. On Taste and Organization in the Field of Cultural Production 2005, a study within the field of organisation and management focused on a film company. Together with Nanna Gillberg she made the film Men at Kastrup in 2004. She presently teaches the course Organisation and Gender and does research at The Stockholm School of Economics.

Introduction

This study regarding the concept of quality in the Swedish film industry has its starting-point in the research about culture production and about organisation and gender.¹ Throughout the study the basic outlook on knowledge is that of so called social constructionism. It means that our knowledge and perception of things and phenomenon is socially created. Together we give a meaning to phenomena. What "quality" is is determined by the social constructions of the phenomenon which is developed in human interaction. We mostly understand roughly what we mean when we are using different words and conceptions even if we are sometimes talking at cross-purposes. We agree together what "reality" is and most of our social interactions aim to establish a common image of "reality". Since knowledge is socially created it means that it changes over time and space, in other words – it changes. There is always room for change, even if such a change can be slow. The starting point for this study is thus that a concept such as "quality" is changeable. "Femininely" and "manly" are also changeable concepts. What is implied by "femininely" and "manly" will vary over time and space. Our understanding of gender is a social construction.

¹ See methodology appendix 1.

Theoretical frame of reference

Cultural production

A distinctive feature for the “culture industry”, the “creative industry” or the “field of cultural production” is that it is characterised by a cultural and a financial logic.² The cultural logic means that one aims for artistic eminence in some way and the financial logic means that one is profitable at the same time. The two logics exist all the time, parallel to each other. It can be said that the field of cultural production ranges between two poles; the financial and the cultural and all actions and comments are placed somewhere between these two poles. This means that all actions and comments are more or less related to either logic. Financial capital, which characterises the financial logic, stands for material assets/money. Cultural capital, which characterises the cultural logic, instead stands for prestige. The French sociologist Bourdieu calls the field of cultural production “an inverted financial world”³. His studies show that the cultural pole is positively charged while the financial pole is negatively charged internally within the field of cultural production. It can be said from a general point of view that highbrow culture is justified by referring to the cultural logic and popular culture is justified by referring to the financial logic. It is typical for cultural production that the two logics are constructed as each others opposites, as if there were an intrinsic clash of interests between the two logics.

This is of course also true for the film industry and its organisations.⁴ Depending on where a person is placed in the film industry, actions and opinions are justified with one or the other logics.

Organisation and gender

Research in the field of organisation and gender describes, interprets and problematise the significance of gender within organisations.⁵ The power relation between the genders is crucial for the understanding of gender. One often needs to look beyond gender divided statistics to interpret the significance of gender. It can be necessary to make notions that people in the organisation have about men and women visible in order to be able to interpret the significance of gender. Gender order is a concept which captures the power relation between genders on a structural level. It is expressed in an organisation through gender

² Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. New York, Columbia University Press.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Lantz, J. (2005) *Taste at Work. On Taste and Organization in the field of Cultural Production*. Stockholm, Arvinius.

⁵ Wahl, A, C. Holgersson, P. Höök and S. Linghag (2001). *Det ordnar sig. Teorier om organisation och kön*. Lund, Studentlitteratur.

structures⁶ and symbols. The latter can include images, representations and awareness of gender in the everyday life of the organisation. These can both reinforce and confirm the structural order as well as contradict and hide it.⁷

A gender-blind outlook means that gender remains unproblematised and the male norm that the present gender order rests on is recreated.⁸ The present gender order is mainly recreated through our actions where a male norm is often taken for granted by both women and men. It is easy to discover the norm through studying how the deviant is named (“boss” and “female boss”, director and “female director”).

An important aspect in the critical outlook that characterises the field of organisation and gender is the stress on interaction between individual and structure. The importance of interpreting individual’s actions based on the prevailing structural gender order is emphasised. Even if the power relation in the gender order often is expressed as a male superiority and a female subordination, it doesn’t mean that all women are subordinated to all men.

The gender order in the Swedish film industry

Previous studies and mappings show that the Swedish film industry is characterised by male domination in leading positions and so called gender marking⁹ for different occupations.¹⁰ This gender order is also significant for the major part of the Swedish cultural field¹¹ and Swedish industry¹². The gender order highlights women’s and men’s different conditions. Also in this study the interviewees answered questions about the significance of gender in the business. I will start with a general account of the aspects that were touched upon; we will then focus on the quality theme.¹³

Almost everybody has taken note of or is aware of the statistics that captures the gender structure in the business and among originators. Consequently many make the comment that it is easier for men to make films. There are also a large number of interviewees who point out that many occupations are gender marked, for example that men are electricians, grips and photographers while women to a greater extent work as script supervisors or within costume and make up. Several maintain – in spite of the knowledge of the gender structure in the industry in general – that their particular organisation is equal. Some even maintain that their organisations are women-dominated, which often means a dominance in numbers. Top positions, i.e. the decision making power still often belong to the men. That it is more difficult

⁶ Gender structure is the name for the organisation’s distribution between women and men in numbers, positions and degree of influence.

⁷ Wahl, A, C. Holgersson, P. Höök and S. Linghag (2001). *Det ordnar sig. Teorier om organisation och kön*. Lund, Studentlitteratur.

⁸ Hirdman, Y. (1988). ”Genussystemet. Reflexioner över kvinnors sociala underordning”: *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift* 3, page 49-63

⁹ Gender marking means that certain positions, occupations, businesses and so on are associated with a sex.

¹⁰ Hermele, V. (editor) (2002) *Män, män, män och en och annan kvinna*. Stockholm, Svenska Filminstitutet

Lindstedt, K. (2003). ”17 gubbar mot två tjejer”. *Aftonbladet*, 15 dec

Birgerson, M. (2005) *Filmbranschen och jämställdheten* Teaterförbundet

Carp, O. (2005) ”Filmbranschen dåligt jämställd”. Svenska Dagbladet 22 juni.

Lantz, J. (2005). *Taste at Work. On Taste and Organization in the Field of Cultural Production*. Stockholm, Arvinius.

Maerk, E. (2006) ”Att göra som man brukar. Om beslutsprocesser i filmbranschen”. Stockholm, WIFT Sverige.

¹¹ Alvesson, M. and A.-S Köping (1993). *Med känslan som ledstjärna*. Lund, Studentlitteratur

¹² Kalmteg, L. (2003). ”Männen har makten i svenska kulturlivet”. Svenska Dagbladet 5 juni

¹³ See interview model in appendix 2.

to see the gender order “at home” is sometimes about it being taken for granted, it is “normal” to us.

The gender order is expressed in the choice of stories. Many women point to that women’s stories and form of interpretation have a hard time getting through in the business.

“Gender is of enormous importance for which stories that get told and how they are expressed. How does gender influence which stories get chosen and how they are expressed? The recognition factor. I don’t identify with and I find bang-bang stories really boring and the only reason for me to find them a tiny bit interesting would be if there was a female principal part who was somehow affected.” (producer, woman)

“Certain subjects are not as hot as others. I mean there are no autobiographical films by female directors, but there are very, very many male stories about childhood.” (film critic, woman)

A male film critic is on the same track. He thinks that men in leading positions don’t always understand women’s projects. He says that a male boss would find it much more difficult to get hooked on the film script for *Bridget Jones’s Diary* than a female boss. “And maybe that’s how it is throughout the whole decision-making process about who gets to make films”, he reasons. He doesn’t think that men actively obstruct women even if it is a male dominated business:

“Since it is a business where one aims to make a profit, I don’t think any man in a leading position would stop a woman’s project because she is a woman. I think it is about them not understanding”. (film critic, man)

He thus confirms that the gender order is maintained unconsciously. A producer testifies that women find it easier to relate to and understand other women’s stories:

“I’m almost one hundred percent certain that women and men write totally different stories. We work a lot with women here and I think it is because we are women.” (producer, woman)

A film commissioner discusses what appeals to him in stories and suspects it has something to do with gender.

“That stories that so to speak spontaneously attract me contain something male, regardless of who is telling it. A male perspective or a male narrative structure or anything. And it is really important that one is aware of it. And I think we have become that and that I am. However I think I have to practise even more to consider it when I have read a script, what is that appeals to me in this script? What makes me feel spoken to? [...] To start dissecting a little bit what is subjective and what is objective and what has to do with me and what has to do with the context I come from and all that.” (film commissioner, man)

As mentioned at the beginning “femininely” and “manly” are changeable concepts and not given by nature. However, there can arise notions about a “typically manly” narrative and a “typically femininely” narrative, which is understandable from women’s and men’s different conditions and experiences. That “femininity” is often connected with feelings¹⁴ make some interviewees underline women being especially suited for the film medium:

“Film is about conveying feelings. [...] I think that women as a rule are better than men at seeing the emotions in the project. Because men are per definition not as good at talking about feelings. [...] And therefore I think that all films that really work – apart from action films – are films that convey very, very strong feelings. I therefore think that it is important that women are part of the whole process, because I think that lifts it. I actually think that many projects would have been better if women had directed and produced.” (distributor, man)

¹⁴ Hochschild, A.R. (1983). *The Managed Heart. Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley, University of California Press.

Another expression of the gender order is that the myth of the genius is associated with a man. A film commissioner explains:

“And there is also this myth of the male genius. There are undoubtedly female geniuses, but you don’t talk about them like that. You don’t talk about female geniuses as geniuses. There are those who get so upset when a man isn’t allowed to make a feature film, but I don’t hear that when it is a woman. One gets a little bit provoked. Who appointed him to genius?” (commissioner, woman)

She also tells that she thinks that there is more of a hype surrounding young male filmmakers, than around young female filmmakers.

The gender order is clear among the audience, not only among the filmmakers. One director problematises the target group definitions. She claims that it could be a trap. If a film is defined as a film for women, men don’t go, is her experience.

“A woman is happy to go and see a film that is perceived to be a typical boys’ film. Or, more to the point, you see a lot of women in the audience, because a lot of women go and see it with their men. But if a film is rumoured to be a women’s film, the men are very sparse. That’s how it is. Women are interested in men’s definition of the world, while men are less interested by women’s definition – as a general rule. [...] I would be tremendously upset if someone wanted to market something I’ve done as a “film for women”, I would find that enormously limiting. And it would also make the men look stupid. They miss out on so much. [...] If you narrate something that people recognise it transgresses class, gender, group.” (director, woman)

In other words, society’s gender order reflects on the business. With a gender order where the man is the norm, men’s stories will be perceived as common to all mankind and universal while women’s stories will be seen as specific.

A director describes film as a gender driven medium and illustrates how the gender order is expressed through sex in a wide sense. “The fact alone that Sean Connery can be 72 years and his female opponent is 30, is so telling”, this director explains. He continues:

“What I find difficult in our type of organisation is that women don’t get the same possibilities. I mean what you used to call career. Women become good and hardworking and we achieve a hell of a lot. A lot suffer a breakdown” Many work terribly, terribly hard. But you are not given any opportunity for development, to do more, to use your knowledge. It stops somewhere. That’s how you become very important to the organisation.” (commissioner, woman)

She explains how women become important cogwheels in the organisation, “you should be there as something dependable, a person who makes everything work”. To move forward, get responsibility for a new area or making larger decisions – that is much more difficult, according to this commissioner.

Many interviewees talk about the reasons for the male dominance in the film industry. Some state the dependency on technique and resources as one of the reasons for this. That the industry devours money influences the choice of who gets to make films, according to one film critic. That the profession of director is a top position is also discussed:

“The reason why there are so few female directors – [...] the same as why there are so few women on board of directors – it’s a top position.” (film critic, woman)

“I’m a good leader and that is necessary when you are a film director. I have seen men who are bad leaders and things don’t work out for them. I have seen women who are both good and bad leaders. I think it is more difficult for women to see qualities of leadership as a natural part, men do because from the outset they look upon themselves as individuals and not as a group. [...] The actors say that I’m not as well looked after as men are by

the team. I think they mean that I'm not assisted and waited on as men are. They think it should be the other way round, that they should look out for me because I'm a woman who they are traditionally more looked after. But since I'm a leader I don't fit the traditional image of a woman. And you don't like waiting on a woman. There is an unconscious conflict of status and rank. (director, woman)

The last quote touches upon the notion that the boss is a man, which has been shown in research.¹⁵ "Femininity" and "leadership" are not as easy to combine as "manly" and "leadership". Women who are bosses are often seen as insufficient leaders or as "unfeminine". The director, who was quoted, also indicates to that we all together contribute to the recreation of the gender order. The team jointly makes sure that the male director is more looked after.

Several interviewees also mention the industry's jargon and work methods as a reason for the gender order to remain. One director describes the industry as "very tough" which according to her favours "strong individuals". You can only remain in the industry if you are persistent and don't look for "a comfortable life without conflicts". One producer has similar experiences:

"It has been very male dominated when I've been working, which creates quite a tough jargon. There is a grim hierarchy at productions and I don't think it has to be like that, in that way. It's a bit like a military manoeuvre. It's not that simple. Some of the problems during a film production aren't only connected to gender, there are also a lot of freelancers that create elbows and a certain psychology which at times isn't that fun. And I can't say that it is always the men's fault, that would be a bit strange." (producer, woman)

Several interviewees draw parallels to the military:

The production process itself is very much like military processes. [...] It makes it more difficult to get in. There are very many male role models, but not as many female, [...] Very male hierarchies, some kind of cowboy mentality. It's like the last male outpost where you can play. So I think it would be good to break it up even more than just changing the gender of people, one would wish for a different work method. [...] That's how I've been thinking as a producer, I would like to work in a different way and I think there quite a few who would like to work in a different way because there is something tempting and cool about productions, but there is also something inhumane. Something inhumane which makes you work like an idiot when you're young and then you like drop and when it's time to have a family you can't work in the productions any longer because they don't go with an adult life. And men can refrain from becoming adults more than women can in some strange way." (commissioner, woman)

Thus they see problems with the working conditions in the industry and the woman who was quoted last, points out that the consequences are different for women and men (it probably depends on how life and responsibilities in general are shared).

There are without doubt more women than men who have experience of gender among the interviewees. Many men refer to statistics and say that gender matters when it comes to who gets to make films, but they rarely have comments beyond that. This is in line with the person representing the norm being the last to discover the norm and the superior the last one to discover the superiority, something the researcher Michael Kimmel has written about. He paraphrases the Chinese saying "The fish is the last one to discover the sea" when he says that the white heterosexual middleclass man is the last to see the gender order: he is a fish in the gender sea.¹⁶

¹⁵ Wahl, A. (1992) "Företagsledning som konstruktion av manlighet", *Företagsledning bortom etablerad teori*, Sjöstrand, S.-E. and I. Holmberg (editor). Lund Studentlitteratur

Collinson, D. and J. Hearn, (1994) "Naming men as men: implication for work, organization and management", *Gender, Work and Organization*, vol. 1 nr 1, page 2-22

¹⁶ Kimmel, M.S. (1996). *Manhood in America: a cultural history*. New York, Free Press.

After having presented expressions of gender order in the film industry I will now move to the focus of the study: the perception of quality. I will however come back to the gender order, both during the presentation and in the concluding analysis.

Perceptions of quality

The following section contains a presentation of some of the answers from the field survey regarding quality in the film industry. The answers showed here were chosen because they are representative. They represent an attitude to quality that can be understood bearing in mind the theories regarding cultural production, organisation and gender.

What is quality?

Almost every interviewee thinks it is difficult to give an answer to what “quality” means to them and to define quality.

“It’s difficult. It’s as if you can feel when it’s high quality, but it’s difficult to put into words. It’s like well cooked food; you feel that the ingredients are good.” (commissioner, woman)

All, apart from two interviewees, eventually describe how they look upon the notion and in most cases also define it in spite of loads of reservations regarding the difficulties of doing it. Below follows a presentation of some of the typical answers. One person will often mention different aspects of quality, hence many themes overlap. They give the term “quality” different meanings. There is disagreement about how many aspects/demands must be fulfilled in order to refer to a film or a project as “quality”.

One director says for example that she in her artistic work uses Harry Schein’s perception of quality in the Film Agreement from 1963,

“which I still think is absolutely brilliant. Film is really discussed in it from different points: form, importance, creativity and so on. Eight different points. I think that is a very good genderless discussion about what quality is.” (director, woman)

She points out that it’s enough if some of the aspects of the notion of quality have been met in order to call something “quality”. She gives the example “a piece can be very challenging, but not accessible”.

Some interviewees mention that film is an emotional medium and discuss quality where the main aspect is that the receiver or audience is affected. One distributor says that he sees it as “quality in the address” when a film “speaks to me in a manner which makes me feel that here is another human being who wants to tell me something and I feel that this really interests me”.

He goes on to say about quality that he is keen on the film being interesting to discuss. He explains this:

“We want there to be a theme and a subject which means that it isn’t just an outer story but also an inner story, a message, which will be interesting to discuss in the places of work or when you go for a glass of wine after the film.” (distributor, man)

One commissioner describes one aspect of quality as:

“That the content somehow affects you and that there is an artistic eminence, integrity in what you are saying.” (commissioner, woman)

One film critic maintains though that he can be affected by bad films, for example films that pander to people’s sentimentality, and he stresses that a film’s quality isn’t only about affecting.

Talent, knowledge, love and honesty often reoccur in the definitions of quality.

“Quality is a product created by a sort of alloy of ambition, love and knowledge.” (director, man)

The quote above comes from a director who stresses that talent is an incredibly small part of the whole craftsmanship. But if the talent is big, it will be very visible. One producer states that it is central for the notion of quality used in his organisation to work with “unexpected talents”, both young and old.

One producer says the quality above all is about “having an honest intention in what one does”. He develops this further:

“Quality isn’t about having lots of resources, it’s about the honest intention of those who’ve done it.” (producer, man)

A distributor talks in the same way about a “truthful” narrative:

One should feel some kind of truth in what is being said. You should have some kind of experience, preferably something you haven’t thought of before or felt before or seen before.” (distributor, woman)

One commissioner emphasises “the proficiency, the thought and the genuine passion” as being central aspects of “quality”. She also talks about “credibility” as an expression of quality. “Credibility in the ideas, in knowing you can pull it through, in the meeting with the audience”.

It is common to emphasise the connection between a “personal touch” and quality. One woman explains that by “personal touch” she means that there is someone sending a message to her as viewer. She especially mentions films where you feel that there is a human being behind it. One man means that the “personal touch” is closely related to the originality of the story. He describes this form of quality as pertaining to

“the sender, it could be a scriptwriter and director together having a personal way in to the story. They should have a relation to it. A strong reason for wanting to tell this story. And have a different and original way of doing it.” (commissioner, man)

Another commissioner is on the same track:

“That there is a personal imprint and a thought in what you are saying. And that it is well carried through. It needn’t be very stylish or look very expensive, but that you have carried out your vision. [...] It should have artistic integrity, not a copy of something else. That is artistic integrity and a personal imprint which to me is quality.” (commissioner, woman)

One director talks about vision:

“To me personally it is that I achieve something I feel is – if not the absolute best for that is very rarely achieved – but if I manage to achieve 80 per cent of what I wanted in my vision and it is conveyed to an audience, I think that’s quality. If we’re talking about result.” (commissioner, woman)

Some interviewees stress the craftsmanship's importance for the quality:

"For genuine craftsmanship, it might sound boring, but that it is skilled on every level: script, dialogue, acting, stage setting, aesthetic. Thoroughly gone through and thought through. (film critic, woman)

"Good production values" is mentioned in a couple of interviews as a condition for quality, for example that "it is neat and that there are good actors". But here too this is qualified by *also* having to be "a good story" and "a good script".

One producer says that quality to him is to "take great pains over every possible part of a film's production process". He talks about the script development stage and the conditions for the work on the film as the film's journey out into the world. He wants to create "the best possibilities as possible for the director and the others involved in making an excellent film".

Closely connected to the craftsmanship is the definition of quality being linked to using all the film's "elements". These elements are, according to one interviewee, script, acting, sound, light, photography and set design. To use all the film's elements demands a carefully thought through project. "That you have looked at all the details and have had a good overview. It is something about entirety", says a commissioner who is on the same wavelength.

One film critic says that creativity, something she thinks is central to quality, entails "moving the art of film forward". Creativity can also according to one distributor mean a new way of looking at a theme. Originality is emphasised by several, some of them link it to the aforementioned personal touch.

One producer relates that his company uses quality as a determinant of choice for the projects they are working on; this includes a wish "for films to be groundbreaking in some way, so that they start a new trend rather than just following an old one".

One commissioner emphasises "the filmic enhancement", which he clarifies with a reference to filmic language and the dialogue. It is according to him important to ask questions about the story's character. Is it a "naturalistic story" or a story "which starts in reality, but which wants to create another dimension"?

Several interviewees refer to quality as something lasting, something that remains. One director says:

"Then there is some kind of retroactive measure of value of quality and that is if it lasts, if you can watch it after ten years. [...] that is a very absolute measure of value: things that are timeless. That has to be regarded as the absolutely highest quality" (director, man)

He develops his thoughts further and says that there are certain productions that are booed when they are produced. Time isn't ready for them. Later it has been shown that they have certain components which make them tremendously universal year after year. They simply continue to communicate with the audience. One film critic brings up that quality is something that works retrospectively: "In the rear mirror you see this person in a bigger context with much more importance and who stands for more quality than what is seen when in the middle of it [the period]."

It is also common to emphasise that they look both at quality in a project – which is defined in terms of “a good story”, “a talent” – and quality in the connection with the audience. The latter is described by one distributor as “hitting the right note with the audience”.

“Degree of urgency” is brought up by one of the commissioners. He explains the concept by asking the question “Is this film about a human being from different perspectives?”.

One interviewee says that he as a director principally has to think about who he is making the film for and then what kind of language is necessary to reach this audience. Quality – according to him – depends on where you come from. A professor, a miner, an ambulance driver and a brain surgeon will undoubtedly have different views on quality. With his films he wants to make quality films for “the normal person” and, above all, not for his colleagues in the film industry. The respect for the audience, regardless of subject, is central to him, alternatively a completely disrespectful attitude – so that it becomes fun just because of that.

One commissioner says that to her quality “has nothing to do with the film being commercial”.

That the film’s quality is something immaterial, which is not always about invested money, is highlighted by a critic who thinks that it is a lot more difficult to talk about quality regarding films than regarding for example wines and cars.

“A bottle of wine that cost twice as much is often a lot better and a car that costs twice as much is so much better. [...] But it’s not that simple with film. A film that costs a hundred million dollars isn’t necessarily better than a film that costs 4 million crowns. (critic, man)

To sum up I want to stress that the interviewees describe their view of the notion “quality” with words that have various meanings, such as “films that affect”, “credibility”, “talent”, “motive”, “love”, “honesty”, “passion”, “personal touch”, “integrity”, “creativity” and “filmic enhancement”. This in itself is not a problem, but it is of course important who the interpreter is, something I will return to in the analysis.

Not wanting to define “quality”

A few people refrained for different reasons at all to try to define or describe their own views of quality. The main reasons for this were that the notion is associated to snobbism, that it is a feeling, that it is “within you” and that it is a “subjective” notion which is impossible to define.

One commissioner who is reluctant to the use of the word “quality” in general, explains that she thinks that it is word that is used “rather prestigiously, a little politically and a little snobbishly”.

Quality is a word just like power that I don’t like to use. I think that power and quality are two of the most unpleasant words in this...I think they are difficult words because somehow they are words that I often hear in my job and in my position; you have power, How does it feel? Or; how do you work with the term quality? I think it’s difficult.” (commissioner, woman)

She is the only one in the study who says that the reason she doesn’t use the term is that it is associated to snobbism. There are however a number of interviewees who problematise the snobbism that is associated with the term, something I will come back to under the heading *The industry’s attitude to quality*.

One producer who doesn't want to define quality means that the notion of quality has to be defined from the purpose of the activity.

"I think it is difficult to describe. You have to have it within yourself. I really think that one must... one must feel it oneself. [...] The day someone puts a finger on quality and tells you what it is, then I think we really are in trouble. Because I think I know what quality is and I think that's why I had this job. It could be based on what I've been involved in over the years. You look at what films one has been involved in and such. Then it's other people defining what it is. Then you can say 'yes, he can, she can, he knows what quality is', so to say."
(producer, man)

Certain people seem in other words to be more or less suited to different kinds of quality definitions.

In asking for the definition of quality, the respondents say that the term "quality" is "subjective" and that it is "a matter of taste" as one director put it. Others who are more willing to narrow down the term think that it is not a matter of taste. One commissioner says that even if there is something subjective in the notion of quality;

"I don't think this thing about choice is so subjective as you might think. But when you look at it I think one would agree pretty much. If for instance several of us were sitting here. Then it could be something about taste. Among these projects that one thinks have quality, which one does one choose? There I think it could be a matter of taste. But I think there is a kind of objectivity which is bigger than one thinks. It isn't so very subjective, as if we're sitting feeling and thinking, but... it can be difficult to define. [...] Taste is something different that you can have lots of different opinions on, but quality is something else."
(commissioner, woman)

On the question if it is possible to define quality one interviewee answers "yes if you have the analytical tools which are part of the role of a critic", which I see as the most direct answer to the question in the study.

One often uses a quality definition which seems to work in one's own activities, which is something that will be discussed further in the next part.

Apropos of the experienced "subjectivity" regarding quality, one interviewee thinks that you have to draw up certain criteria to yourself and then check if they have been met. The quality logic must according to him depend on the project's character. "If it is a comedy that isn't funny, then it's bad quality". One director is on the same track. According to her the quality ambition is mostly about the subject and how you want to convey it.

Using "quality"

Most of the interviewees state that in spite of the "subjectivity" they have remarked upon, they still use the term "quality", though the usage seems to vary according to role/position and individual attitudes towards the term. Many of them use the term "quality" when they speak about what they think is most important in their jobs. One distributor says that his company wants to work with projects that are "both quality and audience". One director describes in a similar way his assignment as "delivering film and TV with high quality and large audiences." One producer says that he thinks that quality in practise is

"the combination of an audience-rated and commercial success with intact quality intact in the production. [...] that script, acting, directing, execution all is secured."
(producer, man)

The fact that these interviewees talk about quality and audience, or “with intact quality”, indicates that their use of the term “quality” doesn’t obviously include a public dimension. That they add the word public means that they recreate the clash of interests between quality and the commercial/public, which is typical for the cultural production field.¹⁷ It is quite common to relate to a perception of quality as something highbrow, which is illustrated in the quotes from those who choose not to use the term (see below). Many of the interviewees who question the perception of quality as “art film” still use the term. Both producers and directors and film critics generally stress the importance of films being watched by many.

One director thinks that “making something that oneself thinks has quality” is an artist’s first demand on himself or herself. A director relates, along the same lines, to when he refers to quality when he is in a sales situation where he is talking about his project. “[...] what I offer has to have quality”.

One commissioner says that

“I might use it sometimes in my write-ups. I’m sure I do it when I’m commenting on why films should receive support from me. [...] Maybe one is a bit careless but I also use it when I’m defining who we want to support. When one is writing some kind of policy statement or when it’s about short films one says that it’s important with high quality.” (commissioner, woman)

Even if they don’t much use the word “quality” internally in the organisation, one producer means that the notion is there even so; they are very careful about spending much time on each step in the production process. This producer relates that one has a strong vision about what the project will be like when one makes the production decision. “And it’s going to be fantastic”, he says. Another producer states that the term is inscribed in the company’s business plan. He relates that “quality” is a “selection variable” when they choose which projects to invest in. Yet another producer states that he never really thinks about quality. He assumes that what he is doing is quality.

Several interviewees explain that among the people they work with an “own” perception of quality or a feeling for how one looks on quality is developed. A distributor points out that they use a certain idea of quality in her organisation which sometimes is made clear:

“You can really notice it that when there are new people coming in, you get new opinions and that is what keeps it alive somehow. But there is of course a basic idea because not just anyone comes in and works for us.” (distributor, woman)

That it can be easier to use the term quality with people in the local situation is something one producer also brings up:

“I’m careful with [the term]. But I do use it. I do. Quality is so different to different people. [...] I mainly use it with people who I know understand what I and others so to speak mean by it. If I’m recruiting [a key person] one has to get closer to the person so that they understand what the term stands for. Not what it is, but what it stands for here [in our organisation]. When I’m dealing with such people I can use quality because then I know so to speak that we know what it means.” (producer, man)

¹⁷ Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. New York, Columbia University Press.

Lantz, J. (2005) *Taste at work. On Taste and Organization in the Field of Cultural production*, Stockholm, Arvinius.

The fact that local meanings of “quality” arise in an organisation is not so strange given that one interacts a lot with colleagues and thus create together a meaning of the term. One so to speak shares an image of reality with one’s colleagues.

That the use of quality also can be connected to people is highlighted by a director. He says that he often uses the term “quality” in his job and refers to the fact that he always uses a certain photographer and a certain editor. Together they always seek the best picture quality as well as the best cut. The view that quality is connected to certain individuals is something that a couple of the interviewees return to in the discussion about guarantee of quality.

One critic emphasises “quality” as the basis for the critic and continues:

“It is the critic’s chief tool I would say. I think that if you are not prepared to form aesthetic hierarchies, you’re not a very good writer or a very good film critic. [...] You have to be prepared to express an opinion, [...] critique must be clear, you have to be clear if you think that something is good and something bad and why. Then you have to get into the perception of quality.” (film critic, woman)

That a film critic is happy to use the term quality can be interpreted that his or her position in the cultural production field is characterised by the cultural logic.

Not to use “quality”

Some interviewees dissociate themselves from certain usages of the term “quality”. They cite that “quality” can be associated with something “narrow” and “arty”. One commissioner says that she doesn’t use the term about “popular culture versus highbrow culture”. She thinks that quality often is associated with something narrow.

One producer says that in her organisation they “[never] talk in terms of quality or not quality”. Instead they talk about “what you are passionate about and what project one wants to pull through because it’s the kind of film you yourself want to see”, she explains. A “good” project is an “interesting story that touches you and that one wants to see in a film”. But she does add that they also take into account the commercial potential in the project. That the term quality isn’t tempting depends on it being so vague and “so individual”. She furthermore thinks that there is snobbism in the term.

“That it shuts others out in some way. [...] That one feels that quality is ranked higher maybe, something that’s a little superior or better than others. That’s probably how I look upon the word quality. [...] It doesn’t mean anything to me if someone says ‘this is quality’. I want more elements to be able to relate to the film. (producer, woman)

Another producer says a propos the use of quality that

“No, I don’t use the word quality [...] There are certain narrow films that might not attract the audiences, but which have enormous quality. But film is an industry, so primarily [for me] can’t be to think that the film should be artistic and narrow: Then there are lots of such [narrow] film of very high quality. But I think one can make maybe two – three bigger films and then one can make one [narrow film]. It is an industry and one has to relate to that [...]. (producer, woman)

It is worth noting that it is only women who say that they don’t use the word “quality”. Because they in the present gender order in the industry often lack the men’s preferential right of interpretation, their dissociation could be interpreted as a protest against not being allowed to define “quality”. There seems to be a big difference between not wanting to use “quality” and not wanting to *define* the term. Not wanting to use the term could be interpreted as a

critique of the domineering meaning/use. Not wanting to define the term could however be about not wanting to have your preferential right of interpretation questioned or highlighted. It can be comfortable to use a term without having to define it from a position of power. In other words, a reluctance to define “quality” doesn’t need to include a critique of the present meaning/use.

Who decides if something has quality?

When it comes to the question of who can decide what has quality, and if someone’s viewpoint is more valid in this context, many reply that everybody has a right to their own definition of quality. One film critic points out for example that there isn’t a right or wrong opinion, regardless if it is expressed by an ordinary filmgoer, the head of the Film Institute, a representative for a film company or a journalist. At the same time a large number of interviewees discuss different organisations’, professional categories’ and other groups’ assumed better ability to determine quality. Both for development projects and for produced films.

To determine the quality of development projects

Some people who indeed have stated that everybody has a right to their own definition of quality, make clear though, that certain people are better equipped to judge the quality of a project in its development stage, for example in the script stage. This is what one film critic says a propos determining the quality of a script:

“It is also a subjective assessment, but of course the more experience you have the better you should be at determining that. I can imagine that if Ingmar Bergman reads a film script, it is easier for him to assess if it would make a good film or not [...]. It’s difficult, but the more experience you have regardless of if it is as a critic, filmmaker or an actor it is of course easier to assess. Because a film script isn’t a finished product, it’s just a beginning.” (film critic, man)

One director reasons along the same lines:

“It depends on if you’re the audience or the creator. And that is a big difference. Each person who is going to see a film has a right to his or her assessment of what quality is. The greatness with film is that it can completely pass one person by and be an amazing experience for another. But I think that in order to assess what can become a good film, because that is often what it is about in my world, I think it takes a lot of skill to assess what is quality. To be able to decipher, since you actually have to guess what can become a good piece of art judged on a sketch on a piece of paper.” (director, woman)

That knowledge and experience for example from having read many scripts make you better at assessing quality is stressed also by a commissioner.

In the light of the gender order and the male dominance that have historically marked the film industry, it is important to remember that the risk is great that more men than women will be considered having “the right” knowledge and experience. That an important expression of the gender order was the difficulty for women’s stories to come out has to be seen against the background of this skills description.

Another commissioner brings up the ever present uncertainty in the assessments:

“You can always be wrong no matter how much experience and knowledge you may have. You can always be wrong because it is such a complicated process.” (commissioner, man)

He explains that film critics and audiences have a completely different starting point than the commissioners, since the first-mentioned always “come afterwards”. He points out that this also goes for individual film workers. He expounds his reasoning:

“There are very many that are critical of our decisions already when we make them, but they only see their project. I see all the projects. I have the possibility to compare the projects with one another and with the criteria I use for making decisions. While [the film maker] only can compare with his or her script. But [the film makers] often compares [the finished films] with the visions they had for their project. [...] We make decisions based on a script and an expectation on this team that are delivering this script can deliver something that corresponds with my expectations on the script.” (commissioner, man)

The uncertainty in the assessment of the script stage and its consequences for the structure of the industry is discussed further under the heading *The industry’s attitude towards quality*.

Organisations and professional categories as a seal of quality

Some interviewees mean that some institutions or organisations have taken upon themselves to use the term “quality” more than others. To a large extent it is that some organisations and professional categories give the projects and the film makers that come with it a quality seal.

“I think that some have taken it upon themselves to use the term. Swedish Television talks about quality, many educations talk about quality. Who can talk about quality? It is not a right you can take away from someone; everybody has the right to use the term quality. But then, the way it’s used, if it’s used in a manner that divides society and phenomena, then it becomes a bit difficult. If it becomes a value wording. I think it’s a little bit old fashioned.” (commissioner, woman)

One commissioner admits along the lines with her statement that “we hold an exceptional position since we have the right to assess that term”. But that obvious use doesn’t necessarily seem to mean that you are more capable to make quality judgements than someone else. He continues:

“I don’t think that we are any better than anyone else to do it. Therefore it’s important to communicate openly about what we work with.” (commissioner, man)

Another commissioner says that she applied for the job as commissioner because she “was one of those who could decide [what has quality]”. She refers to her many jobs within the film industry and experiences from different festivals and awards.

“One thinks it’s a seal of quality. I think there are more who can assess [quality], but I think that I could be on of them. The producers have of course a very important role. They are the ones that create the films and they have to find the grains of gold first. I think it is really the producers who should find the talent, find the quality. I can recognise now when I have read a lot, that with certain producers I know from the start that there will be a certain quality.” (commissioner, woman)

The commissioner thus throws some light on the fact that both she as a commissioner and some producers can make a project’s quality legitimate. However, not everybody agrees that the film commissioners are seals of quality. “One would like to say the film commissioners”, one film critic begins her answer to the question of who is best at assess quality. She then proceeds to pick out as those whose opinions are more valuable when it comes to quality:

“I believe, I hope, I think that there are very many young film producers who I think are very competent to assess what is good. [...] Based on experience, qualification and performance I would say. If X says that she has made a good film I believe her. Then I see that they’ve produced this and this and this. Someone who has done good stuff.” (film critic, woman)

The critique follows the same pattern according to her. Certain critics' words simply count for more than others. It depends on the critic's experience, competence and level of ambition as well as the level of ambition of the medium where the opinions are presented, she explains. That some critics give quality seals is something that is discussed quite often in the interviews. Under the heading *Quality in relation to critics* follows a more detailed account of the interviewees' relations to critics.

One producer, who in general is reluctant to give a definition of quality and who states that it must be defined in the light of the purpose of the activity, discusses who is best to decide upon quality. He considers the organisation's power structure:

"In my organisation you could say that I know best because I'm the one who ultimately decides. In the end it is me who defines [quality]. Well, then I have to say that I know best, on what would I otherwise base my decision on? I've never thought about it, but it is somewhere logical. If you look at a hierarchy." (producer, man)

His statement can thus be interpreted as a confirmation of the prevailing structure, those in power positions in the industry are best at assessing quality.

Another producer thinks that some representatives from The Swedish Film Institute and The Guldbagge Award jury are better than others at determining what has quality. She also mentions professors from certain schools such as The Valand Academy and Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts, as people whose opinions on quality carry more weight than others'. One director emphasises that knowledge about film and art in general can contribute to a better base for assessing quality.

"I absolutely believe that someone better can determine if an expression is true. And I think that a person with great knowledge about film, art and even history can determine if this has a potential to become something of quality or if it's a copy of something that has already been done. But then you always have to let that be something fluid." (director, woman)

The seal of quality which is discussed above is understood with reference to the cultural logic based on Bourdieu's description of the field of cultural production. Products, actions and statements are legitimised by being associated to a cultural capital (prestige). Cultural capital is found in individuals who have acquired it through their social background and/or education. But the cultural capital is also found in some organisations, which through their actions has demonstrated that they are governed by a cultural logic, i.e. that they in their actions aim for some form of artistic eminence.¹⁸

There are however a couple of interviewees who express different opinions on who is best at deciding on what has quality. One director emphasises the artisans:

The artisans who sit and do their work [...] have hopefully a good feel for quality if they are successful and capable people."(director, man)

Many in the study emphasise, like the director above, their own professional category in the discussion about quality assessment. The reference to "successful and capable people" could furthermore be interpreted as a confirmation of the present structure, i.e. a notion that the present structure sifts out the best filmmakers who have the ability to judge quality.

¹⁸ Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. New York, Columbia University Press.

Lantz, J. (2005) *Taste at work. On Taste and Organization in the Field of Cultural production*, Stockholm, Arvinius

One producer discusses friends as quality judges:

“One could possibly say that certain film critics sometimes can be a yardstick, but then you know that you don’t always agree with them. So the yardstick is probably one’s own friends. One often makes films for one’s friends, those that I know thinks roughly like me. If they come and say that that was bloody good and the critics say that it wasn’t, then it’s still good.” (producer man)

The last two quotes could be interpreted as an escape from and a protest against the seal of quality which happens in the industry through for example commissioners and critics.

Quality in relation to film critique

The interviewees’ attitude to film critique in relation to quality generally varies quite a lot. Some emphasise the importance of an independent film critique. One distributor states that the critics’ views on films sometimes coincide with his and sometimes does not. Even if he describes the critique as a “pure quality judgement”, he is careful to point out that journalists are also human and that they are affected by their private situations. If they have recently lost a relative they will probably be especially moved by a film that describes that problem very well, he thinks. He asserts that it is important not to relate to film critics, but to believe in what one does and to do it to 100 %. Another producer says that he thinks that his attitude towards film critics when it comes to quality varies depending on the film’s character. Some films that he is part of don’t get any appreciation from the critics, but still get an audience. He says that he respects those film critics who can understand what genre the film represents. The statement mirrors the field of cultural production with its two principals of legitimacy, where the critics represent the cultural logic and the audience the financial logic.

A large number of the interviewees are relatively negative to film critique in Sweden. One director points for instance to “the degrading moment of being judged by a person you don’t respect”. He mentions that film critique is a “mechanised industry” as one of the reasons why he doesn’t find the critique interesting. According to him, the critics drown in advertising material from the film companies and shall then give points in their reviews that the film companies – provided that the points are high enough – can use in their advertisements. He thinks it’s a quite unpleasant part of the entertainment industry.

One commissioner is critical of film journalism which she finds often “follows the trend”. She means that there are few who are curious and look for something new. One producer says that the critics often are “very occupied by their own words” and that they often want to “tell how much they themselves know”. Who the critic’s addressee is is something one director discusses. He thinks that it often looks as if the critics are addressing other critics rather than the readers/audience.

Yet many seem to take in the views that are expressed in the film critique, which reveals the strong position of the film critics. The necessity to be strong in relation to the critique is stressed by one director and one producer. The latter means that there are many directors who never manage to get up after having been ripped apart by film critics. He admits to having been failed by both critics and audience while at the same time being pleased with his achievement. He thinks that both film critics and audiences can notice if “there is an honest intention”; that you have worked very hard to make an original film, but have failed in some sense.

“So therefore one can say that in the long term it’s a better recipe to choose that path than making films that pamper to the audience. Because those are often not of very good quality, but they can still be popular. One can say that the audience doesn’t have very good taste.” (producer, man)

Again the construction of a contradiction between quality and audience shines through. Even if many interviewees are relatively negative towards film critique it is obvious that it has an authorising force, at least in the eyes of the public. A possible interpretation of the negative attitude is that the critique is an authorising force that the rest of the industry can’t master and it makes them frustrated.

Quality in relation to audiences

Many stress that the size of the audience does not determine the quality of the film:

“I don’t think that attendance indicates what quality is”. (producer, woman)

“I think that a film can be justified even if you only expect a small audience. [...] A film can have a limited scope from the start because the target group is small. (commissioner, man)

One producer stresses that he doesn’t see the size of the audience as a seal of quality in itself and discusses further around quality:

“It might even be that if a smaller group becomes very involved, that is better than if a big group does. [...]” (producer man)

A commissioner for short films talks along the same lines about quality and the audience:

“Even if you think that short films maybe don’t have a big audience in the cinema, there is a big audience that will see it on television and at festivals. [The short film] has a quality audience, even if it isn’t so wide it can give a lot...” (commissioner, woman)

It is interesting that the last two quotes discuss the “quality” of the audience. One interpretation could be that the audience in some instances authorise it. It seems as if a “quality” audience sometimes creates “quality film”. It is likely – without the interviewees explicitly saying so (based on studies on cultural consumption¹⁹) – that the “quality audience” is a cultural capital rich audience, who through their cultural capital gives the film a seal of quality.

There are however those who emphasise the size of the audience. One producer says that a “critics’ appreciation” can be replaced by the appreciation in numbers of people that go and watch the film. Another producer points out that the best result is when the film has “both audience potential and quality”. The idea of a clash of interests between quality and audience is thus again confirmed.

Some of the interviewees comment that that there seems to be a contradiction in the industry between audience and quality:

“Popular film is unfortunately not quality, I think, in established society. One says that popular appeal is not quality. But I can personally support a film with popular appeal, which might not be the most artistically sharp documentary [...] But if we are to use term quality, it must be quality that a lot of people watch the film.” (commissioner, woman)

¹⁹ Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press

She is thus trying to give the term quality a different meaning: success with the public. One director stresses that he sees the audience as his film critics. He says that he completely relates to the audience. He can sometimes feel really frustrated when the people from “the quality section” accuse him of not standing up for quality. He thinks they are taking a snobbish point of view.

One producer talks about quality in relation to the audience, but not the size of the audience:

“I would feel ashamed...It’s embarrassing and tough if you release a film that isn’t good enough. It’s so very painful. When something that isn’t perfect becomes so public. And it feels really hard that people will pay lots of money in a cinema for something that isn’t good enough. That is a driving force for working as hard as possible so that it gets as good as possible.” (producer, man)

One commissioner says that she enjoys that people like the film, that it creates feelings. That the cinema audiences’ reactions are a “cleaner contact” than what the critics say, is emphasised by a director. She means that it is therefore enough “to walk in and listen to the audience breathing and you know if you’ve done something good or not”. One interpretation of the “cleaner contact” is that it’s free from the internal positioning that critics according to earlier quotes are seen to be doing.

The audience feels when a film has high quality, one director says. He continues. “You can feel if someone has spent a lot of love and care on something. That product is inspired by the love and care one has put into it. It radiates.” He is however careful to point out that he doesn’t believe in asking the audience during the filmmaking.

One producer is on the same track:

“We want to give the audience something that is better than they thought they wanted. [...] I think that this talk of pandering in order to get a big audience is just bullshit. I think that it’s only when you’re making something new that you can attract a new big audience.” (producer, man)

This view represents the cultural logic that one is aiming to influence the market rather than mirroring the market’s demands.²⁰ We now leave the interviewees statements of their own definitions and attitudes to quality and quality assessment and move on to a presentation of how they experience the industry’s attitude to quality.

The industry’s attitude to quality

Almost everyone starts off or finds an opportunity to say that they think that the quality of Swedish film is low. This is interesting in the light of the fact that so many find it difficult to pinpoint what quality means to them. Almost everyone uses the term in a negative sense, in spite of so many having an aversion to defining “quality” and some not wanting to use it at all. Most of them also try to explain why according to them the quality of Swedish cinema film is so low. It is very common to refer to the large number of Swedish film productions.

“I think that there far too many bad films opening in the cinema. Absolutely. We make far too many Swedish films in Sweden. Most of them don’t belong in the cinema, they should go straight to television or video.” (distributor, man)

²⁰ Lantz, J. (2005) *Taste at work. On Taste and Organization in the Field of Cultural production*, Stockholm, Arvinius

Several interviewees emphasise lacking preproduction as one of the reasons according to them for the low quality of Swedish films. Several interviewees call for producers and production companies taking a larger responsibility. One producer says that they at an early stage have to be clear about what fits into the budget, something that doesn't always happen today. "Instead it's as if you start and that will be that." The projects can then easily be rushed off, she says. A fellow producer has a similar view:

"I can't get away from the feeling that that a number of films feel as they are slovenly made. I don't know if it depends on that they started too soon or if the script is incomplete or if there isn't enough or bad financing for the films to be carried through. [But] it still feels as if there are too many films released that feel incomplete and carelessly executed. And with too low quality." (producer, man)

One director maintains that increased producer power would be a solution to Swedish film industry's problems. He thinks that it is wrong that the director has the final cut in Sweden. A film critic asks rhetorically: Why aren't there any really good films made in Sweden? She answers herself that she suspects that the scripts aren't gone through thoroughly enough. It is also necessary, according to her, to answer questions such as *What do we want with this film? How can we sell it? Why should people go and see this film?* while working on the script. "Too many films are made without a really good plan" she thinks. Given the lack of good drama and good commercial film that she experiences today, she thinks that it is difficult to understand the basis for forming judgements in the industry. This reflection brings us on to the connection between the structure of the industry and quality.

The structure of the industry and quality

A large number of interviewees discuss the structure of the industry and its consequences for quality. Contacts, industry consideration, power structures and technical development are some of the areas covered.

One commissioner says a propos the industry:

"If I'm to look back and be critical I can feel that one has sometimes showed more industry considerations than quality consideration. [...] One has tended to support productions companies and directors who've made many films and who you know are dependent on support from here in order to run their – often very small – companies. That their financial situation depends on making a film every year or every second year. [...] One has then I think gone into a very dangerous situation where you in fact lower your standards of quality in order for the industry to survive or for some individuals in the industry to survive." (commissioner, man)

One commissioner agrees. He thinks that is often the wrong considerations that govern the film industry. "It is not quality considerations but the fact that there are producers who need to make films all the time", he notes.

Many say that the judgement is based on contacts:

"[I think] that a lot is based on knowing each other from before. One thinks oh what fun it was last time. Based on one's knowledge of the originator one draws the conclusion that yes, he or she will probably make something good of this. Some can get money from The Swedish Film Institute without submitting a complete script. [...] some get money a little too easily. And some don't get any at all. So it's a lot about who you know." (producer, woman)

Researchers have shown in organisation research that the selection process for example in connection with recruitment and promotion is characterised by informality both regarding the

methods and criteria used. The informality gives a reduced recruitment base and creates blindness for those who aren't already part of the network in question.²¹ In organisations in industry in general research has shown that the informality leads to an increase of men in leading positions while it at the same time confirms the assertion that "there aren't any women to recruit". That contacts and industry considerations are pointed out also in the film industry should be interpreted from the prevailing gender order. Who have the power positions and have the largest number of contacts? Who represent the organisations that are considered? Organisational research show that men often choose men in the prevailing gender order. It is not only human values but also about the relation between the sexes, which is characterised by a power dimension, where the structure causes men to choose men while women don't choose women to the same extent. Since men as a group dominate society's top positions and have the most power and influence, men can have most of their needs met by other men. It is said that men's relations are homosocial. Women are more divided as a group. They also often orientate towards men, not because they are disloyal to other women but because it increases their room for manoeuvre, possibilities and access to resources.²²

It is common to engage people whose chances appear to be good at getting the job done when work is characterised by uncertainty. You base it on what it has looked like before, how the job/position is constructed.²³ The effect of this is not only uniformity but also a justification of the prevailing status quo. The incumbents are confirmed as worthy and competent. They become the very definition of "competence" and "quality". This is also visible in some of the quotes presented in this study, for example when interviewees refer to their positions as a guarantee of their ability to assess quality.

All cultural production is characterised by uncertainty regarding the consumer's reception.²⁴ Several interviewees discuss flock behaviour and the reduction of uncertainty in the film industry. The flock behaviour is touched upon by one producer who means that if someone thinks that something is good, the rest will follow. Some originators stand for quality regardless of what they do. He thinks there is a lack of "diversity", a lack of "different definitions of quality". There is, according to him, a kind of "approved list" of what quality is. One director discusses what the effects of the reduction of uncertainty are:

"Everybody understands that if you're sitting round a table, trying to persuade twenty people and say 'Imagine this boss, played by Mikael Persbrandt', everybody understands. They know what he looks like and how he sounds. But if I say that the main character is played by John Smith, then people get frightened and looking at their watches and stuff. Even if I'm a person who demonstrably has done lots of good things and I say that I believe in this and that I pledge my honour on it, it doesn't make any difference in this room among these men who are making this decision. I would want that they trusted me, but also that they challenged their imagination and opened the doors a bit more and said 'do you have a video of this John Smith, I would like to watch, I would like to get alongside your idea'." (director, man)

There are also complaints from some financiers. One commissioner says that he feels as if few originators have themselves decided on whether the project is good or bad when they turn to The Swedish Film Institute.

²¹ Holgersson, C. (2003). *Rekrytering av företagsledare: en studie i homosocialitet*. Stockholm, EFI.

²² Lipman-Blumen, J. (1976). "Toward a Homosocial Theory of Sex Roles: An explanation of the Sex segregation of Social Institutions." *Signs* 1(3): 15-31.

²³ Kanter, R.M. (1977). *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York, Basic Books.

²⁴ Caves, R:E: (2000). *Creative industries: Contracts between art and commerce*. Ambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

“[it feels] as there are few who have at all made their own judgement of what kind of project they are getting involved in. It sometimes feels as if they want me to tell them if it’s good or bad before they get involved. And it’s enormously frustrating and I become more and more aggressive with this kind of effort. [...] if people send in a script which isn’t finished and apply for advance support, I get extremely pissed off.” (commissioner, man)

One possible interpretation is that the filmmakers don’t have a clear idea of what “quality” means, either to themselves or to the rest of the industry. The commissioner in his statement above shows that he thinks that there is a common view on “quality” in the industry. If all important players in the industry, for example the directors’ and producers’ organisations, distributors, cinema owners, TV-channels, independent filmmakers and commissioners were to identify the 15-20 best films during one year “with a common perception of quality” they would agree. “There is no difference there. The problem is that we get these projects in different stages and levels and [have] slightly different reasons for wanting to do these projects”, he says.

Another commissioner thinks that for some sections of the industry “quality” isn’t central, but the number of occupied seats in the cinema or the number of copies distributed. “To some quality probably is an invective, that it is narrow”, she says.

Some interviewees discuss the industry’s recent development and state that too little has been invested in production. One director mentions the expansion of the distribution industry in latter years, mainly within television, but points to a lack of investment in the production side, which would give the channels content. That the increase of the different productions windows has not been matched by increased productions budgets is touched upon by a commissioner, who notes that there is “an expectation that this increased demand will be dealt with by the Film Institute’s unchanged budget”. One producer talks about the technical development and the new aesthetics which is a consequence of it being cheaper to film a lot.

“It can be said that it is too easy to film, too cheap, one doesn’t have to make decisions. You can say that it lowers the technical quality. At the same time you could say that maybe you can find something else. Some honesty in this. Some true feeling.” (producer, man)

One director maintains that people with power in the film industry have lost control. He thinks that they have not coped with the change in this new situation where the door is wide open. They have lost their ability to judge and it is as if anything goes now, he says. He calls for a new generation of producers who understand the new film landscape.

Quality then and now

The development of the industry regarding the view of quality involves many interviewees. Some of them think that there were greater opportunities before for making quality film. They often mention the 60’s as a golden decade with more experimental and personal films. A number of interviewees are very positive to Harry Schein’s quality criteria. Some stress that you “were given more chances” before as a filmmaker. Many talk about it becoming more commercial lately. “Audience pandering”, “cynical” and “honestly commercial” are other descriptions of how the industry relates to quality these days.

Everybody isn’t entirely positive to the earlier film climate. One director relates when she was there in the 60’ and 70’ when the Film Institute’s role was to defend and maintain quality film. But the drawback of the era’s climate was “that everything that was deep and mystical became quality”. The directors of that time lacked, according to her, the knowledge of how to lead a group. One distributor says that he thinks that the debate about what quality is often feels a little bit antiquated. We were in his eyes for many years paralysed by waiting for the

next Bergman. He points out that even if he loves Bergman it is important to conduct the debate regarding quality in the new world in which we are living.

Several interviewees ask for a more intense debate about quality. That it should be possible to have a more qualified conversation about films funded by our tax money is an opinion expressed by among others one film critic. She thinks that there is a far too “nonchalant and wasteful” attitude towards quality today. Others ask for more discussion about quality, based on the importance of film and art for society.

“That’s how it is [...] with film and art and all expressions of culture. The idea is that they should be ahead. Not all, but some should though and then there are others who should tell us exactly where we are and be a kind of filter for people to interpret their reality here and now. But both have to be there in a society. Someone has to violate what is considered good taste in order to widen the perception of good taste, that is also a very important quality.” (director, woman)

The importance of film as a mirror of society and force for change brings us on to power.

Power and quality

Several interviewees, mainly women, get on to power. The director just quoted continues:

“Quality can always be used as a guise to maintain both class and gender. To maintain power. That’s why it’s very dangerous to have a united body of critics of the same sex, class or age. [...]The moment you speak about quality it can be a guise for recognition within a group, consensus for increased unity, to exclude.” (director, woman).

That the notion of quality can be problematic is something a distributor also mentions:

“One is always marked by one’s background and one’s age and one’s class.” (distributor, woman)

One commissioner says that she thinks that the quality question can be a problem since the term according to her is marked by snobbism. There is a fear of breadth and an aim to narrow it. She means that there is a desire for “only a few should be permitted to make film”. She expounds her views:

“I think the quality question is a problem because it closes doors. Not only in the gender issue, but I also find that it closes doors in the democratic popular. There is a snobbism associated to quality that I find unpleasant...it has to be possible to use the term. But as I said, I think it feels a bit old fashioned, but at the same time I think that it has to be possible to use it – I can use it myself about different kinds of fabrics...” (commissioner, woman)

Furthermore she thinks that the notion of quality is associated to a higher education. “It is rare to associate it with an autodidact”, she says. This statement can of course be interpreted based on the cultural production field’s two imperatives each being diametrically opposed. If you are looking for breadth you are basing it on an economical commercial logic, and one that is often not perceived as especially qualitative. And vice versa. She then contrasts this snobbish, narrow view of quality with the discussion about quotas for film support which is going on within the industry.²⁵

“When women get the opportunity to make film through a quota system or however you choose to solve it, there is a problem. You often hear that quality would deteriorate, or that [...] ‘women don’t submit good enough scripts. [...] if we introduce quotas it would mean that the quality goes down.’ Above all one here associates low quality, and this is where it gets exciting, one associates it with not attracting an audience, it becomes too

²⁵ A longer discussion about quotas for film support is found under the heading *quotas for film support as a method for change*.

narrow. Interesting really. So in this context quality is associated with what attract large audiences. It is very interesting. Because the notion of quality is really associated with this narrow highbrow culture.” (commissioner, woman)

Therefore she thinks that it seems as if “one can use the [notion of quality] as you like sometimes”. That observation can be interpreted based on the preferential right of interpretation that certain people with power, often men, have. In a study in a film company it was shown that men could change between different attitudes to “taste” with much bigger ease than women.²⁶

One commissioner discusses norms and the notion of quality:

“If one was to define the notion of quality as the films we are used to seeing, that are made by a male director for example... If we would have that as a quality norm then [...] that could obstruct equality. That wouldn't obviously mean quality. I think that it's very important that you talk about what one means with quality. [...] One has heard regarding quotas, what will happen to the quality? That sounds incredibly stupid I think since everybody says that Swedish film is of such bad quality, so why would it get worse if you changed something? On the contrary, that is a really good reason to change something. (commissioner, woman)

She thinks that it would be a good idea to define quality and then keep it in mind when you assess and talk about film.

It is mostly women who discuss the industry's attitude to quality from a power point of view. That women expose the male encoding of the term and the importance of the assessors position (class, sex, ethnicity), can be interpreted from the fact that they belong to the subordinate category. It is more difficult for the superior to discover the superiority, as mentioned before.²⁷

To assure the quality of film

Many don't think that it is possible to assure the quality of film at all. Some refer to the fact that everybody has such different taste. Others only state that there always is an element of uncertainty in the process. Some of them however suggest different ways of assuring the quality or at least contribute to a certain assurance of quality.

Several interviewees say that one has to make demands on a finished script when the project starts. The decision makers should join forces in this and demand that the financing must be in place for the project to start, says one distributor. Financing as an assurance of quality is recommended by one producer. He says that the financing can raise the quality through, for example, leaving space for complimentary additions. But also because it allows for a longer development phase, he adds. This kind of assurance of quality can be a condition for the assurance of quality which is demanded from a director. “More work, care and love” is according to him one way of assuring the quality.

Many see the choice of people for the project as an assurance of quality. To take care of what one has got is something one producer calls attention to. “By not always thinking that the grass is greener on the other side of the river, but what you have is maybe [very] good. And it's not good just because it's new. Just because you add new people that are then knocked out

²⁶ Lantz, J. (2005) *Taste at work. On Taste and Organization in the Field of Cultural production*, Stockholm, Arvinius

²⁷ Kimmel, M.S. (1996). *Manhood in America: a cultural history*. New York, Free Press.

all the time.” Another producer thinks that the Film Institute assures the quality partly when they control which persons are involved in the project in the so called A-functions.

One commissioner says that he doesn't think that “creatively speaking there have to be some magic ingredients in order to guarantee the quality”. He maintains that one should support “talents”, who themselves have a feeling for quality. The people become themselves an assurance of quality.

“[...] It is important to let those that have made good films continue to make films. Of course they must have a good script, but that they have done things that are good from a quality point of view is of course something I take into consideration. But when it's about making sure that new talents, who can become their generation's great film creators, emerge then you have to take some kind of risk. [...] It has to be the practitioners who guarantee the quality. We're not producers. [...] Our assignment is to make sure that those we think are good enough filmmakers have the conditions they need to deliver film of high quality.” (commissioner, man)

One commissioner thinks along the same lines and stresses quality assurance via people:

“In the sense that one says ‘we use people that we know have delivered things or are recognised as good’. [...] Then the space for risk isn't very big.” (producer, man)

The risk he admits is that it becomes conventional instead: “That you follow what you know has delivered or that you know work. And there is the risk of repetition. There is a risk of depletion.” There is also a risk that the homosocial behaviour among men in top positions leads to the cementation of the existing constructions of “quality”. The favoured can be further favoured if you attach great importance to previous experience. You search where you have searched before and for every choice the prevailing view of “quality is preserved.

One distributor thinks that diversity is the best guarantee for quality:

“There has to be diversity. Both in education and in supply, so that they can fertilise each other and give inspiration. It's about diversity, class and sex.” (distributor, woman)

One director emphasises technical assurance of quality, checking which subcontractors you use.

Film support through quotas as a method for change

Many are positive about equality in the industry gradually increasing in later years. Others are frustrated that it isn't going fast enough, that women still make films for less money than men. One director says that she doesn't think that it is equal until women are allowed to fail and men don't feel that they have to be leaders.

Since the origin of this study was the discussion about quality that followed the suggestion of quotas for film support²⁸ the study ends with a short run-through of the comments regarding quotas. As a researcher I don't aim to have an opinion on whether quotas are a suitable method for change, but I will comment on statements if they contain ideas about quality and gender or when statements can be interpreted based on the theoretical frame of reference for this study. Several interviewees mention quotas even though there were not any direct questions about it included in the interviews.

²⁸ According to the Film Agreement that came into effect in January 2006 at least 40 % of all scriptwriters, producers and directors who receive support from The Swedish Film Institute must be women.

Even if most of them express a positive view on increased equality in the industry, many of them don't like quotas as a method for change.

“However I don't believe in this model that you have rules saying that you should have x per cent women and x per cent men. [...] One must of course have an ambition that everybody should work towards getting more women as directors and producers or whatever. But to have such a demand...[...] Ultimately you might have to say no thanks to a new project by Lukas Moodyson in order to make a bad project with a ... I think it's the wrong starting point. But I'm one of those who think it would be fantastic if in one year it was 100% women who made film, but it has to be good projects. (distributor, man)

The interviewee seems to see a conflict between quotas and quality/”good” film. This corresponds with the discussion in industry in general where there is a perception of a conflict between quotas and “competence” regarding women on company boards. The interpretation of this outlook is that the existing structure already sifts out the best.

“A basic problem that I don't know what to do about is that there are more women than men that want to make film. Who get round to submit, phone or whatever you do. That is to say those that get in touch with the Film Institute and say ‘I want to make a film, I want money’. [...] If not more girls want to play you can't like force someone to do something.” (film critic, man)

That more men apply relies on the prevailing structures favouring them. In organisational research one talks about “possibility structures”. In the light of the earlier success of many men, men in general have big ambitions and high expectations of success. They relate upwards in business and sometimes overrate their competence. It is thus not about men having better self confidence by nature, but that their position in business makes them look more positively at their chances of success. If you have small possibilities you will limit your ambitions, have low expectations and sometimes underrate your competence.²⁹

Some are uncertain about the method and thinks that quotas could mean too much control.

“Art by quotas sounds a bit silly I must say. In the same way as if you decided how big the paintings should be or of what ethnic origin you have to be to stage an opera or such. [...] I think one always wants to do good things, one wants everybody to be happy and content and running to the cinemas. One is thus aiming for making something of quality, something that touches you, which is good. No one is in this because it doesn't matter at all. There it becomes...if you have such a rule it becomes like an order for what the painting should look like or the size, it is a limitation you have to follow.” (director, man)

Also the statement can be interpreted as the existing structure is designed in such a way that all the best advance. The director seems to mean that quality might suffer with quotas. It is interesting given that almost all the interviewees find the quality of Swedish film low. Generally the statement regarding the present system creating the best quality can be interpreted as some kind of declaration of incompetence of those who haven't been allowed to make film to the same extent.

Several interviewees, mainly women but also some men, are in favour of quotas for film support. Some mention the connection between quotas and the perception of quality.

“It's amusing that the argument from those that are against quotas [...] that the quality aspect is more important than the gender. It is very comical since you in that case have had a quota for a lot of bad male art. [...] Women aren't a threat against quality if you look at the total quality. It can only get better. Instead you could say that this a chance of testing a parameter which could improve the quality.” (film critic, woman)

²⁹ Kanter, R.M. (1977). *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York, Basic Books.

“Regarding quotas, I think it’s a tool which is necessary to get the discussion going. Increase the pressure for change, you know. I would of course like to discuss the ways of doing it. [...] But that is more about how you do it. I think there is something healthy in the use of quotas. I don’t think it will move otherwise.” (producer, man)

This last producer refers to the discussion about quotas lowering the quality as “bullshit”. Those who are most in favour of quotas mainly stress the need for a change. That quotas can involve thinking in a new way is stressed by one producer.

I don’t at all think that all sexism would disappear. I don’t think that. [...] But there will be a dialogue, someone asks a question: Do you really think that? Couldn’t we do this in another way? [...] It’s easy to say that it will be trying to work like that, but something else opens up when you are forced on to new roads. The brain gets stimulated when it is forced to think in a new way and that is one of the reasons that it should be 50-50. We’re here 50-50. I think there should be set quotas everywhere.” (producer, woman)

That women must be allowed to fail is mentioned by several. This director sees the men as the biggest obstacle in the film industry.

“To give 40% to women is in a way a bit sad because it won’t give us lots of fantastic female directors. But maybe in 20-30 years. So we have to encourage women to fall a bit more. Because if you don’t open the door, men will continue to domineer. [...] We are in a time when certain positions have to be given to women because organisations say ‘we must have women’. In a way I think we have to do that. Otherwise it will never move forward. And if it makes my life a little more difficult, more difficult to get money for a film, so be it. Somewhere someone has to say ‘the door is open for you’. After that it’s up to the women to prove that they have stories that the public wants to watch. But we saw that already with ‘Masjävlar’.” (director, man)

One commissioner is surprised that 50/50 isn’t even discussed. A producer says about the argument against quotas that there aren’t enough qualified women who could make quality film, “that’s what I call a lie”. She continues:

[The men can’t] come here and talk about quality, that it is about that the quality would disappear if there were quotas. Because their whole system is built on the recognition factor.” (producer, woman)

She thus connects to the discussion about stories under the heading *The gender order in the Swedish film industry*.

After this presentation of the interview study follows a summarising analysis based on the theoretical frame of reference with one leg in the research field organisation and one leg in a theory about cultural production.

Analysis and summary

As mentioned in the study’s starting point the field of cultural production, of which the film industry is a part, is characterised by two parallel and concurrent logics, one financial and one cultural.³⁰ The financial logic means that you strive for profit and the cultural means that you strive for artistic eminence. It can be said that the field lies between these two poles, the financial and the cultural, and all actions and statements are placed somewhere between these two poles. In this study of perceptions of “quality” quality is generally described in relation to the cultural pole. It is for example obvious in the two first sections, *What is quality?* and *Using quality*. That quality is about film that affects you; the filmmakers’ talent, love, motif

³⁰ Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. New York, Columbia University Press.

and credibility. A personal touch, artistic integrity and fulfilled vision; using all the elements in film, creativity and the film's eminence are examples of that "quality" in this industry is justified above all by the cultural pole. Artistic ability is put first and profit or the size of the audience is not pointed out as the direct purpose (even if such objectives can exist alongside) of quality.

One of course defines and uses the term in a certain way that mirrors one's position in the field of cultural production/film. It is therefore not surprising that it is mainly producers and distributors who partly lean towards the financial logic in their descriptions of quality. One producer emphasises for example the conditions of the production as a central quality aspect.

That the term "quality" mainly is justified with the aid of a cultural logic is also evident in some of the explanations given by those who refrain from defining quality and who say that they don't use the term. The fact that one thinks that the word "quality" is linked to snobbism, artistic ability and status are further signs that the term in general is characterised by the cultural pole and its cultural capital. To use taste as a distinction and a power resource characterises the cultural logic.³¹

That many explain that the size of the audience does not determine the film's quality, can be taken as a pretext for that "quality" is constructed as a term legitimised by the cultural logic. Instead one sometimes talks about "quality audiences". Certain cinemagoers seem more prestigious than others, for example those that are few but "engaged". One producer says that the audience doesn't always have such good taste. Many also oppose involving the audience in the filmmaking. That one film critic states that a film's quality doesn't depend on what it has cost to produce is also a sign of that quality generally isn't justified by the financial pole.

The special thing about the cultural pole is that the two logics are created as each others opposite pole. A consequence of this is that people in this field often choose sides and see the other side as a faulty justification. It was shown in a study by a film company³² that the representatives of the cultural pole regarded the distribution section of the company (which is characterised by the financial logic) as uninterested in film. The distributions section on their part regarded the sections of the company that represented the cultural logic (for example production and buying) as erratic, unprofessional and uninterested in business. This fabricated clash of interests between the two logics is very obvious also in this study. Quality is often contrasted to "popular" and "commercial". This clash of interests is also maintained by the people that say that they disagree with the notion that quality should be the same thing as "narrow film" (see *Using quality*). These people call their aims "both and", for example through expressing their aims as wanting to work with projects that "are both of quality and popular", and seeing quality as "a combination of popular and commercial success with preserved quality".

Legitimacy

It is as stated earlier important with cultural capital or prestige if you seek legitimacy with reference to the cultural logic. In order to rise "in the right way" within the film industry it is important with the "right" type of legitimacy, i.e. to be associated with the "right" support, producer, media and so forth. One expression of legitimacy are the answers under the heading

³¹ Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press

³² Lantz, J. (2005) *Taste at work. On Taste and Organization in the Field of Cultural production*, Stockholm, Arvinius

“Organisations and professional categories as a seal of quality”. One obvious example of an organisation that gives film projects legitimacy is The Swedish Film Institute. Producers, the jury of the Guldbagge Award and professors from film schools are also mentioned as people who are better than others at determining quality. Knowledge and experience are also emphasised as important basis for legitimacy. Even if some interviewees are negative towards the film critique in Sweden there is no getting away from it that it gives the films legitimacy. That a film critic also states that quality is the base for the critique points to a self understanding according to the cultural logic. Certain audiences (“qualified”, “engaged”) can also provide certain legitimacy.

It is also easier for those who represent organisations with substantial legitimacy to use terms such as “quality”, since they have the preferential right of judgement of deciding its definition (see the critic above). The term is given in the assignment/business plan for some organisations. One commissioner states for example that she often refers to the term in her reasons as to why a project gets or does not get support.

That several interviewees are negative to film critique does not mean that it is unimportant. It could be the critics’ power in the shape of legitimacy that is frustrating. The critics are also players in a field and their internal positioning could be disturbing for many filmmakers. That a director talks about a cleaner contact with the audience could be interpreted as an expression for the fact that the audience does not take part in what goes on in the film field.

Preferential right of judgement

I have already talked about the cultural logic as the most prestigious in the field of cultural production. The gender order is an example of another power structure. We will now interpret the material one more time given the gender order that exists in the Swedish film industry³³, where men dominate among directors, producers and scriptwriters.

Many express, as mentioned, an opinion that the term quality is “subjective”. And many are negative towards defining the term at all just because of that. All experiences, impressions and perceptions as well as all creations of meaning are subjective according to the social construction of knowledge. But at the same time my meanings match others’ to create a reasonably common reality. This is called *intersubjectivity*. It is made up by what different people have in common, the shared meanings. The more you interact with people the easier it is for a clear intersubjectivity to arise. A kind of mini-universe where you share certain perceptions. When interviewees in the study claim that a notion of quality is developed which is used locally in their organisations or in their department and that this established notion becomes visible when someone new comes in, it is just this intersubjectivity they are pointing to. That it is difficult for many to define “quality” does not mean that it is a meaningless term. This is not least shown by the fact that the interviewees in spite of everything state that they use it. It can be maintained that everybody has a right to their own definition of the term, but in a social context, in the interaction with others from the film industry, certain meanings of the term “quality” will dominate. Partly because some form of shared reality is needed, intersubjectivity, in order to be able to interact with one another in a meaningful way, partly because it is significant from which position one is talking. Power structures influence which perceptions of quality take hold.

³³ Hermele, V. (editor) (2002) *Män, män, män och en och annan kvinna*. Stockholm, Svenska Filminstitutet

That taste and cultural capital recreates power structures, above all class, is something that research has established a long time ago.³⁴ That the notion of quality is used to maintain power is an opinion that is put forward by some of the interviewees in this study. The gender order in the industry means that men dominate in the decision making positions and thus it is above all men who have the preferential right of judgement for what “quality” means. Some interviewees, women especially, comment on notions about quality being marked by a male norm. However according to these women this does not mean that it is quality. But thanks to men’s dominance and preferential right of judgement the notions about quality will be male coded. This male code will result in a perception that there is a built in contradiction between “femininity” and “quality”. Some women bear witness to how they have been party to this contradiction in connection with quotas for film support started to be discussed. They dispute this perception, but such perception or constructions can be tenacious.

In the light of the male coding of the perception of quality, the guarantee of quality through people which is recommended by some in the material could lead to a recreation of the male dominance. To choose what you already know could be seen as a reduction of uncertainty, but then you run the risk of conventional filmmaking, as pointed out by one of the interviewees. Furthermore, a homosocial behaviour among men in top positions (i.e. men orienting towards other men) could mean that the male coded quality perception is further strengthened.

Those who have power positions in the industry can with their preferential right of judgement describe quality with references to other words which also demand intersubjectivity, for example “love”, “care”, “creativity”, “challenging”, “talent”, “credibility”, “true” and “honest”. Thus the preferential right of judgement is very important. One woman says that some seem to be able to use the term “quality” as they wish, and give it different meaning, makes the preferential right of judgement visible. In the same way, men were seen to change more easily between different meanings of taste in a film organisation.³⁵ That some in power positions can refer to quality as “a feeling” and that they are reluctant to narrow it down, can also be seen as a consequence of the term not being a problem to them. It doesn’t shut them out. Instead they use the term to confirm their positions. “The ability” to assess quality is rather seen as a part of their competence.

In a study of constructions and usage of “taste” in a film company³⁶, men were shown to have the preferential right of judgement for what “good taste” means as well as “objectivity”. Women were construed as more “subjective”. Even if taste and quality are construed as different terms in this interview study, the pretensions of objectivity, the preferential right of judgement, act to men’s advantage. One producer refers to the organisational hierarchy when he answers the question about who is best at determining what quality is, that since he has the final saying he is best at determining what quality is. This statement can be contrasted to the talk about everybody having a right to their own definition of quality. Of course everybody has that, but all definitions don’t have an impact. It is important to problematise who is allowed to represent and be co-creator of the collective memory of quality if durability is an aspect of quality.

³⁴ Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press

³⁵ Lantz, J. (2005) *Taste at work. On Taste and Organization in the Field of Cultural production*, Stockholm, Arvinius

³⁶ Ibid

The fact that many speak about “quality” as something subjective is in itself not a problem. What you put into the term “quality” will always be a social construction. An assessment will always be central to the term. The problem is when power structures favour certain groups’ interpretations, in this case men’s (but you could also problematise quality based on class and ethnicity). That we would be able to demand clear definitions which don’t refer to other subjective terms is impossible. There is a risk that demands for better and clearer definitions will make way for an increased economisation thanks to the construed clash of interests between the financial and cultural logics. Since the cultural pole is seen as erratic, arbitrary and unprofessional by the financial pole the latter will get an advantage from demands for clearer definitions, referring to measurable specifications such as audience numbers and investment sums.³⁷ It seems as if it is important to keep the debate alive on what “quality” is even if it is impossible to demand an unambiguous definition, not least so that there is space for parallel different interpretations of the term. As shown in the study, the term “quality” can be used to hide and keep existing power structures. An unreflecting and unproblematized use of the term can be an obstacle for women in the Swedish film industry.

Appendix 1

Method

In total 16 interviews were conducted with people in the Swedish film industry during September and August 2006. The selection was made in consultation with wift and the aim has been to include representatives from several sections of the industry. Of the 16 interviewees three are directors, six producers, three commissioners, two distributors and two critics.

The interviews lasted for about an hour (see interview guide in appendix 2). All interviews were taped and transcribed afterwards. Half of the interviews were conducted by Moa Elf Karlén, who studies gender studies at Stockholm University. The transcriptions of her interviews were given to me, Jenny Lantz, to be used in this report. Half of the interviews were conducted by me. The undersigned is responsible for the whole analysis.

Appendix 2

Interview model

- Briefly about your role in the organisation. Background
- Briefly, what is your assignment? What is most important in your job?
- What makes your job meaningful?
- What is quality to you? What is your attitude to this term? Do you use it? Can one define quality? How?
- Who can best decide what quality is? Is someone’s view worth more? Who?
- What does the assessment process look like in your organisation? What does it look like in the rest of the industry?
- How do you relate to film critics and audiences? (Regarding quality)
- Do you have a vision/idea how to increase quality in the industry?
- Is the quality issue a problem? When? How?

³⁷ Ibid

- Has the meaning of quality changed during your time in the industry? In different sectors of the industry? How?
- How does the Swedish film industry in general relate to quality?
- Do you think there is a difference in the view of quality in TV and film?
- Is it possible to guarantee the quality of film somehow? If so how?
- What is the importance of gender in your business? In your organisation?
- Generally speaking, what is the importance of gender in the industry? In other organisations?
- (What is the importance of gender when evaluating a project? When marketing a film, designing campaigns? When reviewing?)
- What does equality look like in the industry? Have you yourself experienced inequality?
- What does equality look like in your organisation? Who has the leading positions? Where are the men and where are the women?
- What are the obstacles for increased equality in the industry according to you?