

# THE IMPACT OF COMMISSIONING AND CONTENT STRATEGIES ON ONLINE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA PROGRAMMING

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**Abstract:** This article highlights the commissioning and content strategies employed in the production of programmes for the ‘prime space’ of the public service streaming service TV 2 Play in Denmark. The strategies fuel two overall trends in the entertainment and documentary programmes currently published: (1) the embedded diversity approach and (2) the megaphone approach. The article is based on interviews with management at TV 2 and strategic documents, and it presents three examples of these current programming trends: the Danish adaptation of the reality game shows *The Traitors* (2023+), *Race Across the World* (2020+), and the documentary *The Black Swan* (2024–2025). The article discusses on this background the challenges to core values in public service media programming online.

**Keywords:** commissioning and content strategies, diversity, documentary, reality game show, streaming service, quality

## 1 Introduction

In July 2025, the European Audiovisual Observatory published a report on what European citizens preferred to watch on their streaming services.<sup>1</sup> The result was an overwhelming interest in watching US-American and British content. In Denmark, this was much in line with the catalogues available from global streaming services. The public service streaming services DRTV and TV 2 Play provided by the two public service media (PSM) organisations, DR and TV 2 Denmark, were not included in the survey on content preferences. If they had been, a very different picture would have been presented in the report.

Viewers in Denmark prefer TV 2 Play and DRTV to other streaming services. In 2024, TV 2 Play was at the top of the ranking list, followed by DRTV. Netflix came third, and this pattern continued in 2025.<sup>2</sup> Both Danish PSM organisations

are currently transforming into online PSM, and this process brings changes to the kinds of programmes needed to retain current viewer attention.

This article investigates how the commissioning and content strategies to support this transformation at TV 2 Denmark impact the content. Because TV 2 is a commercially funded PSM it is dependent on attracting an audience of scale and scope to generate sustainable revenue from subscriptions and commercials as well as political legitimacy. These conditions seem to fuel two trends in especially entertainment programming and documentaries that will be highlighted and discussed. I term these trends the **embedded diversity** approach, and the **megaphone** approach. The article argues that the adaptation to an online identity presents a creative challenge to public service programming in two ways.

First, in the more advanced digital media markets in Europe such as Denmark, streaming services are increasingly used as the 'front doors' to the entire portfolio of content – linear as well as nonlinear.<sup>3</sup> The competition with global streaming services increases the importance of commissioning and publishing programmes that can attract an audience of scale and scope. This new competitive situation on the European television market makes the distinctiveness and impact of PSM single programmes paramount to the continued political legitimacy of the organisations.<sup>4</sup> In Denmark, Danish language content plays a major role in carving out a distinctive content profile and brand for PSM in the competition.

Second, the push towards distinctiveness and impact at the level of the single programme is reinforced by the decreased importance of the many niche channels and multiple schedules typical of the multi-channel era of television history. This decreasing need for programmes for the streaming service is, nevertheless, accompanied by an increased demand for instantly successful programmes in terms of scale and scope.

The article presents the key aspects of the commissioning strategy aimed at the streaming service and the content strategy *All that we share* (TV 2) that has guided TV 2's programming for almost 10 years. The long-lasting content strategy involves a specific value profile and communicative ethos at TV 2. In combination the strategies seem to support the two trends in the content, and the article focuses on how these are visible in three examples: The Danish version of the reality game shows *The Traitors* (2023+) and *Race Across the World* (2020+), as well as the investigative documentary on economic crime *The Black Swan* (2024–2025). Even if the content published can explain much of TV 2's contribution to the success of online PSM in Denmark, it comes with challenges to universality, diversity and quality as core public service values, and the article closes with a discussion of the creative playing field in online PSM programming.

## 2 The Front Door and the Prime Space

Recent contributions to research on how PSM in Europe are transforming to online PSM show that competition for audiences with global streaming services in different national contexts especially challenge the values of universality and diversity in many ways.<sup>5</sup>

According to Bruun's work on the development of PSM's streaming services in Denmark,<sup>6</sup> the streaming service must work as the front door to the entire portfolio of content in online PSM. The streaming service TV 2 Play is used as the gateway to linear streaming as well as time-shifted streaming by the users, and 50 % of their time is spent on linear streaming, according to Bruun's informants. The two modes of watching television are not mutually exclusive.

The problem is, however, that the prime space, equal to the top two rows of the service's front pages, is hugely important. According to DRTV's head of publishing, 75 % of viewing starts by clicking on a title in the prime space,

and 10 % of the content accounts for 80 % of the viewing at TV 2, according to TV 2's head of content.<sup>7</sup> These user patterns make the curation of the prime space important, as this curation also paves the way for further use of the catalogues of programmes.

However, the limited real estate of the streaming services' prime space represents a challenge to the promotion of programmes. As pointed out by Bruun et al. (2025)<sup>8</sup> there is a push towards publishing content for an audience of scale and scope. This is the case even in large English-speaking markets such as the UK. In this way, promoting diversity in prime space suffers. Personalisation might support diversity; however, PSM still make limited use of recommender systems because of the many resources this publishing approach acquires.<sup>9</sup>

The two Danish PSM streaming services are, nevertheless, outliers in the comparison to other European public service streaming services, as they publish a mixed-genres profile in the prime space. News, current affairs, lifestyle programming, and documentaries are well represented, as well as fiction and entertainment. However, the drive towards content across genres that can secure an audience of scale and scope dominates the publishing practices. Bruun et al. document this in a comparative analysis of how much of the prime space content is produced for the mainstream channel of 10 PSM organisations. In the Danish case, 68 % of the content carries the main channel brand at DRTV and 55 % at TV 2 Play.<sup>10</sup> The small market with its national language is also a double-edged sword. Giving priority to linguistic and cultural proximity works well as a key differentiation tool in a crowded streaming market, and it is also part of the remit. Bruun et al. further document how content in national languages dominates the prime space of the PSM streaming services. For example, the percentage of Danish language content in prime space is 87 % at DRTV and 92 % at TV 2 Play. For small media markets such as Denmark and Belgium, this strategy is, however, a very expensive one, and producing relatively cheap and popular content with linguistic and cultural proximity is needed.<sup>11</sup>

This article contributes to the existing body of research on how the streaming service focus changes PSM – but from a content perspective. The programme analysis therefore offers a discussion of the impact of the strategies by investigating what characterises the programmes published. However, using rather traditional qualitative television programme analysis in the context of online television comes with new possibilities and limitations for the cogency of the results of this study, which is presented in the following section.

### 3 Methods

The paper builds on two main sets of data. The first dataset consists of eight qualitative interviews with managerial staff at TV 2. The interviewees are heads of content, commissioning editors, heads of the streaming service and of research and development. All have executive power over how TV 2's challenges and competitive position are understood in the production culture and how the content strategy *All that we share* is interpreted and turned into a commissioning strategy for specific programmes aimed at the prime space of TV 2 Play. The interviews took place in the summer and autumn of 2024, in person, as part of the data collection in the *Public Service Media in the Age of Platforms*-project.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the analysis includes published documents on the strategies available on TV 2's website tv2.dk<sup>13</sup> and confidential briefs for the external production companies in 2024. These briefs are calls for programme pitches for the 2025–2026 seasons and cover programmes in all genres including entertainment and documentary but excluding news and sports. News and sports are in-house productions at TV 2 and sports programming is, furthermore, dependent on attaining sports rights.

Based on the analysis of the first dataset, the second dataset are the three selected programmes from 2025 and 2024 to exemplify the two trends in entertainment and documentary programming identified. For the embedded diversity approach, Danish adaptations of the reality game show *The Traitors* (2023+) and *Race Across the World* (2020+) will be used as the examples. The analytical focus is on how the casting of participants aims to elicit common

denominators, and the pros and cons of this approach in building the PSM entertainment-brand will be discussed. For the megaphone approach the Danish investigative documentary serial on economic crime *The Black Swan* (2024–2025) is used as the key example of documentaries published by TV 2. The analytical focus is on how the megaphone approach employs controversial journalistic tools to elicit and document societal issues of public interest and importance in Denmark: an agent provocateur element and hidden camera footage. The approach aims to maximize public attention and fuel political action but it can entail risks to quality journalism associated with the PSM-brand that will be discussed.

### 3.1 Textual Analysis and the Paradox

The choice of three programmes to serve as examples of trends in programmes published on the prime space of the PSM streaming service points to a paradox for researchers of television texts and its cultural and societal significance. This has an impact on the state of the research methods developing for qualitative VoD analysis.<sup>14</sup>

On the one hand, textual analysis of television has never been easier in terms of gaining access to the programmes one wants to analyse. In the Danish context, two very good options exist: first, the catalogue of the providers offers extended access to often multiple seasons of a series. This kind of access was far more difficult in the past. Second, if the content is not available, the Danish Royal Library has a service that can give media researchers access to programmes from the public service providers on request. This study has benefitted from easy access to all seasons and episodes of *The Traitors*, *Race Across the World* and *The Black Swan* and other supporting examples using both options.

This abundance of texts is, nevertheless, a challenge to textual analysis in terms of securing the relevance of the textual corpus, and in terms of demarcating it confronted with the limitless recirculation of cross-media texts in a digital context. But to document change or trends in content, there is still a need to focus on, e.g. a narrative, the audiovisual aesthetics, on casting of participants, and the issues of television as a coherent text of multiple episodes and seasons. Seriality – and often the serial – is currently the default mode across televisual genres of fact and fiction. The approach in this article is to focus on the programmes published and to zoom in on specific issues in the programmes, but it is acknowledged that this is not the only text that generates the audience attention and impact that TV 2 is asking for. The argument for the focus is that without the analysis of programmes, it would not be possible to follow the impact of the commissioning and the content strategies in practice, and therefore the programmes need to be included in the textual object.

On the other hand, access is growing more difficult because of the paradoxical lack of texts: despite the abundance, textual analysis of television has never been harder if the purpose is to include an analysis of the promotional interstitials, the paratexts of the publishing and scheduling practices, as well as the scheduling of the programmes at the streaming service.<sup>15</sup> This kind of analysis was possible at least in Denmark in the multi-channels era of television because of extensive archiving at the Royal Library in Denmark.

The main problem currently is the lack of access to archived streaming services and consequently data to enable better explanation of publishing priorities and practices as well as programme ratings. These aspects cannot be included in the analysis of the three programmes because there are no proper institutional archives for the streaming service as a textual phenomenon on par with a television channel's schedule. The researchers must do their own archiving if possible. If the collection is done in retrospect, getting the textual object reconstructed is work intensive and perhaps even impossible, as is the case with TV 2 Play. TV 2 Play is behind a paywall and therefore not scraped systematically by The Wayback Machine – or the Danish Media Archive and The Danish Internet Archive, both part of the Danish Royal Library. Consequently, in Denmark, and probably in most European countries, cultural heritage data

is disappearing daily, making television history and scheduling studies based on textual practises difficult in the future if not amended by cultural policies.<sup>16</sup>

## 4 The Commissioning and Content Strategies

Based on an analysis of the commissioning practices at the two public service organisations in Denmark, DR and TV 2, Bruun and Lassen<sup>17</sup> show that there is a drive towards Danish content in a multitude of television genres. However, all programmes must be able to secure an audience of scale and scope. At TV 2, this is based on economic necessity as well as a specific value profile and communicative ethos designed to meet its public service obligations.

First, TV 2 is funded by commercials and subscriptions, and the revenue from advertising is decreasing. The revenue from subscriptions will not be able to close the gap. Because of this business model, TV 2 is still dependent on traditional broadcast channels sold in bundles to distributors and carrying spot commercials, and TV 2 has a portfolio of seven linear channels. At the same time, TV 2 is transforming into online PSM as presented above with a focus on the streaming service and its prime space, and, in this ongoing process, both ways of publishing must be supported by the organisation. This is, nevertheless, putting severe pressure on the resources left for content production.

The commissioning strategy to make ends meet is to produce ‘fewer but bigger programmes in terms of impact’ that can deliver an audience of scale and scope (Head of content commissioning, TV 2, personal interview May 28, 2024).<sup>18</sup> Programmes for niche channels and specific target groups are not given priority like in the past, and this favours risk-averse behaviour, e.g. recommissioning new seasons of hit programmes and adapting formats with a proven track record to the Danish context.

However, as pointed out by all the interviewees, there is also a need for new and interesting programmes on TV 2 Play’s prime space daily to maintain its popularity as the first-choice service of the citizens in Denmark in the harsh competition with DRTV, subscription video on demand (SVODs) and YouTube. These programmes must stand out, as pointed out by the former of data and audience research at TV 2 (personal interview May 27, 2024), otherwise TV 2 will no longer be able to compete. The former director of content at TV 2 seconded this and pointed out that TV 2 must deliver programmes that are able to ‘be heard above the noise of the streaming market’ (personal interview June 3, 2024). The focus is increasingly on different factual genres and entertainment in Danish that can make a huge impact and set the agenda in the public discussions in other media and in society at large. The linguistic and cultural proximity is regarded as the key advantage that TV 2 has in the competition for attention.

Second, the strategy is to build on the brand image of TV 2. TV 2 has historically and currently put emphasis on egalitarian values and mainstream appeal in its programming. As pointed out by Bruun,<sup>19</sup> TV 2 has been cultivating an image of being in eye contact with the viewers by constructing and mirroring a homogeneous socio-cultural identity of the Danish viewers that is able to include all kinds of differences among the citizens. The content strategy *All that we share*<sup>20</sup> is the paramount manifestation of this value profile, and this strategy has since 2016 guided the production of content – now increasingly to feed the streaming service as the front door and its prime space. The strategy puts emphasis on producing programmes with a mainstream appeal that can put commonly shared positive and negative themes and issues in Danish society on the public agenda. According to the former director of content at TV 2, the aim is to make TV 2’s programming work as ‘critical democratic infrastructure’ in an increasingly fragmented society (personal interview June 3, 2024).

In the following sections, the focus is on how these economic conditions and idealistic missions are translated into trends in entertainment and documentary programmes published.

## 5 Embedded Diversity

In 2023, TV 2 started its Danish adaptation of the reality gameshow *The Traitors* and it was continued in a third season in 2025 with 1.06 million viewers out of a population of six million.<sup>21</sup> For entertainment programmes, the commissioning strategy entails a move away from what is termed ‘shiny floors entertainment’ by the commissioning editors (personal interviews May 29 and May 30, 2024). TV 2 is moving away from the studio quiz show or the live reality game shows that demand live viewing because of the audience voting element. What is called for by TV 2 are programmes with a much longer shelf-life, and formats that mix the genres of entertainment in ways that fit on-demand streaming.

*The Traitors* is an example that meets this requirement to fill up the limited real estate of the prime space as three quarters of the viewers watched the programme on-demand. The show is produced for TV 2 by Blu, a Danish production company that is part of the Fremantle company owned by RTL Group. The Agatha Christie crime novel-like gameplay and the focus on the psychology of human deception are probably the main reasons for the success of *The Traitors*. From the first episode, the viewers know who the traitors are as the host selects them in this key scene:

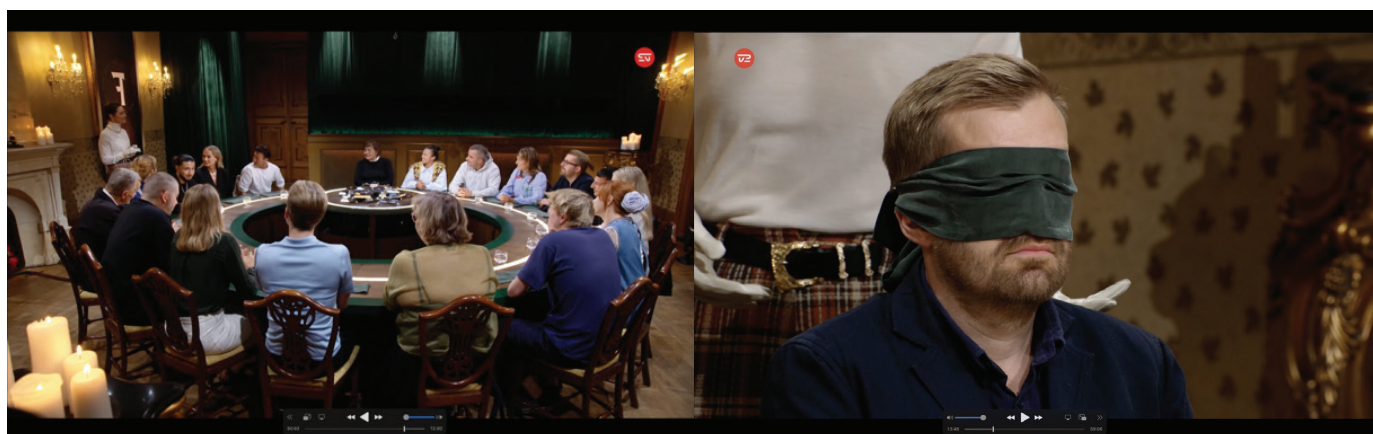


Figure 1. The diverse cast and the selection of the traitors in *The Traitors*. Episode six, TV 2 2025. Screenshots from the programme and access provided by The Danish Royal Library.

From this point of view, the viewers can study how the celebrities struggle to survive in the show and what kind of human qualities are displayed in doing so. The ordinariness of the celebrities in line with the egalitarian values of the content strategy is the common denominator that equalises a myriad of differences. This is seconded by the casting of the participants that I term the embedded diversity approach. The approach builds on identity-based diversity known from the branding strategy of Netflix,<sup>22</sup> and the cast comprises a mix of ethnicities, genders, ages, and not least celebrities known from very different public arenas and subcultures: e.g., the young influencer, the elderly politician, the young actor from arthouse movies and well-known mainstream actors, the young podcaster and the stand-up comedian, the top athlete etc. The embedded diversity might work to secure the audience scope and a kind of shared experience of human psychology up for discussion across generations, genders, ethnicities, and taste segments among the viewers, which might build insights and societal cohesion. As the head of programmes at TV 2 puts it, entertainment that ‘mom and dad, the teenager and the 5-year-old want to watch together’ (personal interview 25 May 2024).

Embedded diversity in casting is trending in entertainment programmes published by TV 2 and probably important to make the programmes meet the content strategy *All that we share* as well as the commissioning strategy ‘fewer but bigger’ programmes for the prime space of TV 2 Play. But the question is whether the embedded diversity approach can meet more content-related issues of identity-based diversity as a core value in PSM? Is TV 2 just mirroring what Netflix and reality shows like *Survivor* in the US adaptation have been doing on screen? Netflix’s aim is to improve its transnational appeal and to promote an ethos of progressiveness, and the reality shows aim to preserve ‘(...) the

feel-good, or “happy,” fantasy of multiculturalism’.<sup>23</sup> Can the impact of embedded diversity be understood in the context of PSM entertainment programmes as more than a commercial strategy and as cultural-political window dressing?

To discuss these questions of the possible societal and epistemic value of the embedded diversity approach in entertainment, the article employs TV 2’s 2025 season of the reality game show *Race Across the World* (TV 2 2020+). The Danish adaptation is produced by the company Strong Productions, which then was also part of Fremantle owned by RTL Group, and the show is relatively popular with around 578,000 viewers.<sup>24</sup> In the 2025 season, one of the teams casted to race through Canada and the USA consists of two young men: Muhammed and Rand, both with Middle Eastern descent. The different episodes show that this team has difficulties in obtaining car rides across the USA because of their ethnicity and gender. In several syncs in episodes five and six, the two young men talk about suffering from ethnic stress: they constantly must prove themselves as valuable citizens and respectable human beings to be treated as equal citizens. In episode six, they are finally given a ride by a young man, Lemonce, from the native American tribe Lakota. He talks to Muhammed and Rand about the discrimination and violence his family has experienced. Muhammed starts crying in this sequence and finally says that they could ‘all cry together’:



Figure 2. Lemonce talks about the treatment of his grandmother, Muhammed cries and the three men are bonding in exchange of shared experiences. Episode six, *Race Across the World*, TV 2 2025. Screenshots from the programme and access provided by The Danish Royal Library.

The sequence is highly emotional. All the other couples in the game show – including a gay couple and a team with a handicapped participant – did not have these problems hitchhiking in the USA. The racism on display prevents the young men from having a fair chance in the game show and, on a deeper, much more serious level, in life.

The embedded diversity approach in this example might pave the way for showing the viewers in detailed action in an otherwise entertaining context of a reality game show what ethnic inequality and racism means for the opportunities

and mental well-being of Danish citizens. After the episode was aired, TV 2 published content about the team's unforeseen problems entering the USA and an episode during the production: Rand was threatened with a gun trying to obtain a ride in Louisville, Kentucky. This episode was cut out of the show and TV 2 explained the many actions taken to secure the safety of the team during the production.<sup>25</sup> All in all, the need for the egalitarian values of *All that we share* stressing diversity and inclusion was underscored in this emotionally strong, unplanned and also ethically debatable way in the show.

## 6 The Megaphone

The megaphone approach is the term used for the second trend in the programmes published by TV 2 aimed at making a loud enough impact to brand TV 2 as 'critical democratic infrastructure' in an increasingly fragmented society as stated by TV 2's former director of content (personal interview June 3, 2024). The programme on organised crime *The Black Swan* is the key example of this trend. The documentary was published 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024 and ran for five episodes, with two additional episodes published 11<sup>th</sup> June 2025. It is produced for TV 2 by the production company Wingman, and the producer is the notorious journalist and filmmaker Mads Brügger. Brügger has produced several controversial political documentaries in recent years. He was the CEO of a now closed and successful talk radio station *Radio 24/7* and is currently the CEO of an online news media outlet called *Frihedsbrevet/The Freedom Charter*, known for its punk political journalism.

The title *The Black Swan* refers to an unpredictable event that changes our view of the world. The documentary was a huge success in terms of scale and scope, with 2.3 million viewers out of a population of six million.<sup>26</sup> These ratings made the documentary the second most watched show in 2024, just behind the live transmission of the announcement of the new King Frederik X after the abdication of Queen Margrethe II. The documentary had an impact on the agenda of other news media too, and the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice called for action based on the revelations in the documentary.

An important reason for its popularity is its agent provocateur element: the main source and main participant in the documentary is the business lawyer Amira Smajic. Using footage from hidden cameras installed in her office, the documentary uncovers how she facilitates the sophisticated cooperation between the criminal underworld (gangs and bikers) and the established upper world (lawyers and top business CEOs) in Denmark. These cooperations include organised environmental fraud and financial crime:

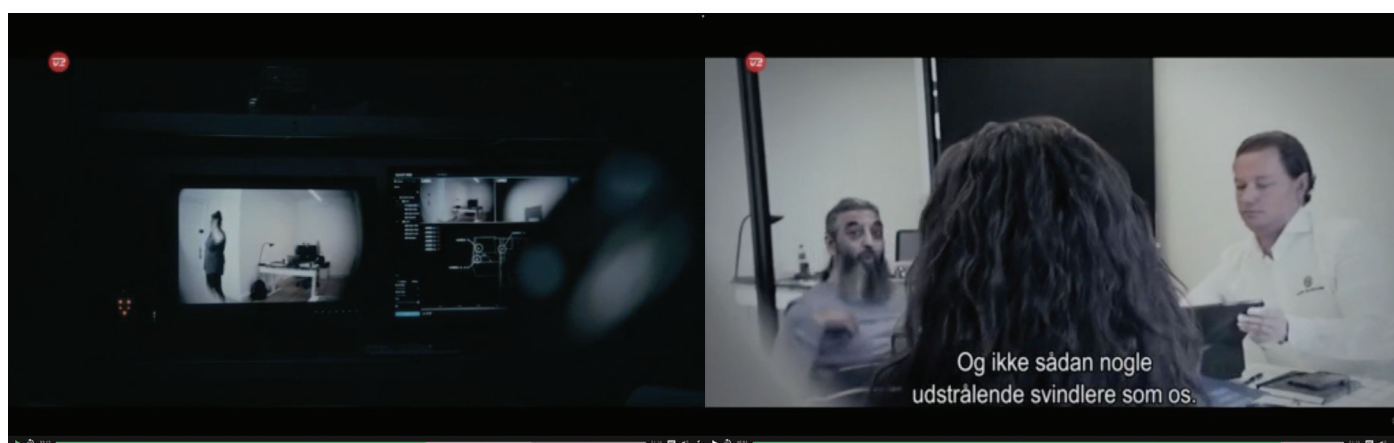


Figure 3. The set up of cameras and Amira Smajic in her office facilitating meetings between the blue- and white-collar criminals. Episode 1, *The Black Swan*, TV 2 2024. Screenshots from the programme and access provided by The Danish Royal Library.

TV 2 has built a track record of using hidden camera footage in investigative documentaries with strong political impact and high ratings both serving its economic challenges and the PSM remit. Examples are documentaries on the work practices in central institutions of the welfare state such as the kindergartens – *Daginstitutioner bag facaden/Daycare behind the scenes* (TV 2, 2019) – and care homes – *Plejem bag facaden/Care homes behind the scenes*, (TV 2, 2020). The tool is controversial in terms of journalistic ethics as the participants are not aware of being filmed and do not agree to be broadcasted, and it often involves trespassing. This high-risk tool is, however, justified in all the TV 2 documentaries by the importance of the content it reveals to the public, appealing to public interest and the freedom of information. Most recently it has been used in the documentary *Hvem passer på grisene/Who cares about the pigs* (TV 2, 2025 and 2026) building on hidden camera footage recorded by animal activists. The documentary documents the terrible suffering and living conditions for the pigs in the huge farms owned by the top management of the powerful association of farmers in Denmark.

The agent provocateur, Amira Smajic (AS), collaborated with TV 2 allegedly because she wanted to stop being part of these criminal activities. Several top lawyers and business executives are shown in the hidden camera footage. They were later prosecuted and lost their jobs. During the production of the documentary, however, AS continued her criminal activities despite her agreement with TV 2, and she tried to prevent TV 2 from broadcasting the documentary. But given the societal importance of what the documentary reveals, TV 2 was allowed by the court to broadcast even if AS's life was allegedly in danger.

After the publication of the first five episodes of the documentary, the newspaper *Berlingske* revealed on 22 December 2024 that AS was also working for the police during the production of the documentary. To avoid a prison sentence, she collected documents from the production company, the journalists and their sources and handed the material over to the police. TV 2 and the production company knew about her role as a double agent but did **not** include the information in the first five episodes. This profoundly undermined the trustworthiness of the documentary and, consequently, TV 2.

Trying to justify this fundamental problem to the truthfulness of the documentary, the additional two episodes published in 2025 are all about documenting AS's cooperation with the police. The focus is on how the police used AS to survey the media and instructed her to give false evidence in court as the police used the media footage for its own investigation to prosecute the involved sources in the documentary. In the final episode, the head of the secret police, PET, is confronted by Brügger with these allegations backed by evidence from the footage but he does not confirm that these methods are used by the PET.

However, TV 2 was later forced by the court to hand over its research material to the police.<sup>27</sup> In this way, the judicial and executive powers of society interfered with the ability of the free press to work for the public good and as the fourth estate of a democracy. This judgement has been taken to the Supreme Court in Denmark, and, if lost, it will probably be taken to the European Court of Human Rights.

As is evident from this description, the documentary is like a crime fiction series, with many common denominators. The key themes and narrative drivers are espionage and double agents in the revelations of economic fraud schemes, including tax and VAT fraud allegedly worth billions of Danish kroner. The criminals from the upper circles of society confirm commonly held prejudices about the moral profile of rich people. The documentary exposes the hypocrisy of the well off and successful, fuelling an indignation directed at this behaviour. Furthermore, many of the blue-collar criminals are also receiving welfare benefits, and social fraud is involved. The ethnic profile of AS and the blue-collar criminals confirms common prejudices in Danish society, which might add to the indignation. This criminal behaviour jeopardizes the welfare state economy, and the egalitarian values in TV 2's content strategy is underscored by its contradiction.

The two episodes in 2025 focus on the police's methods, and espionage targeting journalists fits the political thriller-narrative of how the free press is under threat from the executive power, the secret police. The staging of the producer

Mads Brügger and his editorial team builds iconically on this positive myth about the role of journalists as hard-working risk-taking heroes of democratic values meeting in secret places to avoid being stopped in their endeavour:

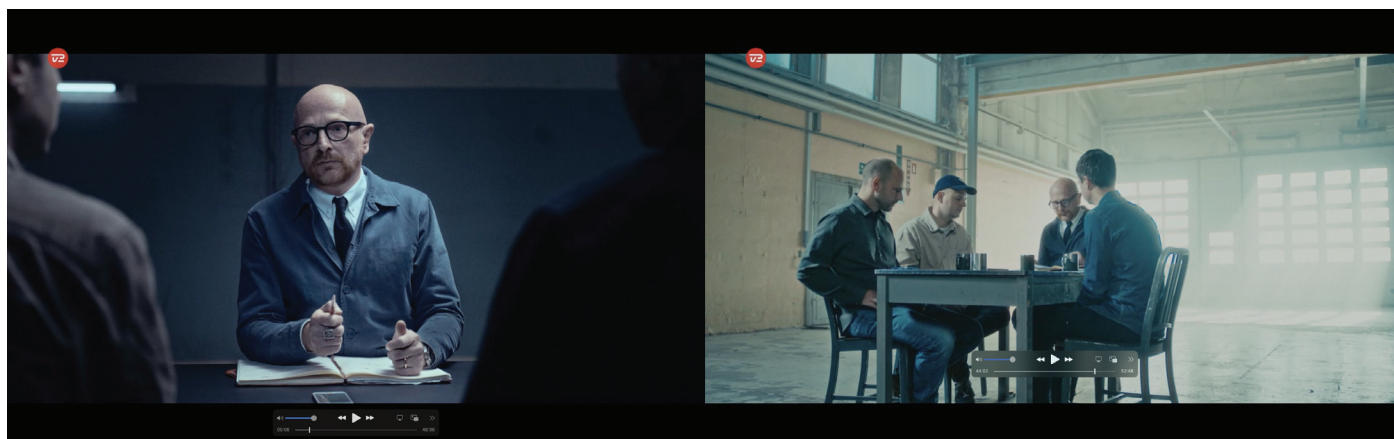


Figure 4. The editorial team meetings in an abandoned factory used as synchs. of *The Black Swan* investigating the police's methods. Episode six and seven, TV 2 2025. Screenshots from the programme and access provided by The Danish Royal Library.

Even if the documentary tried to argue for this critical position, the effort was already undermined by stories in the press about how the documentary deliberately held back information in the first five episodes, and by criticism of Brügger's professional ethics, e.g., exploiting the documentary to further his career and business. The lawsuits from the unwilling participants in the documentary filed against TV 2 following the first five episodes also contributed to this impression of dubious journalistic value.

Nevertheless, the serial was awarded best documentary in 2025 by the Danish television industry association, sold to the BBC and published 17 November 2025.<sup>28</sup> The megaphone approach aimed to fit the commissioning and content strategies at TV 2 is therefore in many ways open to discussion of the quality of the journalism in the programmes published if the goal is securing PSM core values in the competition for audience attention in online PSM.

## 7 Online Public Service and Core Values

The presented commissioning and content strategies currently used by TV 2 to secure its sustainability in an online television context show that a differentiation strategy can be employed to brand online PSM with an impact. This is possible in both entertainment and in journalism with a successful outcome in terms of audience attention in an increasingly difficult media market for PSM. The competition for attention and declining resources at TV 2, nevertheless, point to the inner conflicts between the core values of PSM such as universality, diversity, and quality in content production.

First, the two approaches trending in the entertainment and documentary programmes published by TV 2 to meet universality in terms of impact and audiences of scale and scope come with a deficit to diversity in terms of programmes for specific target groups and niche content. Rather than the entire portfolio of channels, single programmes must combine universality and diversity within the limited real estate of the prime space. The challenge is to include actual issues on inclusion and identity-based diversity in the programmes rather than window-dressing diversity.

Second, the need for hit programmes to stay on top in the streaming service competition and to attract an audience of scale and scope in a fragmented market might put the core value of quality at stake. Especially in the case of

documentaries using tools like the agent provocateur and hidden camera footage, the standards of professional journalism are at stake even if universality is met. A public service provider such as TV 2 runs the risk of jeopardising its own brand image if not used with care.

Even if the inner conflicts of the core values of PSM are part of the creative adaptation to an online PSM identity in the present media landscape, both trends in the case of TV 2's programming profile can be regarded as provisional solutions to secure PSM's survivability and legitimacy in a small media market such as Denmark. This calls for further research and discussions of how the actual programmes published in a range of genres by PSM align with the normative goal of PSM in different kinds of social-cultural contexts and media markets in the future.

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