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Political Public Relations and the Rise of the Innovation Hype in Sweden

Stenberg, Jacob

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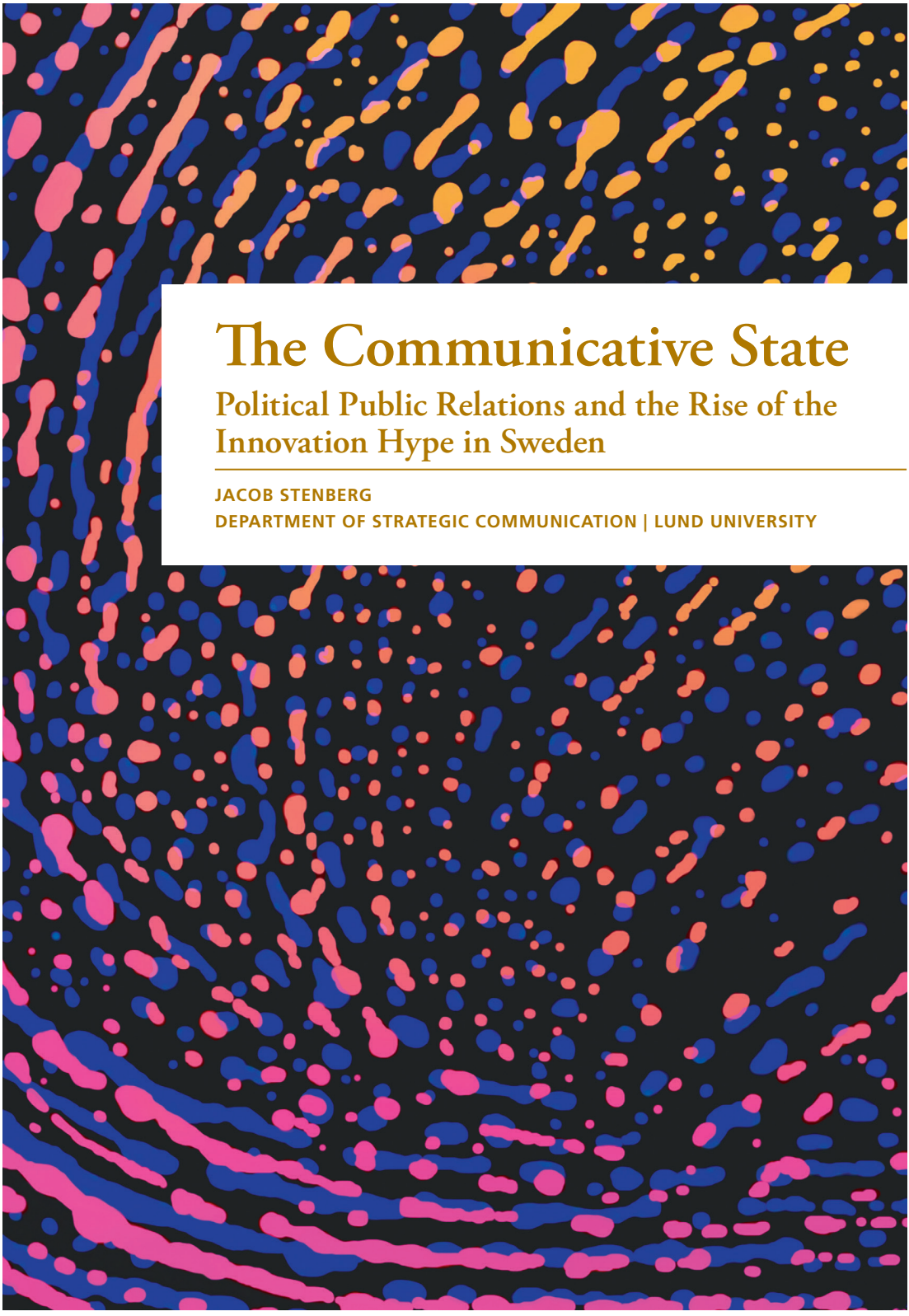

The Communicative State

Political Public Relations and the Rise of the Innovation Hype in Sweden

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The Communicative State

Political Public Relations & the Rise of the Innovation Hype in Sweden

Jacob Stenberg

LUND
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Abstract

Government agencies in Sweden are experiencing a communicative turn where notions concerning brand, image and identity have become standardized tools and concerns. Public relations, with its focus on persuasion and creating relations with external actors, is part of this communicative turn. This book is concerned with how government agencies practice political public relations in a more communicatively orientated political landscape. By describing and analyzing two government agencies' public relations work, this dissertation aims to understand how contemporary agencies use persuasion and the management of external relations in order to promote political issues and the political and democratic implications these practices may subsequently have. In the post-financial crisis of 2008, innovation emerged as a political issue on many government agencies' agendas. Public relations practices were implemented by government agencies on an unprecedented scale in order to promote innovation issues. Considering this increase, I have labeled innovation a political hype. By applying a multiple case study, this dissertation follows the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications and the Swedish Institute's public relations work in their promotion of innovation issues. These two organizations are used as a window through which to perceive the public relations practices government agencies in Sweden at large have at their disposal. The multiple case study approach was fruitful, as it provided this study with two different cases by which to perceive government agencies' public relations. Two methods were employed for gathering the empirical material. Twenty-six qualitative interviews were conducted with the government agencies' employees, all of whom were responsible for public relations practices. A targeted sampling of government documents (directives, meeting protocols, strategies, policies, SOUs) that were created by the agencies in order to facilitate and enable their public relations practices were collected and analyzed. This dissertation employs an interdisciplinary framework, where sociology and cultural researchers (Michel Foucault, Peter Miller, Nikolas Rose, Barbara Czarniawska, amongst others) are fused with critical public relations researchers (Jacquie L'Etang, Lee Edwards, Judy Motion, Shirley Leitch, amongst others).

The dissertation makes a number of findings that are of interest to public relations research. First, the research shows some of the discursive shifts that have made public relations practices into feasible concerns for the two government agencies. Second, looking at these shifts discloses the role networks have come to play for government agencies. These networks can be beneficial, but also asymmetrical in terms of power relations. Third, my findings suggest that political issues are selected based on what I call their "communicative appeal". This dissertation thus introduces the term "PR-ization" of government agencies' as a way of capturing this, something that has political and potentially even democratic implications. Fourth, my findings reveal some of the unforeseen aspects of public relations. Fifth, political hypes are not innocent, but assemble actors and distribute resources unevenly. The political and democratic implications of these findings are discussed.

Key words

Public relations, political public relations, critical public relations, strategic communication, discourse, governmentality, government communication, political hype, government agencies

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To Freja, Idun and Ronja

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Tack

En avhandling består av så mycket mer än forskning, så mycket mer än böcker och artiklar, intervjuer och transkriptioner, skisser och analyser. Bakom alla ord på pränt, bakom reflektioner och överväganden, döljer sig människor och händelser, kriser och känslor som inte ryms i en avhandling, men som onekligen påverkar arbetets gång. Det var inte enkelt, inte heller alltid kul. Ofta nervöst, lite osäkert – men också väldigt spännande. Det är väl därför det tar sådan tid. Nästan fem år har det tagit att förverkliga avhandlingen, en konstig och skrämmande mängd tid. Det är därmed inte ovanligt att en doktorand i sluttampen ställer sig frågan – var det värt det? Det är med en otrolig känsla av lycka (och viss befrielse) som jag med säkerhet svarar *ja*.

Först och främst vill jag tacka alla som ställt upp på intervjuer vid insamlandet av material till avhandlingen och som tog sig tid till att besvara mina ibland märkliga förfrågningar via mail om olika dokument, om förtydliganden, om budgetunderlag och årsrapporter. Ni har alla spelat en stor roll i färdigställandet av den här avhandlingen. Ett jättetack till er all.

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På Göingeplan i Malmö,
där allt började,
men som nu avslutas,
den 9e maj 2016.

1 Introduction

This dissertation concerns the public relations practices that Swedish government agencies implement in order to promote political issues and create relations with external actors. I am particularly concerned with how innovation as a political issue established notoriety in Sweden's government sector in wake of the global financial crisis of 2008. The crisis prompted government agencies and political leaders to promote tough political programs (such as bank bailouts, rescue plans and stimulus packages) in order to prevent their nations from collapse (Allon & Redden, 2012). However, along with these "hard" political programs came "softer" forms of governance that motivated the implementation of various rather unprecedented communication and public relations practices by government agencies of Sweden. The European Commission launched the Innovation Union in 2010, a flagship strategy realized in order to promote, enable and simplify innovation issues for its member nations and their citizens. Sweden followed suit quickly, as Swedish regions, municipalities and other government agencies too developed innovation strategies to boost their local innovation capacity, created branding platforms in the hope of attracting "innovative citizens" and instigated dialogue meetings with local decision makers, businesses and citizens on issues pertaining innovation. On a national level, the Government Offices of Sweden[1] and the Ministry for Enterprise, Energy and Communications[2] also began promoting innovation issues through their work on what was to become the National Innovation Strategy (NIS). The Ministry's work on the NIS was officially launched in 2010 and enabled the Ministry to set in motion a range of different communication and public relations practices. Dialogue programs, workshops, new communication policies and even symbolic branding efforts were created and implemented in order to persuade the Ministry's target-groups of the importance of stressing innovation issues in their work. In 2010, the Swedish Institute (the government agency in charge of promoting Sweden abroad) implemented an unprecedented

[1] Regeringskansliet

[2] Näringsdepartementet

international campaign that was to promote Sweden as the global leader in innovation. The Innovative Sweden campaign (as it was called) was made possible by the Institute's efforts to coordinate with Swedish embassies, exhibition consultants, PR-firms and the foreign media in the hope of raising awareness of Sweden and attract particular forms of individuals and organizations to the country. The Ministry finished its work on the NIS in 2014, the same year the Innovative Sweden campaign was taken off the Institute's international circuit.

Innovation was thus a particular political issue that for a brief period in time became "in vogue" – in particular for the Ministry and the Institute. I will refer to the successive rise of innovation on Sweden's political scene as signifying that of a "political hype". In chapter three I will define political hype as the construction and/or promotion of a (supposedly) novel idea that can mobilize various actors and enables, or at least promises, a future societal change for the benefit of certain actors and interests over a finite period of time (cf. Brown, 2003; Cronehed, 2004). By perceiving these events as political hype invokes the exceptionality of the circumstances. This dissertation is concerned with what government agencies do when they become embedded in political hypes – with a particular focus on the emergence of innovation – and what public relations practices the hype enables in the process of persuading their target-groups that innovation is a particularly crucial political issue. To study and discuss a political hype from a communication perspective is particularly fruitful, as it provides the researcher with a window by which to perceive how government agencies make use of all of the communication "tools" they have at their disposal. As such, this dissertation is also concerned with the communicative turn that government agencies are embedded in. By using this term I want to invoke the process by which government agencies have come to professionalize their use of communication in order to garner support for future policies, seek consensus with external actors, attain media exposure or ensure successful governing (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2013, 2014; Papathanassopoulos, Negrine, Mancini, & Holtz, 2006). Communication professionals are hired, new and highly specialized communication policies are created and extensive and meticulous communication projects implemented by government agencies for these reasons. Communication has thus become a new tool for government agencies, existing on par with other management tools (Gelders & Ihlen, 2010).

The Ministry's work on the NIS and the Institute's Innovative Sweden campaign can be seen as particular instances where government agencies became embedded in a political hype and studied as if being part and parcel of the communicative turn. The communication and public relations practices that the

two organizations set in motion will thus be described and analyzed in this dissertation. Considering government agencies' powerful position in society and their fairly new devotion to communication issues (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2013), it is important to study and develop our understanding of how government agencies seek to integrate communication into their core activities and implement communication and public relations practices. Even though other organizations and actors became embedded in the innovation hype and sought to promote innovation issues, I have delimited this dissertation to only focus on the two aforementioned political organizations' practices. This delimitation suggests that I will not study or include the role of the media, individual political parties, individual citizens or corporations in any explicit sense. I will analyze the public relations practices the two organizations implemented in order to understand the role communication and political public relations have come to play in and for government agencies of Sweden today and its political and, to some extent, democratic implications.

I see this dissertation as a contribution to the field of political public relations. I will apply a critical and socio–cultural framework in order to study the two government agencies' communication practices. The socio-cultural perspective in public relations research entails including contextual factors in public relations practice (Edwards & Hodges, 2011). One fundamental position in this dissertation is that government agencies are affected by larger, often global, "political imaginations" that shape the government agencies' understanding of what is possible to do in and for society (Jasanoff, 2015b; Jessop & Sum, 2012). This dissertation uses the "imaginary" as its contextual backdrop, and argues that it fosters ideas, favors certain societal ideals and legitimizes certain governmental practices. Imaginaries should be seen as the socio-cultural backdrops that frame both the hype's emergence *and* the public relations practices that became legitimized forms of government practice.

The politics of hypes

In this section I wish to contextualize the dissertation by looking into certain societal, cultural and political conditions that I argue enabled the political hype to emerge, but also caused the public relations practices that the government agencies set forth to become suitable tools of and practices for governing. In chapter two and three I will expand on this discussion.

Globalized societies can be distinguished by their multitudes of overlapping *imaginations* (Appadurai, 1996). The pace at which ideas, products, services, images and people move across transnational boundaries, together with the perpetual development of new forms of communication technologies, "mark the world of the present not as technically new forces but as ones that seem to impel (and sometimes compel) the work of the imagination" (p. 4). Another way to express this is to claim that globalization has enabled new and bountiful ways for individuals, organizations, entire nations and their governments to imagine new and creative possibilities to act upon and potentially mold society. A particularly dominant political imagination that has come to acquire a nearly indestructible force in contemporary societies is linked to certain ideals of *progress* (Mukhtar-Landgren, 2012; Winner, 1986). Progress tends to refer to matters of innovation: science's triumph over nature, developments in new technologies and different forms of entrepreneurship through *creative destruction*. This "innovation imperative" is often cast in terms of being a matter of national, and indeed global, concern for political actors (Sveiby, Gripenberg, & Segercrantz, 2012). However, some researchers are questioning this imperative. Nigel Thrift (2008) has, for instance, argued that Western societies and economies have "reached a technological plateau" in the sense that it is "increasingly difficult to squeeze value out of innovation – which no doubt explains why innovation has become such a watchword, even an obsession" (p. 142). This "obsession" with innovation issues amongst political actors was made clear in wake of the financial crisis of 2008. Not only did the crisis instigate enormous structural changes for entire societies, but it also enabled political actors to seek new pathways in hopes of controlling a highly turbulent political and social environment. Large, transnational organizations such as the OECD, WTO and the EU created and promoted innovation strategies and other large-scale, high-agenda innovation programs. Member states were prompted to implement their own innovation strategies and promote innovation as a particularly crucial issue in order to overcome the financial crisis.

Previous research has revealed the normative power of these larger organizations. Bob Jessop and Ngai-Ling Sum (2012, 2013) argue that transnational organizations are powerful institutions that need to construct simplified frameworks for how the world is constituted in order to be able to promote certain norms that are in line with dominant economic principles. From the rubble of the financial meltdown of 2008 there emerged a new hyperbolic language spawned in part by the policy and strategy norms launched by the aforementioned transnational organizations. Amidst all the gloom, the

Swedish Government Offices (GO), local and regional municipalities, other government agencies and private interests began mobilizing their networks of actors in the hope of promoting innovation as a core feature of how Sweden was to be governed in the future and how it was to define itself domestically, but also internationally. At the center of this coordination was The Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications, who – through the Prime Minister's government declaration[3] – was awarded the responsibility for creating a National Innovation Strategy for Sweden (NIS) in order to accelerate Sweden's global competitiveness. In charge of promoting Sweden's innovation capacity abroad was the Swedish Institute, who through the construction of the campaign entitled Innovative Sweden was to construct a strong brand based on the idea of an innovative nation in order to gather human capital (students, researchers and companies) and foreign direct investments. There was, in other words, both a domestic and international mobilization of force at work in the promotion of innovation as a critical political issue. The two different yet nevertheless interrelated organizations thus had to imagine ways to mobilize support for their different undertakings. Both the Ministry and the Institute sought to frame and promote the strategy and the campaign in terms of the possibilities generated from creating a more innovation prone society: It would creatively destroy economic stalemate, minimize bureaucratic red tape and ultimately solve global challenges, to name a few social and economic aspects found in the organizations' language. In the hope of legitimizing the NIS' development, the Ministry sought to build relations with actors from within Swedish business, various interest groups and civil society. The Ministry hired consultants, new communication policies were created and social media experiments were launched in order to legitimize and promote the NIS. For the Institute, the Innovative Sweden campaign was arguably one of the most extensive to date, an undertaking that entailed the management of international journalists, external public relations consultants and foreign agencies abroad in order to brand Sweden and its population through an innovation lens.

This dissertation will use the innovation hype as a window by which to describe and analyze government agencies' communication and public relations practices. Later in the book, I will argue that the government agencies' communication practices can be analyzed by way of using critical and socio-cultural public relations lenses (Edwards, 2012a; Edwards & Hodges, 2011; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; L'Etang, 2005b; McKie, L'Etang, Xifra, & Snow, 2015). I thereby wish to move away from functionalistic public relations

[3] Regeringsförklaring

research by embracing factors such as power, context, symbols, narratives, materiality and persuasion – aspects that traditional public relations research tend to ignore but are undoubtedly part and parcel of political public relations. The shift from functional public relations research to the critical, socio-cultural turn in public relations research will be dealt with more explicitly in chapter two and three. In the next section, I will look more closely at what I call the communicative turn that has emerged in Sweden in the last two decades.

A communicative turn: Informal networks, post-politics

By the phrase *communicative turn* I am referring to a process government agencies are part of where issues and tasks that pertain to communication are gradually professionalized, reflected upon and made into core activities within the organizations. Communication is not an activity or practice that is located in the hands of a few employees, technicians or departments, but permeates government agencies' planning, strategizing and reflections on how to organize its activities. In other words, the communcative turn entails an increasingly strategic approach to communication (Falkheimer & Heide, 2011).

There are a number of societal developments that correlate with, and subsequently fuel, the communicative turn. Fredriksson and Pallas (2011) argue, for instance, that strategic communication has gradually become an institutionalized practice within government agencies due in part to surrounding norms and the expectations developed by organizations' publics. We have come to expect organizations to communicate. To experiment with and professionalize communication becomes a practice that is used in order to tame expectations, claim legitimacy and build trust in an otherwise unstable environment (cf. Sandhu, 2009). We can also locate the communicative turn in matters that pertain to governing. Haughton, Allmendinger and Oosterlynck (2013) argue that in the last two decades there has been an almost global surge of what they call "soft spaces of governance" – all those spaces that "exist outside, alongside or in-between formal statuary scaled of government" (p. 217). According to the authors, soft spaces enable governmental experimentation through different, more informal means that can be realized under a number of different guises. In the case of the Swedish Government Offices (GO), the successive so-called decorporativization of the Swedish state in the early 1990s

entailed an end to formal external influences over state developments from official organizations and through official channels (Lindvall & Rothstein, 2006; Naurin, 2001), which enabled an opening for informal networks to exert power over political decision making – often through informal means (Garsten, Rothstein, & Svallfors, 2015). This coincided with an increasingly sharp opinion climate, accentuated in part by the emergence of a new and hitherto unseen professionalized group of communication and public relations consultants hoping to take advantage of a new, increasingly informal political landscape (L. Larsson, 2005a, 2005b; Tyllström, 2013). In other words, government agencies have become more willing to experiment with and reflect upon different forms of public relations programs whilst a new clientele has become willing to accommodate this outreach.

Another intertwined societal condition that has spurred government agencies' communicative turn is the gradual development of what some authors have coined the "post-political" landscape. By this term, authors have sought to conceptualize and discuss the appearance of a new mode of governmental practice that seeks and prioritizes political projects that can generate consensus, create informal networks and enhance the role for private and civic actors in matters of governing (Swyngedouw, 2005). In the post-political landscape, ideological visions are replaced by a form of governance that is based on technocratic skill, and political projects that are based on universal values are sought-after as they enable collaboration with a broad range of actors and minimize potential conflict (Ek, 2011). As we will see, the Swedish innovation hype managed to generate support from a wide range of different actors: Business leaders, political decision makers, interest groups and members of civil society were all drawn into the construction of the Ministry's NIS and the Institute's Innovative Sweden campaign. With this in mind, it is possible to interpret the two organizations as bound up in what Swyngedouw (2014) has called the "disappearance of the political", where the "colonization of political space by a consensual mode of governance has reduced political conflict and disagreement". The inclusion of differing opinions on everything imaginable is sought-after – "as long as it does not fundamentally question the existing state of the neo-liberal political-economic configuration" (p. 123). This move towards a post-political landscape entails a more speculatively prone government (Tesfahuney & Dahlstedt, 2008), where a broad repertoire of government agencies' constructed policies, strategies and visions are launched on the basis of their possibility to form external coalitions, networks and new relations with new actors (Mukhtar-Landgren, 2008, p. 229-231). To experiment with and reflect upon issues that pertain to communication must be seen as a particularly

important practice within a post-political landscape, as it facilitates for government agencies to create and maintain relations with external actors.

In this dissertation, I will describe and analyze how the Ministry and Institute construct and promote innovation through different discursive, symbolic and material means in order to advance political issues by way of forming relations with external actors. The Ministry and the Institute both initiated, in 2010, what can be seen as large national and international political public relations campaigns and practices in order to promote awareness of the social and economic benefits of innovation. In order to translate innovation from a mere "imagination" to a graspable political issue requires reflection, different communication techniques and strategies, plus the creation and maintenance of networks containing individuals and organizations. To devise and implement events, seminars and dialogue programs were practical undertakings the two organizations set in motion. The public relations practices also had discursive and material dimensions, where the invocations of statistics, international rankings, the creation of new communication policies, experiments on social media, the creation of "spatial" communication platforms and other symbolic and material strategies were used in order to create relations with external actors and promote innovation as a critical political issue.

This dissertation will employ a critical and socio-cultural public relations perspective in order to highlight how government agencies' reflect upon and implement communication and public relations practices – an emerging field unified by an interest to situate the practice of public relations in its socio-cultural context and to include notions such as power and persuasion in its core (cf. L'Etang, 2005; Edwards, 2012a). The empirical material is based on a wide range of political documents (strategies, communication policies, vision statements, budget reports, brochures, invitations, seminar programs) and interviews with public officials, private consultants, scientists and project leaders at various organizations that were all in different ways embedded in the public relations practices implemented by the Ministry and the Institute. Before I turn discuss the aim of the dissertation, I will discuss briefly where I position myself in relation to strategic communication and public relations research.

Strategic communication & political public relations

Strategic communication is an interdisciplinary research field that comprises a range of different subjects and perspectives. A fundamental concern of this

research field is the study of organizations' deliberate communication practices that are implemented in order to reach organizational goals and missions. The term "strategic" is crucial, as it delimits the research of strategic communication to that of organizations and their deliberative communication processes and practices (Falkheimer & Heide, 2011; Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2007; Magnusson, 2014). Strategic communication should thus be read as an umbrella term composed of various research enterprises, perhaps most notably marketing communications, organizational communication, crisis communication and public relations. Typical communication practices and issues that have been of interest within the field are corporate branding, organizational identity, corporate reputation, image and legitimacy (Falkheimer & Heide, 2014). Strategic communication should thus be seen as a "transboundary concept" that captures the all-embracing and interrelated communication practices organizations are embedded in and engages with (p. 123–124). Alternative and critical perspectives on strategic communication that have sought to broaden the discipline's horizon have emerged in recent years. In the first-ever published *Handbook of Strategic Communication*, the editors Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2015) incorporate a manifold of perspectives into the research program in order to advance our understanding of strategic communication's role for organizations and society.

This dissertation concerns *political* public relations – arguably an under-researched field within strategic communication. Political public relations has come to be associated with spin, manipulation and behind-the-scenes lobbying (Lamme & Russell, 2009; Morris & Goldsworthy, 2008; Stauber & Rampton, 1995). A fundamental stance found in this dissertation is that organized interests use public relations practices, including public organizations such as government agencies, regions and local municipalities. This was clear to Edward L. Bernays – one of the early contributors to public relations research – who, in the early 1950s, wrote of the public relations practices of unions, governments, private interests and even farmers (Bernays, 1952/2012). Research on public relations in Sweden, however, tends to concern the public relations industry's development (Tyllström, 2009, 2013), lobbying and its implications for democracy (Hermansson, 1999; Naurin, 2001, 2007), the media's role in government agencies (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2013, 2014) or branding perspectives (Dahlqvist & Melin, 2010). Political communication studies share many similarities with political public relations yet has to a large extent been occupied with researching individual campaigns of political parties, party leaders, public opinion and the news media with an emphasis on one-way communication flows (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2011; 2015, p. 383).

A more strategic perspective on political public relations is in order – one that includes, rather than excludes, practices, employees and organizations. International research has moved in this direction, where public relations perspectives are implemented in order to understand political actors such as governments (Avery & Graham, 2013; Gelders & Ihlen, 2010; Kiousis & Strömbäck, 2010; L'Etang, 1998; Lee, 2009, 2012; Moloney & Colmer, 2001), nation branding institutions (Rasmussen & Merkelsen, 2012; Szondi, 2010) and activists (Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000). More, alternatively tinged research on political public relations practices in other areas can be useful in order to document its ubiquity in contemporary democracies.

I will argue that political public relations practices works on many different levels that exceeds lobbyism, the PR-industry, the media's role and branding practices. In this dissertation, focus will thus be on what I will call the "mundane" public relations practices that the Institute and Ministry's project leaders, communication professionals, project assistants, directors and media managers implement in order to promote political issues and form relations with external actors. Public relations is, in other words, not only a practice that concerns communication professionals or public relations practitioners, but is used and crafted by a wide range of employees in their more or less calculative endeavor to promote political issues and to create and manage relations. By *mundane* I am referring to the relatively smaller instances (through, for instance, the creation of seminars, dialogue forums and other events) government agencies make use of in this endeavor. In the previous section I referred to these as the "soft spaces of governing".

A useful starting point is Strömbäck and Kiousis' (2011) definition of political public relations. They perceive it as "the management process by which an organization or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals" (p. 8). It is a useful definition as it enables the researcher to describe and analyze a variety of communication practices (not only political campaigns, media management or lobbying) used by a number of different actors (not only political parties). In this dissertation the Ministry and the Institute are undoubtedly involved in different forms of political public relations practices that were crafted and implemented for a number of different political purposes. I will expand on this definition more in chapter two and argue that political public relations cannot shy away from viewing persuasion as intrinsic to its practice (Pfau & Wan, 2006).

If we purely perceive political public relations as "a management process" certain important social dynamics might be disregarded if we want to understand its practices fully. Strömbäck and Kiousis write that political public relations research cannot "disregard the cultural, social, political, institutional, or systemic context in which they are located – or existing power relationships" (p. 4). This falls in line with the socio-cultural turn in public relations research that has emerged in the last few years. According to Edwards and Hodges (2011), public relations is not only a practice that entails purposeful communication for the maintenance of relationships, but should also be seen as "a locus of transactions that produce emergent social and cultural meanings" (p. 4). In other words, researching the socio-cultural dynamics of political public relations concerns looking at the production of narratives, discourses and the symbolic work that is constituted in and constitutive of its practices. In this dissertation, I will argue that this is a central aspect to political public relations practice that is critical and can be analyzed by looking into how government agencies reflect on the discursive, symbolic and material conditions that together produce social and cultural meanings in societies. It therefore contributes to critical public relations research (L'Etang, 2005b; McKie et al., 2015). It is also important to mention that my approach is interdisciplinary, as I will also make use of researchers from disciplines outside of public relations or strategic communication research.

Purpose of the study and research questions

The overarching purpose of this dissertation is to describe and analyze how government agencies implement political public relations practices in order to create relationships with external actors and additionally make political issues into concerns for a manifold of actors. I will do this by describing and analyzing how government agencies *reflect on* communication issues and their public relations practices *and* the organizations' actual implementations of political public relations practices. By "reflect on" I am stressing the need to describe and analyze how the agencies try to continuously improve their approaches to communication and public relations practices in different ways. By "implementation" I am stressing the need to analyze how these reflections and improvements are made manifest in practice. As I am studying *political* public relations, it is also important to analyze what the political and to some extent democratic implications of the communicative turn may be. I have chosen to

use the Swedish Government Offices (GO), the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications and the Swedish Institute as the focal government agencies in this dissertation. I regard the government agencies' work on innovation issues as a window through which one is able to better understand their public relations practices as a whole. I chose this particular political issue and these two organizations as cases since the issue enabled the organizations to reflect on and implement several public relations practices. It is important to mention that even though my interest in the organizations' work on innovation may reflect concerns that are rooted in the research field of innovation studies, I do not consider my research as corresponding to this field. This dissertation's focal point is to advance our understanding of political public relations and its practice in government settings. Three research questions will be dealt with in this dissertation:

i. How do the government agencies reflect on communication and public relations issues and practices?
ii. How do the government agencies implement public relations practices as a way to promote innovation and what central arguments are used by the organizations in order to portray innovation as a beneficial political issue for society?
iii. What are the potential political and democratic implications of the communicative turn in government agencies?

Considering that the research field of public relations, and political public relations in particular, is rather under-theorized, the purpose of this dissertation is to also advance research on political public relations by highlighting critical perspectives that acknowledge power issues, contextual dimensions, the role discourse plays and even material aspects in the government agencies' preparation and implementation of their public relations practices. I believe this is important to study, especially considering that a strategic approach to communication is a rather new disposition within government agencies in general. An understanding of what this entails in practice, the societal and to some extent democratic implications will therefore be critical enquiries in this dissertation. The employment of an interdisciplinary approach will be used in order to account for the manifold ways political public relations is being implemented by the two focal government agencies in this dissertation.

Disposition

PART ONE - Foundations

In the following chapter, **chapter two,** I will give an overview of public relations as a research field. I am particularly concerned with juxtaposing "traditional" public relations research with critical public relations research. I will also consider how previous research has dealt with public relations as a political practice carried out by political actors in Sweden. I will argue that political public relations must be seen as a practice that aims to create beneficial relations and networks with individuals and organizations, as well as a practice that aims to persuade its publics of political ideas. In **chapter three**, I will outline the socio-cultural and critical turn in public relations research. Central analytical concepts and terms are introduced. In **chapter four**, I will discuss how I analyzed the Ministry and Institute's communication and public relations practices. My use of research methods, the empirical material as well as the analytical process is presented and discussed.

PART TWO – Analytical chapters

In **chapter five**, I will discuss the discursive nodes and central arguments that are invoked in the innovation hype by the Ministry and Institute. This is important, as it gives us a foundation on which to stand and to understand what the hype was concerned with. In **chapter six**, I will take a practice orientated approach and describe and analyze how the GO and the Ministry reflect on and implement public relations practices in order to persuade its target-groups of the benefits of innovation and render innovation into a graspable political issue. The focal point is the public relations work the Ministry conducted through the National Innovation Strategy (NIS). In **chapter seven**, I will discuss what the Ministry's practices amounted to: both in terms of the National Innovation Strategy, but also the political implications of the Ministry's public relations practices. In **chapter eight**, I will discuss the practices of the Institute through their Innovative Sweden campaign, launched in eleven countries in total.

PART THREE – Conclusion

Finally, in **chapter nine**, I will sum up the results from the analytical chapters and discuss the implications of my findings. I will most notably condense my analytical findings, discuss their transferability into other contexts and discuss the findings' practical implications for government agencies.

Part I: Theoretical Point of Departure and Methodology

2 Political Public Relations

In this chapter I will do three things. In the first section, I will present some of the historical roots that have contributed to the development of public relations research. This will contextualize the section that follows, where I will be discussing research that has sought to describe and analyze public relations in political organizations and settings. Lastly, I will deal with how public relations as a research field has been studied in a Swedish context. The purpose of this chapter is thus to place this dissertation in its proper research context and to clarify the position of my own research.

Public relations as a research field: Background

Public relations research must be seen an interdisciplinary research field, as it has been influenced by a range of various disciplines such as economics, sociology, media studies and psychology (Ihlen, Fredrikson, & Ruler, 2009, p. 3). As such, definitions of public relations abound and have undergone many different transformations throughout the research field's history. Definitions are not only shaped by disciplinary influences, but by the societal context in which public relations practices function.

In the early 1900s, Ivy Lee, arguably one of the founders of public relations in the US, perceived and wrote of public relations as a "news management practice". In 1906, Lee formulated a Declaration of Principles that would guide the public relations practitioners hired by organizations. "On behalf of business concerns and public institutions", he wrote, the practitioner should "supply the press and public of the United States prompt and accurate information concerning subjects which it is of value and interest to the public to know about" (Butterick, 2011, p. 11). Public relations practice was thus conceptualized as the dissemination of information to an organization's publics through most notably the mass media. A few decades later, Edward L. Bernays (also in the US) sought to professionalize public relations practice by grounding

it in science (most notably psychology). Bernays' published works span decades of research and cover a wide range of different topics on public relations issues and know-how. Public relations to him involved the persuasion of "the group and the herd"[4], "the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses"[5] or (a now infamous statement) "the engineering of consent"[6]. To argue for the manipulation of the masses may come across as belligerent, but for Bernays, it was a cornerstone of democracy. The kernel of his argument was that the political elite were educated, whereas "the average American has only six years of schooling behind him. With pressing crises and decisions to be faced, a leader frequently cannot wait for the people to arrive at even a general understanding" (Bernays, 1947, p. 114-115). A lot of Bernays' work thus contains descriptions of what public relations can do in order to persuade a passive public, signaling a more strategic approach to public relations: perform "painstaking research" on the public's hearts and minds, implement simplified symbols and orchestrate stagecraft in the public domain in order to appeal to the public's emotions, and so on (cf. Ewen, 1996, p. 373ff). Bernays thus perceived public relations as a method of persuasion working to facilitate the elites' undertakings. In the introduction to Bernays' (1923/2011) *Crystallizing Public Opinion,* Stuart Ewen writes that Bernays propaganda-approach to public relations must be seen in the light of the early 20th century's "explosive ideals of democracy" that had come to "challenge ancient customs" (p. 34ff). Considering this social and political context, Ewen notes, power and rule in society had become a technocratic (as opposed to aristocratic) enterprise that Bernays sought to defend through public relations.

The unethical (and outdated) dimension of Bernays' enterprise is apparent. No person (elite or otherwise) today could argue for the persuasion of "the herds" in order to ascertain the elites' position of power – public relations researchers included. This leads us to modern forms of public relations research where researchers have sought to come to terms with their field's past and exclude the "persuasion"-word from their work altogether. Starting in the late 1970s and early 1980s, research focus shifted to the development of efficient *and* ethical models of public relations practice. The research field was highly influenced by the functionalist research agenda driven by Grunig and Hunt (1984) and their development of the four-models approach to public relations. This functional approach constructed normative and ideal situations in order to illustrate how organizations ought to communicate effectively with stakeholders

[4] In *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, 1923
[5] In *Propaganda*, 1928
[6] In *Public Relations*, 1952

under certain circumstances. The publicity model, the public information model, the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model were launched as blueprints for organizational (or managerial) action, and in order to rid themselves from unethical persuasion, argued that the symmetrical models were "ethical" and thereby preferable. The authors of the four-model approach defined public relations through a managerial lens: "The management of communication between an organization and its publics" (p. 6). This managerial and normative enterprise is paradigmatic of public relations theory and has been expanded and transformed through, most notably, the development and subsequent popularization of the Excellence-study conducted in the US in the 1990s (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006). It is possible to argue that these normative and functional research enterprises have, to a large extent, paved the way for and legitimized public relations research and even the public relations profession in general (L. Larsson, 2005b, p. 38-39). Moloney (2006) called this dominant paradigm a "Grunigian one" (p. 3) and Botan and Hazelton (2006) argued that the Grunigian paradigm "laid the necessary foundation" for future disciplinary struggles (p. 11). Considering its ubiquity, some even perceive the Excellence-project as a terminal destination for the research field (cf. McKie et al., 2015, p. 3).

The normative and functional doctrine that has pervaded public relations research in general has, according to more critical researchers, come to ignore certain aspects and possibly even stifled public relations research development. According to L'Etang (2008b), the popularization of the four-model approach to public relations was even "a detriment of the field as a whole" (p. 327), as it sought to frame public relations practice through the use of universal terms, even though the study was based on practices and historical records of practice in the US. Public relations research was instrumental, as L'Etang and Piezcka (2001) note, as it was for a long time preoccupied with improving "the occupational standing" and making organizations more efficient in terms of generating value for organizations (p. 228–229). Public relations research thus found its *raison d'ètre* as a management tool (Falkheimer & Dalfelt, 2001, p. 94), as opposed to a research discipline that sought to explore new horizons. Pfau and Wan (2006) argue that the symmetrical models advanced and popularized through the Grunigian paradigm ignore power imbalances and persuasion dimensions. This is why Ihlen, Fredriksson and Ruler (2009) claimed that public relations research has come to suffer from "intellectual isolation" (p. 3), as critical issues that concern power, persuasion, propaganda or other critical issues were by and large ignored from this dominant paradigm and potentially hindered the field's development (Fawkes, 2007).

However, in the last decade or so, various divisions of research interests have emerged that challenge and surpass the functional paradigm of public relations research (Taylor & Kent, 2014, p. 384). According to Edwards (2012a), the emergence of new interests and perspectives on public relations has made it difficult to speak of one unique and dominant paradigm. Feminist, rhetorical and postmodern are examples of perspectives that have come to challenge the status quo. Public relations research, she argues, can no longer "be neatly compartmentalized into different schools of thought" and consequently, "it is time to consider how we might use our ability to define PR in a way that better reflects the plurality of views in the field" (p. 23). Many public relations researchers have thus sought to move away from the normative, functional and managerial perspective. The publication of the *Handbook of Critical Public Relations* (2015) is a manifestation of the last decade's increased interest in alternative and plural perspectives on public relations. Considering the many different approaches the handbook's authors apply, it is difficult to ascertain one simple definition of critical public relations. But it is worth noting that the handbook seems to suggest that public relations should not be seen purely as an organization-centric or managerial function, but is comprised of many different actions carried out by a multitude of different actors in a number of varying arenas for different causes and ends – some ethical, some not. In other words, the public relations field has developed into a nuanced field, and, as I will argue, cannot resort to simple symmetrical models, as public relations is a practice that is ingrained with notions of power and persuasion (Moloney, 2006).

The critical and socio-cultural approach to public relations (that I alluded to in chapter one) will be discussed more explicitly in chapter three. In the following section, I will discuss some cornerstones of *political* public relations. I will argue that even though political organizations have undergone a communicative turn where communication issues have become ingrained in the organizations' core, public relations perspectives concerning these movements have largely been ignored.

Towards a political public relations agenda

Communication issues and practices have always been deeply ingrained in the core of what political actors and political organizations do. But in the last few years, political organizations in general (be them political parties, government agencies, municipalities, interest organizations, social movements, and so on)

have in many ways sought to professionalize their approach to issues that pertain to communication (Svensson, 2016). By *professionalization*, I am referring to how communication practices have become a reflexive process, or considered in need of "continual self-improvement and change towards what is deemed to be a better way of doing things, be it winning an election, achieving consensus, gaining support for policies, ensuring successful governance, as well as a more general process of skills specialization" (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2006, p. 14). I alluded to this in chapter one when I stated that political organizations have experienced and is part of a fundamental communicative turn. For government agencies, this emerging professionalism can be seen in their adaptation of a vernacular that traditionally was designated for and developed by the corporate sector (Wæraas, 2008). When government agencies thus talk of branding procedures (Grundel, 2014; Magnusson, 2014, p. 93ff), differentiation (Sataøen & Wæraas, 2015) and image (Möllerström, 2011), this reflects new forms of practices that indicate an increasingly strategic and reflexive approach to communication issues. Many different communication perspectives have sought to understand the emergence of an increasingly communicative political landscape. Political communication, political management, public affairs and political campaign communication are but a few examples of research fields that place communication issues at their epicenter (Strömbäck, 2011, p. 73). It is possible to argue that public relations practices have always been crafted, reflected upon and implemented by political actors throughout history. According to Strömbäck and Kiousis (2013) "politics, political communication, and public relations have *always* been closely intertwined". However, "while political public relations has a long and prominent history, and continues to be highly important in political communication processes, there is neither much theorizing nor empirical research on political public relations" (p. 3). Some research has emerged which has sought to understand political organizations' communication practices through a public relations lens. I will mention four research genres that I believe are typical enquiries in the field of political public relations.

Political public relations: Four genres of research

In public jargon as well as in research, political public relations tends to imply propaganda, deception and indoctrination (Moloney, 2006). The rise of public relations as an institutionalized practice within and for political organizations has produced a body of literature that seeks to condemn its practice. For

instance, in *A Century of Spin,* David Miller and William Dinan (2007) argue that the institutionalization of public relations in the Western hemisphere facilitates corruptive behavior, promotes increasingly neo-liberal states and ultimately hinders the development of participatory democracy. In *Toxic Sludge is Good For You*, the authors Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber (1995) analyze the invisible hand of manipulative spin-doctors and their supposedly intentional mission to undermine democratic processes. There is a tendency within this body of literature to accuse public relations issues of being undemocratic and illicit from the very outset, a position that I regard as one-dimensional and unproductive.

A second genre is that of historical public relations research, where several authors have analyzed political organizations in their historical milieu. This field has most notably paid attention to public relations history in the UK (L'Etang, 1998) and the US (Ewen, 1996; Lee, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012). Lamme and Russell (2009) went further back in time and investigated political public relations practices prior to the 20th century, in particular the US and UK. What unites these different historical contributions is their inclination to widen public relations as a research field and attribute its practice not only to public relations practitioners, their firms or private organizations, but also to a whole range of different professional roles, political organizations and institutions.

A third genre of political public relations research concerns a fairly narrow field where transmission perspectives on communication and public relations are central. Typical enquiries of this research strand concern individual political party campaigns and their news management processes (Froehlich & Rüdiger, 2006). For instance, according to Zipfel (2008), "political public relations refers to the strategic communication activities of actors participating in the political process that aim at informative and persuasive goals in order to realize single interests" (p. 677). According to the author, persuasion for the advancement of "single interests" is ingrained in the very core of political public relations. This may not be particularly strange, considering that government agencies have always been devoted to shaping citizens' behavior and opinions. This may manifest itself through various forms of communication means pertaining to issues of health (stop smoking, consume healthy foods, eschew illegal drugs), risk (instructions in the face of pandemics, climate awareness, crime prevention in schools), the economy (enforce entrepreneurial activities, taxation of citizens) and the social (voluntary work engagement, the importance of higher education, family arrangements)(Arts, Lagendijk, & Houtum, 2009). However, placing emphasis on persuasion for the advancement of political goals is a fairly narrow point of departure, as it ignores other communicative dimensions, such as the

formation of relations, networks and coalitions for the advancement of political goals.

A fourth genre has sought to combat this limited departure and has been advanced by, for instance, Ledingham (2001, 2014) in his attempts to apply a relationship management-approach when analyzing government communication and political public relations practices. According to him, political public relations must place the relationship-concept at the epicenter of analysis. Public relations, he argues, is defined as the "ethical and efficient management of organization–public relationships, focused over time on common interests and shared goals in support of mutual understanding and mutual benefit" (Ledingham, 2014, p. 236). His invocation of "ethics" and "mutual interests" suggests that public relations should not be seen as a persuasion activity, but a co-creational process that holds quality aspects of relationship building at the center (Heide, 2011, p. 136). The relationship management school thus emphasizes the creation and nurturing of loyalty, trust, openness and quality vis-à-vis the organization's publics, as opposed to promoting a narrow view on public relations practices where issues such as media impact measurements and other separate communication activities are emphasized (Ledingham, 2006, p. 465ff). However, excluding persuasion altogether ignores a range of different aspects that are intrinsic to the political context in which political actors function. The political environment is highly contentious, and issues of power and persuasion are inherent. I believe it is important to define a field that holds persuasion, as well as relational aspects, as central components in political public relations (Kent, Sommerfeldt, & Saffer, 2016, p. 94ff).

Political public relations: A new agenda

Strömbäck and Kiousis' (2011) research on political public relations is a suitable meeting point for the inclusion of relational, as well as persuasion and power aspects. The authors define political public relations as "the management process by which an organization or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals" (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2013, p. 3). This definition is useful as it highlights and suggests a number of key analytical dimensions researchers of political public relations need to be aware of. First of all, there are a manifold of different political actors

that can be analyzed by way of looking at the political organizations' strategic creation of relations. In fact, the authors mention several political organizations that become of interest through this opened space of political public relations. Not only are political parties of interest, but also nonprofit or for-profit organizations, unions, businesses with political agendas, government agencies, interest groups and "collateral organizations" (organizations that become embedded in political organizations' work). This is important, as I am interested in the socio-cultural dimensions of public relations practice (I will expand on this notion in chapter three) that seek to move away from the paradigmatic assumption within public relations research that singles out specific organizations as the most important context of study (Edwards, 2012a).

Second, the authors also emphasize that political public relations is strategic, meaning that the practice of establishing, building and maintaining beneficial relationships with publics can be analyzed on a number of different levels *within* political organizations. This is important, as political public relations should not be narrowed down to an analysis of individual technicians carrying out specific tactics for the benefit of the respective organization (Botan & Hazleton, 2006; Hallahan et al., 2007). Consequently, political public relations as a research field is broader than related fields, as it involves looking into the multilayered and often complex dimensions of how relationships are planned, thought of and evaluated *within* political organizations (not just a focus on communication issues per se).

Third, the authors call for a more inclusive and broad perspective on political public relations that does not shy away from perceiving public relations as a harbor for intentions to influence (or use persuasion) – an assumption that the research field in general, to a large extent, has explicitly ignored (Fawkes, 2007; L'Etang, 1998; Pfau & Wan, 2006).

Fourth, the term *public* is crucial. In public relations research, the analyses and environmental scanning of publics has been a central conception ever since Bernays' (1923/2011) publication of *Crystallizing Public Opinion*. Political public relations is a highly complex endeavor, as "political organizations face a higher number and a more diversified and complex set of publics than most corporate organizations" making "their political public relations strategies, tactics, and efforts even more important" (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2011, p. 18). The task for the researcher is thus to describe and analyze how political actors reflect upon, strategize, evaluate and implement practices for the creation and maintenance of relationships with key target-groups.

Summary

This section aimed at contextualizing political public relations as a research field. I have argued that political public relations must be seen as a practice that consists of both relational aspects, which aim at creating and fostering relations with key publics, as well as aspects that concern persuasion and practices of influence that are used to strengthen the political organizations' goals. In chapter three I will thus argue that this agenda must be augmented by including dimensions that are otherwise ignored in public relations research. The interpretative and post-structural program as outlined by the socio-cultural and critical school in public relations research will thus be discussed and described in the following chapter. Before the socio-cultural and critical research program is outlined, I will discuss how government agencies' public relations has been viewed and researched in a Swedish context. I believe this will show that public relations in Sweden has been researched from a distance, as opposed to seeking an understanding of how public relations have infiltrated political organizations conduct and influenced the way they work today.

Political public relations in a Swedish context

In this section I will discuss how previous research has discussed and conceptualized how the Swedish Government Offices (GO) and Swedish government agencies in Sweden have come to use communication to form relations with external actors. A common starting point that illustrates how the GO and government agencies form relations with external actors concerns the successive decorporatization of the Swedish state. Of importance is Jörgen Hermansson's (1999) formative publication *Decorporatization and lobbyism*. The purpose of the publication was "to describe from a democratic point of view what characterizes the governance model of Swedish politics on the threshold of the 2000s" (p. 19), with a particular focus on the non-institutionalized forms of influence over political decision-making – unregulated (and perhaps unconstitutional) practices aimed at affecting political decisions. Sweden's largest interest groups have traditionally enjoyed a proximity to the Swedish government, but in the early 1990s the Swedish Employers Association (SAF) realized that it could acquire greater influence through other, more informal means – lobbyism, for instance (Garsten et al., 2015; Naurin, 2001). This decorporatization led to a power vacuum in Swedish democracy, as the

previously institutionalized forms of affecting policy in Sweden were gradually deregulated, paving the way to more informal or network-based access to the political elite. Hermansson (1999) concludes his research by stating that "corporations and [interest] organizations' societal contacts are extensive and have undergone a growing professionalism, that lobbying enables the already major actors rewarding conditions for influence and that the traditional elites […] continue to encompass power in Swedish politics" (p. 102).

Lindvall and Rothstein (2006) argue that the successive decorporatization of the Swedish state has also shaped the way government agencies form and maintain relations with external actors, where the management of opinion has become a central concern. According to the authors, government agencies have turned into what they call "ideological state apparatuses", government organizations "whose main task is to safeguard its own political area and propagate for their opinion" (Rothstein, 2004, p. 299). In other words, the management of public opinion became the central (if not the only) concern for many government agencies, a development that must be seen as constituting a new and increasingly opinionated political culture in Sweden. More recently, Garsten, Rothstein and Svallfors (2015) reiterate that the decorporatization was a "critical juncture" in Swedish politics (p. 228ff). In their book *Power without mandate*, the researchers argue that it made way for an increasingly more professionalized group of non-elected "policy professionals" who through various means and channels are "employed to conduct politics" (p. 7). The term "policy professional" encapsulates the professional turn amongst the non-elected in Sweden politics, where individuals and organizations such as PR-firms, press secretaries, political secretaries, communication professionals, think-tanks, unions, interest organizations and government agencies have tapped into and are part of the competition for political space in Sweden.

What I am suggesting here is that the political and democratic space in Sweden has been widened, rendering new practices of governing plausible, legitimate and even salient. Communication and public relations practices have become suitable "tools" for governing in an increasingly opinionated and sharper political climate. I am not suggesting that communication is a new form of governing tool. Kjellgren (2002) shows in her dissertation the complex internal dynamics and political struggles which result from the Swedish GO's use of information and communication. What was once perceived as an "instrument" to enlighten citizens and distribute information, the GO's communication activities, she argues, are now more strategic (in the sense that communication permeates all levels of the organization) and she finds support in her dissertation that the GO has become increasingly concerned with

symbolic politics, where communication practices such as profiling and marketing have emerged as reasonable governing practices (p. 370–371). Larsson's (2005) research affirms this claim. His research indicates a society that gradually has been permeated with communication and public relations practices for the management of opinion – government agencies included.

Even though research on the Swedish GO's communication practices remains scarce, there have been some attempts that seek to understand the organization's large communication apparatus. Focus has been on the GO's relation to the media. Erlandsson (2008) traces the different functions and roles communication professionals have had within the GO. Aside from noting a sharp increase in communication professionals dealing strictly with media matters (the first "information secretary" was appointed in the 1960s, compared to more than 20 at the end of the 1970s and around 140 in total today), the author argues that to compare the GO to a large news bureau is not entirely off the mark. The organization not only seeks to set the news agenda (through press releases and the arrangement of *pseudo-events*), but has also come to learn the importance of swift adaptation to the media cycle and sudden media outbreaks. The media's increasing demand for information and stories has decidedly been met by a group of professional communication roles located within the GO and in close proximity to the political decision-makers. This can be seen as affecting the work within the GO, especially in terms of how the increasing speed caused by a perpetual media cycle may entail a de-prioritization of long-term governing and plans, not only for the politically appointed personnel but also for the civil servants who frequently write scripts for ministers prior to interviews or press conferences (cf. Djerf-Pierre, 2008). The professionalization of communication issues within the GO is also manifested in what the author refers to as the organization's branding practices – all the well-crafted symbols and logos the GO put to use in its publications (propositions, websites, strategies, folders, and so on) and on all of its offices, buildings and entry halls. It is thus possible to claim that the GO has incorporated a corporate communication mindset (p. 342–343). Ullström's (2011) dissertation on the manifold of professional roles and positions within the GO in many ways endorses Erlandsson's results and argues that the GO is part and parcel of the mediatization of Swedish politics. To *own* the media story has become an integral part of the GO's work. Falasca (2014), for instance, showed how the financial crisis of 2008 played in the hands of the incumbent government. The crisis opened up a media vacuum waiting to be filled with voices of expertise and know-how. One could suppose that such crises would open up the debate considering the complexity of the issue at hand. She noted how governmental actors (most notably politicians in

the GO) stepped up their communication efforts and in so doing became the dominant storytelling actors, endowed with the ability to define the crisis and ultimately control the media agenda.

In spite of these developments, it would be wrong to conclude that the GO is an organization that has become mediatized to the point of being unable to conduct "proper work". Some research suggest that the GO's contacts with the media have decreased in the last decade (Premfors, Sundström, & Andersson, 2007). This does not reflect the media's unimportance. For government agencies in general, the relationship with the media is a delicate issue, as an exaggerated focus on media visibility can be perceived as suspending "proper" government work and responsibility. However, the increasing role communication policies have come to play for the GO and the appointment of a communication director (CD) serving directly under the Prime Minister[7] can be seen as strategic wishes to centralize and control a highly disparate organization and its communication practices (Falasca & Nord, 2013). These moves do not only reflect a wish to control the news agenda, but also a wish to approach citizens and organizations through new dialogue programs and engagement processes. The GO has become more professionalized in managing opinion and promote political issues by the use of increasingly indirect and informal means. I will argue later on that the GO is "PR-ized", where indirect, informal and mundane forms of communication practices (as opposed to more direct forms of news management) have taken on a much more important role. It is for this reason that I perceive the GO and government agencies' communication activities as public relations practices, as they entail more than media relations.

Swedish government agencies must be situated in this context, as communication has emerged as a new form of governing and promotional tool. Research that deals with Swedish government agencies' communication practices is to a large extent preoccupied with issues of mediatization (cf. Fredriksson & Pallas, 2014; Fredriksson, Schillemans, & Pallas, 2015). Another salient research interest concerns Swedish government agencies' branding practices. Place branding, where the branding practices of individual cities (Mukhtar-Landgren, 2008; Möllerström, 2011), regions (Falkheimer, 2004; Grundel, 2014) and the entire nation (Björner & Berg, 2012; Pamment, 2011)

[7] The appointment of a CD was a sensitive issue. It was feared that the ruling party in government would use the GO to extend its "past election campaign and, perhaps most importantly, as long-term preparation for the next election campaign" (Falasca & Nord, 2013, p. 27–28). The CD position was eventually abandoned due to criticism, yet appeared again in 2012 with a new hiring process and new appointee.

are focal research points. Of particular note for this dissertation is Fredriksson and Pallas' (2014) research on the Swedish government agencies' struggle for visibility. Their research is unique, as they surveyed the majority of Swedish government agencies' communication documents (policies, strategies, profile manuals, and so on) in order to account for how Swedish agencies perceive the role communication plays in their work. Their results suggest that agencies, to an overwhelming extent, are guided by principles of visibility – to communicate in order to strengthen their brand and shape stakeholders and the publics' perception of the agencies. A visible and known agency simplifies for agencies to see through their decisions, recruit staff and affect people in accordance with the agencies' mission. I will have reason to expand on this, as my research will in many ways support the importance of visibility for government agencies.

Summary

In this chapter I have argued that political public relations as a practice is concerned with the management of relations with external actors, as well as with that of persuasion. Public relations research in general, I argued, has ignored the persuasive dimension (Pfau & Wan, 2006). The "political vacuum" brought forth by the decorporatization of the Swedish state has enabled the Swedish GO and government agencies to develop new and professionalized communication practices and routines. Government agencies have been characterized as "ideological state apparatuses" that struggle for visibility. Previous communication and public relations research concerning the Swedish GO and government agencies have largely focused on media perspectives and branding efforts in order to account for the struggle of visibility. How government agencies manage relations and implements public relations practices in order to promote political issues are excluded research enquiries. This dissertation is not concerned with branding or the media in any strict sense. I will shift focus to what I will call the "mundane" features of public relations – how communication policies, strategies, political seminars, dialogue programs, materiality, graphs, tables and evaluations are coordinated in order to promote political issues and manage relations. However, the socio-cultural turn of public relations research stresses the need to look into public relations practices through contextual and discursive dimensions. I will thus commence the next chapter by placing government agencies' political public relations in its socio-cultural context.

3 A Socio-Cultural & Critical Approach to Political Public Relations

In the previous chapter I briefly mentioned the socio-cultural turn in public relations research. In order to understand contemporary practices of public relations it must be situated amidst the social, political and cultural circumstances that surround the practice (Hodges & Edwards, 2011, p. 7–8). The public relations practices carried out by the two government agencies in this dissertation must be placed within the overarching context of what I call *political imaginations.* I will argue that the particularly acute and salient imagination contemporary government agencies find themselves embedded in is the cathartic, emancipative and liberating idea of what innovation can do: for progress, financial growth and human and social development. Innovation issues provoke political action indiscriminately, serving as a toolbox by which future-oriented political visions, strategies and policies are crafted and networks between actors to form. Governments and political actors in power must adhere to the flow of global trends, fashions and international policy developments that promise to unveil future possibilities for progress and development (McCann, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2010). New policy tools and conceptual templates are devised and promoted by the scientific community, management consultants, policy advisors, think tanks and large and transnational organizations who claim unique knowledge of how society functions (Sum & Jessop, 2012). Following Cronehed's (2004) "grammar of hypes" and Brown's (2003) "temporality of hypes", I will argue that one particularly unique and tangible feature and consequence of political imaginaries is the possibility of new political terms, concepts and issues to develop into political hypes for brief points in time. Political public relations is a beneficial practice for circulating political issues and thereby maintaining dominant imaginaries. Through political public relations, political actors ground, devise and seek to communicate and embed their vision of dominant imaginations (Rizvi, 2006). I will begin this chapter by

describing the role of political imaginaries and political hypes. I will then proceed by discussing the role discourse theory has come to play in public relations research in order to develop some of the central terms and concepts that I will put to use in the analytical chapters.

Political imaginaries: Simplifications and transdiscursive terms

When speaking of *imagination* we tend to perceive it as something that is innate to human-beings. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the imagination is "the faculty or action of forming new ideas, or images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses". This definition connotes illusion or self-deception, as in the saying "it is only in your imagination". It can also be seen as a human capital that is used, traded or sold as part of different forms of human labor practices – perhaps then on par with human creativity. Imagination thus tends to be cast in terms of its instrumental ability.

When I speak of the political imagination, the perspective is broadened in order to account for the ways political actors seek to devise the future they wish to inhabit. This notion of the "imaginary" as a social and political construct goes back to Cornelius Castoriadis' publication *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987). The author argues that societies develop by way of imagining future situations and practices. For him, imaginaries can be seen as background frames or mental maps that help (in our case) political actors situate their work in order to ascertain, plan and potentially implement future possibilities. If we consider how complex or even "disorganized" the practice of governing is (Arts et al., 2009), political actors are forced to simplify the society of which they belong as a condition for "going on" in the world. Without simplifications that are based on what holds "true" of a complex society, it would be difficult to relate to or make decisions about the environment political actors wish to affect. Imaginaries thus include normative and performative dimensions, as they prescribe lines of action and future decisions in a society infused with often-conflicting possibilities (Jessop, 2012; Levidow & Papaioannou, 2013). As Komporozos and Fotaki (2015) note, "the process of imagination can then be seen as the generation of central representations that serve as frameworks structuring and giving meaning to actions and behaviors of social collectivities, such as organizations and societies" (p. 325). The imaginary does not purely

then belong to the mental faculty of individuals. It should rather be seen as a cultural and social resource, a "collective, social fact" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 5) that "gives us a sense of who we are, how we fit together, how we got where we are, and what we might expect from each other in carrying out collective practices that are constitutive of our way of life" (Gaonkar, 2002, p. 10; see also Jasanoff, 2015b, p. 6).

The imaginary has been criticized for being a "totalizing" theory (cf. Grant, 2014). Consequently, some researchers have sought to situate the imaginary in a more local context. Jessop and Sum (2012) have described and analyzed what they call "economic imaginaries". The economic sphere is sufficiently complex, they argue, to the extent that its entirety cannot be adequately grasped and thereby forces political actors to choose from "simplifications" that are partial and thereby privilege some activities over others in order to be able to govern the economic field constructively. There are, in other words, a myriad of economic imaginaries that compete for domination. Sum and Jessop (2013) analyzed the development of the Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE). Being closely linked with other dominant economic imaginaries (such as the information society, the creative economy or the learning economy), KBE emerged as an all-encompassing framework for how towns, cities, regions and nation states came to perceive themselves. In an attempt to tame an inherently unstable and complex environment, the formulation of new political visions, policies and strategies that are in line with the concepts and tools of the KBE became important practices for political actors. The authors trace the origins of the KBE concept from being a scientific or theoretical model in the 1960s, recontextualized into policy formats in most notably the 1990s and, more recently, emerging as what the authors call a "knowledge brand" – a conceptual framework "promoted by 'world-class' guru–academic–consultants who claim unique knowledge of the economic world" (p. 34). In order to become objects for political thought and planning, imaginaries must seek correspondence "to real material interdependencies in the actually existing economy" (p. 26). Apart from influential experts, consultants and large organizations, the authors stress the importance of international rankings and indexes as being part of the successive circulation of economic imaginaries (Jessop & Sum, 2012, p. 270). Ranking instruments provide political actors with objective tools that are mobile, and by comparing and measuring, the imaginary becomes graspable (cf. Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012). Later on in this chapter, I will label international rankings "inscription devises". These devises are particularly important for the promotion of political issues (Miller & Rose,

2012). The authors call for research that explores the discursive and material factors that comprise imaginaries.

Another "local" imaginary has been researched by Jasanoff and Kim (2009, 2013) through what they call "techno-scientific imaginaries" – the "collectively imagined forms of social life and social order reflected in the design and fulfillment of nation-specific scientific and/or technological projects" (2009, p. 120). As captured by the adjective "techno-scientific", these imaginaries "are at once products and instruments of the coproduction of science, technology, and society" (Jasanoff, 2015a, p. 19). Like Jessop and Sum, Jasanoff and Kim perceive imaginaries as instrumental for political action, as the imaginary conjured up by technology and science provokes political actors into devising future possibilities and projects. We can locate these imaginaries in their material manifestations. Barry (2001, 2006) argues that highly developed technological societies are distinguished by the creation of "technological zones": highly complex networks of practices, institutions, organizations and individuals that serve to not only protect but also to promote nations' different forms of technological development. Considering that contemporary societies are, as the author argues, "judged against a measure of intellectual productivity or property, skill or scientific or computer literacy" (Barry, 2001, p. 3), technological zones (such as large science facilities or business clusters) become focal points of political interest. A perhaps more influential theory was written by Appadurai (1990, 1996) and his use of various forms of *scapes*. Scapes are building blocks of imagination, "the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (p. 33). One such world, argues Appadurai, is the quite recent emergence and construction of *technoscapes* – the flow of technologies, their producers (engineers, scientists and other forms of high-skilled labor) and high-tech companies merging in geographical points in a process of deterritorialization. In chapter eight, for instance, I will argue that the Swedish Institute's nation branding and public relations practices can be seen as creations of technological zones or scapes, as the organization fuses different technological trajectories into single geographical points in order to translate the innovation imaginary into a concrete and graspable issue.

I argue that innovation – as a political issue – must be seen as embedded in both economic and techno-scientific imaginaries, as it simplifies how society should be organized in the post financial crisis of 2008, and promotes economic and techno-scientific projects and developments – but also transdiscursive concepts and new political issues.

Transdiscursive terms

Economic and techno-scientific imaginaries enable new political concepts, terms and ideas to form and translate across organizational boundaries. Considering that political issues which pertain to techno-scientific and economic imaginaries are becoming increasingly more complex to manage, political *demand* for recipes, ideas and conceptual tools that may control a highly turbulent society has grown (Jasanoff, 2003, p. 243). But so has the *supply* of recipes, ideas and models. Godin (2006), for instance, argues that when the knowledge-based economy became fashionable in policy circles, it heightened a global concern for science and technology policies and realigned statistics, indicators and rankings for the comparison of nations' developments. This subsequently "spawned new concepts" and generated new forms of productions of knowledge, new alignments between actors and new constellations of different areas of interest (p. 24–25). Popular conceptual tools such as the "triple helix model", "national innovation systems", "science clusters" and "hubs" became particularly acute for political actors to adhere to and include in their visions and strategies (Miettinen, 2002). I will label these concepts "transdiscursive" terms – that is, terms that can cross organizational boundaries fairly easily due to their "semantic flexibility". Transdiscursive terms are therefore "pragmatic" or "handy", due in part to their ambiguous nature (Gioia, Nag, & Corley, 2012; Giroux, 2006).

Transdiscursive terms are developed through "hybrid arenas" or "action nets" – spaces where disparate actors (in this case scientists, policy professionals and management consultants) temporarily join forces in order to promote collective actions based on mutual interests (Czarniawska, 2002, p. 3–4; Godin, 2012). But transdiscursive terms are not innocuous features of political life, as they provoke political action and even enable political ideals and norms to form. Wikhamn and Knights (2013) have argued, for instance, that conceptual models which pertain to innovation issues reflect and possibly even promote gender norms when implemented in organizations. In their research on "open innovation", the authors argue that innovation issues tend to be "bound up with masculine preoccupations", as they transform "everything to objects of control or conquest, emphasizing competition, domination, linear rationality and self-sufficiency" (p. 276). Several researchers have stressed how *competitiveness* and to some extent even *conquest* are ingrained in transdiscursive concepts. Fougère and Harding (2012) argue that innovation has evolved into a concept that is as important to nations' economies as it is to national identity constructions. Innovation has become the defining feature of modernity – failures in hosting a proper innovation climate for businesses, organizations and individuals tend to

be attributed to "backwards" or "pre-modern" nations. How innovation has come to be used and talked about in political settings thus tend to imply competitiveness between nations (p. 34–35), something that has been termed the perpetual "innovation race" (Hasu, Leitner, Solitander, & Varblane, 2012). This can be seen in how public organizations carry out their work on innovation issues. Albert and Laberge (2007) have shown how Canadian government agencies adopted the national innovation system-concept on the basis of the OECD's scientific claims. They conclude their research by stating that the concept's "perceived scientific validity leads government employees to consider its underlying economistic world-view as an unquestionable vision of the social universe. This worldview substantiates the idea that the primary goal of science and technology is to serve as a tool for business growth and economic competitiveness" (p. 226). Transdiscursive terms that pertain to innovation are grounded in "objective science" in order to provide a particular representation of reality that is possible to ascertain by a wide range of actors. Science provides the concepts with a "cultural authority" and ascertains a "scientized" worldview (p. 224). By connoting progression, novelty and development, innovation issues tend to "colonize" organizational language (Rehn & Vachhani, 2006), something I will have reason to come back to in the analytical chapters.

What I am suggesting is that innovation must be seen as a transdiscursive concept, enabled and promoted by techno-scientific and economic imaginaries. The concept is handy, pragmatic and ambiguous enough to traverse organizations and different domains. In the analytical chapters I will make reference to some of the aforementioned authors who deal with transdiscursive terms in order to bind the public relations practices of the Ministry and the Institute to its socio-cultural milieu. But innovation is more than a transdiscursive concept. Considering innovation issues saliency in the post-financial crisis of 2008, I have decided to label the transdiscursive term "innovation" a "political hype", signifying the political terrain where transdiscursive terms are implemented and promoted.

Political hypes: Assemblages, affordances, hope, disintegration

An important feature of this dissertation is its emphasis on the construction and circulation of political hypes. To perceive political issues as hypes is

unconventional. This can be attributed to the negative connotations the term – *hype* – is associated with. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, *hype* (as a noun) entails "extravagant or intensive publicity or promotion" of a particular object or idea or (as a verb) to "promote or publicize (a product or idea) intensively, often exaggerating its benefits". But a hype does not only signify manipulation or spin, but as a particular state of affairs that promote political actions. The so-called IT-hype of the late 1990s and early 20th century, for instance, tied the global discourse of ICT with national and local politicians' aspirations and desires (Czarniawska, 2002, p. 23), something that propelled and even necessitated action by the political actors themselves. *A* hype or *to* hype thus tend to connote *affective* conduct, doubtless a behavior political actors wanting to achieve legitimization on the political arena would acknowledge as a salient feature of politics (Anderson, 2007, p. 157). I am arguing that political actors are responsible for promoting transdiscursive concepts into becoming political hypes. This is apparent in the policy world. As McCann and Ward (2010) note, "policy-makers seem to be under increasing pressure to 'get a move on' – to keep up with the latest trends and 'hot' ideas that sweep into their offices, to convert those ideas into locally appropriate 'solutions' and to 'roll them out', thus making the most of them before the next trend emerges" (p. 175). Cronehed (2004) speaks of the "grammar of hype", where he argues that there are a few intertwined aspects that characterizes political hypes. I will base my framework on those aspects and intertwine other researchers for context and support.

The first and highly fundamental characteristic is the hype's possibility, or intrinsic need, to assemble various actors around the transdiscursive term in question. This *assemblage* does not entail an automatic conviction amongst the interested parties, in the same way that religious revival meetings do not necessarily create believers. According to the author, the hype itself is rendered possible as it enables the mutual construction of feasible future scenarios that do not (at least initially) necessarily correspond to matters of everyday life. Research has shown how organizations incorporate a wide range of ideas, routines and programs that are in vogue at a particular point in time in order to convey internal rationality to the outside world (Alvesson, 2011b; Czarniawska, 2002; Røvik, 2008, 2011). However, transdiscursive concepts that pertain to innovation issues can assemble actors as they claim *novelty* and portray exciting *futures* that seem possible to realize. Rehn and Vachhani (2006) argue that there is a "political dimension of even using a term such as 'innovation'", as it ascribes values of novelty that ultimately form "how economic discourse endlessly repeats and reiterates its praises" (p. 312). In my analytical chapters I will argue

that the innovation hype garnered a broad interest base, as the hype was yet to correspond to the day-to-day life of its participants and held vague but nevertheless exciting promises concerning the future.

The second important characteristic of hypes – and tied to the first – corresponds to its ability to instigate *expectations* and *hope* from soon-to-be devotees. The so-called IT-hype brought a whole range of new and previously disparate actors to center stage (IT-entrepreneurs, policy advisors, experts and technicians) and thus new political ventures were made into possible projects – the creation of "Information Cities", IT-conferences and new public organizations such as IT-commissions (Ilshammar, 2002). These ventures and projects were to a large extent based on the social and political management of *expectations*. According to Brown (2003), to invoke expectations in political settings "are fundamental to producing the incentives and obligations that will be necessary to mobilize the necessary resources for a particular aspiration to be realised" (p. 11). Boorstin (1987) has even characterized society as suffering from "extravagant expectations" that ultimately "create a demand for the illusions with which we deceive ourselves" (p. 5). Brown (2003, p. 10ff) is more pragmatic in his interpretation of the role of expectations play in society. He argues that there are at least two dimensions that pertain to how political expectations are nested in and enable the development of hypes. First, expectations are *temporal*, meaning that expectations vary in degree and propensity according to the hypes' ability to be portrayed as novel. In other words, expectations are embedded in "memories of past futures" – hypes must be promoted as if constituting a break from previous state of affairs. This has implications, he argues, as the intensity of expectations and claimed novelty are instrumental for how new political networks and practices become embedded in the hype's promises. Temporal expectations are thus future-orientated, as they claim to substitute or replace an existing state of affairs in order to improve those very conditions. Second, there is a *spatial* side to expectations, meaning that expectations will be construed and interpreted differently for the many groups, individuals or organizations involved – including policy makers, researchers and citizens who become embedded in the hype's networks. He labels this the "knowledge economy of expectations", as the hypes nest in hopes and aspirations of often highly influential actors that seek to steer the hype in certain directions.

However, collapse is inevitable. Like any trend or fashion, what was once radiant becomes daft and mundane once the hype confronts the everydayness of social life. There is, according to Cronehed (2004), always a discrepancy between the devotees' expectations on the one hand, and the realizations of

those expectations on the other, as hypes cannot include or satisfy all possible parties of interest. This has implications for the actors involved in the hype's distribution. Brown (2003) puts this eloquently:

> On the one hand, we accept that expectations are constitutive and performative and that hype plays a fundamentally important role in organizing our future present/s. On the other hand, hype is a source of 'overshoot', ultimately damaging credibilities and reputations. Communities of promise are constantly presented with the difficulty of judging the veracity of future claims. And we engage with these processes of judging whilst knowing that things rarely turn out as expected (p. 17).

Hypes can thus damage credibility and reputations for organizations embedded in its promises. Czarniawska (2002) reasons in similar terms. "Fashionable" terms that operate in municipal organizations struggle against becoming institutions or customs. Once institutionalized, other fashionable terms or recipes take their place (p. 135). The third and final characteristic thus entails death (or at least transformation) of the hype, an aspect I label *disintegration.*

Mobilization, assemblages, novelty, futures, expectations and disintegration are some of the forces and factors that underpin political hypes. To summarize, I define a political hype as the construction and/or promotion of a (supposedly) novel idea that can mobilize a wide range of different actors and enables or at least promises a future societal change for the benefit of certain actors and interests over a finite period of time. It is important to mention that political hypes do not necessarily entail deceit or deception as perhaps the popular notion of the term would have it. In our case, for instance, innovation may or may not provoke a betterment of society, i.e. it may or may not contain true assumptions. But the leap from being a fairly commonplace political issue to that of a unique political hype arises when its proportions are unevenly distributed in relation to previous time periods. In the following section I will look into what political public relations entails for political hypes.

Political hypes: Public relations' role

In the previous chapter I argued that an increasingly more informal political culture, one that is comprised of personal networks and indirect means of political decision-making, has emerged in Sweden where communication and public relations constitutes a new form of governing tool for government agencies (Gelders & Ihlen, 2010; Rothstein & Vahlne Westerhäll, 2005). The

culture of political elites has shifted from the belief in a strong Swedish state to a paradigmatic change that has rendered previous modes of rational planning and governing outdated (in chapter two I referred to this as the decorporatization of the Swedish state). From a governmental point of view, government agencies need to adhere to citizens and other national/local actors while at the same time monitoring policy movements, trends and transdiscursive terms that operate on a globalized/Europeanized scale, enabling the rise of what some authors have labeled "disoriented" governments (Arts et al., 2009). This shift has been captured by ways of actively seeking (as opposed to commanding) to form relations and networks with organizations and citizens, a transition from a hierarchical mode of government to the social act of governance together with and for the public, individuals and organizations (Bell & Hindmoor, 2009; Jacobsson & Sundström, 2006).

This necessitates a range of different tools and calculations in order for political actors to govern. The history of political public relations practice provides examples of how governments and their agencies have sought to form strong bonds with external actors through various communicative means (L'Etang, 1998; Moloney, 2006). However, to mold global ideas, policies, strategies, fashions, trends and programs into localized formats requires not only political management skill and expertise (Czarniawska, 2002), but also the ability to persuade constituents, citizens and stakeholders of their relevance (Pieczka & Escobar, 2013). Government agencies need communication expertise in order drive home their point, establish networks and claim legitimacy (Motion & Leitch, 2009b). Yet the divide between the creations of complex, narrow and technical political projects on the one hand, and the actors' often-limited knowledge of such developments is problematic. Fischer (2009) takes policy development as an example in order to highlight this:

> Given the technical and social complexity of most contemporary policy issues, a significant degree of competence is required of citizens and their politicians to participate meaningfully in policy discussions. If they are unable to understand and make intelligent judgments on the issues […] this poses a worrisome problem. It is scarcely a new question, but it is all the more pressing in the 'age of expertise' (p. 29).

Communication operates as a vehicle to make political matters intelligible. An understanding of communication practice in the formation of relationships has become a must-have insight for contemporary governments and public administrations. In the "age of expertise" political organizations hire project leaders, meeting coordinators, public relations consultants, graphic designers,

web designers, press agents, event and media managers in order to propagate their point of view and facilitate the maintenance of relationships with external actors. I have labeled this the "communicative turn" of government agencies. In order to translate transdiscursive concepts into meaningful practice and language, to calculate and implement communication and public relations practices is required. In order to grasp these political issues and movements emerge, I believe a socio-cultural framework of public relations is productive. This will highlight discourses, context and the material and symbolic dimensions of political public relations practices.

A socio-cultural perspective on political public relations: Discourse, governmentality, symbols

The socio-cultural approach to public relations is an upshot of the cultural turn in communication studies that emerged within the social sciences in the 1980s – an increased fusion of culture studies with other research fields, communication studies included (Calhoun & Sennett, 2007, p. 3). Communication's link to culture first appeared in James Carey's publication *Communication as culture*, originally published in 1989. Carey's most important contribution to the field of communication studies was the author's insistence on perceiving communication as a means by which society and culture is disclosed as opposed to regarding it as a mere transmission technique. In other words, through communication we can perceive a society – or culture – of which it is part. Through language, symbols, materials, artifacts, rituals, film, images and other communicative means "reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed" (Carey, 1989/2009, p. 23). One implication of such a position is the emphasis put on symbolic forms in constructing meaning. This is not an innocent statement, as it entails that "reality is brought into existence, is produced, by communication – by, in short, the construction, apprehension, and utilization of symbolic forms" (p. 25). A similar position was later taken by John B. Thompson (1995), who argued that communication, on a fundamental level, concerns most notably two aspects, "both the meaningful character of symbolic forms *and* with their societal contextualization" (p. 10, author's italics). Communication cannot rid itself of the social or cultural context in which it is embedded.

Mickey (2003) was arguably one of the first to connect cultural studies with public relations research. In *Deconstructing Public Relations*, he investigates "cultural products" through a critical and cultural lens – health campaigns, advertisements, TV-shows, art exhibitions, and so on – and argues that public relations practice must be seen as a power struggle for meaning. Edwards and Hodges (2011) have been proponents of this recent critical movement in public relations research. In their edited volume, *Public Relations, Society & Culture* (arguably the first collection of essays that seek to intertwine notions of culture with public relations theory and practice), there are chapters that cover a wide range of topics on the symbolic, narrative, discursive and material dimensions of public relations. Their analytical focus is on the "locus of transactions that produce emergent social and cultural meanings" (p. 4) and the contingent factors that underpin such "transactions". The book's chapters are diverse and contain enquiries into storytelling, semiotics, diversity management and anthropological perspectives on public relations. In other words, the socio-cultural turn must be seen as a bricolage of perspectives, methodologies and interests that are joined together in order to question the functional dogma of public relations research and furthermore, as a way to look into what public relations practices entail for the production of culture and meaning in contemporary societies. According to the authors, the socio-cultural turn entails a study of the discourse, context and the profession of public relations. In this dissertation, I will focus on discourses and context. I will include notions of governmentality in order to document this, as I believe it is a productive lens for perceiving how public relations practices are reflected on and implemented. Public relations' relation to discourse and governmentality will be addressed in the next section. The symbolic and material dimension of political public relations will be handled in the final section of this chapter.

Political public relations: Discourse & governmentality

In this dissertation, I will make use of some conceptual lenses and concepts developed in large part by Michel Foucault, who in his highly eclectic body of work acquired and developed a range of different lenses and methodological tools suitable for various research programs. Although he explicitly shied away from categorizing his own work, he has been placed in the post-structuralist camp and to some extent that of the critical tradition (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 367). It is, in other words, difficult to neatly compartmentalize his work, but nevertheless common to speak of three periods in Foucault's work.

The archeological period was marked by, to some extent, "normal" historical research (Bergström & Boréus, 2005, p. 310), as it sought to investigate how scientific knowledge and truth had, through historical events and ruptures, come to occupy privileged positions in institutional settings throughout society (Foucault, 1969/2011). The genealogical period differs, as it does not entail an analysis of historical ruptures or specific historical events, but an analysis of the "history of the present", or the tracing of how current practices and events have come to emerge as plausible realizations (Foucault, 1976/1990). If the archeological period was more concerned with language and focused on highly specific discursive formations, the genealogical period was preoccupied with the emergence of power manifestations and their implications for the "creation" of individuals and different "subject positions". Lastly, the governmentality period shifted focus to the governing of subjects. Attention is paid to how political power is practiced, thought of and strategically implemented by way of indirect techniques and control (Foucault, 1993). In this dissertation, I am interested in some rather specific (albeit nuanced) conceptual lenses that Foucault advanced throughout his three periods. I thereby make no claim in to trying to painstakingly fit myself into any of the three periods. Some researchers claim that that is not the point (Åkerstrøm Andersen, 2003). Additionally, many researchers appear to discuss the different periods using the same forms of language and arguments. It is more useful, I believe, to perceive his work as an "oeuvre" or toolbox as Motion and Leitch (2007) put it. I will come back to the conceptual lenses soon, but first let me outline how public relations research has dealt with discourse theory.

Humble beginnings

Discursive perspectives on public relations practice have recently emerged as a critical complement to an otherwise quite functionalist research discipline (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 165). It is interesting to note that this multilayered perspective has been advanced and propagated by just a few researchers. The first publication that sought to link discourse explicitly with that of public relations practice was Motion and Leitch's (1996) article *A Discursive Perspective from New Zealand: Another worldview*[8]. The authors were interested in how public relations practitioners were part and parcel of political struggles for truth – or discursive struggles. By drawing on Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, they argued that discursive and social

[8] This is in fact claimed by the authors themselves in the Encyclopedia of Public Relations (Motion & Leitch, 2013).

transformations could be achieved politically (and thereby analyzed) through three steps – (1) research (or environmental scanning) into public attitudes of the social, (2) the implementation of public relations campaigns and (3) the perpetual training of those employees or workers in need of implementing the stated change. The authors found support to claim that public relations practitioners were part of this "chain" of discursive transformation in a political public relations campaign in New Zealand, enabling the researchers to label the practitioners "discourse technologists". Two years later, Leitch and Roper (1998) included and expanded on the term discourse technologists in their publication *Genre colonization as a strategy.* The authors analyzed a sensitive political public relations campaign in New Zealand through a conceptual lens they called "discourse colonization", or in other words, how discourses struggle for saliency and power over other discourses in order to promote particular social realities. Considering the recent "critical turn" that has pervaded public relations research in recent years, these early articles' critical disposition can be considered rather modest, though alternative, take on public relations, but in 1996 and 1998 such claims were arguably quite provocative as they contrasted sharply with the pervasive Excellence project. Almost twenty years later, in the *Critical Handbook of Public Relations*, the authors Motion and Leitch (2015) reflect on their initial critical and discursive approach as follows:

> There really was no choice – from the outset of our academic careers we had to seek out alternative explanatory concepts and research methods to theorize public relations. From our political perspectives, a very different approach as called for that would open up the field of public relations scholarship and practice for critique. Although the Excellence project offered an idealized view of public relations and normative insights for best practice, it did not resonate with the more complicated, pluralistic practices that we had observed and engaged in (p. 142).

According to the authors, their reasoning for the application and exploration of other perspectives was political. In the last decade or so, discursive perspectives on public relations have, if not down-right flourished, at least matured and have thus been applicable to a number of different contexts by different public relations researchers, making it less of a political challenge. But acceptance for this alternative way of perceiving public relations emerged slowly, as it would take a few years before other researchers began experimenting with discursive perspectives. In fact, prior to 2005, there was not much movement in terms of expanding on discursive perspectives on public relations. Three exceptions are, however, of interest. In *Dressing for battle in the new economy*, Weaver (2001)

drew on the previous authors work in order to discuss the public relations practitioners' role "in the production of culture", their role in reproducing neo-liberal values in the "new economy" and the silencing of oppositional voices. Weaver's article is not, however, a publication that deals explicitly with discourse theory but should rather be seen as a discussion paper that very briefly invokes discourse theory as an alternative perspective. Another publication was Holtzhausen's (2000) initial work on postmodern perspectives entitled *Postmodern values in public relations*. The article is not, like Weaver's, an explicit take on discourse theory, as the author only briefly mentions Foucault's perception of power. Motion's (2000) *Personal public relations* was arguably the first to describe, discuss and apply Foucault's notion of subjectivity and identity-work on a finite public relations case study. She creates an analytical framework through Foucault's notion of "technologies of self" in order to interpret and account for how public relations practitioners and political actors ascribe particular meanings to themselves, their work and identity.

Onwards and upwards

As we can see, attempts to fuse discourse theory with public relations practices was until roughly 2005 rather scant and scattered and taken up by individual researchers with similar interests and purposes. L'Etang (2005a) even argued that there had been "a major discursive turn in the field" (p. 522). Around 2005, more research and articles that dealt explicitly with discursive perspectives on public relations emerged. The journal Public Relations Review, for instance, had a special issue they entitled *Tracking trends: Peripheral visions and public relations,* where researchers were asked to submit papers on "their idea of edge-happening public relations" (McKie & Munshi, 2005, p. 453). A central article in this journal that concerned the advancement of discursive perspectives on public relations was undoubtedly Motion's (2005) *Participative public relations*. The article was the first published to explicitly describe, discuss and analyze a finite public relations case study based purely on Foucauldian concepts. The article made clear use of Foucault's notion of "problematization" and his understanding of power – terms and conceptual lenses that have since then become highly salient within public relations research engaged with Foucault's body of work. The very same year, Motion and Weaver (2005) published *A Discourse Perspective for Critical Public Relations Research* where they introduced new discursive and Foucauldian lenses such as "regimes of truth", expanded on Foucault's notion of power in public relations and discussed the relevance of context in their analysis of a political public relations campaigns. Ever since then, the public relations research field has been flooded with various

takes on discourse and its relation to public relations practice. However, discursive perspectives (Foucauldian, in particular) were still considered alternative or fringe public relations research, so much so that Bentele and Wehmeier wrote in 2007 that "given the functional and positivist dominance in PR research, Foucault is rarely used in public relations theory building" (Bentele & Wehmeier, 2007, p. 296). Granted that it was at least relatively rare at the time of their writing, and furthermore that research has shown that critical research does not make too much of a splash in the overall body of public relations research (cf. Meadows & Meadows Iii, 2014), it could nevertheless be argued that the discursive perspectives has emerged as one of the most used perspectives in the critical turn of public relations research. Aside from a number of articles, major publications include L'Etang and Piezcka's (2006) *Public Relations: Critical Debates and Contemporary Practice*, Motion and Leitch's (2009) *On Foucault* in *Public Relations and Social Theory* and the pivotal *Handbook of Critical Public Relations* included a chapter on critical discourse analysis by Motion and Leitch (2015).

As we can see, from the humble beginnings of the late 1990s, to the highly influential publications that have emerged in the last decade or so, discursive perspectives on public relations have come to acquire a rather solid standing within the critical turn of public relations research – more or less through the encouragement of certain individual researchers. The fairly recent interest in discourse within public relations research is not particularly peculiar, as I believe it is a highly fruitful perspective to apply in public relations research. Let me now turn to some of the key conceptual lenses that have saturated discursive perspectives on public relations research and discuss my own take on their use and potential. From a Foucauldian perspective, Motion and Leitch's (2007) article *A toolbox for public relations: The oeuvre of Michel Foucault* is arguably the most cited and referenced article within public relations research. I will use this together with the aforementioned chapter *On Foucault* as a springboard by which to discuss the connection between public relations and Foucault. I am particularly interested in discourse production, power/knowledge, regimes of truth and governmentality. I will deal with these notions in the remainder of this section.

Central concepts and terms

A useful starting point is to define the term "discourse". On a very fundamental level, the term discourse for Foucault (1969/2011) signifies "a certain way of speaking" (p. 193). Bergström and Boréus (2005) perceive this as the "narrow" definition of discourse, where discourse (perhaps most notably in popular

jargon) can also be interpreted as a collection of texts or utterances (p. 307). For Foucault (1976/1990), the term discourse is broader and more nuanced, and could be described as a "system of regulation" that enables the emergence of regular and systematic expressions, texts and language systems to unfold. Even though he perceived language and the relation between statements as proper analytical enquiries, this does not suggest that language is innocent in any shape or form. Discourses should rather be seen as rule-bundles that guide and steer perceptions, actions and practices and thereby come to legitimize certain norms, practices and subject positions at the expense of alternative ways of doing or seeing things (Foucault, 1991, p. 56). This is what Motion and Leitch (2009) have in mind when they argue that discourses "form the objects of which they spoke" (p. 86). The creation of, for instance, different "subject positions" or "professional identities" through the production and transformation of discourse has been of interest to public relations researchers in particular (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). Place and Vardeman-Winter (2013) studied what hegemonic discourses public relations professionals were embedded in in order to describe and analyze how their professional identities were made into legitimate roles that the practitioners could occupy in their respective organization. They found that the public relations industry is a site permeated by power dynamics and practitioners' roles and identities in many ways shift in order to comply with expected industry standards. However, discourses produce more than *mere* "identity work". Foucault was interested in analyzing the creation and subsequent legitimization of entire scientific disciplines. In his analysis of the emergence of psychiatry, for instance, Foucault (1961/2010) argued that this new form of regulative practice emerged through the creation of institutions (mental hospitals, as an example) that in and of themselves urged new forms of discursive practices – a new science (psychology), new subject positions (normal, abnormal) and professional identities (doctors, psychiatrists) to emerge. In public relations research, the production and transformation of discourses tend to signify an *intent* to create new forms of meanings and understanding in society – practices that are not innocent but create and mutually reinforce certain ways of seeing or doing. I alluded to this previously when I referred to public relations practitioners as "discourse technologists". Discourses are thus not purely textual, language-based or only involved with the creation of norms and identities. Discourses are also material and practical, as they enable not only norms or identities but practices, institutions and organizations to form and become legitimate. Foucault (1980) states this very clearly in, for instance, *Two Lectures* in the *Power/Knowledge* publication:

> What I mean is this: in a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of discourse (p. 93).

In other words, discourses are what enable new relations (between organizations, institutions and individuals) to form and hold. There is thus an inherent power dimension that needs to be explored, one in which political organizations writ large are part and parcel. According to the discursive approach to public relations, the task for the researcher is to draw attention to how particular discourses become privileged over others, the communicative means by which this is made possible and the political implications this has for individuals, organizations and society as a whole. For instance, in chapter six, I will show how the transformation of communication policies within the Swedish Government Offices (GO) enabled and legitimized new forms of public relations practices by individual Ministries.

An important conceptual lens that has sought to capture the emergence and "foothold" of discourses and their implications for societies, organizations and individuals is Foucault's often-repeated notion: power/knowledge. The term signifies an interest in what power is, how it works and its implications for individuals and societies in general. How power works through public relations is a highly relevant, yet fairly poorly developed area within public relations research (Edwards, 2006). Foucault breaks with traditional conceptualizations of power within the social sciences on at least three accounts. First of all, Foucault does not perceive power as being intrinsic to individual institutions, organizations or people. Power is thus not fixed and has no real essence, and should not be analyzed as an isolated event or as a product of leadership qualities, hierarchies, legal rights, and so on (Alvesson, 1996, p. 96). As opposed to traditional conceptualizations that regard power as something that inhabits individual people, corporations or even entire states, Foucault agues that power should rather be seen and studied with attention to all those relations existing within and between (if translated into public relations research) organizations, individuals and practices which together form a network of more or less stable conditions that enable the use of power, control and discourse transformation. Research into the power dynamics of public relations should therefore pay attention to the practical bearings (or their "microphysics" or "micro-politics" of power, as he calls it) – the myriad "dispositions, maneuvers, tactics, techniques and functionings" that render relations into stable constructions (Foucault, 1975/2003). In other words, it calls for the researcher to describe and analyze

the thorough calculation and the implementation of all those events, strategies and plans that organizations set in motion in order to create and maintain relations. In chapter six, seven and eight, this is a central concern, as I will discuss the practices of the Ministry and Institute from a Foucauldian and relational perspective.

Considering public relations research's inherent interest in developing a "relationship identity" within the social sciences (Coombs & Holladay, 2015), this is undoubtedly suitable for a public relations research program. However, there is a critical side to this power concept, one that breaks with traditional understandings of what relations are in public relations research and "conventional" understandings of power. The second claim about power is concerned with its relation to *knowledge*. In very blunt terms, Foucault (1980) states that "the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (p. 52). He also elaborates on this as early as in *Discipline and Punishment* (Foucault, 1975/2003):

> [P]ower produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (p. 23).

This can both be seen as an epistemological claim (in the sense that knowledge is not something that is "discovered", but embedded in power relations) *and* a statement on how power in contemporary societies operates. Power is thus not only relational, but receives its significance, legitimacy and meaning through claims to and invocations of knowledge. In Foucault's (1961/2010) *Madness and Civilization* we can see how the emergence of the new science of psychology came to legitimize the creation of new and highly intertwined relations between those of hospitals, doctors, patients, political actors and social services. By invoking regulated and highly structured forms of knowing produced through objectively describing, measuring and evaluating bodies and health, new forms of institutions and governing organizations worked in unison to crystallize new practices almost entirely based on premises of truth. Similarly, the creation of contemporary welfare states in modern societies can be traced to the development (and subsequent implementation) of the human sciences in the hands of policy makers and politicians (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 375). In other words, "[p]ower produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" (p. 194).

If we go beyond the development of such broad enterprises as the creation of entire scientific disciplines, it is possible to translate the power/knowledge tool into "minor", or more localized instances. Experts (be they in science, in politics or in corporate settings) translate and make use of knowledge through the promotion of statements, texts and images with regards to their specialized areas for different purposes and ends. We can therefore talk of local "regimes of truth" as upshots from the resonance of power/knowledge. Bourne (2013a) argues that this is indeed a practice that public relations practitioners are engaged in. She argues that "by first establishing and then regularly repeating these statements wherever possible, and by constantly measuring, analyzing, and defining aspects of their field, experts create regimes of truth governed by discursive rules of their field" (p. 676). Bourne (2013b) applied this on a case-study and analyzed how *trust* in the financial market is enabled by and embedded in the expert systems and knowledge developed by public relations practitioners that worked for large financial firms in the UK. According to her, the practitioners could be interpreted as "trust intermediaries" that navigate between the expert role and the role of "selling" the financial market to policymakers and the public in general. The task for the researcher is therefore to analyze how the repeatability of statements establish truth, the practices these aspects invoke and whose interests are acknowledged by the popularizing of certain regimes of truth.

This last point invokes the third shift in Foucault's understanding of power, as it entails the "productive" force of power. Through his historical analysis, he argues that contemporary and Western societies are marked not by discipline and control by a central institution or governing body, but by power/knowledge relations that through highly informal and indirect means work *on* and *through* subjects. In Foucault's governmentality period, he became more interested in all those fine-grained tools and methods that authorities make use of in order to "get to know" citizens (in the case of politics) or employees (in the case of organizations) in highly advanced liberal societies. Due to Foucault's death in 1984, he did not complete a specific research program on how to study governmentality – what he had implied with governmentality comes from a series of lectures he gave on the subject (Gordon, Miller, & Burchell, 1991; Rose, O'Malley, & Valverde, 2006). In a lecture entitled *Governmentality,* Foucault (1978/1991) argues that it is possible to find historical shifts in the manner of how authorities have practiced the "art of governing" – from sovereign power aimed at implementing judicial or police means of control to a new, more discrete, form of power that exercises control by way of finding "fresh outlets" where the "problem of population" could be

localized and properly understood (p. 98–99). In other words, the "population" became the focal point of government, and through the term governmentality Foucault "sought to draw attention to all those attempts to know and govern the wealth, health and happiness of populations" (Rose & Miller, 2010, p. 272). Dean (2010) argues that governmentality today can be seen and analyzed through how authorities use a multiplicity of organizations, spaces and individuals in order to govern populations – what he calls the "conduct of conduct". According to him, an analysis of how governing works in contemporary liberal societies entails investigations into, for instance, the means of calculation by which governing is made possible, the relations that are formed, the forms of knowledge and techniques employed, the ends sought and its outcomes and consequences (p. 17–18).

A number of researchers have been instrumental in further developing his approach – in particular his ideas on those specific techniques and methods governments use to locate and understand a population in order to be able to govern accordingly. Miller and Rose are in the forefront of this approach. Much like Dean, they argue that governing today "is exercised today through a profusion of shifting alliances between diverse authorities in projects to govern a multitude of facets of economic activity, social life and individual conduct" (Rose & Miller, 2010). In their *Governing the Present* (2008), the authors analyze governmentality on a range of different political "projects": regulations in the national economy and the welfare state, consumer campaigns by government organizations, the development and profusion of therapeutic authority in the UK, to mention a few examples. A fundamental disposition in their work is that governing is a "relational" project, a phenomenon they seek to capture by using the term *acting-at-a-distance* (they borrowed this term from French sociologist Bruno Latour). By acting at a distance, the authors argue, "centers of calculations" emerge which could lead or direct persons or processes that are distant from it – the enquiry is thus concerned with how relations are formed between and within the multiplicity of organizations that in a number of ways seek to realize political projects. This is particularly crucial in advanced liberal societies, as authorities are confronted with, on the one hand, citizens equipped with rights that must not be violated and, on the other, lacking knowledge about how to exercise sovereign will onto a population (Rose & Miller, 2010, p. 277-278). As I will show in the analytical chapters, communication tools and public relations practices have emerged as a solution to this very problem. Governmentality is interested in all those practical tools that organizations implement in order solve societal issues. In the following I

will mention a few particular aspects that I believe are suitable for public relations research interested in governmentality.

First of all, governmentality should be seen as a *problematizing* activity, meaning that research must look into instances where governing was called upon in order to fix some problem outside of its own domain. Second of all, the notion *political rationality* is central to governmentality studies – a conceptual tool that signifies all the thoughts, ideas, knowledge, expertise or rationality that are deployed in order to combat the political problem in question. Third, governmentality has a *discursive* character, meaning that in order to perceive how governmentality operates, the researcher must pay attention to language. This entails paying attention to the role (for instance) policies, statistics, strategies and presentations play in "rendering a realm into discourse as a knowable, calculable and administrable object" (p. 30). The authors call these tools and practices "inscription devises" or "intellectual technologies", tools that make reality amenable for discussion, strategizing and – consequently – practical action. Fourth, governmentality is concerned with intervention. The authors thus call for research into what they term "technologies of government", or those practices which seek to act upon the domains of reality and carve out spaces for action. Miller and Rose emphasizes that this must be placed and analyzed in the humble, the mundane or the "micro-physics" of power I alluded to earlier. Sixth, as I alluded to previously, governmentality works on the freedom of subjects, their passions and happiness, as opposed to governing through coercion.

Governmentality in public relations research is, however, non-existent – despite, I believe, fitting rather well with public relations research[9]. Before I finish this chapter, I will briefly discuss symbols and their use in public relations practice, as I will invoke their role in the innovation hype in the analytical chapters (most notably in chapter eight).

Political public relations: Symbols and materiality

Symbols in politics are strategic devises which frame reality in certain ways and enable the formation of networks to emerge. Contemporary research on public relations has to a large extent ignored the production of symbols for the creation or maintenance of "meaning" in society. We have to go back to Bernays in

[9] Motion and Leitch (2009) reflect on governmentality and its connection with public relations in *On Foucault* but purely on a theoretical level.

order to find perspectives on symbols' importance for public relations practice. In his publication *Public Relations*, for instance, Bernays (1952/2012) notes:

> A public relations campaign must also reckon with the power of symbols. A symbol may be defined as a shortcut to understanding and to action. It is the currency of propaganda. It is a word or a picture… The acceptance of a symbol is emotional and expresses an associative mental process stemming from familiarity. That symbols must be carefully chosen it self-evident. In publicizing a vast corporation, the symbol may be a single person at the head of the department, it may be a slogan describing the product, or it may be a single department, that performs a specific public service (p. 166).

Albeit written in rather abstract terms, leaving the reader confused as to what symbols are (a person, a department, a word or all of the above?), Bernays' understanding of symbols being "a shortcut to understanding and to action" is relevant. In other publications, Bernays argues along similar lines. In *The Marketing of National Policies: A Study of War Propaganda,* from as early as 1942, Bernays acknowledges the symbolic power that is in the hands of political actors. In the article, Bernays stresses that public opinion (or the "powerful common man" as he calls it) can be swayed more easily in contemporary societies due to technological developments (he mentions the "talking movie" and the radio). In other words:

> This powerful common man could be influenced by symbols, by words, pictures and actions. Appeals could be made to his prejudices, his loves and his hates, to his unfulfilled desires. Manipulation of symbols by unscrupulous leaders against a background of post-war psychological and economic uncertainty, led millions to follow new leaders and ideologies in the 'twenties and 'thirties (Edward L. Bernays, 1942, p. 240).

Bernays' take on symbols is by and large psychological, as he invokes desires, people's fears and love as instigators of individual drives (not a particularly strange disposition considering Freud and Jung's then recent "discoveries"). But the "psychologism" that is invoked by Bernays invokes a transmission perspective on communication and leads to more questions than answers. A notable exception in public relations research is Saxer's (1993) *Public Relations and Symbolic Politics*. By drawing on symbolic interactionism, the author explores the generation of symbols in the production of meaning. According him, "[s]ymbolic politics and public relations serve as communication strategies that draw attention to certain meanings in the political public as well as in other groups of the public, defining collective relevance structures in this way. Their

main instruments in this process are the use and reinterpretation for their purposes of symbols already in circulation and the introduction of new symbols" (p. 134). Even though Saxer does not clearly define what a symbol is, he refers to symbols as "instruments of thinking", whereas the principal sphere where political symbols are disseminated to the public by public relations practitioners is the mass media[10]. In other words, Saxer argues that public relations practice incorporate and disseminates symbols for the advancement of particular social, cultural or political positions and meanings.

Dandridge, Mitroff and Joyce's (1980) take on symbolism can be transferred to practices of public relations. According to their view, "organizational symbolism" refers to all those expressions used by organizations members to reveal certain fundamental aspects of what the organization *is*. Through talking of an organization, for instance, we invoke symbols by expressive means. Such expressions can take multiple forms. The authors point to symbols as manifested through *text* (myths, stories, and jokes), *actions* (rituals, ceremonies) and *materialities* (as in organizational logos). Symbols are not fixed and permanent, but unstable, as they are negotiated by organizational members. Gustafsson (1998), who draws on the aforementioned authors, argues that the intertwinement of symbolic texts, actions and materiality is a powerful tool in the construction of meaning. Certain texts might function as a proper communication tool in isolated settings (in the case of a press release, for instance). But it is when all three are intertwined, he argues, that symbols are most "felt". Consider large propaganda apparatuses of dictatorships and their appeals to reason and emotion through texts (leaflets), action (military ceremonies) and materialities (architecture). In the chapter on the Swedish Institute's public relations practices (chapter eight), similar appeals are made by the organization, but through "softer" communication devises: the creation of seminars (action), exhibitions (materiality) and text (promotional brochures and websites), all embedded in the Institute's symbolic universe. Therefore, when I speak of symbolic representation in this dissertation, I refer to intentional communication devices that manifest themselves through text, action and materiality and in certain ways seek to depict or steer reality in some way as they perform, create and maintain culture and meaning in society. The task of the public relations researcher is to analyze how communicative symbols are produced and made manifest to a public, the reasons for their strategic usage and how the political practitioners make use of symbolic representation in

[10] As Saxer's article was published in 1993, the author's usage of the concept media was limited to the printing press, TV and radio.

forming relations with stakeholders. As we will see in the analytical chapters, this technique is critical, as the employees at the Institute and Ministry need to handle a large set of different relations (social as well as material) in order to produce stable *meanings* and *representations* of innovation.

Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the socio-cultural framework. I began by stating that the socio-cultural turn commences at the level of context. I have placed the political imaginary as being the innovation hype's societal context. Imaginaries, I argued, pave the way for large transdiscursive terms to become global. Political hypes were also described, and should be seen as outcomes of political imaginaries. I also wrote of public relations' relation to discourse, governmentality, symbols and materiality. I argued that these tools are fruitful lenses for analyzing the Ministry and the Institute's communication practices that were embedded in and promoted the innovation hype. I will now discuss in more detail the methodology of this dissertation – how I approached the organizations, how I gathered my empirical material and later on analyzed the empirical material.

4 Methods and empirical material

Spoken broadly, "methodology defines how one will go about studying any phenomenon" (Silverman, 2011, p. 53). This can be seen as a *process* the researcher is engaged in and where he or she makes deliberate choices concerning particular methods and later on applies them to the social world. These choices also reflect *pre-assumptions* about the nature of the social phenomenon under investigation. How do we know that the methods used do in fact generate empirical material that shines light on the phenomenon in question? In this chapter I will discuss these aspects: the particular methods used, my reasons for their having been chosen, their potential shortcomings and some of their ontological and epistemological assumptions.

My own academic background and research interests reflect the choices made throughout this entire research project. Considering my wish to explore how the phenomenon under investigation is constructed socially, the discourses it is composed of and to reveal the local contingencies, the choice of a qualitative research design is not peculiar (Silverman, 2011, p. 17). Considering my application of and interest in critical perspectives, the qualitative approach is accentuated. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the overall design of my research and implementation. It is crucial to point out that the research process itself was seldom linear in any strict sense. Part of the research process (perhaps particularly within qualitative research) rests on the researcher's ability to jump between different modes of production. This should not to be considered a flaw in the process but part and parcel of what makes research a creative project. Social life is messy, and the researcher makes sense of it accordingly and continually. Below I will demonstrate below the construction and implementation of the research design as one following a fairly linear process: from my deliberations on selecting organizations and interviewees, via the particular methods evaluated and used and how I came to analyze the empirical material the methods gathered.

A multiple case study: Selection process

To approach a field is a task marked by uncertainty. You encounter people and situations that you most likely know little of. Greater experience of, and familiarity with, the field and its people is an advantage. In my case I had little knowledge or experience of the field itself, despite a few months working at the innovation department at Region Skåne prior to starting my dissertation. This gave me some prior knowledge of the issues and key actors within the field at large. However, the political landscape is a vast and complex network composed of a multitude of private and public organizations and individuals with intricate ties to each other based on interests, ideologies and resources. To single out specific actors within this landscape was a complex process. One of the first steps in this process was to conduct so-called *informant* interviews. These are less structured, perhaps even more informal and open-ended in comparison to interviews carried out with *actual* respondents or interviewees. Two professors at Lund University were interviewed due to their experience and knowledge of the innovation landscape in Sweden. The two project leaders of the National Innovation Strategy were interviewed in this manner as well (prior to the actual semi-structured interview I carried out with them a few months later). These informant interviews were not recorded (and therefore not transcribed). Their aim was rather to unearth clues about what the political landscape looks like, who the key political actors are and to establish some bearings in relation to moving forward with this research project. The informants were by and large enthusiastic about my research project, lending me confidence to proceed. The political landscape that I sought to engage with also became clearer as more interviews were carried out.

My wish to follow the innovation hype and the public relations practices it enabled forced me to pin down at the outset where these events occurred. By drawing on my own experiences and my informant interviews, I initially constructed a mind-map composed of several different actors that I believed to be important. These organizations differed greatly, both in terms of size and location: regional, national, private and public organizations were discussed as potential objects of enquiry. I was inspired by Creswells' (2013) notion of a *multiple case study*, a research tactic that entails "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information – e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports" (p. 74). Multiple case studies rest on a

constructivist paradigm (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545) and are appropriate where the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why"-questions and when contextual conditions are pertinent to the study (Yin, 2003). This research framework recommends cases that show different perspectives on the issue at hand in order to open up varying interpretations of the social phenomenon in question. The Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications was in the process of creating the National Innovation Strategy (NIS) during the same time the Swedish Institute was in the process of initiating the Innovative Sweden campaign. Both of these organizations satisfied some of the conditions I had hoped for and could depict different takes on political public relations in government settings. Let me make some of these conditions explicit:

- The organizations are *political*: they are to a significant degree charged with managing public resources to achieve political goals.
- The organizations share a *belief* in the importance of innovation issues and have incorporated this belief fairly recently in various forms of campaigns, seminars, dialogues, policies and strategies (practices that will be described and analyzed in the analytical chapters).
- The organizations are large and powerful enough not to be anecdotal, yet *definite* enough to be manageable for a researcher. As of 2014, the Ministry comprises over 300 employees situated within the Swedish Government Offices that, in turn, comprise over 4600 employees (Regeringskansliet, 2015). The NIS-group, on the other hand, was more fluid, as it was comprised of two full-time and several part-time employees. The Swedish Institute – during the same year – was composed of 149 employees (Svenska Institutet, 2013) whereas the number of people who were more or less directly involved with the NIS project ranged from five to eight[11].
- The organizations are situated within intricate forms of *political networks*, enabling them to forge alliances in distant places and have the potential to "conduct the conduct" of others without forms of direct surveillance (Dean, 2010; Rose & Miller, 2008). As such, their *governmental power* is apparent. As we saw in chapter three, my interest in political public relations and its

[11] It is difficult to pinpoint an exact figure here as a number of different employees worked with the NIS and the Innovative Sweden project on sporadic terms. I base these figures on the interviews I conducted with the Institute's staff that were central to the campaign.

socio-cultural environment entails going beyond the organization-centric focus that pervades much of public relations research (Edwards, 2012a). I have therefore included political organizations that are not under direct control of the Ministry or the Institute, but nevertheless serve mutual goals in a range of different ways. I will label these "collateral organizations" (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2011, p. 10).

- The organizations sought to make "innovation" into a "known object" for thought through the implementation of political public relations activities. They were using public relations practices in order to persuade.
- Daymon and Holloway (2011) argue that case studies "should have a clear beginning and end" (p. 123). The extended, yet finite, period of time in which the two organizations' concern for making innovation into a known object and the strategic communication practices that were to serve this process was fairly limited. In fact, it is possible to pinpoint the actual date on which the two projects began and were subsequently terminated.
- The organizations deliberately constructed broad target-groups in order to make innovation into a concern for a manifold of actors and to build and maintain relationships with them through their implemented public relations practices.

The organizations nevertheless differ from each other (as multiple case studies suggest), as they work within different institutional settings. The Ministry is an old, national organization, whose purpose within the Swedish Government Offices (GO) is to implement the Swedish parliament's decisions, formulate procedures on which the parliament can make decisions, inform citizens' of the parliament and the GO's work, and monitor EU and other international organizations' work (Jacobsson, 2001, p. 7-9). The Swedish Institute's main field of interest lies mostly outside national borders. The organization was created in 1945, in part as a preparation for what was believed would be a post-war chaos. The Institute derives its priorities and directives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The organization's overall purpose is to promote Sweden as a competitive nation and raise awareness of, and trust for, Sweden abroad (Glover, 2011, p. 27; Pamment, 2012, p. 330). Both organizations must thus be seen as highly complex entities, composed of a manifold of employees working on a multitude of different issues and tasks. According to Stewart (2012), multiple case studies entail "investigations of a particular phenomenon

(or group of phenomena) at a number of different sites" (p. 69). This research design thus promotes an understanding of differences between sites or organizations. By describing and analyzing how two interrelated yet unique political organizations promote similar political issues and in turn seek to form relations with external actors can shed light on the intricacies concerning the way government agencies reflect upon and implement public relations. Other political actors who worked on innovation issues that I could have studied, and who were frequently invoked in both my interviews and gathered documents, were ALMI, Vinnova, various departments at the GO, SIDA, specific departments at the OECD, the Swedish Regions and certain science hubs in Sweden. However, I chose the Ministry and Institute due to them being different in terms of where they implement public relations (national/international settings) and their ability, due in large part to financial resources, to devise large public relations practices. The organizations, I argue, are therefore suitable exemplars of how government agencies can and do carry out political public relations today. It is worth pointing out that this is not a comparative study, as I do not intend to extrapolate or come to any conclusion regarding why the organizations' practices differ (cf. Silverman, 2011, p. 376–377). Throughout this dissertation I will treat the organizations separately, since making comparisons between the two is difficult. In the final chapter of this book, however, I will synthesize the organizations' work on public relations and discuss the political implications of their public relations practices on a more general level.

Access/non-access

Society's interest in what political organizations do stem largely from their power to control, manage and implement "who gets what, when and how" (Lasswell, 1958). This position makes these organizations accountable to the public in a number of different ways. Political and public organizations usually meet these demands through transparency. Wodak (2006) has, however, written of the difficulty of gaining access to political professionals. I would like to discuss briefly how I gained access and those times when access was denied.

I approached the two organizations in the form of an outsider. I thereby had to convince the organizations and their employees of the legitimacy and value of my research. My approaches were normally instigated in the form of a phone call and a follow up e-mail consisting of a short description of my dissertation, its aims and research questions. In the early stages of my research

project I was optimistic, as I had assumed that this would suffice in gaining access. In some cases, I gained access rather easily. The entire staff at the Swedish Institute was open, generous and kind prior to, during and after the interviews had taken place as I often had to e-mail them asking for specific documents. The project leaders and communication professionals at the Ministry for Enterprise, Energy and Communications were open and highly supportive, as were the project leaders at the different embassies and consulates I interviewed via Skype. In other cases, however, access to the organizations or certain employees was denied. The Government Offices denied my enquiry to use participant observations of the organization's communication practices, a method that would have generated useful empirical material. Some employees at the GO and the Ministry also turned down my requests for interviews[12].

Empirical material

My empirical material can be ordered into the following two groups: (1) Interviews conducted with the Ministry and Institute's employees that were in charge of the National Innovation Strategy (NIS) and the Innovative Sweden campaign respectively and (2) the collection of documents such as policies, strategies, press releases, social media material and promotional material that were written produced and circulated by the two organizations in connection with the Ministry and Institute's practices.

Interviews

The interview is arguably the most dominant form of methodological "tool" within the social sciences (Bryman, 2011, p. 412-413; Silverman, 2011, p. 165-166). It has become a key resource by which researchers encounter society (Rapley, 2001, p. 303-304). I will discuss my methodological considerations that I dealt with prior to, during and after I conducted the interviews. I will

[12] The former Minister and State Secretary at the Ministry for Energy, Enterprise and Communications both turned down my requests for interviews. So did the newly appointed Communications Director at the GO and the secretary in charge of the current government's *Innovation Council*.

begin by giving an overarching and "factual" account of the interviews I carried out before I discuss methodological considerations.

After the interviews with the informants and equipped with some knowledge from previous work experiences, I considered myself somewhat in the know about the general issues that pertain to innovation in Sweden and felt I had a decent picture of who the influential actors were and their communication practices. During my research project 26 interviews were carried out. My first interview was carried out in February of 2012 and the last interview in November 2015. The interviewees were chosen on the basis of their significant role in the work of the Ministry's NIS or the Institute's Innovative Sweden campaign. My interview sample can thus be interpreted as a *strategic* sample (cf. Falkheimer, 2004, p. 117). The first interviews were conducted with the people that worked with or became involved in the Ministry's work on the NIS. The employees and actors I interviewed that had been involved with the creation of (1) the NIS were:

- Employees at the Ministry: Two project leaders, two communication professionals and the Communication Director at the department.
- Three consultants at two different private companies.
- Three "experts" at two different public organizations which had helped with the formulation of the strategy.
- The communication director and three employees that managed the strategy at Vinnova.

And (2) the Innovative Sweden campaign:

- Employees at the Swedish Institute: Two project leaders in charge of the campaign; one media relations manager, the General Director at the Institute and the organization's chief analyst.
- One architect at an architect firm responsible for building the campaign.
- Three project leaders in charge of the campaign at the embassies/consulates in Shanghai, Brasilia and New Delhi.
- Two consultants at a private firm in charge with developing a branding platform for both the Ministry and the Institute.

The interviews lasted between 40 minutes (the shortest) and 1,5 hours (the longest), and the average interview lasted for about one hour. All of the interviews took place at the offices of the interviewee in question – exceptions

are the two interviews that I carried out via Skype (I will come back to this). I have transcribed all of the interviews. I also made sure to include the interviewees' pauses, laughter, intonations or other indirect forms of communication, as these seemingly trivial instances can be insightful. I realized this was crucial, since the transcriptions were sometimes read months, or even years, after the actual interview had taken place. Had I not included these minor enunciations, it could have potentially affected my understanding of the interviews (Kvale, 2007, p. 94; Silverman, 2011, p. 366). I therefore include and mark these intonations when I quote the interviewees in the analytical chapters, in order to better substantiate the quotes. It is worth pointing out that the interviews were carried out in Swedish and if I quoted them in the analytical chapters, I translated those quotes into English. I will now present my interview guide as a basis for discussing how the interviews were developed and the material they generated. I will conclude this section by discussing some of the shortcomings of this method.

The interview guide

The interview guide I developed can be divided into so-called *grand-tour* and *mini-tour* questions (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 228-230). Grand-tour questions are general in character and are posed in order for the interviewee to reflect upon and discuss the issue in question rather freely and for the interviewer to get a good understanding of the contours of the phenomenon under investigation. They were posed in order to understand the position and background of the interviewees. But they were also posed in order to get an overarching understanding of how the organizations reflected on and discussed innovation and communication issues. This was important, as I was interested in understanding how the interviewees sought to define innovation and communication as delimited political issues and practices (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 171). Some examples of the grand-tour questions that I posed to the interviewees were: How did you become involved in the NIS/Innovative Sweden campaign? Have you had professional experience with these kinds of projects before? What has been the role of communication? How do you define innovation? Do you find innovation to be a critical issue and if so, why? These grand-tour questions were posed to all of the interviewees without any major reconfigurations.

While the *grand-tour* questions remained largely the same throughout my research, the more precise "mini-tour"-questions pertained to the particular

circumstances and nuances of the NIS and the Innovative Sweden campaign. I was particularly focused on not only how they reflected on communication issues, but also how the organizations had planned, carried out and evaluated their communication and public relations practices. The mini-tour questions were posed in order for the interviewees to give an account of how – from their point of view – their particular projects had developed. I posed questions that pertained to how they had discussed the initial stages of the projects, what they regarded as important to establish through their use of communication, issues that pertained to target groups, their particular communication practices, their evaluation of the projects and what they had learned from communication through these projects. These questions differed not only depending on the position of the interviewee, but also on how my research had progressed. As I gained knowledge of the circumstances that surrounded the NIS and the Institute, the mini-tour questions were updated in order to advance my understanding. The interview guide thus went through an evolutionary process. In some cases (particularly in the beginning of the research project) I concluded the interviews by asking the interviewees to write down the names of other individuals or organizations they perceived as important to the innovation discourse in general, generating a snowball effect (Möllerström, 2011, p. 55). This gave me a good and overall understanding of whom the organizations and individuals the Institute and Ministry worked with in order to realize their undertakings.

Why conduct interviews?

The interview guide illustrates my semi-structured approach to conducting interviews. This approach highlights the need for the interviewer to remain flexible and adapt the questions to the discussion that unfold in the interview context, rather than posing rigid and explicitly pre-formulated questions. With this in mind, what kind of empirical material can be generated from this approach?

In order to discuss this, an illustrative distinction can be made through Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 64–66), who argue that the interviewer can either take the role of a *prospector* or a *traveler*, wherein both roles come with different assumptions pertaining to the interviews' purpose and their generated material. The prospector is concerned with finding "metals" – a metaphor that captures the interviewer's interest in finding "pure" knowledge about the interviewee's world that is untainted from perspectives, feelings or other

"muddled" personal aspects. The interviewer is in this case uninvolved and tries to remain neutral in order to not distort the interviewees' responses. The traveler, on the other hand, "walks around with the locals", participates in the discussion and collects narratives and stories for analysis. The interviewees' reflections and perspectives are important material for the subsequent development of new insights and knowledge. The former position can be regarded as symbolizing an objectivistic paradigm where knowledge is waiting to be found "out there", whereas the latter stands on a social constructivist and hermeneutic philosophy which involves interpretation of the social world and its social and local contingencies in order to "produce knowledge" (Alvesson, 2003, p. 13).

These two "camps" should be seen as two points existing on either side of a continuum. They are illustrative "ideal types" – not static or absolute. I view my own interviews as existing somewhere in the middle of the continuum, with a tilt towards the "traveler's" position. The interviews were carried out in order to collect empirical material that could disclose the social, cultural and highly local contingencies that make up political issues and the highly complex communication practices the political actors implement in order to promote those issues. I thereby perceive the interviews as instances where the interviewees reflect, discuss and set the tone under the guidance of my semi-structured interview guide, in which my role was significant, as I discussed and asked follow-up questions throughout the interviews. The interview was therefore a two-way communication process, where both the interviewee and the interviewer played significant roles. I agree with Silverman (2011) who notes that "we need not hear interview responses simply as true or false reports. Instead, we can treat such responses as displays of perspectives and moral forms which draw upon cultural resources" (p. 199, my italics). The interview context was a field where narratives, discourses and cultural contingencies were invoked and could be analyzed accordingly. This interplay between the interviewee and myself proved to award significant "clues" in relation to the complexities and nuances of the organizations' communication – clues that most likely would not have emerged had I chosen a more structured approach to interviews (cf. Magnusson, 2015, p. 55–57). It is a stance that shares similarities with Alvesson's (2003) *localist* position, as I reject the notion that language is a mirror in interviews – the interviews I conducted should rather be seen as "situated accomplishments" by the actors that were involved in the interview, myself included (Alvesson, 2011a, p. 22ff).

My social constructivist and hermeneutic position is thereby clear. However, considering the political landscape's complex network of actors and

regulations, I occasionally asked questions that pertained to factual circumstances (the "prospector"-position), as I had to "uncover" facts in order to understand the complexities and nuances of the organizations' communication and public relations practices properly. I often had to follow-up the interviewees' responses with factual questions in order to fully grasp their replies and, on some occasions, send them e-mails after the interview in order to make sure I understood some of their responses correctly.

Limitations with the interview method

It is possible to argue that we live in an "interview society" and that the social sciences reproduce this assumption (Silverman, 2013). With this in mind, and considering the significance my interviews play in this dissertation, it is crucial that I consider some critique of the interview as a research method. I believe there are most notably *four* issues that pertain to my interviews.

The *first* potential issue concerns the temporal aspect. One some occasions, I conducted so-called "retrospective interviews" (Falkheimer, 2004, p. 123), where my interest lied in the interviewees' past practices with either the NIS or the Innovative Sweden campaign. There is, in other words, a potential mismatch between what occurred when the interviewees were engaged in their prior work and what accounts they gave during the interviews. This criticism can be held against the qualitative interview as a method in general, as semi-structured interviews are problematic when it comes to establishing direct access to facts, events or to the interviewees' direct experiences (Silverman, 2011, p. 168). Yet with retrospective interviews this potential problem is heightened. But it is not an insurmountable problem, as the majority of my interviews were not retrospective interviews but interviews that were conducted when the interviewees were in the midst of working with the strategy or the campaign. A *second* potential issue concerns my interviews with employees in managerial positions or experts with significant experience in the issue one is investigating; so called elite interviews (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 236; Littig, Menz, & Bogner, 2009). The vast majority of interviewees were much older than I was and had several years (in some cases decades) of professional experience within the field. Von Platen and Young (2014, p. 27ff) argue that interviews with employees in management positions, or experts for that matter, tend to be asymmetrical and affected by power imbalances. Considering their years of experience, these professional groups are usually rhetorically skilled in their area of expertise and can potentially steer the discussion in their favor. Such

manifestations, albeit present at times, were not too common, and since I interviewed a manifold of actors (not only management or experts), it was not an acute issue that limited my understanding of the cases. A *third* potential issue concerns the number of conducted interviews. In total, I carried out 26 semi-structured interviews. I could have gained insights from conducting interviews with the former Minister and the State Secretary at the Ministry of Energy, Enterprise and Communications, but they denied my interview queries on several occasions. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that interview-based research tends to reproduce quantitative assumptions – "more interviews, better science" (p. 129–131). I consider my interview material saturated, as the majority of the key political actors were interviewed. A *fourth* potential issue concerns the two interviews I conducted via Skype. Literature on the interview as a method seems to be in agreement as to the importance of developing a good interpersonal researcher–participant relationship, something that might be fairly difficult to establish during Skype interviews (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 235ff). Social clues such as bodily gestures that render the interviewee "human" might be left out of this interview context. Considering that the interviewees were located miles away from where my research took place, I found no way of going around this fact. But I only conducted two Skype interviews and so should not be detrimental to my research in general.

Documents

A second important source of empirical material was realized through the collection of various forms of documents. The collected documents were produced and published by the Ministry, the Institute or the "collateral organizations" that were involved with either organization in their work on innovation issues. Grundel (2014) argues that in research inspired by matters of political discourses and context, the researcher must include a wide range of documents from a manifold of actors in order to be able to account for how ideas are produced and reproduced in different settings. I have chosen what Silverman (2011) terms *targeted sampling*; entailing a process where the researcher collects a variety of documents in order to form an overall yet nuanced picture of the problem under investigation. This process is fruitful for researchers who wish to understand "the emergence, persistence and/or evolution of a particular social construction" (p. 270–271). I thereby tried to locate government documents, directives, protocols, policies and press releases

that dealt with the cases' entire "time-line" – from the very first press releases the organizations published concerning their work on the NIS or the Innovative Sweden campaign, to the final government directives that cancelled their projects, and all the documents in between that in various ways were central to the two organizations' work. The collected documents enabled me to follow how the organizations reflected on their projects, what they valued as important and the projects' implementation procedures throughout the projects' lifespans. As the two organizations worked on the NIS and the Innovative Sweden campaign during the time of my research, I collected documents on a continuous basis in order to update my understanding of their efforts. But I also collected documents that would place the organizations' work in their proper contexts. I therefore located documents that could disclose and further nuance my understanding of how the organizations had come to implement these specific public relations practices as opposed to other forms of governmental practices. This entailed finding, for instance, older documents pertaining to the organizations' current practices. Since the two organizations are public, the documents are published openly. If I could not locate a specific document, I contacted the organizations in order to obtain those documents via email. If we sort the documents into categories that pertain to the two organizations of interest in this dissertation we get the following collection:

Documents from the Swedish Institute include:

Press releases: The Institute wrote and published press releases prior to and during the Innovative Sweden campaign. Before reaching the cities where the campaign was to be implemented, the Institute published press releases containing information on the exhibition's purpose, location, dates, who could attend and quotes from the Institute's General Director. The embassies and consulates that supported the Institute's role in the selected cities also published press releases during the campaign. Fifteen press releases in total were collected.

Promotional publications: The Institute publishes many different forms of promotional documents covering a wide range of topics. These are produced in order to inform but also persuade the reader (foreign citizens, journalists and other stakeholders) of what Sweden *is*. Examples of promotional brochures that were of interest to this dissertation were *Innovation – The Swedish Way, Thank you Sweden* and *Swedish Innovations* – documents that sought to brand Sweden based on Sweden's innovation capacity and its historical legacy as an innovative nation.

Communication policies: These documents are created in order to guide or inspire the employees' work on communication issues. Three documents were of particular importance: the communication policy *Progressive communication,* produced by several government agencies in charge of promoting Sweden abroad, the branding platform *Spirit of Innovation,* developed by the Institute in cooperation with Vinnova and the communication policy devised explicitly for the Innovative Sweden campaign by a public relations firm.

PowerPoint presentations: The Institute gives presentations to stakeholders interested in Sweden on a regular basis, most notably during the seminars and events that are tied to specific campaigns. Two presentations developed by the Institute on the topic of innovation were *Welcome to Sweden – From a Business Point of View* and *Sweden – Leading the World in Innovation*.

Procurement documents: The Institute frequently outsources different tasks to external companies. In the case of the Innovative Sweden campaign, the Institute outsourced the design and construction of the exhibition platforms that were to follow the campaign (I will discuss this in chapter eight). These documents include the outsourcing protocols and the winning bidder's offer submitted to the procurement process.

Evaluation documents: The Institute conducts and publishes analyses of foreign citizens' perception on Sweden as a nation. These reports are used by the Institute in order to know and ultimately overcome the "perception issues" Sweden faces. A report that was of particular value in this dissertation was *Images of Sweden Abroad*, the largest in-house study on foreign nationals' perceptions on Sweden. The foreign agencies (embassies and consulates) in charge of the Innovative Sweden campaign in their respective cities wrote evaluations after the campaign had run its course. These evaluations held descriptions and reflections by the embassies' staff on how the campaign was carried out, their partnership with local actors and the campaign's exposure in the media. I have also obtained the Institute's own evaluations of the campaign.

Invitations and seminar programmes: Prior to the Innovative Sweden campaign being launched in the various countries, the Institute, embassies and consulates all published invitations and devised schedules for the exhibitions. These programmes disclose who was invited, which actors gave speeches and which themes were discussed during the seminars.

Documents from the Swedish Government Offices (GO) and The Ministry of Energy, Enterprise and Communications' include:

SOUs[13]: A few SOUs have been valuable to this dissertation. I have been interested in SOUs that deal with communication and innovation. Three SOU's have been of particular interest: *Kommunikationsverksamheten i Regeringskansliet – en översyn* (2011); *Innovativa processer* (2003) and *Opinionsbildande verksamhet och små myndigheter* (2007).

Social media platforms: The Ministry kept a blog on the GO's website where employees and invited guests wrote of issues concerning innovation and the National Innovation Strategy's (NIS) development. The Ministry also managed a Twitter-account (@Innovationsstrategi) and sought to spur dialogue through the hashtag #snis (acronym for Sweden's National Innovation Strategy).

Communication policies: Since 1999 the GO has made use of a communication policy in order to guide their employees' work that pertains to matters of communication. The original policy has been updated two times. The Ministry has also created communication policies, two of which will be described and discussed in the analytical chapters.

Invitations, schedules and summaries from the Ministry's dialogue meetings: The Ministry carried out fifteen dialogue meetings throughout Sweden in order to ground the strategy in consensus. I have obtained all of these publications.

Dialogue meeting procedures: The Ministry hired a private company to carry out dialogue meetings. I have obtained that company's very own dialogue plans for constructing the rules the attendees were to follow during the meetings.

Government directives[14]: Directives are documents that contain regulations for future government action, often with clearly defined tasks and

[13] Swedish Government Official Reports – the official series of reports conducted by the government that analyzes different issues in order to improve future legislation and governing practices.

[14] Regeringsbeslut

responsibilities. A few directives have been of particular interest: *Uppdrag att utveckla en plattform för kommunikation av Sverige som innovativt land* (2012), produced by the Ministry in order to award an external firm the task of producing a digital platform to brand Sweden as an innovative nation. Other documents of interest were the GO's directives to Vinnova where they outlined Vinnova's role in the NIS.

The GO's yearly reports: Every year the GO publishes summaries of the organization's activities. The purpose of these publications is to give the reader an encompassing insight into the different activities of the GO. The publications contain "facts and statistics" on a wide range of topics. Of interest to this dissertation have been the chapters entitled *Special projects and programs* (where the Ministry's NIS is briefly discussed) and *External communication* (where the GO sums up their perspective on communication).

The National Innovation Strategy (NIS): The Ministry's creation of the NIS is central to this dissertation and will be described and analyzed in chapter seven.

A few other documents and publications that were published neither by the Ministry nor the Institute were additionally gathered. Examples of such documents are: The EU:s Innovation Union's strategy, the Swedish Region's innovation strategies, the Innovation Council's (IC) presentations and final SOU, documents by Vinnova on innovation in and for public organizations and their follow-up documents on the NIS. These documents are mostly used as contextual support in my analytical chapters. I will borrow the term *collateral organizations* from Strömbäck and Kiousis (2014) when referencing such organizations and documents.

Why collect and analyze documents?

Considering the ubiquity of documents (policies, directives, strategies, visions, goals and so on) that are created by government agencies, it is particularly difficult not to include these forms of empirical material when researching these types of organizations (Bergström & Boréus, 2005, p. 13; Bryman, 2011, p. 494; Silverman, 2011, p. 248). The aforementioned documents were chosen on the basis of being produced and distributed by the Ministry and Institute prior to or during their work on the National Innovation Strategy and Innovative

Sweden campaign. My collected documents are then *social texts* (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 460) that are part and parcel of the practice and context of political hypes and the government agencies' public relations practices. Daymon and Holloway (2011) point to a number of different advantages of collecting and analyzing documents. First of all, documents can indicate how particular organizations interpret their past, present and future actions and achievements. Consequently, documents may also signal how organizations justify and publicize themselves to those individuals or organizations they regard as important, as the majority of documents (press releases, promotional material, yearly reports, and so on) are well-crafted texts with strategic purposes aimed at specific audiences. Speaking of culture, the authors argue that documents are not (despite their often innocent features) neutral but can provide insights into cultural dimensions pertaining to the society in which they circulate. In some cases, certain documents might even be more comprehensive than other methods as documents provide the researcher with insights into *past* processes and events not available for immediate observation. And finally, they argue, the collection and analysis of documents is unobtrusive by definition, particularly valuable if access to individuals or organizations is restricted or even denied (p. 277–278).

It is important to mention that my collected documents should not to be seen as simple and transparent representations of an underlying reality. Some factors should be taken into account when assessing the researcher's collected documents. Bryman (2011, p. 488ff) argues that that there are four principles that can be used in such an assessment: (1) the documents' *authenticity*, or, if the documents can be regarded as stemming from an unambiguous source; (2) their *reliability*, or, if the documents can be regarded as truthful; (3) its *representation*, or, if the documents can be interpreted as being representative of the phenomenon the researcher investigates and (4), their *meaningfulness*, or, if the documents can be understood properly by the researcher. According to the author, official documents from government agencies at least satisfy the authenticity principle (in the sense that the source is easy to determine) and the principle concerning the documents' meaningfulness (in the sense that they tend to be written in rather unequivocal language). I would also argue that the principle concerning the documents representation is satisfied, considering that the documents are unequivocally produced and circulated by two organizations that undoubtedly were part and parcel of what I have called the innovation hype. Criticism could, however, be raised against the level of the documents' saturation, questioning if the sum total of documents can be claimed as representative of the phenomenon the researcher investigates. Perhaps there are

other documents with contradictory points of views, for instance. However, in the GO, Ministry and the Institute's case, the amount of documents produced and circulated is finite. And furthermore, the documents' substance cannot be said to vary greatly considering they often are scrutinized and written according to similar and rigid government protocols. I therefore find it unlikely that other potentially missing documents would claim diametrically opposing views from the ones I have collected. But Bryman's focal concern with documents regards their reliability. Inaccuracies and distortions in government documents are commonplace (p. 497). However, many of the documents analyzed in this dissertation are *promotional* documents intended to portray a particular worldview to an often pre-defined target-group, meaning that the degree of "accuracy" is of little relevance. And furthermore, many of the documents were discussed during my interviews with the Ministry and Institute's employees, thereby granting new perspectives on the documents' role.

I mentioned earlier that the documents should not only be seen as reflections of a reality existing out there. I rather perceive them as social texts where ideas, norms, power relations and performances are represented and reproduced in accordance with the Ministry and the Institute's political programs (cf. Grundel, 2014, p. 60–61). The documents are "prescriptive texts", written in order to be read, discussed and used in different contexts and for different purposes. The documents are also, as I have alluded to in chapter two, significant for the organizations' public relations practices with regards to their efforts to render innovation into a meaningful and graspable political issue in future undertakings. In the following section I wish to discuss briefly what empirical material was important in each of the four analytical chapters.

The empirical material and the analytical chapters

So far, I have described the methodology that I applied in order to collect my empirical material. I have stated that the primary material that I base my analysis on is the interviews conducted with most notably the Ministry and the Institute's employees and the various forms of documents collected from these two organizations. The interviews and the documents are used differently depending on the aim within the analytical chapter. The following schema can be useful in order to get an overview of where the interviews and documents

were put to use analytically[15]. I have written a brief description of each chapter and listed the documents used in these chapters underneath:

Table 1: Interviews and documents used in the analytical chapters

Chapter 5: Description and analysis of the innovation hype's discourse. Documents produced and published by *both* the Ministry and the Institute, in particular:	**Chapter 6: Description and analysis of the GO and Ministry's public relations practices.**
Ministry and Institute documents: • Blog posts from the Ministry's innovation blog • Press releases (such as the Institute's press releases prior to their international tour) • Promotional booklets (such as the Institute's booklet *Innovation – The Swedish Way*) • The Institute's communication platform • PowerPoint presentations the Institute produced on the topic of innovation • The Regions' innovation strategies • Contextual documents, such as the SKL's work on innovation issues Interviews with the Ministry and Institute's employees.	Ministry documents: • The GO's communication policies (from 1999 and 2012) and the Ministry's communication policies designed in particular for the NIS • Social media platforms (such as the Ministry's blog) • SOUs such as the GO's analysis of their communication activities • The NIS' dialogue meeting invitations, schedules and summaries • Government decisions on their communication activities • The GO's yearly reports Interviews with the individuals involved with the National Innovation Strategy at the Ministry and other collateral organizations.
Chapter 7: Description and analysis of the National Innovation Strategy (NIS) made possible by the Ministry's public relations practices	**Chapter 8: Description and analysis of the Institute's public relations practices.**
Ministry documents: • National Innovation Strategy (NIS) • The GO's yearbooks • Government decisions on Vinnova's role after the NIS was finished Interviews with Ministry and Vinnova employees.	Institute documents: • Press releases the Institute developed prior to their exhibitions • Procurement documents developed by the Institute prior to their international tour • Evaluation documents developed by the Institute in order to evaluate their public relations practices (the embassies' evaluations included) • Invitations and seminar programs written by the Institute prior to each exhibition • The Institute's yearly reports • Promotional material Interviews with the Institute and embassies' employees.

Please note that the chapters also include and make use of documents from what I have previously have called "collateral organizations". These are used to contextualize the discussion and substantiate the claim of the hype's ubiquity. So for instance, I may refer to the OECD or regional documents in order to

[15] View page 90 for a discussion on the reasons for placing the analytical chapters in this order.

contextualize or deepen the Ministry or Institute's claims. Or I may include reflections from Vinnova's employees who were in charge of implementing the NIS when it was finished.

Limitations

There are two particular methodological limitations that I believe are unique to my research project. First of all, I did not have access to certain events that turned out to be vital in my analysis. For instance, in the Ministry's case, fifteen different dialogue meetings were carried out throughout Sweden. These meetings are public relations practices that were implemented in order to generate trust and legitimacy for the Ministry and the National Innovation Strategy they sought to create. In the Swedish Institute's case, the Innovative Sweden campaign was implemented in eleven different cities all over the world, a campaign composed of a range of different public relations practices. A suitable method would have been to conduct participant observations during the Ministry and the Institute's implementations of these public relations practices. However, the Ministry's dialogue meetings were carried out before my research had begun and there were also practical limitations as to joining the Institute's campaign practices abroad – funding being the most apparent obstacle[16]. I believe and hope that the previously discussed empirical material is sound enough to be able to answer my research questions.

The second methodological issue concerns if or how my collecting of empirical material and the conduction of the interviews create or confirm the discourse in which the actors operate. I have written of this problem elsewhere (cf. Möllerström & Stenberg, 2014, p. 133–134), where I argue that there are two problems at stake. The first one concerns the risk of having interviewees construct their identities based on the discourse the researcher is interested in. It is perhaps obvious that the interviewees are aware of why they have been selected as interviewees and their answers may therefore come to reflect their idea of what I as a researcher am interested in. This is, however, not only a potential concern for researchers that engage with discourse theory but for all forms of qualitative interviews (Silverman, 2011, p. 181). The second problem at stake is more fundamental as it concerns the risk of constructing (rather than

[16] I did ask the Institute if I could join them on their campaign in Seoul but their funding was limited and my request was turned down.

deconstructing) the discourse the researcher is intrigued by. The risk here is to hastily confirm what the researcher is interested in, or that the interviewee is driven by and invokes "political" motives (Alvesson, 2011a, p. 30), rather than being critically engaged with the phenomenon one investigates. Some precautionary measures were taken in order to minimize these two risks. For instance, I did not to call my research a study in political hypes, as it could potentially steer the discussion prematurely and place the interviewees in either a defensive or offensive position. As my semi-structured interview guide made clear, the questions I posed to my interviewees were rather broad and written in order to have a somewhat structured discussion and thereby hopefully minimize the risk of constructing and confirming discourses. Also, my approach is interdisciplinary, as I have chosen to analyze my empirical material from various perspectives and thereby applied different perspectives on my empirical material. I have also collected different forms of empirical material, in order to broaden the analysis. How I analyzed my empirical material will be the topic of the next section.

Analytical framework

Analysis does not begin the moment the researcher's empirical is collected in its entirety. I rather see the analysis as being a continuous process where the researcher constantly engages with analysis during the entire project. The writing of the interview guide can be seen as an analytical process where the researcher's preconceived ideas of what is important is made explicit. Transcribing the interview is also an analytical process, as ideas begin to emerge about the patterns, assumptions and implicit or explicit values the interviewees' assert (cf. Klein, 1990). I was constantly writing down ideas on how to find ways to interpret the empirical material throughout my research process. Absolute analytical beginnings are therefore difficult to pinpoint, as they by and large characterize the entire research process (Magnusson, 2014, p. 60). Research is, in other words, a somewhat playful and creative process (Åkerström, 2010, p. 93). With that being said, in this section I will describe in explicit terms how I analyzed my empirical material.

In chapter three I launched the socio-cultural framework for public relations research. I argued that researchers within this nascent field have been interested in how public relations practices intersect with and are embedded in matters of discourse and context. Part of my analytical focus has been on the

salient discourses that the empirical material invokes and how we can understand these discourses by way of looking at the societal context in which they function. Edwards and Hodges (2011) argue that these two areas (discourses and context) direct the researcher to pose certain questions to their gathered empirical material. One of the first enquiries in my analysis thus entailed an overarching scanning and categorizing of my empirical material (the interviews and documents). Kendall and Wickham (1999) argue that the analysis of discourses fundamentally entails the analysis of a "corpus of 'statements' whose organization is regular and systematic" (p. 42). These regularities can be labeled "regimes of truth" (Bourne, 2013a, 2013b; Foucault, 1980). I posed questions to my material in order to get a comprehensive grip on what ideas, thoughts and perspectives are pertinent and salient in the hype's discourse. I have argued that symbols, narratives, taken for granted knowledge and subject-positions are important features of public relations research and that their disclosure and subsequent analysis can be fruitful for discussing public relations practices and how political issues emerge and circulate. Examples of questions that I posed to my empirical material in the initial stages were:

- What are the dominant symbols, narratives and representations that are frequently being invoked by my interviewees and in the documents?
- What taken-for-granted knowledge is invoked in order to legitimize the hype and the public relations practices?
- What actors, organizations and subject-positions are invoked and privileged in the hype's distribution?
- What social, political and cultural histories are accentuated and disclosed?[17]

I read through and interpreted (and re-read and re-interpreted again) my empirical material on multiple occasions throughout this project in order to disclose enquiries for further analysis and investigation. Recurring themes (symbols, narratives, subject-positions, actors) were marked and categorized accordingly. Kendall and Wickham's (1999) advice is to look into the "rules of production of statements", referring to the researcher's task to investigate what social, cultural, political or historical conditions must have been in place in order for the language of (applied to my case) political hypes to emerge. I have labeled these *conditions of possibilities* elsewhere (Möllerström & Stenberg, 2014, p. 132). This must be seen as the contextual dimension of socio-cultural

[17] These questions were inspired by Edwards and Hodges (2011, p. 6–7).

research. In this dissertation I have sought to include researchers that analyze and discuss the discerned, salient themes and conditions. Aside from applying the perspectives that I developed in chapter two and three, I will make use of previous research that deals with the discerned conditions explicitly. For instance, in chapter five, I will argue that innovation emerged as a powerful political issue as it was tied to the "objective science" of international rankings and indexes. I invoked researchers that have studied these rankings in order to disclose the contextual dimension of the political public relations they enabled. This is what I meant by the dissertation's interdisciplinary approach. I have thus chosen not to conduct a "proper" discourse analysis. This dissertation's approach must be seen as *abductive*, as the innovation issue and public relations practices have been analyzed through a shifting focus on different researchers, disciplines and theories and the public relations practices are interpreted in a new light (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2011, p. 56).

Discourses that are systematic and regular are action-orientated, as they enable and legitimize social and political practices (Grundel, 2014, p. 69). Discourses are not textual per se, but rather should be seen as practical and productive, and the interviews and documents were analyzed accordingly (Bergström & Boréus, 2005, p. 311; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 245). In chapter six, seven and eight, I thus take a practice-orientated approach, as I turn towards the Ministry and the Institute's public relations practices. In chapter six, for instance, I looked into the "discursive shifts" of the communication policies and strategies of the Swedish Government Offices (GO) since the organization created its first communication policy in 1999. I analyzed the policies and strategies by paying particular attention to how the language has shifted on matters that pertain to communication issues, in order to show how these minor "textual" instances and shifts may legitimize certain communication practices for the GO. I did not analyze how the language itself is constructed in detail[18] or how many times a particular concept is invoked, but rather how the texts sought to argue for future government *practices* – how they reflect on communication issues, the governing problems they believe can be solved through communication and the solutions that come with communication. Gibbs (2007) argues that a major concern of analyses in qualitative studies is to describe what is happening: "To answer the question 'What is going on here?'" (p. 7). Therefore, in order to perceive how these shifts operate in practice, I have applied governmentality tools that emphasize notions that "exceed" language – inscription devises, governmental technologies, acting at a distance, political

[18] By paying attention to shifts in grammar, for instance.

rationalities, political problematization and translation processes are particular concepts I applied (Dean, 2010; Kendall & Wickham, 1999; Rose & Miller, 2008, 2010)[19]. The governmentality concepts enabled me to pay particular attention to the manner in which individuals and organizations were drawn into relationships with the government agencies, and in particular, the role all those "mundane" tools, documents, policies and strategies came to play for the agencies in the creation and realization of those relationships. In chapter six, seven and eight, I therefore analyzed the empirical material (both the interviews and documents) in order to get an overall grip on the events that unfolded in order to tell the story of how the organizations reflected on, implemented and evaluated their communication and public relations practices. In those analytical chapters, and in line with case study approaches (Nylén, 2005), I will present the public relations practices as following a somewhat coherent plot and subsequently disclose descriptions and quotations in order to give the reader a "close encounter" with the actors that were involved in the practices that unfolded.

A simplified schema of some of the central analytical tools that I used per each analytical chapter is presented below:

Table 2: Examples of the key analytical concepts and tools per each analytical chapter.

Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Chapter 8
Discursive nodes (regimes of truth; bio-politics; conditions of possibility; transdiscursive terms)	Governmentality of public relations (government technology; inscription devices; acting at a distance; rationalities; technologies of agency)	Narrative styles and implications of the NIS (problematizations; translation processes; inscription devises)	Governmentality of public relations (government technology; inscription devices, acting at a distance; translation processes; scapes; symbols)

The analysis should not stop at the texts and practices under scrutiny, but should also discuss the findings and their implications for public relations research and its societal implications. Eksell and Thelander (2014) suggest that the final step in qualitative analysis entails a move to disclose what they call the "deep structures" in the empirical material (p. 207). This entails reflecting on the findings themselves (rather than on the texts or practices) and discerning new themes and trends in order to shed light on the phenomenon under investigation. In accordance with my third research question, this will be developed in the final chapter, where I discuss the impact of my findings for political public relations and their societal and to some extent democratic implications.

[19] I dealt with these concepts in the section entitled *Central concepts and terms* (page 55ff).

The different forms of empirical material I generated (through the interviews and collection of documents) are threaded throughout the analytical chapters in an attempt to construct a vibrant and credible narrative that can answer the research questions properly. The analytical chapters contain quotations from the interviews and documents and were chosen as a way to illustrate – they do not exist in a vacuum. In line with critical research, I thereby see the analytical chapters as interpretations that seek to "give meaning and significance to social phenomena" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 333).

Summary

In this chapter, I have given an account of how I argued prior to, and during, my work on this dissertation in terms of methodological, empirical and analytical issues. I argued that the Ministry and the Institute are good exemplars of organizations that were embedded in the innovation hype and that describing and analyzing their strategies and campaigns are suitable entry-points into the role political public relations have come to play for government agencies. I also described how I collected my empirical material, with a particular focus on the interviews and the documents. I included a description of the interview guide and the different documents' forms and substances. I also discussed the limitations of my methodological approach. Finally, I discussed my analytical framework, arguing that it should be seen as an interdisciplinary one. I believe this approach enabled me to disclose the complexities of public relations practices.

We are now ending part one of this dissertation. Part two consists of four chapters in which my empirical material will be analyzed. On the following page, I will describe each chapter briefly in order to make the structure clear for the reader.

⁕ Part II: Analytical Chapters

Chapters 5–8 contain the analytical chapters. This is where I intend on answering my research questions.

In **chapter five**, I want to analyze what innovation as a political issue entailed for the Ministry and the Institute. I believe it is important to place this analytical chapter first as it can shed some light on what the innovation hype was concerned with. In this chapter I pay attention to recurring themes that are found throughout my empirical material – in the interviews as well as the collected documents. I have managed to locate what I will call discursive nodes that can be seen as the central arguments that together made up the Swedish innovation hype during the years 2010–2014 and made it relatively stable.

In **chapter six**, I will describe and analyze the Swedish Government Offices (GO)'s reflections on communication issues. Of particular concern are the Ministry's public relations practices that were implemented in order to make innovation into a concern for a manifold of actors. I will discuss the dialogue programs that were initiated by the Ministry and argue that the Ministry is part and parcel of a PR-ization process, a process that can be constructive but also disabling. These dialogue programs were launched in order for the Ministry to formulate the actual National Innovation Strategy (NIS).

In **chapter seven**, I will describe and analyze what the NIS amounted to. Particular focus will be on the different narrative styles the Ministry applies in the strategy in order to accentuate the importance of innovation. I will also discuss why the strategy as a government tool was considered useful for the Ministry. I will conclude by discussing the implications of the NIS.

The final analytical chapter, **chapter eight**, will describe and analyze the hype's manifestations abroad with a particular focus on the Swedish Institute's Innovative Sweden campaign. In this chapter I want to emphasize all those complex arrangements and practices that need to be in place in order to implement a public relations campaign abroad.

5 The Innovation Hype's Discursive Nodes

What central arguments did the government agencies employ in order to portray innovation as a beneficial political issue for society? In chapter three I invoked *regimes of truth* as being a particularly productive analytical enquiry for public relations research and a possible conceptual tool to apply in order to disclose what political issues are about, how they become dominant, and consequently, what public relations practices they subsequently enable (Foucault, 1980; Motion & Leitch, 2008). Regimes of truth in public relations research is concerned with locating and analyzing the repeated discursive rules that guide and shape what can enter into the social and political domain on their basis of being considered true or meaningful (Bourne, 2013a, 2013b). The focus of this chapter is to describe and analyze some of the discursive rules that caused innovation to be ascertained as a meaningful issue for political actors in the post-financial crisis of 2008. I have paid special attention to the salient narratives that depict innovation as critical, the role knowledge plays in ascertaining innovation as a critical political issue for a manifold of actors and (in line with Foucault's notion of relational power) the actors and organizations that became embedded in the Ministry and Institute's work. For pedagogical reasons, I will call the ensemble of rules "discursive nodes", which I define as the rules that steer and "freeze" the innovation hype's intricate web and thereby makes the hype to be considered coherent and render its promises as truthful, plausible and desired. I will describe and analyze the discursive nodes in order to show how innovation could be considered a meaningful political issue at this time and as forming the basis of the organizations' subsequent public relations practices (I will discuss the communication and public relations practices in the following three analytical chapters).

Three discursive nodes will be explicitly described and analyzed. The discursive nodes are (in no hierarchical order): (1) New spaces, new actors – Innovation is a concern for a manifold of disparate and hitherto unconnected actors. Particular focus will be on the role of the Swedish public sector; (2)

International competition and growth – Innovation is concerned with the promotion of competitiveness; (3) Biopolitics – Innovation is concerned with the empowerment of the individual citizen or employee in order to initiate change. It is important to mention that the list of nodes is not exhaustive – I have weighed them according to their prominence in the empirical material. The nodes are critical, as their *apparent* coherence and significance enables for a whole range of different communication practices in general and public relations practices in particular to be implemented by the Ministry and Institute. In the analytical chapters that follow, I will describe and discuss the communicative implications of the discursive nodes. In line with the socio-cultural turn in public relations research, I will discuss some of the conditions that have made it plausible to invoke these particular nodes. In chapter five on methodology I referred to this as the investigation of "conditions of possibility". This chapter is based on documents from both the Institute and the Ministry (and some "collateral organizations" for context) and interviews with the organizations' employees.

Node one: New spaces, new actors

A crucial task for the Institute, and in particular for the Ministry, was to carve out new spaces in which innovation processes were to emerge and function. Innovation issues are not solely a concern for universities or private firms – spaces and actors that traditionally are involved in innovation processes. Traditional actors such as private firms or universities were not even central target-groups. Of greater concern was to "mainstream" innovation and to appeal to individuals and organizations outside of traditional innovation domains. This shift is usually referred to as the "third generation" of innovation politics, where the public sector takes a more proactive role and innovation is not purely connected with technological development or financial growth for private industries (cf. Frankelius, 2005, p. 225ff). The Ministry in particular was very concerned with this, as they sought to make innovation into what they called a "people's movement" (a term other interviewees outside of the Ministry were fairly skeptical of). Consider the project leader of the National Innovation Strategy's (NIS) response to my question on whether there have been any shifts in terms of how innovation is being discussed in Swedish political settings:

> I would say that the greatest shift is that it [innovation] is not only concerned with business, technology or R&D anymore. It's a concern for business as well as public sectors and civil society. So it's the entire society that is included and you have a greater understanding that these innovation processes takes place in between different spheres in society (Project Leader 1, NIS).

The interviewee mentions both the public sector and civil society as particularly new arenas where new innovation processes are critical. She also distinguishes it as a concern for sectors outside of industry and technological development. The public sector in particular was of great concern for the individuals working at the Ministry and their "collateral organizations" that worked with innovation issues simultaneously. I will deal with this in detail, considering the public sector's prominence in the empirical material.

Working independently from the Ministry, but nevertheless with similar concerns, was the Innovation Council (IC), serving under the Government Offices (GO). The IC was formed around the same time the Ministry began its work on the NIS. According to the government directive, the IC's aim was to "support and stimulate innovation and change in public sectors that can lead to substantial improvements for citizens and businesses and make current processes more effective" (Innovationsrådet, 2013, p. 219). Through numerous government reports, seminars and events, the IC discussed and analyzed a wide range of "innovation processes" considered suitable for the public sector – the management program "lean production", "knowledge management", how information "flows" between government agencies and "customer satisfaction" within Swedish government agencies are examples of issues or programs the IC sought to tie to its work on innovation (cf. Innovationsrådet, 2012). When I interviewed the project leader of the IC, it became clear that innovation was perceived in terms of a solution to the problem of bureaucratic *efficiency* in the public sector. He invoked a metaphor in order to make this point:

> I usually compare it to the efficiency rate of a lamp. You could say that traditional light bulbs are 5% efficient – the rest of it is heat and the 5% is light. And the new LED lamps, I believe have an efficiency rate of about 70%. And we can compare this to human organizations. Are we really working in a smart sense in terms of work environment and efficiency rates? (Project Leader, IC).

Innovation processes invoke the hope of acquiring greater *human* efficiency. Smarter forms of organizing must replace old and traditional forms of administration procedures. In order to concretize this, the interviewee proceeded by applying this line of thinking to assumptions about how public

sectors in general are being organized today, giving an example of the process of requiring building-permits from local Swedish municipalities:

> There are a lot of public organizations today that run on a tradition of authority and, you know, old regulations and thereby neglect the customers' perspective. If you want a building-permit, that's not organized based on what is easiest for you as a citizen. It's organized based on how we have come to organize our society (Project leader, IC).

Innovation is frequently pitted against the notion that the public sector prioritizes organizing that is based on tradition and old conventions rather than efficiency. The IC's project leader equates the engineering of lamps to the management of "human" organizations. In chapter three I mentioned the temporal dimension of political hypes, or how hypes discriminate against old ways of doing things with references to a future state of affairs. The old, in this case, is represented by over-bureaucratized public sectors. The Ministry's employees made similar statements. An arena of priority for the Ministry was to affect the GO itself. Much effort was placed on meeting other departments within the GO and discussing how the organization could become more innovative in their tasks and how the departments' employees would benefit from incorporating an innovative "mindset". An explicit target-group of the NIS was political decision-makers and employees within the GO. This was a difficult task for the Ministry's employees, as they had to struggle against what they perceived as a rigid organization and new issues that affected the status quo were met with resistance. One of the project leaders of the NIS puts it as follows:

> If you look internally at the Government Offices you'll see an organization that is populated by really gifted employees. They are enormously productive and work very hard, with very short deadlines and with a lot on their table. So I would say that one of the most difficult questions is to make innovation relevant and part of the organization's core. So it doesn't become, you know, "oh another thing I have to deal with". So a huge challenge in this project has been to figure out how innovation can contribute to achieving better results within different political areas, make employees do better work and more efficient work instead of them saying "oh another issue I have to deal with" (Project Leader 1, NIS).

The Ministry was interested in instilling innovation as a base disposition within the GO without having to impose constraints on the departments. But to remedy efficiency issues oftentimes leads to more work for public organizations. Ivarsson Westerberg (2004), who has studied administration procedures in the

Swedish public sector, follows this line of reasoning: "The consequence of efficiency programs seems paradoxically enough to become a patchwork quilt occupying even more employees and take up more of their time" (p. 10, my translation). The Ministry's employees seemed to have been aware of this difficulty, as they were careful not to impose time-consuming procedures on top of other departments' workloads, while simultaneously wanting to change what they perceived as the organization's efficiency issues (I will come back to this when I discuss the Ministry's communication and public relations practices in chapter six). Hospitals and other healthcare organizations, local municipalities, the Swedish regional organizations, the Swedish social security agency and the Swedish tax agency were also brought up as examples of where innovation was critical. Organizations within the Swedish public sector were thus a prime target of the Ministry's work on innovation issues.

Forssell and Ivarsson Westerberg (2014) launched the concept *administration society* in order to capture how strict rules and regulations minimize the public sector's ability to exercise creative and productive work. In the last two to three decades in Sweden, the authors argue, there has been an upsurge in political demands to make the administrations more "rational" and "economical" (p. 193ff). Public administrations have therefore become a particular target for management trends – all seeking to alleviate public organizations from bureaucratic burden. Organizational models, templates, and recipes on how to best achieve organizational rationality and efficiency abound and reiterate the dream of escaping the iron cage (Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, & Ganesh, 2011; Røvik, 2008). Innovation is a transdiscursive concept – not a specific template with strict rules and procedures – that can easily be turned into a recipe for future guidance, for public administrations, as well as its employees. My interviewees and the documents allude to this perception, as they speak of public administrations' bureaucratic burden as particularly troubling and conversely of innovation's potential to alleviate this weight. But innovation in and for public sectors is not a new phenomenon – public administrations have sought to make innovation into a sedimentary disposition in their work and multiple government reports and other state-run organizations have been concerned with the matter for at least a decade. I will briefly discuss Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting's (SKL) work on innovation issues in order substantiate this claim.

SKL is Sweden's largest employers' organization for the Swedish municipalities and regions. Between 2003 and 2006, the organization, in concert with Vinnova, initiated nine different projects aimed at documenting and analyzing how innovation works in today's public sector. The results of

those programs were published in the "inspiration book" *Do innovations have to be about metal?* in 2007. The book came with stories, examples and ideas of innovation in public administrations, and published in order to make employees "reflect on how they can create better conditions for innovations in their own municipality, county or region" (Utbult, Klepke, Larsson, & Lundström, 2007, p. 9). In 2009, SKL published *The innovative municipality*, a book that was to "provide each and everyone who wants to work with innovations in the municipalities with thoughts, ideas, inspiration and encouragement" (Frankelius & Utbult, 2009, p. 9). In 2013, SKL awarded innovation researcher Per Frankelius the opportunity to "analyze the development of innovation in public administrations and provide recommendations for future tasks in order to stimulate the development of future welfare services" (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2014, p. 3). The publication – entitled *Innovation for public administrations* – was published in 2014 and contains an historical exposé of innovation research, innovation trends and a few practical recommendations for how government agencies can become more innovative. To establish continuous innovation seminars and exhibitions, to create "innovative environments" in public sector organizations, to increase our understanding of what innovation is, and to establish best-practice examples for organizations in the public sector to use are examples of such recommendations (p. 19–22).

What I am suggesting is that innovation is an embedded and ingrained imaginary in public administrations' repertoires. Considering the issue's ubiquity, innovation must be seen as a conceptual tool public administrations can invoke and frequently refer to in order to provoke actions from within their departments, organizations and employees. The aforementioned publications are written as inspiration books for the government agencies' management and employees. These publications, and the programs that led up to them, were thus not published in order to upset organizations' day-to-day conduct, but innovation can nevertheless be said to have "colonized" the language of the Swedish public sector (cf. Leitch & Roper, 1998, p. 205). Giroux's (2006) research on the role of what she calls ambiguous but pragmatic reform concepts and programs are suitable to include in this context. Through her longitudinal research on, for instance, the use of quality management systems (QM) in organizations, she found that QM had evolved and become a term that was ambiguous enough to make way for multiple interpretations, yet pragmatic enough to function in organizations. It is possible to interpret the frequent reiterations of innovation in government agencies as a simplified or ambiguous reform concept put to use in order to tame and improve a highly complex public administration. It is ambiguous enough to illicit new programs and

publications frequently, yet pragmatic enough to promote action and provoke curiosity. Elam and Börjeson (1991), who have studied the profusion of reform-concepts in Sweden from a historical vantage point, argue that "workplace reform" programs in Sweden are subjected to intense discursive struggles. Reform concepts and programs that pertain to notions of, for instance, organizational "efficiency" and "competence" do not emerge naturally but are produced by way of political struggles and disputes over language. Notions of "efficiency", for instance, made its way into the language of organizational reform properly in the early 1980s. What the authors suggest is that experts and interest organizations make concerted efforts to "colonize" the language of the public sector by way of launching programs and publications, whose ultimate aim is "to offer a strategy for prevailing in global competition which is both sensible and humane" (p. 333). "Innovation" must be seen as both a "sensible and humane" reform concept, promoted and invoked by experts and a number of different government organizations. What I am suggesting is that innovation is gradually emerging into a reform concept organizations can invoke indefinitely – on par with such notions as "efficiency" and "competence". A "pro-innovation bias", the presumption that innovations will benefit organizations indiscriminately, is pervasive (Abrahamson, 1991, p. 589).

The public sector was thus an important arena for innovation. In the analytical chapters that follow, I will show how public sector organizations and other disparate actors became embedded in the Ministry and Institute's different public relations programs through different informal means – something I have called "soft spaces of government". These particular spaces, where actors become entangled in loose networks, are an intrinsic trait of political public relations; a critical aspect that I believe has been neglected in research. Even for public organizations in the "administration society", the role of informal networks plays an important role (Forssell & Ivarsson Westerberg, 2014, p. 198). How this manifests itself through public relations practice and its political implications will be the topic of the three remaining analytical chapters.

Node two: Sweden's great, but threatened

International rankings and indexes that are created in order to portray nations' relative innovation capacities serve a central role in, as I discussed in chapter three, economic imaginaries (Jessop, 2012; Sum & Jessop, 2013). I will deal with the rankings' function in the innovation hype in this section. Some of the

most commonly referred to rankings in the innovation hype are The Global Innovation Index developed by the World Intellectual Property Organization, the OECD's Science, Technology and Industry Scoreboard and the EU Commission's Innovation Scoreboard. The organizations in charge of the rankings collect different innovation indicators in order to be able to sort and place different countries into coherent scoreboards. What those indicators consist of and the number of indicators the different organizations use to measure nations' innovation capabilities differ. In general, they tend to concern populations' average university level, the rate of R&D in firms, the number of patents produced per capita, and so on. These rankings have been criticized for not giving a proper picture (cf. Godin, 2004). But regardless of what they say, we can see how rankings enable the political hype to carve out spaces of interest for a number of different actors. The rankings make the actors that become embedded in the Ministry and Institute's practices reflect on and evaluate their own capabilities or inabilities. Consider the following three statements taken from the Ministry's blog on separate dates.

> 1. In the latest measurements, Sweden shows a good position in terms of innovation climate. The EU's Innovation Union Scoreboard ranks Sweden on top this year again. But as it is written in the innovation strategy, other countries are gaining ground. Therefore it is important that we continue to work on the innovation climate in Sweden (employee at the Ministry).
>
> 2. Sweden belongs to the best countries in the world when it comes to innovation. We are creative, have good research and production. But we are worse at 'doing business', and apply and implement. It is a huge challenge for the public sector in the years to come. We need to go from words to action! Every municipality and every county should have their own innovation strategy (participant from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs).
>
> 3. Sweden is special. Sweden belongs to the most advanced and innovative nations, but our position is always being challenged. We need to draw advantages from what we have in order to strengthen the innovation climate. One challenge is that we need to 'trim and polish' all corners of society (included in a summary written by participants from Tillväxtverket, Region Skåne, Vinnova and a tourism organization).

As we can see, various individuals working for different organizations expressed pride in Sweden's leading position. They were all expressed during the Ministry's public relations and dialogue programs (I will deal with the implementation of these programs in the next chapter). They also express an

eagerness to improve in matters they consider pertaining to innovation. Compare the previous statements to these three examples that come from different documents from the Swedish Institute:

> 1. Swedish is ranked as the world's most innovative nation today by several international indexes. We are in a position to claim leadership (The Swedish Institute & VINNOVA, 2010).
>
> 2. Sweden belongs to the world's elite when it comes to innovation. In order to spread awareness of this position, the Swedish Institute will launch an international campaign concerning innovation (The Swedish Institute, 2010).
>
> 3. A number of international indexes have been developed in a bid to measure the ability of countries to create environments that encourage innovation. According to them, Sweden is one of the most creative places on the map. Also, when the innovation and technology magazine Red Herring listed the most innovative and promising companies in the world in 2012, eight out of 100 were Swedish. No small feat for a small nation (The Swedish Institute, 2013).

As we can see from the examples, the rankings tend to be used in order to legitimize the participants' hopes for future action within their respective area and organization. Inferences that were drawn from Sweden's position on the rankings involved Sweden's need to "adjust and polish all corners of society", "start doing business" in the public sector, implement more innovation strategies in local municipalities and regions and claim global leadership on matters of innovation. Regions in particular seem to have been highly aware of this and often made use of this narrative by translating the ranking into a symbol and measuring device in order to evaluate their own position. In the Stockholm Region's innovation strategy the region's position is quite clear:

> The Stockholm Region has an ambitious goal – to become the world's most innovatively driven economy by the year 2025. We will put a lot of force and effort in order to achieve this position (Stockholmsregionen, 2012).

The Skåne Region makes use of similar forms of narratives as well, albeit the region uses the year 2020 as its future reference point:

> Vision: Europe's most innovative region in 2020. By means of regional, national and international collaboration, Skåne can develop into an attractive innovation environment. The foundation of the strategy is substantial investment in reinforcing Skåne's innovation culture and capacity. A culture which [sic] grows

> out of the creativity, openness and diversity that we have in Skåne today (Region Skåne, 2011).

During my interviews, Sweden's leading position was frequently talked of with a sense of pride. After one particular interview, the interviewee referred to the Innovation Scoreboard's newly published rankings where Sweden had claimed a leading position. She asked me if I had seen them and told me "we are on our way" (Project coordinator, Ministry).

From a governmentality perspective, we can see how rankings enable innovation to become an object of thought for the people and organizations that became embedded in the hype. We can perceive these rankings as inscription devices that make innovation stable, mobile, comparable and combinable (Rose & Miller, 2008). In other words, rankings (much like opinion polls) are perfect communication devises as they are mobile descriptions that seek to portray glimpses of social life accurately. The rankings' connection to "objective science" is pertinent. And even more so, as the aforementioned quotations disclose, the rankings enable the participants to reflect on their own work and situation. Rankings can then be perceived of as a particular form of government technology (Rose et al., 2006, p. 273) – that is, calculations such as national statistics, benchmarking indices, international indexes and rankings that enable people and organizations to weigh in on and reflect on their own practices in order to improve their own work in relation to innovation. In his research on international competitiveness reports, Fougner (2008) argues along the same lines and states that measurement tools (such as competitiveness reports) enable certain norms of conduct to emerge. Competitiveness reports, he notes, "induces its objects to relate to how one should act in order to achieve best practice" (p. 318). Applied to rankings, they provoke reflections on how the actors regard and can improve their own work in line with what the participants assumed innovation entails. What those assumptions were varied. For some, the rankings seemed to conjure concerns over public administrations in Sweden. For others, they were a call to arms for the regions. For the Swedish Institute, the rankings in many ways legitimized public relations practices abroad (I will discuss this in more detail in chapter eight). If we are to look at some of the conditions that have enabled rankings to become a salient node within the innovation hype, we need to look at why rankings have become standard evaluation tools for government agencies.

First, the international rankings reflect a discourse on economic globalization and competitiveness (Kornberger & Carter, 2010). We can presuppose that the rankings are normative, in the sense that to be positioned in

the upper league is considered positive. Lower scores are per definition negative and need to be fixed according to the assumptions made by the rankings. There is perhaps no coincidence that mainly countries from the Western hemisphere occupy the rankings' upper half, whereas the bottom half is occupied by Southern nations. In other words, the rankings make it possible to standardize and mobilize specific formulas for the economic development of states. Fougner (2008) argues that it is only in the last two decades that competitiveness *between* nations emerged as a concern in relation to how political actors were to govern a state, municipality or region. Competitiveness was no longer a concern for private firms, but for entire nations and influenced how they have come to perceive themselves. Hasu, Leitner Solitander and Varblane (2012) invoke the term "innovation race" in order to disclose the urgency of the innovation issue – a "race", he argues, that is facilitated and diffused by the joining of academic research, consulting and often global policy-making forces (p. 87ff).

Second, and closely linked to the aforementioned standardizing aspect of rankings, concerns the ontology of rankings. Rankings, and other tools that seek to document social life objectively, have become an "intellectual machinery" for contemporary governments and public institutions. There is a flood of statistics that portray almost every corner of society (Hacking, 1991; Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012, p. 566). We should therefore see these forms of knowledge productions as government technologies that are constructed in order to make social life amenable to scrutiny and political deliberation. They are "engines" that seek to transform the environment that it seeks to depict (Espeland & Sauder, 2007). Due to their references to what I have referred to as the "cultural authority of objective science" (Caraça, Lundvall, & Mendonça, 2009), Kornberger and Carter (2010) argue that rankings "form the battleground" on which global competition is played out, as they actively encourage public administrations to "change behaviors" and devise strategies, programs and practices that are in accordance with the rankings' underlining suggestions (p. 263). The aforementioned quotations seem to affirm that this is the case.

Third, rankings enable the creation of a particular form of promise. As we saw in chapter three, political hypes tend to come with promises for social change. Ngai-Ling (2009), who has studied international rankings and indexes, argues that "the increasing sophistication in index construction" enables government officials and agencies to "communicate pride, needs, desires and even panics over economic restructuring". For example, he argues that government actors "may narrate a fall within this index order as threatening and/or a sign of 'hollowing out'. This generates pressures on governments, firms, communities and some individuals to refashion themselves to become

competitive subjects and economic categories (e.g., entrepreneurs) in the race to aspire to a world-class ranking or, at least, do better than their immediate comparators" (p. 192–194). The invocation of innovation rankings is a particularly useful government technology in order to make the object of which it speaks critical for a manifold of actors. As the earlier quotations showed, the rankings produced pride but also alarm, and thereby urged the participants and organizations to reflect on future action. In chapter three, I discussed two aspects I believe are intrinsic to political hypes: future-orientation and hypes' capacity to mobilize different actors under similar forms of concerns. The rankings that were involved seem to have extracted future action from the hype's participants, as they enable reflections on a future state of affairs. It is also possible to claim that the rankings were critical in making the innovation hype a concern for many actors, for as we saw, different organizations with different interests could reflect on, interpret and make use of the rankings in accordance with their own interests.

Node three: The hype as a biopolitical project

I have argued that the emergence of the innovation hype in Sweden must be seen as part and parcel of a post-political condition. Post-politics is "politics made light" that favors and pursues consensus and the "apolitical" in its projects, activities and practices (Tesfahuney & Dahlstedt, 2008). Ek (2011) argues that in the post-political contemporary, the "optimization of life" becomes a prime target for governance. The planning of political projects is to a large extent concerned with creating "biopolitical subjects" that possess certain preferred and productive qualities. Ek thus incorporates Foucault's notion of biopolitics (or biopower), a term that first emerged in the final chapters of volume one in *The History of Sexuality* and in his later writings on ethics (Foucault, 1976/1990; Nilsson & Wallenstein, 2013). Foucault was interested in how governing had transformed itself throughout history, from disciplinary measures implemented in order to control a population, to softer forms of power in modern and advanced liberal societies where the care and protection of the population had become a greater concern. Political power in "advanced liberal societies" is thus not concerned with imposing political constraints, but rather enabling formations of preferable subject-positions in light of conceptions of what is good, healthy, normal, virtuous, efficient or profitable (Rose & Miller, 2010, p. 273). The promotion of subject-positions has, as I argued in

chapter three, been a concern for public relations research, but more so in terms of how public relations practitioners themselves conduct "identity work" in organizations (cf. Motion & Leitch, 2009, p. 97). In this section, the perspective is broadened, as I argue that the innovation hype the government agencies are embedded in and promote is a manifestation of how biopolitics work today – through a myriad of different political programs, representations and practices that are not constraining but "enabling" programs. My interviewees and the documents place great emphasis on certain "essentialist" individual features that pertain to how we as a population should conduct ourselves as "responsible" citizens. The argument tends to be made by appealing to assumptions that pertain to notions that concern Swedish identity, culture and history. In line with this dissertation's purpose to disclose how government agencies promote political issues, two salient "biopolitical techniques" are used by the Ministry and the Institute in order to promote innovation as a political issue: (1) By constructing innovation as a particularly ingrained notion in Swedish culture, history and identity and, its opposite, (2) by invoking attributes particularly lacking in Swedish culture, history and identity. I will commence by discussing the former. I refer to them as *biopolitical techniques,* as they come with suggestions about what is proper and perhaps even normal behavior.

Positive biopolitics

By positive biopolitics, I am referring to the techniques the government agencies make use of in order to construct the Swedish individual with ingrained and empowering features that are in line with innovation issues. A crude disclosure of this was published on the portal Sweden.se (a website managed by the Swedish Institute) prior to the Institute having developed their exhibition for the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai – an exhibition they labeled *Spirit of Innovation*:

> Part of Sweden's success lies in its inclusive and decentralized approach to management. Claes Andréasson, co-author of *The Viking Manifesto: The Scandinavian Approach to Business and Blasphemy,* says modern leaders have learned a few things from their marauding ancestors. 'The Vikings were the first tradesmen in the world. After a few centuries, they decided it was bad business to kill your customers,' he says. As Andréasson and his co-author Strid write in The Viking Manifesto: 'The Viking organization is built on the concept that the freer someone is to speak his mind, the more likely he is to use it. Long before

> management theory, the Vikings knew that democracy means empowerment and empowerment means passion and commitment. Democracy is not just a nice theory, it's efficient business' (Sweden.se, accessed 2012–12–13).

This is a naïve portrayal and obviously employs an extreme form of promotional language expressing images of Sweden's mythical past (Vikings) and a very crude joining of political nature (decentralization, democracy, freedom of speech) with that of capitalism (passion of and commitment to business, even conquest). The quotation is nevertheless symptomatic of the innovation hype, as it seeks to form discursive relations with that of certain "essentialist" assumptions surrounding Swedish culture and history, meaning that the discourse "presupposes that a group or a category of people share some defining features exclusive to the members of this particular group or category" (Eide, 2010, p. 66). Essentialist and positive biopolitical expressions in the hype's discourse tend to stress Swedish childhood and, by extension, the Swedish school system and education. Take, for example, the promotional booklet entitled *Innovation – The Swedish Way* published by the Swedish Institute (2013). The publication contains different stories of innovators and their essentially innovative "spirit". To produce promotional material is standard practice, but this is arguably the first time where the Institute actively conveys Sweden and its population as hosting essential qualities that are prone to innovation. One IT-entrepreneur documented in the booklet speaks of tree climbing as a child as a metaphor of the innovation spirit:

> From an early age, my passion was to climb trees – big trees with strong, solid branches that stretched the sky and fueled my imagination of faraway places, beyond our garden and neighborhood. I was blessed with parents who gave me the freedom to be me. Instead of trying to get me down from the tree, afraid that I would fall, they would ask me if I had a great view up there. And they gave my friends and me the tools we needed to build our own fortresses up in the clouds. Though my family could not afford a new Volvo, and I inherited jeans and sneakers from my older siblings, we all benefited from good, publically funded schooling. From elementary school onwards, we were encouraged to think independently and be inquisitive (p. 1).

Innovation is tied to the Swedish school system and education, but also to more "fluid" or "soft" personal qualities such as curiosity, imagination and bravery. In the same publication, when documenting sustainable and green innovation, the Institute ties innovation to a form of empowerment that emerges at an early age and in school:

> …[a]s early as preschool, children are taught to sort waste and to think about their responsibilities as human beings. Schoolchildren are strongly encouraged to find out how things work, to think critically to experiment and to work in groups. Many become small green innovators before they even leave the playground – which is not a bad place to start (p. 9).

It is interesting that the Swedish school system is used as an exemplar of Sweden's innate advantage. The OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is of interest to discuss here. PISA is an international survey that measures elementary students' understanding and knowledge in literacy, mathematics and the natural sciences in 41 different countries. When the 2012 report was released, it was like a minor bomb for the Swedish school system. The Swedish National Agency for Education[20] summarized PISA's results by stating that "the Swedish elementary students' understanding of literacy, mathematics and the natural sciences has deteriorated in the last decades" – in all three areas (Skolverket, 2013, p. 32). Swedish schools were ranked number 37 or 38 (depending on the subject), far below the mean average and the country's position when the survey was first carried out in 2000. The invocation of the Swedish school system, a salient and recurring aspect within the innovation hype, must be seen as part of a national self-image, rather than a projection of "real" conditions, something I will come back to.

We can find traces of essentialism in the interviews carried out with the individuals working for the Ministry as well. During my interview with one of the project leaders of the NIS, I asked her whether or not she believed innovation to be a lifestyle:

> We are all innovative. And when we were kids we were all innovative. We can have different presuppositions to continue to be innovative or to let ourselves or allow ourselves to be innovative. But I don't think it is a lifestyle. I believe it is a disposition that is more or less active. We humans are made not to like change. But if we look towards the Swedish population in relation to the world as a whole then we are very prone to change. And we are enthusiastic when it comes to trying new 'things'. So when it comes to the innovative vein in people in general, then we have better presuppositions than others (Project Leader 1, NIS).

The previous illustrations are examples of how the hype connects a particular population's essential qualities to that of being culturally driven to innovate. The interviewees and documents frequently juxtapose the Swedish population with other nations in order to disclose the said population's reckoned aptitude

[20] Skolverket

in adapting to societal change and development. In order to substantiate this claim, essentialism is frequently tied to *democratic* notions supposedly unique to Sweden. Sweden is a particularly suitable breeding ground for innovation when considering the nation's progress in terms of gender equality, diversity and non-hierarchical structures that are thought to pervade Swedish businesses and organizations. As an example, we can see how the Institute melds together these assumptions in the following Power Point-presentation:

> The Swedish culture offers:
>
> An open and international climate where influences and competences come together, creating new ideas and solutions.
>
> A non-hierarchical culture where the distance between management and staff/professors and student, is small and the relations are informal.
>
> A strong belief in the individual and the individuals' will and capacity to take responsibility.
>
> A strong belief in the importance of children's play. We believe that play is a key to creativity.
>
> A climate encouraging independent thinking and individual initiatives.
>
> A strong focus on cooperation, diversity and equality in all aspects of society (the Swedish Institute, n.d.).

This presentation was written as a template in order to simplify things for the Institute's employees during their presentations abroad concerning Sweden as an innovative nation. The transdiscursive elements and their "semantic flexibility" within the hype are salient (Miettinen, 2002), as innovation is tied to disparate democratic and highly positive aspects such as diversity, equality and non-hierarchies between management and employees in Swedish workplace settings. This can be attributed to a highly persistent image of Sweden being a "vanguard of modernism and progress" and a "social, political, and economic role model for other countries" (Larsson, 2008, p. 108). There are, in other words, discursive traces of what is often referred to as the *Swedish model*. Conceived in the 1930s as a government program that made employers organizations and trade unions meet as equal partners in order to minimize strife and conflict, the Swedish model has, according to Larsson, Letell and Thörn (2012), been transformed into a collective self-image of Sweden and its culture which is "rooted in a success story about a chosen people in league with

the future. While the nationalist overtones in this story of progress may not be unique to Sweden, it is a narrative that has formed generations in political life" (p. 6). For Musial (1998), who has studied how the *image* of progressive Sweden came about, the Swedish model emerged as a lens by which not only Swedes but also foreign nationals perceive the nation. For him, the model was more than a governance philosophy, as it was linked to notions of social, political and technological progressiveness that "came to be regarded as a *moral* quality" (p. 7). Sweden was enjoying a reputation as "the most advanced, socially engineered country. Swedes themselves came to believe that they had created a better system than any other nation in the world" (p. 12). The innovation hype must be seen as an extension of this belief, as the interviewees and documents frequently invoke assumptions that pertain to how Swedes favor progressive social and workplace ideals and are thus culturally susceptible to behavior that is in line with "innovative conduct". Interestingly, tying innovation to biopolitical notions and their transdiscursive and loosely coupled elements makes it even easier for the employees to speak of matters that pertain to innovation. The Institute's media relations manager, for instance, is a young man born in Portugal who came to Sweden a few years ago to work at the Institute. Prior to joining the Institute, he worked as a communication professional in the sports industry in his home country. During the interview, I was surprised by how he had learned not only the language of innovation but also its supposed relation to Swedish culture in just the few years he had worked at the Institute. During our conversation, a range of different cultural, social and economical assumptions pertaining to Sweden were brought to the fore:

> Why is Sweden so good at innovation? Well, there is a mandatory education system that is one of the oldest in the world. It also has to do with Sweden's openness to the world; we can reach the world, but also bring in talent to the nation. That is what we are talking about here, and also a sort of political, geopolitical environment that is very favorable for innovation, for a good innovation environment. That there is no war, that there is stability that comes from welfare, so people know that they are going to have food for tomorrow and therefore we can figure out things. How can I change the way we live, how can I be creative? That's very Swedish (Media Relations Manager, the Institute).

The media relations' manager brings up several assumptions supposedly pertaining to Swedish culture, history and identity: education's role in society, societal stability, welfare and citizens' freedom to exercise creativity. Implied in the interviewees and documents' suggestions is that the essential characteristics should be considered in relation to other nations, populations and human-

beings that may lack fundamental innovative attributes. A project leader of the NIS stressed this essentialist position during our conversation about what innovation is by juxtaposing the innovative human-being with a particular stock character:

> A wise friend of mine said that innovation – ultimately – is what separates us from the cavemen (Project Leader 1, NIS).

Albeit coming off as banal, the quotation is indicative of how political actors distinguish between preferred and undesirable personal attributes.

Negative biopolitics

We can also find shifts within the discourse that seeks to move away from this essentially positive construction of Swedish identity and culture. They still account for different degrees of "essentialism", albeit in the opposite manner. The argument in these *negative* cases is to reveal that *Swedishness* lacks defining attributes needed in the post-financial crisis context. This theme is more prominent within the Ministry – not particularly strange considering that their work with the NIS was concerned with promoting change in and for Swedish organizations, culture and individuals. During my interview with one of the communication professionals who worked with the NIS, I asked whether she believed innovation was important for Swedish society. Her answer was fragmented, but discloses certain assumptions about the nation's essential qualities that pervade Swedish society:

> I would say that I get more annoyed with people who don't want to see that there is a possibility to change. I guess I have become more aware of this as I've been working on these issues. You know, we in Sweden generally do not see possibilities, but problems. We've had it so good for so long so when we encounter problems we think 'but someone else can fix this'. We are used to the someone-elseness culture [*nånannanismen*], that someone else should do it. So I am becoming more, you know, 'yes but do it yourself, how would you solve it?' (Communication professional, NIS).

The NIS' project leader spoke in similar terms yet invokes a more everyday understanding of what innovation could amount to. She compares Sweden with the US, where she had worked prior to commencing work on the NIS:

> IP: A salient image that portrayed how far we have come in the collectivistic thinking of Sweden… It was two headlines, one article and one op-ed in Aftonbladet. It concerned Gunn, 77 years old, who helps women on the street in Stockholm. The headline said, 'I have never felt how meaningful life is until now', or something like that. And then in the op-ed [in an upset voice]: 'Citizens should not need to take care of society's responsibilities'. And then I just felt [whispering], 'what has become of us?' With that feeling I returned to Sweden. And the American society is far from the dream society. Sweden is a place where I would rather live and raise my children and where I want to grow old. But it is this passivizing collectivism where there is always somebody else, somebody else who should be blamed. It's the school's fault that my children are so and so. Why hasn't the school done this or that…? But what is *your* responsibility? It's a structural problem, they say. But maybe you have a little bit of elbowroom within the structures. Rosa Parks was a human being who actually changed the structures in the US. What do you do, within your structures?
>
> I: So the ultimate goal has in some way been to try to affect civil society, not only decision makers?
>
> IP: The culture in society. In the same way that people's movements in all times have affected people in the context in which they act. Yes, that has been an ambition. And many people have been positive to this, when they hear us talk about this. 'Then it really is about culture'. And that is correct. We have received a lot of positive feedback for this. It doesn't only concern bureaucracy; it is much more integrated in the whole of society. Innovation as a positive change, or as a societal force for change (Project Leader 1, NIS).

The project leader proceeded by juxtaposing "passivizing collectivism" with that of individual choice:

> The world is not perfect and will never be perfect, but can I do something in order for it to become perfect? And in what way shall I do this? Will I go and blow up Sergels Torg or do I chose to be engaged, start a movement, figure out the smartest thing and make sure people can use it and change the world in this manner. Shall we spray paint the walls or take advantage of the possibilities that de facto exists? I mean that we would not be here in this society if not human beings would have taken advantage of the possibilities that exist. Do we want to absorb the possibilities that we have with the knowledge, with the competence and our ability to interact and do stuff together (Project Leader 1, NIS)?

I interpret the interviewee as claiming that innovation is human capital and a bodily – tacit, indeed – skill that contains different levels of cognitive awareness. The innovator him/herself is an individual who rejects old forms of Swedish

collectivism and is willing to take responsibility for the well being of him/herself and others, and indeed, the nation as a whole. Beckman (1990) argues that the intertwinement of human capital with that of societal progression is a fairly recent development. He labels the 19th century "the era of human capital", where the geniuses, entrepreneurs and inventors have come to take the role of societies' heroes (p. 82). But it is more to it, as the interviewees connect innovation to that of a sensitive political discourse, both as something we do not want to do (blowing up a square) and aspirational figures we can aspire to be (Rosa Parks and "Gunn"). Innovation is thus an active, political choice we must make as citizens. Project Leader 2 of the NIS speaks of innovation using the same terms:

> I see it as a concern for more people. We had a seminar in the beginning of the NIS where a keynote speaker was asked what he thought was the most important aspect concerning the NIS. And he says: 'I don't think a strategy is needed. There is a need to sensitize people to the concept of innovation and the importance of innovation'. And that's something I find really interesting. When it becomes a concern for a lot more people, when you realize that as a coworker in an organization, regardless if it is in a private company or in healthcare, or in education, or in infrastructure, or whatever. That you realize that you have a role to change and renew and improve and develop that organization, and that you create space for that. Of course, we shouldn't exaggerate this dimension, everything has to flow as well. But I do believe a lot more is to be done, to release the renewable force in each and everyone (Project Leader 2, NIS).

The project leader's wish to "sensitize the user" and to instigate feelings of responsibility is pertinent. It is possible to interpret the interviewees as seeking to configure the category of *being innovative* for humans to actively choose. Rose (1999, 2001) labels this *vitalist politics* – a concept that signifies all the specific programs and strategies governments and public organizations launch in order to secure national interest through speaking to the citizens' care of the *self*. Narratives that invoke "freedom", "individuality", "passion", "empowerment", "enthusiasm", "spirit" and "creativity" are salient features and are invoked in order to work through the freedom of individuals and organizations. Dean (2010) argues that this is indeed how political power is organized in advanced liberal societies: "The exercise of authority presupposes the existence of a free subject of need, desire, rights, interest and choice" (p. 165). In other words, the Ministry's approach is not to constrain life, but to encounter individuals and organizations on their own terms, through their freedom and circulate a discursive strategy that invokes feelings of obligation, responsibility and alertness

against the perceived rigidity within Swedish culture. Innovation is thus the "contextual power" (Möllerström, 2011, p. 97) that enables political actors to disclose choices, possibilities and initiatives – without having to impose regulatory constraints. I hinted at this in the previous section on the role of rankings, where regions and other organizations came to reflect on their own work with regards to innovation. This will become clearer in the following chapters, as I will show that public relations practices are suitable tools to implement as a way to govern and disclose possibilities and choices for external actors – without having to upset or impose constraints on individuals or organizations.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented and analyzed the discursive nodes that together made the innovation issue into a somewhat coherent conceptual framework for political actors to use. The term "discursive node" is used as a conceptual and pedagogical tool in order to highlight the particular and locally contingent features of the political issue and the central arguments the innovation hype is composed of. The particular nodes are frequently stressed by the interviewees and are salient in the collected documents. They must therefore be seen as forming the basis through which the political issue was constructed as a plausible, realizable and meaningful issue for the political actors. I argued that the innovation hype that the Ministry and Institute were embedded in and promoted was considered productive, as it sought to align hitherto unconnected and disparate actors. The Swedish public sector in particular was considered a valuable target for innovation issues and processes, something I connected to an overall societal and political trend that has in the last two or three decades sought to come to terms with how to make public organizations run more efficiently. The SKL, as I discussed briefly, had initiated a manifold of different programs and published several reports in the last decade on issues that must be seen as similar to those concerns of the Ministry. In chapter three, I stated that transdiscursive ideas in political settings tend to evolve into new terms, concepts and practices in order not to become institutionalized customs. The Ministry's particular concern for innovation was construed as novel, something I believe was necessary in order to provoke action from within the public sector anew. This was also connected to what I have alluded to as the symbol or "cultural authority of objective science". The transnational organizations' circulation of

international rankings and indexes served a critical role in the profusion of innovation issues. That knowledge produces and legitimizes actions and practices was discussed in chapter three. We can thus see how this manifests itself in the innovation hype's discourse, as the participants involved began reflecting on their work in line with innovation. Innovation should thus be seen as a particular political issue that is suitable in advanced liberal societies, as it can work on the freedom of subjects while simultaneously invoking feelings of responsibility and obligation.

I chose to place this analytical chapter first, as I deemed it important to describe and analyze the central arguments the Ministry and Institute promoted. In the following three chapters, I will discuss in more detail how the Ministry and the Institute translate these nodes into public relations practices. I will, however, commence by describing and analyzing how the Swedish Government Offices have come to professionalize their approach to, and calculations on, matters that pertain to communication issues. I will do this in order to situate the Ministry's communication and public relations practices that pertain to innovation in its proper context. The Institute's public relations practices will be dealt with in chapter eight.

6 The Government Office's Communication and The Ministry's Public Relations Practices

In this chapter I will argue that the Swedish Government Offices (GO) have become a "communicative state" – it has come to reflect on, professionalize and implement new forms of communication practices that must be seen as signifying that of a new organizational "rationality". The increasing amount of communication professionals, press agents and the fairly unique appointment of the GO's Communication Director is an apparent reflection of these movements (Erlandsson, 2008; Falasca & Nord, 2013). Some have gone as far as suggesting that the GO and other public organizations are mediatized organizations that in many different ways continuously adapts to the pervasive media logic (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2013, 2014). Other researchers have suggested that the GO has come to adopt corporate communication practices such as branding measures and thereby come to resemble private organizations' communication efforts (Ullström, 2008). Research on what I have called the "mundane" or "micro-practices" of the GO's communication is, however, scant.

By way of Canel and Sanders' (2013) framework for studying government communication, I will commence this chapter by looking into some of the discursive shifts that have emerged through the GO's recent policies, administration documents and various strategies that deal with communication issues. As we will see, the GO has undergone a rather fundamental discursive shift in terms of how it perceives communication issues, a shift that has come to enable new forms of communication practices for the GO's departments. How the GO has come to reflect on communication issues is important to disclose in order to fully understand how the Ministry of Energy, Enterprise and Communications (the Ministry) promotes political issues and create relations with external actors. This is in line with this dissertation's overall purpose. I will therefore proceed by looking into how the Ministry adheres to this shift through its use of what I argue should be seen as political public relations practices that

contain both relational as well as persuasive elements (two fundamental aspects of political public relations, as I argued in chapter two). I will describe and analyze how the Ministry develops and implements different forms of public relations practices in order to mobilize support from a wide range of different actors on issues that pertain to innovation and the National Innovation Strategy (NIS) the Ministry sought to create. The research questions this chapter aims at answering are: How does the GO reflect on communication issues and how does the Ministry translate these reflections and discursive shifts into public relations practices in order to promote innovation issues and create relations with external actors? I will use some of the tools I developed in chapter three on the discursive and governmentality aspects of public relations in order to describe and analyze these shifts and practices. I stated that discursive perspectives on public relations are concerned with the "micro-physics" of practice: all those "mundane" tools that are used to reflect upon and calculate how governing can be possible and that ultimately make public relations a viable concern and option. This chapter's empirical material is based on government documents and interviews with the Ministry's employees that worked with the NIS (see empirical material list according to each analytical chapter in chapter four). It is also important to keep in mind that the public relations practices were implemented in order to create the NIS document. In chapter seven, therefore, I will describe and analyze some of the results of the Ministry's public relations practices, including the substance of the NIS.

Government communication: Three dimensions

Government communication manifests itself through a wide range of different discursive and social arrangements. According to Canel and Sanders (2013, p. 14ff), government communication can be analyzed by looking into three different dimensions: *Administration*, *Human Resources* and *Communication Practices*[21]. The administration framework is concerned with structural dimensions such as legislation, policies and guidance strategies, budgets, and financial resources. The human resource dimension concerns all those skills, values and professional experiences that permeate the government organization's

[21] The authors label this *Communication Processes*. I prefer to use the term *practices*. "Process", I believe, connote transmission, whereas "practice" captures the nuances and complexities of communication better.

communication practices. The practice dimension is much broader and involves a description and analysis of planning, meetings, briefings, campaigns and evaluation processes that are involved in the implementation of government communication practices. In the following sections, I will commence by looking at the administrative dimension that structures and enables the communication practices of the GO's to unfold. I will proceed by describing the communication practices that the administrative dimension enables by looking at the Ministry work with the NIS. The human resources dimension will only be used indirectly as I believe the administrative and practice dimensions are more in line with the overall purpose of this dissertation.

Government communication: Administrative framework

Administration concerns all those formal rules (such as policies and legislation) and the financial resources (such as budgets) awarded to the different Ministry's communication issues. A critical dimension here is that administrative procedures are not purely linguistic per se, but are, according to a governmentality lens, "systems for action through which they have sought to give effect to government" (Rose et al., 2006, p. 275). In terms of legislation, the GO is according to the Swedish Administrative Act[22] from 1986 obligated to inform citizens of its tasks, decisions and procedures. These judicial rules tend to be written in fairly general terms. For instance, in 4§ of the Administrative Law Act, the law states that "every government organization shall enlighten, give counseling, advice and other help to individuals that are affected by the organization's activities" (my translation). Another rule is stated in 6§ and concerns the communication tasks designated to the head of government agencies. The head of the government organization shall "make sure the public's contact with the government agency is facilitated by good service and accessibility, through information and through simple language in the agency's regulations and decisions" (my translation). Communication (or informing, at least) is thus ingrained in the GO's organization through constitutional law. The reason for this is to enable the citizenry to make informed decisions and to stimulate an open discussion climate concerning the government's work.

[22] Förvaltningslagen

It is important to note that the Swedish Administrative Act does not even begin to disclose the complexities and nuances of government agencies' communication practices. On several occasions, government agencies have been criticized and in some cases even reprimanded for conducting opinion-driven communication, as opposed to simply informing citizens of the organization's different activities, as the aforementioned law states (Hermansson, 1999). And moreover, the emergence of social media platforms has complicated communication matters even more (Hong, 2013). Consequently, a number of rather new internal policies, reports and strategies have been produced that seek in different ways to professionalize the GO's communication activities. A second administrative dimension is thus all those steering documents that seek to move the GO's way of organizing its communication activities in certain directions. The principal administrative documents are the overarching communication policies that are designed to guide the departments and their employees in their external communication activities. The GO's very first communication policy was devised in 1999. It has been updated on one occasion – in 2012[23]. Let me analyze and compare these two documents, as I believe it is possible to ascertain the development of the GO's perception on communication through these two policies.

In the 1999 version, the policy states that the GO's external communication was to be guided by five core values: Open, apprehensible, factual, fast and adaptable. It was, moreover, to be "neutral and separated from *political* information and communication" (Regeringskansliet, 2001, p. 3, my italics). This is a statement that suggests the GO should not be involved in opinion-driven forms of communication. Its most crucial target group was "the public"[24], though other government agencies such as municipalities and the media are mentioned as critical groups. Arguably the most unique feature of this policy is listed under the heading *Working procedures*[25] where it is possible to glimpse the emergence of a more professionalized communication perspective entering the GO's way of organizing. It is stated that "external information" and "communication"[26] should become integrated parts in the ways the GO plans

[23] The communication policy from 1999 was rewritten in 2003 in order to shorten it. The 2003 version was thus a redacted version of the 1999 communication policy and will not be developed further here.

[24] Allmänheten

[25] Arbetsformer

[26] The policy makes no real distinction between "information" and "communication". At the end of the policy however, they do define information (one-way) and communication (two-way) but throughout the policy they are used interchangeably with not clear separation.

its activities. Employees at all levels should take into account how their tasks and decisions are in need of and affect information and communication activities. And also, this must be planned well in advance. Let me quote one passage in full in order to portray this perspective:

> All larger information activities should be well planned before they are implemented and then evaluated in order to see if the goals have been realized. The activities should be *offensive*; it is important that the Government Offices take the initiative so the information is *correct* and as *broad* as possible. It is also important [for the GO] to be responsive for information that is demanded. Information should be adapted to every target-group's knowledge, interests, experiences and needs. In doing so, the possibilities of reaching out [to the public] are greater (p. 6–7, my italics).

There are a number of different dynamics within this policy worth pointing out. First of all, the GO went to great length to argue that their communication was to be neutral in order to steer away from the opinion-driven communication that the GO had been criticized for. This can be seen in the policy's repeated invocations of terms such as "factual", "correct" and the interchangeable use of "information" and "communication". However, to perceive communication as mere information undoubtedly reflects a transmission perspective on communication where the distribution of precise and objective facts is considered possible (Kjellgren, 2002).

Second of all, we can also see an emerging form of professionalization of communication, considering the policy's insistence on making communication an ingrained and integrated perspective on all levels within the organization. However, the communication policy of 1999 was written by the GO's former Administrative Director[27], an "apolitical" civil servant with little *political* clout within the GO as a whole. The GO is a highly complex organization with different departments, manifold press agents and political party leaders with different interests and political issues at stake. It is possible then that the communication policy of 1999 was a rather toothless steering device considering the variance of interests. This can even be seen in the policy's preface where the director states that the policy should be seen as a "*living document* that must be adjusted to the reality that the Government Offices face and must be rewritten depending on the demands that the organization face" (p. 2, my italics). Already at the outset then, the director suggests that the policy is not a universal product

[27] Förvaltningschef

for the entire GO but can be justifiably disregarded depending on certain circumstances.

Before I discuss the communication policy of 2012, a number of other administrative documents emerged after 1999 that, I argue, was part and parcel of the GO's discursive shift on matters that pertain to communication issues and suggest that communication had emerged as a *problematizing* activity that in different ways sought to fix some problem outside of its domain in order to govern properly (Dean, 2010).

In 1997, the government's different departments were unified into one coherent government agency – what is now the Swedish GO. To unite all departments under one administrative framework was achieved in order to make the organization run more efficient. A few years after the change, the internal consequences of those changes were difficult to pinpoint (Jacobsson, 2001, p. 5). The Cabinet Office[28] decided to form a task force whose goal was to recommend changes that could make the GO "more rational and efficient", as stated in the task force's government directive *A project for efficiency and rationalization of the Government Offices* (Statsrådsberedningen, 2011-09-21). Three years later, the task force published *A more efficient Government Office* (Regeringskansliet, 2003). Part of the task force's job was to analyze the "information operations" of the GO. In order to do so, they had hired the communication bureau Gullers Grupp[29] whose job was to conduct an "organizational oversight of the information operations" and Information Rosenbad's work on "information issues" (p. 106). "Information Rosenbad" was created in 1996 and its task was to manage and facilitate the GO's information and communication issues[30]. The SOU invokes coordination and cooperation between all departments in order to unite the GO's communication efforts as particularly crucial. The authors also discussed explicitly (most likely the for the first time in the GO's history) the individual competencies the GO's information operations are in need of. The SOU thus speaks of its need to hire *generalists* (key competencies and know-how: analytical, "strategic ability", pedagogical, media savvy, devise communication strategies) and *production-orientated* (key competencies and know-how: graphic design, web design, journalism, print). They state that "it would be reasonable that each department had access to information specialists that are generalists and qualified consultants and the more production-orientated specialists could be seen as a common resource" (p. 110).

[28] Statsrådsberedningen – the department in charge of steering the entire GO.
[29] Gullers Grupp is one of the largest communication bureaus in Sweden.
[30] Information Rosenbad changed its name to RK Kommunikation in 2013.

The SOU is interesting as it reflects a more calculative and ingrained approach to the GO's highly specific communication issues (I will label this a new *rationality* shortly). But it also discloses a conflict between that of *information* and *political communication*. At one point, the SOU claims that "in light of the strong connection between information operations and the political level the consultant [from Gullers Grupp] recommends a stronger connection to State Secretary-level" (p. 108). When the SOU states its recommendations in concrete terms, they write that "[a new] information policy should clarify the boundary between the GO's press secretaries and political information that remain separate from information operations" (p. 110). In other words, the SOU reaffirms (at least to some degree) the suggestions made by the communication policy of 1999 that a separation between information and political communication is valuable, but nevertheless proposes that a discussion on this distinction is in order. This can be interpreted as being a minor but nevertheless real shift of how the GO perceives the purpose of communication.

In 2011, communication issues gained attention again. The Prime Minister at the time had appointed his own party's (the Conservative Party) prior communication manager Per Schlingmann as the first ever State Secretary (a political position) in charge of the organization's communication affairs. The appointment was criticized, as it was interpreted that the Conservative Party in charge of the GO was gradually turning the organization into a "propaganda apparatus" for the party itself. The appointment was even examined by the Swedish Constitutional Committee[31]. One of the tasks Schlingmann set in motion was to award an independent researcher the responsibility to investigate what communication challenges the GO face and what the GO needs to do in order to make the organization's communication "efficient". In a PM written by the Administrative Department[32] who were in charge of the SOU, they state that the purpose of the SOU is to make the GO' communication activities…

> …more efficient, clear and purposeful. The communication shall be based on cooperation and flexibility. Responsibilities should be clearly defined. It is important that the GO's communication is characterized by openness, is adapted to the citizens and is future-orientated (Statsrådsberedningen & Kleen, 2011).

The author of the SOU's general concern was that the organization was rather immature in how it communicates to its different publics (by the GO's "public"

[31] Konstitutionsutskottet
[32] Förvaltningsdepartementet

the author was referring most notably to the media, citizens and different stakeholders such as NGO's and private organizations). However, a lot of employees the author interviewed regarded communication as essential. As one of the author's interviewees mentioned during his interview, "the Government Offices are run by money, laws/regulations and communication" (p. 45). That communication was carried out in a rather sporadic and unorganized matter was thus, according to the author, peculiar and in need of improvement. Some of the author's recommendations reflect the GO's aspirations of professionalizing its communication issues. For instance, communication, the author argued, was to become a more critical concern for Cabinet Office (The Prime Minister's Office, the top organization in the GO). The appointment of a Communication Director in 2012 serving at the Prime Minister's Office can be seen as invoking this move. The author also argues for the inclusion of communication perspectives in the laws that regulate the GO's tasks (*Förordning med instruktion för Regeringskansliet)*. These changes have not, however, been implemented, but the SOU's mentioning of this fact signals that it was a significant argument and must have been discussed on numerous levels within the GO. Another change that the SOU argues for concerns the awarding of clear responsibilities and roles in matters of communication in each department at the GO. I will discuss these responsibilities shortly.

The most significant change that the SOU arguably achieved concerns the communication policy of 1999. That policy's insistence on being "open" and communicating "factual" and "correct" information has in the newly created communication policy of 2012 (arguably legitimized by the aforementioned SOUs) been expanded and makes way for a range of different possible interpretations and communication activities. It is possible to argue that new communication practices inspired by two-way communication models have made their way into the GO's new communication policy. A range of different discursive shifts are made manifest and if judged against the backdrop of the communication policy of 1999 can be seen as quite symptomatic of a new and improved communicative government. Let me briefly describe a few aspects I believe signify a turn in the GO's view on the role communication plays.

First of all, a range of different new *practices* become legitimate ways of governing through the new communication policy. For instance, to implement *dialogue* and *discussions* with affected publics is in the 2012 policy perceived as a particular communication goal that should be implemented "in order to support the government in its task to govern the nation and realize its political duties". "External communication" should also be used in order to "create *trust* for the government and the Government Offices as institutions". Practices that

concern environmental scanning[33] and other evaluation methods are also new communication activities that are stated as crucial in order to be able to effectively communicate to specific target-groups (p. 3–4).

Second of all, the policy also concerns the awarding and structuring of *responsibilities*. The policy documents all those different roles, procedures and tasks the different departments consist of. On a basic level, the policy depicts a highly structured and hierarchical communicative organization. If we translate how the policy describes the way that communication is thought of and practiced at the GO, we get the following schema (p. 5–8):

Table 3: Responsibilities divided by department as promoted in the 2012 communication policy.

Department	Examples of responsibilities in matters of communication
The Cabinet Office	Overarching responsibility for the GO's communication; reference point to where communication issues that pertain to the *entire* GO should be discussed and evaluated.
The Administrative Office and the Communication Director (CD)	Coordinates all communication; create and formulate yearly communication strategies; evaluates the GO's communication practices; press agent for the entire GO; editor for the GO's websites; support all of the departments in their communication practices.
The GO's common "communication unit"	Support the CD's role; technical and practical support to the GO's press conferences and digital media platforms; advice the GO's departments in communication matters; supervize procurement processes on communication issues
The various Ministries	Communicate with the public on matters that concern their own issues; inform the CD regarding cooperation and development of communication activities.
Individual Ministers/State Secreteries (the political staff)	Determine what political issues should be prioritized from a communication perspective; organize sound work relations in the Ministry's communication work; determine the line between the Minister's role as a representative of the government and the role as a political party leader.
Press agents	Support the Minister's role as a spokesperson; initiate, coordinate and arrange the Minister's contacts with the media; develop communication strategies for the Minister.
The communication unit at each Department	Strategically plan the Ministry's communication; support the entire Ministry in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the communication practices; develop communication skills for the employees at the Ministry; develop communication policies unique for the Ministry; coordinate communication activities with the CD.
Head of the Ministry	Identify the Ministry's communication needs; make sure publicized information is correct; develop relevant background material for the Ministry's communication activities; be able to give facts to the media and other target-groups; make sure the Ministry's employees can develop communication skills if necessary.

[33] Omvärldsanalys

As we can see, the policy promotes and ascertains a highly communicative organization where all of the different departments and individuals reflect an organized GO on matters of communication. From the highly strategic communication matters of the Cabinet Office to the lower and concrete communication activities carried out by the head of the Ministry, the GO can be seen as having made efforts to streamline its communication functions and practices throughout the organization. It is worth noting that the communication activities carried out by the GO's individual communication professionals, the project leaders, the project assistants and the GO's hired consultants are not mentioned in the communication policy. The policy thus excludes the communication roles and activities that take place "on the floor" of the GO – communication is more significant than the policy depicts.

To some extent, this permeated professionalization is not particularly surprising. Governments worldwide need to be able to communicate its tasks, decisions and procedures to its target-groups in order for the organization to be considered democratically sound (Gregory, 2012; Waymer, 2013). That communication perspectives permeate the entire GO is therefore a highly suitable form of governing and can be argued as having become a management tool amongst many that the government may use in order to govern properly (Gelders & Ihlen, 2010). It is also worth pointing out that if we disregard the potential democratic possibilities generated by a communicative GO, there are a few critical topics that emerge with the development of a professionalized GO in terms of communication. In Kjellgren's (2002) historical analysis of the Swedish GO's communication, the author argues that even though the simple distribution of public information may reflect intrinsic democratic notions, it should nevertheless be seen as a form of ideology production – especially if we consider how strategic and well-planned the GO's communication efforts have become. The new communication policy even stirred a media debate in Sweden, where some civil servants and unions criticized the policy for making employees "write political texts" (cf. Hultqvist, 2012-09-25).

Gelders and Ihlen (2010) argue that a potential undemocratic consequence of governments' professionalization of its communication matters concerns governments' possibility of communicating and testing *potential* policies in the public sphere. The critique boils down to if and to what extent the politically appointed staff (such as party leaders) should have the entire GO at its disposal for purposes of political communication. The notion of implementing "trial balloons" in the public sphere (Åsard & Bennett, 1997, p. 31) becomes even more plausible if we consider the GO's newly found interest in what I referred to in chapter two as symmetrical forms of communication. As

we previously saw, new forms of communication practices such as "dialogue", "discussions" and "trust building" emerged through the new communication policy as legitimate forms of communication practices. This discursive shift reflects how far along the communication practices have come from the earlier times where "factual" and "correct" information was perceived as critical to the organization's communication activities (as was manifested in the communication policy of 1999, for instance).

This shift is also hinted at in the yearly reports produced by the GO where they summarize the organization's activities. Prior to 2012 (the year that the new communication policy was formulated) the report claims that the GO's external communication function is mainly concerned with five different activities: writing speeches for the political staff, collecting information for the Ministers' work in the Riksdag, giving responses to letters from the public, informing and consulting with the business life, interest organizations and the public and participating in seminars and other events. After 2012 however, the yearly reports include and acknowledge that the GO's external communication is concerned with "informing and communicating about the government's and the *political leaders' work*" (cf. Regeringskansliet, 2015, my italics). At first glance it might strike the reader as being a minor amendment to the yearly reports. However, the statement must be seen as a reference to the communication policy of 2012 and signifies a shift that may come to legitimize a more politically charged form of communication from the GO. Taken together, the administrative structure has slowly and gradually shifted from promoting one-way communication tools to legitimizing a whole range of different communication practices, a shift that I argue makes way for practices that should be labeled public relations practices as opposed to the more modest label of government communication. I will return to this notion shortly by making references to how the communication professionals at the GO speak of communication during my interviews.

Before I describe and analyze how the administrative framework manifests itself in public relations practice let me discuss how the administrative framework translates into the Ministry and NIS' communication policy.

The NIS' communication policy: Towards public relations

The policy was a crucial element in the development of the National Innovation Strategy (NIS). When I asked the NIS' project coordinator about the policy's function, she describes it as follows:

> You need it in order to create a common understanding for how we should communicate and then distribute this to the politicians, because this is something that we need to show them and that we need to discuss. 'What do you think of this? Are we going to communicate like this?' And then they can come with their opinions. The policy is also important in the discussions with the heads at the departments so everyone shares the same picture of what is important. The policy is definitely important as an 'absolute point' (Project coordinator, NIS).

The coordinator speaks of the policy as enabling the Ministry to create a shared perception on what communication entails. But more interestingly, and from a governmentality perspective, she also speaks of the policy as a steering device that is highly reflected upon; something I believe indicates that communication has become exposed to *rational* and *reflexive* forms of conduct within the GO in general. For instance, the project coordinator invokes this reasoning by mentioning that the policy must be discussed and sanctioned by the department's management (the politicians and the heads of the department) in order to become a reference point in the department's own conduct. This is even stated in the policy itself, where it is mentioned that the policy must be anchored internally by the management on a continuous basis. In other words, the department's management and employees continuously reflect upon its communication activities. The nine-page document must thus have been a fairly tedious document to write as the department revised the document on at least seven different occasions[34]. The NIS from the very outset is labeled a "communication project". The policy takes as its starting point the following statement that can be interpreted as a condensed form of the Ministry's "environmental scanning":

> Innovation is a hot subject on the political agenda globally, nationally and regionally. We can see this in Sweden where a large number of actors discuss innovation issues and develops strategies in order to strengthen the innovation climate. But for the individual citizen innovation is most likely a vague term. One of the challenges is to create understanding at a broader target-group in order to create jobs and possibilities for development – regardless where in Sweden you live and work (Regeringskansliet, 2011, p. 2).

It is interesting that the policy makes explicit references to the innovation hype. Innovation is considered a "hot subject" that a lot of individuals and

[34] In certain government documents (such as policies) the department must list when (the date and year) the document was subjected to revisions.

organizations currently work with, affirming McCann and Ward's (2010) suggestion that "hot ideas" sweep into political offices and "force" political actors to figure out solutions and "roll them out". If we look towards the communication dimensions, the policy manifests a fairly mature organization where target-groups, communication channels, communication goals and the communication roles the employees should occupy are explicitly listed and reflected upon. The policy sheds light on the Ministry's beliefs and hopes about what communication can achieve, and marks a definite break from the GO's policy from 1999 and a continuation (even expansion) of the 2012 policy and the recommendations from the 2011 SOU. In governmentality language, a new form of "problematization" emerges as it seeks to combat a "new" set of problems by invoking new forms of "government technologies" that can solve those very problems. Let me mention four communication dimensions in the Ministry's policy that I believe hitherto have been unexplored in a GO context. I will do this in order to describe and analyze some of the policy's practical implications and how it manifests itself through public relations practices in the next section.

First (1), the communication policy of the NIS argues that the implementation of dialogue and participation programs, the creation of and attendance of seminars, workshops and conferences and a proactive presence on social media platforms is needed in order for "the target-groups to have knowledge about the work with the NIS and know what they can do in order to contribute to a better innovation climate". The dialogue programs, for instance, are carefully described in the policy, indicating that the policy is a well-crafted document that has been subjected to careful thought and scrutiny.

Second of all (2), the benefits of media exposure are also touched upon in this policy, something that the previous policies do not reflect on. Also social media platforms (such as Twitter, blogs, Bambuser and Flickr) are communication channels that the policy recommends.

Thirdly (3), the graphic profile of the NIS and the strategy's symbol is revealed. The symbol for instance was to be used in the NIS' employees' emails, the Ministry's presentations during the Ministry's public relations practices and on all of the published material related to the strategy. The NIS was to make use of the following symbol:

Image 2: The symbol and graphic profile created exclusively for the NIS by the Ministry's communication unit.

By creating a shared and coherent frame with a specific typeface and graphic profile is what Erlandsson (2008) refers to as the GO's "borrowing" of corporate communication tools such as branding. The fact that the Ministry was keen on implementing the symbol on other organizations' events and on their programs and invitations can be seen as a manifestation of power asymmetry through the production of political symbols, as it discloses the Ministry's potential for applying what I have called "instruments for thought" onto other domains and in other spaces if considered suitable.

And finally (4), one of the policy's main pieces of advice for the Ministry' future communication practices during its work with the NIS is a "meta-reflection" on communication itself. I am here referring to how the policy states that the new communication tools and practices (its channels and dialogue programs for example) in and of themselves are beneficial for the Ministry regardless of their potential outcome, as it would signal a new and more open form of governing. For instance, under the heading "Message"[35], the policy states that "[t]he overarching message is that the government works with an open and inclusive dialogue in its work on the innovation strategy" (p. 4). In other words, that the Ministry works with new communication practices is in and of itself a highly positive message that is considered valuable from a communication perspective. No longer is communication a case of informing the GO's target-groups of "factual" and "correct" information regarding its work and decisions, but the entire communication practices that they create and implement send valuable signals to its target-groups. In my interviews with the Ministry's employees, similar forms of reflections are common and I will discuss this more explicitly later on when I describe how the discursive shift (from factual information to dialogue programs) manifests itself.

So far in this chapter I have sought to describe and analyze the administrative frameworks that affect and to some extent steer the

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communication practices that the GO in general and the Ministry in particular can implement. As a starting point I referred to the Administrative Law Act of 1986 and the GO's first communication policy from 1999 in order to disclose the professionalization of communication practices that gradually emerged from within the GO. I believe that the administrative documents such as the SOUs, the communication policy from 2012 and the Ministry's communication policy written explicitly for the NIS are reflections of a communicative turn within the GO that enables and legitimizes a whole range of communication practices. I also argued that communication (perhaps for the first time ever) seems to have become a particular form of "rationality" within the GO. By *rationality* I am referring to a new form of "reasoning, or way of thinking about, calculating and responding to a problem, which is more or less systematic, and which might draw upon formal bodies of knowledge and expertise" (Dean, 2010, p. 24). The SOUs and the later policies indicate a GO that carefully reflects upon communication and how certain communication practices can benefit their work. Or in other words, the administrative framework has gone from legitimizing information over communication into perceiving communication as a particular form of rationality with its own rules, nuances and complexities. In the following section, I will describe and analyze how the Ministry implements this new form of rationality. I will refer to their practice as public relations practice.

The Ministry's public relations practices

I will now turn to the next step in Sanders and Canel's (2013) framework for analyzing government communication. They label this step *Process,* where the government's practical communication activities should be described and analyzed. In this section I will thus describe the government's public relations practices that took place behind the development of the NIS in order to highlight the communicative turn that I believe the GO currently faces. In the previous section I paid close attention to certain key documents that I believe set the administrative framework for the GO to legitimize new communication practices. In this section I will pay closer attention to the interviews that I carried out with the employees that were responsible for the NIS. I will, however, also make use of certain government documents (such as communication policies, SOUs, blogs, workshop programs) and I will analyze the empirical material by looking into what I have called the governmentality

aspects of public relations, meaning all those meticulous calculations that the Ministry seeks to employ in order to be able to govern properly. I will commence by looking into the core values that the Ministry considered crucial to communicate during their work with the NIS. I will proceed by analyzing the dialogue programs, the consultants' role in the programs, what the dialogue format enabled for the Ministry and the consequences the dialogue format had for the Ministry within the organization. Put shortly, I will look at the public relations practices that were particularly critical for the Ministry's portrayal of innovation as a critical issue in Sweden. This is thus in line with this dissertation's overall purpose as discussed in chapter one.

Initial reflections and concerns

In this section I will describe and analyze the Ministry's implementation of their public relations practices. I will place the analytical level on a fairly elementary plane where practices such as meetings and workshops with the Ministry's target-groups are used as examples in order to show how well planned and calculative the Ministry's communication activities have become. I will argue that the spaces where the Ministry meets its target-groups have emerged as a new and particular form of governmentality and according to Miller and Rose (2008), the practices of governmentality need to be located and analyzed "in the mundane and the humble" (p. 63). Even prior to Foucault's interest in notions of governmentality, his interest was always on how micro-techniques affect power throughout society (Alvesson, 1996, p. 96ff; Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 51). Let me begin by giving a quick outline of the Ministry's initial reflections on their public relations practices in order to discuss the "micro-techniques" I believe the Ministry make use of in order to turn innovation into a political issue for its stated target-groups. Keep in mind that I perceive these forms of practices as having emerged as legitimized on basis of the innovation hype, but also on basis of the discursive shifts that appeared in the aforementioned communication policies and other administrative shifts.

It is important to point out that the amount of people who worked for the NIS and its communication programs varied greatly. The project leader of the NIS told me that this was a fairly complex situation. Some employees worked full-time (such as the two project leaders), others worked 75% (such as the communication professionals and the project assistants), some worked indirectly with highly specific issues (such as the Ministry's Communication Director) and others had a more strategic function (such as the political staff, the Minister

herself and a group that spanned many different departments at the GO). Together, the Ministry began its work with the NIS by designing a three-step plan that was to guide its team of communication professionals, project assistants and projects leaders in their work with the NIS. The plan included:

1. Communication: To communicate to a whole range of different stakeholders what innovation is, how it affects different parts of society and how it emerges.

2. Formulation: Together with the different stakeholders, find an agreement on a vision and different goals and to identify the most crucial areas where innovation is to emerge.

3. Implementation: The cooperation that the innovation strategy had promoted (from within the government offices and with other key stakeholders in society) is a foundation onto which the strategy is implemented (Näringsdepartementet, 2011).

Communication was an intrinsic (even primary) part of the Ministry's work with the NIS. One of the project leaders describes this communicative realization as follows:

> I went straight to the communication director and told him that this is what we are going to do, it will be a lot of communication involved that I do not know how to handle so I need your help. Kind of like, I'll do as I am told…(Project leader 2, NIS).

Before the Ministry began its implementation of public relations practices, the organization had discussed what core values they believed should be reflected in their communication with its target-groups. This was a crucial task, as the purpose of the entire NIS was to make innovation into a graspable subject for a manifold of individuals and organizations – they wanted to create a "people's movement". Some of the NIS' core messages can be found in the NIS' communication policy, where the policy argues that the employees need invoke and emphasize three aspects in particular: the Global Challenges, the ever-increasing competition between nations and Sweden's future welfare-state are all messages that need to be clearly communicated by the NIS' employees as particularly acute concerns. In order for these three aspects to emerge as concrete reference points in the Ministry's public relations practices, the policy states that the employees need to be able to clearly state and communicate four aspects in particular: What innovation is ("New solutions to societal

challenges"), where it appears ("In all forms of businesses, public organizations and in civil society"), why it is needed ("Raises competitiveness, solves global challenges") and how it appears ("In many different ways, often randomly, often through a combination of knowledge and other resources") (Näringsdepartementet, 2011).

A more central concept was the term "empowerment". A few civil servants at the Ministry had gathered prior to the public relations practices of the NIS and discussed what the term "empowerment" meant and how it could be used. To have participants feel empowered was critical, they argued. One of the project leaders puts it as follows:

> This time we had a very wise and experienced communication professional with us from the start. And the Communication Director, her boss, and I we had a few initial meetings where we talked about the term [empowerment] and a people's movement. That people should feel that they can and want to contribute to societal change (Project Leader, NIS).

The results of their discussion were even included in the NIS' communication policy where it is stated as follows:

> We have discussed the word *empowerment*. The meaning of this is to strengthen the driving force within the individual human being. That you as an individual should feel that innovation is something that you can contribute to. One way of formulating this can be to have a vision that says *Sweden shall be a nation of innovators* (Näringsdepartementet, 2011, p. 4, the authors' italics).

I argued in chapter five that innovation is a biopolitical issue concerned with promoting individual attributes and traits. The interviewee invokes a "people's movement" and the policy paraphrases this into a vision of having a "nation of innovators". I believe that her invocation is a reflection of the hype's power and Bergwik's (2014) suggestion that the politics of innovation tend to perceive innovators as possible to replicate from a top-down perspective. Whether or not a "movement" could emerge from the Ministry's work, the NIS' employees' repeated invocations and emphasis on empowerment and their belief in creating a movement says a lot about their perception on what their public relations practices can achieve. In the Ministry's case, they needed public relations in order to create a movement and to make individuals *feel* empowered. In the governmentality literature, Dean (2010) has discussed the governments' employment of what he calls "technologies of agency", or the "multiple techniques of self-esteem, empowerment and negotiation" that are used in order to foster and create shared communities (p. 196). Such technologies work on

the freedom of the citizen (as opposed to the discipline of citizens), as the technologies tend to be framed in a positive and emotional light of individual self-fulfillment. I do believe that the emergence of a communicative turn within the GO in general and, in this case, the Ministry in particular, fits rather well with this new form of governing that emphasizes and works on and through the freedom of citizens. Public relations practices may have become a particular governing technology that is implemented in order to facilitate this very engagement. I believe this will become increasingly concrete as we turn towards the more practical arrangements of the Ministry's public relations practices – the implementation of dialogue meetings and workshops ("shared spaces" for short) and the consultants' role in managing those spaces.

The consultants' role

To get an overview, we can see that the Ministry creates different shared spaces in order for its target-groups to encounter the Ministry's work. Kick-offs, dialogue programs, workshops and seminars were all spaces that are implemented and carefully scripted. The communication director at the Ministry told me that these forms of practices where the Ministry actively invite target-groups were fairly new – a practice he termed "active" and "structured" listening. Considering that these forms of communication practices were rather new for the Ministry, they enlisted the help from a private consultancy firm that I will call the Dialogue Group (DG for short). The DG is a private organization that specializes in, according to their website, "helping private and public organizations become more efficient, plan and implement organizational change and improve organizations' management functions". When hired by the Ministry, the DG's role differed, as their tasks were mainly to design, coordinate and supervise various dialogue meetings the Ministry wanted to set in motion. According to one of the communication professionals at the Ministry, the consultancy firm's supporting role had been absolutely crucial in the making of the strategy (Communication professional, NIS). Note that the hiring of the DG itself is an indication of the communicative turn of the GO, as it is a reflection of an organization that is in need of perfecting its public relations activities. I will discuss briefly the consultancy firm's perception on their work with the NIS, as I believe it is telling of how the GO practices public relations.

In the beginning of my interview with one of the DG's private consultants that worked with the NIS I asked her about what it is her firm provides to their clients. Her answer was as follows:

> DG was formed in 2000 and in the beginning there was a lot of focus on consulting methods involving big groups, which was fairly uncommon in Sweden at the time. In the US it is very popular, that you gather a lot of people, up to 500 people in the same venue. Large meetings. There was someone who got the idea during the Woodstock festival and then inspired DG. So we have become leaders in this tradition and educated a lot of consultants in that vein. So when we develop organizations we work a lot with that, and it is usually longer assignments where we want to develop the organization. It usually concerns change or that we need to get more energy into the system, or management does not work properly or that management needs to get the co-workers in line with their decisions. It's often like 'yes we know how to lead, but how are we to get the masses on board, how will we get everyone to feel a belonging in the entire organization'. That's difficult. [The clients' say:] 'We have reached a decision, this is what should be done, but how will we get everyone aboard?' (Project Leader, DG).

The interviewee commences by defining the DG's mission by making reference to large masses such as Woodstock. The phrase "get the masses on board" evokes premonitions of earlier forms of management schools where discipline and direct steering of employees were regarded as conventional and recommended approaches (cf. Cheney et al., 2011 p. 47ff). The project leaders proceeds by suggesting that the DG's approach is based on "scientific" reasoning:

> One of our cornerstones is clear leadership, which is a theory that comes from a professor in the US that is about how to achieve clear and precise communication within an organization, because that's what you build an organization on. People, instead of technology and infrastructure (Project Leader, DG).

Foucault (1991) argues that governing in advanced liberal societies is primarily concerned with what he calls "the problem of population" (p. 100ff). He is referring to how "the population is the object that government must take into account in all its observations and *savoir*, in order to govern effectively in a rational and conscious manner". It is thus a potential problem in the "art of governing" to find fresh outlets, spaces and practices that can realize and localize "the problem of population". The DG is, in a sense, a solution to this problem for the Ministry as it is difficult to imagine a government who is directly involved with calibrating and steering the meetings by themselves without evoking overt government control. What the consultancy firm provides that the Ministry cannot is an aura of legitimacy constructed as "scientific" expertise and

other forms of know-how in the governing of the conduct of others. The consultant speaks of her work as needed when an organization and the leadership is in need of organizational change and energy and to help them bring "the masses" on board. Her solution to this is what she perceives to be an "evidence-based" form of communication that is grounded in science. In other documents the firm had created in order to better explain their work to the participants, the key words were "coaching", "energy", "change", "a push", and so on (Dialogue Group, 2011). I asked her about what the premises were when the Ministry awarded the consultancy firm the contract:

> When she [the NIS project leader] joined the Ministry she called us and asked around a bit: 'We need help to launch this and we need quality in terms of what is being done…If we start with these dialogue meetings, how will these meetings look and what will come out of them?' So she came with a lot of ideas and then me and my colleague sat down and thought: 'How do we want to develop this, what is the most efficient way to work with this strategy, get energy into this, and have others feel empowered to change, as an individual but also as a group'. And then relate that to the Ministry's work [on the NIS] (Project Leader, DG).

Note that the DG's project leader also emphasized the invited participants' possibilities to "feel empowered". Empowerment thus takes a practical shape through the consultants' role in the NIS. She proceeded to reflect on how the DG discussed their work with the Ministry's dialogue meetings:

> We don't really believe in coaching like, you know, here are some consultants from Stockholm that will sit along and coach. It's about discussing issues they themselves deal with. To discuss central issues, to focus on what can they do. And every innovation dialogue has to be super good. You know what it's like to get everyone into a meeting for one day. Everything must work out perfect. And then there's a lot of great speeches where they develop their theories and ideas. But in the end, what did the participants gain? Did they get more than what they get from reading a book? Or should one make sure that meetings are a meeting place where I can contribute, where I take responsibility, where I can imagine possibilities and scenarios, in order to boost innovation. So it's about what possibilities are out there, and what do I need to do to embrace this. How high should the bar be in order for us to achieve the possible? And the project leaders were clear on this, that it should not be about the Ministry dictating what the meetings should be about. But it should be a win-win in the sense that we need you and they need us in order to gain from this (Project Leader, DG).

A key point for the consultants was to create in the participants a sense of empowerment – by carving out a shared space where the participants could

reflect on their own work and future. According to the consultant, this is different from more traditional practices of creating engagement. She juxtaposes it with transmission models of communication (speeches or reading a book) and tedious meetings. In the previous section I referred to public relations practices as a governmental technology of agency. I believe that the leader of the DG group reflects this very position, as responsibility is framed as something that is wanted by the invited participants (the meetings are *for* them and to empower them to "achieve the possible"). She also invokes just how calculative such an undertaking is (the dialogues have to be "super good" and "everything must work out perfect"). The dialogue programs are thus in line with a more professionally communicative turn where meticulous forms of dialogue programs are in need and carefully planned. This can even be interpreted as a way for the Ministry to relieve itself from having to take responsibility for the outcomes of their meetings or the NIS. *Empowerment*, as Heide and Simonsson (2011) note, reflects an old management ideal that sought to award employees with new forms of responsibility that had previously been attached to managers, something which often resulted in a distancing between that of management and employees' work (p. 208). I will have reason to come back to this, as public relations practices seem to relieve political actors from taking responsibility in political arenas. First, let me discuss just how well planned these meetings or spaces were.

Shared spaces

The Ministry had designed an outline of the different forms of meetings or shared spaces they were to participate in or monitor. The following schema was designed where four types of events were placed in hierarchical order:

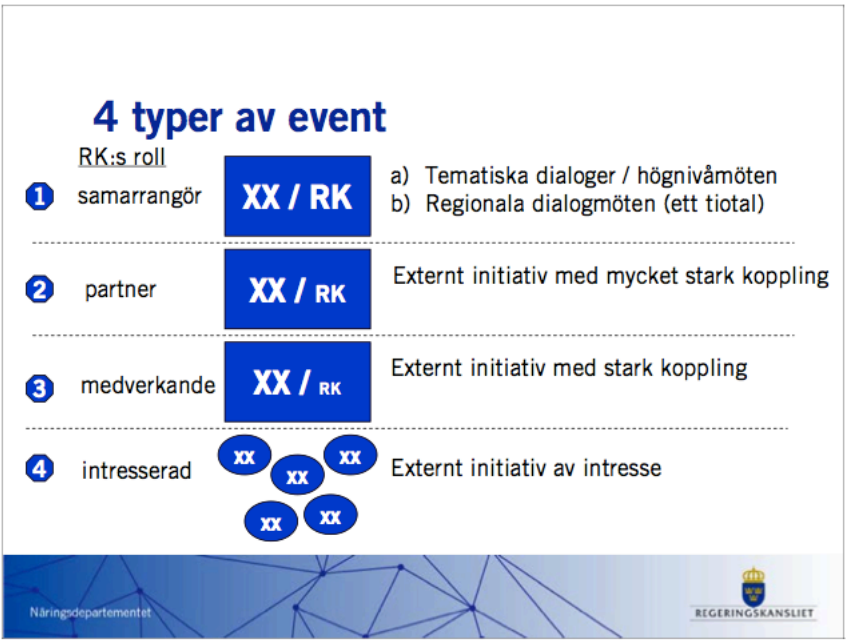


Image 3: The four types of events of interest to the Ministry, in hierarchical order of interest (Näringsdepartementet, 2012c).

The image guided the Ministry in terms of how they ought to perceive and categorize their "active" and "structured" listening. Starting from below, point number 4 concerns all those events that other actors outside of the Ministry's control organize. These events are, as it is stated in the right, "of interest" but not a priority for the Ministry or the development of the NIS[36]. Higher up in the hierarchy is point number 1, which concerns the dialogue meetings that the Ministry itself was in charge of and therefore considered high priority. It is worth pointing out that, according to the communication policy, the Ministry was to discuss "interesting events" (regardless of their priority) in order to evaluate if the events could include the Ministry's NIS project in their discussions. The crucial task was to ask and discuss with the organizers of each event if it coincided with the aim of NIS and, if deemed possible, participate in their activities. After such discussions, "the Ministry's project group decides if it

[36] These events have not been documented or analyzed in this dissertation. They were independent events organized by organizations close to the Ministry but outside of the Ministry's direct control. Attending such events is a standard procedure within the Ministry and is thus not exclusive for the innovation hype.

is suitable [for the organizers] to apply the graphic profile [of the NIS] during these activities and their web- and twitter presence. Responsible for these decisions are the project leaders, the political staff and the communication professionals" (p. 7–8). As we can see, the Ministry paid close attention to events in its surroundings in order to carefully examine their potential for carving out new spaces where the NIS could be made of interest to a wide public. In corporate terms, this would be similar to branding or sponsoring events.

If we look at the Ministry's top priority in terms of the events, the Ministry initiated eight different regional and dialogue meetings all throughout Sweden and seven different thematic dialogue meetings that covered a wide range of different topics pertaining to different forms of innovation: open innovation, service innovation, innovation and gender, social innovation, innovation and immaterial assets, innovation and tourism and innovation for sustainability in the ocean. Invited participants were actors from the public sector, NGOs, local businesses and universities. The number of participants ranged from 80 to 300 individuals. How the Ministry invited the participants was a rather informal affair. When I asked the project leader about this she reflects on the process as follows:

> We have pretty good networks. And then the politicians meet people that they invite to write stuff for the blog. On seminars or the workshops, if we spotted someone interesting, we asked him or her if they wanted to join us somehow. So we had, how should I put it, an overarching picture of some of the people that we thought could contribute to this (Project Leader 1, NIS).

The second project leader confirms this rather informal and open form of creating networks:

> Already at the kick-off we sent out an invitation in order to see if someone has an idea they want to work with, then they should signal that to us. So we used many different roads. It was personal contacts or people that came up to us in different contexts – telephone calls, e-mails, Twitter, all different kinds of things. It was a very open process in that sense (Project Leader 2, NIS).

In chapter two on the development of public relations in Sweden, I mentioned that the GO's public outreach has undergone a range of different transformations that has enabled the Ministries to form new networks with target-groups through a range of different informal means. I referred to the successive decorporatization of the GO in the early 1990s where the previous formal decision-making processes within the organization were gradually

replaced by more informal use of networks (Hermansson, 1999). The new political value of informal networks was also emphasized by Garsten, Rothstein and Svallfors (2015), something the Ministry is embedded in and take advantage of. The two project leaders stress the importance of building and (more importantly) using their own networks in order to implement the work on the NIS. I will expand on this later on in the chapter when I discuss the interviewees' reflections on what the meetings amounted to.

Prior to the actual dialogue meetings however, the DG held workshops with the actors that were to coordinate the fifteen dialogue meetings taking place throughout Sweden. The coordinators of the dialogue meetings were usually actors that the Ministry was in close contact with (most notably Regions but also governmental agencies such as Vinnova and universities). These workshops took place in the autumn of 2011, whereas the dialogue meetings were to be implemented the following spring. The DG claimed that these workshops served as "quality insurance for the upcoming dialogue meetings" where the workshops' aim was to "work through a concrete plan for each dialogue meeting, what the coordinators need to do prior to the dialogue meeting and during the actual meeting". The DG called this process "train the trainers", as it was their task to coach and boost the coordinators of each upcoming dialogue meeting (Dialogue Group, 2011). The person in charge of these initial workshops at the Ministry explains these workshops as follows:

> We had discussed the workshops with some organizations [that had been interested in hosting dialogue events], and they said yes, they thought it was a good idea. So we invited them to an initial workshop with the consultants who are specialists where they introduced our 'dialogue concept'. At the workshops, they could discuss issues, raise questions and say what they thought about the whole thing. So they got an introduction together with other organizations that were to hold these dialogue meetings (Project Coordinator, NIS).

The invited organizers of the future dialogue meetings could also contact the DG-group on a continuing basis if they were in need of support prior to the actual dialogue meetings. In other words, the Ministry thus hired expert support on how to conduct (what I interpret as) large-scale public relations practices, as the aim of the future dialogue meetings were to (1) mobilize support for the NIS and (2) to create engagement around innovation issues in order to "foster growth and welfare" (Dialogue Group, 2011). This is a practice that reflects a detailed-orientated Ministry in matters of communication and public relations practices. I will come back to this notion shortly.

When the event organizers implemented the actual dialogue concept however, things got a little more complex. The thematic dialogue meetings were fairly similar in terms of how the meetings were outlined. The days began with speeches delivered by either the Minister herself, one of her representatives and/or managers at different organizations that were highly involved with the respective theme. However, the Ministry and the DG-group had been at pains not to make the "dialogue concept" into just another conference. In fact, the previously discussed workshops had been organized in order for the organizers to understand that the dialogue concept was to be constructed as something new and exciting. The NIS' project coordinator reflects on when the Ministry realized that to implement such new forms of concepts was a fairly complex endeavor:

> We did not think it was going to be so difficult. Because a lot times we were like 'but hey, it shouldn't be so hard to understand'. But at the same time, this is new stuff and these things take time (Project Coordinator, NIS).

Later on in the interview she expands on the dialogue concept's complexities:

> At times, some organizers understood the entire thing fast. Some said, 'this sounds like fun, it's exciting to do new stuff'. At the same time, it was easy for some people to just do the typical stuff: 'We'll organize a conference and someone is lecturing, and then you applaud, and maybe you can ask a question or two, and then it's on to the next lecturer'. It was easy to go back to the un-interactive stuff, where you're just passive and listen to someone's speech. And it wasn't until they had been to other dialogue meetings where some people had understood what the whole point was. That they realized that 'wow, people are talking a lot more with each other and create new contacts and come up with new ideas'. That it's just not about taking in, but it's also about sharing and creating something together (Project Coordinator, NIS).

The project coordinator invokes a salient trend within the Ministry, that which perceives transmission forms of communication (passively listening) as outdated, and co-creational perspectives that emphasize sharing, creation and social inclusion significant. The amount of actors differed during these dialogue spaces. One regional dialogue that concerned innovation in the tourism industry states in their summary that the following participants contributed:

> On February 8 we conducted an innovation dialogue for the tourism industry at Verket in Avesta. Over 200 people joined from all over Sweden. The day was dominated by 66 large and small corporations. Actors in research and education were also present (11 participants) and representatives from business in the

> tourism sector (23 participants). 17 people came from departments on a national level [government] and 4 represented the tourism sector on a national level. Actors from regional level were also present (11 participants). Municipalities from the Gävle-Dala and Middle Sweden area also joined (32 participants). Also, regional actors joined, that is destination companies and regional tourist corporations (Region Dalarna, 2012-04-12).

The majority of the dialogue meetings were supervised and guided by the DG-group, and the consultancy group tended to base the meetings on a workshop format: dividing participants into groups around tables and having them discuss specific issues concerning the particular theme and then presenting their conclusions to the group. During the dialogue meetings, the consultancy firm had outlined a highly structured schema on how the participants were to behave and discuss. One such dialogue practice involved what the consultants referred to as "role-playing". Each participant was placed in a group. When looking at the summaries of these events, it is clear that the DG was keen on mixing the groups so that they consisted of individuals from different sectors. Prior to this, each participant was to reflect on and write down answers according to pre-defined questions formulated by the consultancy firm and the Ministry: "What have you done with regards to the particular theme that was successful for your organization? What were the results and the effects? What was your role in this process? Was there any cooperation with other actors? Was timing of any importance for the project?" (Näringsdepartementet, 2012d). The participants were to proceed by interviewing another participant in order to present the examples when joining their group. When presenting to their assigned group, each individual was to behave according to quite specific roles. It was, in a sense, a form of role-playing where each individual was to act according to a clearly stated and defined character: "The coordinator" was to stimulate the discussion and to keep the workshop constructive and inclusive. "The timekeeper" was to keep track of time and to notify the group of how much time was left for the discussion. "The writer" was to listen for keywords and to capture the most central ideas that were developed during the discussion. "The rapporteur" was to carefully listen in order to be able to share the stories told in the group to the other groups – the "plenary". Once roles had been designated, the participants were to tell the stories of their individual reflections and to collect recurring themes and particularly unique aspects of the stories told. In the aforementioned innovation dialogue that concerned the tourism industry, the region states in their summary that the groups' "reflections were then documented via computers and projected on big screens in order for everyone on site to discuss the said issues" (Region Dalarna, 2012-04-12, p. 6).

Even though they might be considered mundane, these dialogue practices were standard when the consultancy firm arranged and supervised meetings. In many ways, it is devised in order to empower people to reflect on their own work in relation to innovation issues. The project leader of the consultancy firm states this quite clearly:

> IP: We have a design that makes them sit in mixed groups. And it's always questions like, 'OK, who are you? What do you do? What expectations do you have for this day? What do you want have to achieved after this day is over?' And so we encourage people and say, 'OK, how will we achieve this? What do you want to do? Are you going to contact someone specific today?' All of these parts are about the people who are there, what possibilities they have for broadening their perspective and capture what it is they can do. So it concerns these leadership principles that are a bit worn-out: Lead yourself, let yourself be led and lead others during the day. And so you put a lot more responsibility over to the participants to act and also to affect.
>
> I: It sounds like conditions for inspiration.
>
> IP: Yes, that's exactly what it's about. When you explain it in those terms I'm thinking that it's not always an easy job. So it's also about seeing possibilities and ask for help and for a mobilization from different parts and also to see that the entire Sweden is working on these things. That I have others near me that work with similar stuff and that there are possibilities around me. And we are, generally speaking, fairly bad at this stuff, it's usually about figuring out these things for yourself. But then you end up in a meeting and wow! So yeah, it's about enabling these things, and get inspired from that and a pat on the back – now we need to do this and realize that it's worth it. We often call it "training" instead of "exercise", because it's about training oneself to find new perspectives, and to focus on the topic and think in new ways. So what we are talking about concerns involvement, responsibility and cooperation (Project Leader, DG).

In chapter five on the innovation hype's discursive nodes, I wrote that the innovation hype should be seen as a bio-political project that aims to work on the freedom of individuals. I believe that this takes a practical role here as the Ministry's invocations of empowerment and responsibilities manifest themselves in these spaces. According to Karlsen and Villadsen (2008), who have studied the role of dialogue in government settings, the practice of dialogue is a government technology that does not per se reflect an open or transparent government, but are instances where opinions and speech are structured and where authorities create spaces that "act upon others in order to shape their orientations, motivations and self-perception" (p. 347). The consultants' fine-

tuned reflections on roles and their implementation suggest that this is a highly calculated practice. According to the consultant, the purpose behind these dialogue meetings was to motivate the participants in their own work lives. The consultancy firm's use of the word "training" as opposed to "exercise" is telling, as it invokes a belief in the progression of oneself in relation to a particular task-at-hand. The shared spaces can be interpreted as empowering the participants to self-reflection and change oneself in line with the political issue and themes of the dialogues. This form of empowerment creates a sense of belonging to a community of like-minded individuals and may invoke feelings of shared mutual responsibility towards a particular political issue. It is thus not wonder that a manifold of Swedish regions – even smaller municipalities – developed their own innovation strategies, clearly in line with the Ministry's wishes. Taylor and Kent (2014) have argued that the practice of dialogues should be seen as existing alongside a continuum, with monologue at one end (where messages are construed so as to generate obedience from the participants), and *real* dialogue at the other end of the continuum (where meaning-making and co-creational perspectives are highlighted). The Ministry's dialogue programs emphasized co-creational perspectives (as the participants were invited to share and be inspired). However, as I will argue in the next chapter, it is difficult to pinpoint how the Ministry's own work was adjusted as an outcome of these dialogue meetings. It also difficult to pinpoint who "owned" these shared spaces – was it the Ministry, or the regions who facilitated the spaces? I will have reason to come back to this, as responsibility may become ambiguous.

To conclude this section, it is important to point out that these dialogue programs and workshops were a fairly unique and new practice within the GO in general. Their execution may come across as mundane, but for a GO that just in the last year or so has commenced experimenting with new communication issues it was a quite unique experience. For instance, the communication director, who served a critical role in the NIS' communication practices, and whom I asked if the dialogue programs could have happened a few years ago, reasons as follows:

> No, there have been a lot of changes. Sometimes when I give presentations on how we work with communication then I first present an image of a couple of megaphones. And I say that when I came here my idea, right or wrong, was that we worked liked this [refers to the megaphones] – we let people know what we had decided, the government has launched this proposition, and so on. And then my next image represents that we now work with open and inclusive dialogues.

When I asked why this change in government communication has emerged in the last few years, he reflects on a general discursive shift pertaining to how society perceives communication:

> [Long break] It concerns the communication business in general, so to say. I mean, this old definition from information to communication to relations. In order to succeed in one's work you must create participation. And then Maud Olofsson[37] was clear on this. It doesn't make sense to just get out there and tell people stuff. We should also take an interest in what happens in people's everyday lives in order for the government to be able to do good politics out of it (Communication Director, Ministry).

The DG-group consultant seems to concur with the communication director. She mentioned that the dialogue meetings were needed in order to "provoke". I asked her if she believed this was intentional from the Ministry.

> Absolutely – 'we need to do something new!'. That's how it was all the time. The project leaders said that we needed to rearrange things completely.

A bit later on, she mentions that the departments within the GO usually do not question how things are done: "It is how it is and there are a lot of documents and stuff to go through" (Project Leader, DG-group). The dialogue meetings were symbolic of a shift in governmentality – from information and administration to the creation of finely tuned shared spaces. They enabled the creation of what Czarniawska (2002) has called *action nets*, how a manifold of different actors are brought into "temporally organized groups of people" for the benefit of political interests (p. 4). We can see these action nets as enabling the creation of shared vocabularies, arguably something that the "factual" era of government communication would struggle with. In the following section I will discuss what the Ministry hoped to achieve through their dialogue programs.

Experimentation, shared vocabularies and the creation of networks

In this section I will describe what the Ministry aimed for with their new public relations practices. I will discuss two aspects that I believe the Ministry in particular was interested in: (1) To "experiment" with communication practices and (2) to create a shared vocabulary within the informal networks that the

[37] The former Minister at the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications.

Ministry's public relations practices had generated. Remember that I have, most notably in chapter three, argued that governing to a large extent concerns the forming of alliances and networks in order to be able to govern "properly". This, I argued, was the governmentality approach to political public relations practice. This can be seen manifesting itself in the Ministry's spaces of experimentations. This will now be described and analyzed.

Even though the aforementioned dialogue programs were a potentially exciting form of governing for the Ministry, during my interviews with the Ministry's employees it became clear that quite early on in the process of implementing the public relations practices it became a worrisome task, in particular for the politically appointed staff. This is perhaps not particularly strange considering the heavy pressure – from the media, the public and other organizations and ministries – they are under (Premfors et al., 2007). To implement a new form of procedure on top of the pre-existing workload thus caused some degree of unease amongst a few of the employees. For the external consultants hired to simplify the NIS process (the DG group) and the NIS' project leaders, however, there was rather a sense of self-confidence vis-à-vis this new approach to communication. Considering this newly found interest in communication matters, it is not far-fetched to argue that the NIS was a form of experiment carried out by the Ministry. Repeatedly in my interviews, the employees perceived this new approach as a "learning process". In fact, to learn how communication works is a key point in the newly formulated communication policy developed by the Ministry[38]. The Ministry is a "learning organization", the policy says (Näringsdepartementet, 2012c, p. 4). The use of social media (most notably the Ministry's blog designed explicitly for the NIS and its Twitter-account) is a case in point as it was in and of itself something fairly new within this organization. The blog was a unique communication event as the GO (and also the Ministry) had hitherto been a fairly inexperienced organization on social media platforms. The blog was managed and written by the Ministry, but on a few occasions the Ministry asked guest writers to compose articles for them to publish on the blog. The invited writers were from Vinnova, universities, the business sector, other departments in the GO, employees at Swedish regions, SIDA[39], to mention a few. In total, more than 210 articles were published. In the early stages of the blog, the Ministry's communication professionals and communication director called the blog

[38] I am here referring to the Ministry's communication policy, not the communication policy developed for their work on the NIS.

[39] The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, in charge of Sweden's foreign aid and development assistance to developing countries.

"innovative communication" and that the NIS was a "communication project"[40]. I asked the coordinator of the strategy about the Ministry's reflections on managing social media and their reasons for using the different platforms:

> The way I see it, in order to test new stuff. To be a little bit progressive. It's not progressive perhaps, but for the government offices we thought we needed to be in different channels, to be a bit more open and to use dialogues. So we can show what the civil servants do. Because the idea is that it is a civil servants blog, show the process, what's going on, but also bring in guest bloggers to show other perspectives. And lift issues that otherwise aren't lifted in government settings. And social media kind of shows that we exist in different places. It's about that too, it's not only about writing stuff but to show that we are there. For discussion, we are there, we read other articles, through re-tweets or what it may be, you show that you partake information they otherwise would say that you don't. So it's a bit like that, to show that it is an open process and if you submit something to us we can put it out (Project Coordinator, NIS).

The project coordinator's reflections are interesting as it signals how the Ministry perceived the goal of their public relations practices. It was not to be used as a one-way communication process (to "distribute" information concerning the NIS, for instance). It signals rather a two-way communication process where the participants' voices could be included in the development of the NIS – but with a twist. Of great concern was the Ministry's interest and aim to disclose to the public and its target-groups that the organization is "open" and therefore to be considered as "progressive" in matters of communication. In other words, the Ministry communicated its new and progressive stance on communication through the blog and its Twitter-account – not through the blog's substance but more through the very fact that the Ministry had a blog and a Twitter-account. I alluded to this perspective briefly in my analysis on the discursive shifts that had emerged in the administrative framework. There I claimed that the Ministry had incorporated a "meta-reflection" on communication issues in the new communication policies, where to signal that the Ministry communicates at all had become a particular aim for the organization.

One possible explanation as to why a meta-reflection seems to be of significant value concerns (in this case) the political issue itself – innovation. According to some of my interviewees, ingrained in this very political issue are communicative dimensions. When I asked one of the project leaders the reasons

[40] http://www.naringsbloggen.se/innovation/page/22/ (2016-01-28).

for why the NIS could provoke "progressive" communication practices, she states the following:

> I mean, how does innovation emerge? Innovation is to a large extent concerned with cross-fertilizing different contexts that maybe clash with each other – different knowledge fields, different experiences, different forces, and so on. I remember that Maud Olofsson was very clear on this: We need to be very innovative in how we work with innovation issues. We must dare to do this (Project Leader 1, NIS).

The second project leader states this in very similar terms:

> Maud Olofsson gave a very clear mandate that this shall be innovative, it will be done in a new way, it will be constructed in broad terms and it will open up the doors to discussions on innovation politics, for people and contexts that have not been part of this kind of stuff before. This entailed that it was very few concrete frames for how this process was to work, other than that it was to be innovative, broad and inclusive (Project Leader 2, NIS).

The emergence of innovation on the political scene was clearly linked to its potential in generating such broad support – it was a "communication project", as I mentioned earlier. This is interesting, as it seems then as if the NIS to a large extent was justified on the basis of its communicative appeal. The Ministry invokes "learning" and experimentations (or "testing new stuff", in the coordinator's words) and can be seen as reflecting a more speculatively prone government that seeks out new spaces and different tools of speculative governing (Tesfahuney & Dahlstedt, 2008). Innovation is undoubtedly a grateful issue, as it is ambiguous enough not to generate critique (Gioia et al., 2012) but provocative and broad enough to potentially generate and shape new forms of experiments. I will discuss this in the final chapter, as I believe the manner in which public relations practices are implemented through political issues that have "communicative appeal" may have some political and democratic implications. But what is it then that the public relations practices of the Ministry enable? What is it that the Ministry perceives as important when constructing these practices?

From a governmentality perspective, the implementation of public relations experiments can be seen as enabling governing at a distance, where new forms of actors become embedded in the Ministry's network. One of the implications and potentials of acting at a distance through different forms of technologies and practices, is the development of "shared vocabularies" or shared explanations of how to understand the world the participants inhabit

through the creation of mobile networks. This perspective is not new. Bernays (1952/2002) wrote in the *Engineering of consent* of different "communication systems" – including "lectures, meetings, discussions and…conversations" (p. 158). But the deliberate creation and subsequent management of *networks* for the management of shared understanding is a rather overlooked practice in current public relations research. We can see one of the coordinators of the NIS explaining this communication practice as follows:

> I don't think people have understood what an enormous network we created through these dialogue meetings. Because what happens when you have these forms of dialogues is that everyone feels that they have been involved in the process. A lot of people feel that they have a relation to the NIS that they wouldn't have if you only would've come with presentations: 'This is how we work, like this and this and this, ask a question if you want to'. And that is being noticed, I feel, a little bit internally [in the organization] as well. We have understood that we have about 2000 people that have been involved [in the NIS] (Project Coordinator, NIS).

The interviewee invokes the sheer quantity of the network as being a result of the Ministry's work on the NIS. She ties the quantity of the created network to feelings of involvement for themselves and the other participants. When the coordinator proceeded, she links the generated network to a change in her own preferences but also to what the meetings themselves enable for the participants:

> It's really important for people to feel affected by a process. I would say that that was one of the biggest parts [of the process]. To feel that you have contributed, or to feel that you should contribute more and spend time on this and you should feel that you have participated in something. I feel a bit reformed after this process. I have a hard time attending normal conferences because I think it is boring if I should just sit there and listen to everyone and not discuss with my neighbors that might have really interesting reflections – but there is [usually] no space for discussions. So it enables for new contacts, across different sectors… Because when we do these dialogue meetings we had, in these workshops, a mix of people. You shouldn't know the person you sit next to, you should get to know new people, five new people at least. And then we should all change tables. So we get new contacts again. So interaction creates networks that enable you to actually bring something with you from this meeting and then do something with it (Project Coordinator, NIS).

The interviewee invokes feelings of emancipation as she juxtaposes the current dialogue format with previous forms of public engagement that (in her interpretation) was permeated by *boring* one-way communication flows and

contained no room for discussions or networking. The new spaces are crafted as "exciting" and "fun". For Alvesson (1996), the creation of excitement in controlled spaces and meetings can be seen as a source of domination. By stressing that "things are (or should be seen as) fun, interesting and in accord with what people want, it is easier to create a positive acceptance of this sort of control; people are also more likely to submit themselves to it cheerfully" (p. 130). The new public relations practices invoke excitement, and are more proactive, the project assistant proceeds, as they concern debate, two-way communication flows and the creation of networks – not only for the Ministry, but the participants were to create their own networks as they were steered into "getting to know people", "five people at least". This last point reflects the aim of the entire NIS-project. The Ministry deliberately invited actors they knew could mobilize within their own networks. The project leader puts it as follows:

> When we invited people, we did this on the basis of the networks they were associated with in order for them to spread our work. If they can create engagement in their own networks, then we get a lot out of that. So it was kind of like, to *network with the networks' networkers*. That was a strategic idea we had (Project leader 2, NIS).

The creation, mobilization and management of networks should not then be underestimated. The project leader mentions that they themselves do not have the power to spread their work entirely on their own – others had to do it for them. In other words, the Ministry saw this as a calculative and planned practice ("this was a strategic idea we had") that entailed a form of "third party endorsements", or the acting upon distant actors in order to achieve a kind of snowball process initiated by the NIS. This is undoubtedly a beneficial practice government agencies in general can pursue, as acting through direct means (such as launching media campaigns or advertising) in order to change behavior or steer opinion is unwarranted and even illegal.

To sum up this section, I would like to point out three aspects in particular. First, the communication practices should be seen as working to create a sense of shared responsibility amongst the participants, a responsibility that is in line with the Ministry's wishes. The Ministry's employees often referred to this as "sensitizing the users" of the NIS and to innovation in general. The outline of the dialogue meetings can be seen as probing the participants to actively question his or her own conduct so as to potentially better oneself in line with the Ministry's societal vision. This perspective does not render the human being as a mere passive subject – Foucault speaks of counter-conducts as way to disengage from paradigmatic ways of doing things

(Dean, 2010, p. 21). It does however suggest that the public relations practices can be seen as enabling a space that works on the freedom of the subjects. Freedom is manifested in all the different ways the participants are made into active participants in their own right. In a banal sense, they exercise their ability to think, discuss and form opinions in relation to the particular theme they were invited to. They describe challenges and solutions. The structure of the meetings – its technology – thus carves out a space that render innovation into a thinkable domain in its own right, i.e. the spaces render a supposed reality (innovation) into a possible thought for the participants to reflect upon.

Secondly, the creation of networks was of critical importance for the Ministry. During all those spaces of experimentation, networks enabled the Ministry to instill feelings of mutual interests, responsibility and empowerment. In the governmentality literature, this is a key point. But it had a practical dimension as well, as the Ministry's using of what I called "third party endorsements" enabled the organization to have other well-connected individuals or organizations speak of issues in their own sphere of contacts that were in line with their own worldview. I argued that the emphasis and importance the Ministry placed on experimentation, the networks and these endorsements reflect a more informal political culture, where communication tools have become a more legitimate and professionalized governing practice. This is not to say that networking did not exist prior to the discursive shift that emerged around 2011/2012. Rather, the practice of networking has become more detailed-orientated, as can be seen in the Ministry's hiring of the expert support of the DG-group and their carefully scripted practices.

And thirdly, I argued the NIS was to a large extent made possible by way of its "communicative appeal". This is undoubtedly a turn that is in sharp contrast with previous forms of governing where communication was but a mere subservient to the "factual and correct"-era of government decision-making. During this era (prior to the discursive shift that emerged around 2011 which we saw in the administrative framework) the GO was to communicate its decisions and regulations. What the NIS has disclosed is today's centrality of communication and the public relations practices it enables. Key words that characterized these spaces were "fun", "exciting" and "new".

Unforeseen implications

In this section I will discuss some more or less unforeseen implications of the spaces of experimentation created by the Ministry. To a large extent, this section

concerns "failure". But it also concerns unforeseen benefits that arise from public relations practices.

If we look at how the Ministry documented the dialogue meetings, no form of systematic control over what these meetings generated seems to exist. It could be argued, however, that the purpose of these spaces was to distribute "information" to the political staff after the workshops and dialogue meetings were over. When I, for instance, asked the communication director what the Ministry had collected during these spaces of what he earlier had termed "active listening", he reflects as follows:

> There were civil servants that were responsible for this and managed this. And they, so to say, took this [the outcomes of the dialogue meetings] with them to the political staff in order to discuss, you know, 'what do we think of this? What can we do in this area, say Life Science or innovative procurement processes?' So: listen, take it back [to the political staff], evaluate it, how can we get it into the strategy later on? So it was taken care of in a proper way. We did this in order to collect good ideas and also bad ideas and then evaluate everything in order to see *if we can do politics out of it* (Communication Director, Ministry).

In a sense, the director invokes the problem of governing in a very poignant way. In Miller and Rose's (2008) words, "governing depends upon calculations in one place about how to affect things in another", as it "confers upon them to lay claim to legitimacy for their plans and strategies because they are, in a real sense, *in* the *know* about that which they seek to govern" (p. 66, authors' italics). The public relations programs seem to have been a solution to this complexity as it enabled "information" and "perspectives" on the political issues in question to be translated from the spaces of experimentation to the political staff in order for them to be able to calculate and evaluate if they could make politics out of its "collections". In this case, the translated information was to be evaluated on the basis of its potential fit in the finalized NIS-document. This is not a particularly strange idea – political actors are surely in need of being in the know of how to ascertain and make use of power properly. What is of interest, however, is that the professionalization of public relations within the Ministry seems to have simplified this process dramatically – or at least theoretically. In the following chapter I will argue that to translate the dialogue meetings into strategy is not a simple process and was, to a large extent, ignored by the Ministry. For now, however, I would argue that the Ministry set in motion a practice that enabled them to be informed and thus to govern from a distance without having to resort to direct control. Stuart Ewen puts this practice eloquently in the introduction to Bernays' (1923/2011) *Crystallizing Public*

Opinion: "While some argued that public relations represents a 'two-way-street' through which institutions and the public carry on a democratic dialogue, the public's role within that alleged dialogue is, most often, one of having its blood pressure monitored, its temperature taken" (p. 32).

The communication director argues that the dialogue meetings were not only a matter of translating information or perspectives from one place to another in order to "create politics". The NIS' public relations practices entailed a rather unforeseen internal dimension as well. He reflects on this by drawing a parallel to the Digital Agenda, another strategy developed by the Ministry that in many ways applied similar public relations practices as the NIS:

> During the Digital Agenda, there was one employee I had a conversation with her regarding the process [the dialogue format]. And then she says like this: 'I have worked here 10, 12 or 15 years and I have written many propositions and I have worked in the traditional way. I had so many binders of different information material. Now [due to the dialogue format] I do not really have to deal with binders like that'. Because this open process has simplified work for the civil servants. She had an understanding of what we want because it is anchored from the beginning. And that's probably one of the things I have learned, that the decisions that have been made have become more accessible because you have already an image [of the process], there is no shock, it is anchored (Communication Director, Ministry).

According to the director, the implementation of the Ministry's public relations practices had simplified things in order for the employees to follow and understand the decisions the organization's management had decided on, as the civil servants had been more actively involved throughout the entire process. The inclusion of information and perspectives generated from the dialogue meetings was not only a practical undertaking for the creation of politics, but simplified administration issues in the process.

However, a particular unforeseen event had emerged fairly early on, without much planning. The communication director at the Ministry realized that the dialogue meetings, workshops and the networks they generated created expectations from the participants that could potentially hinder the actual creation of the NIS-document. I asked him if the Ministry was aware of the expectations they created and if it pressured the staff working with the strategy:

> Yes, I became aware of that pretty early on. Like, if you want to dance, then you expect that someone can both lead and do something exciting. And that you get something in return. Those expectations emerged fairly early on. And I do think that the civil servants that worked with the strategy have been good at managing

> the opinions that were brought to them. And the feedback given to the participants who got involved in these seminars was fairly good. We reported back in some contexts – but these larger seminars, like with the tourism industry for example, we gave no feedback to those actors afterwards. But just the other week we were at an event called *Tillväxtdagen* [Growth Day] in tourism, and there we heard that they talked about the innovation strategy (Communication Director, Ministry).

A bit later on in the interview, he posits the expectations they created by reflecting on brute numbers:

> You have to remember that if we invite people and there are 20, 30, 40 or 100, then a lot of people are engaged, people who sacrifice their working hours. One hundred people, that's 800 working hours, that's 20 workweeks that *we* get. And then we have to manage that in a very respectful and professional manner (Communication Director, Ministry).

Notions that concern expectations generated by public relations have been written on by, for instance, Ledingham (2006, p. 473). He argues that when two parts meet each other's expectations, good relations can be built. Expectations are also, as I argued in chapter three, crucial ingredients in the creation and promotion of hypes (Brown, 2003; Brown & Michael, 2003). The dialogue meetings and the workshops were frequently mentioned in the form of summaries on the Ministry's blog and through their Twitter-account. A typical example of feedback on the NIS' blog was a summary of the dialogue meetings' reflections with a conclusion stating that "[f]rom the Ministry's side, we thank you for your input, your dedication to the innovation strategy and we look forward to future dialogues"[41]. It is difficult to perceive these social media-spaces as having delivered on the participants' expectations. The solution to a communicative problem does not necessarily entail more communication on other platforms. However, the director argues that the NIS was frequently invoked in different spaces outside of the Ministry's control and was thereby seen as proof that the Ministry's created expectations were indeed being met. After all, to create interest in innovation issues was one of the main goals of the Ministry's work. This was a fairly common assumption made by the Ministry's personnel, and is similar to what I wrote in the previous section on action nets – actors that become embedded in loose and ad-hoc networks through all the shared spaces where the Ministry encounters its target-groups (through

[41] http://www.naringsbloggen.se/innovation/innovationsstrategi/tack-for-inspel-till-bloggstafetten/ (2016-01-29)

seminars, dialogue meetings and workshops, and so on). These actors can then legitimize certain practices by making references to the Ministry's work. One of the writers of the NIS-document states this very clearly. The Ministry brought him in from Tillväxtverket, as they needed help in writing and finalizing the NIS-document. I asked him about the implications of the dialogues the Ministry had set in motion:

> For instance, we have a program here that is directed to the regions and there we have implemented dialogue programs with every region. So we have 21 partners where we say, 'yes, join us, and tell us what development issues you deal with and how can we support you on this'. I know a lot of that stems for the Ministry's work (Writer, Tillväxtverket).

The Ministry's work seems to have inspired other government agencies' efforts in their engagement with target-groups. ALMI[42], for instance, created its own innovation strategy that was to an overwhelming extent based on the NIS (Almi Företagspartner, 2013), and so did, as I have stated, regions and local municipalities. Later on in the interview the writer invokes, much like what I have discussed in the previous sections, the potential of creating a shared vocabulary or, in his own words, a "common starting point":

> I think that if you can get a lot of people to have the NIS as a start point, then it will be all over the place. And then I think it can make a difference (Writer, Tillväxtverket).

But as the communication director stated earlier when invoking his dance-metaphor to describe the Ministry's dialogues, it is not unlikely that the Ministry's dialogue format heightened the expectations of the Ministry's own work on future innovation issues. The dialogue meetings had worked on the assumption that everyone should be included – the Ministry as well – in implementing innovation issues in their respective organizations. This is particularly acute considering that the NIS never had money that was earmarked for future projects after the Ministry was finished with their public relations practices and the completed NIS-product was launched. What the Ministry was to do after all those networking spaces were completed had been a fairly neglected concern within the organization from the start. It seems as if knowledge of the implications of this new form of communication disposition was by and large missing. As the project coordinator of the strategy told me,

[42] ALMI is a large, stately owned company. It gives out loans, give advice to upcoming or established companies and serves as a venture capital firm.

after the dialogue meetings were concluded and the NIS had been written, the internal workforce that had worked with the strategy from the beginning was severely downsized, making the networks that the Ministry had formed difficult to maintain and use. I asked her if the Ministry had dropped the issue after the strategy was formulated:

> IP: Yes, it was a bit like 'now we should get back to work'. There were a few thoughts early on that we should continue to use these people, this network that we had created, but that has fallen into oblivion, because we haven't had the resources needed to maintain this.
>
> I: But did you lower the resources after the strategy was formulated? Did you not have the same resources afterwards?
>
> IP: We had resources but…[The project leaders] chose to leave, create their own business and [Project Leader 2] was borrowed from Vinnova and her employment ended with the strategy. So we were one person short immediately. And then [the new project coordinator] stepped in. And then [the communication professional] went from working 75% to 25%. So sure, it was a miss. No doubt about that. It was like, 150% of the workforce disappears.
>
> I: That is quite interesting. When the strategy is finished you stop communicating, or reduce the workforce at least…
>
> IP: Yes, and that does not only concern communication but also the workforce in general. Why this happened I really have no answers to but you have to adapt and there are austerities generally speaking at the GO, so we can't hire people and so on. I don't know, we're fewer on our unit than we were a few years ago, because people have changed job or something and then you chose to cut down on spending. It is not only the NIS that is affected, but we are fewer generally speaking in the GO (Project Coordinator, NIS).

The project coordinator perceives what happened after the communication practices ended and the NIS as "getting back to work", which I interpret as her stating that the NIS' and all of its work had been a kind of exception to the other work the Ministry carries out. She also mentions that there never was any real plan as to what to do after the dialogue meetings and the NIS was finished. The project coordinator blames austerities, which have been a general issue within the government offices. However, it is difficult not to perceive this as a fallacy from the get-go – something that could potentially have been foreseen prior to implementing public relations practices. The evaluation and scrutiny of public relations campaigns is textbook practice of public relations. But it is of

importance to point out that the GO and Ministry are quite unique organizations that must adhere to many different administrative and political dimensions that in the end may hamper communicative developments (Gelders & Ihlen, 2010; Waymer, 2013). In other words, to professionalize communication practices within the GO is a difficult process, considering that the GO is a highly complex organization, with many departments and political decisions to regard and prioritize. In the following chapter we will see how the NIS was demoted into non-existence. As the innovation hype started to fade and the Minister saw that the NIS could not be made into politics anymore, it was regarded as a "no-go" project. It thus seems as if the implementation of the strategy was left to its own devices, where the target-groups and the participants themselves were to be responsible for innovation issues. It is, however, rather negligent to presume that the awarding of responsibility for this was to be shared by the participants. It could be argued that the Ministry could benefit from including actors in the actual outlining of the dialogue programs from the beginning, a perspective that for instance L'Etang (2008a, p. 24) advances. What the NIS actually succumbed to (the actual document) will be the topic of the next chapter. I will sum up this chapter in the next section.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe and analyze the Ministry's communication practices. I argued that a discursive shift has emerged from within the Ministry's administrative framework that has enabled the GO's departments to implement new forms of public relations practices and has made these practices more strategic (in the sense that communication perspectives seem to pervade the manifold hierarchies within the GO). This was salient when comparing the development of the GO's communication policies and the administrative documents that deal with communication issues. Put shortly, the GO has in the last decade or so gone from speaking of the importance of the distribution of "information" to the importance of openness and dialogue and included communication as a particular form of "rationality" into its organization. This is not a minor discursive shift, as it unfolds a whole range of different communication opportunities for the GO with various political implications. The Ministry's public relations practices are an example of a more communicatively prone GO. I showed that the Ministry was explicitly interested in forming relationships with many different actors. I argued that the

Ministry's public relations practices carve out *shared spaces* that make political issues graspable for the included actors. This must be seen as a positive turn, as practices that open up government agencies is undoubtedly beneficial for society. I argued, however, that there are grains of what I called the PR-ization of the GO. The PR-ization of the government agencies has been debated ever since Hermansson's (1999) publication *Demokratiutredningen* in 2000. That publication argued that there is a new tendency in Sweden where public organizations launch communication campaigns in order to gain support (financial and other forms) from political decision-makers. Rothstein (2004) labeled this phenomenon "ideological state apparatuses". In my view, the PR-ization of the GO concerns and enables the launch of what I call "trial-balloons" in the public domain – that is, the practice of testing political issues in order to ascertain their political value and in order to garner support from publics. This is similar to the mediatization of government agencies, but instead of adapting to the media logic, the government agencies seek to prioritize political issues on the basis of their "communicative appeal". The NIS was frequently invoked as being an exciting and fun "communication project" – this was even stated in the communication policy. I will argue in the next chapter that the NIS became an off-topic for the Ministry, since the department could not "make politics" out of it once the public relations programs and the NIS were completed. This may have political and democratic implications, which I will deal with and discuss in this dissertation's concluding chapter.

It is important to emphasize that the GO and the Ministry's communication practices ought to be considered valuable endeavors, as they may strengthen democracy and transparency. The Ministry's work on the NIS, and the unprecedented public relations practices, should therefore be seen in a positive light. But the implications of those practices are opaque. The next chapter will discuss what the public relations programs amounted to; that is, the actual strategy document – its substance, what form of governing tool strategies are and the implications of the Ministry's public relations practices and the NIS.

7 The National Innovation Strategy

Strategies have become standard practice within public and private organizations. Political parties and government agencies alike are bound by different strategic documents that aim to steer the organizations' practices and actions in a uniform direction. Communication policies, visions and strategic goals proliferate political life, as their outspoken aim is to enable the organizations' employees to know what to do under specific and in some cases volatile circumstances (Grundel, 2014). Definitions of what strategies are and their functions within organizations abound. A basic definition of organizational strategy is, according to Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2008), "the direction and scope of an organization over the long term which achieves advantage in a changing environment through its configuration of resources and competences with the aim of fulfilling stakeholder expectations" (p. 3). Strategies thus entail normative positions: they do not reflect on how things are but rather how things ought to be (McCabe, 2010). A popular conceptualization in public relations research is Botan's (2006) differentiation between grand strategy, strategy and tactics. Grand Strategy concerns issues of policy and planning at the organizations' highest level, strategy operates at the level of the campaign and tactics are the specific activities implemented as an outcome of both levels of strategy. These distinctions (the separation of organizational activities) fall in line with a general trend that perceives strategizing as a "more or less rational calculation" (Ezzamel & Willmott, 2004, p. 44). In line with this dissertation's critical approach, one can also argue that there are ceremonial functions involved in the formulation and implementation of strategic documents (Alvesson, 2011b). Their aim is not purely functional, as strategies are a way for organizations to demonstrate stability, order and rationality – within the organization as well as to external actors.

The formulation of the NIS was an obvious and important part of the Ministry's work as it legitimized the public relations practices that led up to the launch of the strategy. It is thus an example of a document that seeks to persuade its users of the importance of innovation as a critical political issue. In line with this dissertation's aim to describe and problematize how the Ministry

sought to promote innovation, the NIS itself is therefore essential to include in the analysis. This chapter should thus be seen in connection with the previous chapter, as the NIS itself was the result of those practices. I will begin this chapter by arguing that the NIS was a mobile technology whose formulation and design entailed a quite arduous process of translation between different contexts. Based partly on Barry and Elmes (1997) analytical toolbox for analyzing strategy narratives, I will proceed by looking into some of the narrative styles within the NIS. I will conclude this chapter by discussing what consequences the NIS had for the Ministry. This analytical chapter is based on the strategy document itself, interviews with the Ministry and their collateral organizations and documents that can contextualize the NIS.

The NIS: A special project

In this section I wish to briefly discuss some of the practical factors that make strategies into a possible tool that the Ministry can implement. Or in other words, how have strategies emerged as a plausible governing tool? Firstly, an important factor is that the GO has extended its work on what is known as the Special Projects[43] (Premfors et al., 2007). The Special Projects is a unique platform with a particular budget within the GO that has been around at least since the early 2000s. The projects differ widely, ranging from, for instance, the Ministry of Employment's[44] work on combating segregation, the Ministry of Education's[45] work on supporting IT projects in Swedish elementary schools to the Ministry's work on the NIS. In the yearly reports that the GO publishes they argue for the development of these projects as follows:

> They are useful when regular forms of governing do not fall naturally into the government agencies' responsibility. It can also be the case that the project concerns many different sectors and necessitates recurring decisions, from the government or individual minister, that are difficult to make for a government agency. The projects are often a critical complement to other projects in the government (Regeringskansliet, 2015, p. 58).

[43] Särskilda projekt och program
[44] Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet
[45] Utbildningsdepartementet

The NIS was thus part of this Special Project section and was awarded its budget from this domain. As the quote makes clear, the purpose of Special Projects (and thus the NIS) is to initiate projects that do not fall in line with "regular" forms of governing and should be seen as a complement to the Ministry's work. It is also worth noting that these special projects should be implemented when other government agencies are not considered equipped for the particular task. In other words, the Special Projects platform enables the GO to exert and "do politics" in a new way. This can be tied to what I in chapter one labeled as the "soft spaces of government" – all those informal means of governing that render new possibilities for new practices and projects (Haughton et al., 2013). The strategy can be interpreted as a suitable governing tool for implementation in these soft spaces, as it enabled experimentation (as we saw in the previous chapter) without running the risk of having to face political accountability (as we will see later on in this chapter).

The Ministry's public relations practices had been implemented in order to empower people and to simplify the formulation of the NIS for the Ministry's employees. As I stated in chapter three, government technologies (such as a strategy) are mobile and occupy different roles and statuses depending on where they emerge. By the term *mobile*, I am depicting strategies as a particular government technology that can freeze the reality that it seeks to depict, make the political issue amenable to scrutiny and discussion and thereby disperse the strategy into spaces where it is considered needed. We can compare this to the creation and use of statistics in government settings, arguably an invention that made it possible to compare and discuss social phenomenon in different spaces by different people (Hacking, 1991). Strategies must be seen as a mobile government technology that can become a tool for others to discuss and scrutinize. The NIS, for instance, paved the way for other organizations to construct their own strategies and discuss their own work in relation to the NIS – arguably a particular form of "conduct of conduct" enabled by the mobility of strategies (Dean, 2010). I also perceive the creation of mobile technology as being a matter of translation – the manner by which ideas or immaterial representations in one context are being made into something new in an entirely new context (cf. Czarniawska, 2002; Røvik, 2008, p. 216). In the Ministry's case, to go from public relations practices (seminars, dialogue programs, events) to a physical and mobile technology, translation processes need to be invoked for the construction of a mobile strategy. For the Ministry, this was a rather painstaking task, as they needed to adjust to a number of different interests and the arduous task of constructing the NIS into a mobile technology that was communicative.

Translation and mobility

The final product is a 62-page document divided into seven different chapters (excluding the final glossary)(Näringsdepartementet, 2012e). It was written in the last couple of weeks by, most notably, the key group within the Ministry, but also hired writers from external organizations. According to the NIS' project assistant, this was a stressful activity. The NIS core group worked around the clock in order to finish the actual product. According to one of the writers that had been hired from the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth[46] to help the Ministry formulate the NIS, this was a complicated and, at times, a bureaucratic process. One critical aspect had been to make the strategy into a *communicative* strategy. When I asked if there had been any rules or guides to help them write the strategy, he reasons as follows:

> It's not about having the right arguments, but about presenting in a way that makes people feel included. And then the communicative aspect is very important. They put a lot of effort into that. They worked hard on this. And if there had been rules for how to write it was nothing that we kept in mind. Because it was like, we just need to publish this text, get it done (Writer, NIS).

The NIS should be seen as a product that was to help the Ministry communicate the importance of innovation. In other words, the Ministry and their writers needed to translate innovation issues and the public relations practices into a mobile technology that was *communicative*. The project leader of the NIS reflects on the problems that emerged in this translation process:

> The strategy needed to be compressed, and it is, even though it's like 60 pages, but it could have been twice as long, without a doubt. And we had a plan to integrate stories, concrete stories about innovative people in every chapter but we had to erase all that. There weren't enough space. Somebody said: "Oh, it shouldn't be more than 15–20 pages!" But that's nothing. We had discussed if we should create another product instead of a physical product. It could have been a digital platform where you can be more flexible with the size of the text and stuff like that. But for various reasons, the hectic work schedule for instance, we settled on a traditional product (Project Leader 1, NIS).

The management of space was thus an important component in making the NIS a mobile governing technology. Later on in the interview, she mentions that the entire NIS group helped with editing the document in order to make

[46] Tillväxtverket

the strategy concise and communicative. Another communicative aspect was the inclusion of the NIS' graphic profile. The strategy's graphic design manifests an apparent aspiration to make the strategy into attractive promotional and communicative material for the Ministry, as parts of the strategy are personifications composed of colorful images and drawings of individuals in action. It makes use of the graphic profile (that the Ministry's team of graphic designers had created) throughout the publication (see image 4–5 on the following two pages). Erlandsson (2008) argues that government agencies today have sought to reinvent themselves through graphic design. These tools are implemented strategically (meaning that they are carefully scripted, following a well-crafted rationality) and must be seen as a "valuable resource" for the politicians in the GO, implemented in order to differentiate oneself from other political documents and organizations (p. 342–343).

But the creation of the NIS also turned into a bureaucratic process. The hired writer speaks of the inter-departmental process that had permeated the writing of the NIS:

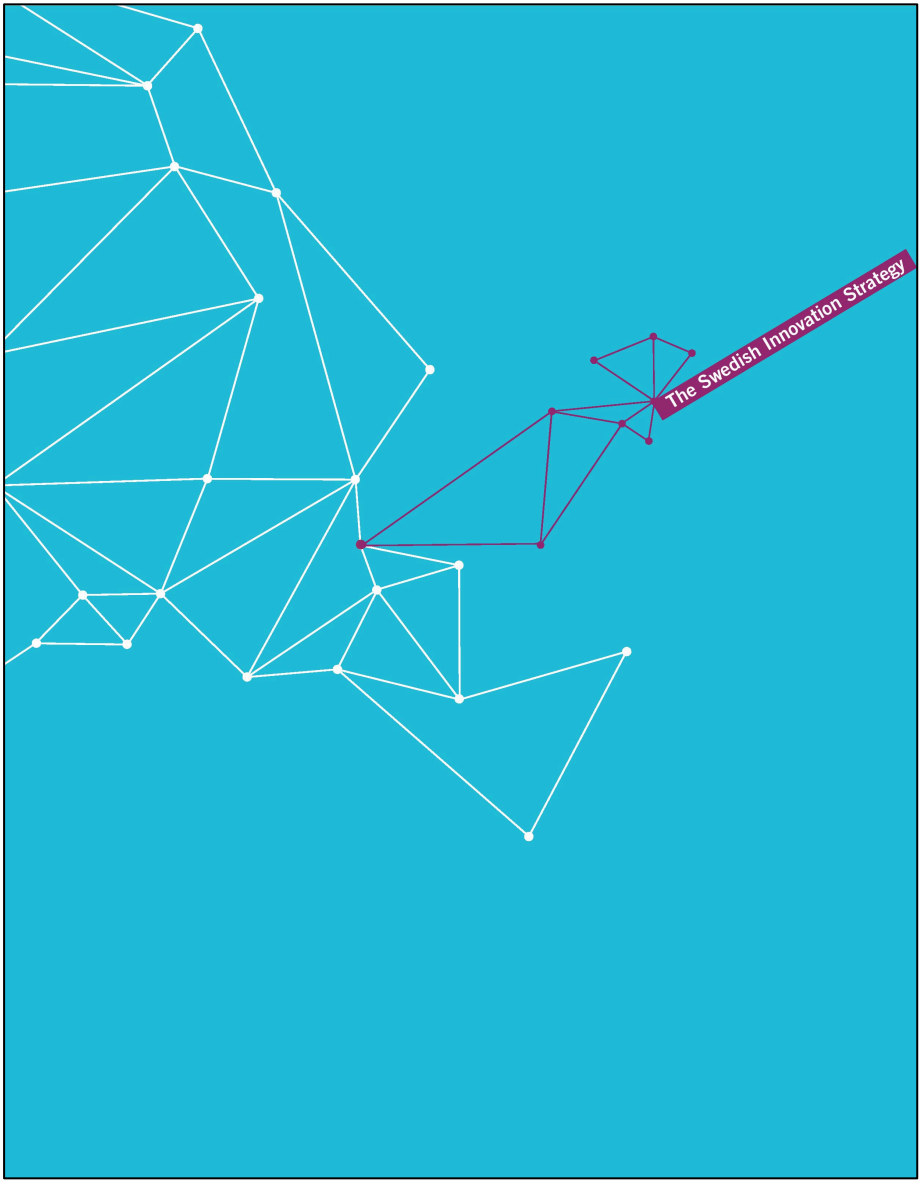
> A lot of the earlier drafts that I read had to be sent out the different departments [at the GO] because the Ministry worked together with other departments, so they all came with their own viewpoints, and then you tried to adjust to those viewpoints, and send it back again, and so on. So the entire struggle with the strategy was a process to gather the text. That was one part of it (Writer, NIS).

It is beyond this dissertation's scope to evaluate whether other departments had influenced the NIS more than, for instance, the Ministry's public relations practices. But the writer's invocation suggests that the strategy in the final weeks had turned into a bureaucratic process, as other departments were in need of proofreading the document and recommending changes – arguably in conflict with the open and transparent governing that the Ministry had sought to conduct through their work on public relations. According to one project leader at Vinnova[47], this was also done on an informal basis:

> During the writing of the strategy, the Ministry collected formal and informal comments. When it comes to informal comments, I had a dialogue with [the project leaders of the NIS] where I gave them some input from our perspective, what we believe is important and how it should be written. And then we received a draft of the NIS, during the final year, and then I gathered our viewpoints on the strategy and formulated those viewpoints (Project Leader, Vinnova).

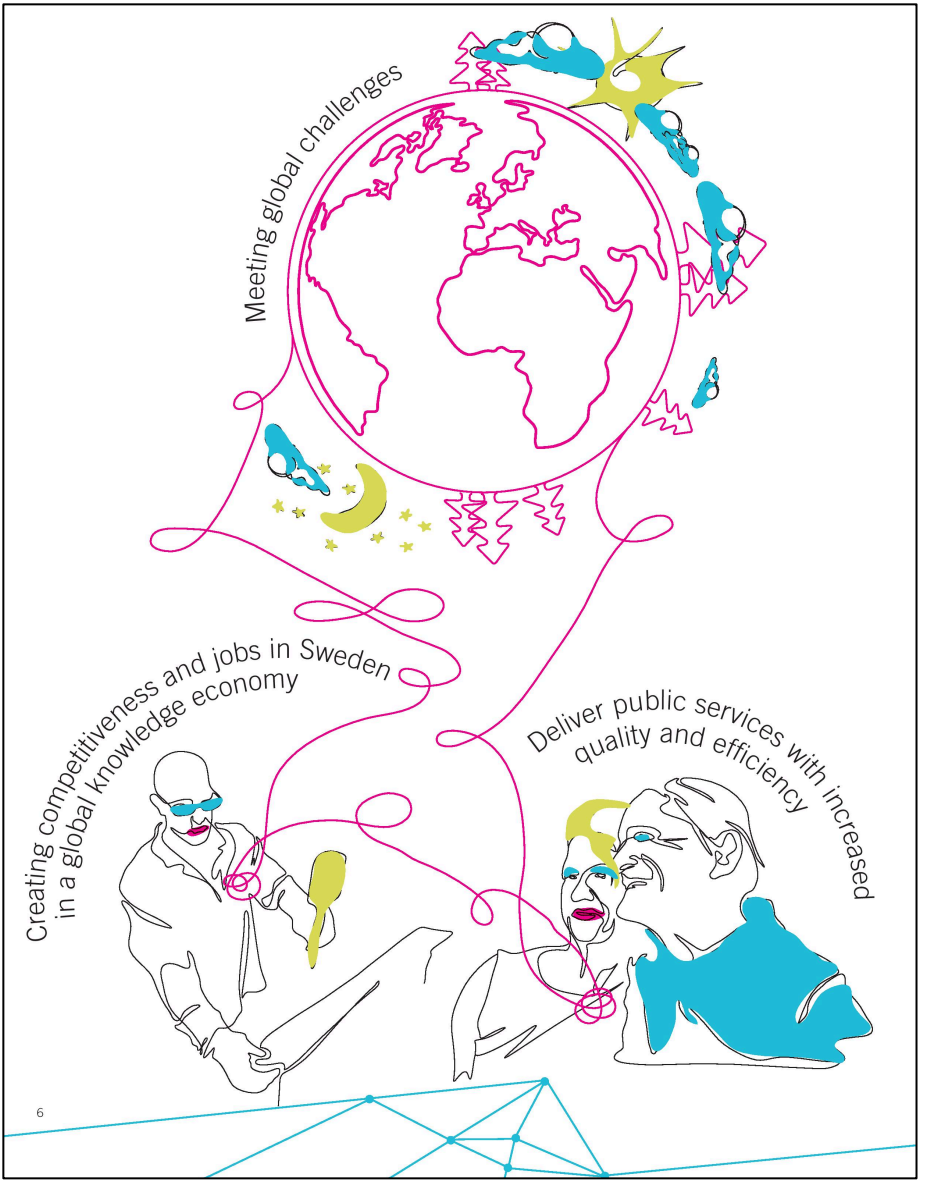
[47] Vinnova is the Swedish government agency that administers funding for research and development. The organization was in charge of evaluating the consequences of the NIS.

Image 4: The graphic profile of the NIS.



Source: Näringsdepartementet (2012d) by permission from the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications.

Image 5: The graphic profile of the NIS.



Source: Näringsdepartementet (2012d) by permission from the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications.

The project leader proceeds to argue that their input weighed heavily, even though the Ministry made it clear that they wanted freedom in terms of formulating the NIS. Czarniawska (2002) writes that "every translation is a destabilizing operation. It destabilizes the text under translation, which is taken from its proper cultural context, and fits it onto another" (p. 119). The "proper cultural context" must be assigned to the Ministry's public relations practices, as it was here that the NIS core group made promises and legitimized their creation of the strategy. In the aforementioned quote, the project leader thus characterizes the strategy as being a "traditional product", which I interpret as conflicting with the new and exciting experiments that had led up to the Ministry's strategy document. One project leader of the strategy told me that the collected material of the public relations practices was of relatively little importance in the actual writing of the NIS (cf. Project Leader 2); while others regarded them as critical (cf. interview with Project Assistant). There thus seem to be conflicting experiences concerning the role of the Ministry's public relations practices, something I believe can be attributed to the problem of translating one government program (the public relations practices) into a government technology (the strategy). Let me take two examples here in order to highlight how difficult it must have been to translate the Ministry's public relations practices substance into a strategy format that is communicative.

First of all, some matters of interest did not make it into the NIS. Gender perspectives on innovation had occupied a privileged position in the seminars and dialogue programs leading up to the formulation of the strategy. Gender was a sole theme of one of the dialogue meetings (Näringsdepartementet, 2012b). During this particular thematic dialogue meeting, more than 80 individuals from a wide range of organizations and branches had gathered under the auspices of potentially affecting the direction of the strategy. In her opening speech, Secretary of State[48] Marita Ljung stated that these dialogue meetings were essential to the Ministry's development of the strategy, and that perspectives on gender had an important role to play in the strategy's formulation. In the strategy itself, gender perspectives are not mentioned.

Second of all, there was a collision of language. For instance, the public relations meetings had a theme they entitled *Innovation for blue growth and living waters and seas*. One of the activities during this dialogue meeting involved a consultancy-firm led group discussion where the participants were asked to discuss challenges and solutions regarding four different, yet quite specific themes: Maritime activities/Sustainable navigation; Over-fertilization;

[48] Statssekreterare

Dangerous substances/chemicals; Biological diversity/Sustainable fishing. The workshop initiated a discussion that became quite technical and thus highly difficult for the Ministry to implement into the formulation of the strategy. For instance, the participants concluded the seminar by stating the following:

> One challenge for navigation is that Sweden is a tiny actor on a large global market, that the international competition is tough and that Sweden lacks a national market. One solution here was that the Nordic countries could be classified as its own market.
>
> Something that was seen as both a solution and a challenge was the competition with other forms of sea traffic, in other words how to move transport from land to sea. What was in demand was a development of inner water roads where Vänersjöfarten was mentioned. In navigation and the shipping industry we can see a growing generation gap and we call for more jobs and training. A new flagging policy was called for – where you change the voting right in the IMO from flag state to owner state.
>
> With regards to sustainable navigation we want to see a more proactive disposition, as oppose to today's more reactive relationship – here the difficulties with separating national with global regulations. The Japanese just-in-time (JIT) logistical process was questioned from a sustainable perspective and other forms of process were acknowledged. From a political perspective, the participants wanted to see incentives to create possibilities to work more efficiently with emission rights. That Sweden has Europe's largest coast was also acknowledged and the participants saw a possibility to develop the tourism trade. To introduce developed products in antifouling on the market was also considered to have a large commercial potential (Näringsdepartementet, 2012a).

We can see two different forms of languages colliding: that of a technical discussion charged with specialized language with that of the Ministry whose wish was to formulate a communicative strategy for all of society. However, the dialogue meetings might have generated a language that could not easily conform to the format of the strategy. In order to make the NIS a mobile governing technology necessitates translation – a difficult task considering these complex differences between the shared spaces on the one hand and the strategy's communicative format on the other. Kornberger (2013) argues that the writers of strategies are often affected by "incompatible rationales for decision making and action", as the writers need to select from different, often competing narratives and voices (p. 105). This is *not* to suggest that the Ministry did a bad job at writing the NIS. I have stated earlier that governing in "advanced liberal societies" entails the ability to govern at a distance and the

importance of collecting material and insights from society as a way to properly govern (Rose & Miller, 2008, 2010; Rose et al., 2006). Public relations is a suitable practice to implement in this context, but the inclusion of perspectives gathered during the public relations practices requires tools and preemptive planning in order for them to be translated well into the requested format (in this case, a strategy). As with all forms of translation, something is lost and retold in order to fit with the new context (Czarniawska, 2002). According to the communication policy designed by the Ministry, larger communication practices implemented by the organizations should be evaluated according to the overarching goals of the project in question (Näringsdepartementet, 2012c). This opens up different questions for the Ministry: Are the dialogue programs suitable according to the purpose of the project? Considering the correspondence between the substance of the dialogue meetings (what the participants had deemed necessary for the strategy) and the end product of the NIS, how can the collection of knowledge and material be translated from one sphere into another in a suitable manner? In the last section of this chapter and in the book's final chapter, I will discuss some of these questions. I will now turn to the substance of the NIS.

Narrative styles

Barry and Elmes (1997) argue that writers of strategies face the same difficulties as authors of fiction, as they are in need of constructing compelling accounts in order for the reader to "buy" into the portrayed worldview. They call this the "narrative style" of strategies. Strategists choose from an array of competing alternatives to frame the story in a certain way that is beneficial for the organization in question. This is similar to public relations' connection to storytelling. Elmer (2011) has argued that storytelling is a practice crafted in order to frame reality in a manner that "support(s) their employer's interest" (p. 47). In this section I will analyze the NIS from a narrative point of view. I will argue that there are three salient narrative styles the NIS makes use of in order to portray innovation as a particularly important issue. First, the NIS was a *problematizing* activity (Bacchi, 2015). By this I suggest that the writers "created" problems in order to juxtapose innovation as being a solution to those very problems. Second, I find traces of post-political conditions in the NIS, as the appeal to universal values and consensus is salient. Third, the NIS manufactures "risk" and "threats" as a way to promote political action. I will

deal with these notions successively. It is important to mention that these styles do not give a complete picture of the NIS, but they are in line with this dissertation's critical aim and the overall purpose to understand how innovation is constructed as an important political issue.

Constructing problems, imagining solutions

The NIS is a manifestation of a problematizing activity, as it seeks to "promote" or construct certain societal problems in order to portray certain solutions for the advancement of innovation. Eriksson (2005) introduced the concept of "wicked problems" in order to describe the complexity of how to come to terms with innovation as a political issue. Wicked problems, he states, are broad per definition, which can be defined through a number of different interpretations and they exist only in relation to the solutions the problem necessitates. In other words, wicked problems are socially constructed, and since there is not one definition of the Problem, there are no clear Solutions to it either. The construction of political problems and solutions becomes a matter of political creativity (p. 185–186). This can be tied to Foucault's notion of "problematization" – by defining a political problem it becomes a potential social phenomenon to act upon as it discursively forms the object of which it speaks (Bacchi, 2000, 2015; Motion & Leitch, 2007).

In the first five chapters of the NIS, the writers frame the need for the strategy and the importance of innovation for Sweden's future. The minister in charge at the time, Annie Lööf, stands as the author of the introductory chapter where she summarizes the document. The fundamental premises that seek to justify the strategy's existence are laid bare through repeated references to the so-called "Urgent social challenges", "Global challenges", "Grand challenges", the ever-increasing competitiveness that sweep the globe and the pressures that face the Swedish public sector. However, the creative effort of "creating" problems was made clear to me when I interviewed the two consultants that worked with both the Ministry and the Institute (I will call this firm Consultia). Consultia had been hired by the Ministry to create a digital platform for both the Ministry and the Institute for the promotion of innovation (Näringsdepartementet, 2012f). When the consultants showed me a PowerPoint presentation they had delivered during the Ministry's work on the NIS, one of the consultants suddenly asked the other consultant if she remembers when the notion of "grand challenges" had entered the discussion. The dialogue might be a bit

sweeping and sarcastic but is nevertheless interesting as they invoke the flexibility in terms of creating and promoting political "problems":

> IP1: Do you remember when the global challenges were thrown into this mess?
>
> IP2: At the end yeah, at the end.
>
> I: How?
>
> IP1: [Gasps] If you're on a real meritocratic sublevel, then you can become a politician. If you become a politician, then you read what other meritocratic fuck-ups have said and then it always turns into the 'global challenges'. This was something that came from the UN originally. And it suddenly became extremely important to show that politically [in the NIS]. Because we if we approach these challenges, then we are in good light internationally and it can land in some ugly keynote…sorry I'm sarcastic but I'm just so tired of… but it came in in the end.
>
> IP2: In the end yeah, like from nowhere (Consultants, Consultia).

The consultants' sarcasm and exhaustion can be attributed to the fact that their developed communication platform was never used. But more to the point, the global challenges seemed to have emerged, as the interviewees mention, "from nowhere" and "in the end", which suggests that the creation of problems is a creative and planned process. Consultia had to include it in their digital platform and presentation. The "grand challenges" are mentioned in the regions, OECD and the Innovation Union's innovation strategies as well. The aforementioned interviewees' mentioning of politicians being embedded in an international flow of ideas is not far off the mark, as political actors assemble ideas, construct problematizations and design solutions as a way to conduct politics (Casula Vifell, 2006; McCann & Ward, 2013; Rizvi, 2006).

Another problematization endeavor was the writers' task to situate Sweden in relation to other nations' innovation capacity. By making international comparisons, the strategy can claim that Sweden is doing well in a range of different aspects that make innovation thrive nationally: investments in education, ICT and research and development, political stability, high levels of trust in institutional frameworks and effective laws and regulations, for instance. The symbolic use of rankings, statistics and numbering populations (as discussed in chapter five) is being translated into and manifested in digital and physical print – arguably a good steering device that can freeze and mobilize certain depictions of Sweden, such as hosting a good innovation climate. However, other nations, the strategy claims, currently move aggressively forward

within these domains. This then "increases the pressure on the corresponding policy development, on both national and regional levels, for Sweden's attractiveness in the long-term" (p. 15). To visualize an increasing outside threat is a common way to frame a story in order to push for political and national action (Stone, 2002). Consequently, the strategy pushes for the need to construct a "public commitment" around issues that pertain to innovation: "The state has an important role to play in continuing to provide good conditions for innovations in Sweden – a good innovation climate – but it is individuals in collaboration that ensure Sweden retains and strengthens its position as a global leader in creativity and innovation capacity" (p. 19).

The solutions to the problematizations vary. They can be found by way of looking at how innovation is defined. The Ministry's interviewees and the NIS frequently cite the OECD's Oslo Manual[49], supporting Jessop and Sum's (2012) suggestion that transnational organizations are powerful actors who promote discursive simplifications for how local political actors ought to devise political projects. In the NIS, the Oslo Manual's definition of innovation is stated explicitly: "The implementation of a new or significantly improved product (goods or services), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization or external relations" (p. 9). However, the NIS stresses the need to broaden this definition:

> Innovation […] may also be new ways of planning and developing urban or rural areas and built environments. It can be combinations of goods, systems and services for the global telecommunications market or smart transport solutions. Innovation can also take the form of new ways of designing or organizing healthcare services for the elderly, new ways of submitting tax returns, new methods of involving customers or users in developing services or goods and new ways of taking advantage of and distributing art and artistic achievements. Innovation can also be new ways of using old, naturally occurring conditions, e.g., cooling energy-intensive data servers through localization in cold climates or new ways of using land, ecosystem services, raw materials from nature and biologically/ecologically based technologies and methods.

The strategic inclusion of a variety of human actions (artistic, designing, service management) performed by a variety of sectors and organizations (culture, health care, transport, the tax agency) through different materials (goods, data

[49] The OECD first published the Oslo Manual in 1991. It is a conceptual manual that serves national statisticians in surveying firms and their innovation activities in a standardized manner (Godin, 2008).

servers, technologies) is indicative of the transdiscursive foundation of the NIS and the political hype. The project leaders stress this broad position as well:

> It wasn't clear to us when we started this work, but values aren't just economical. That innovation only concerns commercial values is outdated. When you speak of innovation with the academy or in the cultural sector, it's always like 'we don't want to talk about innovation, it's so commercial, we stand for other values'. But in the light of what the OECD and the EU and many other nations say – it's about solving the global challenges. That's the overarching problem or challenge we face. And demographic challenges, and so on. So we are in need of change, not just economical, but also in social and environmental terms (Project Leader 1, NIS).

By invoking the "grand challenges" and the social, cultural and environmental domains, innovation as a political issue is "tamed", as innovation should no longer be seen as only concerning commercial values. By tying the NIS to "soft values" and threatening global challenges ahead, the NIS carves out spaces where new actors are made into potential "innovators". A possible interpretation of this discursive shift has been stressed by Godin (2012). In his historical analysis of how innovation issues have been used by governments, he argues that innovation as a political issue has gradually transcended notions of technological progress or national competitiveness. He notes that "from the 1980s onward, innovation became an end in itself: Anything goes in the name of innovation; everyone should innovate" (p. 52).

The strategy thus speaks of different roles individuals can inhabit in society for the development of new values: "visionaries, inventors or creators who have ideas, users and customers who have demands and who to an increasing extent participate in the creation of new products, services and processes, entrepreneurs who run and organize the realization of ideas, salespersons who communicate ideas and financiers who believe in the potential value of ideas and provide capital and often business competence as well" (p. 10). This is a key feature of the strategy. The individual's role is one out of six steps the Ministry considers valuable for its vision – to make Sweden the world's most innovative nation by the year 2020. It is the first step that is discussed in the strategy. The other steps of the NIS are concerned with higher education, businesses, public services, the regions' role and conditions for innovation. These six steps are framed as goals for Sweden to reach, all of which come with narrower sub-targets devised in order to facilitate the reaching of these goals. If we take the construction of "innovative people", the more general goal is that "people have the capacity, willingness and conditions to contribute to innovation" (p. 21). This goal is

broken down into three sub-targets constructed in order for the goal to be easier reached: "People have the knowledge, skills and expertise to contribute to innovation"; "People have the courage and willingness to contribute to innovation as an entrepreneur, manager, employee, user and citizen"; "Sweden's working life is attractive on an international level and welcomes diversity and mobility" (p. 23). The biopolitical node, with its emphasis on individual responsibility as discussed in chapter five, is thus salient in the NIS. The other sub-targets are depicted in some detail; yet do not contain insights into what the Ministry will do in order to realize the vision. There are no political commitments for the solving of problematizations. To situate the individual as an empowered actor ultimately responsible for strengthening the innovation climate can be interpreted as the Ministry freeing itself from delivering political promises after the launch of the strategy – I will come back to this when I discuss the political implications of the NIS.

Wicked problems are thus tied to wicked (or broad) solutions, as stated by Eriksson (2005). We can tie this to Uhlin's (2005) notion of the "instrumental mistake" of innovation politics, as innovation tends to be cast in rational and instrumental terms where it is often sporadic and irrational. But the innovation imaginary, as we saw in chapter three, needs to devise maps in order to proceed in the world. As Jessop (2012) notes, "imaginaries often include prospective and descriptive elements, anticipating or recommending new lines of action, which may guide present and future (non)-decisions and (in)actions in a world pregnant with possibilities" (p. 17). The descriptive elements are the problematizations, whereas the prospective elements are the solutions to those problems, written in order to promote political decisions and action.

The NIS as a post-political tool

In chapter one, I mentioned that the innovation hype must be seen as embedded in a post-political landscape. The post-political condition implies that political and governmental representations and practices are rendered into consensual or technocratic notions, making conflict, exclusion and power invisible (Kenis & Mathijs, 2014). The NIS can be interpreted as being a manifestation of the post-political condition – it even permeated the Ministry's public relations practices (as there were no competing interests that negotiated innovation – it was constructed through consensual notions). I will now discuss how this manifests itself in the narrative of the NIS.

An important narrative feature of the NIS is the portrayal of the process behind the strategy itself. Appeals are made to the manners by which the strategy was produced, through dialogue and consultation with a range of different actors (private, state and civil): "Many people with different backgrounds and perspectives have shown a great commitment and will" (p. 13). There was a need to portray a unified front – that there was a general consensus behind the strategy itself, the issues at stake and the ways in which society is to solve these issues. The technique here is to persuade the reader that everyone is on board. I have referred to this as the Ministry's "meta-reflection" on communication – that is, portraying the communication process behind the NIS as a promotional tool. This obfuscates the inherent political dimensions that underlie the work of the NIS. By appealing to consensus and a unified front, there is a strategic wish to reduce political friction, opposition and dissensus. In other words, the technique strives to make matters apolitical as a way to construct "discursive closures" (Deetz, 1992) and to render alternative viewpoints obsolete. In Grundel's (2014) dissertation on Swedish regions' discursive steering through political documents, she argues that the construction of visionary documents that center on consensus and competitiveness must be seen as being part and parcel of a depoliticization that has swept the Western world ever since the 1980s, most notably with the rise of neoliberalism and New Public Management (NPM). The author argues that political strategies, visions and goals that are formed around narratives of consensus and apparent or absolute truths are good examples of these larger societal trends.

However, this dialectical battle between the political and the *a*political took on practical forms, as it was a source of frustration for the employees working with the strategy. When I asked one of the project leaders about the reasons why innovation as a political issue had withered away after the NIS had been launched, she mentioned the Ministry's fear of "making it into politics":

> Everything goes fast in the world of politics. But that's how it is, you have to deliver what you had promised. And everyone knew that the strategy was arriving, that it would be launched. But when it was launched and you can't do more politics out of it…[pause] Or what does it mean to 'do politics'? I was talking to a friend about this and he muttered: 'I think we are a bit bad at doing politics out of this, it [the strategy] isn't visible, you should do more politics out of it". 'I know you don't want to hear this' he said. [Now in an upset voice] But its exactly that kind of 'doing politics' we didn't want – the innovation strategy is about politics at the margins (Project Leader 2, NIS).

The project leader invokes the fast-paced nature of politics as a reason for the strategy not having been "made into politics". A bit later on in the interview, she reflects on this by invoking the role party politics plays in the GO:

> I think it was a frustration that the Centre Party[50] was so weak as it was. The party leader had little trust amongst the voters, outside of her party line. The party was under the four percent threshold[51]. So something had to be delivered. And then we have this abstract, fairly nonconcrete document that accentuates that. Of course it's not a dream situation, politically speaking. But what the party leader could have done was to make politics out of it by getting everyone on board this thing. But for some reason, I don't know why, this was never the case. It could have been something that shows that something is being done, if you want to make politics, that is (Project Leader 2, NIS).

The project leader stresses the contrast between the "abstract" NIS and "doing politics". The NIS did not contain, for instance, political obligations or any concrete promises, and was therefore difficult to use in party politics considering the precarious position of the Minister and her party. In other words, "real" politics can be seen as being located outside of the aforementioned soft spaces of governing, something in contrast with the "abstract, fairly nonconcrete document". The project leader also invokes the need to "show" that politics is being done as one aspect of "doing politics", arguably an important feature of a communicative Ministry. It thus seems that "doing politics" is a reflexive work within the GO, as everything cannot be made into political issues.

We can find instances of the apolitical within the NIS. It concerns the document's pressing appeal to by and large universal values or facts. I write "by and large" as the values or facts are not intrinsically universal but the language in use is constructed in universal terms. This can be seen as the power/knowledge-function of the NIS, as the Ministry seeks to construct and promote knowledge on the basis of its powerful position in society – the NIS becomes "a vehicle through which power/knowledge circulates" (Motion & Leitch, 2009a, p. 88). It is similar to the aforementioned point concerning the apolitical, as it seeks to transcend dimensions pertaining to what is right or wrong (it is obvious knowledge) or to time and place (it is non-contextual and universal). The universal values/facts that the NIS appeal to and that the strategy tries to link with innovation issues are matters that concern financial

[50] The Centre Party's leader was the Minister at the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications at the time.

[51] The minimum voting percentage that a political party requires to secure representation in the Swedish Riksdag.

growth (through open markets, deregulation, increased competition), life quality (through the creation of better workplace conditions, supplying more efficient public services, and healthier lives) and societal development (through better environmental conditions, the alleviation of poverty, investments in education). In their research on regional and national tourism strategies, Kietäväinen and Tuulentie (2012) argue that a strategic appeal to universal values lies in the potential to garner broad support for the issues at hand. If the general premises of the strategy are considered meaningful and accurate, there are reasons to believe that these can be transferred into more tangible tactics for the owners of the strategy. For Barry and Elmes (1997), the possibility of having the right to speak from the point of view of an "implied author" – a distant and all-knowing and thus truthful conveyor of objective facts and values – is a crucial and highly typical narrative tool in the construction of credibility. The individual writer and personality is erased, as the language is plain, non-tempered and safe. The upshot of this (as well as the NIS' appeal to consensus) is that the document is speaking from an unbiased point of view – making it into a safe political document. This must be attributed to the strategy being a soft form of governing tool, whose actions are justified by the public relations practices themselves, not by the substance of the NIS. This is not to say that the publication of the NIS was futile. I have only argued that the NIS was at pains to document consensus and universal values as particular narrative styles – a style that is embedded in the post-political fear of making too much political noise. I will come back to the NIS' implications when concluding this chapter.

Manufacturing risk

There are also competing alternatives when it comes to the construction of the strategy's very plot. Barry and Elmes (1997) stress strategies' *epic* form. The epic form is constructed around risks or obstacles and the application of the strategy's possibility of overcoming these risks. Giddens (1998) argues that there is a good deal of political decision-making in contemporary political discourse that is concerned with what he calls "manufactured risks" – referring to all the risks for which history provides us little previous experience. Manufactured risks are negotiated, as government officials need to be persuaded of their accuracy and weight: "It must be widely publicized, because people must be persuaded that the risk is real – a fuss must be made about it" (p. 28–29). Risks that are frequently invoked in the NIS are – to mention a few – increased international competition, the shrinking of our global natural resources, demographical

transformations, the inefficiency of bureaucracy, climate change, unsustainable development, low expenditures of research and development in private firms, low proficiency in reading, mathematics and the natural sciences in elementary school, little interest in entrepreneurship in the school system in general, that university graduates seek employment rather than self-employment, segregation of gender in the market place, low employment mobility, and so on. The construction of risks and obstacles that loom in Sweden's future is, however, frequently juxtaposed with opportunities. We can look at this narrative style by looking at a concrete example from the NIS:

> The world economy is currently undergoing fast paced transformations and large markets are materializing in China, India, Brazil, Russia and many African countries, in line with the improvement of living standards associated with speedy urbanization. This increases pressure on all of the earth's resources and the need for more sustainable production and consumption thus rises in, for example, the energy and materials sectors (p. 36).

The aforementioned quote mentions a wide range of threats and obstacles (the emerging global market and the consequence this has for our global natural resources). Contemporary markets and societies are bound up in high-speed development. Unknown geographical spaces lure in a not so distant future. Key verbs here are "speedy", "pressure" and "undergoing", as to emphasize the turbulence and instability of our times. The mentioning of "all of the earth's resources" invokes feelings of mutual responsibility and, as we shall see in the text that proceeded the quote above, begs for a call to arms through the intertwinement of business and nature in order to save Sweden from being stuck in a state of turbulence:

> At the same time, this also entails an increase in global business opportunities. In order to take advantage of global growth opportunities and contribute to a green economy and sustainable society, it is essential for businesses in Sweden to continue to develop knowledge and expertise and strengthen their capacity to develop world-leading offers based on unique combinations of technology and service content (p. 36).

As opposed to the construction of risks and obstacles, the emphasis here is on hope and the potentials that come with global trials and tribulations. The key verbs and formulations that come to signify hope as opposed to despair are "take advantage of", "contribute", "develop" and "strengthen". We are thus no longer passive actors in an otherwise unstable global environment, but active choosers of our fate. For Barry and Elmes (1997), this is an associative approach to

strategizing as it "helps deflect attention away from the narrative's fictionality" (p. 437) by using notions we can empathize with in our lives: the possibility of redeeming oneself from evil and as active protectors of risks. It seems as if this is the modus operandi of the practice of strategizing, as the Swedish regions invoke similar positions:

> Our surroundings change. The global development and the increasing competition raise the demands on renewal and change. Some regions will get stronger, while other will have a hard time claiming the same position. The Stockholm region will continue to be offensive. We will go from a position of strength to the world's most innovative economy. In order to succeed we must – through regional, national and international cooperation – give the businesses good condition for renewal and development (Stockholmsregionen, 2012, p. 2)

Like the NIS, the Stockholm region's strategy posits risk (change in surrounding, increasing competition) in order to promote offense and action – clearly in line with what I have alluded to as reiterations of the "innovation race" (Hasu et al., 2012).

According to Barry and Elmes (1997) it is important in the practice of strategizing to not only posit risk but also produce conveyors of solutions to these potential threats. A central feature within the NIS is to constitute human-beings in ways that are in line with political or ideological ends. What emerge in the strategy are varying degrees of human talent. The ideal citizen that the Ministry is seeking is a human-being that is "knowledgeable and well informed", an "active and knowing consumer" who is quick to identify solutions to societal and organizational ills and keen on (life-long) learning and "creates or coordinates resources in order to transform these into valuable activities". The strategy contains photos and illustrated images of individuals in motion, at meetings and in fast-paced cities, in the midst of mind mapping and networking, in lab coats and professional attire. There is a desire to portray the citizen as being one in action and in the know as how to best carry out specific tasks and activities. The normative function of the document is to cultivate a certain form of human talent which hosts fairly general but nevertheless tacit skills. Thrift (2005) argues that tapping into the intuitive and bodily abilities of a society's workforce has become a trend he perceives as emerging from the so-called new economy boom of the 1990s. Talent, he writes, "will manifest skills and competences which include increasingly quantified qualities like intuition, emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, cultural empathy – the full armory of the contemporary economy, in other words, that it is necessary to gird in order to be continuously innovative" (p. 124). Similarly, according to Knights

and Morgan (1991), the purpose of strategies is to create subjects as participants that can either agree or disagree with the aims of the strategy. Through participation, they may "secure their sense of meaning, identity" (p. 269) and potentially become members of a community with its own norms and regulations. In order to create an attitude change directed towards the creation of talent, the NIS stresses certain key societal aspects: the importance of the Swedish school system (from pre-school to the university); the importance of the Swedish workforce to adjust itself in relation to new societal demands and competences; the creation of a stimulating work environment can lead to "new and constructive behavior"; to continuously learn and adjust itself to new demands; the central role leadership has in enabling the right form of talent amongst the employees.

Implications of the NIS

This section will describe and analyze the implications of the NIS – what the strategy and the practices behind the strategy amounted to. It is not a complete picture, as it would be impossible to evaluate or measure all of the effects of the Ministry's work on the NIS. A presupposition here is that implementation is a difficult enterprise, as it entails the operationalization of programs (such as public relations) and technologies (such as the strategy) into concrete action (Miller & Rose, 2012). I will show that a conflict emerged between the "soft spaces" of governing advanced by the Ministry on the one hand and the strategy itself on the other – there was a collision between government programs and technologies.

The NIS was launched at an event organized by the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences[52] in December 2012. Annie Lööf (the Minister in charge at the Ministry) presented the NIS. Prior to the launch, the Ministry gave out a press release consisting of the following statement:

> The strategy will now be turned into action […] The government will spend more than 2 billion on innovation projects up until 2016. These projects involve test- and demo plants, more innovation offices at the universities, reinforced cooperation between the academy and business, as well as historical investments on infrastructure and broadband (Näringsdepartementet, 2012-12-11).

[52] IVA

The press release gives the impression that the Ministry is investing a lot of money on rather specific projects and that these investments could be tied to the NIS itself. This was not the case. The Ministry could claim this, as the investments were budgeted for through the Ministry of Education's proposition on research and innovation (FIP), a heavier document, politically speaking, that was released the same day as the NIS. To launch the two documents simultaneously is peculiar, but according to my interviewees, this was a strategic undertaking. The Ministry's communication director reflects on the relation between the NIS and FIP as follows:

> The more time that passed, it became clear that it was FIP who had money at its disposal. And that connection, it has been a challenge for us. Because, in a sense, we haven't owned the issue. So how we were to present the innovation strategy and its connection to FIP, we had to figure that out (Communication Director, Ministry).

To launch the NIS with no commitments was difficult, especially considering the upcoming election (I will discuss this shortly). It is possible to interpret the publication of the NIS on the same day as FIP as a strategic effort to tie FIP's investments to the NIS and illustrate the two documents as reinforcing one another. For the NIS to piggyback on the FIP could potentially silence critique. Alvesson's (2011) statement that strategic documents contain ceremonial functions thus receives some support, as the Ministry sought to enlarge its clout and power by appealing to other practices located outside of the NIS.

In chapter seven of the NIS document, the implementation of the strategy is discussed. To implement the NIS, the Ministry emphasizes the benefits of perceiving innovation in broad terms; that it supports continuous dialogue amongst different actors and of the importance of the Ministry to continue monitoring national and international knowledge- and evidence based policy incentives on innovation issues. It is difficult to perceive these aspects as being concerned with concrete implementation. It was therefore criticized from different positions. Social Democrat Ingela Nylund Watz summoned Annie Lööf through an interpellation to the Riksdag on the following grounds:

> This autumn the government accepted the National Innovation Strategy. The work on the strategy was carried out in a broad and very ambitious way. A lot of actors were invited to share their point of view to the Ministry during this process. The final result is a product that unfortunately contains no strategy for implementation or any monitorable goals, which is highly remarkable (Nylund Watz, 2012).

Charles Edquist, professor in innovation studies at Lund University, criticized the NIS along similar lines in an op-ed in Sweden's largest newspaper Dagens Nyheter:

> This autumn the Ministry presented the National Innovation Strategy. A lot of departments and government agencies had been involved in the process, but [the strategy] contains only two pages on how the strategy should be implemented, and no monitorable goals are formulated (Edquist, 2013-03-26).

Editorial writer P J Anders Linder wrote the following in an editorial in the second largest newspaper, Svenska Dagbladet:

> [The strategy] affirms that it is urgent to do new things in new and improved ways in order to manage future challenges, but it doesn't speak of what is at stake and is not characterized by a sense of urgency. Most things are good as they are, and when the ambitions are boiled down to unique points they are so general that you can't really navigate based on them. You have to be a fanatic communist if you're provoked by this worship of entrepreneurship and creative people (Linder, 2012-12-04).

Vinnova also raised concerns. One of the employees in charge of managing the NIS at Vinnova claimed that there had been a minor clash, as they had initially believed that it would contain clear instructions on the future of Swedish innovation politics. When I asked him what happened at Vinnova after the NIS was launched, he reasons as follows:

> Not much. We tried to…[pause] If you put it like this, a lot of the things that are in the NIS on a general level stems from our own strategy. They include public services, which is something that we have worked on a lot. They raise the grand challenges, and so on. So those aspects are in line with our own strategy. So there wasn't a whole lot of change after the NIS was released.

The NIS group within the Ministry does not concur with this critique, and that is understandable considering that they were part of the public relations practices behind the NIS (the soft spaces, as I have called them). One of the project leaders describes this as follows (I will quote her reply in full in order to document the complexity of evaluating the effects of public relations practices and the work on the NIS):

> A lot of people say things like 'not a lot has happened'. I don't share that image. A lot has happened. But it is very hard to show that. These processes are not something that, you know, 'smack!', and everything changes over night. To take

> a concrete example, the GO started to work on innovative procurement processes in 2009, they published their conclusion at around the same time as the work on the innovation strategy commenced. And a lot of actors worked on these issues for a number of years. Vinnova, for example, worked with these issues, so did SKL. So during the autumn in 2011, the government stated in their budget proposition that this was in line with raising the innovation climate in Sweden and in line with the innovation strategy. And Vinnova got more money to continue their work on these issues and to support other government agencies in this. During the spring of 2012, there was a decision that three government agencies – the Swedish Energy Agency, the Swedish Transport Administration and Vinnova – were to continue with their work on procurement processes. And these decisions are pretty big, the consequences are big. But it's not like things change over night. Who knows what this will bring in three years or so (Project Leader 1, NIS).

The project leader invokes procurement processes, more funding to Vinnova, a range of different organizations and a more generalized interest in innovation issues on a GO level as particularly fruitful outcomes of the NIS. Her nuanced answer is owed to the fact that she had been working closely with these issues ever since the Ministry commenced its work on the NIS. The other project leader concurs:

> A lot of people, entrepreneurs especially, were like: 'Ehhh, there is nothing concrete in the strategy'. But the strategy did not really concern itself with individual entrepreneurs who can just take a look and see that if you have a company that is a particular size you're entitled to X amount of money at the end of the month. It [the strategy] was a political framework for the innovation debate in Sweden. That way, government agencies become more involved through the final document, and the through the process itself we got in touch with many people and let them share their opinion (Project Leader 2, NIS).

From the aforementioned quotes, we can see two worlds collide: One worldview, taken up by the project leaders, argues that the "soft spaces" of governing are valuable, as the NIS' public relations practices construed innovation as a critical political issue and thereby set the framework for a larger and more general debate. The second worldview, exemplified through P J Ander Linder, Charles Edquist and Ingela Nylund Watz's critique, emphasized concrete and measurable political reform. The NIS was never debated in the Riksdag, and could therefore before interpreted as having little (if any) political clout. The NIS' project leaders, however, can be interpreted as having taken an "activist stance" or the role of "discourse technologists" (Holtzhausen, 2012;

Motion, 2005), as they were thoroughly embedded in their organization's public relations practices and in different ways seek to resist the "mainstream" narratives that were formed after the launch of the NIS. It is easy to understand both perspectives, and it is beyond this dissertation to evaluate the effects of the NIS. I do believe, however, that the project leaders' position is valid, as all those networks, dialogue programs, shared spaces and organizations and individuals that became embedded in their public relations practices indicate a Ministry that is stepping in the right direction concerning matters of public relations. The NIS should, moreover, be seen as a form of discursive steering that undoubtedly shapes and legitimizes certain practices (Kornberger & Clegg, 2011). I have, for instance, alluded to several different organizations that developed strategies that were in line with the Ministry's NIS. But the Ministry may have underrated the notion of distance between themselves and the reader of the NIS. As I stated in chapter three, hypes are composed of *spatial expectations*, the manner by which hypes generate expectations unevenly and are interpreted differently depending on where the actors are located in relation to the hype (Brown, 2003, p. 13). It thus seems reasonable to suggest that the difference between the NIS' critics and the project leaders is a matter of *spatial proximity*. Alvesson's (1990) research on corporate communication can be useful here. He argues that in terms of image making, "the experiences based on personal contacts carry more weight in forming opinions and beliefs than the message in the advertisement" (p. 377). Translated into the NIS' context, the critics perceived only the NIS' "information", whereas the practices behind it (the personal contacts or relationships formed) were excluded in their evaluation. The problem of translating soft spaces into a concrete and reliable government technology was in other words troublesome.

The clash of worldviews is thus not peculiar, as governing to a large extent involves degrees of "failure". It is possible that a strategy was the wrong government technology to use, as it connotes concrete and decisive (*militaristic* even) action (Knights & Morgan, 1991; Nothhaft & Schölzel, 2015, p. 18), where the Ministry perceived the NIS as a stepping stone to something larger. As Miller and Rose (2012) note, "[t]echnologies produce unexpected problems, are utilized for their own ends by those who are supposed merely to operate them, are hampered by underfunding, professional rivalries and the impossibility of producing technical conditions that would make them work" (p. 35). In other words, *in relation to* the public relations practices that created the NIS, the strategy itself was a difficult technology to operate as it provoked different, sometimes competing, interpretations of its use. This can perhaps be attributed to the expectations that were generated, as mentioned in the previous

chapter. I will expand on this in the final chapter where I will deliver some practical recommendations.

Evaluation (and disintegration) of the NIS

The Ministry awarded Vinnova the task of monitoring and evaluating the effects of the NIS and how other government agencies' work stand in relation to the strategy's stated goals. In the government directive, it says that Vinnova shall create a process for the "regular evaluation of the national innovation strategy and for the presentation of the Swedish innovation climate's development on a national and regional level" (Näringsdepartementet, 2012d, p. 9). Considering the NIS' broadly formulated goals, to evaluate how other government agencies' activities live up to those goals turned out to be an arduous task. When I interviewed a member of that group, he disclosed a quite apparent exhaustion when reflecting on the evaluation process. The breadth of the goals had made it impossible for the project team at Vinnova to develop indicators that could measure other government agencies' innovation activities. One of the interviewees in charge at Vinnova explains their method as follows:

> I've worked as an evaluation consultant prior to this so I am pretty skilled when it comes to evaluation techniques. What made the innovation strategy unique was that those goals were very hard to measure, they were very general and there were many similar sounding goals, which made it difficult to find indicators, or the indicators become arbitrary. So we realized early on that you can either try to find indicators, […] or you can look at the activities that are being done. We settled on showing what is done within these areas. It was a pragmatic approach, as we had to let go of traditional forms of evaluation and just give examples of activities that were in line with the NIS (Interviewee, Vinnova).

The three reports (one final report and two interim reports) thus contain examples of how fifteen government agencies work with the NIS' stated goals. Considering this complexity, I was interested to know how the interviewee felt when they got this assignment. I will quote the passage in full, as I believe the passage contains a lot of interesting insights into the NIS, its evaluation and subsequent disintegration.

> IP: I thought that we had to figure out what they wanted. And we received very clear signals from the political staff…
>
> I: At the Government Office?

IP: Yes, that they were, ehhh, this sounds a bit amoral, but they were looking for stuff to show, that was their approach. They wanted to show politically that there is a lot of positive stuff that they are doing.

I: How did you notice that?

IP: Well, it emerged during our dialogues with the State Secretary.

I: They didn't say it explicitly?

IP: I guess they did, during our informal talks.

I: Is it common to get these broad assignments? That are so broad and diffuse…

IP: Well, it's kind of unique, it is.

I: But it must have been taken up so much of your work. Because I have been looking at these reports…

IP: [Laughs] Let me put it like this. The first year we put a lot of time and focus on this, because it was very important to deliver something good.

I: You mean the first report?

IP: Yes, exactly. Then we got the feeling that they [the Ministry] didn't do very much with the report. It was a bit unclear how they used the material. And pragmatically speaking, there was an election coming up, and it looked as if there was going to be a change of government. And there was no secret that all strategies then end up in the trash. So sure, that wasn't completely insignificant. It's not like we stop working…[long pause] But to deliver based on a strategy that was most likely going to end up in the trash come October […] Plus, it didn't have any political priority within the political staff whatsoever – we picked up those signals. So what we did was not to focus on the delivery, but the process. Now we had all these government agencies on board and they had started to look at their own organizations from an innovation perspective. I met with all of them and guided them – that was good. We had meetings here [at Vinnova] where we exchanged experiences and that is something we are going to continue with (Interviewee, Vinnova).

In the beginning of this passage, the interviewee invokes that the NIS' was a suitable tool for the Ministry to use in order "show" that the administrative wheels were in motion. The public relations practices and Vinnova's evaluation were good government programs to use in order to show this. However, due to political changes (upcoming election and possible change of government) the

evaluation of the NIS was a problematic activity – it went from being of strategic importance to low priority. The NIS must then be interpreted as having become a burden for the Ministry, as the project leader seems to invoke that the Ministry had no interest in their evaluations after the publication. This claim is also supported by the NIS' project leaders who, as I mentioned earlier, spoke of the difficulties of turning the NIS into politics after its publication. However, even though the project leader at Vinnova had been skeptical of the NIS, at the end of the passage above, he speaks of the creative aspects that had emerged from within his organization due to the NIS' low priority. The project leader mentioned how instead of using traditional evaluation methods, his team had focused more on the process: to engage with and invite organizations as opposed to analyzing their activities from a distance. Miller and Rose (2012) argue that this is intrinsic to government technologies, as "techniques invented for one purpose may find their governmental role for another" (p. 35). Vinnova thus used the NIS as an alibi in order to form closer relationships with external actors, arguably a positive effect of the NIS.

The disintegration of the NIS was an outcome of the change of government that took place in the 2014 national election. The project leader at Vinnova stated this in blunt terms:

> IP: In our [former] government directive it said that we would continue to carry out these evaluations every year up until 2020. This is no longer the case.
>
> I: Did you hear this from the current [new] government?
>
> IP: Yes, exactly. [That directive] will be erased.

It turns out that he received notice of this the day before of our interview. In other words, not much is left of the NIS, as the political staff at the Ministry was replaced and Vinnova stopped evaluating the NIS. In chapter three I stated that political hypes inevitably disintegrate, something that the aforementioned quotation affirms. However, the NIS' own project leaders' account on the informal and non-measurable effects of the NIS should not be taken lightly, as the Ministry (and perhaps the GO) arguably learned something from the public relations practices and possibly inspired actors that were embedded in those practices. I will expand on this in the concluding chapter.

Summary

In this chapter I have described and the analyzed what the Ministry's public relations practices amounted to. I have argued that the Ministry faced some difficulties that pertained to translation. To translate the public relations practices into a government technology that was communicative was a difficult enterprise, as the Ministry had to reduce a highly complex issue into a framework that could work from a communication perspective. It is possible to interpret this as a particularly significant problem that the communicative state face, as turning complex political issues into communicative issues requires processes of simplification. To render the complexity of political issues into simplified formats may be an intrinsic aspect of political practice in general, but it is possible that the PR-ization of government agencies reinforces this phenomenon – an aspect research into political public relations must take into account (I will come back to this in the final chapter of this dissertation). The Ministry's employees considered the NIS an "apolitical" tool, something my analysis of the narrative styles showed. By constructing "wicked" problematizations and the "manufacturing of risk" (Giddens, 1998), the Ministry sought to position the NIS as a particularly fruitful government technology in the post-financial crisis of 2008. However, due to political reasons that seem to correlate with the election that was to take place in 2014 and the probability of change in government, there are reasons to suggest that the NIS was gradually being considered a "no-go" project. The Ministry and the political staff (as some of the employees argued) could not "make it into politics". This is an interesting perspective that may shed light on how politics is being done, and potentially affirms the role of PR-ization, as communication and public relations were central, rather than the consequences of those practices. The NIS had turned into an administrative concern for Vinnova in particular, arguably a long way from the public relations practices and the expectations that had been generated by the Ministry prior to the NIS' creation and publication. I will discuss this even more fully in the final chapter when I discuss the political and democratic implications of my findings.

8 The Swedish Institute's Innovative Sweden Campaign

In the previous two analytical chapters I have mainly been concerned with how the Ministry implemented different forms of public relations practices in the hope of casting innovation as a critical political issue in different social and political spaces. In this chapter I will shift focus and analyze how the political hype makes itself manifest through different political public relations practices on the international scene, specifically by way of analyzing the Innovative Sweden campaign implemented by the Swedish Institute during the years 2011–2014. The campaign can be interpreted as being a case of nation branding practices and even though scholars and practitioners tend to argue that nations have always branded themselves (Olins, 2002), it is only in the last decade or so that nation branding as a public relations practice has become ingrained in many governments' foreign activities, existing together with such measures as public diplomacy and foreign policy issues (Rasmussen & Merkelsen, 2012). Despite the practice's almost global proliferation, nation branding research has been driven by an instrumental agenda, whereas critical approaches to the phenomenon have been particularly lacking (Varga, 2013). Kaneva (2011) calls for a critical research agenda that aims to understand the appeal of nation branding, analyze the relations between the political and economic elites and the political implications of "treating nations as brands" (p. 131). It is also possible to perceive the campaign as a political public relations practice, as it was implemented by a political organization for the promotion of a particular issue and to form bonds with individuals and organizations abroad (L'Etang, 2009; Szondi, 2010; Yang, Klyueva, & Taylor, 2012). I will in this chapter thus look into the practical, symbolic and material dimensions that were implemented in order to promote innovation as a political issue. In line with this dissertation's purpose, this chapter aims at understanding how the Institute reflects on and implement public relations practices in order to promote national interests abroad – with a particular focus on innovation issues. A useful framework by which to perceive and understand how government agencies

promote political issues abroad has been developed by Aronczyk (2013). According to her, the creation of a nation branding campaign tend to include the following steps: (1) measuring the nation's strengths and weaknesses (I will call this environmental scanning), (2) assembling the important actors and ambassadors, (3) identifying the campaign's core idea and (4) implementation. I will structure the chapter in accordance with these four aspects, as a way to analyze the Institute's public relations practices. I will begin, however, by describing the general contours of the campaign.

The Innovative Sweden-campaign

Even though the Institute has promoted Sweden's innovation abilities abroad for decades, this campaign is the most strategic, extensive and costly campaign on innovation the Institute has implemented to date. I am particularly interested in showing some of the complexities that are involved in the campaign's realization and how the Institute early on embeds outside actors in order to be able to conduct the campaign. As I have discussed throughout this dissertation, political public relations can be seen through organizations' assemblage of individuals and organizations for the promotion of political issues and the creation of conducts (Foucault, 1978/1991; Rose & Miller, 2008; Rose et al., 2006). This is certainly a public relations issue, as its focus is on the role of creating and managing relationships (Coombs & Holladay, 2015; Waymer, 2013). This section will give an overview of the campaign in question.

The idea behind the campaign came in 2008 from a project leader at Kista Science City (a regional hub for IT-companies outside of Stockholm). The idea was to carry out a traveling exhibition to a number of cities abroad. Sweden as an innovative nation was the exhibition's focal point. Considering the amount of human and financial resources such campaigns demand, the Institute had internal debates regarding the feasibility of a traveling exhibition. In 2010, the Institute thus commenced a minor analysis composed of two steps. First, the Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis'[53] international offices in Beijing, Tokyo and Washington DC were approached and asked if they believed a large campaign could be of interest, where the agency claimed that "such an exhibition was of high relevance". Second, the Institute conducted interviews

[53] Tillväxtanalys – an agency serving under the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications.

with representatives of eight leading incubators throughout Sweden and "also this group regarded the project to be well-timed" (The Swedish Institute, 2016, p. 4).

The campaign was carried out during the years 2011–2014. It was a highly cooperative campaign, where a myriad of different government agencies, foreign agencies, corporations and individuals became embedded in the launch and implementation of the campaign. According to the Institute's evaluation report published in 2016, the purpose of the campaign was to "create trust and interest for Sweden by raising the knowledge of Sweden as one of the most innovative countries with technological products at the forefront and promote Swedish higher education" (p. 1). The target group was "students, researchers, innovators, businesses, investors, decision-makers and the media" (p. 6). The campaign was a traveling exhibition, wherein the Institute had designed and developed seminars, talks and individual programs for each targeted city on topics that involved ICT, Life Science, Gaming and Clean Tech. The campaign also contained a complex set of spatial arrangements, as the Institute had hired the architect-firm White to develop an exhibition platform that was to travel with the Institute's campaign and be showcased at each city (I will expand on this later on in the chapter). The campaign and exhibition were implemented in eleven cities in nine different countries:

Table 4: Innovative Sweden campaign: Targeted cities and the location of the campaign.

Year	City/Area	Location
2011	Silicon Valley, US	Stanford University, Alumni Center
2012	Toronto, Canada	Medical & Related Sciences (MaRS)
2012	Washington DC, US	House of Sweden
2012	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Centro Cultural do Banco Brasil
2012	Beijing, China	Tsinghua University, Institute for Design
2012	Shanghai, China	Tongji University, College of Design and Innovation
2013	Berlin, Germany	The Nordic countries' common house
2013	Tokyo, Japan	Miraikan National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation
2013	Seoul, South Korea	Ewha Womans University
2014	Jakarta, Indonesia	Indonesia International Institute for Life Sciences
2014	Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam	Hoa Sen University

Whereas the Institute was in charge of developing the campaign's concept, the exhibition platform and promotional material, it was the foreign agencies

responsibility to make sure the exhibition and events were carried out (choosing location, contacting sponsor organizations, inviting influential people, involve social media, and so on). The foreign agencies in charge (Swedish embassies and consulates) brought in help from other organizations, such as other Swedish organizations (private and public) and local public relations firms. During the launch of the exhibition, seminars and talks were held with local as well as Swedish decision-makers, entrepreneurs and scientists. The length of the exhibition itself differed depending on the city, but were generally held for two to four weeks. According to the evaluation report, the Institute believes that the exhibition was shown to 75,000 individuals, "generating 562 news articles in most notably the foreign press, which according to the Institute's calculations entails a readership of 139 million people and an ad-value of 28 million Swedish Crowns" (p. 16). In terms of the foreign agencies' staff, "between 25 to 70 weeks of working-weeks were needed in order to plan and implement [each exhibition] and in some instances it meant that the entire staff at the embassy or consulate became involved" (p. 12). In terms of financial resources, the report mentions that the Innovative Sweden campaign had "demanded a lot of resources considering the shipping [of the exhibition] to the designated cities. For the Institute, the total cost has amounted to around 11,8 million Swedish Crowns […]. The exhibition has therefore cost more than one million Swedish Crowns per exhibition" (p. 20). In most cases, it took the embassies and consulates ten to twelve months to prepare for the campaign. These numbers suggest that the campaign was a large and undoubtedly important campaign for the Institute. I will describe and analyze the campaign through Aronczyk's framework and commence by discussing how the Institute employs measurements in order to evaluate the programs the organization set in motion.

Environmental scanning

The practice of environmental scanning entails "strategic research" into "pre-issues or trends" (Botan, 2006, p. 241) and can be said to work on the basis of seeking control of a complex and nuanced environment in order to know what issues or trends to prioritize in the construction of (in the Institute's case) particular campaigns or projects. By drawing on supposedly rational methods in order to turn social life into factual claims, the world can be more easily explained and perhaps better controlled from a communicative perspective. Scanning techniques (surveys, statistics, rankings, opinion polls, and so on) are

frequently employed by political actors (whether in a state, regional or municipality contexts) in order to understand how the social body they seek to govern functions (Lundqvist, 2010). An understanding of the Institute's scanning procedures can be tied to this dissertation's purpose: to describe and analyze how the government agencies reflect on communication issues in order to make public relations practices a viable concern.

In one of the larger in-house public perception study, the Institute, along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005), argue "it needs to have close knowledge of its target groups to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of its promotional work. For this reason we monitor and study perceptions and awareness about Sweden across a wide range of parameters in different countries" (p. 5). From a public relations perspective, this entails an outside-looking-in awareness, as the Institute is in need of understanding foreign perceptions of what makes Sweden attractive. The Institute relies on and pays attention to a number of measurement techniques devised by external actors whose aim is to create and distribute "facts" of global perceptions, values and attitudes. When I spoke with the General Director (GD) of the Institute, it became clear that measurements are powerful discursive tools that legitimize and enable action:

> When we look at how Sweden relates to other countries we top the international rankings and indexes when it comes to innovation, creativity and so on. Top 3, top 5. We share that with the Nordic countries. But Sweden has been in those positions for a long time. The second thing we look for is perception measurements, where people in other countries describe how they view Sweden. Even here Sweden is ranked very high. Always amongst the top 10 most renowned countries, and depending on how you measure we have a position at nr. 2, 4 or 10. And in some of these measurements they ask what it is they rank highly. And here creativity and innovation are the aspects that stand out. It is not Sweden as a cultural or tourist nation. It is innovation capacity. I have worked for fifteen years with promotion in order to attract foreign investments in Sweden. It was similar then – what was it that attracted people to Sweden? It's central position in northern Europe, its market, Sweden's competencies, innovation capacity and strong global and successful engineering corporations. That is, innovation capacity (The General Director, the Institute).

In the quotation above, the GD speaks of the need to adapt the Institute's work to how the organization's target-group claims it (if one can speak of a coherent group) perceives Sweden. The GD draws on a range of different measurements and rankings in order to legitimize the Innovative Sweden campaign. The first measurement she invokes ("top 3, top 5") is a reference to some of the

international indexes produced by various organizations throughout Europe such as the Global Innovation Index by INSEAD and Innovation Union Scoreboard by the EU Commission. I have discussed the political and symbolic use of this form of measurement technique in the previous chapters and I will not analyze it further here. But it is worth pointing out that her reference to this ranking shows how the Institute and the Innovative Sweden campaign is embedded in the same global currents and hype as the Ministry, as both organizations invoke and legitimize their practices based on those indexes. In the communication platform developed by the Institute together with Vinnova (2010) prior to the launch of the Innovative Sweden campaign, these rankings enabled the Institute to use and apply the concept "We Lead the World in Innovation" in all of the communication material published for the campaign. They also serve as basis for all of the press releases written by the Institute prior to the different Innovative Sweden exhibitions and in some of the PowerPoint templates the Institute used when presenting Sweden to foreign stakeholders (The Swedish Institute, n.d.).

The GD's reference to "perception measurements" is also relevant. Two of the more dominant and commonly referred to perception measurements are the Country Rep Track by the Reputation Institute and the Nation Brands Index (NBI) by Anholt GfK Roper – companies that through their own methodology measure citizens' perception of different nations[54]. In the quotation above, the GD had interpreted these measurements as indicating that the Institute should focus on constructing "brand Sweden" through an innovation lens. On the Institute's website, a large number of different rankings and Sweden's position in these rankings are mentioned[55]. When I asked an analyst at the Institute about the role rankings play, she affirms their importance, but seeks to paint a more nuanced picture by invoking the Institute's own environmental scanning:

> It's part of our reality. What's really interesting is to look at [the rankings'] development over time and see if things have changed. And there are many rankings, and of course they give us an indication. But it's a picture of reality, and reality is complex. So you have to complement that with different bits and pieces, and the environmental scanning is part of that (Analyst, the Institute).

In order to develop relevant projects, these rankings provide guidance for the Institute. This is especially critical, she proceeds, considering the Institute is a government agency and is obliged to communicate "truthfully". Such

[54] For a description and analysis of for instance the NBI, see Aronczyk (2013, p. 69ff).
[55] https://si.se/verksamhetsomraden/sverigebilden-utomlands/internationella-index/ (2016-05-06)

measurements can thus justify campaigns and projects. They also justify certain representations of how the world "works". According to the NBI index, these services aim at "providing governments and their agencies with a one-of-a-kind resource for actionable insights needed to more effectively manage a country's reputation" (GfK Roper Public Affairs & Media, 2009, p. 1). A good image abroad, they argue, can help strengthen foreign policy initiatives, increase inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI), increase tourism and export revenues and attract foreign talent. The indexes are powerful sources that enable notions such as "foreign perception", "image" and, in our case, "innovation", to become valid points of reference. They make reality stable, categorized and mobile in the sense that their work can be susceptible to debate, management and perhaps enable projects or campaigns[56].

The Institute also carries out their own environmental scanning. Considering that the organization serves under the Foreign Ministry, it has a huge network of foreign actors (including embassies, consulates and their staff) at their potential disposal for implementing measurements on foreign perceptions. One example was set in motion in 2005 when the NSU[57] began its work on the *Study of Sweden's Image Abroad* (SASU) publication – arguably the largest study on foreign perceptions of Sweden to date. The study's precursor was the *The Swedish Image Project* conducted by the Canadian opinion institute Angus Reid Group in 1999, a smaller survey also paid for by the NSU members. Granted that the Swedish government has a tradition of researching and compiling foreign perceptions, the majority of these publications are largely based on Sweden's exposure in foreign media outlets (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005, p. 4)[58]. The SASU on the other hand was purely focused on foreign perceptions as opposed to foreign media portrayals, as it investigated foreign citizens' perception of Sweden in 23 different countries through surveys conducted by Sweden's foreign embassies. The results of their survey suggest that the NSU's members ought to promote the image of Sweden

[56] It is also worth noting that the companies that create the indexes become part of governments' nation branding campaigns by taking on the role of consultants. It is, in other words, in the interest of the companies to emphasize and repeat the beneficial (often market-orientated) narratives of nation branding (Aronczyk, 2013, p. 70).

[57] The Board for Promoting Sweden Abroad (Nämnden för Sverigefrämjande i utlandet), an umbrella organization composed of the Institute, the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy, and Communications, Business Sweden, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and VisitSweden.

[58] The Department for Press, Information and Communication under the Foreign Ministry has ever since 1968 published yearly reports on how Sweden is portrayed in foreign media outlets. Since 2002 this is published every month through the Foreign Ministry's website (Pamment, 2011).

through values that foreign nationals perceive as indicative of Swedes and Sweden: the *Swedish model*, *culture* (Ingmar Bergman, ABBA, Astrid Lindgren), *niche tourism* ("exotic nature" and "Stockholm's hip image") and even *clichés* ("relating to sexual liberation and beautiful, blonde, blue-eyed women") are among the strongest elements pertaining to Sweden's image abroad. The authors of the study also suggest that "the public and private sector would benefit" from launching a concerted effort to promote Swedish *companies* and *products*, and they highlight that "there is scope here for further sustained educational efforts" to promote Swedish *investments* (p. 52) – something we will see manifest itself in the Innovative Sweden campaign. In 2007, the Institute also commenced a series of yearly investigations designed to explore how the world perceives Sweden – the publication was called *Sverigebilden*[59]. These investigations were based on the NBI's evaluations, the Institute's own surveys and foreign media reports on Sweden. It is, however, difficult to perceive these publications as environmental scanning documents. Pamment (2012), for instance, argues that even though *Sverigebilden* gives a nuanced perspective on the image of Sweden, the publications give no real insights into the directions of the Institute's efforts abroad and should be seen as a branding tool the Institute can use to portray its own work (p. 331–332).

The Institute's interest in environmental scanning indicates a professionalized and reflexive approach to its public relations practices abroad that in many ways legitimize the Institute's practices and how the employees come to perceive the Institute's role. In Lundqvist's (2010) research on the role environmental scanning has come to play for government agencies, the author notes that there is a tendency – promoted by consultants, self-appointed experts and politicians – to construct environmental scanning as a crucial practice in order for the agencies to make rational decisions, let alone survive. Based at least in part on their own, but additionally the experts' scanning of trends, the Innovative Sweden campaign can be seen as a "rational" decision, as it was considered a truthful and much needed expression of Sweden.

Assembling key actors

In order for campaigns to be constructed, they need mobilization from a wide range of actors who together make up and perform a network of disparate yet

[59] *The Swedish Image*

connected individuals and organizations. For the Institute, it was a reflexive and calculative undertaking, as the Institute needed to decide on who to include and how best to use their particular strengths. The actors in question that came to be part of the campaign are manifold and differ in terms of their assignments. This symbolizes the power the Institute has. In the governmentality literature (and in Foucauldian readings) power can be said to represent the possibility of gathering actors from a distance. Even if the actors assembled by the Institute are formally independent, they are nevertheless drawn into the campaign's vocabularies and core ideas (Miller & Rose, 2012; Dean, 2010). In this section I will discuss and analyze the assemblage of actors and their subsequent roles in constructing the campaign. This step does not include forming relations with the Institute's targeted publics, but rather forming relations with influential actors in the hope of facilitating relations once the assemblages are implemented abroad. There are (in no hierarchical order) notably three actors that are assembled in order for the campaign to come alive: (1) international media companies, (2) manifold organizations and individuals, (3) and brand ambassadors/materiality. I will deal with these consecutively. In the section on implementation, I will discuss how these assemblages were used once the campaign was abroad.

Assemblage 1: Media relations

According to Morris and Goldsworthy (2012), contemporary public relations practice is almost exclusively aimed at persuading a public through the media or other forms of "third party endorsements". In other words, it entails a practice that seeks to get other, often independent, actors to tell the stories you as an organization want to become salient in the public domain. In the Institute's case, this public relations practice (with media relations as a core feature) has become more calculated in the last few years. In the initial discussions within the Institute, there had been ideas on how the newspaper company Metro International could be involved in the targeted cities, but the Institute never found the time to realize such a project. As a preemptive move, they settled on inviting international journalists to Sweden. The Institute's media relations manager told me that this can be done in a tactical manner. By inviting foreign journalists from target countries to Sweden a few months prior, it enables the Institute to showcase Sweden on its own terms and facilitate the campaign better once placed in those said countries. The media relations practice is preoccupied with constructing schedules and tours for foreign journalists or,

from a governmentality perspective, assembles actors in the hope of being able to persuade or manage opinion internationally. According to the manager, it was important to construct and show a narrative of Sweden as an innovative country, but from a number of different perspectives. The invited international journalists took part of a schedule that included discussions of and visits to, for instance, Swedish tech-startups, universities and even "progressive" daycare centers in order to make the story of Innovative Sweden concrete for the foreign visitors. Journalists and bloggers were to a large extent invited based on their capacity to influence the media environment of which they are part[60]. How the Institute selected and invited the journalists was on an ad-hoc basis. Journalists would either contact the Institute for potential news stories to write or (considering the large and often personal network of media contacts the organizations have developed throughout the years) were contacted by the Institute in the hope of generating interest of a particular story. If there is a group of six to eight journalists participating in the scheduled activities, the Institute hoped to generate at least eight articles in foreign media outlets (Media relations manager, the Institute).

This proactive media practice is a fairly new public relations form within the Institute, something that become quite salient if we look at the Institute's yearly reports. Prior to 2004, these reports mention little (if anything) of these public relations practices that are now standard within the Institute, the assembling of journalists included. The 2004 report puts emphasis on the professionalization of the Institute's digital presence, coinciding not incidentally with the expansion of the portal Sweden.se launched two years earlier. Budget discussions on communication practices in these early reports involved the cost of information material such as books and other publications (cf. Svenska Institutet, 2005). The emphasis on one-way communication practices (centered on notions such as "marketing", "information resources" and "presentations") was gradually succeeded by a language that placed emphasis on a more proactive approach to communication. The invitation of journalists as a proactive and strategic practice for the facilitation of opinion abroad seems to have occurred or at least gained greater emphasis around 2007 when the Institute earmarked specific sums for this practice, a practice they specifically labeled public relations[61]. Ever since then, this has become a standard public relations practice

[60] In terms of bloggers, the Institute frequently purchases lists of the most influential bloggers in order to weigh their potential worth.

[61] The budget of managing international visits differs yearly, from 300,000 SEK to 500.000 SEK. It is important to mention that these cost do not only refer to visits from international journalists but from other actors as well (such as politicians and other decision makers). Yet

within the Institute. The term "Strategic Communication" emerged in 2010 in the yearly reports.

The preemptive news management tactic may thus not only enable beneficial portrayals of Sweden in foreign media outlets, but may also facilitate and form media relations abroad prior to the Institute's international visitations. According to the media relations manager it may also enable word of mouth:

> Then there is another side, when I speak with journalists I often hear: 'I want to send my daughter to study in Sweden'. And it's almost with a euphoric tone, when you meet journalists who think this is really amazing. They never write that in their articles of course, that would be unprofessional. But regarding the effects, when a journalist who goes back to their homeland, their context, and describe the country with that tone, why it's so fantastic – that's very powerful (Media Relations Manager, the Institute).

Considering the emphasis the Institute has placed on public relations and strategic communication during the last decade or so, it is of no surprise that this form of news management has come to occupy an important function within the Institute. The preemption by which international media is contacted signifies a professional approach in matters of public relations. It has become strategic, in the sense that news management is often coordinated on many levels. In the Institute's (2016) evaluation of the Innovative Sweden campaign, they write "both the Institute and the embassies emphasize the importance of active media work locally, early visitations of journalists in Sweden and the use of a local media bureaus in conjunction with the inauguration [of the exhibition]. In those cities where media exposure has been the greatest this is how we have worked" (p. 16). Aside from this preemptive news management practice, the Institute is dependent on embedding journalists and media actors on a local level abroad. This is done by most notably the foreign agencies, and will be dealt with when I discuss the campaign's implementation.

Assemblage 2: Foreign agencies and other organizations

A crucial group of actors that were important to assemble was the Swedish foreign agencies in the Institute's targeted cities abroad – in fact, they were

considering the substantial amount of international journalists that embark on the Institute's media tours it is not a wild guess to suppose that a large portion of this expense is directed towards assembling journalists. In 2008, for instance, the Institute managed to assemble 178 journalists for a total of 47 unique tours (The Swedish Institute, 2011).

crucial to the campaign's implementation. One of the first concerns had been where the Institute was to eventually showcase the campaign, an issue that was ultimately decided by the Institute's management. When I asked the project leader about how the Institute discussed the choice of cities, her response suggests that there is a hierarchical notion concerning nations and cities in the Institute's reflections:

> There's a lot of talk about the BRIC-nations. That's Brazil, Russia, India and China. But as we discussed this with the project leader who came up with the entire idea [the campaign], she thought, you know, why not start in Stanford? And we thought that was very interesting, and a bit tough, you know, Sweden is one of the most innovative nations in the world, and to enter Stanford [laughs]…Toronto was not a priority, but they really wanted this, because Karolinska[62] has a cooperative agreement with Canada and they wanted to activate that again. And we got a lot of traction from Brazil, China and Berlin. Japan is a priority, but South Korea is not, just kind of, but they really wanted the exhibition. But it's the Institute's management that decides on the exhibition's stops, where we go (Project Leader 2, the Institute).

The foreign agencies follow the Institute's work through different internal channels and if a particular campaign is considered relevant, there is a strong possibility that it is up for consideration. In other words, the foreign agencies have some power to use the Institute's campaign for their own purposes. In the Institute's own evaluation report of the Innovative Sweden campaign, the Institute claims that the foreign agencies that were approached were all interested in using the campaign and exhibition (p. 18). An interesting point is that the embassies and consulates assembled their own local actors based on those actors' familiarity with the local context. The Institute's power thus lies in its ability to form strong ties with foreign agencies that in turn assemble their own network of actors for the creation of the campaign:

> It's the embassy's network together with the local partners' networks – that's what's important when you choose a local partner. It should be a good exhibition space, but it must also be a local partner that has a good network who can reach the target-groups that we want to reach (Project Leader 1, the Institute).

This can be seen in the Institute's evaluation report of the campaign. The report mentions that "to find the right local cooperation partners has been a key to a

[62] Karolinska University Hospital, based in Stockholm.

successful project. If you find the right local actors, the actors' own networks can be used and contribute to the program and with their status" (p. 12–13). In Brasilia, for instance, this was considered an important media event and the embassy thus hired its own Brazilian public relations firm in order to maximize media exposure (Project Leader, Swedish Embassy in Brasilia). In the other cities, various opportunities for sponsorships were offered to private actors in order to minimize the campaign's financial costs. These sponsor organizations could in turn design their own seminars during the exhibition. In many cases, the embassies or consulates employed the trade association Business Sweden in order to facilitate their work and mobilize their network for the campaign's cause. Vinnova, Tillväxtanalys, local universities and local corporations were also drawn into the exhibition's events and seminars, something that, according to the embassies' own evaluation reports, has generated new projects and formed closer relationships with those organizations.

In the previous two analytical chapters I wrote of the Ministry's power and its wish to form a network of relationships with different actors based on their mutual interests. I believe this can be found in the Institute's public relations practice as well, as they to a large extent mobilize actors in order for those very actors to mobilize new actors. Pamment (2014) argues that this has been a traditional perspective in research on public diplomacy (PD): "PD strategies seek to identify 'key influencers,' 'multipliers' or 'agents of change'; individuals who, usually on the basis of a leadership position in their respective social sphere, act as 'hubs' with access to a large number of 'nodes' in a network. These individuals redistribute core messages in their own voices, which can help shift public opinion" (p. 57). This might be a conventional perspective in public diplomacy research, but is not particularly salient in research on political public relations. I will expand on this when I discuss the implementation of the campaign and in this dissertation's final chapter.

Assemblage 3: Brand ambassadors and materiality

The campaign needed to be filled with content, or as the General Director put it, with "flesh and blood". Another form of assembling was the Institute's use of brand ambassadors, which can be seen as a symbolic approach used in order to differentiate a nation's brand (Rusten, Bryson, & Aarflot, 2007). Several months prior to the campaign's first implementation at Stanford in 2011, a jury

consisting of five external "innovation experts"[63] was assembled to handpick twenty Swedish (by and large) technological objects to represent Sweden in the exhibition: "the hottest Swedish inventions right now", as the press releases note. The inventions were categorized under one of four different categories: Life Science, Gaming, ICT or Clean Tech (The Swedish Institute, 2010). The selection process turned out to be a tricky endeavor and would last several months, a practice occurring while the Institute sought to decide on the budget for the entire project. The parameters by which the jury chose the tour's inventions revolved around the inventions' visual aspects, its degree of novelty, international market potential and media potential. Out of the 201 inventions submitted to the jury, 56 were sent a questionnaire containing questions on why they were interested in participating, on their invention's market potential and how they were going to pitch their invention to international clients. In the end, 21 inventors and their inventions made it through the jury process and would become representatives of Swedish culture on the international campaign. For instance, in the press release published prior to the campaign having commenced, the Institute emphasized the following inventions: Memoto (a wearable camera), Neonode (a Multi Sensing Touch Technology), Crunchfish (gesture control for mobiles), Mutewatch (silent touch screen watch) and Peepoople (hygienic sanitation) (The Swedish Institute, 2010). Some of these inventions followed the Institute's campaign till its depletion in 2014. On two occasions, new inventions and their inventors joined the tour. The project leaders were keen on pointing out to me that it was not a matter of promoting individual products, but a matter of promoting Sweden as a nation that promotes solutions to global challenges (Project Leader 1 & 2, the Institute).

It was crucial for the Institute to assemble these brand ambassadors, as these material representatives could serve as dynamic evidence of Swedish innate innovativeness. During the campaign's implementation, the brand ambassadors thus came to fulfill a double-edged role: that of seeking an international audience for its own inventions (pitching their ideas to potential investors or journalists, for instance) and as symbols of a much larger promotional purpose sought by the Institute and the embassies. Having the brand ambassadors assembled, discussions emerged within the Institute on how they would be managed once in place at the exhibition spaces. It would take another form of assemblage to make the traveling exhibition into one coherent frame – an

[63] The jury consisted of representatives from the Sweden Mobile Association, Swedish Incubators and Science Parks (SiSP), Sweden's Environmental Technology Council (Swentec, formed by the Ministry), Royal Swedish Academy of the Engineering Sciences (IVA) and two other independent experts with "years of experience" with the Swedish innovation system.

assemblage that reveals the importance of materiality. I will describe this assemblage process in detail, as I believe it makes apparent the intricacies of how the Institute *reflects* on public relations practices.

On October 13 2010, the Institute announced the procurement of "concept and production of the exhibition Innovative Sweden" (The Swedish Institute, 2010a, p. 1). The purpose of the procurement was to assemble a team of designers that could manufacture an exhibition in which the aforementioned brand ambassadors would showcase their material. The exhibition's purpose was to "strengthen the image of Sweden as being one of the most innovative nations in the world, with cutting edge technological products and services. The exhibition will tour in nations of geographical importance to the Institute. The target-group for the exhibition is the media, students, researchers, opinion makers, decision-makers, the business sphere and a curious public" (p. 11). In the published procurement document, the Institute writes that the submitted proposals were to describe and explain the "creative solutions" the company had in mind for the exhibition (preferably with visual sketches), how the exhibition was to be manufactured and packaged, how subcontracting would work, how the exhibition's graphic design would be carried out, and the cost of producing, dismantling and maintaining the developed exhibition platforms. In addition, the Institute demanded that the bidders' finance was in order, that their ideas were environmentally friendly to develop and manage, that the bidders have proof of prior experience with similar forms of practices and have good relations with the assigned subcontractors. The proposals were then graded on a 1–5 scale by Innovative Sweden's project group and one external expert. There were three aspects that were graded:

1. The creative solution and the configuration of the exhibition. The exhibition was to be interactive, innovative and interesting by itself (50% of the total grade).
2. The exhibition's flexibility and its manageability. Considering that the exhibition was to tour the world, it had to be easy to install, maintain and disassemble (25% of the total grade).
3. The overall cost of producing, maintaining and disassembling the exhibition. The allowed price was set between 800,000 and 1 600 000 SEK for the production of the exhibition. In addition, the bidder would then specify the costs for project management, technical support, shipping boxes, manual installations and dismantling per each exhibition and (optionally) the cost of shipping and customs (25 % of the total grade)(The Swedish Institute, 2010-12-17).

Fourteen different Swedish organizations (mostly architect firms, but also communication bureaus) submitted ideas on how the campaign was to be exhibited. Three bidders were invited to present their ideas in front of the campaign's project group and the external expert. In the end, the architect firm White Arkitekter brought home the bid. The bid received a total grade of 4,75 out of 5 and was motivated by the Institute as follows: "The Swedish Institute can affirm that this bid [White Arkitekter's] is the most economically advantageous and caters best to our needs in terms of those criteria described in the procurement document and in relation to the other received bids" (p. 4). In their tender, White Arkitekter summed up their offer as follows:

> Our creative solution is based on a showcase that is environmentally friendly and small enough to ship and store but can give the most amount of impact when developed as an exhibition. It will be possible to build it in different spaces and yet still feel as the same exhibition. The concept will be sharp and the exhibition can be viewed in whatever order. The showcase will exhibit Problem – Solution – Idea (product). All the 21 ideas will be shown on a 17" screen if needed. Texts will be installed on Perspex material so the background does not need to be replaced (White Arkitekter, 2010).

The firm's solution was an invention in itself, a large cylinder containing four separate spaces for interaction that were to travel with the exhibition to all of the Institute's targeted cities (see image 6 on the following page). The cylinders were to showcase the brand ambassadors' inventions and the global problem each of the innovations were solutions to. One of the cylinders showcased a more general portrayal of Sweden as an innovative nation. White Arkitekter labeled it the "caramel kaleidoscope", as it manifested many different colors and visuals in one single point. One of the project leaders at the Institute described the kaleidoscope as follows:

> It was a very pedagogical approach [by White]. It is a cylinder form that is divided into four different segments. Two opposing sides reveal the chosen inventions with symbolic wallpaper reflecting the company's color. Then we have two other segments. One in black and the other in white. The black represents the [societal] problem and the white represents the solution [that the invention solves]. Smart solutions are the foundation of the exhibition.

The eleven cylinders that were manufactured for the Institute were to be shipped or flown overseas to where the exhibitions were being held. In the tender submitted by White Arkitekter, the bidder thus emphasized the cylinders' flexibility and its simple construction. Covering a total of 100m2, the

Image 6: White Arkitekter's contribution to the Innovative Sweden-campaign, an easily assembled "kaleidoscope" having the ability to showcase a multitude of different innovations. The 11 cylinders were designed in order to be easily assembled and disassembled, as they had to travel in either ships or on board flights. By permission from the Swedish Institute.

weight of the cylinders reached one ton in total, yet as they wrote in their tender, it could easily be dissembled by two persons and take 1,5 days of labor. The cost of manufacturing the cylinders would be 800,000 SEK in total and the subcontractors that were to follow the cylinders on all of their travels and be responsible for the cylinders' construction and disassembling amounted to 35,000 SEK per exhibition. The Institute thus chose White's constructions as they were environmentally sound to manufacture, signified the innovativeness they wanted to portray, but were also practical from a logistical point of view.

Before I proceed by describing and analyzing the implementation of the cylinders as a public relations platform, it could be useful to reflect on what the cylinders represent. Why did the Institute choose to assemble White Arkitekter for the construction of their campaign and – ultimately – Brand Sweden? When I asked the General Director this question, her answer was as follows:

> Our job is not to build things, […] there are people that are so much better. Our competence is to understand, try to make other people understand why Sweden is relevant. And come with ideas on how to arrange exciting meetings. And then we can go out and say that yes here's an exhibition or here is a seminar series. That's an expertise for us. But to build things, no we are not going to do that.

The GD draws a distinction between what the Institute is capable of doing (arranging meetings or seminars) and what White Arkitekter is contracted to do (design and build exhibitions), but they are nevertheless drawn into similar forms of cultural expressions. The publication of the procurement document, the project group, the experts assigned to grade the submissions and the manufacturing of the cylinders themselves can be interpreted as the Institute's creation and invocation of what Billing and O'Dell (2005) has labeled *experiencescapes* – the construction and assembling of material conditions for the promotion of particular forms of experiences. The authors analyze, for instance, tourism, heritage and hotel sites as expressions of these scapes. By drawing on Appadurai (1996), the authors argue that experiencescapes provoke imaginary worlds, as they enable "people to imagine alternative lives and livelihoods than those presented to them in their immediate local settings" (p. 17). What the Institute does is fuse that of nation branding as a public relations practice with that of experiencescapes. In doing so, their practice to promote innovation becomes more technical and complex in terms of production, planning and implementation. To stand out amongst other competitive nations requires not only new assemblages of actors but also the technicization of turning those assemblages into experiencescapes. The task of assembling White Arkitekter on the Institute's side is a good example of an increasingly more

detailed orientated public relations organization wishing to move away from the one-way communication dogma in order to become network experts in an experiencescaped world. Before I analyze the role of experiencescapes in more detail, I will look into Aronczyk's third level – identifying the campaign's core ideas.

Identifying core ideas

Due to its global outreach, the Institute has to grapple with a public relations equation that is fairly difficult to solve: It needs to adopt a language that is universal while at the same time sensitive to the local context in which the exhibition was to take place, yet seemingly true to the norms and ideals of its country of origin. As Aronczyk (2013) argues, before nations exist, they have to be imagined. When I asked the media relations manager about what he perceived as important in the Innovative Sweden campaign, he put it as follows:

> My first thought was, how can we make this relevant to a journalist who does not care – because he doesn't. So how do we translate what we want to say in a way that is interesting, that is relevant for our target groups. And my first thought was that it does not matter that they are Swedish innovations. We are speaking of innovations that solve global challenges (Media Relations Manager, Institute).

What is interesting in my interviewee's statement is his understanding of the global challenges – that we need to do something about these issues and the crucial role innovations (by and large technological) have in solving these issues. As we saw in the earlier chapters, this is a common understanding the innovation hype affords. Translated into public relations practice, its practitioners need to imagine what holds true of a nation in order to be able to formulate and communicate national assumptions. The environmental scanning documents argued that Swedish products, companies and matters that pertain to investments are to be used as critical points in the organization's communication. The Institute decided to promote the nation by way of using concrete inventions, its materiality, symbolism and a complex set of spatial arrangements during their international tour. In other words, the Institute needed to create a coherent framework for the campaign in order for it to function properly abroad. Nation branding research (Anholt, 2003; Hildreth, 2010), as well as public relations research (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Hallahan, 2011),

have emphasized the importance of coherence in terms of the concepts and symbols organizations set in motion. To stand out on the global market of nations requires uniqueness (at least perceived uniqueness) and the production of coherence in order not to be considered opaque. I asked one of the project leaders about the need for coherence. She speaks of the need of communicating truthfully as a strategy for coherence:

> It's important to find a rubric that is broad enough to include so you can have that as an umbrella. That's the strength, to gather a lot of actors, it's not only the Institute's exhibition but it's Sweden's […] This is in order to attract many different actors as possible, that we should communicate the same message about Sweden and that's very important. I think there's has been a lot of progress here in the last years when it comes to communicating a unified message on the image of Sweden. And we have a story here where Sweden's history is accentuated, how it is today and what is coming in the future (Project Leader 1, the Institute).

In the Institute's case, the language of differentiation can be traced back to at least 2005, when the Council for the Promotion of Sweden (NSU) ordered the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to study Sweden's image abroad – the aforementioned SASU-publication. The authors of the publication argue that the world's perception of Sweden's rests on "old laurels and clichés" and in a world where national images and competition between nations "has become infinitely more keen", Sweden "must unite around the things which still set us apart from other countries and which we are still good at. Sweden's image must be nurtured" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sweden, 2005, p. 50, my italics). The growing international competition on the global market of nations has enabled the Institute to acquire a more proactive stance in terms of seeking to align all of its publications and other forms of promotional material while simultaneously trying to differentiate itself from other "competing" nations. One result of this realization was arguably the branding platform developed by the Institute in accordance with the Swedish government's foreign agencies. Developed in 2005–2006 and officially launched in 2007[64], the branding platform was to guide the different organizations during their portrayal of the Swedish image abroad. According to the platform, "communication science has told us that it is easier to form images for people if you select a few, trustworthy main messages and together stick to them over a longer period of time" (The Swedish Institute,

[64] The launch was even broadcasted on Swedish television over the internet (Pamment, 2012, p. 329).

2009, p. 4). The Innovative Sweden campaign sought coherence and uniqueness through the intertwinement of national identity and technology.

Identity/technology

The Institute hired a public relations firm in 2011. The firm's task was to formulate, and design, an overarching and coherent message, including subheadings and a copy that was to function throughout the campaign and in the campaign's information material[65]. In the document I received from the firm, the company states that their devised communication policy was to work as a guide for the Institute's employees and serve as an "umbrella that assembles the exhibition whilst highlighting Sweden as an innovation country" (Brandit, 2011, p. 1). When reading the firm's arguments it is clear that the firm wanted to link Swedish identity with that of the exhibition. In order to avoid clichés, they write, "and not to be confused with other nations, the message and copy ought to breathe Sweden and Swedishness" (p .1). The headline written by the public relations firm was as follows: "We lead the world in innovation. Our curiosity, creativity and desire for change improve lives". The subheading, written in order to "feel Swedish", was as follows: "Innovative Sweden: Be Curious. Change the World". The copy was designed as follows:

> Sweden may be a small country, but we are full of great ideas. Our curiosity, creativity, and desire for change have made us innovators. We lead the world in innovations, in a variety of fields. Our curiosity has enhanced and upgraded the way we all live.
>
> Every day, more than 25 million people use Skype to communicate. And Spotify will revolutionize the way we enjoy music. These ideas build on a history of Swedish innovations, including the zipper, the pacemaker, and color graphics technology.
>
> Now it's time for a new generation of innovations from Sweden. Innovations that will improve lives.
>
> Get a glimpse of the latest in the fields of green technology, information and communication technologies, life science, and gaming. From organic wood treatment to eye tracking devices. From hydrogen fuel cells to cleaning water

[65] I will call this firm *Brandit.*

> with sunshine. You'll find these innovations in hospitals, schools, at home, and all around you.
>
> Feel the power of curiosity. Join us and challenge yourself to change the world (p. 2).

The copy was to introduce and contextualize the campaign wherever it was displayed. The public relations firm's repeated use of the pronouns "We" and "Our" is a strategic endeavor to amass the narrative under one flexible story and to homogenize an otherwise highly heterogeneous population into one mobile narrative. This fits well with the aforementioned communication platform developed by the Institute. The platform launched the term "progressive communication" – a policy that was to permeate the work of NSU's organizations, including the Institute. By "progressive", the platform aims to signify that Sweden is "a developed nation that emanates from people's needs and the environment's condition. On a larger scale, progressivity is about having faith in the future and a willingness to step by step make the world a better place. It is about believing in human-beings' power to create and ability to take responsibility for their lives, and to cooperate in an open manner with the surrounding world for the future" (p. 5, my translation). The branding platform proceeds by arguing that there are four national characteristics NSU's members should put to use in its communication practices abroad, all of which aim to serve the notion of being progressive. Sweden should be emphasized as being Innovative, Open, Empathetic and Authentic.

The strategy of using concrete technological objects to showcase Sweden's innovativeness is thus not controversial considering the Institute's emphasis on being "progressive", and that nations have come to measure themselves according to *their* technological innovations (Ekström, 1994). The material properties used in the communication of Innovative Sweden are largely a matter of attributing symbolism to that of physical objects. This is not purely a practical arrangement. Using the technological objects as symbols in the implementation of a campaign has discursive and textual origins. We can find the materialization of this discursive strategy in several of the publications written and published by the Institute. In order to fully grasp the Innovative Sweden campaign, I will briefly describe and analyze some of the central publications that use the same strategy as the exhibition, albeit in textual form, in order to understand what it is that renders technological products into good symbolic reference points in the campaign.

The booklet *Swedish Innovations* (The Swedish Institute, 2006) is arguably the Institute's first strategic attempt to brand Sweden solely through

the use of Swedish innovations. The purpose of the publication is to portray the innovativeness of a nation through an inventory of the nation's invented artifacts. The publication traces the history of Sweden as an innovative nation through the objects that have been invented within the nation's boundaries. It commences by telling the story of Olof Rudbeck the Elder who "as a 22 year-old in 1652… publicized his epoch-making discovery of the human lymphatic system" (p. 10) and ends with the Leksell Gamma Knife, "an ingenious tool invented by Lars Leksell (1907−1986) and Börje Larsson, who built the first prototype in 1968 for the private hospital Sophiahemmet in Stockholm. The prototype was sold to the USA in 1974 for the symbolic sum of SEK 1" (p. 93). Between all this, descriptions of various inventors and inventions abound, joined with images of the makers and their artifacts in use or as graphic ornaments. An illustrative example is the chapter entitled *Swedish medical innovations* (p. 79–93). It seeks to speak the language of the natural sciences by using the inventions as markers of certainty. Consider the following statement:

> Sephadex is a medium discovered in 1958 by researchers Björn Ingelman, Per Flodin and Jerker Porath. Sephadex consists of molecules of dextran, a polysaccharide which had been known for many years. These molecules can be made to cross-bind, resulting in a three-dimensional network. This discovery led to further developments in the separation technology of electrophoresis. The wound dressing Debrisan, introduced in 1973, is another area of application for Sephadex. This salve utilizes the cleansing and absorbent properties of Sephadex. Debrisan consists of a network of dextran chains in the form of small "pearls" which can absorb the moisture from a wound. This innovation came about after Assistant Professor Ulf Rothman dropped a can of dextran in water (p. 81).

What I find interesting is the manner in which language can transcend understanding while simultaneously being considered meaningful. Considering the popular tone of the publication itself, it is peculiar that certain statements can be uttered at all. It is difficult to grasp, for instance, what dextran molecules, polysaccharides, separation technology of electrophoresis, chains and pearls entail. The process of cross binding, "resulting in a three-dimensional network" is, I imagine, rather confusing for the general reader. Yet it does make sense. I believe this process of engineering material awe is quite symptomatic of the Institute's "material-discursive" strategy. It is not a matter of understanding its supposed importance but of being struck by the wonder of a material that the reader most likely cannot fully grasp or experience. The *whole* makes sense at the expense of its material components. The role of materiality (particularly that of "hard" sciences) is, as Carver (2011) points out, "a discursive marker of

certainty" (p. 116). It is possible to use materialities as discursive markers as they simplify the coherence of the story. "Innovative Sweden" becomes true by its association with material markers. But it is more than the strategic use of material synecdoches (how the technological objects are representatives of a whole). A salient tactic of the Innovative Sweden campaign is that of using technological objects that possess life histories of their own – to place them on a timeline leading from humble beginnings to world domination:

> A strong culture of innovation has propelled Sweden to the forefront of technological development. The transformation from poor agrarian society to highly industrialized country took only a few decades, thanks to a rich supply of raw materials in combination with pioneering inventions like the steam turbine, the ball bearing, the gas-powdered beacon and the adjustable wrench. Our long history of ambitious research and development programs seems to indicate an insatiable thirst for knowledge. But it is not only about having clever ideas; it is also about turning them into commercial success. Many Swedish companies are good examples of this. The founder of telecom company Ericsson, Lars Magnus Ericsson, started his business of developing telegraphs in a small mechanical engineering shop. Subsequently, he contributed to making Stockholm the world's most telephone-dense city in the late 1800s. The firm belief that communication is a basic human need has been a driving force in Ericsson's development into the global giant. The IKEA story begins in 1931, when five-year-old Ingvar Kamprad starts selling matches to his neighbors. Twelve years later, he founded a company that he decided to call IKEA, based on his own initials plus the first letters of Elmtaryd and Agunnaryd, the farm and village where he grew up. Six decades later, the company had developed from an entrepreneurial idea in the woods of southern Sweden to a major furniture retail brand present in 40 countries (The Swedish Institute, 2014, p. 24).

The role of technological objects is to infuse them with Swedish culture and tradition (the invocations of the words "Our" and "Swedish" indicates this link). Sweden and its populace are continuing on its path towards technological advancement. And furthermore, to tie certain actors (the heroes) to their specific locations (Ericsson's Stockholm and Kamprad's village) connects inventor and invention to that of a specific place – Sweden. Whether this is true or not is of less interest. It is rather a manifestation of what Czarniawska (2002) has called *historiogesis* – the manner by which "traditions are compiled from selectively combined elements of an existing repertoire, into a coherent version that serves a pragmatic purpose" (p. 111). Technology, place and tradition are tied together in order to construct an image of Innovative Sweden. In the case of the Innovative Sweden campaign, the brand ambassadors that were chosen by the

jury and the campaign's materiality (the cylinders and the technologies) can be interpreted as symbols that invoke the Institute's core ideas. To use these symbols can be seen as an act of accordance with the Institute's aim of aligning its communication material into a coherent story. The aforementioned publications indicate that this form of promotion is a common narrative tool used by the Institute. Its materialization is potentially stronger than a textual publication from a public relations perspective, as the cylinders and the technologies enable interaction with the exhibition's participants and thereby invokes experiencescapes as well. I will discuss this in the following section.

Implementation

In this section I will describe and problematize how the Institute and the foreign agencies implemented the Innovative Sweden campaigns in different cities. It is worth pointing out that the foreign agencies had relative freedom in terms of implementation, as long as the implementation was in line with the general concept of the campaign (as discussed in the previous sections). The Innovative Sweden campaign was therefore implemented differently depending on the respective foreign agencies' considerations. I stated in chapter three, through Gustafsson (1998), that the intertwinement of material, practical and textual symbols is a suitable practice for public relations that seeks to make political issues meaningful for its publics. In this section I will pay particular attention to the materiality of the campaign, how the Institute values the formation of relations and the agencies assembling of the media, as I have come to understand these issues as being of import to the Institute in their work on promoting innovation. I will therefore not discuss the campaign's implementation in each single city.

Assemblage 1: Material experiencescapes

All eleven foreign agencies had to make use of the exhibition developed by White Arkitekter – the eleven cylinders containing the jury's chosen technologies that were to symbolize the campaign. Depending on the city, the exhibition was built and put to use in strategic locations where the exhibition was then unveiled and the seminars and other events were to take place. The foreign agencies acquired spaces such as university settings, design centers,

museums or any other prestigious cultural arenas suitable for the exhibition and its seminars. Cassinger (2011) uses the term spatial communication to signify the manner by which "meaning is constructed in both symbolic and material terms" and how space acquires meaning through its material dimensions (p. 150). To place the exhibition and the events in spaces that are infused with technological progression and cultural capital is thus a strategic endeavor used in order to draw symbolic power from those very spaces onto the campaign.

The Institute hired transport companies in order to facilitate the exhibition's travel. The cylinders were packed in large wooden cases and either transported by larger ships or on aircrafts between the different cities. In order to describe the complexity of this process, consider the following excerpt of the interview I conducted with the project leader at White. I asked her if White follows the exhibition to the different embassies or consulates:

> IP: In the beginning we joined the exhibition in order to make things work. But now we're so used to it, so it's only the construction workers that join.
>
> I: So they go with the exhibition?
>
> IP: Yes, they assemble and dismantle the exhibition. Other people can't do that. We can't just send it to China and be like "hey, build this now".
>
> I: OK, so they follow the exhibition to every city?
>
> IP: Yes.
>
> I: How many are there?
>
> IP: Six people in total. Four people assemble the whole thing. Or that depends on where you are, but it's usually four people. And two people dismantle it. But they are not there during the exhibition. I mean, it is shipped, checked in customs, controlled, they make sure it's in the right place. And then they open the boxes and work really hard for a couple days to assemble the whole thing.
>
> I: So it takes time to assemble it? It's not really easy…
>
> IP: It's full of… it's full of technology. You have computers and technology and screens and lights. It's not a damn popup umbrella – they work on this for a few days (Project Leader, White).

Earlier in this book I wrote of the symbolic and material aspects of public relations practice. Czarniawska (2003), for instance, argues that ideas are always in need of materiality in order to travel to different contexts. The interviewee

speaks of the complexity of this process, as she mentions how a number of different individuals and their know-how are required when assembling these technological objects. The purpose of their assemblage is to construct what I previously alluded to as experiencescapes (O'Dell & Billing, 2005), as the exhibition in many ways is constructed in order for the Institute and the foreign agencies to render innovation as being more than just an idea, but a practical issue that one can engage, experiment and have fun with. The interviewees and the embassies' evaluation reports invoke the interactive and tactile features of the exhibition as well as having the entrepreneurs engaging with the participants as particularly beneficial:

> It becomes very concrete – to see a product, see it in use, see it being used during a presentation, on a movie and then to meet these people (GD, the Institute).

The project leader in charge at Shanghai spoke of the exhibition's role as fundamental, as it provided depth and even legitimized the entire campaign:

> The exhibition works as a framework for what we do and makes it relevant. So to create these seminars without the exhibition, you know, we wouldn't arrange ten seminars during 23 days [laughs] without having this exhibition. It would just be weird. Who would we invite and why, why would we arrange all of a sudden a seminar on ICT at Tongji University without an exhibition? (Project Leader, Shanghai).

There is also an illuminating understanding amongst my interviewees and from the evaluation reports that regards the exhibition's materiality as adding a dimension of excitement to the otherwise complex practice of public relations. The GD of the Institute states this in blunt terms:

> Maybe it's easier to do that with a physical product like an exhibition and then do the seminars so they feel open and innovative and authentic. It's easy to fall back on creating conventional seminars, like 'let's invite eight people to the podium!' And then you create a very hierarchical environment where nobody dares to ask questions, and when the ambassador or State Secretary or GD finish their talks, half of the people leave because you just need to have shown that you were there. It's about figuring out how we create events that are just as innovative as we want Sweden to be portrayed. In some places you don't want that because it's scary. It's a balancing act (GD, the Institute).

The interviewee's juxtaposition between what she perceives as outdated forms of communication (hierarchical speeches, Q&A-sessions) with "innovative events" is similar to the Ministry's hope of transcending their own one-way

communication processes. We saw in the previous chapter how the Ministry had gone from distributing "factual" and "correct" information to public relations practices and how the Ministry's staff had perceived this as an exciting new practice. I interpret the Institute's design and assembling of the exhibition as the "spatial component" of experiencescapes, since these *scapes* are "planned, manipulated and designed to influence us in particular ways. In this sense it is a politically charged realm through [sic] which power relations come to expression as actors assert their wills and ideas over spaces […] and thus affect people who come in contact with that space" (Billing and O'Dell, 2005, p. 17–18). The spaces were created in order to act as a foundation for the Institute to legitimize and create depth for the seminars and events – undoubtedly a move to make "power relations come to expression". This is made salient in my interviews:

> What it is that is important to them [the Institute] is the people they can connect with, and the seminars and everything that happens around [the exhibition]. That's what happens. The exhibition is a foundation for that work (Project Leader, White).

Whereas it would be difficult for the Ministry to experiment with overt experiencescapes as a public relations practice, the Institute and the foreign agencies have considerable leeway in terms of experimenting with material and symbolic public relations practices. The experiencescapes enabled by the exhibition can be seen as powerful tools used in order to create and form new relationships – possibly even networks of relationships.

Assemblage 2: Networks, networks, networks

I have made repeated references in this dissertation to the power of networks. One conclusion on the Ministry's public relations practices (as described and analyzed in chapter six) was that these practices enabled the Ministry to create and at least try to maintain networks of individuals and organizations that share mutual interests. We can see similar forms of patterns emerge when looking into the Institute's public relations practices. I will show examples of how networks are formed, as they are particular results of the campaign.

A particular form of network was created through the Institute and the foreign agencies' work on the events. The foreign agencies initiated different

seminars, talks and speeches under different themes[66]. In some cases, the events were sponsored events, where the sponsoring organizations would host the events. For instance, in Toronto, Swedish corporations ABB, Getinge, AstraZeneca and Ericsson were sponsors. In Shanghai, Volvo, IKEA and SEA were sponsors. The sponsors also assembled showcases where their work and products were shown to the participants together with White's exhibition. When I asked the project leader in Shanghai about the corporations' reasons for sponsoring the Innovative Sweden campaign, she argues as follows:

> It depends. IKEA went into this project in order to boost their Swedishness in China. That was their goal. They wanted a connection to Sweden, because there aren't many people who know that IKEA is from Sweden. So we spoke with them and they were like 'yes, this is fun, we want to join this, so we can show that we're from Sweden'. And SEA has their own innovation center here in Shanghai where they sit and adapt their products to the Chinese market. For them it was really about innovation, and they wanted to be in this, as it would market Sweden as an innovative country. It's good marketing for them. And for Volvo Group, for them it was about innovation and about Sweden and because it [the exhibition] was at Tongji University who they cooperate with, so they wanted to join because of that (Project Leader, Swedish Consulate Shanghai).

According to the project leader, the sponsoring organizations had different reasons for joining the campaign. IKEA and SCA, she argued, invoked branding; for Volvo Group it concerned its relationships with the university. By instigating the campaign's events under one umbrella (Innovative Sweden) and – perhaps more importantly – working concomitantly during the campaign, the different organizations drew power from each other in order to fulfill their goals. I will call this the "power-in-numbers" approach to public relations, as larger networks of relationships facilitate the practice. The sponsoring corporations are, as Pamment (2014) argues, "multipliers" that could connect the dots of the network by bringing their own relationships into the campaign. This was also a media management approach, as I will discuss shortly.

The events themselves were both formal and informal. Informal events were dinners and inaugurations. If we look at the formal events, the foreign agencies created seminars where local decision makers, local corporations and other influential actors discussed different topics with actors from the Swedish private and public sector. Seminar topics tended to revolve around trade

[66] The interviewees and the evaluation reports speak of "seminars" and "conferences" interchangeably when signifying the same processes. I will make use of the term "event", as it is broader and encompasses both seminars and conferences.

agreements, cooperation between universities, entrepreneurship, sustainable development, transport and infrastructure. Different workshops, pitching sessions with the 21 entrepreneurs that had been chosen to follow the campaign, competitions such as "innovation races" and other forms of activities were also carried out. To make this concrete, I will cite the Swedish Embassy in Brazil's program in full in order to highlight the role networks came to play. Pay particular attention to the amount of individuals, organizations and the role of materiality (technology and spaces), as I believe this is telling of the intricate nature of political public relations and how calculative the practice must be:

> The conference and innovation race was arranged at Rio's Planetarium, which is owned by the city of Rio. The embassy could use the rooms for free, aside from the costs of stage, sound system, technicians, furniture, interpreters, hostesses, etc. The mayor wrote a letter of support and the vice-mayor gave the opening speech at the conference.
>
> Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (CCBB) was chosen as exhibition spaces after careful considerations and visitations throughout Rio. The exhibition will be placed at the CCBB, Latin America's most visited cultural center. The Swedish Institute has been an active collaborator in the preparations, and a support in terms of the costs for the exhibition. The Embassy awarded a cultural producer in Rio to manage the exhibition's practicalities at CCBB, guides and entry [of the cylinders]. The Swedish Institute also contributed to travel grants and fees for two speakers from Sweden.
>
> The innovation week was introduced on May 28 with an all-day conference on sustainable innovation: Clean Technology, ICT, Gaming and Life Sciences. A known radio journalist with a focus on environmental issues from the news channel CBN acted as a moderator during the entire conference. Representatives from Swedish and Brazilian agencies, industry representatives, technology parks, businesses and universities participated during the conference. All of the institutional collaborators (ABDI, BNDES, CISB, FIRJAN, INPI, MCTI, Tillväxtanalys and Vinnova) moderated roundtable discussions, which were summed up in a panel debate. Focus was on identifying the challenges of sustainable development, which innovations can solve these challenges, and how relevant actors can contribute to an innovative environment.
>
> The state government acted as a host for a technical innovation seminar, which the Embassy organized with the support of ABDI and Vinnova, with participants from Swedish and Brazilian government agencies, industry- and research organizations and technology parks and businesses.

> A 72-hour innovation race was organized in cooperation with Innovation Plant and four Brazilian universities from Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio, UFF, UFRJ) and Sáo Paulo (UFABC) and businesses (SAAB, SKF och Aspeby Szabas Industrial Property) and Brazilian agencies (BNDES, Finep och INPI). The participants in the two teams consisted of 12 students on doctoral and Masters-level and were chosen by the Brazilian universities through their innovation centers in consultation with the Embassy. The businesses, universities and government agencies acted as 'Back office' that gave technical support. The race resulted in 21 projects, 11 are patentable.

I decided to quote this fully in order to show how complex the management of networks is. The number of events, actors and materiality is rather overwhelming, and it is thus no wonder the embassies needed, according to my interviewees, 10 to 12 months in order to prepare the campaign. Political public relations must be seen as a practice that ties together all of these different aspects. Its practice is not, as some authors would suggest (cf. Stauber & Rampton, 1995), invisible or hidden. Its practice is readily apparent, but nevertheless consists of a highly complex arrangement of different actors, materiality and spaces, all serving a mutual political interest and striving to make this political interest known.

In my interviews, and also in the evaluation reports, it is strongly suggested that the events were implemented in order for the Institute and the foreign agencies to create, and also maintain, networks of individuals and organizations sharing similar interests. Earlier in this chapter, I stated that the assemblage of foreign agencies and their networks had been crucial for the campaign. During the actual campaign, to perceive the Institute's work in terms of networks as opposed to relations should not only be seen as a tactical approach, but also as a particularly useful result. I will cite a few examples in order to discuss this more fully later:

> Via the embassies you activate contacts and you also create contacts in order to continue your work – that is relationship-creation. And you need to manage this, so it's not like we just leave the exhibition…the entire thing is long-term (Project Leader 2, the Institute).

> Sweden now has, via the Swedish Institute, created a fantastic bridge to Silicon Valley, a foundation for future possibilities for the innovative Sweden to create collaborative projects with universities, research institutions, export and financial possibilities, and so on. It would be good to continue the dialogue with organizations, universities and businesses to follow up and make use of what has been built (Swedish Consulate San Francisco, 2011, p. 1).

> To conclude, the embassy now has new collaborations to look into and prioritize for our future promotional work in Brazil! (Sveriges Ambassad Brasilia, 2012-06-14, p. 9).

> We get a much stronger common communication out there. It's not one actor that goes out, but we are many actors that say the same things, even though we use different words, and with different examples. Then the story becomes infinitely stronger (General Director, the Institute).

> We had around 60 to 100 participants on our seminars. And we felt they went really well and we got relevant people to come. We began collaborating with a whole bunch of interesting organizations and businesses here in Shanghai. We still collaborate with them. So you expand your network of contacts (Project Leader, Swedish Consulate Shanghai).

Earlier I mentioned the power-in-numbers approach to public relations, where a manifold of actors facilitate the practice in order to make political issues salient. The interview excerpts above stress similar conceptualizations of how the Institute and the foreign agencies implement and perceive the use of public relations. The campaign's story becomes stronger and the promotion of issues more "efficient". This is why the Institute speaks fondly of what they call "connectors" and "multipliers" – influential actors located in contexts the organization wishes to engage with in order to promote specific issues or stories. But the Institute takes this one step further than the Ministry, arguing that the creation of networks may even result in sustaining new relationships after the campaign is over. It may also simplify the creation of future projects. It should thus be perceived as a long-term perspective, as the conditions for implementing future campaigns and other political projects are improved, and can be transmuted into new constellations not initially perceived by the initiating organization(s). This can be seen as in line with the "proactive and strategic endeavor" of political public relations (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2011, p. 315), where new actors that share similar interests are gathered for the promotion of political issues.

According to the Institute's GD, this proactive approach to networks could have worked even better during the Innovative Sweden campaign:

> We started in the wrong end. We sat at the Institute and said, 'Yes, we need to talk about innovation. How are we going to do that?' Next time we must gather actors from the very start and look at how we allocate roles, tasks and costs. And how we can use this in our own organization. So I think we must work more like that (General Director, the Institute).

The GD's reflections on the role networks play in their work signify a more reflexive and proactive approach compared to the Ministry. For the Ministry, it had been a new realization, whereas for the Institute it was spoken of in matter-of-fact terms, something they already knew was of great value. I will now turn to the implementation of the campaign's media relations.

Assemblage 3: Local and social media

The media's role in the Innovative Sweden campaign was a central component. This is a critical aspect in public relations research in general – some even perceive it as the only function of public relations (Zoch & Molleda, 2006, p. 279). Aside from using traditional press releases, the Institute and the foreign agencies implemented several strategies in order to create relations with local journalists and the media. In some cases (most notably in Shanghai and Brazil), the agencies hired local public relations firms in order to facilitate relations. In the evaluation report written by the Swedish embassy of Brazil, the ambassador write of the hired bureau in positive terms. I will quote the full passage in order to show the importance the agencies and the Institute placed on media quantity (number of newspaper articles and news segments):

> For the innovation week, the embassy and the Swedish Institute worked with a PR-bureau named S/A Comunicação (Kreab's agent in Brazil[67]). This turned out to be successful. The Institute created a trip for journalists to Sweden where three journalists participated, from [the media companies] O Globo and CBN, which also proved beneficial. In total, the innovation week was shown in over 140 different news segments. An example of this was a segment in the largest TV-channel Globo News and its news broadcast Jornal das Dez and a documentary show on Estúdio; printed articles in the largest morning papers Estado de São Paulo and Folha de São Paulo and Metro and DCI; in the web editions of the magazines Vejas, O Globo and G1; and on the radio CBN – Brazil's largest radio channel.
>
> Part of the success was that the S/A got support from the media network Globo – who during the innovation week showed a segment on the innovation nation Sweden 8 times without any cost during the commercial break. We've also had commercial segments on the radio CBN (Sveriges Ambassad Brasilia, 2012-06-14, p. 6).

[67] Kreab is a global public relations-firm.

In the introduction to the same evaluation report, the ambassador wrote that he initially "doubted the use of these kinds of services. This time, I am however convinced that it was worth the money. We got exposure on national TV, which would have been impossible without [the PR-bureau] S/A Comunicação" (Sveriges Ambassad Brasilia, 2012-06-25, p. 1). In Shanghai's case, the hired PR-bureau helped the agency launch online campaigns on social media platforms such as Weibo "in order to attract interest to the exhibition with possibility to win prizes such as an 'Idea Book'". Visitors were therefore encouraged "to take photos at the exhibition and post them online" (Sveriges Generalkonsulat Shanghai, 2012a, p. 10). The firm also helped the consulate carry out a competition where Chinese citizens were encouraged to "artistically capture Swedish innovations through the lens of their cameras – be it professional photo equipment, snapshot cameras or simply the mobile phone" (Sveriges Generalkonsulat Shanghai, 2012c, p. 1). The competition itself, it turns out, was a rather tricky endeavor. In the consulate' published guidelines, they state:

> A jury consisting of representatives from Sweden.cn[68], the Consulate, the Embassy, Swedish Institute, Chinese photographer Mr. Liu Sha and Tencent will select 30–50 finalists. We will publish the finalists on Sweden.cn on Oct. 11, inviting the public to vote for the best picture. The first to the fifth winners will be announced at the opening of the exhibition Innovative Sweden. The first will be awarded a one-week trip to Sweden, and the second to the fifth winners will be given Swedish innovation awards such as Electrolux home appliances, the 2013 Hasselblad Masters Book or a Bluetooth headset (p. 1).

A similar competition was implemented during the campaign's initiation in Seoul, where the embassy wrote in their press release of the various Swedish inventions that could be used by the photographers:

> The Nobel prize, the zipper, the safety match, the adjustable wrench, Hasselblad camera, the dialysis machine, the ultrasound, the pacemaker, the time-release tablet, Bluetooth, Skype, the rear-facing child safety seat, the democratic design, the free daily newspaper Metro, the parental leave, and the Ombudsman (Embassy of Sweden Seoul, 2013, p. 2)

I will not analyze this in detail, but it is interesting to note that the competition makes practical use of what I mentioned earlier as the campaign's core values, since the competition invokes the idea of tying a particular place with certain

[68] The Swedish Institute's Chinese website.

Swedish technological products and symbols. But as opposed to the material-discursive strategy, the Swedish agency urges citizens to actively and physically engage with Swedish technological products, arguably a tactic that transcends (and may be more useful than) mere text. Rusten, Bryson and Aarflot (2007) argue that goods and products can come to symbolize specific places, and whereas such "cultural products" arguably may be beneficial for the corporation's image, we can see, in our case, the reverse in effect: the media campaign enables foreign nationals to engage with Swedish cultural products in order to promote the nation's image.

To engage the local media was also a central prerogative for the foreign agencies. Another media tactic was carried out on an informal and preemptive basis. The agencies used their own media contacts through their own channels, as can be seen in the case of the campaign in Jakarta:

> Two Indonesian journalists participated in the Swedish Institute's program in March 2014 and also stayed [at the exhibition] for one extra day for meetings with Business Sweden where they got to meet the sponsor organizations. Prior to the exhibition we had arranged a media partnership deal with Indonesia's largest newspaper Kompas and the second biggest news channel Metro TV (Sveriges Ambassad Jakarta, 2014, p. 8)

This preemptive and informal dimension of media management can also be seen in the case of the Swedish foreign agency in Shanghai:

> The consulate worked very actively with the media, both prior to and during the exhibition. A few days prior to the exhibition was unveiled, the Consul General invited the journalists that had traveled to Sweden to the residence for dinner and mingle (Sveriges Generalkonsulat Shanghai, 2012-12-05, p. 10).

Previously I mentioned how the Institute had invited foreign journalists to Sweden. The quotations above are examples of how these journalists become embedded in the Institute's campaigns during the implementations. Another tactic involved cooperation with the sponsor organizations the foreign agencies had assembled. We can thus see how the agencies' assembled networks generated media interest through their attendance:

> Approximately 15 of the published articles are a result of the Consulate's invitations to the media while the remaining part is the outcome of our sponsors' work with media. IKEA devoted half of their company day [at the exhibition] towards media from all over China with a result of 28 published articles where all of them include information about their participation as sponsors of the

> exhibition 'Innovative Sweden'. On the SCA-day, 5 interviews were made with SCA representatives but no articles have been published yet. Volvo Groups was interviewed by the Swedish newspaper Dagens Industri in connection to their company day at the exhibition and the article was published on November 21st (Sveriges Generalkonsulat Shanghai, 2012b, p. 1).

The campaign's use of the exhibition, the seminars, the assemblage of influential actors and creation of experiencescapes can be interpreted as enabling pseudo-events for the media to cover. Pseudo-events are, according to Boorstin (1987), who coined the term, planned or incited events that are initiated for the purpose of being reported on by the media (p. 11). These events tend to contain, as Hallahan (2011) notes, "memorable strips of political reality" (the use of specific stories, narratives, sound bites) that political actors choose from and are thereby conductive to promoting particular political causes and issues (p. 183). IKEA's "company day", for instance, was an event arranged together with the consulate "where they invited Chinese media and their IKEA family members for engaging workshops and presentations where the participants could learn more of what IKEA has done in the past, what they are doing now and what they are aiming to achieve in the future" (Consulate General of Sweden Shanghai, 2012-11-09, p. 1). I have previously alluded to the strategy of tying a place (in this case Sweden) with selected history and certain corporations as a particular beneficial communicative tool. We can see how this is manifested in pseudo-events, as the IKEA-day enabled the campaign to invoke Swedish history and a symbolic corporation. The pseudo-events may have been of interest to local media actors considering that the corporations that were embedded in the Innovative Sweden campaign are highly influential, which is arguably a good media management strategy (Zoch & Molleda, 2006, p. 283).

In the Institute's evaluation report, the Institute concludes by stating, "the media exposure for the Innovative Sweden campaign far exceeded what the Institute had projected" (p. 22). As I stated earlier, the Institute argues that the campaign generated 562 news articles and segments in total, and engaged 139 million people around the world at an ad-value of 28 million SEK[69]. In an Excel-sheet the Institute sent me, their media calculations were documented as follows:

[69] According to the report, the Institute initially projected that the campaign would result in 55 published articles worldwide. I will not analyze the articles themselves, as it would go beyond this dissertation's overall purpose. My purpose here was rather to show how the foreign agencies and the Institute worked together with the foreign media.

Table 5: Excerpt of the Swedish Institute's media evaluation of the Innovative Sweden campaign (internal document).

Project	Number of articles	Span [nr. of readers]	Ad-value SEK
Journalist visit (april 2012 – 6 journalists [3 China, 3 Brazil])	13	99390000	1311948
Journalist trip	1	15000	1980
Innovative Sweden Beijing	13	825000	108900
Innovative Sweden Shanghai	16	26000000	343200
Innovative Sweden Rio de Janeiro	37	8298000	1095336
Grand total	80	21677000	2861364

The evaluations were based on assessments made by a company hired by the Institute to take esteem of their media exposure. It is beyond this dissertation to evaluate the measurement's methodology. But it is of interest to show these numbers, as they reflect how valuable the international media is for the Institute and their campaigns, and how meticulous the Institute portray themselves through their measurements. The numbers are concrete and supposedly objective measurements and thus mobile – meaning they are easy to present to the Institute's stakeholders. The analyst at the Institute invokes this view clearly:

> You can measure media exposure, and we do that. And that's because we report that to our stakeholders. So we can look at it […]. And it's not the only way you can measure stuff. But it's a way for us to report through our yearly reports, or at least to our stakeholders (Analyst, the Institute).

Glover (2009) argues that the Institute must be seen as a broker between national and international stereotypes that pertain to Sweden. Showing its domestic stakeholders their projects' relevance and value is therefore a crucial task. The media analysis of the Innovative Sweden campaign was therefore included in the Institute's yearly reports, arguably as a way to project the value of the campaign (Svenska Institutet, 2015, p. 14). According to the media relations manager, one should not over-interpret these numbers. When I asked him about his reflections on their evaluation of the campaign, he responds as follows:

> Yeah, it's gone well, absolutely. I am very pleased with those numbers. But you don't need to adjust to those numbers because there is an effect that you cannot measure, and that's everything else we do really (Media relations manager, the Institute).

Media effects are but one side of the political public relations coin. The more important one is, as I have argued earlier, the creation and formation of a network of relationships for the promotion of particular political issues or ideas.

Summary

The Institute was to a large extent pleased with the Innovative Sweden campaign. In the evaluation report, they stress the networks that were created and the campaign's exposure in foreign media as particularly beneficial implications. As we saw, this was largely due to the various forms of assemblages that the Institute (along with the foreign agencies) managed to create and maintain: local journalists, Swedish corporations, brand ambassadors and architects became embedded in the campaign. The assembling of the exhibition was particularly crucial, as it formed experiencescapes that legitimized the campaign's events and even created pseudo-events for the media to cover. It is possible to interpret the Institute's interest as being in line with what Pamment (2012) argues to be Sweden's new public diplomacy (PD) abroad. Sweden's new PD, he argues, "places the emphasis on […] the communicative spaces that promotional activities potentially open up" and "is expressly concerned with self-representation (what Sweden 'stands for'), and employs values and culture as a medium for prying 'open' new public and market spaces. The national interest is defined in competitive, economic terms, with Swedish culture and image employed instrumentally to support these objectives" (p. 329–330). The exhibition and events were undoubtedly "communicative spaces" where Swedish identity and its relation to technological advancement could be employed as instruments to showcase and promote innovation. In line with the critical take on global public relations (Pal & Dutta, 2008), the campaign served and became embedded with dominant capitalist actors and imaginaries through for instance the sponsorship programs and its appeals to competition through rankings and indexes. Nation branding practices such as the Institute's public relations practices tend to be discussed in apolitical terms (Glover, 2011, p. 173). But considering its embeddedness with corporate actors, this claim is difficult to support, as the campaign undoubtedly distributed and perhaps even ascertained power and influence. It is for this very reason, I believe, that nation branding is causing so much debate, as it is often accused of reproducing values that are in line with global competitiveness (Aronczyk, 2007; Varga, 2013).

Part III: Results & Discussion

9 Conclusion

I began this dissertation by stating that government agencies have experienced and currently are part and parcel of a sweeping communicative turn. By using that term I wished to invoke the matter in which government agencies have sought to professionalize their approach to communication issues. I have argued that the Ministry and Institute are good exemplars of government agencies that in many ways reflect on, scrutinize and experiment with new forms of communication "tools" – public relations must be seen as a particular practice the two agencies have at their disposal. The purpose of this dissertation was to describe and analyze how government agencies reflect on and implement public relations practices in order to make political issues into a concern for a manifold of external actors and by way of this create relations with external actors. The innovation hype was a fruitful window through which to perceive the two government agencies' work and reflections on their public relations practices as the two organizations put their communication tools to practical and material use. I will commence by summarizing and discussing the results and the contributions of this dissertation. Five particularly salient findings will be presented and discussed. The sections that follow my presentation of findings discuss this dissertation's transferability (how it may be transferred to other contexts and settings) and the implications of the findings – their practical implications (for government agencies in particular) as well as their implications for future research.

Key findings

Some significant findings in this dissertation can help shed light on the communicative turn, the public relations practices that are implemented and their implications for government agencies. In this concluding chapter I want to discuss some of the most salient results of this dissertation. It is worth pointing out that I make several findings throughout the analytical chapters – in this

chapter I will discuss the findings that I regard as most relevant in relation to this dissertation's overall purpose and its research questions. Considering that I wish to contribute to the field of political public relations, I will focus on the findings that are related to those practices. Since the two organizations implemented highly different public relations practices, drawing comparisons between the two organizations is difficult. In what follows, I will discuss each organization separately. In line with this dissertation's purpose, I will synthesize the findings later on in order to draw conclusions on the findings' political and democratic implications.

A discursive shift: Professionalizing communication

One of the first findings concerns the discursive shift that both the Ministry and the Institute must be seen as part and parcel of. I am here referring to some of the shifts that were salient in the Government Offices (GO), Ministry and to some extent the Institute's policies, strategies, yearly reports and other administrative documents that disclosed the organizations' explicit move towards professionalizing two-way communication practices as opposed to implementing what the organizations had come to perceive as outdated, transmission forms of communication. I argued that a study that pertains to discursive perspectives in public relations must locate the "micro-physics" or mundane features that enable public relations to become legitimized practices. This can be tied to this dissertation's overall purpose, which is to disclose how the communicative turn manifests itself in government agencies. Part of my first research question dealt with how the government agencies reflect on and communication and public relations practices. This section will deal with how the organizations reflect on communication issues by looking at some of the discursive shifts the agencies invoke.

For the Government Offices (GO), I highlighted how notions that pertain to dialogue, trust, the media and social media platforms, graphic profiles and the awarding of well-defined responsibilities on matters of communication have emerged as new invocations in some of the key documents the GO has developed in recent years that shape how the organization perceives communication. I argued that this could be interpreted as a new "problematizing" activity that enabled the GO and its departments to reflect upon their own communication efforts. The documents can also be seen as discursively steering the GO's communication activities, roles, departments and communication programs in rather new ways. Considering that the GO in

Sweden had been criticized for implementing their own opinion-driven communication practices, the discursive shift enabled the Ministry to implement public relations practices in order to find legitimate locations and spaces where it could encounter and get to know the population or its publics. I defined these communication practices as public relations practices, as it breaks away from the more traditional conceptualization of "government communication". For the Ministry, this was made manifest in a number of ways: the NIS employees gathered early on to discuss communication with the Ministry's communication director, a new communication policy exclusively for the NIS was created, new and hitherto unused spaces for communication were developed (its Twitter and blog account), an external consultancy firm to help facilitate the Ministry's creation of *shared spaces* was hired, sought to invoke their graphic profile onto other external events and initiated highly calculated and supervised dialogue meetings with a range of different actors. I argued that the Ministry had developed a new form of governing "rationality", as the Ministry continuously reflected on their communication practices and gleaned ways of making communication issues work better and more "efficient". In the following section on the *PR-ization*, I will discuss what political and democratic implications these shifts may have.

In the Institute's case, a clear discursive shift in terms of communication is not possible to ascertain. The Institute, as I mentioned, characterizes their practices as "strategic communication" and "public relations" in their yearly reports. Glover (2011) argues that the term "public relations" emerged in the organization's vocabulary in the 1960's, when the former General Director Tore Tallroth invoked public relations in his speeches as the concept by which to define the Institute's communication practices (p. 138). It is nevertheless possible to perceive the Institute's public relations practices as adding a dimension through their usage of what I called "experiencescapes", something that must be attributed to Institute's wish to stand out in the global competition between nations. Their highly proactive and reflexive stance on media relations can also be seen as a move towards a more strategic and professionalized communicative organization. Whether or not this constitutes a discursive shift is difficult to say – although the Institute's GD did refer to this as signifying a new perspective on communication: From the outdated role of "speeches" to the creation of "experiences", where materiality and public participation served crucial roles. I made use of the term "spatial communication" to signify the importance the Institute placed on the materiality and the symbolic approach of their public relations practices. It is possible that the creation of experiences for

the promotion of political issues will take a more professional turn for the GO and the Ministry as well.

These reflections are fundamental to how the organizations practice public relations. It is important to emphasize, however, that these shifts should not be seen as signifying that of a completely new way of organizing. These are shifts that may legitimize new forms of communication and public relations practices. The political and democratic implications of these shifts will be embedded in the findings that follow this section.

The importance of networks

A second major finding of this dissertation concerns the role networks play for government agencies. The governmentality lectures of Foucault (1978/1991) and his subsequent interlocutors (in particular Miller & Rose, 2012) caused me to pay attention to the importance of the networks' role in and for contemporary governing. This can be tied to the overall purpose of this dissertation, as the formulation of networks was a critical factor in how the two organizations sought to make innovation an important political issue. This finding is thus related to my research question that dealt with how the two government agencies promote political issues. The employees that were employed by the Ministry and Institute to facilitate and coordinate the NIS and the Innovative Sweden campaign respectively managed and collected more or less informal networks composed of what the two organizations regarded as influential individuals and organizations. The networks were more or less "informal", as the networks were assembled on a more or less ad hoc basis and by way of the employees' own relationships with influential persons and organizations. In my analytical chapters I drew on Haughton's et al (2013) work on the development of all those in-between spaces of governing – the "soft spaces" that are not regulated in any strict sense, but implemented in order to experiment with political issues and particular political programs. The creation of networks was crucial for making innovation into an important political issue for several reasons. In general, networks work under the mantra "power in numbers", and must be seen as a development of the previously discussed discursive shift – from transmission to an explicit wish to create networks.

As for the Ministry, I argued that the networks were brought together in those spaces enabled by the public relations practices that were supervised by the hired consultancy firm Dialogue Group (DG). The creation of networks enabled, as my interviewees stated, the possibility of speaking of innovation on

similar terms using a similar language and to instill a sense of shared responsibility and mutual interests. The Ministry perceived this as a form of *empowerment*. I argued in chapter seven that this reflects an old management ideal and can be seen as a governing strategy of acting at a distance – a perspective advanced most notably by governmentality researchers that sought to come to terms with how indirect forms of governing and the management of conduct manifests itself in advanced liberal societies (Rose & Miller, 2008, 2010). The networks also facilitated what I called the assembling of third-party endorsements – the practice of gathering persons that, due to their influence, may very well speak of (in this case) innovation in their own network of individuals and organizations. As one interviewee stated, "to network with the network's networkers. That was a strategic idea we had" (Project Leader 2, NIS). The term "third-party endorsement" is usually attributed to the practice of having the media speak of an organization's interests (Morris & Goldsworthy, 2012), but may very well apply to public relations that is practiced through what I have called the mundane (in seminars, conferences, dialogue programs and other events). The assemblage of actors under a particular political issue also enabled what I called the organizations' "meta-reflection" on communication – the ability to communicate that the organizations' had indeed mustered broad support for their work. To communicate that a political issue has been generated through consensus enables the issue to be perceived as particularly important.

For the Institute, the creation of networks was more structured, as the organization has a long history of working with and assembling a wide range of actors (journalists, embassies, foreign decision-makers, consultancies and corporations abroad). The preemptive assembling of journalists was carefully scripted and planned in order to create beneficial promotion in foreign media. The formation of networks also entailed the assembling of particular material, discursive and symbolic resources into particular events at a particular point in time. I was made aware of this by drawing on Gustafsson's (1998) symbolic approach, where he argued that symbols become "instruments for thought" through their material, discursive and practical underpinnings. The use of *pseudo-events* and *experiencescapes* were thus intrinsic parts in the Institute's management of networks. The employees that worked for with the Innovative Sweden campaign can thus be seen as "cultural intermediaries", as they managed the material, discursive and symbolic resources in the creation of "stable meanings" (Edwards & Hodges, 2011). But as opposed to the Ministry, the creation of networks also entailed the development of *future* projects for the foreign agencies, arguably an important implication of the power-in-numbers

approach to public relations. Corporations served a crucial role in the promotion of innovation issues abroad, and became central actors in the creation of the Institute's networks.

To summarize, the creation of networks may enable the following five dimensions that are of interest to public relations practice and research: (1) the creation of a shared language and understanding of political issues; (2) a trickle-down effect as the political issues may be supported through third-party endorsements; (3) networks enable the possibility of appealing to consensus and using "power in numbers" in order to promote awareness of the issue elsewhere; (4) a network may instigate interest from the media and (5) a network's material, discursive and symbolic reference points placed in singular locations enable the political issue to "stabilize" reality – it becomes tangible.

What are the political implications of the role networks have come to play in and for political public relations? A first observation concerns what I have referred to as the "soft spaces of governing", which I have tied to the development of a more "speculatively prone" government (Tesfahuney & Dahlstedt, 2008). I argued that public relations practices can be seen as having become a governing tool that enables government agencies to create shared spaces where hitherto disparate actors meet and form networks. It is possible to argue that public relations practices and the subsequent creation of networks promote and ascertain the post-political contemporary, where a homogenous group of people unites around safe political issues and exposure to alternative views or perspectives remains at a minimum. In other words, government agencies' public relations practices may run the risk of being a tool that is implemented to create "fun" and "exciting" spaces – not as a practice that can facilitate governing on vital and inclusive public issues or to spur societal debates. Public relations practices create *shared spaces* that become *easy spaces*. But should public relations practices become tools for government agencies to implement in order to ascertain networks where already powerful actors tend to become central, and alternative actors' views are downplayed for the potential benefit of the future network? Can similar public relations practices be launched and networks formed on political issues that do not have the same "communicative appeal" and where consensus is not given? The ability to assemble networks is, as I have argued, what constitutes political power in liberal democracies. It follows that if political public relations practices have a role in assembling networks, it ought to be perceived as a powerful governing tool in contemporary societies, not mysterious, but apparent through all of its material, discursive and mundane assemblages.

The PR-ization of government agencies

A third finding is tied to my interest in analyzing what some of the implications are of a more communicatively prone government agency. For both organizations, the formation and collecting of networks was undoubtedly a major outcome of the hype and their implemented public relations practices. As we saw in chapter seven, however, it does not seem to be the case that the Ministry was in complete control over the network it had collected through its public relations practices, as there had been no clear plan on what to do with the network after the NIS was published and launched. The staff at the Ministry was downsized, and no money was earmarked for future projects after the publication of the NIS. One possible interpretation of this is that, as I discussed in that chapter, the communicative turn is not only made manifest in all those public relations practices that the Ministry implemented, but is ingrained in the core of how politics is "being done". In other words, political issues receive significant attention and made into flagship political projects due to their possibility to garner broad support by way of public relations practices – they can easily be packaged as communication projects. I referred to this as the PR-ization of government agencies (a paraphrase of "mediatization"), a particular condition for most notably the Ministry. The NIS was, for instance, labeled a "communication project", and the Ministry's communication policies and interviewees frequently invoke "experimentation" and "learning" as particular reasons for implementing communication practices. The innovation issue, I argued, can be seen as a particularly good communication project due to the issue's ambiguous nature – undoubtedly an advantageous strategy for the gathering of a multiple of actors with different interests (Gioia et al., 2012). Hermansson (1999) referred to the PR-ization of government agencies, but was interested in how government agencies affect political decisions-makers through communication campaigns in order to attract financial resources. I argue that PR-ization refers to the way political issues are prioritized on their basis of becoming good communication projects. There are three possible implications of PR-ized government agencies.

First, one upshot can be stated in blunt terms: what cannot garner support will not be made into so-called communication projects to begin with and may therefore receive less attention from within already hard-pressed government agencies. In other words, will political issues that are complex, perhaps sensitive and therefore more difficult to manage not be translated into public relations practices and subsequently receive less attention within government agencies? If that is the case, what future role will public relations practices play within and

for government agencies if they are only implemented on their basis of creating *consensus*? And if communication projects that will knowingly generate broad support are prioritized, are there other political issues that receive less attention due to their inability to conform to a "PR-logic"? It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss these questions, but they are nevertheless worth considering when speaking of government agencies' practices.

Second, the PR-ization of government agencies may enable the implementation of what I called in chapter seven political "trial balloons" (Åsard & Bennett, 1997). By this term I sought to capture the way government agencies experiment, promote and implement dialogue programs and other communication practices on potential policies or political issues in the public domain in order to evaluate their potential political worth. There are a few potential benefits of this practice. Gelders and Ihlen (2010) argue that trial balloons can be beneficial as they give decision-makers insight into the citizens' perspectives and can therefore fine-tune arguments and adjust to the needs of citizens. But considering the vast communication resources the GO and the Ministry have at their disposal, the political staff may use the Ministry's communication clout for their own political gain (such as conducting opinion-driven communication, for instance). This critique has been raised on a number of occasions throughout the GO's history (Kjellgren, 2002), and was the reason why the GO's communication policy of 1999 insisted on distributing "factual" and "correct" information. However, the aforementioned discursive shift may bring this critique to the agenda again, as public relations practices seem to have emerged as a new form of governing tool that may enable more opinionated forms of communication. It may be troublesome if the ruling political parties of the GO can use the organization's power as a continuation of past election campaigns or as preparation for the upcoming campaign (Falasca & Nord, 2013, p. 27-28). Blumenthal's (1982) notion of a *permanent campaign* is lingering. By that term the author stressed how practices of *governing* had been transformed to include *campaigning* practices. Political actors in office prioritize or try out political issues for the upcoming election, rather than deal with vital public issues by governing. The increasing use of public opinion polls and focus groups by government agencies for testing political issues and their potential "fit" in upcoming elections are seen as characteristics of the permanent campaign. These tools are not standard within the Swedish GO[70]. But is there a crucial difference between focus groups and all those *shared spaces* the Ministry

[70] Blumenthal studied the US government where opinion polls and focus groups are prevalent. The notion of permanent campaign has been studied in a Swedish context, but more in terms of political parties and their presence on social media platforms (cf. A. O. Larsson, 2014).

implemented? Notwithstanding the methodological differences, shared spaces can be perceived as being similar to that of focus groups, as they are used in order to "get to know" certain segments of a population and, as I have argued, try out political issues' worth. As the Ministry decided to ignore, possibly even hide, their work on the NIS ahead of the 2014 national election, it is possible to interpret their work as reflecting that of *failed* permanent campaign – but a campaign nonetheless. Writing on this issue more than decade ago, Heclo (2000) posed the question: Why should we care about permanent campaigns? His blunt answer: "Because our politics will become […] more foolhardy in disregarding the long-term, and more benighted in mistaking persuasions for reality" (p. 33). Public relations practices may thus become tied to short-term political gains, as opposed to facilitating governing in the long haul.

Third, the NIS was high priority within the Ministry – undoubtedly a flagship project that the organization sought to promote. It was, however, criticized for not owning up to its initial expectations and for not containing any political promises or clout. The Ministry, for its part, legitimized this by referring to the NIS as a "communication project" and argued that the open process and the networks created were reasons good enough. This might be problematic from a democratic point of view, as the power to create political projects is being separated from taking responsibility for the outcome of those very political projects (Mukhtar-Landgren, 2008). The role of political responsibility is blurred, as it becomes difficult to perceive who or what should be held accountable in the construction of politics. Should responsibility be awarded to the Ministry, the regions who implemented the dialogue spaces, to the consultancy firm Dialogue Group or the participants that became embedded in the Ministry's practices? And considering that the "effects" of their work was to be measured in the year 2020, responsibility is thrown into the distant future. Public relations practices may contribute to accentuating these blurry lines, as power is handed over to a myriad of actors and individuals (Grundel, 2014, p. 193). Research tends to stress an independent, influential and professional media sector as a buffer to a "spinning" GO (cf. Falasca & Nord, 2013, p. 42). But this does not take those "mundane" programs into consideration. Basic democratic values, such as transparency and public access to information, may be threatened. Considering that some of the Ministry and GO's employees repeatedly turned down my inquiries to interview them on matters that pertained to the NIS and their public relations practices indicate, to some extent, that this is the case.

I do not suggest that the PR-ization automatically entails unethical or illegitimate forms of communication. The Ministry's practices should be

acknowledged as positive – an open and transparent government is undoubtedly something worth pursuing (Sanders & Canel, 2013; Sanders, Crespo, & Holtz-Bacha, 2011). But the PR-ization of government agencies in its current shape must be seen as a reflection of the post-political landscape, where speculation and experimentation is constructed through consensual public relations practices. In other words, this dissertation has shown the PR-ization within government agencies in its "embryo" (in particular for the Ministry), as important issues (such as feedback mechanisms and future responsibility) were to some extent left out of the equation.

The unforeseen aspects of political public relations

A fourth finding concerns the unforeseen events that emerged for the Ministry and the Institute. This result thus entails looking into some of the mistakes, possibly failures, and new realizations that emerged through the government agencies' public relations work. This must be tied to this dissertation's aim, as unforeseen events undoubtedly affect the public relations practices that the two organizations implemented in order to make innovation into an important political issue. Previous research has written of the "messiness" of strategic communication (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015, p. 9). What this dissertation has shown is that public relations practices are never linear nor can they be neatly placed into specific and pre-ordained categories. Miller and Rose (2012) state that governing is suspect to failure, obstacles and unintended events – they argue that it is intrinsic in the "art of governing". The same must be attributed to public relations for government agencies.

For the Ministry, considering their wish to learn from and experiment with communication (as was mentioned in the interviews and the Ministry's communication policy), it is no wonder that certain unforeseen events and new conditions emerged. First, it must be admitted, the Ministry underrated the expectations they instigated through their public relations practices. This was mentioned repeatedly in my interviews and can be seen in the Ministry's neglect in seeking to maintain its work on the NIS after its publication and the criticism that was charged against the strategy. *In relation to* and judged against the fervor by which the NIS was talked about prior to the launch of the public relations practices, it is possible to conclude that the expectations were not met. The NIS was, after its completion, transported to a few employees at Vinnova, making the Ministry's work on innovation issues into a bureaucratic practice for others outside of the NIS' core group as opposed to a continuous project for the

Ministry. To invoke Brown's (2003) theory of expectations, the created expectations must be seen as "overshot" (p. 4). This may possibly damage the Ministry's credibility on innovation issues. To continue to instigate grand expectations, through public relations programs, on other political issues would potentially reinforce the stereotypical supposition that politics is "all talk and no action" and thus minimize citizens' trust for government agencies' affairs – undoubtedly a democratic issue.

Second, the Ministry also underestimated the complexities of devising dialogue programs from a top-down perspective, despite the Dialogue Group's constant supervision. Many regions and other organizations that had been in charge with implementing the thematic and regional dialogue spaces had, to the detriment of the Ministry, succumbed to creating "normal" conferences. I believe this suggests that the communicative turn within the Ministry is at an "embryonic state" – it *exists* and is *real*, but has yet to emerge as a fully-fledged communication or PR-state. There were, however, some indications in my empirical material that suggest the public relations practices helped the Ministry's employees understand the political issues better, as they were involved during the internal debates and the meetings with the external participants on a continuing basis (as opposed to learning about decisions being made through administrative documents) – an unforeseen but highly positive reflection on the value of political public relations.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, to translate the material the Ministry had gathered during their public relations programs into a strategic document (the NIS) was a troublesome activity – especially as they had to construct the NIS as a *communicative* strategy. Thus, the writing of the NIS became a rather strenuous and bureaucratic activity, as a number of different departments and individuals were engaged in the writing process – not to mention the Ministry's graphic design team, who had to adapt the text to symbols and images. But how do you choose what to include amongst the often-competing voices and perspectives that are generated from public relations practices? What is to be included or excluded? What happens after the "active" or "structured" listening[71]? As with all translation processes, thoughts, ideas, theories or perspectives are lost along the way. The communicative turn makes this an even more complex process, as aspects that pertain to persuasion and promotion are layers that must be added onto an already difficult translation process. This is a balancing act, something that the Ministry was aware of. Some

[71] *Active* and *structured* listening were terms the Ministry used to label their public relations practices.

employees wanted to create a very short, highly poignant NIS, whereas the project leaders were skeptical of this position. However, considering the gradual but nevertheless real discursive shift on issues that pertain to communication that the GO currently undergoes, it is possible that persuasive and promotional elements will become more salient in similar, future documents. The implication would be clear: Issues that cannot be translated into a "communicative format" would potentially struggle to make its way into government documents, such as the NIS.

For the Institute, the unforeseen events were rather minor, which I believe is due to the Institute's long history and experience in implementing public relations campaigns. Unforeseen events that emerged were of a technical nature – for instance, some issues had emerged that concerned infrastructure and the location of the exhibition (in some cases, the exhibition and seminars were distant from, for instance, public transport). Another unforeseen event of importance had been the role of networks and their future potential, something that the foreign agencies spoke of in rather surprising terms.

I believe these unforeseen obstacles, failures, and new realizations of public relations practices that the Institute and, in particular, the Ministry found themselves entangled in can be seen as a testament to the inherent difficulty in seeking to *control* or implement preordained steps when working in a highly complex political arena. Considering that the two organizations are deeply dependent on the management and assemblage of individuals and materials, and discursive and symbolic resources "at a distance", complex and unforeseen events are bound to emerge. Public relations models can be useful as an overall schema, but say little of the highly local, contingent and unforeseen events that will and do occur. I do not suggest here that organizations should in any do away with planning in advance. But I do suggest, in line with the critical and socio-cultural turn of public relations research, that public relations cannot be reduced to universal or absolute principles, but must be analyzed as locally contingent and ever-changing with regards to irregular and sometimes volatile circumstances. Flexibility and adaptation to pending circumstances must be seen as crucial components in this terrain (Svensson, 2016, p. 196).

The mobilization power of political hypes

I have chosen to characterize the political issue that the two government agencies promoted as a political hype. Innovation strategies became *in vogue*, as regional organizations, municipalities as well as other public organizations

developed their own (fairly similar) strategies. The Institute must be seen as being part of this movement, as they created unprecedented public relations practices on a global level in order to promote Sweden through the language of innovation. Transdiscursive concepts and the hypes they enable mobilize actors and allocate resources almost indiscriminately – possibly without much reflexivity. I will in this section summarize the central arguments the two government agencies made use of to promote innovation as a critical issue in and for society in order to discuss and analyze the political and democratic implications transdiscursive concepts and their mobilization may have.

First, for the Ministry, innovation was launched as a reform concept that could easily be invoked, reiterated and creatively put to use by a manifold of political actors in order to instigate or at least provoke change. Innovation was frequently linked to notions of making organizations run more *efficient*. The public sector was seen as particularly stricken, as inefficiency issues supposedly tarnish public administrations in Sweden, making public organizations susceptible to reform programs, ideas and concepts (Forssell & Ivarsson Westerberg, 2014). Second, the role of international rankings and indexes were pertinent and charged the hype around innovation with political force, lending it truth and urgency. These instruments encouraged organizations to implement tools (such as strategies) that were in line with the rankings' presuppositions or even legitimized campaigns (such as the Institute's). The "cultural authority of objective science", and the transnational organizations that promote its claims, are thus powerful discursive forces that produce incentives to act (Albert & Laberge, 2007; Caraça et al., 2009) and reiterate global competition between nations (Hasu, et al., 2011). Knowledge and power must be seen as tightly interwoven. Third, to instill a sense of individual responsibility for the future wellbeing of society was considered crucial, something I labeled *vitalist politics*. This was tied to certain essential attributes that pertain to Swedish culture, identity and history. Creativity, different forms of talent and the responsible and active individual and organization were frequent invocations in the empirical material. It was not a case of "drilling bodies" into subordination (Alvesson, 1996, p. 115), but of producing spaces, fresh outlets and textual documents that enabled the government agencies to carve out possible practices individuals could refer to in order to provoke action within their own organization.

Efficiency, truth and *responsibility* – these nodes rendered innovation a particularly suitable, meaningful and innocuous political issue to use in the government agencies' public relations practices. The transdiscursive nature of innovation is undoubtedly part of it being rendered into what I have called a "handy" term for the government agencies, as its semantic flexibility makes it

possible for a manifold of political actors to interpret and make use of the concept to fit their particular purpose (Gioia et al., 2012). Innovation must thus be tied to an overarching, perhaps global and highly prevalent and suggestive *change discourse*. Cheney et al. (2011) argue that there is an ongoing tension, a push-and-pull between demands for change and constancy in society and organizations. They connect this to historical periods and argue that change and constancy can be equally valued, but "while change has always been praised in modernity, we believe it is valued more today than at any other time in history" (p. 238). Whereas this may be considered a positive force, transdiscursive turns and hypes are, as I have argued, simplifications of an otherwise highly complex society that mobilize resources indiscriminately and may prioritize mobilizations that serve already powerful actors. For the Ministry, it enabled the organization to conduct a permanent campaign. For the Institute, it assembled and possibly even ascertained the role and status of multinational corporations. It also "forced" a manifold of Swedish regions to develop similar innovation strategies, arguably a resource-intensive practice. In other words, transdiscursive terms may or may not unleash positive change in society, but tend in either case to receive a disproportionate amount of political attention by invoking a highly suggestive change discourse. If, as Lasswell (1958) had it, politics is a question of "who gets what, when and how", transdiscursive terms and the unevenly allocation of resources must be seen and analyzed within this trajectory of power. Transdiscursive terms and the hypes they enable are thus not innocent, but legitimize practices and political issues and allocate resources unevenly at the expense of other, perhaps more vital, public issues.

Transferability of results

This section is concerned with the results' transferability. I am interested in the extent that the aforementioned results can be transferred onto other social contexts, settings or organizations. Considering that the Swedish Government Offices, the Ministry, and the Institute are unique and complex organizations, transferability must be approached by a degree of caution. My social constructivist and hermeneutic approach highlights this, as my findings are to some extent dependent on and shaped by my own interpretations. And furthermore, the cases in this dissertation cannot easily be reduced to one fixed "reality" existing out there (cf. Heide & Simonsson, 2014, p. 221). In other words, the findings are embedded in contextual factors that are local and unique

to the timing of my research. On a number of occasions throughout this dissertation I have also criticized public relations research that seeks universal, or absolute rules in order to make practices efficient. There are nevertheless aspects of my findings that can be of relevance in other settings and organizations.

My findings concern, and are embedded in, the GO, Ministry and the Institute's work on communication issues and practices. The employees (project leaders, communication professionals, media managers, communication directors) that are in charge of these issues and practices, their reflections and aspirations, and the administrative documents that the employees are subjected to have been described and analyzed. In general, the issues, practices, reflections, aspirations and documents are part and parcel of government agencies' communicative turn. Government agencies are unique, in the sense that they are subject to unique rules and regulations and therefore do not have the same degree of freedom as, for instance, private corporations do, mainly in terms of how communication issues and practices can be implemented. My findings are therefore most relevant for government agencies' approaches to public relations – in particular regional organizations and local municipalities, as I believe there is reason to suggest that these organizations are also part and parcel of a communicative turn, interested in forming close relationships with external actors but also susceptible to transdiscursive terms and their connection to *change discourses*. The role networks have come to play for the promotion of political issues, the importance of locating critical "multipliers", the often-unforeseen factors and events that undoubtedly shape and affect public relations and the importance of living up to the expectations that are generated by these practices are examples of findings that can be transferred to these organizations and included in their work. The two organizations in this study differ from the work of local and regional municipalities. Considering that the work of regions and municipalities is local and perhaps more hands-on in regards to the creation of dialogue programs with citizens, there may be reasons to suggest that regional organizations and municipalities have developed a greater understanding of some of the issues this dissertation has raised. It would nevertheless be interesting to explore if my findings are suitable for these settings as well.

Practical implications

By practical implications, I am referring to my dissertation's practical applicability – or the findings' "extra-disciplinary" potentials. I will try to

translate some of my findings into applicable form, with a particular focus on the work of government agencies. The recommendations should not be perceived as normative or strict, but rather as potential communication lenses that can be used to reflect with, or simply as recommendations that may fall in line with a political organization's overall goal. I have so far in this conclusive chapter placed considerable emphasis on the networks' role in the communicative turn. I have argued that government agencies' public relations practices consist of creating, and seeking to maintain, networks of relationships in order to promote political issues. I have argued that this is particularly critical in advanced liberal societies – government agencies must act at a distance, something that the emerging professionalization of communication issues facilitate.

Murphy (2015) has argued that networks are "a way of looking at the world" (p. 115). By my use of the concept "networks of relationships", I want to move away from perceiving relationships as simple or linear, existing solely between that of a "host" organization (such as a central government agency) and the outside actors or stakeholders. By invoking the term network of relationships, public relations becomes a more pluralistic practice, as it steers attention to *aligning* external actors and for the government agency in question to be part of that aligned network *on equal terms*. In other words, focus should not only be on creating simple relationships – but on creating and maintaining a network of relationships in order to facilitate the promotion of political issues. A network of relationships is composed of many actors that are strategically aligned by a political organization based on similar interests. The term "strategically aligned" is important, as it implies that the political organization should actively seek and create *shared spaces* where its relationships can meet concomitantly. Shared spaces are "mundane" or informal gatherings where common ground can be created based on the political issues in question. "Multipliers" – influential actors within the network – should be located. To instill public relations practices for the creation of strategically aligned networks may also facilitate for the government agencies' employees, as it would necessitate their inclusion into the "doing" of politics at a more fundamental level. My empirical material has shown how the agencies' employees became involved in the issues – in some cases even took an "activist stance", as they became part of the process to create the networks themselves. For democratic purposes, and in order to minimize power asymmetries (as discussed previously), to create networks through political issues that do not have "communicative appeal" should be considered. If political public relations practices are to be seen as ethical in the future, it ought to be used professionally

and for a myriad of issues – not only as a sporadic promotional tool to persuade or form relations with powerful actors. Clearly stated purposes and goals of the public relations practices and created networks ought to be ascertained in the early stages, as it would simplify for the political organization to make concerted efforts to realize those projects, minimize the risk of constructing programs that do not live up to expectations and it would not reiterate the assumption that politics is "all talk and no action". My empirical material also suggests that the *maintenance* of networks is a resource intensive practice, something that needs to be considered prior to implementing public relations practices for the creation of networks.

Implications for future research

In chapter three I stated that public relations research has undergone a range of different transformations. I agree with L'Etang (2013), who argues that "[p]ublic relations has now clearly shifted from an almost entirely functional position focused on organizational requirements to a more open and creative discipline that increasingly draws inspiration from social theory and cultural studies to understand the role of public relations' cultural intermediaries" (p. 810). Considering these research transformations, I would argue that a creative and nuanced reading of public relations could develop the research field.

In this dissertation, I have described and analyzed the role political public relations have come to play in the communicative turn that permeates contemporary government agencies. In chapter one and two I stated that research into government agencies' "communication work" has hitherto been discussed in a rather distant manner (research into the Government Offices practices in particular). Media analysis and media perspectives, for instance, dominate. By invoking public relations, I have sought to investigate the role communication plays in the "mundane" – all those seminars, dialogue programs, administrative documents, communication policies, strategies and to some extent even material aspects such as exhibition sites. I believe that public relations must be situated within a nexus of all those practical, discursive and symbolic features that undoubtedly characterize and enable the practice to become a possible "governing tool" for government agencies.

With this in mind, I believe a particularly fruitful enquiry for future research would be to go even deeper into the mundane. Ethnographic approaches – encouraged by for instance L'Etang (2012) – with a particular

focus on public relations practices would be interesting and rewarding in order to further develop an understanding of the communicative turn and the programs, strategies and tactics government agencies launch in order to promote political issues. It would be particularly interesting to expand on the material conditions – the role documents, graphs, charts, strategies, spaces and policies serve in the creation of public relations practices. It would also be interesting, as I have highlighted in this dissertation, to study the role of the individual employees who are part of the discursive and material practices more fully. Edward's (2012b) concept of "cultural intermediaries" has been used to capture this trajectory on a few occasions in this dissertation, but could have been developed further. By this I mean to suggest that future political public relations research may wish to study a manifold of actors and employees on many organizational levels (not only public relations or communication professionals) in the promotion of political issues and through public relations perspectives. The role informal and personal relationships have in the formation of political relationships would be particularly interesting. The "mundane" aspects of public relations research must also look into what I have called translation processes, or what government agencies do when they seek to incorporate all those ideas, perspectives, theories or just talks from their implemented shared spaces into their own political programs and work. This dissertation shed some light on the complexity of these processes, but a deeper scrutiny would be beneficial – in particular as it concerns the "effects" of political public relations.

There are a few aspects in my dissertation that are mentioned implicitly, but have been beyond the scope of this publication to deal with in any explicit sense. As I have chosen to deal with *political* public relations, democratic dimensions are undoubtedly part and parcel of these practices. Some researchers before me have discussed the relationship between communicative government agencies and democratic theory. In chapter two, I mentioned Hermansson (1999) and Kjellgren's (2002) research on the role communication plays for government agencies and how this relates to democratic theory. As valuable as these contributions are, government agencies' communication or public relations practices are nevertheless researched from a distance. This may ignore valuable insights that are to be found in the mundane or the everyday practices as they pertain to how government agencies practice public relations. Future political public relations research needs to fuse the everyday practices of the government agencies with democratic theory – in particular how it relates to what I have called *permanent campaigns*. Not in order to judge whether individual actions are democratic or not. During my work on this dissertation I have *not* come to believe that public relations is an inherently undemocratic

practice. Considering the complexity of public relations practices, it cannot be stated in absolute terms whether it is democratic or not. Rather, to describe and analyze how democracy may work for and through public relations is a more productive approach. In doing so, I believe it would also be necessary to include perspectives and reflections from citizens and organizations that become embedded in the government agencies' relationships.

A final note concerns the title of this dissertation – *The Communicative State*. The title has two possible interpretations. First, it concerns how *the state* (government agencies in general) implements more or less strategic forms of communication practices. Second, it connotes a state of "communicative being" – something that government agencies have become embedded in, which I hope has been shown in this dissertation. This connotation – organizations being in a state of communication – is in need of further exploration.

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The Communicative State

Government agencies in Sweden are experiencing a communicative turn where notions that concern branding, image and identity have become standardized tools and concerns for a manifold of agencies. Public relations, with its focus on creating relationships with external actors and persuasion, must be seen as part of this communicative turn. This book concerns how government agencies practice public relations in a more communicatively orientated political landscape by way of its focus on a particular political issue. In the post-financial crisis of 2008, innovation emerged as a critical political issue on many government agencies' agendas. Public relations practices were implemented by government agencies on an unprecedented scale in order to promote innovation issues. Considering this, I have chosen to label innovation a political hype. This dissertation follows two government agencies public relations work on innovation. The organizations and their promotion of innovation issues are used as windows through which to perceive how Swedish government agencies use persuasion and the management of external relationships in order to promote political issues. The potential democratic implications of a more communicative state are discussed as well.

This book documents the government directives, policies, protocols and strategies that were created by the agencies in order to facilitate and enable their public relations practices. It also describes and analyzes the spaces where public relations are implemented. The project leaders, project assistants, communication professionals and communication directors that were responsible for the public relations practices have a central role in this book as well. This dissertation shows how political public relations can be a beneficial practice for government agencies. Public relations may be a suitable practice for a more transparent, open, even creative government. But this book also broadens the discussion, as there are some less constructive, potentially even unwarranted, implications of what I call the PR-ization of the Swedish state.

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