After the terrorist attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005), the issue of security is at the top of the political agenda. Public debates with regard to security and risks have created a sense of urgency that has rapidly spread across the world in this first decade of the millennium. *For Security Reasons* tells the stories of the work practices of employees in the railway sector, in light of the heightened sense of urgency. Set against the background of local cultural and societal discourses with regard to security in Spain and the Netherlands, the book consists of a collection of narratives about daily life at the railways, focusing on the dangers, joys, and tensions of work in this sector. Anyone who has ever travelled by train will recognize the situations that are vividly portrayed, and yet the research of Hanneke Duijnhoven offers us a unique view on the many different ways in which people working in the Dutch and Spanish railway sector make sense of security issues.

Hanneke Duijnhoven works at the department of Culture, Organization and Management at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the VU University in Amsterdam. For her PhD research she conducted an interpretive ethnographic study in the Dutch and Spanish railway sector.
For Security Reasons
Narratives about Security Practices and Organizational Change in the Dutch and Spanish Railway Sector

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor aan de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, op gezag van de rector magnificus prof.dr. L.M. Bouter, in het openbaar te verdedigen ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie van de faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen op woensdag 21 april 2010 om 11.45 uur in de aula van de universiteit, De Boelelaan 1105

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Hanneke Louise Duijnhoven geboren te Amersfoort
For Security Reasons

Narratives about Security Practices and Organizational Change in the Dutch and Spanish Railway Sector

Hanneke Duijnhoven

VU University Press
The realization of this publication has partly been made possible with the a travel grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) for the fieldwork in Spain.
Y, pues esta vuestra escritura no mira a más que a deshacer la autoridad y cabida que en el mundo y en el vulgo tienen los libros de caballerías, no hay para qué andéis mendigando sentencias de filósofos, consejos de la Divina Escritura, fábulas de poetas, oraciones de retóricos, milagros de santos, sino procurar que a la llana, con palabras significantes, honestas y bien colocadas, salga vuestra oración y período sonoro y festivo; pintando, en todo lo que alcanzáredes y fuere posible, vuestra intención, dando a entender vuestros conceptos sin intrincarlos y escurecerlos. Procurad también que, leyendo vuestra historia, el melancólico se mueva a risa, el risueño la acreciente, el simple no se enfade, el discreto se admire de la invención, el grave no la desprecie, ni el prudente deje de alabarla. En efecto, llevad la mira puesta a derrabar la máquina mal fundada destos caballerescos libros, aborrecidos de tantos y alabados de muchos más; que si esto alcanzásedes, no habríades alcanzado poco (Miguel de Cervantes (1604), Don Quijote de la Mancha, prologue: p. 13-14).

And as this piece of yours aims at nothing more than to destroy the authority and influence which books of chivalry have in the world and with the public, there is no need for you to go a-begging for aphorisms from philosophers, precepts from Holy Scripture, fables from poets, speeches from orators, or miracles from saints; but merely to take care that your style and diction run musically, pleasantly, and plainly, with clear, proper, and well-placed words, setting forth your purpose to the best of your power, and putting your ideas intelligibly, without confusion or obscurity. Strive, too, that in reading your story the melancholy may be moved to laughter, and the merry made merrier still; that the simple shall not be wearied, that the judicious shall admire the invention, that the grave shall not despise it, nor the wise fail to praise it. Finally, keep your aim fixed on the destruction of that ill-founded edifice of the books of chivalry, hated by some and praised by many more; for if you succeed in this you will have achieved no small success.

(English translation by J. Ormsby)

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Table of Contents

Preface

1 And Thus, the Story Begins…
   It Happened On Board of the AVE… 13
   Socially Constructing Security 15
   Making Sense of Railway Security 17
   Capturing Local Meanings 22
   Discourses of Public Services 25
   Problem Statement and Outline 27

Part I: The Study

2 Making Sense of Security Discourses
   Introduction 33
   Discourse Analysis as a ‘Transdisciplinary’ Approach 35
   Sensemaking and the Discursive Construction of Events 42
   Security, Risk and Surveillance in Everyday Life 44
   Securitization of Public Discourses 45
   Representations of the Railways in (Fictional) Literature 51

3 Fictionalizing Science: On Methods and Methodology
   Introduction: the Interpretive Turn in the Social Sciences 55
   Methodology: Organizational Ethnography 61
   Research Strategy: the Cases 65
   Research Practices: the Fieldwork 67
   Analysis: Iterative Inductive Interpretation 72
   Writing Practice and the Practice of Writing 74
   The Stories to Come: A Disclaimer 82

Part II: The Narratives

4 Renfe Operadora: Integrating Security
   En Route: From Atocha to the Security Department 87
   From Renfe to Renfe Operadora: the End of an Era 91
   The New Company: Where Do We Stand? 96
   Something Old, Something New 98
   Room for Negotiation 100
   11-M as a Critical Event in the Development of Security in the Spanish Railways 102
| The Attacks                                      | 102 |
| 11-M and Railway Security                      | 104 |
| Painful Memories                                | 107 |
| Terrorism and the Spanish Railways             | 108 |
| February 2007: Explosions in Lutxana           | 109 |
| The Normalization of Threat?                   | 111 |

5 **NS: A Concern for Security**

| NS and Personal Security                       | 113 |
| Positioning The Security Department Within NS | 115 |
| Towards the Separation of NS and ProRail      | 117 |
| Security is a Societal Problem                | 119 |
| A Question of Responsibility?                  | 121 |
| Talking About Security                         | 122 |
| Service and Security: A Hot Topic             | 125 |
| No Panic, It's Just a Backpack!               | 128 |
| NS and Terrorism in the Netherlands            | 130 |
| In the Line of Fire                            | 131 |
| Stories From the Frontline: Workfloor Autobiographies | 133 |
| Van Loon: Coping with Aggression and Violence | 134 |
| Van der Meulen: Circling Around the Church    | 135 |
| Lunenborg: Longing for the Past                | 136 |
| Van Tuinen: The Disappearance of a Job         | 138 |
| NS: Love to Hate It/Hate to Love It            | 140 |

6 **Service, Surveillance and Security**

| Railway Security: Operational Measures         | 141 |
| 'I Had the Highest Number of Incidents'        | 142 |
| '1.700 Passengers in Just Two Hours'           | 152 |
| Surveillance, Enforcement and Service          | 158 |
| 'To Report Incidents is Crucial'               | 159 |
| 'Information is More Important Than Trust'     | 162 |
| 'It’s Our Responsibility To Make the Passengers Feel Safe' | 163 |
| To Be Safe, To Be Monitored?                   | 167 |
| 'Go Back to Work, I Am Watching You'           | 168 |
| 'Abuse of the System Will Be Punished'         | 172 |
| 'A Pleasant Place'                             | 177 |
| 'They Make Us Scan Our Index Finger'           | 179 |
| On the Use of Camera Surveillance              | 182 |
| Designing a Train                              | 185 |
| In Retrospect                                  | 188 |
Part III: Interpretation and Conclusions

7 The Quest for Security

Discourses about (In)Security 191
‘Negotiating Security: the Battle of Experts’ 197
Service Above All? 198
Security and Professional Identity 200
‘Future (Im)Perfect: Where Do We Go From Here?’ 202
The Netherlands and Spain in the European Railway Sector 203
Translating the Grand Narratives of Public Sector Reform 205
‘In Control or Under Control: Towards a Security Utopia?’ 210
Is There Security in Numbers? 210
And So This Story Comes to Its End 215

8 Telling Tales

Fictionalized Research Narratives or Lies? 223
The Narratives: A Reflection 224
The Contribution of a Narrative Approach 229

References 231

Appendices

Appendix 1: Organizational Chart Renfe Operadora 2005-2009 254
Appendix 2: Institutional Relations in the Spanish Rail Sector 257
Appendix 3: Organizational Chart NS Holding 2006-2009 258
Appendix 4: Institutional Relations in the Dutch Rail Sector 262

Nederlandse samenvatting

1. En zo begint dit verhaal… 263
2. Betekenis geven aan vertogen over veiligheid 264
3. Fictionaliseren van wetenschap: over methoden en methodologie 267
4. Renfe Operadora: veiligheid integreren 269
5. NS: een concern voor veiligheid 270
6. Service, toezicht en veiligheid 270
7. De zoektocht naar veiligheid 271
8. Verhalen vertellen 272

Curriculum Vitae 275
Preface

‘You should see some of the crazy things people do around here’, a female ticket inspector says when I tell her about what just happened.

‘And it’s really stupid you know, cause in the end it’s all of us tax-payers that pay the bill’, she continues while she hands back my ticket.

‘I know. It’s just that I thought I’d to let you know what happened’, I reply.

‘Yes, thank you. You did good’, the ticket inspector says before she wishes me a good night and continues on her way through the compartment.

Just before that, around 11 pm, I was on my way home after a night in the theatre. I got on the train and went to the compartment on the top floor of the train (it was a double train). As soon as I entered the compartment I noticed a small fire on the table in front of the first seat on the left. It was a lighter without the top on it and the fluid was burning. I looked around to see if someone else had noticed it, but the few passengers that were in the compartment sat all the way at the other end. I looked behind to see if I could spot a ticket inspector or someone else but there was nobody.

So I picked up the lighter by the bottom end and walked back downstairs and out of the train. I threw the lighter on the platform, into a puddle of water (it was raining). My hand was burning, it had been a rather big flame. A few people walking by looked at me with a curious face, but nobody spoke. I looked along the platform to see if I could spot the ticket inspector or train driver, but they were nowhere to be seen.

The fire had gone out so I went back into the train and looked at the spot where the fire had been. I could see the big black burned stain and the compartment smelled of smoke. The other passengers looked at me but again, nobody spoke. I took a seat on the right side of the compartment and the train departed from the station.

As soon as the ticket inspector has left, I sit back and look out the window. Still a bit shaken up by the situation I think to myself that it’s actually kind of ironic. For four years I have been working on my research about security in trains and on stations. I have talked to many people, read about incidents, I have tagged along with ticket inspectors, observed meetings, gatherings and the daily life of railway security. And only after I finished the research and my dissertation has been approved I am part of an actual incident. True, it’s not a life threatening situation (thankfully) and it doesn’t even come close to what railway employees experience on a daily basis, but for me it was an intimidating situation all the same.
And now, after four years I am wrapping up this study. I want to express my appreciation to all the people who have helped me in the past years. In the first place all the people at NS and Renfe Operadora who have given me access to their work practices and thoughts. There are many who come to mind so I will just assume they know who I am referring to. John Dietz and Fernando Fraile deserve to be mentioned for their kindness and for being open and helpful in my fieldwork. Of great help also has been Hilde Slaats. As an MA student she participated in the project by conducting three months of fieldwork at Renfe Operadora. She did a wonderful job and I am grateful to her for letting me use her data in my analysis and for letting me ‘borrow’ the title of her MA thesis as a chapter title.

I started working at the department of Culture, Organization and Management almost six years ago because my MA supervisor at the time, Carel Roessingh encouraged me to pursue an academic career. I owe so much to him. Myrte Berendse and I travelled a large part of the road towards our PhDs together and she has been a tremendous help. Thank you, Myrte for all the coffee moments, debates, conference visits, and laughs. I hope we will continue working together for a long time. Marcel Veenswijk and Kees Boersma, my supervisors, have been a great support throughout the project. They believed in me from the start and gave me the freedom to write a dissertation that is somewhat unconventional and although they gave me critical feedback or strict deadlines I never felt unsupported. A big thank you also for all the PhD students of the department of Culture, Organizational and Management for the inspiring and sometimes heated discussions. Thanks to the other colleagues at COM, I am not going to mention you individually because all of you are wonderful people. I also want to thank Stefan Soeparman and Teun Oosterbaan for helping me ‘make sense of it all’.

Finally, my deepest gratitude for the love and support from my family and friends: my parents, my sister Marieke and my close friends, Vanessa, Karin and Ellen. It has been a period with many ups and downs and I will never forget your help and encouragements.
1 And Thus, the Story Begins...

For as long as the story goes on, reality no longer exists
– Paul Auster

It Happened On Board of the AVE...

Like everyday, the AVE arrived punctually. At 22.25, it made its entrance, majestically, into the station of Santa Justa. But there was something quite unusual: the platform, usually empty before the arrival of a train, was full of police officers.

Several officers, wearing the National Police uniform, covered the possible areas where the passengers should exit the train.

The orders were strict: nobody was to leave the train until inspector Quintero, who was heading the operation, decided so. He walked nervously along the platform, looking at the convoy that was coming to a stop. He was a man of reasonable height and maturity, big, with little hair and prescription glasses that gave him a certain air of intellectuality; he was wearing loose-fitting pants and jacket, without tie, that gave off an obvious sense of indifference towards his appearance.

He was walking without looking at his men, only having eyes for the train that was arriving, although every now and then he verified with a glance that the escalators, giving access to the platform, were also controlled; nobody could come down or go up on them.

From the upper part of the station, the employees of Renfe observed the actions of the police with curiosity. They didn’t know what was happening, but sensed that it had to be important. The rumours were going around quickly. Some asserted that there had been a terrorist attack; others that there had been a poisoning caused by the food on board; the most discrete were simply waiting for any news, with curiosity though not without apprehension.

With a deep sigh the elegant AVE came to a standstill. But the doors did not open. Nobody got off. Through the windows one could see the faces of the passengers. They were looking outside, trying to find an answer to the message they had received over the intercom of the train, announcing, just before the arrival, that nobody could get off until the police would authorize it, and that everybody would have to keep their identification in their hands.

At first, confronted with the news, a profound silence emerged among the passengers, soon after to break into a multitude of softly-toned conversations, speculating about what might be going on.
It is true that, because of the day and time, the AVE was carrying an abnormally low number of passengers from Madrid to Seville. That was a good fortune, because, if it would have arrived fully occupied, it could have complicated the task of managing the crowd. Thus, the small number of travellers permitted the crew to control them with reasonable success. Apart from some isolated incidents, caused by the obvious tension, the crew members had done a good job.

The train manager had authorized that, under his responsibility and contradicting the concerning legislation, everyone who desired so could smoke in the cafeteria. After all, people had to be able to soothe their nerves. Evidently this meant everyone, except the passengers in carriage number eight, who, following the explicit orders of the Police could not be allowed to leave the carriage... (Fragment from the novel ‘Sucedió en el AVE’ by Víctor Salterio, 2007: 7-9, translation HD).

This excerpt, from a novel by the Spanish author Víctor Salterio, is the beginning of a fictional narrative about the murder of two members of ETA that takes place on board of a high speed train (AVE) that travels between Madrid and Seville. The novel evolves around a highly sensitive societal topic – the Spanish conflict with the Basque terrorist organization ETA – using the railways, with great detail, as the setting where the story embarks. Evidently this novel is a product of the imagination of the author. Nevertheless, parts of this novel closely resemble the daily life at the Spanish railways. It may thus be assumed that the author (just like many other novelists preparing to write a narrative about a specific subject), closely studied the routines and habits of passengers, railway employees, life at the train stations, and so on (Carter, 2001; Daly, 1999). Presumably, he has some experience with railway travelling of his own. Among literary scholars, any narrative (albeit fictional or nonfictional) is “part of a larger construct, referred to by some as the ‘reconstructed’ (or ‘represented’) world” (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002 [1983]: 6). Although in general social scientists are more systematic in their observations, both novelists and scientific authors base their writings on observations and experiences of ‘real life’ situations, mixed with their own life-experiences (beyond the formal fieldwork) and a bit of imagination/creativity (Watson, 2000: 503). What is more, storytelling is a central part of how people experience and make sense of their everyday lives (e.g. Boje, 2001; Brown, 2006; Czarniawska, 1998; Finnegan, 1998; Gabriel, 2000; O’Connor, 2000; Richardson, 1995; Tangherlini, 1998). We all use stories of the past as a point of reference to weigh current experiences and to build expectations for the future.

In turn, I now use this fragment to embark upon a different journey: the presentation of a scientific study on security practices and organizational change in railway organizations in Spain and the Netherlands. Much like the excerpt above, I will present in this book a collection of narratives about daily life at the railways,
focussing on the dangers, joys and tensions of work in this sector. In contrast to the author above, the narratives in this book are not fictional or pure products of my imagination, although I did play a very significant role in the creation of these narratives. As an ethnographer, I spent a considerable amount of time in the two main railway operating companies in the Netherlands (NS) and Spain (Renfe Operadora). During this period I talked to a lot of employees at different levels of these companies and even got to spend a few days tagging along with small groups of operational staff. The aim of the research was to understand the ways in which actors in these two organizations make sense of security issues, taking into regard the specific context in which they operate.

Socially Constructing Security

In general, the term security refers to the protection and prevention of intentional harm (such as vandalism, organized crime, terrorist acts or other deliberate human threats) (Bosch et al., 2004: 109). In the realm of the railways (and beyond) the term security is often further specified as ‘personal security’, referring to the protection of employees and passengers. In popular idiom the term security is often used interchangeably with the term ‘safety’ despite the different meaning of the two terms. Safety refers to the protection against natural disasters, and the prevention of human or system/process failure (Bosch et al., 2004: 109). In the rail sector this is generally used for (technical) safety issues related to the infrastructure or operational (traffic) system. However, when people talk about ‘feeling safe’ this refers more to the concept of (personal) security than to the concept of safety, therefore a complete separation of the terms is not (always) possible. What is more, in both the Dutch and Spanish language there is only one word for both terms (respectively veiligheid and seguridad). Interestingly, during the fieldwork I found that in both countries the English terms ‘security’ and ‘safety’ are often used to indicate the different meanings (Bosch et al., 2004). It thus seems that this distinction between ‘safety’ and ‘security’ is a more or less universally accepted one, at least among professionals in certain industries. Nevertheless, language aside, the question remains what the local meanings of the terms are when it comes to the enactment of these concepts in the daily practices of actors, as well as the academic conceptualizations of the terms.

3. In Dutch ‘personal security’ is translated as ‘sociale veiligheid’, whereas in Spanish the term is ‘seguridad personal’
The field of security studies first emerged as a separate field from political science and international relations after the Second World War and was firmly shaped during the Cold War and the developments in the area of nuclear power arms (Baldwin, 1996; Grey, 2009; Miller, 2001). Therefore the field developed at first around a state-centred focus on security. This approach on security broadened somewhat in the early 1980s when increasing attention for ‘human security’ emerged (Grey, 2009; Kaldor et al., 2007). The scope of the field of security studies remained firmly based within international relations but the concept of ‘human security’ not only focused on war as a threat to security or state-sovereignty but included a wider range of possible threats (such as crime, health, terrorism, etc.). Furthermore, the focus shifted from the nation state to a more international (globalized) approach to security (Baldwin, 1996; Miller, 2001).

Important streams of research within security studies consist of systems approaches, the application of mathematical game theory, or a focus on the intelligence aspect of security studies (Grey, 2009). With the emergence of the ‘human security’ focus, more critical orientations developed questioning the dominant objectivist epistemology of the field (Grey, 2009). As Grey indicates, this new stream (also called ‘the Copenhagen School’) “links to more thoroughgoing post-structuralist and deconstructionist analyses of security” (2009: 307), drawing upon social constructionism and focusing on ‘securitization’ instead of ‘security’.

Securitization is concerned with the processes through which particular issues become constituted as ‘security’ issues, and are seen as amenable to security solutions (or, in parallel, the way that other issues are ‘de-securitized’ and so seen as outside the scope of security studies) (Grey, 2009: 307).

What is interesting (yet not completely surprising) is that the ‘critical turn’ in security studies developed parallel to similar reorientations in other fields across the social sciences. Nevertheless, security studies still remain a subfield of international relations and as such developed rather in relative isolation from other fields of inquiry, such as organization studies (Grey, 2009). Within organization studies, the closest link to security studies may be the increasing interest in crisis management, risk prevention and occupational safety (e.g. Adams, 1995; Boin et al., 2005; Perrow, 1999; Turner & Gray, 2009; Vaughan, 1999; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). Whereas traditionally these lines of investigation involve a deterministic approach to the probability of risks, the prevention of harm, or the occurrence of accidents there is a growing awareness of the socially constructed nature of occupational safety issues (Turner & Gray, 2009). “Through the social constructionist lens, the meaning of safety [and security] is viewed as situated, negotiated, generated, and transplanted in the historical socio-material, and cultural contexts in which inter-
action occurs” (Turner & Gray, 2009: 1260). Still, the crossover between safety and security studies literature and organization studies literature is limited (Grey, 2009; Turner & Gray, 2009), despite the continuing development in which security discourses permeate all aspects of our society. One important area that is, until now, lacking attention is a micro level (interpretive) analysis of organizational processes with regard to security and securitization.

In my study I focus on the local meaning constructions and enactment of security related issues. Central to this approach is the idiosyncratic construction of ‘security’ within different contexts. The concept ‘security’ is closely related to the (subjective) perception of individual human beings. If you think about situations in which you feel insecure or unsafe, such feelings do not necessarily correspond with a rational, objective cause. What is more, these feelings are not the same for all people. Our reaction to specific situations is influenced by our previous experiences, our upbringing, our cultural background; by who we are. According to phenomenological philosophy (with Husserl and Schütz as some of its main representatives), human beings perceive the world around them and give meaning to (their position in) it with their previous knowledge and experiences as a point of reference. As researchers, it is therefore impossible to conceive of an objective reality. The only way to understand social reality is through the understanding (verstehen) of local patterns of meaning and the way these meanings are constructed (e.g. Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; O’Reilly, 2005; Veenswijk, 2001; Yanow, 2006b). In this way, actors (and collectives) within and across organizations and societies have different perceptions with regard to security issues. This idiosyncratic nature of security is a central presupposition in this project. Especially due to the obvious differences between the Netherlands and Spain with regard to their (political) history and cultures, I was interested to learn about the local meaning constructions with regard to security among actors in these different contexts. In addition, the current widespread attention and salience of security issues in the western media and the political and public realm makes a study into the local meaning constructions of security all the more intriguing.

Making Sense of Railway Security

Going back to the novel by Saltero, a situation like the one described in the fragment above may very well be encountered in ‘real life’ at the railways. Incidents whereby the police are called onto the scene to deal with a situation (violence, aggression, crime, terrorism) are not uncommon. The companies in the railway sector are confronted with a multitude of threats and problems that may put the security of employees and passengers at risk. In the fragment, rumours about a
possible terrorist attack are mentioned along with other possible explanations for
the actions of the police. The threat of a terrorist attack is very real for contempo-
arary organizations in the public transportation sector (and elsewhere), especially in
a country like Spain where there is a long history of terrorism and internal political
conflict. As a societal meta-narrative, the specific historical background of a com-

munity influences the ways in which members of that community make sense of
their life-worlds. In a similar vein, the way people make sense of and deal with
security issues and threats is influenced by their frame of reference (embedded in
the cultural and historical context). Thus, the reactions described in the (fictional)
fragment should be placed within a broader historical context of terrorism in
Spain (in particular the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004, aimed at the railways).
This is not to imply that a story like this could only be situated in a country like
Spain, but the fact that the novelist is Spanish and the story is set in Spain makes it
perhaps more ‘believable’ that people in the story would think in terms of a terror-

ist attack. Also the storyline about ETA contributes to the creation of a particular
setting for the unfolding of the story and plot.

Yet also in the Netherlands, where there is a very minimal experience when it
comes to terrorism, terrorism is an issue which has permeated public discourse in
many ways. The recent examples of terrorism around the world have awoken a
sense of urgency when it comes to (the perception of) this kind of threat. After the
9-11 attacks, and even more so after the Madrid (2004), London (2005), and Mum-
bai (2006) bombings aimed at the railway systems, an increased sensitivity towards
the possibility of terrorist activities and awareness of the vulnerability of railway
systems emerged. Within the Dutch railway sector there is increasing attention to
terrorist threats, and NS actively participated in a nation-wide government cam-
paign launched to raise awareness of terrorist threat and to increase the alertness
of citizens (Duijnhoven, 2007b). In daily practice, employees and passengers are
also confronted with the threat. For instance, there have been numerous incidents
in the recent past whereby worried passengers reported left luggage or ‘suspicious’
behaviour by fellow travellers, thereby momentarily disrupting the rail traffic. In a
(autobiographic) book about his experiences as a ticket inspector, working for NS,
Ernest H.O. Van Loon describes the emotional experience he had when during one
of his shifts an unattended bag was found in his train. After requesting the owner
to identify him/herself via the train’s intercom, and nobody showed up, he finally
felt forced to stop at the next station and call the authorities. The train and sur-
rounding platforms were evacuated and a specialized explosive expertise team
came to investigate the bag:

When the dog gave the definite sign that whatever it was in the bag was not a bomb,
finally the bag could be removed from the train. And the train was shunted away.
And finally there was time for coffee. After all the barricades were removed, the passengers could return to the platforms, after which the rail traffic could be cleared. It then takes some time before the traffic gets under way, which caused a certain amount of delay. When all the emergency services have left, and you’re standing at the platform again, a very strange feeling comes over you. It’s only then that you really start to think about what you’ve just experienced. It starts to hit you what kind of threat you have just been confronted with. Also when you consider the circumstances under which the suspicious object was encountered. The owner of the bag reported himself to the Railway Police later that night. He declared that he had entered the wrong train. And then he forgot his bag. He apologized. Hence, a left bag in the train can cause a lot of hassle and stress. Something that bothered me quite a lot for the next few days (Van Loon, 2007: 53, transl. HD).

The increased attention for terrorism in the railway sector (and beyond) has been reinforced by a global discourse of ‘a shared terrorist enemy’ or the ‘war on terror’ (mainly referring to Islamic fundamentalists), sustained and invigorated through intensive and often dramatic media coverage and political attention (e.g. Castaños & Muñoz, 2005; Hoskins, 2006; Oswick et al., 2008; Wagenaar & Boersma, 2008). The events of 9-11 have arguably had an important influence on the way concepts like ‘security’ or ‘risk’ are perceived in the (western) world (Beck, 2002; Giddens, 2002; Peper, 2004; Szyliowicz, 2004). The ‘classical’ understanding of the concept of security involves freedom and carelessness. It is considered to be a basic need and, as such, refers to the protection from a broad range of threats (from hunger, environmental hazards, and unemployment to disease, crime and political repression), which makes it an essential part of everyday life (Liotta, 2005: 56-57), although often unconsciously. A number of scholars have argued that processes of globalization and modernization have produced a number of new dimensions of challenges for societies and people across the world, such as global financial risks and ecological crises, which are no longer bound to nation-states (Adams, 1995; Beck, 1997, 1999; Giddens, 2002).

Traditionally the government plays a central role in the provision of security for its citizens (Boin et al., 2005; Bosch et al., 2004; Van Dijk, 2004) and even though this notion is still prevalent, the idea of shared responsibility among the government and organizations in both the public and private sphere has gained ground over the last decades (Bosch et al., 2004; Duijnhoven & Berendse, 2007; Huisman, 2004). Similarly, a “generalized mode of organizing and orienting public sector administration towards a collective and pervasive sense of vigilance and responsibility for combating the threat of terrorism” has emerged (Oswick et al., 2008: 1025). As such, the state seems to pass on the responsibility for guaranteeing civil protection and instead serves only “to alert the public to the inevitable risks and threats” (Oswick et al., 2008: 1026). Civilians and organizations alike are urged to
take up the responsibility for fighting against these threats as well as submitting themselves to increased surveillance measures (Duijnhoven & Berendse, 2007; Oswick et al., 2008; Wagenaar & Boersma, 2008). On the one hand, this 'globalization of terrorist threat' has placed the responsibility and control of this risk beyond the direct scope of nations or organizations, yet at the same time it has reinforced a protectionist attitude towards the outside (Beck, 2002).

Beck goes on to argue that the unprecedented large-scale terrorist attacks like those in New York and Madrid have added a whole new dimension to the risks facing modern Western society, and thus also to the meaning of security (Beck, 2002). While traditional challenges are characterized by the aspect of self-endangerment and their accidental nature (after all humankind is creating its own threats to the ecological and financial system), the principle of ‘accident’ is now being replaced by ‘intentional harm’. According to Beck, there is an increasing realization that the different vulnerabilities and risks might (and likely will) be channelled and exploited by terrorist action, thereby simultaneously unleashing an accumulation of hazards directed at specific targets across the globe. The intentional characteristic of these potential risks dismisses, in Beck’s terminology ‘the prerequisite of active trust, in the field of economics as well as in everyday life and democracy’ and thus creates a general feeling of mistrust among people (Beck, 2002: 43-44). Furthermore, it puts risks and threats at the centre of people’s lives. They now perceive the world and every aspect of it in terms of potential danger and threat, and have come to the realization that these potential risks are uncontrollable and unintelligible (Hovden, 2004). This uncertainty, or ‘culture of fear’ (Boin et al., 2005: 8) makes the quest for security an essential aspect of everyday life. As a consequence a central issue in contemporary society is, to put it in Beck’s words: “how to feign control over the uncontrollable” (2002: 41). What is more, as Feldman (2004) argues, this “securocratic regime” leads to the reframing of history into a (false) dichotomy of an ideal state safety on the one hand and a state of total disorder and malice on the other hand (Feldman, 2004; Oswick et al., 2008).

Although the recent ‘wave’ of terrorism has certainly increased the saliency of security in public discourse, the arguments provided by Beck and others are based on rather limited empirical research. The idea of a global culture of risk/fear does not account for differences in the ways people make sense of these ideas. Against the dominant, homogenizing views, a significant body of ‘cultural approaches’ to security and risk has emerged (cf. Desch, 1998; Duffield et al., 1999). These cultural theories challenge the realist theories in the field of security studies (and international relations). As the proponents of these cultural approaches argue, security and risks are socially constructed and their meaning is historically and culturally embedded (Boholm, 2003; Dake, 1992; Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). Regardless of
the general recognition among security scholars that concepts such as security and risk are socially constructed and culturally/historically embedded, this recognition is rather superficial. There is not much (empirical) attention for the processes of sensemaking at the micro level. To put it in the terms of Oswick et al. (2008: 1025), it lacks an empirical “rendition of localized effects (...) of a meta-level phenomenon (i.e. the perceived threat of terrorist attacks)”. The question whether or not people feel safe or secure is closely related to their specific local frames of reference, and a focus on local constructions of meaning is therefore imperative.

The construction and institutionalization of specific meanings or ideas takes place through a constant process of sensemaking, through which actors attempt to create micro-stability in their interpretive frameworks and thereby in their frames of action (Weick, 2001). “Explicit efforts at sensemaking tend to occur when the current state of the world is perceived to be different from the expected state of the world, or when there is no obvious way to engage the world” (Weick et al., 2005: 409). Micro-stability is produced when people “orient to a presupposed social-structural order, reifying and reproducing it in the course of their activity and imposing its reality on each other as they do” (Weick, 2001: 22). This reification serves as a justification of their actions, which in turn guides the sensemaking process. Important to note here is the fact that sensemaking is by nature a retrospective process, which serves as an ongoing process of rationalization (Weick, 1995). In other words, “perception and action validate each other in ways that resemble self-fulfilling prophecies” (Weick, 2001: 26). The micro-stability of these frameworks however, is temporal and does not completely determine human action. These frameworks merely offer a set of possible patterns from which actors, in every situation, enact particular performances which they feel are best appropriate for that particular situation (Feldman, 2000; Rouleau, 2005). This set of patterns constantly changes through learning and through external influences and interactions. Furthermore, “[t]hrough choice and action, individuals and organizations can deliberately modify, and even eliminate, institutions” (Barley & Tolbert, 1997: 94). Thus, paradoxically, interpretive frameworks constitute the boundaries of behaviour of actors at a given point in time, while at the same time actors may change or deinstitutionalize the interpretive frameworks through their behaviour. In times of relative stability, these appropriate performances will be unambiguous and unconsciously selected. Yet at times when the micro-stability is radically disrupted (for instance through an extreme event like a terrorist attack) the different performances an actor can choose from are not always in line with the interpretive framework. This causes situations of ambiguity and uncertainty for the actors involved. They need to translate the new situation into their pattern of performances through processes of sensemaking in order to realign their interpretations and their behaviour (e.g. Bacharach et al., 1996; Weick, 2001).
The growing research on sensemaking has predominantly focused on the retrospective nature of sensemaking processes. Nevertheless it is increasingly recognized that while much sensemaking occurs retrospectively there are other forms of sensemaking as well. The narrative constructs that people create in their minds to make sense of the world around them are not always retrospective. According to Boje (2008), retrospective sensemaking should be seen in interplay with ‘in-the-moment’, ‘prospective’ and ‘reflexive’ ways of sensemaking. For example, a lot of the narrative fragments “look forward (prospectively) to invent the future” (Boje, 2008: 13). This notion seems particularly interesting with regard to the sensemaking processes in the area of security, protection and risk prevention which are inherently future-oriented.

Capturing Local Meanings

How then to proceed with this task of capturing the local meaning constructions of security? This is surely not an easy endeavour, especially taking into regard the very nature of such constructions and the (im)possibility of them being presented in any form at all, let alone linking them back to some broader framework. In Chapter three I will focus more elaborately on the methodological design of the study. For this moment I want to explain something about the intentions I have with the style and outline of this book. From the myriad of data collected in the course of this study in the Spanish and Dutch railway sector, I wrote a number of narratives that represent my interpretation and analysis of the data from the two companies (NS and Renfe Operadora). As a social scientist, I have used my knowledge about processes of change and other social phenomena to interpret and theorize my observations in the field. As many scholars have argued, the lines between fiction and science (or non-fiction for that matter), or between fictional constructs and facts are often unclear (e.g. Agar, 1995; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Czarniawska, 1999b; Narayan, 1999; Phillips, 1995; Rhodes & Brown, 2005b; Watson, 2000). One could in fact argue that fiction and non-fiction are ideal-type concepts that cannot exist in their purest form, although we can all conceive of the difference between what a ‘fiction’ is and what ‘non-fiction’ is (Genette, 1988: 15). As Genette argues, they are merely different styles or genres, each belonging to the same broad process of narrating social phenomena (1988).

Moreover, the distinction between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ (often erroneously used as antonyms) is a false dichotomy. The two are actually inherently different concepts that have little to do with each other. ‘Fact’ is an ontological statement about social reality whereas ‘fiction’ is a product of an author’s writing endeavours. It is more interesting to explore the relations between the different realms of ‘social reality’
and their representations in narrative constructs. For something to be called a narrative there are a few criteria. In a narrow sense a narrative is a verbal expression of a succession of events (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002). According to Czarniawska (1998: 2) “[a] narrative, in its most basic form, requires at least three elements: an original state of affairs, an action or an event, and the consequent state of affairs”. Some argue that for something to be called a narrative it requires at least a ‘plot’ (e.g. Gabriel, 2000; Greimas, 1971), or a linear sequence, consisting of a beginning, middle, and end (Boje, 2008), while others have a much broader conception, where basically anything can be approached as a narrative (Barthes & Duisit, 1975). Boje (2008: 1) conceptualizes the difference between ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ as follows: “Narrative has been influenced by modernity to aspire to abstraction and generality, while story, here and there, has retained more grounded interplay with the life world, and its generativity”. Although related to Boje’s conceptualization, from a more linguistic approach the distinction between ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ has a slightly different focus. As Greimas writes:

[There is a] fundamental distinction between two levels of representation and analysis: an apparent level of narration, at which the manifestations of narration are subject to the specific exigencies of the linguistic substances through which they are expressed, and an immanent level, constituting a sort of common structural trunk, at which narrativity is situated and organized prior to its manifestation (Greimas & Porter, 1977: 23).

In other words, as Galloway Young (1987) argues, there are two different ontological realms that constitute the relation between ‘social reality’ and the narratives representing that social reality. The first are the events the story is about, whereas the second is a rendering of that reality as a description (narrative) that is materialized through the perspective of the narrator. It is clear that among scholars in the field of literary studies, as well as social sciences, different approaches to the concepts of narrative and story exist. Nevertheless, as Rimmon-Kenan (2002) indicates, it is more or less accepted that a narrative is built up by three different aspects⁴. The first is the story, or the events the narrative is about. Second is the text, which is the verbal representation of the story. Third and final aspect is the act of telling or writing (putting into words), or narration (e.g. Genette, 1988; Rimmon-Kenan, 2002). In addition, Greimas (1971: 794) argues that a narrative should not be confused with a literary genre or language: “Narrative structures are located at a deeper level than deep linguistic structures”. Thus, the actual narration or narr-

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⁴. Unless explicitly indicated otherwise, I will use this conceptualization of narrative, story, text, and narration throughout the book.
tive structure can take different forms or shapes (not only written or oral language but also cinema, paintings, photographs, or dreams) and should be regarded “outside of the manifestations of meaning that occur in the natural languages” (Greimas & Porter, 1977: 23).

Important in the distinction between these aspects is the relations they have with each other. By describing an event, this representation of reality becomes reified, yet it still is a version of reality that is mediated by the perspective (or cultural background) of the person recounting the event. Therefore one can say that specific descriptions already point to specific understandings and as such, narrative accounts in any shape are to a certain extent always (inter)subjective (Galloway Young, 1987). What this analysis of the concept of narrative in literary studies shares with certain approaches in social sciences (including organization studies) are questions about the nature of the relationship between ‘reality’, ‘experience’ and ‘text’⁵. Whereas literary scholars approach this question mostly from the text and trace it back to reality through analysis, in social sciences the customary approach is reversed. The central question there is how social reality relates to (or can be known and represented in) text. Yet, essentially the problem is the same and both fields build upon the work of the same philosophers.

From a phenomenological perspective, actors’ perceptions of reality are intersubjectively constructed and mediated by culture. As Galloway Young, following Alfred Schütz, puts it: “Meanings shift with percipients and occasions, generating a layered world of ‘multiple meaning-contexts’” (Galloway Young, 1987: 3). In turn, culture is perceived as interpretive frameworks that guide behaviour and processes of sensemaking. These frameworks consist of dynamic (yet institutionalized) webs of meaning and significance that are embedded in the local context of those settings in which the framework operates (Geertz, 1973; Schein, 1985). These settings can be any situation in which a group of people interact (e.g. societies, organizations, inter-organizational networks, departments, etc.). According to phenomenology, to understand the ways in which actors make sense of a situation requires focussing on the (individual as well as collective) meanings they attribute to those situations and their interpretive frameworks. Phenomenology has been an influential inspiration for the entirety of social sciences (and beyond). In this study, the main focus is on actors in railway organizations and therefore I extensively draw upon organizational studies about actors’ sensemaking and processes of enactment. Concretely, in this study I will focus on the processes of sensemaking and enactment of organizational actors in the railway operators in Spain and the Neth-

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⁵ Here ‘text’ is approached in a broad sense whereby any form of communication, talk, or symbolic phenomena can be seen as text.
erlands. At times of (radical) changes in the environment or cultural constellation of an organization, the existing interpretive frames no longer offer a satisfying explanation for the situation. What follows is a process of redefining and renegotiating to come to a new (temporary) stability. From a cultural perspective, organizational change involves a shift from a more or less stable logic of action to a period of redefinition until a new relatively stable order emerges (Bate, 1994; Veenswijk, 2001; Weick, 2001).

If we are to understand processes of change, it is therefore important to focus not only on the construction of meaning of individual actors, but also to look at the process of the ongoing intersubjective construction of collective meaning and to connect these patterns of meaning to the broader (societal) discourses in which the process of sensemaking takes place. To prevent arriving at extremely relativist arguments or trying to link everything with everything, it is important to signal the main storylines in the context of the collective under study. The point here is that it is essential to situate the actors’ interpretations and actions within broader (temporal) frames and discourses (Sillince, 2007). As such, the narratives that I will present in this book should be read with the specific context in mind. “The sense of the universal is somehow embedded in the particular”, as Finnegan eloquently puts it (1998: 11). More specifically, in this study the central focus is on the meaning of security among actors in the Netherlands and Spain. Nevertheless there are other important themes and issues in the context of these organizations that are strongly intertwined with the process of meaning construction with regard to security. I will touch upon these as I go along in the book, but one of these ‘storylines’, concerning a dominant discourse with regard to public services, deserves special attention at this stage since it is central to institutional and organizational operations in the railway sector.

**Discourses of Public Services**

Traditionally the provision of many services (such as railway transport) has been the responsibility of the public sector. However, over the last decades, a large number of tasks and services have been delegated and assigned to private organizations or semi-autonomous organizations that operate at the intersection between the public and private sector. Furthermore, there has been an increasing tendency towards the separation of management on the one hand and operation of public services on the other hand. At the same time, society has become increasingly dependent upon the stability and security of critical infrastructures, and problems with regard to the quality of service delivery are subject to public scrutiny and receive wide attention from all sorts of media. The discourse around this broad
public sector reform trend (often referred to as ‘New Public Management’) employs fashionable concepts, tools and principles (mainly borrowed from private sector management). For instance, changes generally involve a shift from a strong focus on processes and inputs to an emphasis on outputs and outcomes, and an increased emphasis on service and customer-orientation. Furthermore, characteristic changes that are usually part of the New Public Management (NPM) doctrine are the introduction of measurement systems based on performance-indicators, quality control through performance or service contracts and targets, as well as the introduction of market-like mechanisms such as competition, privatization, outsourcing, etc. (e.g. Gruening, 2001; Hood, 1995; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Pollitt, 2001; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). In addition, reform programs related to the NPM movement commonly involve wide-scale reorganizations whereby governments are receding, responsibilities for the provision of (former) ‘public’ services and values are shifting, and all kinds of new organizational forms emerge at the intersection of the public and private spheres. As a consequence, the role of the State in wider society has transformed and the boundaries between what is ‘public’ and ‘private’ have blurred. The responsibility of the government to provide a number of public services like energy, health care and transportation has increasingly become the subject of debate. Mainly due to economic reasons, the legitimacy of the often large, highly bureaucratic state-monopolies in which these public services are organized is being challenged.

While many scholars and practitioners adopted the NPM doctrine as the solution to a number of problems in the area of public organizations and governance, there have been numerous critical approaches as well. The critiques mainly focus on the question whether management principles from private businesses can successfully (or should) be implemented in the public sphere. Scholars (as well as practitioners) have presented several empirical, theoretical, and normative arguments to show that the underlying ideology of the NPM movement presents severe difficulties, for instance when it comes to the principle of measuring public sector performances (Noordegraaf & Abma, 2003). Furthermore, critics of the NPM movement argue that the political dimension of public management is disregarded, and the role of public organizations in creating and sustaining public values is undermined (Emery & Giauque, 2003; Haque, 2001; Noordegraaf & Abma, 2003).

Today, most scholars in the field recognize the local variations and give credit to the micro particularities of organizational settings. As Thomas & Davies (2005) and Veenswijk (2005a) among others argue, many innovations and (cultural) changes in public organizations indeed seem, from a ‘frontstage’ point of view, to be congruent with the NPM discourse, yet, the ‘backstage’ reality (or lived experience) of such change programs is much more ambiguous and complex. Whereas
traditionally, the NPM principles were approached in a rather instrumental, deterministic and unidirectional way (Thomas & Davies, 2005), scholars today are much more sensitive to the plurality, conflicts and resistance of organizational practices. An increasing number of studies focus on the actual backstage, or microcosm (Parker, 2000), processes of micro-resistance (Thomas & Davies, 2005), local meanings, or sensemaking processes (Veenswijk, 2005b) that are involved with organizational change.

Nevertheless, despite an increase in interpretive approaches to processes of public sector change, most of these studies continue to treat the New Public Management doctrine as an unproblematic concept, thereby contributing to the reification of the discourse and making it difficult to move beyond the abstract (‘blue-print’) intentions of these public sector reforms. This relates to what Giddens refers to as a ‘double hermeneutic’: as social scientists we should adopt a reflexive attitude towards the phenomena that we study (i.e. the social world). “Sociological knowledge spirals in and out of the universe of social life, reconstructing both itself and that universe as an integral part of that process” (Giddens, 1990: 15-16). As such it is important also to consider the narrative construction of such academic texts and place these within their context. Academic texts have very specific literary conventions and they are too often approached in an unproblematic manner (Finnegan, 1998; Van Maanen, 1995b). As Van Maanen argues: “our theories of the world are not mere reflectors of the world, and this is why the words we use are so terribly important” (1995b: 139). In the same spirit, I intend to not only problematize scholarly narratives (like the ‘New Public Management’ or ‘Risk’ narratives that prevail in contemporary western societies) but in addition I intentionally break with some of the traditional scientific conventions when it comes to the presentation of my study. In the following chapters I will further elaborate on the relation between style or genre and the message that texts (aims to) convey.

**Problem Statement and Outline**

Security is an important theme in the contemporary Western world (including in academic circles). As a concept as well as a discourse it is strongly intertwined with other societal developments and embedded in the cultural and historical background of actors. As such it makes for an interesting and relevant topic to study the interactions between public discourses with regard to security and the local micro-level constructions of meanings and enactment of security issues.

Apart from increasing attention for security-related issues, the railway sector has been subject to changes with regard to the institutional position of the organizations in this sector. In the spirit of the general tendency to increasingly move
public services from the public towards the private realm (the abovementioned ‘New Public Management’ doctrine), railway organizations have experienced a shift from being public state-owned bureaucracies towards becoming independent, commercial companies with the expectancy of a liberalized competitive market in the near future. These developments, although they are widely spread across different national contexts, have different implications at the local level of each organization. Furthermore, these developments and the accompanying discourses have important implications for the ways in which security is perceived and enacted at the micro level.

In this study, the processes of situated meaning construction and local practices with regard to railway security are studied in two different contexts. Through the presentation of narratives about a wide variety of situations and issues from the daily life in this sector, the book focuses on the ways in which actors in the main railway operating companies in the Netherlands (NS) and Spain (Renfe Operadora) make sense of the concept of security. The narratives that will be presented are situated at the micro level of everyday practices, while at the same time they are embedded in the wider context of societal meta-narratives.

The central research question of the study can be formulated in the following way:

In which ways do organizational actors in the railway sector make sense of security issues, and how is this manifested in the daily practices of organizational actors in the Spanish and Dutch railway operators, taking into regard their specific institutional and cultural contexts?

As mentioned, the majority of studies that focus on the development of a public ‘security discourse’ in the current (post 9/11) Western world, take a macro level approach. They focus on the emergence of ideological changes and perception of a globalized ‘war on terror’. Little attention is paid to the implications and manifestations of such meta-discourses at the micro level of actors in specific context. As such, this research will focus on the following aspects. In the first place, the study will focus on the representation of such discourses in the two different contexts. Second, the focus will shift from the societal discourses towards the narrative constructs that can be identified within the railway sectors in Spain and the Netherlands. In particular, the different narrative constructions of security among different groups of actors (such as management, media, operational staff, government representatives, etc.) will be explored. Finally, this will lead me to discuss the ways in which different groups of organizational actors across different levels within the two railway organizations enact their narrative accounts with regard to security. In
other words, the ways in which they make sense of and cope with security issues in their daily practices. These three aims can be translated into the following three sub questions:

How are societal discourses about security and the railway sector constructed in the Netherlands and Spain?

What kind of narrative constructs about security can be identified within the Dutch and Spanish railway sector?

How do actors at different positions in the Dutch and Spanish railway operators make sense of and cope with security issues in their daily practices?

The dissertation is structured as follows. In the first part of the book, the background of the study will be discussed. Chapter 2 focuses on the theoretical and philosophical positioning of the study. Through a discussion of several theoretical concepts related to the broader framework around (organizational) discourse and sensemaking the study is placed within the interpretive stream of research. This positioning is further developed in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 is centred on the design and methodology of the study. The chapter focuses, among other things, on the epistemology, the methodology, the fieldwork, the analysis and the writing of the study. Special attention is given to a fourth, more general aim of this research (in addition to the aims that follow directly from the problem statement). This aim involves a discussion of the use of literary genres in scientific texts, and the relation between text and social reality. This chapter presents a first exploration of the use of unorthodox writing techniques as a means to problematize traditional scientific conventions. As a powerful discursive force, scientific texts tend to become reified and as such they influence the processes of the construction of meanings across societies. This chapter provides the point of departure for the use of literary techniques and genres in the empirical part of the study.

In part II of the book, the empirical data is presented. Following the discussions in part I, several narratives are presented that take you to a variety of situations and aspects based on the daily life at the railways in the Netherlands and Spain. Chapter four is an introduction to the Spanish case. We will get acquainted with Renfe Operadora as an organization and in particular the security department of the organization in Madrid. Furthermore, some central events and issues from the history of the company are used to make ourselves familiar with the setting. Chapter five introduces NS and the Dutch railway sector. Like chapter four, the aim of this chapter is to familiarize ourselves with the particularities of the Dutch setting and the security department at NS in specific. Both chapter four and five also
provide the first narratives that take us into the world of railway security. Chapter six offers different narratives about specific aspects of the security organizations in both countries. In chapter six the focus lies mainly on the experiences and work processes at the frontline. We will meet a number of ticket inspectors, security guards, service agents, and the like, as the main protagonists in that chapter and read about their daily practices with regard to railway security. Some of the main themes that we will be reading about in chapter six are surveillance, service, monitoring and enforcement.

Part III, the final part of the book, consists of the discussion and conclusions of the study. This section is divided into two chapters. In the first place, chapter eight discusses the main findings of the study with regard to the meanings and enactments of railway security in the Netherlands and Spain. In addition, these findings are related and linked back to broader societal, political and cultural discourses and I will reflect upon the implications of this study. Finally, chapter nine is dedicated to a reflection on the study’s methodological and stylistic contributions. A central concern in that chapter is to discuss – in retrospect – some of the choices I made with regard to the presentation of empirical data. Also I will explore some of the ways in which this type of writing might be useful in other projects.
In the first part of the dissertation I will discuss the theoretical, philosophical and methodological underpinnings of the study. Before continuing I would like to briefly set the stage for the next two chapters. As you will read, this study is conducted from an interpretive perspective. In line with a social constructionist ontology and interpretive epistemology, I embarked upon this study with an open mind, as far as that is possible. Obviously I had some ideas with regard to the focus of the study, after all I had already decided that I would be studying security practices. Nevertheless, I tried to work as inductively as possible. The theoretical framework that will be discussed in the next chapter is intended to locate the study within a specific research tradition, more than to operationalize the main concepts of the study. The theoretical chapter (chapter two) and the methodological chapter (chapter three) should be seen as complementary to each other, since the theoretical framework is strongly influenced by philosophical notions and as a consequence the methodology, theory and methods are closely related to one another.
2 Making Sense of Security Discourses

Not infrequently, and perhaps ever and always, texts refer to other texts and in fact rely on them for their meaning.

– James E. Porter

Introduction

In this chapter I will focus on the theoretical background of the study. One of the central themes throughout this study is the connection between public discourses and processes of sensemaking and enactment at the level of individual actors. There are many different definitions and conceptualizations of what a discourse is. As Phillips and Hardy (2002: 3) put it: “Discourse, in general terms, refers to actual practices of talking and writing… We define a discourse as an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception that brings an object into being”. An important question in this regard is how organizational practices and individual behaviour can be understood within their specific social and cultural contexts (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

Concretely, the study aims to understand how societal, cultural and historical discourses with regard to security are enacted at the organizational level. Pettigrew talks about a contextualist approach, which he describes as follows:

The view taken here is that it is not sufficient to treat context merely as descriptive background or as an elective list of antecedents that somehow shape the process. Nor, of course, given the dangers of simple determinism, should structure or context be seen as only constraining process. Rather, this approach recognizes that process both is contained by structures and shapes structures, either in the direction of preserving them or in that of altering them (Pettigrew, 1985: 239).

In other words, what Pettigrew calls for is a combination of a micro-oriented perspective and a macro (institutional) perspective. The argument behind this plea is that public discourses seem to direct the attention of (organizational) actors to specific issues (agenda setting), influence the framing of issues, and as such influence the behaviour of actors (Weick et al., 2005). Therefore, it is important to “pay as much attention to structuring and conversing as we do to structures and texts” (Weick et al., 2005: 417). Conceptually, this means that it is important to focus on micro and macro levels of analysis. Nevertheless, it is imperative to bear in mind that the distinction between ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ is rather limiting. The distinction
is in fact a false dichotomy; there are no macro actors, only micro actors who engage with each other, creating networks that may (or may not) become institutionalized and thus conceived of as macro actors (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). Thus, ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ are analytical categories that do not have an ontological status of their own. Yet, they are very real in the sense that people talk about them as reified, quasi-objects (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996) and therefore they are necessarily part of any social research. As Weick (2001: 19) formulates it: “Macro constructions such as organization, family, state, media or market are created in micro situations, often in the form of justifications for interdependent actions and then treated as if they were real constraints to be honoured, resisted, bypassed, rationalized, reversed or ignored”. The labels given to these macro structures help us to understand them. To give an example, the label ‘organization’ has familiar connotations for people and therefore labelling something as an organization contributes to (and steers) their understanding of it. If we look at it from a discursive perspective, ‘organization’, ‘micro’, ‘macro’, and so on, are all textual constructions that together constitute social reality. In order to understand the relations between micro level phenomena and macro level constructs it has been argued that discourse analysis constitutes an approach that is able to combine both levels as well as establish links between ‘text’ and ‘action’ (e.g. Chia, 2000; Grant et al., 2001; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Sillince, 2007).

This research builds upon a social constructionist ontology (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As a philosophical argument the social constructionist ontology has inspired many streams of research within social sciences. These approaches share the view that social reality is constructed through the interaction and intersubjective interpretations of human beings. As opposed to the realist epistemologies that claim that social science research can mirror the objective world ‘out there’, it is argued that research is an interpretive act and the texts resulting from such an endeavour are meaning-creating constructs that are representing the author’s idiosyncratic interpretations of the world (Phillips, 1995; Rhodes, 2001; Watson, 2000). Nevertheless, despite the socially constructed nature of aspects of social reality, “once constructed they are realities which affect and limit the textual (or ‘discursive’) construction of the social” (Fairclough, 2003: 8). In contrast to an extreme social constructionist argument, this more moderate viewpoint does not necessarily deny altogether the existence of a ‘reality’ separate from its actors – as some critics of traditional ontological standpoints claim – but rather that this reality cannot be represented or mirrored directly since it is constituted in texts (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Fairclough, 2003). As Watson puts it: “The human observer must use the language of the culture of which they are a part, both to make sense of what is before them and to talk about it. This means that they inevitably talk or write about a reality which is their own construction” (2000: 501).
The recognition of the idiosyncratic nature of human knowledge and the impossibility of directly representing or mirroring social reality has given rise to the so-called ‘linguistic turn’ (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000a: 629) and the ‘crisis of representation’ (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) in social sciences. A growing number of scholars (ethnographers, narrative analysts, discourse analysts, and so on) now focus on the relation between texts (language, discourse) and the construction of social reality (Fairclough, 2003). Whereas traditional qualitative research approaches aim to uncover the (polyphonic) meanings of the social world ‘out there’, these scholars hold the view that ideas, objects and structures are socially produced and maintained (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Widely spoken, the research approaches that focus on the role of text in the construction of social reality can be united under the label ‘discourse analysis’. This category of researchers consists of many different approaches (e.g. narrative analysis, critical discourse analysis, ethnography, linguistic textual analysis) and researchers from varying disciplinary backgrounds (anthropologists, sociologists, linguists, historians, etc.) or fields of interest (e.g. organization studies, gender studies, development studies). In what follows I will discuss broadly what discourse analysis entails and how this study can be positioned within this stream of research.

**Discourse Analysis as a ‘Transdisciplinary’ Approach**

Discourse analysis is a broad term for a variety of approaches that aim to understand the discursive construction of texts and locate these texts in a broader historical and social context. Discourse analysis “is a theory or method which is in a dialogical relationship with other social theories and methods, which should engage with them in a ‘transdisciplinary’ rather than just an interdisciplinary way, meaning that the particular co-engagements on particular aspects of the social process may give rise to developments of theory and method which shift the boundaries between different theories and methods” (Fairclough, 2002: 121-122). As such, discourse analysis might be described as “a methodology rather than just a method, that is, an epistemology that explains how we know the social world, as well as a set of methods for studying it” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002: 3). The set of methods that Phillips and Hardy refer to consists of many different qualitative techniques that are adopted to be used within this specific discourse analytic epistemology.

What all the discourse analytic approaches share is that they focus on ‘texts’ as the basic unit for analysis. A text comes in many shapes and forms and there is great variety among discourse scholars as to their conceptualization of the term. Despite different (theoretical) orientations, text is approached in a broad sense by
most discourse analysts, “as not only incorporating the written word, but also encompassing talk and other symbolic phenomena through which the social production of meaning occurs” (Keenoy et al., 1997: 155, note 1). Fairclough, one of the central authors on critical discourse analysis (CDA) uses the term ‘text’ as follows:

Written and printed texts such as shopping lists and newspaper articles are ‘texts’, but so also are transcripts of (spoken) conversations and interviews, as well as television programmes and web-pages. We might say that any actual instance of language in use is a ‘text’- though even that is too limited, because texts such as television programmes involve not only language but also visual images and sound effects (2003: 3).

A discourse analytic approach seeks to study the power of discourses (which are sets of interrelated texts) in producing and reproducing social reality. In this view, texts are discursive events that can be analysed linguistically, as instances of discourse practice (the production, distribution, and consuming of texts) and as social practices (Fairclough, 1992: 269). Texts as elements of social events have the power to bring about changes in our knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, identities and so on. These effects are not directly causal because they are mediated by meaning-making. There are many other elements in the context that determine whether a text has such effects. Moreover a text can have different effects in different contexts or on different actors (Fairclough, 2003: 8). According to discourse analysts, texts have no independent meaning, but they gain meaning through the connection with other texts. “Discourse analysis presupposes that it is impossible to strip discourse from its broader context and uses different techniques to analyze texts for clues to the discourses within which they are embedded” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002: 6) In other words, it is the intertextuality - or relations between different texts - that makes discourses so powerful (Keenoy & Oswick, 2003; Phillips et al., 2004). Intertextuality is a term that is inspired by the work of Bakhtin, referring to the relations between different texts. All texts are in a way referring, responding to or anticipating other texts (e.g. Fairclough, 1992; Keenoy & Oswick, 2003; Keenoy et al., 1997; Porter, 1986; Riffaterre, 1984; Solin, 2004). Building upon the work by Bakhtin, different scholars identify various types of intertextuality. For instance, when a text is connected to texts either preceding or following that text, this is what, in Bakhtin’s work, is referred to as ‘horizontal’ intertextuality. ‘Vertical’ intertextuality on the other hand, refers to the relations between a text and other texts in its immediate or distant context (Fairclough, 1992). Apart from a distinction between horizontal and vertical intertextuality, a distinction can be made between manifest intertextuality (when other texts are explicitly present in a text, for instance through quoting) and constitutive intertextuality (the relation of a text
with specific discourse conventions) (Fairclough, 1992). Keenoy and Oswick (2003), in turn, discuss intertextuality (as conceptualized by Genette) as one of five different forms of ‘transtextuality’. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the different types and forms of intertextuality, but the point is that it is important to look beyond an individual text and look at how it is related to other texts within a broader network of texts (the discourse).

Another important element of discourse analysis is the relation between discourse and social practices. Discourses constrain certain actions while at the same time promoting other actions. Discourses thus have the power to create order and to (re)produce structures in the social world. Whereas conventional approaches in social research tend to focus on either text (language, communication) or action (behaviour, practice), discourse analysis may offer an opportunity to combine these perspectives (Phillips et al., 2004; Taylor & Robichaud, 2004).

We can see social life as interconnected networks of social practices of diverse sorts (economic, political, cultural, and so on). And every practice has a semiotic element. The motivation for focusing on social practices is that it allows one to combine the perspective of structure and the perspective of action – a practice is on the one hand a relatively permanent way of acting socially which is defined by its position within a structured network of practices, and a domain of social action and interaction which both reproduces structures and has the potential to transform them. All practices are practices of production – they are the arenas within which social life is produced, be it economic, political, cultural, or everyday life (Fairclough, 2002: 122).

It is these general elements of discourse analysis that have inspired scholars from a great variety of fields. Within discourse analysis, contributions range from linguistic or semiotic approaches and critical discourse analysis focusing on power relations and socio-political dominance, to more general approaches to discourse such as conversation analysis. In this study I mainly build on the work of discourse analysis in organization studies. This is a growing body of work, focusing on the discursive construction of organizations and processes of institutionalization (e.g. Alvesson & Karreman, 2000b; Chia, 2000; Grant et al., 2004; Grant & Iedema, 2005; Hardy et al., 2000; Keenoy et al., 2000; Oswick et al., 2000). In their overview of research on organizational discourse Grant and Iedema (2005) distinguish between two different strands of research. On the one hand there is, what they term, ‘organizational discourse studies’, referring to a stream of discourse-oriented research originating in management and organization theory. On the other hand there is ‘organizational discourse analysis’, which denominates a stream of more linguistically oriented research.
Whereas some studies refer to the work of linguistic approaches to discourse, the majority of work on discourse published in the main organizational and management journals falls in the category of organizational discourse studies. This work entails a broad variety of applications but few are explicitly linguistic in their approach. Similarly, contributions in the area of sociolinguistics usually pay little attention to the application of discourse analysis in organizational settings (Grant & Iedema, 2005). A possible reason for the scarce attempts at a crossover between organizational discourse studies and (socio)linguistic approaches to discourse is

the fact that the concern with discourse among organizational and management theorists has tended to emerge from an interest in poststructuralist and postmodern approaches to its study rather than the approaches favored in linguistics, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics (Grant & Iedema, 2005: 39).

Dissatisfaction with dominant paradigms in management and organizational theory in the 1960s and 1970s gave rise to a growing stream of critical research, inspired by the work of poststructuralist theorists in general and the work of Foucault on discourse in specific (Grant & Iedema, 2005).

From this critique on traditional research approaches in the field of organization studies, a wide variety of discourse-oriented streams of research has emerged. Dissatisfaction with prevailing explanations for processes of institutionalization by traditional institutional theorists has led several scholars to introduce the notion of discourse in the studies on institutionalization and legitimacy (e.g. Phillips et al., 2004; Vaara & Tienari, 2002). Other scholars (e.g. Helms Mills & Mills, 2000; Taylor & Robichaud, 2004; Watson, 1995a) explicitly link (organizational) discourse with sensemaking and organizational action. According to Taylor and Robichaud (2004: 396-397) there are two different perspectives on discourse that they aim to combine:

As text, discourse is a manifestation of human sensemaking (Weick, 1995). The making of text is how organizational members reflexively (Giddens, 1984) and retrospectively (Weick, 1995) monitor, rationalize, and engender the action of organizations. As conversation, discourse is an instrument of organizational action, and text is the resource that enters into its construction. Linked to the purposes of organizing conversation is tied to object-oriented and materially based action. In contrast, discourse as text constructs the organization as an object of reflection and interpretation.

Language, in their view, is central to sensemaking. To make sense of an event, organizational actors construct texts (stories) about the event in which they establish links to (their recollection of) previous events and their idiosyncratic under-
standing of it. The texts about the event then become part of the repertoire for future sensemaking (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004). The intertextual relations between different events are what the process of sensemaking is about. At the same time this process directs organizational actions and as such is a central part of the enactment of particular discursive practices.

Other authors focus their attention on the texts that are constructed in the process of sensemaking and identification (e.g. Barry & Elmes, 1997; Beech & Johnson, 2005; Berendse et al., 2006; Boje, 1995; Brown, 2006; Brown & Humphreys, 2006; Buchanan & Dawson, 2007; Doolin, 2003; Gabriel, 2004a). Whether they be termed ‘texts’, ‘narratives’, ‘stories’, ‘accounts’, ‘scripts’ and so forth, these authors are interested in the production of different versions of an (organizational) event and the influence they have (or do not have) on the direction of organizational changes. Although such approaches are often perceived as distinct approaches (i.e. narrative analysis, storytelling approaches, etc.) and have slightly different perspectives, broadly speaking they all build on a discourse analytical and social constructionist epistemology and there is much overlap between them (as well as between authors for that matter).

In order to understand ‘localized effects of meta-level phenomena’ (Oswick et al., 2008: 1025) within organizational settings, we should study the production, reproduction, and enactment of public discourses among organizational actors. It is thereby important to problematize these discursive constructions and focus on processes of both sensegiving and sensemaking, taking the power relations of different actors into account. A central aspect of sensemaking, according to Weick, is identity construction (Weick, 1995, 2001). People make sense of their environment in light of how they see themselves.

From the perspective of sensemaking, who we think we are (identity) as organizational actors shapes what we enact and how we interpret, which affects what outsiders think we are (image) and how they treat us, which stabilizes or destabilizes our identity (Weick et al., 2005: 416).

When the stimuli from the environment are contradicting their identities, or if the different stimuli are in themselves contradictory, people need to either change their account of who they are or resist the stimuli (and rationalize their actions in order to justify their behaviour). In any case the actors involved will change their identity narratives accordingly.

Organizations are constantly changing and as such organizational actors are continuously involved in processes of sensemaking and identification (e.g. Beech & Johnson, 2005; Gabriel, 2000; Weick, 1979, 1995), negotiation of meaning, and resistance (e.g. Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Thomas & Davies, 2005). Discursive
practices play an important role in these processes and are used both unconsciously and strategically by organizational actors to influence change processes (Berendse et al., 2006; Hardy et al., 2000; Taylor & Robichaud, 2004) and to legitimize their identities (Brown, 1997; Currie & Brown, 2003; Granlund, 2002; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). The ongoing process of sensemaking that people are involved in manifests itself as an evolving narrative construct. People cope with situations by constructing a story about the situation through which they can understand (and retrospectively rationalize) their position and actions (as well as those of other people) in that particular situation (e.g. Brown & Humphreys, 2003; Czarniawska, 1997; Gabriel, 2000; Hopkinson, 2003; Tangherlini, 1998; Weick, 2001). As such, the processes of sensemaking are closely related to processes of identification; after all, how someone interprets his/her position in a certain situation is part of how they see themselves (or how they think others see them).

In the growing stream of research on organizational discourse in general and that of narratives, storytelling, and identity work in organizations in specific, there is a great deal of attention for the processes by which actors and collectives constantly (re)construct and legitimize their identities. It is argued that individual and collective identities are constituted in identity narratives, through which the actors interpret and give meaning to events and developments in and around the organization where they work (Brown, 2006).

Following Chreim (2005: 570), identity may be conceived of as “a reflexive project that consists of sustaining continuously revised biographical narratives that must integrate events occurring in the external world into the ongoing story”. Among critical scholars in the field of organization studies, the process of identity construction is increasingly denominated as identity work, which refers to people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness (Svenningsson & Alvesson, 2003: 1165). They argue that ‘identity work’ offers a much more useful approach to processes of identity than traditional approaches to the concept, since it specifically centres on the dynamic aspects of the process of identity construction. Particularly during times of radical organizational change or as a reaction to upsetting experiences, organizational actors construct narratives by which they can make sense of what is going on and try to resist the changes or guide them in another direction which is beneficial for them. As Currie and Brown put it: “…[N]arratives are significant vehicles for the expression of political activity and one means by which ideas and practices are legitimated, especially during periods of change” (2003: 564). Through processes of editing (using a wide variety of discursive strategies), each actor will idiosyncratically interpret and adapt the narratives, thereby contributing to the polyphony of organizational narratives, and to a (greater or smaller) extent influence the direction of the changes. Depend-
ing on the position of the individual actor or group to which (s)he belongs, people will have access to more or less stages and outlets to ‘perform’ their version of the collective narrative. In general, within organizational settings, the actors at the highest levels of the hierarchical structure will have the most opportunities to act out their versions, although authority to speak does not necessarily mean that the spoken is accepted or acknowledged. Narratives are often contested through counter-narratives emerging from other (marginal) actors or groups within the organization or by external actors like the media or politicians (Berendse et al., 2006; Brown, 2006; Coupland & Brown, 2004). All narratives can potentially have equal power, depending on the persuasiveness, receptivity or force of the narrative (Beech, 2008; Hardy et al., 2000; Phillips et al., 2004).

A narrative account can take different forms or shapes. Broadly speaking we can define four types of narratives in organizational research. In the first place there are pre-existing narratives in the environment of the organization that are part of more or less institutionalized discourses ‘out there’ and that have been constructed without interference of the researcher. This type of narratives include media texts, managerial statements, personnel magazines, policy documents, minutes of meetings, (corporate) biographies, emails, etc. These narratives can be strategically used to legitimate or justify specific actions (Hardy et al., 2000). The second type of narratives are reactive (or counter narratives). Although in a way all narratives are implicitly or explicitly reacting to other texts, some very explicitly react to a specific account of the situation (often in the form of resistance to the dominant or formal narrative or discourse). Thirdly, there are those narratives that have been generated specifically for research purposes (e.g. interviews). These narratives that are co-authored by the researcher and respondents within the discursive configuration of that particular (research) setting. Finally, the products of the researcher are the fourth type of narratives that represent yet another version of organizational reality. As Phillips and Hardy (2002) explicate, in theory, a discourse analytic approach inherently includes the reflexive study of our own texts, which can be rather powerful when it comes to influencing the discourse. As such it is important not to underestimate the discursive power of research texts.

By focussing on these different types of narrative accounts one can gain an understanding of how certain topics are dealt with among organizational actors. In addition, by tracing specific narratives it is possible to identify counter narratives, tensions, power struggles and processes of editing between and among groups of actors (Berendse et al., 2006). In short, through the narratives of organizational actors we can come closer to “an understanding of collective identities as multi-voiced, quasi-fictional, plurivocal and reflexive constructions that unfold over time and are embedded in broader discursive (cultural) practices” (Brown, 2006: 732). Furthermore, the narrative approach can offer an insight into the ways that micro-
level actors make sense of and translate macro-level phenomena into their daily life-worlds.

**Sensemaking and the Discursive Construction of Events**

As discussed earlier, people continuously try to make sense of their environment to reduce uncertainty and to determine their actions (Weick, 1995). “Sensemaking involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action” (Weick et al., 2005: 409). The world is a mass of signals out of which people try to make sense to be able to act in that world. The process of sensemaking is continuous and for the most part unreflective (Czarniawiska, 1998). According to Weick, people aim to “carve out some momentary stability” in a constantly changing environment (2001: 3). Interpretation is an important component of the process of sensemaking, but “whereas interpretation focuses on text, sensemaking looks at how people generate what they interpret” (Helms Mills, 2003: 47). In other words, people’s preconceptions and previous experiences influence how they make sense of new events. They construct their ideas about new stimuli (events in their environment, but also media messages for instance) in relation to what they already know or, and this is an important part of Weick’s notion of sensemaking, they retrospectively construct events to justify and rationalize their own actions. “Individuals try to make sense of their actions by seeking out cues to make plausible explanations for their behaviour” (Helms Mills, 2003: 42). In particular when the momentary stability of daily routines is interrupted, for example in case of a crisis, people resort to familiar ideas and actions. After all, people cannot make sense of or understand something of which they do not have any previous conception (Helms Mills, 2003; Weick, 1995, 2001). This means that people, to put it in Weick’s terminology, “enact” the ongoing stream of events and stimuli in their environment, creating their own (socially constructed) realities, based on their own interpretive framework (2001: 195).

The media play an important role in this process, since they constitute a large part of the stimuli that people encounter in their daily lives. In fact, (collective) sensemaking of societal phenomena takes place mainly through media representation. As Vaara & Tienari (2002: 276) argue, “[t]he emergent discourses shape collective understandings of those complex phenomena”. In other words, the ways in which issues are depicted in mass-media outlets constitute an important element for any research on social and cultural change, since the media have a very central position in (contemporary) social systems (Fairclough, 1995). Thus when studying processes of sensemaking among organizational actors it is important to recognize the powerful role of media texts. Czarniawiska and Joerges remind us that:
Organizational actors are forced to pay attention to issues which arise not only in the marketplace but also in society at large. Politics is the proper arena for this, but the voices of modern politics would not be heard without amplifiers: politicians together with the mass-media construct the problems which demand attention (1996: 31).

When adopting a discourse analytical approach, it is necessary to include texts and stimuli from all kinds of sources and actors. Be this as it may, the (mass) media constitutes a particularly powerful arena for the production and reproduction of discourse, due to its extensive reach and centrality. The availability of media texts also makes them a ready source for discourse analysts.

Building on critical discourse analysis (e.g. Fairclough, 1995, 2001; Van Dijk, 1993), Vaara and Tienari look at the discursive construction of mergers and acquisitions in the media. Through their analysis of media coverage of large mergers and acquisitions in Finland, the authors identify four generic discourses that are used to discuss these mergers and acquisitions (Vaara & Tienari, 2002). The dominant discourse in their analysis is a rationalistic discourse, mainly representing strategic, managerial points of view on the events. Alternative discourses that are employed are cultural discourses, societal discourses and individualistic discourses (Vaara & Tienari, 2002). According to their study, the use of these different discourses (in particular the rationalistic discourse) contributes to processes of justification and legitimation of the mergers and acquisitions. Together, this leads to the naturalization of mergers and acquisitions in general. As they say, this process can help explain why mergers are so popular. Furthermore, they suggest that the same relation between media representation, through different discourses, and the collective sensemaking of a particular phenomenon (in their case a specific management practice) may apply to other phenomena as well (Vaara & Tienari, 2002).

In a similar vein, O’Connell & Mills (2003) discuss the role of the media in the social construction of a mining disaster in Nova Scotia, Canada. They argue that the media constitute a discursive semiotic space in which an event is “filtered, framed, communicated, and made available to society for construction and enactment” (2003). They explicitly highlight the power dimension in the process of collective sensemaking, an aspect that is rather underemphasized in Weick’s primary work on sensemaking processes (Helms Mills, 2003; Helms Mills & Mills, 2000; Weick et al., 2005). According to Helms Mills, some actors have an advantaged position giving them unequal opportunities to influence the construction of social reality and the processes of collective sensemaking (2003: 153). The media have a powerful role in the enactment of a specific account of an event because they have “the power to determine the experience of others” (Molotch & Lester, 1974: 111 as cited in O’Connell & Mills, 2003) and therefore, actors who have the authority to
influence media coverage (e.g. politicians, corporate executives) possess the power to direct public discourses (Buchanan & Dawson, 2007; Fairclough, 1995; Phillips et al., 2004; Weick et al., 2005). It may be argued that while actors make sense of events, partly through their interpretation of (media) texts, (media) texts are sense-giving devices that are authored by powerful actors (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Rouleau, 2005; Vaara et al., 2005; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). In the case of the mining disaster in Nova Scotia for example, the media influenced the way in which (organizational) actors made sense of the crisis. According to O’Connell & Mills (2003), the media contributed significantly to the initial reactions to the disaster through a dominant representation of the incident based on a discourse of natural disaster and tragedy (as opposed to alternative discourses related to human agency and organizational culpability).

As said before, the media constitute but one arena in which discursive constructions are produced and reproduced. Depending upon the availability and limits of access, organizational researchers can draw upon a wide variety of texts to understand the discursive construction of social reality for the organizational actors. Nevertheless, news media are indeed an important and powerful realm and should not be neglected or put aside as ‘contextual’. In the remainder of this chapter I will further discuss the role of the media in the construction of public discourses with regard to security and the railways.

**Security, Risk and Surveillance in Everyday Life**

Security is a topic that increasingly pervades and even dominates many discussions in the political, societal as well as popular media realm. But also academic attention for security-related themes continues to be substantial. Some of the main theories with regard to security and risk are the works by sociologists as Ulrich Beck (1992, 1999, 2002), John Adams (1995, 2003; Adams & Thompson, 2002), and Anthony Giddens (1990, 2002) and Zygmunt Bauman (2000, 2001). According to public and academic debates, we are living in an increasingly complex and dangerous world, with threats that are inherently different from those we were confronted with in previous times. Beck (1999), Giddens (1990), and other scholars (Bannister, 2005; Bauman, 2001; Boholm, 2003; Boutellier et al., 2005; Dake, 1992; Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Inglehart, 1997; Van der Loo & Van Reijen, 1997) point to the paradoxical characteristics of modernity, creating tensions between security and danger, control and freedom, or between trust and risk. But what does that mean for people in their everyday lives? How can we grasp these changes and understand how people make sense of them? The body of literature on risk and security does not offer much empirical work into the situated meanings of
concepts like risk, threat, or security. As Giddens (1990) suggests we should be reflexive when it comes to conceptualizations like these, for they constantly feed back into the social world they intended to explain in the first place. As such, it may be stated that the goals to create more security in society are often taken for granted (Boutellier, 2005). After all who would oppose or compromise when it regards ‘more security’? Nevertheless, it is imperative to understand what is meant by security in how it is conceived of among various groups of people.

Through the application of a discursive approach to the study of security and risk, we might be able to come closer to a situated understanding of processes of meaning construction and enactment with regard to these themes. A first step in this process is to take a look at the situated ways in which the concepts of security and risk figure in public discourses. In other words, we need a contextualized focus on the discursive constructions of security. In the following section I will make a start with the exploration of security discourses by focussing on the representation of security issues in western popular media, political debates and academia. This is by no means an exhaustive analysis; it merely serves as a first exploration and a way to start building a contextual framework for the empirical study. Further analysis of the discursive constructions of security is a recurrent theme in the rest of this book.

**Securitization of Public Discourses**

**February 25, 2009:** an airplane crashes just outside Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam. 9 People are killed and 86 are injured. Later the same day, before any official statements about the exact circumstances of the crash, a press statement of the Dutch national anti-terrorism coordinator (NCTb) is published in various (online) newspapers, stating that there is no indication whatsoever that the crash is related to an act of terrorism (e.g. De Telegraaf, 2009; NU.nl, 2009; Trouw, 2009a).

In this day and age, hardly a day goes by without some mention of terrorism in the media. As such, events like the Schiphol crash (described in the textbox) is in a way indicative of the current public discourse around the issue of terrorism. As Casebeer and Russell (2005) argue, “the terminology of ‘terrorism’ has become part and parlance of daily public discourse”, most of which takes place in the mass media arena. One could wonder whether a message such as the one by the Dutch anti-terrorism coordinator after the airplane crash would have been released prior to the 9/11 attacks in 2001. What is more, the mere existence of the anti-terrorism body (in this case in the Netherlands, but also elsewhere) is closely related to the
post-9/11 discourse of terrorism. It seems as if these days, almost any occasion may, in some way or another, be framed as or linked to terrorist threats.

The intensive exposure of the topic in media and public debates has turned into a structural relation whereby the public continuously turns to the media and expects to be informed about terrorist threats, as well as to reassure them when an incident is not a terrorist act. Even in those cases that later turn out not to be related to terrorism, the issue of terrorism is still highlighted and as such they reinforce the terrorism discourse, or “the grand narrative of terrorism” (Burnett & Whyte, 2005). As Hoskins argues, media “impose a particular interpretation, organization or narrative on a current news story with reference to archived images, sounds and stories” (Hoskins, 2006: 455). Through the constant recycling of images from past events in relation to new events, more or less ‘separate’ events become bound up through mutual association, thereby reinforcing a particular discourse (Hoskins, 2006). It is not uncommon to connect certain incidents with previous disasters; for instance, the attacks in London (2005) were often associated with the attacks in Madrid (2004) and New York (2001). As such, past events are substantiated in the present through the reiteration of images (Montealegre & Garzón, 2004). Or in other words, “news narratives are reflexive in that they feed off themselves, generating their own easily recognizable contexts and histories, and which are employed in interpretations of unfolding events” (Hoskins, 2006: 455).

The visual images of previous catastrophes are a powerful means to frame current events and as such the media representations influence processes of sense-making (e.g. Vaara, 2002; Vaara & Tienari, 2002; Van Dijk, 1991, 1995; Weick, 1993, 1995, 2001). Moreover, the speed and technological possibilities of present-day media transmission increase and intensify the pace at which people across the globe are informed about (or almost literally emerged into) events that take place anywhere in the world (Hoskins, 2006; Montealegre & Garzón, 2004). “Immediacy, intimacy and proximity have become a dominant mode of representing crises, conflicts and catastrophe” (Hoskins, 2006: 453). The rapid media presence at the scene of an event can sometimes lead to the initial provision of misleading or confusing information, as in the case of first coverage of the bombings in Madrid on March 11, 2004. The blame was initially put on to ETA and in the first days after the attacks (until after the Governmental Elections four days later) confusion and accusations about the precise circumstances of the bombings dominated public discourse (Alonso Ruiz, 2004; Arzumendi Adarraga, 2004; Chari, 2004; González Bustelo, 2005; Olmeda, 2005; Powell, 2004; Rivas Troitiño, 2004; Teruel Rodríguez, 2005; Travesedo, 2005). This striking example shows us how powerful media representation may be in shaping the collective sensemaking of specific events. Furthermore, it highlights the constant negotiation of meaning in public discourse where different actors claim authority for their version of reality.
To give a concrete example of the intertextual relations between different texts and events, in the excerpt about the article by the Dutch anti-terrorism coordinator, this article links the texts about the Schiphol crash with texts on terrorism, thereby indirectly establishing a link between the crash and the terrorism discourse. With regard to how terrorism is covered in the media across the world, one could argue that ‘the war on terror’ narrative is a dominant discursive representation, creating a culture of fear and uncertainty; after all anything is a possible threat (Altheide, 2007). At the same time, the discursive construction of media coverage in the area of terrorism contributes to the normalization of catastrophic terrorism, for instance through the constant recycling of images (Hoskins, 2006). In particular in the US, but also in other parts of the world, daily public discourse is filled with references to terrorism and the ‘global war on terror’. “The political rhetoric of the War on Terror” (Goodall, 2006: 30), therefore shapes the collective sensemaking of the current state of affairs in the world as a ‘global war’. This war narrative provides the public with a familiar storyline, namely that there is a war going on, against a well-defined enemy, and that there is a possibility to eventually win the war (Callahan et al., 2006; Goodall, 2006). Within this war narrative events such as 9/11, but also Madrid 2004, are portrayed almost as mythical episodes that legitimate and justify the ‘war on terror’ along with corresponding policies.

Altheide (2007) conducted a qualitative content analysis of news coverage in the US and found that the media representation of changes in US foreign policies as well as the war in Iraq and 9/11 (‘the war on terror’) are strongly politicized. What is more, it is not uncommon that terms like ‘manipulative’ or ‘propaganda’ are used to discuss the political influence in media discourses on terrorism (Altheide, 2007; Callahan et al., 2006; Goodall, 2006). In fact, the ‘war on terror’ discourse is strongly linked to the Bush administration (Dunmire, 2009). Strikingly, shortly after the inauguration of the Obama administration, his Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, announced that the new administration has abandoned the term ‘global war on terror’ (CBS News, 2009; Fox News, 2009; MSNBC.com, 2009). According to Clinton, “the administration has stopped using the phrase and I think that speaks for itself” (CBS News, 2009). Interestingly, the announcement of abandoning the term ‘war on terror’ is a discursive strategy (e.g. Brown, 2005; Joutsenvirta & Vaara, 2009; Martín Rojo & Van Dijk, 1997; Sillince, 2007; Vaara et al., 2006) that serves to rhetorically distance the current administration from the previous administration. It does not entail specific changes in policy, but merely an explicit – yet rhetorical - break with the past (not only for the administration, but also for the media). In a similar vein, Dunmire (2009) conducted an intertextual analysis of the ‘Bush Doctrine’ in the period after 9/11. She links the National Security strategy of the Bush administration that was presented as a reaction to 9/11, with the US security discourse from the Post-Cold war period. As she argues, the events of 9/11
served to legitimize a security strategy that sustains the dominant international position of the US.

What these examples make clear is that the media play an important role in the process of sensemaking and the definition of specific problems (Fairclough, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). The media co-produce public discourses containing specific vocabularies that are subsequently adopted and disseminated by individual actors. We should remind ourselves however, that individual actors are not passively receiving the stimuli from the media but instead, make sense of and enact them using their own interpretive frames in ways that fit their own purposes (Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Phillips et al., 2004; Weick, 1995, 2001). Also, discourses with regard to security are closely intertwined with other discourses. In light of the discussion above, it has been suggested that the changing attitude towards security in our societies is connected to the changing relationships between the government, the public sector, the private sector and members of the public (Boutellier, 2007). Or, to put it differently, the security discourse is intertwined with the discourse of the public sector. Under the label ‘securocracy’ Oswick and colleagues (2008: 1025) define this development as “a generalized mode of organizing and orienting public sector administration towards a collective and pervasive sense of vigilance and responsibility for combating the threat of terrorism”. In other words, while traditionally the government assumed a central role in the provision and safeguarding of public security, the current set-up in the public realm increasingly moves this responsibility towards individual citizens and private sector organizations.

This is in line with the general tendency of governments across the globe to privatize public services, or the so-called New Public Management movement. As described in the first chapter, the NPM discourse about the reforms in the public sector has gained a strong position both among practitioners, professionals and among scholars. Without resorting to a ‘chicken-and-egg’ discussion, what is clear is that the dissemination of the NPM discourse in both the academic and the organizational realm legitimizes and strengthens the power of this discourse. Nevertheless, more critical studies suggest that the dominance of the NPM discourse has created tensions in particular at the level of individual actors (e.g. Duijnhoven & Boersma, 2007; Emery & Giauque, 2003; Noordegraaf & Abma, 2003; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Veenswijk, 2005a). For instance, Oswick et al. (2008) argue that, whereas on the one hand public sector organizations increasingly focus on ‘service’ and ‘customer orientation’, the security discourse at the same time demands a surveillance and vigilance role from public sector workers. According to the authors, there is an inherent tension between ‘serving’ and ‘policing’ the public, affecting the (professional) identity of the actors involved. Davies and Thomas (2003) observe a similar tension with regard to the localized enactment of NPM ideas within the UK police force.
The above examples are all about the influence of the media on public discourses and although, as mentioned, the media have a central position in processes of sensemaking and sensegiving, they are not the only arena in which meanings are negotiated. To stick with the topic of security, the post-9/11 ‘war on terror’ discourse is not contained to the public realm (with the mass-media as its most influential player), but also prominently inhabits scholarly debates. Security in general, and terrorism in specific, is a highly topical issue, not only in our societies, but also – as indicated in the introduction – among scholars. Before the 9/11 attacks in 2001, most scholarly attention for the issue of terrorism was located in the US (Van Leeuwen, 2003). After the attacks, European scholars (along with politicians and citizens) became increasingly weary of the possibility of large-scale terrorist activity on our continent. Until then, only specific cases - such as the conflict with ETA in Spain or the IRA in the UK - received regular attention from scholars (Van Leeuwen, 2003). With the recent examples of catastrophic terrorism (Van Leeuwen, 2003) in the US and Europe (aimed at making large numbers of victims, such as 9/11, Madrid 2004, London 2005), terrorism moved to the top of the public agenda, and as such also received attention from an increasing number of scholars from a wide range of disciplines, such as organization studies, sociology, anthropology, communication & media studies, and science & technology. Nevertheless, as indicated by Grey (2009), and Van Leeuwen (2003), the majority of studies in the area of security remain firmly based in the fields international relations and political science studies.

The attention for terrorism in scholarly debates, much like the media coverage, contributes to the dissemination and institutionalization of contemporary notions of insecurity and threat. We should therefore not underestimate the influence of research narratives on the strength (domination) of specific discourses in society. All narratives (respondents’ accounts, media texts, research texts, etc.) are "discourses, articulated in a particular genre, and audienced, to influence a specific readership" (Buchanan & Dawson, 2007: 680, italics in original). Although by now it is widely accepted among scholars that respondents often tell different versions of an event, depending on the situation (audience), less attention is given to the sensegiving aspects of research narratives.

While respondents in research studies may be ‘accused’ of offering accounts which serve personal purposes of sensemaking, impression management, and the advance of political agendas, those ‘accusations’ (observations) equally apply to the qualitative case researcher and author (Buchanan & Dawson, 2007: 670).

Discourse analysis and other constructionist approaches aim to include the social construction of research narratives. “In using language, producing texts and draw-
ing on discourses, researchers and the research community are part and parcel of the constructive effects of discourse” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002: 2). Theories are ideas expressed in words, and therefore necessarily a rhetorical performance. This does not mean that theories have no value, yet we should include in our research endeavours the literary conventions of academic writings (Finnegan, 1998; Van Maanen, 1995b).

Accordingly, academic discourses about terrorism co-construct and sustain the dominant public discourse on the topic. What is more, the strength of the ‘war on terror’ discourse has contributed to the reinforcement of a broader security discourse. Building on discourses that can be traced back to the cold war and arguably (Gephart et al., 2009; Miller, 2001) earlier than that, the current security discourse is firmly grounded in political and societal discourses of risk (prevention) and threat (Feldman, 2004; Grey, 2009; Miller, 2001). Although analytically, it is useful to conceptualize a (dominant) security discourse, discourse analysts emphasize that discourses are continuously changing and fluid. There are many different discourses, that are somehow linked together, and the boundaries between them cannot be clearly defined (Fairclough, 2001; Hardy et al., 2000; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Phillips et al., 2004; Van Dijk, 1993). Thus, in studying the sense-giving force of discourses it is important to pay attention to the linkages between different broadly defined discourses. Often these draw on what some call archetypical or generic storylines or plots (Czarniawska-Joerges & Wolff, 1991; Finnegan, 1998) that permeate most discursive utterances in society. For instance, many texts can be traced back to a discourse of technological advancement, progress, industrialization, individualization, capitalism, domination, and so forth.

The intertextual presence of these generic storylines is not limited to public discourses, media texts or organizational narratives, but extends also to other textual utterances such as novels, movies, television drama, etc. (Alvarez & Merchán, 1992; Czarniawska, 2007; Czarniawska & Guillet de Monthoux, 1994). To give an example, I will discuss an example of the discursive representation and intertextuality of discourses surrounding the railways, before continuing in the next chapter with the discussion of the methodological choices for this study. Through a brief discussion of the (changing) representation of the railways in fictional sources I want to underline the main point of this chapter, namely that no texts should be underestimated when it comes to the discursive role it may have in producing social reality.
**Representations of the Railways in (Fictional) Literature**

*If all the trains at Clapham Jctn
Were suddenly to cease to fctn
The people waiting in the stn
Would never reach their destinin.*

– Anonymous

Throughout modern history, the railways have become a widely acknowledged symbol of modernization and progress. The inauguration of the first railway lines in the nineteenth century have marked the beginning of industrialization in many countries (Carter, 2001). As such, the railways have also permeated the realm of art and popular culture. For instance, Peter Ashley edited a book called *Railway Rhymes* (2007). This volume contains poetry from a great diversity of poets, varying from icons such as Thomas Hardy, Robert Louis Stevenson, or T.S. Eliot, and a great number of less famous poets, to anonymous contributors. The 'great Railways' have also inspired artists such as Claude Monet or Edouard Manet (Carter, 2001). From the very beginning, there has been something fascinating about trains, stations and steam locomotives. Famous novels like Leo Tolstoj’s *Anna Karenina* and Émile Zola’s *La Bête Humaine* are situated for a large part around railway settings (Carter, 2001), and also Charles Dickens is said to have been fascinated and inspired by the railways (for instance, the railways play a significant role in Dickens’ short story *The Signalman* and his novel *Dombey and Son*). According to Daly (1999) and Carter (2001: 91) Dickens went from a railway admirer to having a fear of railway travelling after being involved in a grave accident in 1865.

The attention for railways in literature has been an interesting reflection of the societal and institutional position of this industry. Whereas it was the ‘epitome of modernity’ (Carter, 2001) in the nineteenth century, one can trace the public opinion on the railway enterprise throughout the literature. From curiosity, or fear, the opinion shifted towards one of romance and nostalgia in the twentieth century (Carter, 2001; Strangleman, 1999, 2002). The railways continued to be an important protagonist in many literary (as well as cinematographic) works. These works vary from realistic novels about train hijacks (e.g. John Godey’s *Taking of the Pelham One Two Three*), crime (e.g. Michael Crichton’s *The Great Train Robbery*), romances on the tracks, to the meticulous writing of ‘whodunit-plots’ by Agatha Christie in which many a murder takes place on a train, or alibi’s are carefully constructed around the famous British ‘Bradshaw’ or ‘ABC’ railway timetables (e.g. *Murder on the Orient Express*, *The Mystery of the Blue Train*, *The ABC Murders, 4:50 From Paddington*). According to Carter (2001) the impact of the railway
timetables has been of significant importance in the use of ‘standard time’ in Britain (and likely also elsewhere).

Overall there seems to be something extraordinarily appealing about the notion of complete strangers travelling side by side on a train, all carrying with them their own stories and secrets. Despite the fictional character of most of these works, the day-to-day business of the railways has been described with much care and detail. Nevertheless, in recent times, the attention for the railways in literature and other forms of popular culture seems to be fading slightly. Airplanes (or space crafts) are now the setting for exhilarating action stories and crimes displayed in fictional stories are increasingly virtual. This might be interpreted as an indication of the current state of affairs of the railways. Railway travelling has lost ground against faster or cheaper means of transportation (although the recent attention for the environment might invoke a renewed interest in trains), and the disappearance of the steam locomotives has taken with it a large part of the romantic appeal of the industry. Furthermore, the institutional reforms and organizational transformations seem to have interfered in the strong ‘railway culture’ that used to be passed from generation to generation of ‘railroaders’. The railways have become almost synonymous for bureaucratic inefficiency. Traditional railway jargon is largely replaced by terminology taken from the world of business and the core business of railway companies (apart from operating trains) is to provide service to the customers.

These changes require a shift in the state of mind of actors (employees as well as passengers, politicians, etc.). They all need to adapt to the changing logics that accompany the developments in society. Actors make sense of and at the same time influence such changes through a great array of narrative accounts (Berendse et al., 2006). Through literature, scientific texts, practices, corporate biographies, formal organizational documentation, media, autobiographies, etc. changing discourses (both grand and local) are communicated. This brings us to another genre of railway literature, consisting of a relatively large number of working-class autobiographies written by railway workers. Remarkably enough the existence of such a collection seems to be “a peculiar feature (...) of the industry” (Strangleman, 2002, 147). Whereas Strangleman talks mainly of British examples, there are at least four examples of autobiographies written over the last few years by Dutch railway employees. Such publications typically linger on the old ways of the organization and criticize the changes in the present (Duijnhoven & Berendse, 2008). In a way, these narrative fictions can be interpreted as a form of ‘creative resistance’ (Schoneboom, 2007) to the dominant discourses in which their self-identity is embedded. This peculiar phenomenon raises questions about the motives to write down the stories from the shop floor. It seems to fit perfectly with the notion that people use narrative constructs to make sense of the world around them and
their position in it (Beech & Johnson, 2005; Berendse et al., 2006; Brown & Humphreys, 2003; Currie & Brown, 2003; Gabriel, 2000). Yet there is a difference between constructing a narrative account in your mind or expressing it orally, and sitting down and writing it up. The difference between oral and written narratives is that the author of a written narrative has had time to think about the text. "Writing offers time for reflection, allowing lingering thoughts to develop, free from the pressures of a listening audience" (Horrocks & Callahan, 2006).

Returning to the notion of a researcher writing down an account of the experiences in the field of study, the analogy is clear. The question is what the differences and similarities are between writing fiction inspired by ‘real life phenomena’, and writing an autobiographic or ethnographic account using creative styles and techniques, similar to those used by a novelist. Accepting the constructed nature of ‘reality’, these differences seem to fade away. In the next chapter, I will present my methodological choices and strategies for this study. Following the discussions in this chapter as well as the first chapter of the book, the questions with regard to the relations between texts and reality will continue to be a central focus point in the next chapter.
3 Fictionalizing Science: On Methods and Methodology

…the enterprise of administration is so crucial to the success of contemporary civilization that we should seek knowledge about it from all possible sources, and not limit ourselves to certain conventional or fashionable methods of study.
– Dwight Waldo

What might we learn if we were to explore the terra incognita of our literary practices?
– John van Maanen

Introduction: the Interpretive Turn in the Social Sciences

What has become clear in the preceding is that there is a growing interest in the role of language in the constitution of social reality. As mentioned, ‘the linguistic turn’ (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000a) and ‘the crisis of representation’ (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) from the 1980s onwards, have led a growing number of authors in the field of organization studies to discuss the process of translation of data into research texts (e.g. Czarniawska, 1997; O’Connor, 2000; Phillips, 1995; Rhodes, 2001; Rhodes & Brown, 2005b; Van Maanen, 1988; Watson, 2000). In other words, authors increasingly become aware of and explicit about the importance of the process of research writing. As I argued earlier, research texts draw upon and reinforce specific discourses in society. As such, it is paramount for researchers to pay attention to the construction and influence of those texts. This recognition, thus calls for an increasingly reflexive stance.

Specific issues that have come to be discussed against the background of the linguistic turn are the responsibility of the researcher/author, the role of the author in the text, authority and truth claims, reflexivity and pragmatism, representation of self and others, power relations and control of meaning (e.g. Alvesson & Karreman, 2000a; Boje, 2001; Cunliffe, 2002; Czarniawska, 1997, 1998; Humphreys & Brown, 2002; O’Connor, 2000; Rhodes, 2001; Rhodes & Brown, 2005b; Van Maanen, 1988; Watson, 1995b, 2000). Apart from public discourses in the media or in organizational settings, a growing number of researchers turn to the role of fiction writings (both as discursive sources as well as a particular genre or writing technique) in the study on the constitution of specific discourses.
The use of fictional sources for educational and research purposes is hardly a new phenomenon. Scholars like Dwight Waldo (1968) or Wittgenstein (cf. De Cock, 2000: 589) already recognized the relevance of novels and other fictional sources for our understanding of social phenomena. Among organizational scholars a growing number of authors stress the value of literary works for our work (e.g. Alvarez & Merchán, 1992; Czarniawska, 2007; Czarniawska & Guillet de Monthoux, 1994; De Cock, 2000; Parker et al., 1999; Phillips, 1995). Apart from including fictional sources, there is an increasing tendency among (in particular critical) scholars to experiment with different writing styles and genres in research writing (Phillips, 1995; Rhodes & Brown, 2005b; Watson, 2000). Increasingly, the distinction between ‘science’ and ‘fiction’ has been problematized (Czarniawska, 1997, 1999a, 1999b; Parker et al., 1999). These authors argue that scientific researchers have much to learn from the techniques of fiction writers. “Fiction accomplishes the feat which organizational theory often misses: it combines the subjective with the objective, the fate of individuals with that of institutions, the micro events with the macro system” (Guillet de Monthoux & Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994: 9). What is more, if we look at the seminal work of Max Weber on the bureaucracy, he already proposed the use of ideal types to conceptualize organizations and institutions. These ideal types are fictional in the sense that they do not exist in their pure form. They are tools or models for researchers to make sense of the complexity of the social world. As long as they are plausible conceptualizations or representations they are useful for theorizing (Guillet de Monthoux & Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994; O’Reilly, 2005). Thus, if the aim for researchers is to contribute to the understanding of social reality, and if we accept the view that social reality cannot be directly represented but is always mediated by language and confined within discourses, we can only conclude that there is a very thin line between what constitutes fiction and what constitutes science. In this dissertation I aim to explore this distinction further in order to make a modest contribution to the growing understanding of the relation between language, texts and social reality.

In this chapter I will further discuss the specific approach of this study. In the first part I will explicate the philosophical underpinnings of the research design, methodology, and methods. In general research methodologists these days tend to distinguish between ‘qualitative’ (naturalistic) and ‘interpretive’ (constructionist) research approaches to denominate non-quantitative research methodologies. As Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2009: 57) indicate, in some disciplines or fields of inquiry the terms ‘qualitative’ and ‘interpretive’ are used interchangeably to denominate research with ontological and epistemological presuppositions based on phenomenology and hermeneutics. In other research areas ‘qualitative’ research refers to a variety of different approaches, ranging from approaches based on objectivist-
realist presuppositions to constructionist-interpretive approaches. What is certain is that the twentieth century has brought about an ‘interpretive turn’ in the social sciences (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009: 57; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006b). What the ‘interpretive turn’ entails is an increasing awareness of the role of language in the study of human phenomena. Furthermore, it involves an “overarching appreciation for the centrality of meaning in human life in all its aspects and a reflexivity on scientific practices related to meaning making and knowledge claims” (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006b: xii). The term ‘turn’ refers to a move away from the glorification of natural science models for the social sciences, and a move toward a “rehumanized, contextualized set of practices” (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006b: xii).

As became clear in the previous chapter, in the present study I build upon work done by the broad (transdisciplinary) community of discourse analysts who are part of the larger community of interpretive researchers. The spread of discursive approaches in social sciences has come to be known as one of the main manifestations of the ‘linguistic turn’ in the social sciences and philosophy (e.g. Alvesson & Karreman, 2000a; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Hammersley, 1997; Heracleous & Barrett, 2001), which is closely related to the interpretive turn (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006b), as well as the ‘crisis of representation’ (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Proponents of these approaches build their arguments against positivism upon phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophies, and specifically the social constructionism of Berger and Luckmann (1966). A central premise of the linguistic turn is that the independent ontological status of social reality is problematic since social reality is always intersubjectively constructed in “an ongoing interplay between individual agency and social structure, in and through which individuals and structures mutually constitute each other” (Ybema et al., 2009b: 8). Furthermore, all knowledge and understanding of this constructed reality is mediated by

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6. In my study I will use the term ‘qualitative’ as the generic term for different approaches, supplemented with a specifying adjective (‘realist’, ‘interpretive’, etc.) where applicable.
7. In some fields of inquiry, like international relations or psychology, a distinction is made between ‘constructivism’, ‘social constructivism’ and ‘social constructionism’ (e.g. Young & Collin, 2004). In other fields, the terms are used interchangeably. Overall there is no clear agreement on the specific use of either of these terms. In my study I build upon the phenomenological tradition as represented through the work on The Social Construction of Reality by Berger & Luckmann (1966), and therefore I will use the term social constructionism throughout this book (except when I use direct quotes from authors that use other terms). This is in line with what Philips et al. (2006: 480) state: “the term constructivism, with roots in developmental psychology (Piaget, 1954), describes an epistemological perspective that emphasizes the notion of people as active constructors, rather than passive receptors, of knowledge: ‘reality’, from a constructivist perspective is constructed in people’s minds. Social constructionism builds on these ideas but emphasizes the social nature of reality; it is not constructed in people’s minds but in their social interaction, and especially in their linguistic interaction because of the enduring traces that this form of interaction is particularly capable of producing”.
language, which makes it impossible to directly and objectively represent reality. In other words, a key theme since the linguistic turn is the problematization of the relation between ‘text’ and ‘reality’. Therefore we should abandon the aim to mimic natural science criteria of objectivity and ‘truth’ in the study of human phenomena. As such, proponents of the linguistic turn focus their critiques of empiricist research that takes the basic principles of the natural sciences as its ultimate example of what science entails. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000: 2) frame the rise of the linguistic turn as follows:

The critics of empiricism (...) claim that culture, language, selective perception, subjective forms of cognition, social conventions, politics, ideology, power and narration all, in a complicated way, permeate scientific activity. These elements leave their mark on the relation between empirical reality and/or attempts to force segments of reality into the research texts, so that the relation between ‘reality’ and ‘text’ (the research results) is at best uncertain and at worst arbitrary or even non-existent.

Although such claims against traditional scientific standards are not new, the actual implications of these critiques for the development of (empirical) research approaches continue to be a popular topic for scholarly debates. As Hammersley (1997) notes, there are almost as many ‘critical’ approaches as there are fields of inquiry in social sciences. What these scholars generally share is that they recognize the limitations of traditional, modernist models of science when it comes to studying the social world. The objectivist scientific stance that became dominant in the twentieth century social sciences rejected normative stances, favouring ‘factual inquiry’. The main argument being “that if we are to understand human behaviour we must examine it ‘as it is’, not judge it in terms of some normative scheme that lauds or criticises” (Hammersley, 1997: 238). Critics have argued that this modernist, ‘objectivist’ stance is not only impossible to maintain, it is also undesirable for it ignores power relations and, despite the claims to be politically neutral, it relies on implicit assumptions and thus preserves the status quo (Hammersley, 1997; Van Dijk, 1993). Social phenomena can only be studied in relation to wider societal structures. Many post-modern scholars are inspired by the work of Foucault, who argued that “truth claims are always linked to power and domination” (O’Reilly, 2005: 53). This does, however, not mean that all these scholars dismiss the possibility of arriving at some sort of truth or scientific knowledge. They merely want to stress that some actors in society have the power to define what is understood as ‘the truth’. Therefore, many of these researchers aim their studies at uncovering the ‘regimes of truth’ that dominate social interactions. Hammersley (1997: 238) summarizes the core of such critical or ‘post-modern’ approaches as follows: “what is promised is some sort of comprehensive theory that will provide
the basis for political action to bring about radical and emancipatory social change. Above all, ‘critical’ approaches claim to unify theory and practice’. The critical approaches that Hammersley is referring to are often related to the ‘post-modern’ movement in social science.

Some argue that the rise of post-modern approaches (against the background of the linguistic turn and crisis of representation) has led to an ‘anything goes’ perspective of qualitative research accounts, whereby researchers “privilege grand theory and experimental writings at the expense of sober enquiry and a concern for truth” (Silverman, 2007: 120). Although in the concluding chapter of his book on qualitative research, Silverman admits that his points are somewhat polarized for the sake of argument, he expresses his concern with some of the current trends in qualitative research (Silverman, 2007). In particular he points to the dangers of extreme relativism, whereby objective truth claims are dismissed and knowledge is always subjective. As an alternative, Silverman proposes an “anti-bullshit agenda for qualitative research” (2007: 139-141) focused on producing clear, beautifully written and straightforward research accounts without over-theorizing and without losing sight of the standard scientific aim for (some form of) truth.

The points that Silverman makes may be seen as one extremity of a continuum in which the most experimental post-modernist accounts of social sciences are at the other extreme. Now, as Silverman also indicates, the work of most scholars lies somewhere in between. Yet it is indicative of the current climate in social sciences that such extreme points of view are used to continue the debates about the status of social scientific research. In fact, the arguments for either (extreme) position on this continuum display remarkable similarities. For instance, Silverman argues that many of the experimental post-modern research accounts are overly theorized and abstract, using meta-concepts and complicated language that have little relation with empirical observations (2007: 124). If we follow the arguments put forward by Van Maanen (1995b), the exact same critiques can just as easily be aimed at mainstream researchers in contemporary social sciences. He makes a plea for unconventional ways of writing theoretical texts. The prevailing writing styles in social sciences, as Van Maanen puts it, are overly abstract and too distanced from empirical observations. Instead of explaining an objective reality in an abstract sense, theories should be seen as generating a possible version of reality (Van Maanen, 1995b: 135). Van Maanen points out that writing in a way that goes against traditional scientific conventions can overcome overly abstract theorized accounts that take the language of traditional scientific ideals at face value.

Perhaps by focusing on concrete particulars, by revealing our doubts and anxieties, by not trying so hard to achieve the other worldly ideals of science, our writings will be able to display our ideals with coherence enough to make them intelligible but
not to dress them up with an alluring but false sense of finality (Van Maanen, 1995b: 139-140).

As such, Van Maanen points out, his arguments are somewhat controversial for they imply “that taken-for-granted ideas about empirical evidence, objectivity, reason, truth, coherence, validity measurement and fact no longer provide great comfort or direction” (Van Maanen, 1995b: 134). Silverman on the other hand, uses almost the exact same accusations about post-modern writing styles:

…‘postmodern research’ can willingly lose contact with claims based on evidence and couched in propositional language. Dressed up in doubtful theoretical verbiage, it not only advocates that ‘anything goes’ but actually prefers ‘ethnodrama, story (and) poetry’ to clear, refutable statements about research findings (Silverman, 2007: 135)

Nevertheless this does not imply (as some authors would have us believe) that such accounts are less ‘scientific’. The problem in this discussion is that the social sciences still firmly rely on positivistic language when it comes to the evaluation of research quality. The criteria for the evaluation and justification of interpretive research are generally based on the dominant social science conventions, which are based on a positivist epistemology. According to Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006a) interpretive researchers should come up with an alternative set of criteria to replace the conventional criteria taken from positivism because they are incompatible with the ontological foundation of interpretive epistemologies. Furthermore, they claim that in order to be able to come to cross-disciplinary knowledge and mutual understanding or recognition of the quality of different types of research, interpretive researchers should be more open and transparent about their methods. In general, the epistemic communities of researchers from different paradigms tend to be very inward focussed. The result is that regardless of the tenability of critiques towards traditional research stances, the quarrel between interpretive and realist research schools has - unintentionally - obtained a negative, sometimes defensive connotation. As such the quality and contributions of interpretive methods remain marginalized and undervalued (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006b). Interpretive researchers should open up the black-box of how we do what we do. In that sense, both Van Maanen and Silverman, along with other authors, make a plea for alternative ways to evaluate the quality of qualitative, interpretive research accounts, that abandon the search for objective truths and universal law-like explanations of social phenomena (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009; Silverman, 2007; Van Maanen, 1995b; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006a). In other words, the ‘sanctified’ position of abstract theories and concepts in ‘the
church of the academic world¹⁸ should no longer be taken for granted. It is important to recognize the rhetorical construction of theories (Van Maanen, 1995b) and the role of theoretical explanations in sustaining dominant power relations. Interestingly, it is precisely the aim of many post-modern researchers to dissolve dominant power structures. Yet many have lost touch along the way with the local empirical observations in their quests, leading to the abstract and overly jargonized academic texts that authors like Silverman and Van Maanen criticise.

If we abandon the attempt to capture reality as it is, and include in our endeavours the subjectivity of knowledge, that does not mean that we cannot learn anything about (the construction of) social reality. It means that instead of seeing research as an activity to ‘mirror’ reality, we should see it as an ‘interpretive act’ (Watson, 2000: 499). Furthermore, it is important to constantly remind ourselves that all theories about social phenomena are human creations that may help to understand the processes through which people make sense of their environments, but that can never provide us with law-like meta-explanations about the world. Therefore, it does not make sense to aim our ambitions at abstract generalizations of social phenomena; instead, the most fruitful endeavours of scientists are those that stay close to what people do and say (Barley & Kunda, 2001; Silverman, 2007), while at the same time being written in an intelligible and transparent style to stimulate the readers to actively engage in the interpretation of processes of human behaviour and knowledge generation. In the following sections of this chapter I will discuss the methodology of the project, the cases, the course of the fieldwork, the analysis of the data and the process of writing it all up.

**Methodology: Organizational Ethnography**

In order to explore and interpret the ways in which actors in the Dutch and Spanish railway operators make sense of security in their daily practices, as I introduced in the first chapter, I conducted ethnographic case studies of the main railway operators in the Netherlands (NS) and Spain (Renfe Operadora). In line with the ontological and epistemological position of the research, and following the problem statement of the project, an interpretive, ethnographic approach seems to be suited best to capture the life-worlds of the organizational actors and cultures. Organizational ethnography is an approach to organizational studies that has gained terrain in the last decades. Using ethnographic methods and anthropologi-

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¹⁸ The metaphor of abstract concepts being ‘sanctified in the church of academia’ was used by Gideon Kunda during a seminar at the Utrecht School of Governance, November 18, 2005.
cal approaches to study organizations and people at work is, however, not a new approach. The tradition goes back to the Hawthorne studies in the 1920s and 1930s and in-depth studies of work and informal organizational life until the 1950s. Between the 1950s and mid-1970s the focus in organization studies shifted from the study of work practices to a focus on strategies, structures and organizational environments, along with a different set of quantitative methods such as survey research and statistical (computerized) analyses, moving ethnographic studies into organizational life to the background of the research agenda (Barley & Kunda, 2001; Bate, 1997; Ybema et al., 2009b). However, the interpretive turn in the late 1970s and 1980s in social sciences and the emergence of cultural approaches to management and organization brought a resurgence of qualitative research approaches in organization studies, mainly as a critique to the mainstream, positivist research at that time (Barley & Kunda, 2001; Bate, 1997; Czarniawska, 1992; Ybema et al., 2009b). Ethnographic approaches to the study of organizations are different from ‘traditional’ organization studies in various ways. One of the main contributions of ethnography to organizational research is the varied ways in which it allows researchers to describe organizational life:

- organizational actors’ sensemaking practices across different situations, engaging with what people do and what they say they do; routine patterns as well as dynamic processes of organizing; frontstage appearances and backstage activities; the minutiae of actors’ lifeworlds as well as the wider social and historical contexts in which these lifeworlds unfold (Ybema et al., 2009b: 6).

Another important quality of organizational ethnography constitutes what Bate (1997) terms “the being there quality”. Through thick descriptions of the organizational life-worlds, the author places himself/herself in the situation, while at the same time drawing the audience into the narrative as it unfolds. As such an ethnographic text does justice to the complexity of everyday situations (Ybema et al., 2009b). The narrative richness of ethnographies makes them especially suitable for the contextualization that often lacks in other types of research (Bate, 1997; Pettigrew, 1985). Through an iterative alternation between ‘zooming in’ and ‘zooming out’, “the ethnographic approach helps us appreciate that work practices do not take place in a vacuum and that people’s organizational lives are shaped both through individual agency and historical conditions” (Nicolini, 2009: 120). The relations between agency and structure constitute one of the central debates in social sciences and although it would be too much to argue that an ethnographic approach can ‘solve’ the issue once and for all, at least “the combination of contextual analysis with an actor-centred approach promises to remedy the apolitical
reading of organizing” (Ybema et al., 2009b: 7) and take into consideration the complexity of social reality.

Within the ethnographic tradition there are several different approaches, building upon different ontological and epistemological philosophies, ranging from positivist or realist perspectives to interpretive or poststructuralist perspectives (Yanow, 2006b; Ybema et al., 2009b). What these different approaches share is the empirical foundation of research into the life-worlds of humans and social phenomena. Varying from very empirical ‘grounded theory’ approaches to more theoretically based ethnography, the basis of knowledge according to the ethnographic traditions lies in the close study of people’s interaction within their natural context (e.g. Denzin, 1997; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; O’Reilly, 2005). Broadly speaking, three main groups of ethnographic approaches can be distinguished (cf. Adler & Adler, 1999). In the first place there are the ‘classical ethnographers’ who adhere to a naturalistic approach of the interactions of people, mainly through observations. The approaches within the classical camp are mostly realist, maintaining that ethnography must adhere to the fundamental principle of studying people in situ. Second there are the so-called ‘rigorous ethnographers’ who plea for an analytically structured approach to ethnography based on traditional demands from mainstream social sciences, often using positivist language such as reliability and validity. These scholars generally position themselves firmly against the experimental ‘anything goes’ image of post-modern researchers. The third group consists of the ‘post-modern or poststructuralist ethnographers’. Scholars in this group depart from traditional epistemological and ontological stances and argue that the only way to develop knowledge about the socially constructed reality is through the lived-experiences of humans. Important in this endeavour is the role of language (no longer representing or mirroring reality but also a social construct and inextricably linked to interpretive frames of people, socially defined meaning). This category of ethnographers includes different sub-streams such as interpretive ethnography (Denzin, 1997), sensemaking (Weick, 1995, 2001), discourse analysis (e.g. Grant et al., 2004; Oswick et al., 2000), deconstructionism (e.g. Chia, 1996; Cooper, 1989; Norris, 1982).

Although these different ethnographic approaches exist side-by-side (or maybe deriving their existence from criticizing each other), Denzin and Lincoln (1994) have made a historical classification of five different ‘moments’ in the development of ethnographic inquiry. The first, ‘traditional’ moment refers to the period between 1900 and World War II, the second moment is the ‘modernist’ period from WWII to approximately the mid-1970s, the third moment is denominated by Denzin and Lincoln as a period of ‘blurred genres’ and runs from the 1970s until 1986 (the publication year of the seminal book by Clifford & Marcus), leading into the fourth moment, the ‘crisis of representation’ (1986 until the present) and the pre-
sent, fifth moment, characterized as the post-modern era. In reaction to the classification by Denzin & Lincoln, Atkinson et al. argue that this classification is a view too linear to account for the diversity of earlier generations of ethnographic researchers (Atkinson et al., 1999). According to them, the temporal metaphor of ‘moments’ is too narrow and a lot of the debates and issues attributed to the ‘crisis of representation’ or to the fifth moment have their roots in earlier times (Atkinson et al., 1999: 465). Despite the fact that different approaches tend to overlap or exist separately from each other, it is possible to identify changes in the general modus operandi among ethnographers along the lines of the historical developments as portrayed by Denzin and Lincoln (that more or less coincide with developments in other areas of social inquiry).

Although informed by theories and concepts, this research builds upon an interpretive epistemological and ontological presupposition. The research design is mainly inspired by empirical questions. It aims to uncover the situated constructions of meaning and practices of organizational actors, with regard to security and within contemporary railway settings. Therefore, the choice of an ethnographic methodology follows directly from the problem statement. As such, one of the central research methods has been (participant) observation. I was present in the organizational life-worlds of NS and Renfe during a significant period of time (approximately 8 months for each case) and during that time I talked to a lot of people, I was present in different organizational settings, tagged along for a few days with operational staff, was present in several meetings, social events and other organizational events. Furthermore, I conducted more or less ‘formal’ interviews. These interviews were usually very open in character; I would start by asking one or two questions (what ‘security’ means to them, in their work) and from there we would start talking and I would let the informant talk as freely as possible, while I would react to specific subjects that caught my attention (Weiss, 1994). It has to be remarked that the process of interviewing is very much a cumulative process. The issues that mostly caught my attention during the conversations where those that would build upon issues that I previously encountered. I recorded the interviews as much as possible9 and I made extensive notes on the more informal conversations and observations. In addition to the observations and conversations I had access to the intranet of both organizations and additional documents that circulated in the departments where I spent time. Of course, as any textbook on ethnographic methodology suggests (e.g. Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; O’Reilly, 2005), the access I had to the field was not unlimited and at times I was confronted with the

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9. On a few occasions, the informants preferred not to be recorded despite my guarantee of anonymity. In those cases I made extensive notes during and after the conversations, just like in the case of the more informal conversations on the work floor, of which I made notes immediately afterwards.
boundaries of what I could or could not do. Access is something that continuously needs to be negotiated and renegotiated. As an ethnographic researcher it is important to be constantly aware of your role and position in the field, and to be flexible to adapt to the environment (Duijnhoven & Roessingh, 2006). In the following two paragraphs, I will elaborate on the cases of the research and the course of the fieldwork. In particular I will describe some of the dilemmas encountered and the ways in which I have dealt with my role as a researcher in each of the two contexts.

**Research Strategy: the Cases**

While the Dutch reacted to the murder of a film director by setting fire to Mosques, in Spain there has not been a single act of revenge after 11-M (El País, 2005: 3 - transl. HD).

As explained before, the study focuses on the ways in which organizational actors within railway organizations shape and give meaning to security in light of institutional and societal changes and the ways in which this is enacted in their daily practices. In particular it deals with the processes of sensemaking, interpretation, and the enactment of security issues into the daily work practices within these organizations. One of the reasons why security has become a very salient theme among railway organizations (and beyond) is the increasing number of terrorist attacks and threats in Western societies. The Madrid bombings of 2004 were still fresh in people’s memories when in the summer of 2005 the London underground was hit by a new wave of terrorist bombings. Around the same time I started with this project and very soon decided that I would include the Spanish railways as one of the field locations in my study (being strengthened in my choice by the fact that I had already lived in Spain before and am proficient in the language). The other case – the Netherlands – was selected, not only for practical reasons (my being Dutch and working at a Dutch University), but also because, at the surface there are apparent cultural, historical and political differences between the two countries. The local particularities of each of the two contexts add to the contribution of this study to our understanding of the meaning of security in general and within contemporary railway operators in specific. Alvesson (1996: 476) describes this situational approach as follows: “a particular situation, delimited in time and space, is considered a core phenomenon and in a situational focus, actors as well as the institutional context are present”. Without reducing the cultural contexts of these two research sites to a series of more or less static variables or pinpointing their ‘cultural position’ on different axes, the situated study of security practices in
relation to the historical and cultural context is a valuable approach if we want to learn about the complex dynamics of localized meanings of security that are embedded in broader discursive structures.

Thus, the choice of two fieldwork locations that are very different in many respects - not in the least when it comes to experiences in the area of security - seems to be appropriate for an approach aimed at understanding local constructions of meanings and attitudes towards security. In that respect, Spain may be characterized as a country with a very turbulent political history and experience with terrorism, and the Netherlands as a country with an image of tolerance and little experience with large-scale security threats and incidents. Obviously, these are stereotypical representations of the two countries, but it offers enough ground for an interesting combination of these fieldwork locations.

As Adcock (2006) discusses, an interpretive approach to comparison in social sciences generally aims to combine the understanding of locally situated particularities with that of some general movement or phenomenon. This general conception of a ‘problem’ (in this case security) serves “to help illuminate how legacies of the past play into the shape of developments in different societies” (Adcock, 2006: 63). To put it more precisely, an interpretive research design allows for the studying of local manifestations of public discourses around security, in relation to individual actions and general historical and political developments. The aim is not to talk, at an abstract level, about differences and similarities between the Netherlands and Spain (as is often the case in more traditional, variable-based ‘comparative’ research designs), or compare the culture of both organizations/countries. On the contrary, the aim is to discuss the situational meaning constructions of security and the life-worlds of railway employees in the Netherlands and Spain, in relation to historical, political and societal developments in each country as well as in the railway sector in general. Among interpretive researchers, the label ‘comparative’ remains rather obscure. It is often associated with the dominant scientific discourse that prevails among ‘conventional’ (positivistic) scientists. Nevertheless, an interpretive approach within two different contexts is particularly suitable to further our understanding of the relation between ‘structures’ and ‘agents’ and the ways in which local meanings of security are constructed and enacted. Furthermore, it is not viable to conceive of two separate cases, since both organizations are part of a wider community of railway organizations, exposed to similar external (and internal) stimuli, and there are several direct interfaces between these organizations. As Van Maanen indicates:

The wistful assumption of “one place, one people, one culture” no longer holds the ethnographic imagination in check. This is made quite clear in what Marcus (1994) calls the “messy texts” of a deterritorialized, open-ended, and “new” ethnography
that attempts to foster an idea of how lives around the globe may be contrasted yet still interconnected (1995a: 19).

What is more, at the outset of this project, during the phase of establishing contact and gaining access, the juxtaposition of the two cases proved a valuable point of entry. Both my initial contacts at Renfe Operadora and NS indicated that they were especially interested in the project due to the international character of the study. Both were particularly interested in ‘learning from the other organization’ or simply to learn ‘what they are doing’. An initial exploration of existing links between the two organizations brought to my attention that there is a more or less regular contact between the organizations. There are several platforms for interaction between different railway operators in Europe in the area of security (such as COLPOFER10) and there have been several mutual visits between the security departments of Renfe Operadora and NS in the recent past. Nevertheless, the contacts at the two departments were especially attracted by the project’s focus on the daily (micro) practices and cultural aspects of security, and soon after the initial contact they agreed to lend their support for the project and grant me access to their organization. I will explain more about the extent of the access to the organizations and the course of the fieldwork in the following paragraph.

Research Practices: the Fieldwork

Walking into the street where the office of the sub-director of the security department of Renfe Operadora is situated my supervisor and I go over the aim of our meeting. We want to discuss the possibilities of conducting research in this department and I feel as if the whole project depends on this meeting.

We enter the big building and I am struck by the out-dated outlook of the entrance. A security guard sits behind a small desk in a wooden cubicle with a glass window. After we leave our personal identification data the guard calls the secretary to announce our arrival. A few minutes later we are directed through the old scruffy wooden doors into a long hallway. Because of the deterioration of the paint and floors, the building almost seems deserted. Nevertheless, the offices on both sides are clearly in use (although there are few people present at this late hour in the day).

My supervisor whispers something to me about how different the outlook of the building is from any typical office in the Netherlands.

I nod and think to myself that the few offices that I have seen in Spain during my previous stays in the country were different from Dutch office buildings in a very similar way.

We enter the office of the sub-director via the office of his secretary. In contrast to the small and cluttered secretariat, his office is spacious and breathes an air of status. Big dark-wooden bookcases are situated along the wall. In the rear part of the room, facing the entrance, a big desk with a leather armchair is located. On the other side of the office, near the entry-door, there is a large oval table, where we are invited to take a seat.

Although my proficiency of the Spanish language is adequate, my supervisor does not speak Spanish and the sub-director does not speak much English, so during the entire meeting I have to translate back and forth between them, making the meeting a bit chaotic for me.

I start the conversation by briefly introducing the ideas we have for the project. I tell him that I want to talk with him about the possibilities for conducting part of the research at his department.

The sub-director does not react to that question at first, but starts to talk about the organization and the security system of his company. He draws a map on a piece of paper about the different regions of the country and the ways in which these regions are connected through an information sharing network. As he is speaking his mobile phone is announcing a message every few minutes. Each time he glances at the phone.

My supervisor and I look at each other and we are both thinking the same thing. Isn’t it rude to let a meeting be interrupted like that?

Maybe the sub-director realizes what we think or maybe it was his next subject in his explanation of the communication network, but he takes his phone and explains that, as sub-director, he is connected to the system. Each time something happens somewhere in the country, he is notified in a message. These messages have different categories of urgency and for most of them he does not have to respond. For instance, he explains, the message he received just now was telling him that there is a defect train in one of the regions.

When the sub-director finishes his explanations, we ask him if it would be possible to come back to Madrid and conduct my research at his department.

He tells me that there is no problem at all. Whenever I want to come, I can just contact him and he will set me up. In fact, he enthusiastically proposes that maybe I want to visit him at a different location tomorrow. He can introduce me to some other people of his department and they can already provide me with some information.

I take him up on his offer and we arrange to meet there the next morning. After that, my supervisor and I thank him for his time and we leave the office. When we are back in the busy street, we walk towards the station. I feel very excited. My supervisor
turns to me and says that this is a first, but very important step. I nod and think to myself that this means that my study has finally really started!

During the first phase of the project I explored the two cases through documents and articles available through the Internet and established contacts at the case organizations in order to gain access to my research sites. For the Spanish case I wrote a letter to the Head of the Directorate under whose authority the security department of Renfe Operadora was situated. In a follow-up phone call I was referred to one of the senior managers at the security department. This contact agreed to meet with me and so I went to Madrid to conduct a short pilot study, consisting of a few explorative conversations to get a general idea of the subject of security and organizational practices in the Spanish railways. During this visit I had two conversations with the initial contact and another conversation with a second member of the department. They were both enthusiastic about the research and agreed to facilitate my stay at their department.

Upon my return to the Netherlands after the initial visit at Renfe Operadora I started with the fieldwork in the Netherlands. To establish access at NS I used a contact of a colleague to be introduced to a member of the security department of NS. After a few initial meetings, my contact and the director of the security department agreed to facilitate my research. We agreed that I could work at the department whenever I wanted. Furthermore, I got access to the directory of the department where key documents are stored, the company’s intranet, and e-mail system. I worked at the office for approximately 3 days a week, talking to different people, sitting in on meetings, etc. Apart from being present at the security department I arranged to talk with different employees at different locations within the company and I was also able, on a number of occasions, to tag along with small groups of frontline employees to observe and participate in their daily work practices (on the trains and at the stations).

The reasons to start the fieldwork in the Netherlands were twofold. In the first place the closeness of this case (geographically as well as culturally). As a Dutch person, I was already familiar with NS, both as a provider of rail transport and as a company that is widely discussed in the public arena. This familiarity would make it easier to enter the organization and conduct a first exploration into the construction and organization of security. In the second place, because I was still working on the elaboration of the research design it was more practical to start with a first period of fieldwork in the Netherlands (three months in the spring/summer of 2006), followed by a first period of fieldwork in Spain (four months in the fall of 2006). After these first periods I came back to the Netherlands at the end of 2006 to reflect upon the course of the fieldwork so far. I reviewed my data and took some time to develop the next steps. After a short period of reflection I went back
to Spain at the end of January 2007 for the second period of fieldwork (three months). After the second fieldwork period in Spain I returned to the Netherlands and over the summer I started working with the data from Renfe Operadora. In the fall of 2007 I started the last period of fieldwork at NS (this period lasted approximately 4 months although I went back a few more times in the period after that to follow up on a number of issues).

Despite my careful planning and reflection between the different periods of fieldwork, the specific course of research has had some influence at least on my interpretations in either case. My personal background as a relatively young, Dutch female with my specific upbringing and education in an Organizational Anthropology department also influences my positions in and understandings of the research setting (Roessingh & Duijnhoven, 2005). As mentioned, the researcher and her research cannot be conceived of as separate because the personal of a researcher is part of the interpretive framework used to make sense of situations. The initial meetings with contacts, my exploration of documents and media coverage, the order of fieldwork periods, all contributed to my accumulation of knowledge about security issues and railway operations. In line with the interpretive presuppositions of this project, it is clear that every choice in the design of a research project has certain consequences. It can never be guaranteed that the results would have been the same if a different path would have been followed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; O’Reilly, 2005; Silverman, 2007; Van Maanen, 1988). In any case, conducting ethnographic research is very much a personal endeavour and at best the ethnographer can be transparent about the steps followed throughout the process (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006a).

During the first period of fieldwork at NS I came across a short report about a visit to the Spanish railways that took place a year before. A delegation of people from the security department at NS, representatives from ProRail (the rail infrastructure management company) and the government conducted a visit to Madrid to meet with security representatives of both Renfe Operadora and ADIF (the Spanish rail infrastructure management company). The aim of the visit was to gain an insight in the security measures developed in Spain after the terrorist attacks in 2004. Naturally, I was interested to find out more about this visit. Talking to several people at the security department I understood that Spain is recognized as a frontrunner when it comes to counter-terrorism measures and NS was eager to learn from them. I wondered in what ways this ‘frontrunner position’ would be manifested. Was it mainly based on the sad experiences in 2004 and before with ETA, or was it more? Most people I talked to during that first period of fieldwork would ask me about the differences and similarities between Spain and the Netherlands and what my expectations were. I soon became conscious of the presence of the ‘other’ organization in virtually all my fieldwork activities.
Upon introducing myself and the topic of my study, people would start to think about the other case and during the course most conversations the other organization would come up again at times. I realized that they might not have mentioned, or even thought about Spain or the Netherlands had I not ‘steered’ them into that direction. This is something that I have kept in mind throughout the whole project. The association of my project with the other country and organization also proved to be a good way of opening up any conversation in a casual way. Sometimes I would just be present in the office and people would come up to me to ask me something about the other party. After that I could naturally ask them something back and a conversation was started.

As mentioned, after the first fieldwork period in the Netherlands I went to Madrid and started the second period of fieldwork, at Renfe Operadora. Like at NS, my contacts at the security department of Renfe Operadora agreed to let me work at their office. I got access to intranet, shared directories, company magazines, etc. During my presence at the department (approximately 4 days a week, for several hours) I talked with many different employees at different levels and locations across the company, during work, on coffee breaks, company parties, etc. I also observed and worked with frontline employees at several stations in Madrid. Upon returning to the Netherlands (and after a few months of reflection and processing the data) the third period of fieldwork at NS started. During this period I worked approximately 2 days a week at the security department and furthermore I conducted a series of interviews and group discussions with people in the different regional departments of NS.

Despite my previous experiences with living in Spain and my knowledge of the Spanish language, I was aware of the different position I had in the Spanish context, compared to the Dutch context. I naturally know more about the background and history of the Netherlands and the Dutch railways than about Spain and Renfe. On the one hand this ‘bias’ made the fieldwork in Spain more difficult, but at the same time the ‘strangeness’ of the Spanish context made me notice ‘remarkable’ aspects of the daily practices that I might have missed in the Dutch case because the familiar surrounding created certain ‘cultural blinders’ (Alvesson, 2003; Silverman, 2007). Nevertheless, I did not have any previous experience with railway organizations, making even the Dutch case ‘exotic’. Ethnographic research is all about ‘seeing the remarkable in the mundane and the mundane in the remarkable’ (Silverman, 2007). At the end of the day it comes down to being reflexive about this throughout the entire project.

In addition to my own fieldwork, I arranged for one of my students, Hilde Slaats, from the MA programme of Culture, Organization & Management at the VU University to participate in my project. She went to Madrid in the spring of 2008 and conducted a three-month ethnographic study. During that time she did
extensive participant observations among a group of security inspectors at the security department of Renfe Operadora. Among other things, she tagged along with them on surveillance routes (controlling the security guards at work on different stations), she took part in a large simulation of an incident, and she participated with a team of employees to manage the flows of passengers before and after one of the most important Soccer matches of the year in Madrid. As part of my project, parts of her data are also included in the analysis and presentation in this book.11

**Analysis: Iterative Inductive Interpretation**

As mentioned earlier, one of the main problems for interpretive researchers is how their research is evaluated by others. The dominance of positivist evaluation criteria (validity, reliability, etc.) makes it hard to exchange knowledge between different epistemic communities (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006a). A first step towards the creation of a set of alternative evaluation criteria is to be more open and transparent about 'how we do what we do' (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006a). One way to make the research more transparent is by opening up the black-box of analysis. Among students of qualitative research, an often-heard question is: 'but how do you do this analysis?'. The response usually involves some reference to the 'emergence of patterns from the data' but researchers hardly ever say what that means exactly.

I do not claim that I can give a complete insight into the process of analysis, since the act of analysis is largely an idiosyncratic, creative process that is hard to capture. For the analysis of my data I followed a number of steps. The first step is already described in the previous paragraphs; generating the data. As Yanow & Schwartz-Shea (2006a) and Ybema et al. (2009b) indicate, interpretive researchers tend to refer to 'generating' data as opposed to 'collecting' or 'accessing'. Again, this highlights the centrality of the role of the researcher throughout all phases of the research. Nevertheless, a distinction can be made between 'naturally occurring' or 'found' data and 'manufactured' or 'constructed' data (O’Reilly, 2005; Silverman, 2007), the latter being all data that is generated through the interference of the researcher (e.g. through interviews, conversations, or participant observations) whereas the former data are generated without interference by the researcher (although it has to be noted that it is the researcher who turns them into data). As Silverman, citing Potter, mentions, the criterion for this category is to hypotheti-

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11. Due to the specific writing strategies I employ in this dissertation it is not possible to separately highlight each of the contributions of Hilde Slaats’ data in the research narratives. I am very grateful to her for her good ethnographic work and for allowing me to use her data.
cally think about whether the data would have existed if the researcher were dead or never even born (2007: 53). This is an interesting criterion which is only useful in the sense that it can be determined that a piece of text would have existed without the researcher, but it should not be disregarded that it becomes data only because the researcher labels it as such.

Apart from my personal field notes, interview recordings, pictures and observational notes, I collected what seemed to be an endless number of documents, articles, magazines, newspaper entries, posts on the intranet, memos, minutes, video clips, etc. For the Dutch case I came across an interesting collection of ‘found’ data, namely a number of books written and published by (former) frontline railway employees. Although these were generally not focused specifically on security, they nevertheless offered me a unique insight into the perceptions and interpretations of the daily practices as formulated by these authors. In a later chapter of this dissertation I will discuss these texts in detail, also in relation to the authors’ personal motives to write their book (I have contacted three of these authors and talked with them about their books).

The most difficult aspect of the data analysis was the selection of ‘relevant’ data. Going into the field with a very open mind and broad questions, initially everything seemed interesting and I was tempted to collect as many documents as I could to write down everything. As Yin points out: “many case studies begin with the naive assumption that "anything might be relevant, so one ought to observe and code everything” (1981: 60). Then, as the research progressed, the focus became more pointed towards specific issues and I became more selective with regard to what I deemed ‘relevant’. Nevertheless, I ended up with a huge amount of documents (and other data). If you have so many documents you tend to drown in them a bit. My strategy has been to quickly scan the documents and determine their relevance by selecting those pieces that actually deal with security-related issues. Subsequently I further categorized these documents by assigning general labels such as ‘terrorism’, ‘aggression’, ‘fare-dodgers’, ‘surveillance’, ‘cameras’, ‘violence’, ‘police’, ‘private security’, and so forth. These labels emerged intuitively through my initial reading of the texts and experiences in the field. Furthermore, I labelled the documents according to their origin (‘Renfe’, ‘NS’, ‘Ministry’, ‘European Commission’, etc.). I screened the other documents, with no direct ‘security’ focus and I made separate labels, such as ‘organizational structure’, ‘media’, or ‘politics’, ‘customers’, which I then further sub-categorized. Finally I made a ‘rest-category’ with all documents that seemed irrelevant at the time or that I wanted to save for a later moment.

My notes from observations and informal conversations were all typed up (as soon as possible) and saved according to the date, the case (Spain or Netherlands), the type of notes (brainstorm, notes from conversations, observational notes, etc.),

73
and general topic. Recordings from interviews and group conversations were transcribed verbatim (again as soon as possible after the recording) and saved according to date, case, respondent(s). Subsequently, I started to code the transcriptions and notes, using the Qualitative Data Analysis Software ‘Atlas.ti’. Some of the documents were also coded, although this took up a lot of time. At the time of analysis, the current version of Atlas.ti (version 5.2)¹² was not equipped to process files in ‘PDF’ format. The majority of documents were either websites or PDF. In order to load them into a ‘hermeneutic unit’ (the term for a single project in the program) I had to convert these into accessible formats such as ‘rich-text-format’ or ‘Jpeg’ (images).

I started coding the data without predefined codes. As I went along, the list of codes expanded and I was going back and forth to code the documents. This process emphasizes the iterative-inductive character of my research approach (O’Reilly, 2005). While I was coding the data, I developed certain ‘hunches’ or ideas, which I wrote down in memos (another function of the Atlas.ti program). These memos obtained a central position in my analysis as they became working texts. I wrote down all kinds of issues that came to mind such as relations between issues, events, contradictions, metaphors, negotiations, tensions, struggles, etc. I tried out different categorizations and other ways to organize my thoughts and notes and saved them in different memos. In a later stage, I started to add conceptual and theoretical remarks to the memos and slowly I found myself transgressing into the writing stage of the project. The process of writing things up, as opposed to writing down during the fieldwork (O’Reilly, 2005) is the last, important phase in the research process.

Evidently, the research cannot be clearly divided into separate phases, but the emphasis on any given moment during a study is on a specific activity. Anticipating the empirical part of the dissertation, in the remainder of this chapter, I will further discuss the ‘textwork’ phase (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009) of the research.

Writing Practice and the Practice of Writing

Still feeling quite uncomfortable in my borrowed uniform I follow my colleague for the day into the train. After he blows his whistle to warn people that the doors are closing, he shuts the doors with his key and we proceed to the nearest compartment.

¹². Recently, the newest version, Atlas.ti 6.0 was released, featuring the possibility to upload PDF files. I used this version in a later stage to analyse some of the PDF documents, such as personnel magazines and all kinds of news letters.
As we walk into the compartment Albert announces our arrival out loud. ‘Good morning, tickets please.’

He starts clipping thirteen tickets on the left side of the compartment and I start with the right side, awkwardly holding the clipper in my hand. A lot goes on in my head as I nervously receive the ticket of my first real customer.

‘If the passenger is on the way out you place the stamp on the left side of the ticket and if they are on the way back you stamp the right side’ – Albert’s instructions resonate in my mind – but how do you know if they’re coming or going? What city is the next station again? Did I check to see if the date is correct?

When I continue my way down the compartment I see that Albert is waiting for me at the end. He already finished his side. I am glad to see that he is watching closely and immediately rushes over when I encounter a passenger without a valid ticket. Routinely he asks the passenger why she doesn’t have a ticket, stressing that she is not obliged to answer this question.

The above is a story based on some of my field notes from the days I spent working with and observing the daily work practices of NS ticket inspectors. I did not write my notes precisely in the way they are presented here. As with most (if not all) researchers, a lot of crafting and re-writing was involved in transforming messy notes and other raw data into the smooth (ethnographic) narratives that are presented as the output of the research (Atkinson et al., 1999).

Although case studies may often begin with little conceptual framework, the narrative must nevertheless be organized around specific propositions, questions, or activities, with flexibility provided for modifying these topics as analysis progresses (Yin, 1981: 60).

The art of writing up the research results is a complex and obscure activity that deserves far more attention as part of a research’s methodology than is usual among scholars (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009). Discussing the use of certain techniques and tools may offer some insight into the process of moving from ‘raw’ data to smooth narrative. This is closely related to the notion of single, double and triple hermeneutics (e.g. Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009). A first moment of interpretation (single hermeneutic) takes place as individuals interpret a text or a situation. The second layer of interpretation (double hermeneutic) is involved when that first-level experience is interpreted by someone else (e.g. the researcher). The third interpretive moment (triple hermeneutic)

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13. Although nowadays the ticket inspectors use a stamping device to control the tickets, it is still referred to as ‘clipping’ tickets like it used to be common practice in the ‘old days’.
occurs as a reader interprets the interpretation of the initial interpretation as presented in the researcher’s text (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009). Especially the feeding back of research results into society is an important aspect that should be taken into consideration. Giddens, among others, discussed the iterative relation between research and practice, making a plea for an inherently reflexive attitude on the part of researchers. Thus, if we take the double and triple hermeneutic into account, it becomes obvious why it is so important to pay more attention to the process of research writing. As Heracleous and Barret state with reference to Giddens:

the interpretive validity of texts can be improved through ethnographic enquiry into the settings of the production of the text, the intellectual resources the author has drawn on, and the characteristics of the audience it is addressed to (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001: 761)

Although Heracleous and Barret are mainly referring to texts that we would consider ‘data’, the same arguments hold for the end products of our research. By providing some insight into the particularities of the production process of the research texts, the readers will be better equipped to interpret them.

In this section I will discuss my attempts to employ an approach that Phillips (1995) and Rhodes & Brown (2005b) call ‘Narrative Fiction’, Watson (2000) has termed ‘Ethnographic Fiction Science’ and Van Maanen (1988) refers to as ‘Impressionist Tales’. Although the theme is far from new in anthropology, within organization studies there is an increasing stream of authors who specifically draw attention to the creative (socially constructed) nature of (organizational) research. I was particularly drawn to the recognition of the fictional character of research reports as articulated by a number of scholars (e.g. Czarniawska, 1999a, 1999b; Phillips, 1995; Rhodes, 2001; Rhodes & Brown, 2005b; Watson, 2000). The fictional character of (research) narratives lies in the fact that they are ‘speech-acts’ that, retrospectively, put something into words that did not exist previously (Brown, 2006) and which has been written from the (unique) perspective of its author.

The narratives that I present in this book are partly fictional. Although they are based upon ethnographic fieldwork and theoretically informed, they do not refer to a situation that actually happened in the precise way in which it is described (Watson, 2000). The added value of a fictionalized...
narrative “lies in the fact that it tells a story, and in telling a story it creates a space for the representation of the life-world in which individuals find themselves” (Phillips, 1995: 628). Because the narratives are composed out of the great variety of accounts that are all derived from different sources and fieldwork experiences, the story obtains a certain plausibility, while at the same time the creative writing techniques the author employs make it attractive to read (Watson, 2000). The narratives are constructed and polished through my understanding of the organizational life-worlds I studied.

As I see it, these stories function as a way to raise and discuss a number of issues and to present a great variety of situational practices, from different perspectives, within their natural context, while doing justice to the ambiguity and complexity of the life-worlds of these organizations. Furthermore, following the impressive organizational ethnographies of authors like Kunda (1992) and Orr (1996), I believe that the foundation of organizational learning is grounded in the close study of what people actually do (Barley & Kunda, 2001; Yanow, 2006a). What is less clear in some of those ethnographic narratives is the way the author has actually constructed the narratives. For instance, in his wonderful ethnography ‘Engineering Culture’, Gideon Kunda provides detailed observational accounts of organizational practices such as meetings, yet it does not become entirely clear if these accounts are based on his notes of a particular meeting or if he more imaginatively combined his notes to write a somewhat ‘ideal-typical’ meeting, based on his observation of several meetings in this organization. The same goes for most (realist) ethnographic narratives. Kunda indicates that he writes in the style of traditional realist ethnography (Kunda, 1995), but what does that mean exactly? It is always the author of the book who chooses the particular words to convey a story and who edits the data in a manner that it is presentable to the imagined audiences. So how should we interpret the role of the author in traditional realist ethnographies compared to ethnographies written in a more confessional or impressionist (Van Maanen, 1988) style? I do not want to argue that all ethnographies should abandon a realist writing style, yet it would be useful if authors would pay more attention to their (imagined) audiences and what their influence is on the text they construct and the expectations of their readers. One way to reach that goal is to adopt the fictionalized writing style that I discuss here. By expanding the boundaries of ethnographic writing and being open about that, the audience is actively involved in the process of interpretation. Thus it does not only involve the style or specific genre that the author adopts but also this strategy is about managing the (mutual) expectations between author and audiences.

The fictionalized narrative approach gives the researcher the creative freedom to move away from traditional social scientific writing conventions and to choose from a great variety of writing strategies and techniques to “provide a space for
the reader to enter the story and vicariously experience the events portrayed" (Phillips, 1995: 634). In a book chapter on ethnographic writing practices, Humphreys and Watson discuss four ideal type forms of ethnographic writing along a continuum from ‘minimally manipulated written accounts to highly manipulated or ‘fictionalized’ accounts’ (Humphreys & Watson, 2009). They argue that the continuum represents the shift from realist ethnography towards ethnography based on the epistemological claim that it is impossible to ‘objectively’ represent reality or some ‘ultimate truth’. This side of the continuum is where my approach would also be situated.

As will become clear, the use of this strategy has a number of advantages. As Rhodes & Brown argue: “borrowing from literary genres can assist us in our efforts to produce more interesting and readable accounts of organizations” (2005b: 483). Not only does this strategy make it possible to construct a more attractive piece to read, but the combination of different sources into a single, coherent composite account also allows for a contextualization of the data beyond mere descriptive background (Pettigrew, 1985), treating it as an explicit part of the story (without extensive discussions of historical ‘facts’, organizational structures, and other ‘background information’). This contextualization is an essential part of (contemporary) ethnographic research, making it possible to reveal certain situational aspects and tensions between micro and macro phenomena. Another added value is that taking the liberty to combine and transform the data relieves the pressure of translating data from different languages into English (a sometimes very time-consuming and frustrating endeavour for non-English scholars). There is less need to worry about minor differences or nuances in meaning when translating quotes.

The use of fictional protagonists provides the opportunity to mask the actual identity of respondents (something which is often difficult in the case of knowledgeable audiences) since the characters in the narratives simply don’t exist but are constructed out of a great variety of sources, together illustrative of groups of actors. As Humphreys and Watson write, the stories of these protagonists are “amalgamations of the stories and utterances of several […] individuals located in pockets throughout the organization” (2009: 50). In addition, by letting go of certain conventional restrictions, the researcher is able to demonstrate tensions, conflicting perspectives, and contradictory (counter-) narratives by creating dialogues or interfaces between different actors, including the researcher. Apart from expressing different positions and perspectives a reflexive writing strategy also makes it easier to make the presence of the researcher in the story more (or less) explicit (Hardy & Clegg, 1997; Van Maanen, 1988). This, in turn, is another way to disclose certain issues in the local situation. As Philips puts it: “Many different viewpoints
can be included in the text, each represented by a character” (1995: 628). Furthermore, as Philips continues his plea for this approach: “[m]uch more room remains for doubt, uncertainty, contradiction, and paradox, aspects of organization that necessarily disappear under ‘rigorous’ analysis” (1995: 629). In the last place, and certainly not unimportantly, the actors in the field will presumably enjoy reading about and recognizing the research narratives.

My approach to the presentation of the empirical data consists of writing fictionalized narratives, based upon and composed out of different data sources. Furthermore, I have tried to play around with different writing styles and narrative perspectives in order to make the stories lively, interesting as well as informative and insightful. Below, I will use an example to give an idea about the ways in which I employ different styles and perspectives and I will reflect upon the consequences thereof. The two fragments that follow present two different versions of the same empirical account. The first is a more ‘traditional’ ethnographic account in which I present a story told to me by an informant in Spain. The second version is what I call ‘fictionalized’. In that version I have deliberately changed the narrative perspective. Instead of relating the conversation I had with this informant, I now tell the story as if we were watching her experience it. Furthermore, I have also introduced a second character in this fictionalized version. The story is dramatized but, and that is my main point here, the core of the story remains the same. Does that make the second version ‘less scientific’? I do not think so. As I already discussed, all ‘versions’ are idiosyncratic representations of that author’s interpretation. They are scientific in a sense that they are based upon fieldwork and careful analysis, and they are (usually) part of a larger text in which the findings are further theorized in order to highlight the knowledge that may be derived from the findings.

**Version 1**

When an incident occurs (this can be anything from very minor incidents, like a door in a train that doesn’t function properly to major incidents like an accident with casualties), the responsible persons and institutions are automatically informed (through sms) and when necessary (in case of major incidents) the top-management is also informed. According to the severity and nature of the incident specific actions are undertaken. When there is a minor incident the local responsible manager will usually be able to take care of it. In the case of larger incidents or when fatalities occur, usually a member of the central security department will travel to the scene and work together with the local representatives. In all cases the local responsible manager will report back to Madrid.

Alma, a manager at the central security department in Madrid, tells me that it is sometimes pretty annoying to get all these text-messages, especially when it regards
minor incidents (the majority of the messages obviously involve minor incidents, to which Alma does not need to react). Occasionally, with larger incidents, she has to drop whatever she is doing and proceed to the office or location of the incident.

‘You always have to keep an eye on your phone, even during the night or when you’re at a party or something. And after a while you kind of get used to receiving all these messages and then there is a risk that you don’t pay that much attention anymore, you sometimes tend to automatically click the message away. Sometimes I think that they send these messages to too many people, and for too many incidents. But then again, sometimes you really have to act. A couple of weeks for instance, I got a message at night about an accident. I had to rush and travel with a colleague and our driver to the scene of the accident; I didn’t even have time to take my hairbrush, deodorant, etc. We had to stop at a local gas station to buy the most urgent things, after all you don’t want to arrive completely dirty and with messy hair, and face the family of the victim. When I got there, a colleague and I had to inform the family that the victim had died. That really stays with you, it is so hard to do. But you know, it is part of the job.’

**Version 2**

It is late at night when Alma hears an incoming message on her phone. She barely opens her eyes while she routinely reaches for the phone on the nightstand and reads the message with one eye. It is the fourth message since she came home that night, but this time she sits up straight in bed after realizing the content of the message. There has been an accident!

She dials the number of one of her colleagues while jumping out of bed. Her colleague tells her that they have to go to the scene of the accident because there is a fatality. Alma quickly puts some clothes on and while she rushes out the door, waiting for the driver to pick her up she realizes that she doesn’t carry any toiletries in her purse.

She takes a deep breath before stepping into the car. While the driver pulls away from her house she asks him if it would be possible to stop at a gas station to buy a toothbrush, a hairbrush and some deodorant.

The driver nods calmly. He knows that she will have to face the family of the victim once they arrive there. There are times when he is glad that he is just a driver without this type of responsibilities. Alma sits quietly in the back and tries to get herself together.

Although the first fragment provides more detailed information, the second fragment is actually more powerful due to the dramatic style. By converting the story that Alma tells in the first text to perspective in the second version, the event comes to life for the reader. Obviously both are narrative fictions (in the
sense of being constructed by the author), yet the contrast between the two versions is indicative of the power of the author and the variety of writing styles that one can choose from (Czarniawska, 1999b; Gabriel, 1995; Rhodes, 2000, 2001). Whether or not employing literary and fictional writing strategies, all writing is ultimately about making choices (and as Rhodes & Brown (2005b) argue, hoping that we can be responsible about them). As such, any social scientific endeavour inevitably involves the interpretation, translation and transformation of empirical situations into constructed narratives that can take different forms and shapes. Traditional forms of research writing, based on realist conventions, typically involve the depersonalization of the author and often include some degree of ‘truth-claim’. With the linguistic turn, scholars in the social sciences became increasingly aware of the subjectivity and constructed nature of facts of social life and the impossibility to objectively represent social life in writing. This awareness has led to an increasing plea for reflexivity among critical, interpretive scholars. Rhodes and Brown, for instance, argue that “an ethical writing is one where it is accepted that what is written was made as a decision by the writer rather than through the decidable application of particular methods and techniques for the true” (2005b: 480). They argue that it is the responsibility of all researchers to consciously make such decisions and reflect upon them instead of following some standardized, pre-established guidelines for writing research. Nevertheless, if we continue to follow the accepted social scientific conventions, it is very admirable to recognize the constructed nature of social reality but it will not contribute to our understanding of it. For as long as we still need to convince other scholars of the ‘validity’ and ‘rigor’ of our work, we will remain trapped in the discursive system of traditional, dominant perceptions of science.

I do not want to argue that we should set aside all our basic techniques and practices as researchers, but merely want to state that it might be fruitful to be more creative and to be transparent about it. As Yanow and Schwart-Shea argue, we should make our research methods explicit outside our research community. “As long as a researcher is writing for a community of readers sharing the same presuppositions and assumptions, there is little or no need to be explicitly reflexive about what was done either in accessing and generating data or in analyzing them” (2006b: xiii). Such a reflexive attitude however, will open up possibilities for interdisciplinary work and dialogues between scholars with different ontological and epistemological positions. An increasing number of scholars recognize the use of fictionalized writing strategies as one of many possible ways of moving beyond disciplinary boundaries (e.g. Boje et al., 2005; Currie & Brown, 2003; Czarniawska, 1999b; Gabriel, 2000; Parker et al., 1999; Phillips, 1995; Rhodes, 2000; Rhodes & Brown, 2005a, 2005b; Watson, 2000).
In this section I aimed to show that the application of a fictionalized writing strategy does not only make research accounts more interesting and readable, but that it provides us with a means to address a number of problems that have been identified by critics of realist epistemologies (such as the omnipotent voice, untenable truth claims, uneven power relations between researcher, research participants and reader, etc). In addition, it does greater justice to the complexity, ambiguity and polyphonic character of social phenomena. This approach gives the readers a taste of the life-world experiences, in which they receive an active role when it comes to the interpretation and creation of meaning. It allows the author to move back and forth between situations, voices, and contexts, and to touch upon the complex relations between the micro and macro levels of social phenomena in a way that is very accessible for most audiences. Traditional research accounts are usually rather inaccessible to audiences beyond the scientific community. Research narratives such as the ones presented in this study are not only entertaining to read for the actors in the field of study, they can also help to make them aware of certain issues. An important problem with many conventional studies of social situations is that the boundaries between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ are often unclear. Phenomena are studied and theories are developed from these studies. At the same time these theoretical concepts feed back into the practical arena and become reified ‘objects’, which then become part of the field of study, leading to adaptations of theories, etc. This circular domination of certain discourses can conceal what is right in front of us.

The Stories to Come: A Disclaimer

The actions of organizational ethnographers, and how they report their actions, are constrained by their working conditions, the demands of academic standards, and accepted discursive practices (Fine & Shulman, 2009: 178).

In the following chapters you will read stories that are based on the fieldwork of my study. Together they represent my interpretation and analysis of the ways actors in the Dutch and Spanish railways make sense of security issues. As I have discussed in this chapter, my intention with the specific writing strategies that I adopt is to focus less on the problematic link between text and reality. By being open about the fictionalization of the data from the start I hope to manage the expectations of my audiences. Following some of the arguments set out in this chapter, I should be as open and transparent as possible (Fine & Shulman, 2009) about the way in which the stories that you are about to read have come to be. I hope that I have made clear that they are the result of my field work and analysis.
about how I have come to understand the (situated) ways in which actors in Dutch and Spanish railway companies make sense of security. Nevertheless, it is difficult (if not impossible) to disclose what each part in a research narrative is based on. That is far beyond the scope of any empirical study, and not the point I try to make here. The desire to be completely transparent about the process of interpretation and ‘translation’ into the end product is an illusion that I try to problematize. As should have become clear throughout the preceding chapters, there is no such thing as ‘raw’ data, since the selection and aesthetic presentation of data is always the responsibility and choice of the author (hence the term ‘narrative’ – it narrates the point of view of the author about a particular story/moment). In my view, any academic text is based on the interpretations, selections and authorial choices of the researcher. It is our job to write a piece of text that is both informative and appealing to different audiences (respondents, laymen, fellow-academics, students, etc.). As I see it, my specific approach accomplishes these three aspects. A few remarks about the specific outline of the empirical chapters.

As mentioned, most of the characters that figure in the stories are composite, fictionalized characters. They do not exist. To safeguard the anonymity of my research participants I will not disclose any information about who said what and when. In some cases it seemed illogical to disguise the identity of actors, mainly because they are public figures or their names are publicly known. In these instances I have stayed closer to the ‘natural’ data than in the more ‘manipulated’ or ‘fictionalized’ parts of my stories.

The empirical chapters are structured as follows. The main part of the chapters is constituted by the narratives I wrote as a result of my first-level analysis of the data. In between the different narratives I provide some additional information and reflections about the situations and issues that feature in the narratives. Although I have tried to be as complete as possible in the construction of the narratives, at times it is necessary to ‘zoom-out’ a bit and discuss certain issues to a fuller extent. The paragraphs between the narratives might suggest there is a certain factuality about them. Specific details about certain episodes in the history of the companies is provided as well as some structural information about the specific lay-out of the railway sectors in Spain and the Netherlands. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these ‘informative’ parts of the text are just as much a part of my interpretive construction of the data as the narratives. Both are based on my analysis and are written in a way that builds up towards the deeper analysis in the concluding part of the dissertation.

In the first two empirical chapters the companies Renfe Operadora and NS and their security departments are introduced. Apart from some general descriptions and explorations of daily life in these two companies, the chapters offer a contextualized view of the organization of security in the company structure as well as
with regard to the wider sector. After these two ‘introductory’ chapters, the subsequent chapter delves deeper into the life-worlds of operational or ‘frontline’ staff in both organizations. The stories from the frontline are embedded within the broader picture that is evolving with regard to security practices at Renfe Operadora and NS. The fourth and final empirical chapter is dedicated to the relations between security and technological innovations. Technology is an important part of security operations and the localized enactment of technology is very telling with regard to how actors perceive security in relation to their role and identity. Whereas the first two empirical chapters discuss the Spanish and Dutch context separately, in the third empirical chapter the focus switches between both contexts.\footnote{To facilitate the reading an icon displaying the map of Spain or the Netherlands is placed at the beginning of each narrative to indicate where that particular narrative is situated.}
Part II: The Narratives

After three chapters on the background, underlying assumptions and my perspectives it’s about time to introduce what this study is all about. In the following three chapters I present my view on security in the Spanish company Renfe Operadora and the Dutch company NS. As should be clear by now, I will not present my interpretations in a traditional, ethnographic style. I wrote a number of short narratives, based on my analysis of the data that I collected among organizational actors in both organizations. The narrative style that I have chosen for a large part of the following chapters has been a deliberate choice to take the reader along a journey across time and space, meeting different people and experiences different moments. At times throughout the chapters I will take a step back from the narratives and offer some additional information as well as some considerations and reflections about the narratives, to keep in the back of our minds as we proceed towards the concluding part of the dissertation. The result is a mix between ‘zooming-in’ and ‘zooming-out’ (Nicolini, 2009) of the contextualized life-worlds of individual actors. But let me not get ahead of myself here. Without further ado I will now take you on a trip to Spain and the Netherlands.
En Route: From Atocha to the Security Department

During the morning rush-hour the usual crowd of people on their way to work get off at Madrid’s largest public transport station, Atocha. For some of them Atocha is the end of the trip, others merely get off to change onto another train, bus or metro line. Let’s pretend that this morning you arrive at Atocha by metro. From the metro platform you would probably walk towards the central area of the station. Walking through the metro station you would pass by a number of shops, most of them still closed at this early time of day. The coffee bar is open and busy; a steady flow of people enter the bar, order a coffee with milk before continuing their way to work. Once you exit the slightly dark passage way out of the metro station you enter a large area, spread over two levels with electronic staircases in the centre of the hall.

On the top level of the hall, two security guards are patrolling along the flight of stairs and main corridor. They wear a typical security guard uniform giving them a formal and authoritative look. Over their jacket they wear a bright yellow safety vest with the logo of the railway company Renfe and the word ‘Seguridad’ on the back.

Although they are very similar to the security guards in the metro station or elsewhere in the station, if you take a closer look there are slight differences between the uniforms. The differences in their appearance reveal what company the guards work for. Some of them clearly work for Renfe Operadora, the railway operator; others work for Metro de Madrid or ADIF, the railway infrastructure manager. Apart from the
company the guards are working for, a smaller distinctive logo on their uniform indicates through which (private) security company they are hired.

José and Francisco for instance, are hired through one of the biggest private security companies in the country, which has obtained a large portion of the entire body of work that Renfe Operadora contracts out. If you would linger around the station for a few hours instead of just passing through, and watch them during a shift you would see them constantly patrolling the station, looking around attentively. With their formal – military style - security uniform and baton their image sends out a somewhat contradictory message of both danger and security. In particular as they take position at different ends of the hall every once in a while, statically observing the crowd, their authoritative look and presence leave an undeniable impression.

Throughout the shift they regularly check in with one another either by radiophone or by approaching each other physically. At times they also chat with some of the other guards in the station or other personnel.

If you would stay around long enough, you would probably be a witness to the guards ‘in action’. Maybe they would escort a homeless man out of the station because he is bothering passengers by begging for some change. Or they would catch somebody trying to travel without a valid ticket, intervene when some youngsters start to fight in a dark corner of the station, or – for one reason or the other – ask passengers to show their identification.

Whenever somebody approaches them to ask for information they refer them back to the customer service desk or one of the information hostesses. Such rigid interactions with passengers clearly contribute to their overall image of authority and force.

Apart from the security guards and the travelling crowd, the station is inhabited by several cleaners, customer-service employees, personnel from shops and restaurants, train personnel, and ticket sales employees working in or around the station. Atocha is a very large station and there are many small shops, bars, restaurants, vendors, and the like throughout the station. The station is divided in different areas. The central area is usually very busy, with lots of people hurrying from one side to the other. This is where the commuter train operations are established. With several electronic stairs and corridors leading to this area, it may be described as the heart of the station. From here, large crowds of passengers go through one of the tourniquets to access the platforms from where trains leave for destinations in the large metropolitan area of Madrid. Others have just arrived and walk towards one of the other areas of the station, such as the long-distance train area. To the side of the commuter area is the
entrance to the metro station of Atocha. This is a dark area with an industrial appearance. Construction work is being done at several places. Upstairs, extending from the landing of the electronic stairs, another entrance to the Metro area is situated, as well as one of the entrances to the high-speed lounge. A cylinder-shaped extension of the building functions as the main exit and entrance to the commuter area of Atocha.

One of the most striking areas of Atocha station is the botanical garden in the middle of the long-distance station, right between the ticket lounge and the upstairs entrance to the departure lounge for the high speed line (AVE). It is a beautiful contrast to the busy, chaotic atmosphere in the commuter area and the Metro station. The warm, tropical air creates an air of tranquillity. It is a nice place for people to sit on one of the benches around the garden or to enjoy a coffee on one of the terraces surrounding it while waiting for their trains.

The exit upstairs to the street level gives access to the taxi area as well as some of the bus lines. If you proceed towards the large street passing by the station you walk over a bridge with a construction site on the one hand and a large parking lot on the other. In the middle of that square is the cylinder-shaped entrance to the downstairs commuter train area of the station. In the middle of the busy road in front of the station a large cylinder made of glass is visible. This is the outer part of the monument for the victims of the terrorist bombings in Madrid on March 11, 2004. Underneath it, right in the middle of the commuter train area of the station is the subterranean part of the monument; a large room shielded by soundproof doors and windows. The walls of the room are dark blue and the only light in the room is coming from the glass cylinder on the street. The inside of the cylinder is covered in a plastic textile, displaying hundreds of phrases about the terrorist attack. These messages, in different languages, were left by the public in the days after the attacks in 2004.

Leaving the station and taking a right turn you would walk into a busy street to the side of the station. There, overlooking the train tracks, you can see a row of four big, stately and gracious buildings that are housing part of the offices of Renfe Operadora and ADIF\(^\text{15}\). After the recent separation of the old company Renfe into these two newly formed organizations the buildings and other assets of the company have been divided as well. At this time\(^\text{16}\), the physical separation continues to be in process and there are still entities of both organizations located in these buildings (manifested through the combination of old and new logos at the front of the buildings). The mix between old, dusty offices and freshly decorated, spacious rooms gives away the fact that the two companies are in the middle of the process of separation and redefinition of their corporate identities.

\(^{15}\) ADIF (Administrador de Infraestructuras Ferroviarias) is the new company that manages the railway infrastructure under the authority of the Ministry of Public Works (Ministerio de Fomento).

\(^{16}\) 2006-2007.
Let’s say that today you are heading for the last of these four buildings to visit someone at the Corporate Directorate of Civil Protection, Security and Risk Prevention\textsuperscript{17}, Renfe Operadora’s security department\textsuperscript{18}. This department occupies the first floor of the apparently recently renovated building. The entrance is a clear, open space, closed off from the street by glass doors engraved with the new Renfe Operadora logo. From the entrance you can either take the elevator or main stairway to the basement or second and higher floors, or you can take a small flight of stairs up to the entrance of the first/ground floor, where the security department is located. A security guard in uniform sits behind a small desk at the left side of the entrance. To enter the building you have to show either a company card or, if you are a visitor, official identification. The guard will then write down your name and telephone the secretariat to confirm your arrival.

To enter the department you need to go through some automatic glass doors, either opening it with a code, an automated fingerprint scanner or with a special security pass. The doors lead you to the middle of a long, stretched hallway. At the left end of the hallway the private offices of the department’s director and sub-director are located, as well as a small meeting room. At the right end of the hallway there is a side-entrance which leads to the small parking lot of the building, where the members of the management team of the department have their parking spaces. This door is also secured with an electronic lock that all employees can either open with their security pass or by scanning their index-fingerprint. Alongside of the hallway various office spaces are located, most of them connected to each other, without any doors to close them off. Only very few employees (those who occupy a higher-management position) have a private office. The only separation between the different workstations is by means of bookcases or other office furniture. Within these large office spaces, the employees with a managerial function have their own office space with a single desk and some bookcases, while the rest of the employees are working side by side at long desks, each with their own PC but without any separation.

It is clear that the department has moved in here only recently because there are several construction workers and technicians installing lights, security systems and other small things. Nevertheless, the design of the office is carried through throughout the whole floor, with the purple and grey colours and company logo displayed everywhere.

On the left side of the hallway, between the entrance and the office of the director the Directorate’s video-control room (CECON\textsuperscript{19}) is situated. This is a large room,

\textsuperscript{17} La Dirección Corporativo de Protección Civil, Seguridad y Prevención de Riesgos
\textsuperscript{18} Hereafter referred to as the security department. See appendix 1 for an organizational chart of Renfe Operadora and the security department.
\textsuperscript{19} Centro de Coordinación Nacional – Centre of National Coordination.
closed off from the hallway by a wall with the bottom half closed and the upper half
made out of windows, creating a sort of aquarium (as the people in the department like
to call it). This room is closed off with an electronic key, just like the side-entrance, and
only designated people have access. Next to CECON (and separated from it by another
glass wall), the secretariat is located. In this room, all secretaries of the department are
working together. There are two long desks placed facing each other, with three work-
stations on each side. In this room there is also a small coffeemaker and refrigerator
with bottled water.

Across from the hallway of the secretariat there is a door, leading to another stair-
case and elevator. Going down the stairs, another hallway belonging to the security
department is located. Here there are various meeting rooms, one of which is a very
large room, equipped with several monitors and telephones. This is the so-called
crisis room, but usually it serves as a conference room for formal meetings or meet-
ings with a larger group of people. Apart from these meeting rooms, a large room
alongside this hallway is used for the storage of data. It contains a number of compu-
ter servers and other machinery that receive, process and store all data that come
from the information system and cameras across the country and it is used to oper-
ate the monitoring system upstairs in CECON. Furthermore, there is a small kitchen
in this hallway, used by the employees to have lunch or smoke a cigarette (smoking is
prohibited in all public buildings in Spain by law, except in designated smoking
areas). At the end of the hallway there is a door to the street (secured with an electro-
nic key like the other entrances). But for now, you stay at the secretariat to wait for one
of the secretaries to introduce you to Daniel, whom you are meeting today.

From Renfe to Renfe Operadora: the End of an Era

One of the observations that are expressed in the narrative above is that Renfe
Operadora is still in the middle of a transformation process after the recent separa-
tion of the old state-owned company into a railway operator and infrastructure
manager. As of January 1st, 2005 the official separation between the infrastructure
management and train operations became a fact (see appendix 2 for a figure of
institutional relations and task division in the Spanish rail sector). On that date,
by official decree, two independent public entities under the Ministry of Public
Works were created; ADIF for the infrastructure management and Renfe Opera-
dora for the operation services (Lozano, 2005). As the newspaper headline (fig. 4.1)
puts it dramatically, Renfe completed its ‘final journey’ at the end of 2004 with a
symbolic last trip. After 63 years as one of the main public companies in Spain,
Renfe has ceased to exist. The first concrete step towards a liberalized railway mar-
ket was a memorable, yet controversial moment in the history of the Spanish rail-
ways.
In line with railway sectors across the European Union (and beyond), the Spanish railway sector has experienced some important changes during the last twenty-five years. The approbation of the Terrestrial Transportation Law\(^{20}\) (LOTT) in 1987 marked the beginning of a period of change in the way the railway sector in Spain is structured and regulated. This law was the first step towards the liberalization of the railways, which became the main aim for developments across European railway sectors. This European aim is embodied in the 91/440/EC directive, stating the requirement for Member States to separate the accounts for the railway operations and infrastructure management (European Union, 1991). The central idea behind LOTT was to give Renfe, the State-owned railway operator, a more autonomous position, paving the way for the future privatization of the company (Campos, 2005; Muñoz Rubio, 1995; Ramos Melero, 2004).

\(^{20}\) Ley de Ordenación de los Transportes Terrestres.
Around the same time in 1991, a major reorganization was implemented within Renfe to create a higher level of service and to increase the competitiveness of the company (Quintana & Solé, 2001; Sala, 2000). A new organizational structure was created, consisting of eleven Business Units and differentiating between operational and supporting activities. The idea behind this new structure was to facilitate the accountability of each individual Business Unit, thereby making the business results of the whole company more transparent. The overall aim was to anticipate on the developments in the international market (Lapastora, 1996; Muñoz Rubio, 1995; Quintana & Solé, 2001; Sala, 2000). Nevertheless, the Spanish railway sector continued to struggle financially and the government decided to liberalise the Spanish railway market (Campos, 2005). On 17 November 2003, the Spanish Government approved a new Railway Law\(^2\), integrating the first railway package of the European Commission into Spanish legislation (Ministerio de Fomento, 2003). With this law a new organizational model for the Spanish Railway Sector was initiated, ending the monopoly position of Renfe and preparing the sector for a liberalized, competitive system (Renfe Operadora, 2006b). This resulted in January 2005 in the physical separation of infrastructure management and operations. Although eventually the passenger market will be opened up for competition, Renfe Operadora has a concession for the main network until 2010 (Rodríguez, 2005). The general terms and agreements of this concession are stated in a contract\(^2\) between the company and the Spanish State (Renfe Operadora, 2006a).

Upon the separation, both Renfe Operadora and ADIF rearranged their organizational structure to adapt to the new situation. For Renfe Operadora, this involved a further centralization of general services, fortifying the corporate layer of the company. The course that was chosen in the late 1980s by Mercè Sala, the then President of Renfe (Sala, 2000) is now carried through to a fuller extent. The new organizational structure consists of separate, largely autonomous divisions that represent the different ‘operators’ (High Speed/Long Distance, Commuter/Regional, Freight/Logistics and Fabrication/Maintenance). Above these independent divisions, there is a solid corporate level, consisting of general divisions that provide specific services for the company (such as human resources, legal advice, financial department and security) and can be chartered as such by the operators (see appendix 1 for a complete organizational chart of Renfe Operadora).

The security system of Renfe is different from that in most countries with regard to the surveillance and enforcement tasks. In contrast to many of their European

\(^2\) La Ley 39/2003 del Sector Ferroviario.  
\(^2\) Contrato-Programa.
counterparts, the Spanish railway sector does not have a special railway police force. The security of railway operations is managed by the companies themselves, with support from the national police force that has a number of mobile teams dedicated to the transportation sector (Ordóñez, 2004). During the 1980s, the company strengthened its security policy significantly by creating special departments for safety and security issues. The main objective was to create an integrated security philosophy in the company and as such it marked the start of a centralization of the company’s security policies (Corona, 1990). It was around the same time that the company decided to outsource surveillance tasks to private companies (Corona, 1990). In replacing internal security employees with external security guards, the management saw a number of advantages. For instance, the number of guards needed to be adapted continuously, and by contracting private security guards the number of guards that are contracted at a particular moment in time would be more flexible. Furthermore, the competition between different private security companies is high, which – in theory – should increase the level of services that the company receives. In addition, by outsourcing surveillance and enforcement tasks, the company’s own personnel would be able to keep focussed on the core business of operating train services. According to the management of the security department, the professional security guards have received a more specialized training and due to their relative distance from the company are assumed to better maintain their authoritative image.

At the time of the separation between Renfe Operadora and ADIF, the two departments for safety and security issues that were established in 1985 were still in function. After the separation, the main part of the safety department remained with ADIF, whereas the security department was transferred to Renfe Operadora. Nevertheless, both companies established additional departments for security and safety as well. After all, the companies are confronted with both security and safety issues.

With regard to security in the new Renfe Operadora structure, each region in Spain has its own operational security department. These departments all operate under the authority of the central security department. This is the Corporate Directorate of Civil Protection, Security and Risk Prevention in Madrid. The directorate is part of the General Directorate of Safety, Organization and Human Resources, which is one of the centralized General Directorates within Renfe Operadora. The security department coordinates all activities with regard to per-

23. Dirección de Seguridad.
24. Dirección de Protección Civil.
25. Dirección Corporativo de Protección Civil, Seguridad y Prevención de Riesgos.
sonal security of passengers and personnel, surveillance, preventive measures and risk reduction, protection of material and buildings against vandalism, etc. All regional security delegates report directly to the central directorate, where the company’s security strategies are developed and implemented. Until the separation in 2005, the central security department, consisting of three divisions dedicated to ‘security’, ‘civil protection’, and ‘risk prevention’ was housed in different offices around Madrid. After the separation the three divisions were brought together in a single building, taking the integration of the security operation to the next level.

The new institutional situation of the company is surrounded with a lot of ambiguity and uncertainty. The prospect of the competitive structure in the passenger market is experienced among many employees as a threat to the existence of the company. A lot of the members of the organization consider the competitive position of the company to be rather weak. They feel that they are stuck in the old structures from the state-owned company, without any prospect of escaping. Some even consider this to be a disadvantage compared to new companies in the field. In addition, the commercial position of the company seems to worsen the employer-employee relations because whereas in the old organization there was a guaranteed job security, this has now become uncertain. Profitability has become a central aim of the company and this is perceived by many to be contradictory to some of the company’s old values.

Although the business model of the company (with the autonomous Business Units structure) is especially aimed at improving the competitive position of Renfe, some feel that it is being taken too far. Especially employees at the central level of the organization (the so-called corporate level which delivers services and support to the different operators within Renfe) experience a fragmentation process within the company. Each of the different Units (or operators) like the High Speed Lines and Metropolitan Lines has very distinct interests and products and they almost seem to be completely different companies. A number of respondents have indicated that, although they understand the necessity of this fragmentation in order to prepare for the liberalization, they ultimately fear for their position.

Among the public and in the news media this fragmentation within the railway network is also subject to debate. For instance, an accumulation of problems and incidents in the Metropolitan network around Barcelona caused a lot of criticism towards the railway policy of the government and of Renfe Operadora. For instance, it is argued that the policy is unevenly focussed on developing and expanding the high-speed network at the cost of metropolitan operations. The high-speed
line is a very attractive business from an economical and political point of view, while the short-distance lines are of less priority at the moment, thereby letting down millions of commuters who depend on these networks each day (Etxezarreta, 2007; La Tribuna de Guadalajara, 2003). There are also concerns about the quality of privatized rail services with regard to security (CGT Ávila, 2007) and the threat of disappearing jobs (Diario de León, 2002).

A large group of Renfe’s employees and the company’s trade unions have expressed their concerns with the liberalization plans from the beginning (e.g. El Ideal Gallego, 2003). At the time of the development of the plans for the sector a serious conflict occurred between the trade unions, the government and the company’s management with regard to the (economic) feasibility of the plans and the position of the employees. The trade unions stated that they feared for loss of the public character of the railway network (EIROnline, 2000). Eventually (after a lot of protests and even strikes) they agreed with the plans after a number of concrete commitments from the government and management. Nevertheless, they remained critical because they deemed the plans insufficiently elaborated. It is even suggested that the government deliberately lets the Metropolitan networks deteriorate by not investing, to justify an eventual privatization of this network (e.g. Gallindo, 2004).

**The New Company: Where Do We Stand?**

Like every morning, Teresa and a group of colleagues from the security department gather in the long hallway around 11 a.m. to go out to have breakfast. They usually either go to the company restaurant in the basement of the first in the row of office buildings or they go to one of the bars in the vicinity of the office. Today the group consists of seven people with different positions throughout the department, ranging from the secretaries to security officers and one of the managers. They decide to go to the company restaurant.

The group leaves the office via the side entrance onto the parking lot. The shortest route to the company restaurant is around the back of the buildings. Via the rooftops of the basement that extend to the back of the buildings a short walk takes them to the first of the four buildings. From there a dingy staircase goes down to the restaurant. On the walls of the entrance, flyers from the different trade unions are posted along with personal ads and other posters. The main part of the restaurant is a large room divided in two areas. A smaller area is designated as a smoking area and the main part is non-smoking. Upon entering the room, the smell of traditional home-cooked Spanish cuisine fills your nose. On the right side of the room, a large buffet is situated where a few cooks are busy preparing today’s lunch. At the back of the room there is a door leading to a separate area where the bar is located. In this area it is also
permitted to smoke and around this time in the morning it is rather busy and noisy with groups of people chatting away.

As the group enters the bar they greet the barman. Some of the people see a familiar face and stop for a short chat. It is obvious that this group of people has a well-defined routine. Teresa approaches the bar, but before she can order the barman already starts preparing everyone’s favourite beverage. After some deliberation with the others, Teresa also orders a plate of sandwiches with Spanish cured ham.

While they sip their coffees, the group discusses an article on the company’s intranet about the division of responsibilities in the railway sector after the separation from ADIF. The European Commission has taken the next step towards the liberalization of the passenger market and the future competition of Renfe Operadora seems to be yet another step closer.

Victoria ponders the fact that ADIF will become the authority responsible for granting the future concessions. This has already caused some alterations in the relations between Renfe Operadora and ADIF. After being separated, they are increasingly developing as separate companies along with distinct interests and responsibilities. On the other hand they still share so much history, especially at the personal level.

‘It’s strange, on the one hand I still see them as my colleagues, but at the same time we are really growing apart. We don’t know anymore what is going on there and they don’t really know about us either’, Victoria says.

‘Well I have more contact with some of my old colleagues at ADIF than with most people in some departments at Renfe, Teresa responds. ‘To be honest, I don’t know whether we’ve made the right choice in staying with Renfe. I heard from Elena over at ADIF that everything is so much better there.’

‘What do you mean by better? Isn’t it all just the same?’, Rafael asks her.

‘Well at least they know that they will still have a job after 2010’, Teresa explains.

‘Yeah, for us it doesn’t look so promising. I doubt if Renfe will be able to compete in the market now that the government doesn’t support them anymore’, Victoria adds.

‘No way, they’re not going out of business, that’s impossible’, Rafael sounds a bit agitated. ‘They won’t let a company like Renfe go out of business.’

‘Well, maybe we won’t go out of business’, Teresa says, ‘but it’s not gonna be the same. A lot will change and I think that the company will eventually be split up in different operators. Cercanías will be signed over to the autonomous communities or city governments and AVE will become a commercial organization.’

‘Right. And then what happens with the employees at the corporate level?’, Victoria says. ‘I mean, they cannot guarantee life-time job security as it used to be with Renfe.’

At that moment Miguel joins the group and asks what they are talking about.

‘We’re discussing the future of our company’.

‘Oh, that’s a difficult one’, Miguel says with a deep sigh. ‘I remember when my grandfather and father still worked for Renfe, so much has changed already’.
‘Exactly, their generation could be sure of a life-long job guarantee. Renfe still was the best employer of the country’, Victoria eagerly agrees. ‘I personally feel less loyal to the company already. If they are not gonna take care of us, we have to think about ourselves’ she adds.

‘Yes, but come on, what else can you expect? Times change. Besides, where else would you want to work? I don’t see it all so negatively’ Rafael responds.

The others all have family members who work or used to work at the railroad and they share the sentiment about the disappearing family ethos of Renfe.

At that point, Victoria makes a sarcastic remark about the family-culture at Renfe: ‘In a way it is still a company that is extremely loyal with regard to family-ties... when it comes to the higher positions that is. I just heard they are going to appoint another nephew of Antonio to that vacant management position’.

‘Really? What experience does he have?’ Teresa asks critically. ‘Don’t know, but does that really matter?’, Victoria clearly disapproves of this appointment, ‘you know how these things go, don’t you?’

The conversation continues for a short while, but the subject gradually changes into lighter subjects. After half an hour the group returns to their office.

**Something Old, Something New**

The commercialization and separation (as well as fragmentation) of the company has led to a shift in orientation of the operations within Renfe Operadora. As indicated by many employees, the new orientations are conflicting with some of the old values that are persisting (to a certain extend) throughout Renfe. Traditionally, the organization has been centralized and hierarchical (Duijnhoven, 2007b; EIR-Online, 2000; Sala, 2000), and although frontstage communications within the company stress the need for a cultural transformation towards a competitive state of mind (e.g. Jiménez, 2005; Renfe Operadora, 2006c, 2006d; Sala, 2000), the highly formalized work structures and ‘militaristic’ culture seem to be so strongly embedded that they are not questioned, even though at times they complicate the work processes in the new situation.

Taking a look at the situation within Renfe Operadora, the changes in the sector have certainly had an important impact on the daily operations of the organization and its members. In particular, the separation of Renfe Operadora and ADIF has had important consequences for the organizational actors involved. Former colleagues and co-workers are separated and buildings are literally divided (visible by the increasing use of the two distinct logos and company colours). While the actual separation is a long process, both companies are moving their own way and the common grounds are disappearing. At the frontstage and in many formal documents the importance of cooperation between the two organizations is stressed,
but many employees feel the distance between the two companies growing each day.

Despite careful preparations in the process towards the actual separation, a number of preoccupations have emerged since the actual separation on January 1st, 2005. What preoccupied the security department of Renfe Operadora in the first months after the separation is to find an appropriate position within the organizational field. Although both Renfe Operadora and ADIF are new companies, ADIF is in fact the continuation of the old company. Furthermore, ADIF remains directly under the responsibility of the Ministry of Public works, whereas Renfe Operadora is directly responsible for maintaining its position. Renfe Operadora’s current concession on the main railway network expires in 2010. In theory, other competitors may apply for parts of the concession at that point. This means that Renfe Operadora has to obtain a legitimate position within the network of relations in the sector and confirm the quality of its operations. Interestingly, ADIF is the company that will give out the concessions on behalf of the Ministry of Public Works, giving them a powerful position over Renfe.

The manifestations of the separation and changing positions of ADIF and Renfe Operadora extend also to the area of security. In the former organization the security system was coordinated in the Centre of Emergencies and Security (CES), located at the Chamartín station in Madrid. Upon the separation, the CES has been transferred to ADIF because of the particular specifications of the system. Most cameras in the system are aimed at traffic circulation control, which is part of the task description of ADIF (see appendix 2 for a figure of institutional relations and task division in the Spanish rail sector) and. Between January 2005 and the fall of 2006 ADIF and Renfe Operadora continued to share operational functions of the control centre. In October 2006 the newly developed monitoring centre at Renfe Operadora’s security department in the office near Atocha has been inaugurated. From that moment onwards, the security and control systems of the two companies is formally and physically separated as well.

The new monitoring centre at the security department – CECON – is aimed specifically at personal security and civil protection. In that way it is complementary to the ‘old’ network that has been transferred to ADIF. Despite the new operational advantages, the separation of surveillance systems has also complicated the operations of and cooperation between both companies. Whereas all data from cameras in the system used to be directly available to both parties, due to the separation the companies need to come up with advanced protocols and scenarios with regard to information sharing. The question is then, which data need to be shared automatically, which data should be contained within the own system and when should specific data be communicated?
The changes in the company leading up to and since the separation do not only have consequences at the institutional and organizational level of the organization. At the level of the daily life-worlds of the employees the changes have also had significant implications. Something as seemingly straightforward as the physical outlook of the office spaces and moving different departments together into a new office often has significant influences. People who are used to having their own office now work in an open office space, all secretaries are put together in one room and a interior design that is (according to some of the respondents) developed with the idea of ‘openness’ and ‘transparency’ turns out to be experienced in contradictory ways as it is enacted in the daily lives of organizational actors. This is not an unusual phenomenon, as is increasingly emphasized by some scholars in organization studies (e.g. Kornberger & Clegg, 2003, 2004; Van Marrewijk, 2006; Yanow, 1995). The physical work environment and material artefacts have an important influence on work practices and culture. Whereas organizations are increasingly conceived of as fluid and boundary-less networks of people, this stream of work emphasizes that we should not ignore the materiality of organizations, since this material space (pre)structures movements and flows of communication (Kornberger & Clegg, 2003).

Let’s meet Daniel. Daniel is a manager at the security department and in the next narrative he expresses some of the ambiguity surrounding the perceptions and enactment of the new work environment at Renfe’s security department. He also ponders about the role of ‘window-dressing’ and frontstage presentations of the department’s signal projects towards external actors.

**Room for Negotiation**

That morning Daniel rushes in. He is late for a meeting with some of his colleagues and he also needs to finish a presentation. He quickly greets the guard en hurries to his desk. He grabs a folder and walks to the secretariat. In spite of his rush he cheerfully greets the five secretaries who work in this room. He walks towards María, his secretary, and he pulls up a chair to sit next to her. Somewhat lowering his voice he quickly explains a few things about the presentation that needs to be prepared.

As they discuss the details he thinks to himself that he doesn’t really like the fact that he has no real office where they can discuss things quietly. Not only because he sometimes needs to discuss private matters, but mostly to be able to concentrate. The room where the secretaries sit is usually rather busy with phones ringing and people walking in and out. Most of the staff members, except the director and higher management, do not have a private office in the new department and it is hard to find a quiet space to discuss things among each other or to have difficult or sensitive (phone) conversations. Since they moved to the new building, Daniel finds himself
working at night from home more often because there he is able to concentrate better and do tasks he is less comfortable with doing in the office where everybody can overhear what is said. On the other hand, the facilities in the new office have certainly improved. The professional outlook of the furniture and light design of the space is very nice, if only there could be more private offices. Besides, Daniel wonders whether the idea behind the design is not only to convey an ambience of transparency and openness - where nobody has anything to hide - but that it is also a way for the management to keep an eye on the staff. In the end, the most important meetings still take place behind closed doors.

After giving instructions to María, Daniel walks downstairs to one of the meeting rooms. Gabriela and Cristian are already waiting for him. He excuses himself for being late and they start the meeting. The main item on the agenda is a discussion about the technological developments with regard to the CCTV system and CECON.

The CECON is celebrated as one of the signal projects of the department, an example of the innovative work that the reorganized security department is developing. It is used as a referential symbol to establish the position of Renfe Operadora’s security organization within the wider field of railway security in Spain and also internationally. A lot of time and money is invested in the project, although sometimes Daniel feels that much of the dedication is put in to show off towards the outside world, rather than to actually develop the best possible system. If he would have the opportunity and freedom to really work out the ideas to their full extent, without running into bureaucratic hassle, the project could be even better. At the same time he realizes that the engineer in him wants to design the best possible system, whereas the manager in him also needs to consider the cost-benefit analyses that are part of working for a commercial company.

The meeting lasts for about an hour and then they return to their desks. Daniel writes a few things they agreed in the meeting down on his to-do list. Then he calls María on the phone.

‘María, please plan a meeting with the sub-director for me somewhere this week, I have to talk to him about the CECON’.

As he hangs up the phone he thinks to himself, slightly annoyed, that it would be so much easier to call his former colleague and friend Marcos directly, without having to speak to his boss first. But his boss does not want him to contact people of a higher rank, even if it is someone he knows from before the separation or his personal network. All those contacts should go via the sub-director or director. To Daniel this seems silly and very ineffective. They don’t have the specialist knowledge with regard to the system so in the end he will have to discuss that anyway.
11-M as a Critical Event in the Development of Security in the Spanish Railways

Apart from an essential element for the company’s operations, the development of CECON provides Renfe Operadora with possibilities to execute their plans to increase the use of cameras in their network. In particular during the investigations of 11-M and the hearings during the trials in 2007, it became clear that the lack of camera images of the events leading up to the attacks proved to be a crucial problem and a subject for heavy criticism. This has stimulated societal and political debates about the use of CCTV systems in public spaces. Renfe Operadora, like many other public transport companies around the world, is exploring the range of possibilities to adapt this type of technology to the specific needs of their operations (such as the monitoring of the flows of passengers throughout the network). Although these explorations and technological innovation plans were already ongoing at the time of the attacks, the bombings on March 11, 2004 have certainly increased the saliency of the issue of CCTV in public debates and accelerated the development – as well as the legitimacy - of such technological applications.

Before March 11, 2004 no one would have guessed that the biggest threat for the Spanish railway sector came from Islamic fundamentalists. What is more, directly after the attacks many speculations pointed towards ‘the usual suspect’, ETA (e.g. Chari, 2004; González Bustelo, 2005; Noya, 2004; Olmeda, 2005; Powell, 2004). The magnitude of that day’s attacks - killing 192 persons and injuring nearly 1800 - was absolutely unexpected and unprecedented. When (retrospectively) looking at the course of events of the morning of March 11, it becomes clear that this terrorist attack has had serious repercussions that reach far beyond the victims and damages of that day. The development of the political situation, societal relations, and profound (emotional) wounds are among the effects that can clearly be traced back to 11-M.

The Attacks

07.39 hours\textsuperscript{29}, Thursday morning March 11, 2004: Three bombs explode in a commuter train, originating from Alcalá de Henares, 500 metres from its destination, Atocha (Madrid Capital). A few seconds later, four explosives detonate in a train stationed at track 2 of Atocha Station. Confusion and chaos rapidly take over the city. Only min-

\textsuperscript{29} This reconstruction narrative of the events of March 11, 2004 is based on a variety of sources from Renfe Operadora as well as articles from Spanish newspapers (e.g. El Mundo, 2004b; 2004c; Renfe, 2004b; Romero, 2004).
utes after the first explosion, another two bombs explode at the station of El Pozo del Tío Raimundo, and another one at the tracks of Santa Eugenia station, destroying a train. In the span of no more than three minutes, during the busy morning rush when hundreds of workers and students travel their daily route in these four trains between the Corredor de Henares and Madrid Capital, ten bombs have spread a wave of destruction and panic in Madrid and beyond.

After the explosions the whole city is shaken. Emergency services work hard to attend the victims of the attack. Crisis hospitals are set up in a sports centre situated along the tracks near Atocha and in the area of Santa Eugenia. The TEDAX (team of explosive experts) immediately start their work at the four explosion sites and detect three more bombs, which they are able to deactivate. Renfe shuts down the circulation of all commuter trains in the affected area, evacuates the affected stations and increases the security measures in the whole country. The traffic circulation in Madrid experiences serious problems throughout the day.

The news of the explosions reaches the public quickly and creates a lot of fear and panic. In view of Spain’s history, the initial suspicions with regard to the responsibility of the explosions point to the Basque terrorist group ETA. In the course of the first hours after the attacks, continuous updates appear in the media, mentioning the number of fatalities and injured, and it soon becomes clear that Madrid has been hit by the worst terrorist attack in its history. The final balance of the attacks is a total of 192 deaths and nearly 1800 wounded.

The first political reactions to the attacks, as well as media coverage, have proven to be crucial for the way citizens make sense of the attacks. President José Maria Aznar and other representatives of his government talk of ETA as being responsible for the attacks. However, during the extensive investigations that followed the attacks it has become clear that already at around 3 pm on the day of the attacks the evidence clearly pointed in the direction of Al Qaeda and that involvement of ETA was almost completely ruled out. However, the governing party (Partido Popular, PP in short) still kept on referring to ETA as the responsible for the attacks, even in the days following the attack, up until Sunday March 14, the day of Spain’s general elections. Similarly, newspaper headlines initially refer to the bloodiest attack of ETA in 13 years (El País, 2004b, 2004c), and a ‘massacre in Madrid’ by ETA (e.g. ABC, 2004; El País, 2004d). Even the following days most of the news coverage continues to talk about the possible involvement of ETA, despite lines of investigations that point to Al Qaeda (e.g. El Mundo, 2004a; El País, 2004a). During the crisis between March 11 and March 14 accusations going back and forth between the different political parties dominated the public realm and in general feelings were running very high across society, cul-
mining in the unexpected loss of the majority by the PP. Against all predictions the socialist party (PSOE) led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero won the elections.

During the months after the attacks and subsequent elections, numerous theories emerged on the possible circumstances leading to the attacks and to the surprising outcome of the elections (Alonso Ruiz, 2004; Arzumendi Adarraga, 2004; e.g. Barreiro, 2004; Chari, 2004; Del Pino, 2006; El Mundo, 2004c; González Bustelo, 2005; González, 2004; López Martín & Roig Domínguez, 2005; Mercado Sáez, 2004; Noya, 2004; Olmeda, 2005; Powell, 2004). Supposedly Aznar and his party would have deliberately kept the information about the non-involvement of ETA from the public because it feared repercussions from the public because the Islamic terrorist attack would clearly be interpreted as being caused by the government’s exterior policy and support for the war in Iraq, against the public opinion. Nevertheless it still became clear before the elections that most likely ETA was not responsible for the attacks but Al Qaeda. The fact that Aznar tried to hide this information is often mentioned to be the cause of his party’s loss of power in the elections. Yet others (mainly PSOE supporters) claim that the sanctioning of PP’s politics was already in the air and that the attacks and the behaviour of the government right after were only the last straw for the undecided voters.

Another theory that arose in the aftermath of 11-M originates from the conservative camp, stating that it was the purpose of the terrorists to manipulate the Spanish voters into producing this change of power. A group of extremists even suggest that the attacks were part of a conspiracy between the terrorists and the socialist party (e.g. Del Pino, 2006). With regard to the involvement of ETA, although the results of the investigations indicate that ETA was not involved with the attacks, there are still people who insist that there was a link between the Islamic terrorists and ETA. During the court trial against the 29 suspects of the attacks (the trial took place from February 15 until July 2, 2007) the judge emphasized that there was absolutely no evidence whatsoever pointing towards ETA (Romero & Yoldi, 2007).

11-M and Railway Security

In the wake of 11-M, security has (once again) become top priority within Renfe and Spanish society at large. Although terrorism and security already had a central place in Spanish society due to its history, the 11-M attacks have added an extra dimension to the subject, as the threat has changed (in addition to existing internal threats now external threats have to be considered). The political situation after the attacks can be characterized as a sharp polarization between the two main parties, PP and PSOE. Mutual accusations and criticism are at the order of the
day. The persistence by the government of Aznar to blame ETA in the first days after the attacks has been harshly punished. The new government of Zapatero and his PSOE has been criticized from day one of its term for being too lenient on terrorists and for mismanagement of the investigations. Combined with its attitude and policies towards ETA, many Spanish citizens are angry and unsatisfied with the Zapatero administration. Terrorism continues to be the number one political issue. There has also been a lot of criticism towards the Spanish intelligence organizations for focusing exclusively on terrorist threat from ETA and thereby missing indications that an Islamic attack was at hand.

There have clearly also been consequences within the railway sector. As mentioned by various managers at the department of security at Renfe, 2004 has proved to be a crucial year when it comes to the place security occupies within the company. Already as a reaction to the failed terrorist attacks against Renfe by ETA in December 2003 (El Mundo, 2003b; El País, 2003), the department started to intensify its measures to confront such threats. Then, with the dramatic events of 11-M, the subject changed in a qualitative as well as in a quantitative sense. There has been an urgent revision of the scenario of terrorist threats, resulting in the adoption of new security measures and the increase of existing measures.

The year 2004 was also important in another sense, namely because it was the year before the formal separation of Renfe Operadora and ADIF. The developments within the security department are therefore also characterized by the preparation for the new situation. The main preoccupation is the division of respon-
sibilities between the two future companies. The preparations largely consist of developing coordination mechanisms between the two departments, which are put in working before the end of 2004 in order to facilitate the transition and making sure that the clients do not notice any changes when it comes to the level of security. It has been decided by the top management of the organization that both companies will need their own department of security. This decision might be related to, or at least confirmed by, the events of 11-M (and earlier terrorist threats caused by ETA). These events have resulted in placing security at the top of the priority list, and as such legitimizing increased allocation of resources. In the design of the organizational structures of both new companies, the central place that security has obtained becomes manifest through the fact that all security related activities are brought together in a centralized, corporate department (ADIF and Renfe Operadora have similar organizational structures).

As for Renfe, the events of 11-M have had tremendous impacts; the company was hit hard by the attacks. Not only was the attack aimed directly at the company, but also one Renfe employee was killed as well as two direct family members of Renfe employees. 13 employees had to be hospitalized due to severe injuries. Numerous employees have psychological problems and have not been able to return to their jobs at Renfe.

The immediate reactions of Renfe to the attacks consisted of shutting down circulation of commuter trains in the Madrid area, increasing alertness, allocating labour forces and resources to try to reinstall services as soon as possible, opening telephone lines to attend to questions from worried citizens, and coordinate the activities on the scenes of the explosions (in close cooperation with the national police and other emergency services). At first only the commuter train services were shut down, but after a few hours all train traffic in the Madrid area was cancelled due to remaining threats. Trains that were already underway were redirected first and later returned to their original destination. A message was sent to all Renfe employees on behalf of the board of directors, informing them about the attacks. In the rest of the country increased security measures were taken and alertness was augmented. During the day a number of threats were announced for explosives in various stations across the country (all of them turn out to be false).

In the aftermath of the attacks, the actions taken by the company and the cooperation between different actors were generally characterized as very efficient and effective. Only eleven hours after the explosions the first trains began to circulate again, all with a black ribbon collocated at the front to show the solidarity of the railway workers with the victims and against terrorism. Just a few days after the attacks, on Monday March 15, all train services were back to normal (Renfe, 2004b). On March 25, the company organized a special funeral service dedicated to the victims (Renfe, 2004a).
ated to give the grieving people of Madrid (and beyond) a place to express their pain and the opportunity to pay their respect to the victims. Within a week no less than 11,300 messages are received through the espacio de palabras as well as through the connected website (Renfe, 2004c). The whole station and the area surrounding the station soon converted into a general place of mourning (along with other important sites in Madrid).

Compared to other (European) countries, Renfe’s customer satisfaction levels related to security are relatively high. The terrorist attacks of 11-M have had no visible impact upon that. Logically, there has been a decline in trust shortly after the attacks, but the satisfaction levels soon rose again and even surpassed the level before 11-M (Renfe, 2004d). Among other railway companies, Renfe is often seen as an expert when it comes to security measures (especially with regard to anti-terrorism measures) because of their history with terrorism (e.g. NS, 2005b). Representatives from the department play a central and leading role in the development of European policies and measures on the subject, through a special workgroup within COLPOFER (UIC, 2007). When asked about this attributed expert role, the department’s director indicates that he is not the right person to judge the expertise of his department because that answer would be very subjective, but he does concur that the department receives many requests for advise and expertise and that they are very satisfied with the positive evaluations and comments they receive from other companies and during international forums and seminars in which they participate.

Painful Memories

The horrific drama that took place on that Thursday morning in March 2004 shocked, hurt, terrified and infuriated the employees of Renfe. Although people do not talk about it often, certain events, locations or artefacts clearly trigger emotional reactions.

Looking out the window of one of the office buildings close to Atocha station, Fernando commemorates the terrible sight of the exploded train. The tone of her voice changes as she recollects the events of that dark day.

‘I remember it so well; the image is still in my mind. Over there by the rails, you see? There was the train that exploded, just outside of the station. It was delayed a little bit, otherwise it would have exploded in the station, can you imagine? We were all worried about our colleagues, you know, I know so many people working on the trains and stations, we didn’t know what happened to them. It was a chaotic day, we were all in shock.’

The windows at the back of the office provide a view of the train tracks going into Atocha station. From these windows you can see the precise location of one of the
sites where on March 11, 2004, during the morning rush hour a series of bombs exploded. A number of members of the department were working in this building (or one of the other buildings in this street) at the time of the attacks. When they speak about that day they become very emotional and it is clear that, three years later, they are still shaken by the events of that tragic day. Although at the time of the explosions the office was as good as empty (the bombs went off around 7 a.m.), that day and the following days they could watch the auxiliary teams working at the scene to aid, investigate and clean up the premises. Furthermore, most of the people who work at Renfe have lost or at least know a few people that have lost a close friend or family member in the attacks. In the hallway of the security department, right next to the main entrance, a framed plaque hangs on the wall, expressing gratitude for the efforts and actions by the company and its employees. A similar commemoration plaque hangs on the wall outside the building of the Autonomous Community of Madrid at the central square in the city, Puerta del Sol:

Madrid Agradecido. A todos los que supieron cumplir con su deber en el auxilio a las víctimas de los atentados del 11 de Marzo de 2004 y a todos los ciudadanos anónimos que las ayudaron. Que el recuerdo de las víctimas y el ejemplar comportamiento del pueblo de Madrid permanezcan siempre. Marzo 2004.

Madrid is Grateful. To all of those who were able to fulfil their duty of helping the victims of the attacks of 11 March 2004 and to all anonymous citizens who helped them. May the memory of the victims and the exemplary behaviour of the people of Madrid remain forever. March 2004. (transl. HD)

### Terrorism and the Spanish Railways

The terrorist attacks in March 2004 were without a doubt the gravest incident in the history of the Spanish railways. Nevertheless, terrorism is a recurrent issue for the Spanish rail sector. In fact, security threats have played a central role in everyday life in Spain for a long time. The ‘normalization’ of threats to personal security among Spaniards may be traced as far back as the Civil War (1936–39), the subsequent military regime of General Franco (1939–75) and the violent acts by terrorists from the Basque separatist movement ETA that have dominated the country in the last decades. Since the first act of violence in 1961 ETA has been held responsible for around 820 deaths (Gómez, 2006; Guenaga, 2007a), a substantial number of them government officials, but many civilians too have fallen victim to the activities of ETA.

Although there have been several periods of cease-fire, so far none of them has lasted. The latest cease-fire, of 22 March 2006, was unexpectedly broken with an
attack in the parking building at Madrid airport on 30 December 2006. This attack has invigorated the political debate about the peace process and the socialist government’s attempts to negotiate with ETA. This ‘antiterrorism crisis’ has increased the distance between the socialist government (PSOE) and the conservative opposition (PP) (El Mundo, 2007b). The weighty political debate has created a climate of tension and there are serious indications that there will be new terrorist attacks on the part of ETA (Pagola & Morcillo, 2007). This has had consequences for the railway sector as well. After the attack on 30 December the alert level was moved up to ‘orange’, the second highest. This means that existing security measures are strengthened and extra controls are imposed.

In the past there have been various instances where ETA aimed its acts of violence at trains, tracks or stations, although the majority of ETA attacks were not aimed at the railways in particular. But ETA’s very first military act was an attempt to derail a train carrying a group of veterans from the Spanish Civil War (Barros et al., 2006; El Mundo, 2006; Jáuregui, 2006). This attack failed and nobody was injured, but it marked the start of a very violent period in Spanish history. Furthermore, in July 1979 two bombs exploded at two different train stations in Madrid (Atocha and Chamartín), killing a total of six persons. Apart from these tragic incidents, there have been over 100 attacks (or attempts) on the railways, most of them causing only material damage or light injuries (El Mundo, 2003b). Among them was an explosion of two bombs on the tracks of the high-speed trajectory near Ciudad Real on August 15, 2001 (El Mundo, 2003b) and a failed bomb attack on a train going to Chamartín station in Madrid on Christmas Eve 2003 (CNN, 2003). Despite the relatively small number of fatalities and damages that have resulted from ETA’s terrorist acts towards the Spanish railways, the company takes the ever-present threat on behalf of ETA (and their sympathisers) or other terrorist organizations into consideration in all its undertakings.

February 2007: Explosions in Lutxana

Today, the morning newspapers are reporting a terrorist attack at Renfe’s Lutxana railway station in the municipality of Barakaldo in the Basque country, in the North of Spain. During the night of the 5th of February 2007 the station was attacked with home-fabricated explosives, damaging the entrance to the station. According to the newspapers the Basque police (La Ertzaintza) attributes the attack to the Kale Borroka30 (ABC, 2007b; Dominguez, 2007; Franco, 2007; Guenaga, 2007b).

30. Kale Borroka is the Basque name for ‘street violence’ or ‘war on the street’ by (young) supporters of the Basque terrorist organization ETA.
It is not the first terrorist act aimed at this railway station in Barakaldo. It is the second time within a few months the Lutxana station has been attacked. Only four months earlier, on October 12th 2006, the same station was attacked under similar circumstances (Aizpeola & Gastaminza, 2006; Deia, 2006; El Diario Vasco, 2006; El País, 2006). The attacks in Barakaldo occur at a time when the issue of terrorism is once again at the order of the day in Spain. After a cease-fire of 9 months the Basque separatist movement ETA broke its silence just 2 months earlier with a bombing at the parking deck of the newest terminal of Barajas airport in Madrid on December 30th 2006. The renewed activity by the long-time terrorist organization in Spain has led the country to state of political tension and social unrest.

The attacks at the Lutxana station and the explosions at another railway station in the region (Renfe’s station of Abaroa, in the town of Basauri, was attacked on February 10) only a few days later (El Mundo, 2007a; El País, 2007), are said to be direct reactions to the actions by the socialist government against ETA members and the controversial Basque political party Batasuna.

At the office, initially there seems to be no indication of any explicit reactions to the explosion among the people at the security department. It appears that everyone is busy with their work as usual. I don’t hear anybody talking about the attack and neither is there any mention of the incident on the company’s intranet.

After some hesitation I decide to raise the issue among some people in the department.

‘Hijos de puta!‘ is the first reaction I get.

‘It is really hurtful when they attack our company like this, they really do not have any respect for anything or anyone’, Teresa adds with an angry tone of voice.

A short conversation follows about ETA and the long-term conflict. Teresa and the others seem to want to explain to me what the conflict is about and how deeply this is embedded in their society. At the same time they seem reluctant to discuss this particular incident any further and the conversation quickly shifts to a more usual topic.

That evening I listen to the reaction of a local representative of the company, talking about the explosion in Lutxana in one of the news bulletins on television. He recounts the events of the night before, gives a statement with regard to the damages and other facts related to the incident.

A few days later I overhear a couple of members of the security department talking about the specificities of the attack while discussing some pictures of the damages and the official report about the incident.

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31. Literal translation: Sons of bitches
The Normalization of Threat?

Throughout my time at Renfe Operadora I develop the impression that in general the people do not feel comfortable talking about the subject of terrorism. When they do mention incidents like the one in Luxtana they are either very angry or they discuss technical details in an instrumental or distanced way. The political connotations of such attacks – that dominate the public discourses in the media - are mostly kept at a distance during the company’s daily operations.

The company’s integrated security policy, aimed at improving (the feeling of) security among passengers and employees and reducing threats is approached with a predominantly professional and instrumental attitude. The members of the company know that terrorism is a very realistic threat for their line of business and this is – almost implicitly - taken into regard in every aspect of their operational business strategy.

Nevertheless, the distant attitude and (at times uncomfortable) reluctance to speak about the topic at the same time suggest a strong sensitivity towards the subject. During several instances, I am witness to the emotional reactions of people at Renfe Operadora (as well as most other Spaniards) with regard to 11-M and terrorism in general. Together this suggests to me that it might very well be possible that people feel so strongly about terrorism and related issues that they do not want to mix their personal feelings and emotions with the expectations and tasks that are related to their professional role.

I am aware of my foreign position, especially with regard to this topic. As a born and raised Dutch person I have had very few direct confrontations with terrorism in my surroundings. This made me feel uncomfortable at times since I did not know when I could ask questions or when it would be better to keep silent. On the other hand, as a stranger I was able to notice things that would probably go unnoticed if I were Spanish, like the morning after the explosion in Luxtana I was expecting something to happen at the office and when it turned out that it was handled as ‘business-as-usual’ this surprised me. Nevertheless I have been aware of my personal position in the matter throughout the study and tried to reflect on this as much as possible.
5 NS: A Concern for Security

NS and Personal Security

Looking out the window of the high office building, overseeing the rail tracks leading into Utrecht Central Station, Pieter realizes that he has come a long way. For years he has been active within the company to get the topic of personal security higher on the agenda. From task groups and single projects to a complete corporate department, they have certainly made progress.

He still remembers the time when the widespread attention for security-related problems was far from self-evident. But then, in the 1990s, aggression and violence turned into an intolerable problem, reaching rock-bottom in 1991 when a ticket inspector in the Dutch town of Harlingen is stabbed to death by an aggressive passenger. For Pieter and many people throughout the company this tragic incident still represents the core of the problem of violence towards uniformed personnel in the public transport sector.

The actions following the Harlingen incident eventually led to the creation of a special security delegation\textsuperscript{32} within NS. As one of the members of that delegation Pieter has continuously been involved in the development of different projects to increase the

\textsuperscript{32} Programma Bureau Sociale Veiligheid
personal security of personnel and passengers. Whereas at the beginning the team was delegated in the Passenger Transport division\(^{33}\), after some years and many processes of change in the organizational structure due to the liberalization of the sector and separation between NS and ProRail\(^{34}\), the security task group was turned into a formal department at the corporate level of the NS Holding. Not only did this formalize the security-related activities of NS, it also broadened the scope from the train operations to other division of the business processes of the company.

During all this time Pieter has remained a member of this security organization. Together with his colleagues he has initiated numerous projects over the years, such as a large project that carried out pilots with the use of cameras, the creation of the mobile ticket inspection teams, and experiments with the interior design of stations to create a more comfortable atmosphere. This project ‘INES’\(^{35}\) aimed at developing innovative ways to create a safer and more comfortable environment for customers and employees working in and around the stations and trains, etc.

And now again, they are in the midst of developing some important projects. Among these projects are the reorganization of the whole security organizations and creation of ‘service and security’ teams, the development and institutionalization of the security control room\(^{36}\), the introduction of the electronic ticketing system\(^{37}\), the use of intelligent cameras, and so on. The development of these plans is already the cause of debates and commotion throughout the organization, and even beyond.

NS does not have an easy position when it comes to publicity and media attention. Pieter smiles as he remembers the striking remark about a colleague’s irritation with some of the media attention that was published in the company’s magazine dedicated to the electronic ticketing project\(^{38}\): ‘the newspaper articles of journalists who, like bloodhounds, are hunting for signals that the project is failing’. Unfortunately, NS has been a willing target for media scrutiny in the past, giving the company a rather negative public image. The internal conflicts between 1999 and 2002 were a low-point in this regard. Although the relation with the media has improved somewhat, at times the company still struggles with its representation. Only recently the media picked up on the plans for the reorganization of the security organization, selectively presenting the issues and thereby causing a lot of worry and critique among the public. The following debates even led to fierce discussions in the political realm.

He looks at the wall on his left. This wall is covered by a whiteboard displaying a schematic drawing and some notes regarding one of his colleague’s projects about the cooperation between NS and the railway police. Next to the whiteboard there is a

\(^{33}\) NS Reizigers
\(^{34}\) The company that is responsible for the infrastructure management
\(^{35}\) INES: Innovatieve Experimenten Sociale Veiligheid (Innovative Experiments Personal Security)
\(^{36}\) Veiligheidscentrale
\(^{37}\) OV-Chipkaart
\(^{38}\) De Kaartlezer, May 2005
notice board that is covered with newspaper articles and cartoons. In the middle of
the notice board a piece of paper is attached with a single phrase in bold black letter-
ing. Pieter often looks at that phrase because it reminds him of the core aims of his
job: “Do the things that you and I do everyday contribute to the opinions and perceptions
of our colleagues, clients and stakeholders about security?”

A vague smile comes over Pieter’s face; even after so many years there is still so
much work to do. And it continues to be a challenging job. A sound on his computer
disturbs Pieter from his thoughts. He looks at the screen and notices that he is late
for a lunch meeting. He grabs his notes and takes the elevator down to the first floor
of the head office. As he walks past the big company restaurants he greets a few of his
colleagues who go in for their lunches. Pieter walks down the big stairs, towards the
entrance lobby of the building. He is meeting his lunch-partner in another building,
located in the station across the road.

In the main lobby of the building Pieter takes out is security pass and holds it in
front of the column next to one of the gates. Immediately the doors of the gate open
sideways and he walks through. The doors close behind him and he thinks to himself
that this new system is a potential problem. As it is the doors close very quickly and
he envisions all kinds of scenarios with people getting stuck in between or being un-
able to walk through with luggage. The recently installed gates in the main building
are a prototype for the tourniquets that will be used in the new electronic ticketing
system that is scheduled to be inaugurated next year. Despite the problems with the
system he is pleased with the placement of the gates in the head office. To him this is
just the type of detail that shows dedication to a project that is surrounded by contro-
versy and debate. After all, that project will change a lot of the working practices of the
company’s operational staff. It is nice that the employees at the offices are reminded of
that through this kind of symbolic changes.

As he proceeds towards the exit he glances at the screen where the current time-
table of train departures at Utrecht Central Station is displayed. There seem to be no
delays at this moment. He waves at receptionists and exits through the revolving
doors.

Positioning The Security Department Within NS

In the 1990s, the personnel (and passengers) in the Dutch public transport sector
were increasingly confronted with aggressive behaviour and violence in the trains
and stations. It has been argued that the social climate (with a general loss of re-
spect for ‘uniforms’) in the Netherlands created a situation in which the public

39. The planning for the OV-Chip card system is delayed several times. At the time of the research it was
still unclear when (and how) exactly the system will be inaugurated.
domain was unable to control the behaviour of its citizens, leading to an increase of aggressive and violent outbursts in public spaces including the public transport domain (Van den Brink & Schuyt, 2003). A tragic incident whereby a train ticket inspector was stabbed to death in the city of Harlingen in 1991 resulted in large-scale protests from the train personnel, urging the management to act (Ferwerda, 1997). As a reaction to this incident in Harlingen, an integrated plan was created between different actors in the Dutch public transportation sector in order to attack these problems. Leading from this plan, a number of ‘local security arrangements’ to deal with so-called problem trajectories or problem stations were developed (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijkrelaties, 2004a; Ministerie van Verkeer & Waterstaat et al., 2002). The efforts have paid off to a certain extend, although aggression remains a recurrent problem for NS officials (as well as other public officials). Recently, a series of incidents were the cause for renewed attention to the issue in the media (e.g. AT5, 2009; De Volkskrant, 2009; NRC Handelsblad, 2009; Trouw, 2009b) as well as from the various trade unions (e.g. FNV Bondgenoten Spoor, 2009a, 2009b; VVMC, 2009a, 2009b).

The task group ‘personal security’ that was created within the NS Passengers division remained in function until the formal separation between NS and ProRail. After the separation in 2002, the organization was structured as a holding company, consisting of six more or less autonomous organizations (NS Commerce, NS Passengers, NedTrain, NS International, NS Stations, NS Real Estate) and a central corporate organization. Upon the separation, the decision was made to transform this task group into a special security department at the central, corporate level of the organization. This corporate department would expand the security activities of NS beyond the passenger division, including also the design and protection of stations and other buildings, counter-terrorism strategies, etc. The aim was to develop a more centralized security strategy (not in the last place with to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in mind). The security department was divided into a number of special teams, delegated with different tasks related to security such as a task group delegated with the issue of personal security, a task group responsible for issues with regard to intelligence, a task group dedicated to the company’s counter-terrorism strategy, and a task group ‘corporate security’. Furthermore, the company’s security department is working on innovative projects in the area of camera surveillance, restricted station entrances, electronic ticketing, and luggage screening (NS, 2005a). The main aim of these activities is to create a more secure railway system by minimizing the number of incidents (objective security) and to
increase the perception or feelings of security for passengers and employees (subjective security).

Apart from the corporate security department, the main operational division (NS Passengers and NS Stations) continued to have a special security delegation, working closely together with the corporate department. In addition, each of the four regional networks in the Netherlands (North-East, South, Randstad North, Randstad South) has its own network coordinator for personal security.

Since the formal separation in 2002, the company has gone through various processes of reorganization. The most recent changes, carried out in 2007, involved a restructuring of the different NS organizations into three main divisions operating under the holding company. The ‘Passenger Service’ segment comprises domestic passenger services from the NS Passengers business unit, international passenger services provided by NS Hispeed, rolling stock maintenance carried out by NedTrain and passenger services abroad by NedRailways (NS, 2009). The second segment deals with ‘Hub Development and Operation’. This business unit consists of four main business activities: Area and Project Development, Asset Management, Operational Property Management and Commercial Operation. The final segment of NS’s new organizational structure focuses on ‘Rail Infrastructure and Construction’. The security department has been relocated and is now integrated in the Passenger Services division.

Towards the Separation of NS and ProRail

In the 1980s and early 1990s the Dutch government developed a more and more critical attitude towards the financial support that was necessary in order to keep the state-owned railway company NS in business (Van den Noort, 1989; Veenendaal, 2004). The idea that the government is responsible, against all costs, for the provision of public rail transport for its citizens increasingly raised objections. In line with the growing attitude that public services might operate better under market-like conditions the government decided that the time was ripe to denationalize the Dutch railways. The decision fitted neatly with the plan of the Dutch govern-

41. Randstad is the common name for the urban agglomeration in Western Holland
42. See appendix 3 for a schematic overview of organizational structure
43. NS Reizigers or Binnenlands Reizigers Vervoer, which comprises the former NS Passengers and NS Commerce
44. Knooppuntontwikkeling, consisting of the NS Poort business unit
45. These business activities comprise of the former NS Stations, NS Real Estate and NS Commercial Station Exploitation
46. Railinfra & Bouw
ment to modernize the public sector. In line with the so-called New Public Management ideology that became popular around that time in many Western countries, the Dutch modernization plan (De Graaf, 2003) focused on a reduction of government intervention and regulation, and an increasing service orientation.

Despite opposition from various (left-wing) political actors and concerns on behalf of passenger association ROVER, NS was split up in a task sector (including all activities related to the infrastructure and remaining under government responsibility) and a market sector (all exploitation activities that ought to be economically accountable, independent from the government). The denationalization process was initiated in 1995 and finalized in 2002 when the task organizations were united in a separate organization, ProRail, under the authority of the Ministry of Transport, Public Works & Water Management. From that moment on, NS was an independent entity, although the State remains the stockholder (Berendse et al., 2006; NS et al., 2003; Veenendaal, 2004).

Anticipating the privatization plans from the government, the management of NS presented an internal reform plan in 1999. The plan was developed to reduce the extreme delays and poor service level of NS, and to prepare the way for the planned liberalization of the railway market (Wessels, 2003). Around the time of the denationalization of the company, a new management philosophy was introduced, organized around the idea of customer-orientation. The plan, strikingly called ‘Destination: Customer’ was aimed to place the customer at the centre of the business. In the past, the focus of the company was primarily on the process of operating trains. Bluntly put, ticket inspectors focussed on controlling tickets, train drivers had to make sure that the trains could depart safely and on time, ticket-sales and information took place on a static location within the station, etc. All tasks were aimed at the smooth running of the primary process: operating trains.

With the new management philosophy, all processes would be organized according to the steps a customer has to follow before, during and after the journey (Berendse et al., 2006; Duijnhoven, 2007b; Wessels, 2003). This has significant consequences for the work practices of all employees, in particular the operational staff. Ticket inspectors have to make the customer feel at home in the train (‘service with a smile’), staff at the stations are no longer sitting behind a desk but move around and have to be easily approachable or even pro-active in providing information to customers. Security is an important aspect of the new service-orientation because, according to the company’s security philosophy, feeling secure is a key aspect of feeling comfortable. Through human surveillance, design and hygiene of stations and trains, and trying to ban unwanted customers or other forms

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47. Bestemming: klant
of hindrance, NS is aiming to make their passengers feel comfortable when they are on the railway premises. The central focus on the ‘experience’ of the customer represents a radical change for the staff, altering the way they conduct their work. Originally, ‘Destination: Customer’ involved a simplification of the duty rosters of train personnel, whereby drivers and ticket inspectors would no longer work throughout the country, but be confined to specific routes (the infamous ‘circle around the church’). The plans were received with much resistance by the personnel and a long period of internal conflicts followed, resulting in a somewhat altered version of the plans. The interference of the media and the strong position of the trade unions within the sector seriously blemished the image and reputation of the company.

Initially the idea of the government was that the denationalization process would ultimately lead to the full privatization of NS. Nevertheless, the conflicts around the internal reorganization of NS Holding, the construction of the High Speed Line, and the disastrous results coming from the British rail sector resulted in the putting on hold of the privatization plans. It was decided that NS would continue to operate as an independent entity, but the State would be able to control and, when necessary interfere in the (operational) management and decision-making processes of the company. Through a transport concession, NS received the right to operate the main network until at least 2015 (Ministerie van Verkeer & Waterstaat, 2005; Veenendaal, 2004). In turn, NS has to provide the Minister with a detailed annual transport plan, outlining the intended performances and related measurement system with specified performance indicators.

Security is a Societal Problem

‘Security is a societal problem, which means that we, as a passenger transportation company can contribute to increasing security, but we cannot do it alone. What is more, it is clearly a matter of shared responsibility with other parties, in particular the public authorities. Our task in the matter is to determine which security-measures can and should be taken to sufficiently protect the company from security threats,’ Anton, one of the security managers, is clear when he speaks about the role of the security department.

48. Rondje om de kerk, the popular name for the Destination: Customer plans that was taken over by the media and public. The metaphor of the ‘circle around the church’ refers to the idea that personnel would be working the same routes every day and all day long.
49. Vervoersconcessie
50. Vervoersplan
Recently, the position of the department has been renegotiated. Whereas the department was located at the central, corporate level of the company since the early 2000s, the discussion about this has resurfaced once more. The complications with regard to the organization of back-up and support to the operational staff and the relations between the police, NS and other actors in the sector has urged the company to rethink the general security strategy. As a result, the department has been relocated and placed in the passenger services division. As such the department is better integrated in the company’s segment that is the largest ‘client’ of the security department. This does not mean that the department is working exclusively for the passenger services. It remains responsible for the entire security strategy for NS.

‘The relocation of our department provides opportunities as well as challenges. On the one hand we are a lot closer to the operational level and can work with them more directly. A challenge though will be how we can secure our relations with the other segments of the company’. 

‘We all know that the tricky side of security measures is that they cost a lot of time and investments and it is difficult to directly measure their results. It is not as straightforward as measuring the number of incidents, but an important part of security is subjective. It comes down to the perception and feelings of security and we all know that there are a lot of external factors beyond our control that influence the perceptions,’ Pieter adds.

‘Right. It’s different from, let’s say, safety measures. Safety measures have a more direct relation with the business processes of our organization and they are embedded in a strict set of rules and legal requirements. There is no discussion about the extent of most safety measures, whereas in the case of security it is a different story. There is, as yet, no clear legal framework. It is always a matter of weighing the costs and benefits, and those benefits are extremely hard to define. As a consequence there is a lot more room for negotiation.’ Anton clearly agrees with Pieter on the subject. ‘For the top management security is but one of the many different issues.’

‘Well, it does have a more central position in the company’s mission statement, and people are much more aware of it compared to a few years ago. I think we have come a long way in that sense.’

‘True, but on the other hand the attention is also fleeing. For instance when it comes to terrorism, after an incident such as the attacks in Madrid the attention is always very high, but it also quickly fades away.’

‘But that is only natural and I think it’s a good thing too. For us it’s our job to think about those things all day, from a professional point of view. But if everyone would be so aware, all the time, it would be chaos. That’s no way to live for regular people.’ Pieter makes an air-quote gesture to indicate the irony of the phrase “regular people”.

For Security Reasons
A Question of Responsibility?

Since the denationalization in 1995 and the subsequent unbundling of the management of infrastructure (ProRail), transportation services (NS) and police, the relations in the Dutch railway sector have become increasingly complex (see appendix 4 for an overview of relations and responsibilities in the Dutch rail sector). The boundaries between the public and the private realm are not always clear. Whereas in the past the railway police was, as part of the company, taking care of most surveillance and enforcement tasks, NS is now responsible for the security of their own operational processes. Thus there is a need to improve the qualifications and competences of NS to function independently, yet the boundaries between the property (and thus responsibility) of NS as a private company and the public spaces surrounding these properties are not always clear. For instance, who has the final responsibility for the security of passengers at a train station when this is no longer a purely public space, since the owner is an autonomous, commercial company? It is therefore crucial to make clear arrangements about the scope of responsibilities and qualifications between the company, the police, the justice department and other external parties, yet this is complicated because situations are often ambiguous and this discussion supersedes specific situations. Furthermore, the communication between these different actors is sometimes made more difficult due to the particular functions and interests of the different parties. To give an example, from the perspective of NS what constitutes a ‘serious incident’ may be very different from what is a ‘serious incident’ for the police or justice department.

In addition to the challenges stemming from the new institutional position of NS in the sector, the commercial position of NS has also caused a shift when it comes to the focus of internal operational practices. ‘Service’ has become the central ambition of the company and most business processes are directed towards that goal. At the same time, the company needs to be financially self-supportive. This means that some of the old guiding principles of the company need to be reinterpreted in terms of what is economically feasible when it comes to the quality of service provision.

Dealing with ‘security’ or establishing a feeling of security is rendered problematic by the lack of legally defined norms or performance indicators. Security is related to protection against criminal activity, such as acts of violence, aggression or terrorism, but also to the state of being or feeling secure. And it is exactly those issues that have gained increasing attention within current society. Safety (in a technical sense) appears to be well defined and less complicated, as the organization has been dealing with this issue for a long time. Safety involves complying with a legal framework or technical standards, whereas security is less clear cut and cost-benefit analysis is rather difficult to make. The company’s security philo-
sophy is based on the idea that a high level of service and customer satisfaction contributes to the perception of security of passengers. Nevertheless the relation between service levels and security are neither straightforward nor easily measurable.

**Talking About Security**

In a small meeting room on the 6th floor of the main building of NS, a group of 6 people is seated around an oval-shaped table. The main goal of today's meeting is to prepare for the next work conference about the role of security in the new organization that is scheduled for next week. These conferences are organized to involve the operational staff in the process of reorganizing the company's security organization. Janine has been involved in the project from the beginning and opens the meeting. The other participants to the meeting today are staff-members from the corporate security department as well as from the passenger services division.

‘Good morning everyone, I propose that we start with the meeting. I suppose the items on the agenda are clear. I will start with a short overview of the progression so far. Then we will discuss some of the core aspects that we want to communicate to the conference participants. Finally we will discuss the role division and programme for the conference. Does anyone have other items for the agenda?’

No one has anything to add at this point and the meeting starts. Janine briefly presents the main preparations that have taken place, mostly regarding the practical matters such as the time-planning, list of participants, location, materials and so on. She also speaks about the reactions from participants to the last conference a few months earlier. According to the feedback Janine received through the different network managers, most of the participants were very positive about the conference.

‘I think overall we can be proud of the way that the process is proceeding. Various people from other departments have already approached me to hear about this process. It is very new for this organization to involve the operational staff like this.’

Marjan interrupts: ‘I heard a slightly different reaction when I was in the network last week. I talked with various people who participated in the first conference and they were only *moderately positive.*’ Marjan’s emphasis of the phrase ‘moderately positive’ suggest that she is being sarcastic.

‘Well, that’s also why we’re here; to hear and talk about different reactions.’

‘I got the feeling that they appreciate the effort of involving them, but they don’t really trust that they’ll actually get a say in the whole matter. They think that we have a plan readily available and this is merely for show.’

Some of the other people in the room nod; they also heard such noises from the various networks.
‘So we should stress this point in the upcoming conference’, Janine proposes. ‘Make sure they know that it is still open.’

‘But is it really open?’ Bob asks. ‘I mean, as far as I understand it, the management upstairs is quite definite about the direction in which they want this security organization to move.’

‘Now that’s not entirely true’, Karel reacts. ‘There are some preferences, yes, but do not underestimate the influence that we can have. We’re still in the middle of negotiations.’

Janine suggests that they return to the main topic, the conference preparations. She stresses that their role in the conference will be mainly that of experts who can provide information to the participants. The programme consists of several workshops based on different scenarios. The participants will work in groups and brainstorm about the presented scenarios.

‘The central aim of the day will be to get an idea of what the work floor wants’ Anton adds. ‘I have discussed this intensively with Janine and the other organisers over the past couple of days. Together we have formulated the different scenarios.’

‘Let’s think about the input that we will give during the conference’, Janine continues. ‘Obviously we all have our specific knowledge and expertise so I assume that we do not have to go into the details of the scenarios too much at this point. The main concern is that we should try not to influence the outcomes of the conference too much. Our role should be purely informative.’

‘Well I think that’s easier said than done’, Bob replies. ‘When we talk from our expertise, as you want us to, it’s hard to not steer people’s opinions.’

‘Still, it is important to be aware of this and try not to be too convincing’ Janine says with a smile.

Karel puts forward an example: ‘so if the participants indicate that they ideally would want to carry out both service and enforcement tasks we should interfere and indicate that that is not an option?’

‘Exactly’ Janine agrees.

‘I strongly disagree’, Anton says firmly. ‘If we want to give them the idea that they are free to come up with their ideal scenarios we shouldn’t undermine that straight away. Let them discuss all possible scenarios.’

‘I agree with you Anton’, Marjan adds. ‘But on the other hand, we should paint a realistic picture and not let them get carried away with ideas that will never be realized in a million years.’

‘Right, I think that from our role as expert we are perfectly able to say something like how difficult that would be to execute in practice’, Karel is thinking out loud. ‘Or explain something about how things are organized in other public transport companies, or something.’

Marjan nods enthusiastically. ‘Precisely! You can just provide some context to what they are proposing.’
Another way to get them to think more realistically is to let them think from the perspective of the customer. How would a customer make sense of a mixed task description?’ says Anton.

After a short pause Bob responds to Anton’s last remark: ‘I’m a bit reluctant to include the customer perspective too much. I believe that we should stick to giving information based on our specific expertise. That is our role in this situation. Besides, they usually have a better idea about the customer perspective anyway.’

‘Sure, but they often look at it from only one perspective. Maybe we can help them to look at it from different perspectives.’

‘Well, from a customer perspective a separation of tasks is probably not very clear. Someone in a uniform represents the entire company, so if something occurs they expect the uniform to respond, even if they have a service role. We as experts are able to make the distinction.’

‘Aren’t we merely talking about extreme situations? Once the police arrive at the scene, they are usually able to control the situation and the customers will see and understand that’, Marjan adds.

‘But that is a different issue; we’re talking about the distinction between the employees who provide service and the employees with an enforcement task. That distinction is a lot less clear than the difference between a NS uniform and a police uniform.’

‘So in fact it’s all about being recognizable and authoritative.’

‘But doesn’t that take us back 20 or 30 years? Back to the time when a uniform equalled authority, regardless if it was a police uniform, a ticket inspector, or even a mailman. As soon as someone was in function, wearing a uniform, that person would carry a certain authority. Since the 1980s this authoritative quality of a uniform has largely disappeared, in particular after the Harlingen incident in 1991.’

The group is quiet for a moment as the telephone rings. Anton walks to the desk and answers the phone. When he returns to the table Bob raises another issue:

‘I wonder to what extent the idea persists in our company that we call the railway police for every incident. In fact, it should be the case that we, as an independent organization, deal with our problems first and then, if necessary, call for support. I doubt whether that notion has spread throughout our company. Do you recognize this sentiment?’

‘I guess that you’re right. There still exists a general tendency to fall back on the railway police. This is partly understandable due to the shared history with the railway police, but at the same time we really need to figure out what to do here. The railway police are no longer part of our company and we can no longer exclusively draw on their services.’

‘To a certain extent this is also dictated by the current legislation about the powers to use force for our staff’ Anton adds.

‘The problem is that our back-up organization is not sufficiently prepared and structured to deal with the amount of incidents. In fact, the old back-up system, the
police, has largely disappeared and to date there is no adequate replacement’ Karel says.

‘Well, that is why we are organizing these conferences and everything else. To be able to design and shape the new back-up organization’, Janine obviously wants to steer the discussion back to the conference.

‘This is exactly how we should explain the situation to our staff, maybe they will understand better why the changes are necessary, and maybe they will think about when they need to call the police or when they can act themselves. Rather than thinking about what we can and cannot say to influence their opinions or not, we should be open and indicate that we don’t have all the answers, that that is why we need their opinion and merely help them to look at it from the point of view we as experts can offer.’

Everyone nods quietly. The subject seems to be closed.

The rest of the meeting is dedicated to more practical matters concerning the organization of the conference and the division of tasks among the group. After an hour the group splits up and returns to their desks.

Service and Security: A Hot Topic

In the current situation of the company the issue of security and enforcement is placed in a different light. The commercial, autonomous position of the company has radically altered the relation with public services such as the police. As a state-owned company, NS used to have a specialized police force within the company; the railway police. Yet, after the denationalization the railway police has been split off from the company and placed with the regular national police force. Within the national police there is still a special department dedicated to the railways, but there is significantly less manpower available and the responsibilities are shifting from prevention and surveillance to enforcement and intervention when serious incidents occur. At the moment, when something happens on a train or at a station the railway police is still contacted in almost all cases, regardless the seriousness of the incident. This is a common practice that is inherited from the old relations between the railway police and NS.

One important reason for the persistence of the old practices is the lack of an alternative practice. The internal back-up organization has not been fully established yet. Most ticket inspectors are qualified as Special Investigation Officers under Dutch criminal law (Ministerie van Justitie, 2008a). However, the company received a waiver from the Ministry of Justice to have all ticket inspectors go

51. Buitengewoon opsporingsambtenaar; BOA
through the special training to be qualified to use force. At the time this was an internal matter, since the company was a public organization. However, with the denationalization and the separation with the railway police, the issue became more complicated. In 2006 it was announced that NS can no longer make use of the exception and all ticket inspectors with powers to use force are obliged to undergo competency tests and training (Ministerie van Justitie, 2008b). There are high costs and a lot of time involved and this is one of the reasons why NS wants to separate the tasks and competences that are related with enforcement from service related tasks.

The company has the intention to take away the majority of the powers to use force from the main body of operational staff and predominantly train them in service delivery. The enforcement tasks will be delegated to a smaller group of employees who receive professional training and they will operate in special security teams. At the time of the research, the exact construction and division of tasks had not been determined. In the course of the development of the new back-up system, a series of work conferences have been organized to involve the operational staff in the actual design of the security organization. The idea has been that the staff is involved, not only in the general design of the back-up organization, but also in the precise lay-out for their local teams.

What is interesting is that this tendency to separate service and security can lead to complicated situations. Think about a train ticket inspector who encounters a situation in a train where a passenger is aggressive and looks like he/she might become violent towards the ticket inspector or another passenger. In theory, the ticket inspector will call for back up and the special security staff (or in some cases the police) comes as soon as possible (usually at the next station). This situation
seems similar to the current situation, but when this ticket inspector is predominantly trained ‘to be nice’ this can be very threatening. Or, if the ticket inspector is not afraid and feels like he/she would be able to control the situation by standing up to the violent passenger the situation might occur that he/she is not allowed to because of a lack of qualification. Furthermore, a separation of tasks may be confusing for passengers. On the other hand, the special security staff will receive special training, something that none of the ticket inspectors had in the previous system. The separation of tasks will this lead to more specialization of the staff.

The bottom-up involvement of the operational staff in the development of the security organization constitutes a rather unique event in the history of NS. The relations between management and operational staff have been characterized by some tension - to put it mildly – in particular after the conflicts in the 1990s/early 2000s, but also before that. As Veenendaal (2004) indicates in his book about the history of Dutch rail sector, the distance between the management and staff of the company has increased since the 1960s. It was also at that time that the notion of ‘a job for life at the railways’ and the ‘family’ character of the company gradually vanished.

Partly due to the sensitivity surrounding this dynamics of this relation, I was unable to get access to the actual conferences. According to the organizers and my contacts at the security department, the idea was for the conferences to be about the staff and not have too many managers or other observers present. In addition, the organizers were afraid that the ‘wrong’ information would leak to the press. The complicated position of NS with regard to the media became clear once again. As they argue, security is a salient topic these days and the media are always on the lure to publish some ‘scandalous’ article about problems regarding the railway security.

Some of my contacts at the security department did not agree entirely with this hesitation and would not have minded my presence, but they did not want to push too much. Instead of participating in the conferences, I did sit in on several meetings in preparation for the events, and I spoke with various people who were either directly involved in the organization or operational staff members who participated in the conferences. As such I got a varied collection of opinions and ideas surrounding this process. The negotiations with regard to the access to events such as the conference also gave me an insight in the controversy and debates surrounding the issue of security and the pending organizational changes.
No Panic, It’s Just a Backpack!

It’s 16.30 in the afternoon and the train from Utrecht to Schiphol is packed with the regular mix of commuters and vacationers travelling to the airport. Just before the scheduled departure time, a voice on the intercom announces that the train cannot leave just yet.

‘Ladies and gentlemen, we’re waiting for the police to pick up a couple of friendly guests who forgot to purchase a ticket’, the voice announces with a sarcastic tone. ‘As soon as we’ve handed these gentlemen over to the police we’ll continue our journey to Amsterdam and Schiphol Airport. Our apologies for the inconvenience’.

In the compartment some people sigh, obviously annoyed by the unexpected delay at the end of the work day. Other passengers nervously wonder whether they will be in time for their flights and a third group does not seem very affected by the delay.

Campaign poster NCTb

Renate stares out of the window, the music on her mp3 player making her a bit sleepy. On the platform, her eye is caught by a huge billboard, displaying a female
ticket inspector in front of a train. The poster announces that ticket inspectors are
against terrorism. Underneath the photo a quote tells us that: ‘within seconds we are
in contact with the police. If necessary we will stop the train’. Below that the poster states
that ‘200.000 professionals and many more people are working together against terror-
ism’. This poster is part of a national campaign to create awareness about the terror-
ist threats in our society. Renate read in the newspaper that it is an initiative of the
National Coordinator Counter Terrorism, together with the government and all kinds
of organizations. Although she appreciates the effort, the poster does not make her
feel much safer. Maybe even the contrary; it confronts her more with the possibility of
an attack. Overall she does not feel scared. She still considers the possibility of a
terrorist attack something that does not happen here.

As if it was written on her forehead that she was thinking about this, she suddenly
notes a man who puts down his backpack and walks away. Suddenly wide-awake
Renate sits up straight and tries to see where the man is going. The window of the
compartment does not let her see far beyond the place where the man left his back-
pack. She opens the window but she still can’t see.

Should she call someone? Doesn’t anybody else notice the backpack? No, it’s prob-
ably nothing.

A few people walk by the backpack and look around if they can spot the owner. But
the man is nowhere to be seen.

A young woman approaches the ticket inspector who is standing in the doorway of
the train. He follows her to the location of the backpack and approaches it. He walks
around it a few times and looks around him.

The ticket inspector grabs his radiophone and calls one of his colleagues. Within
no time a woman wearing a NS uniform comes down the electronic stairs onto the
platform. She joins the ticket inspector and repeats his initial actions. She walks
around the backpack and looks around.

Meanwhile the ticket inspector asks people around him if they own the backpack or
if they have seen who left it.

Just as Renate is getting ready to shout something out of the window the owner of
the backpack comes walking back. He seems unaware of the commotion and is carry-
ing a sandwich and a coffee. He looks very surprised when he realizes that a group of
people has emerged around his luggage.

The ticket inspector asks the man if he can watch his luggage more carefully and
not leave it unattended the next time he wants to get a snack.

The man nods, but he does not seem very affected by the speech.

The other bystanders turn away and the ticket inspector returns to the train. He
enters the doors and blows his whistle to indicate the departure.

As the train picks up speed on the way out of the station, Renate thinks to herself
that some people can be so ignorant!
NS and Terrorism in the Netherlands

On December 2nd 1975, seven young and armed South Moluccans stopped and seized a train from NS near the village of Wijster in the Netherlands. They took control of the train and took 64 hostages. The train driver was killed immediately. The hijack lasted almost two weeks when the hijackers finally surrendered on December 14. By that time, three men were killed and an explosion had injured one of the attackers, as well as one of their hostages. Almost two years later, in May 1977, a group of nine armed South Moluccans seized another train, this time near the crossing at De Punt. The hijack lasted 482 hours and during the rescue operation two hostages and six hijackers were killed. These two violent instances in the history of the Dutch railways were part of a series of terrorist acts (including the hostage-taking of an elementary school) of a group of radical South Moluccans who were dissatisfied with the attitude of the Dutch government towards them since their arrival in the Netherlands thirty years earlier. Through these terrorist acts they hoped to convince the government to keep their promises to grant them the opportunity to (re)build their own community on the Moluccan Islands, Indonesia. Until today these hijacks are the only terrorist attacks in the history of the Dutch railways (Bootsma, 2000; Den Boer, 2007; Muller, 2003; Rasser, 2005), although the issue of terrorism has gained a prominent position in the sector in the aftermath of 9-11 and once again after the attacks in Madrid and London.

The terrorist attacks in the US on September 11, 2001 provoked strong reactions both in the Dutch political, institutional and the public realm. The Dutch government realised that it needed to start thinking about a policy focused on terrorism. Although the Netherlands has relatively little experience with terrorist activities, the threat seemed suddenly very realistic (Den Boer, 2007). The issue of terrorism and security was put high on the political agenda and many organizations (especially those in so-called vulnerable sectors like transportation) inevitably started to think about their own security measures.

Within NS, the 9-11 attacks created a sense of urgency to put the issue of security at the top of the agenda. As it was, the company was still in the process of reorganizations resulting from the denationalization and the issue of personal security had already gained a more prominent position in the 1990s. The attacks in Madrid underlined the need for counter-terrorism measures even more. A special task group delegated with the anti-terrorism activities of the company was created within the security department shortly after the Madrid attacks. This task group has developed a special training programme for all (operational) employees and is involved with the communication strategy towards the public. Since 2004, campaigns have started to urge passengers to be alert and in 2005 a nation-wide pro-
gramme\textsuperscript{52} has started (Nederland tegen terrorisme, 2005), based on the underlying notion that counter-terrorist activities are a shared responsibility of the government, public authorities and organizations in the so-called ‘vital’ sectors. The anti-terrorism task group within NS has also been involved with the design criteria for the construction and improvement of stations.

The counter-terrorism strategy of NS has been developed in cooperation with other actors in the security sector in the Netherlands and abroad. Delegates from the security department are participating in the COLPOFER task group dedicated to security (UIC, 2007), and there have been several visits to the UK and Spain among other places to share knowledge and expertise about counter-terrorism strategies in the railway sector (NS, 2005b).

Although the Dutch like to be seen as down-to-earth and commonsensical, the increasing attention for terrorist threats has permeated the society in many ways. False-alarm bomb threats from left luggage, suspicions and social unrest towards Muslims and heated political debates on the matter are more and more becoming common practice in Dutch society. Although it has to be noted that such reactions are strongest and mostly visible right after critical events, such as the terrorist attacks in Madrid or London, or the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, overall the public discourses surrounding terrorism and security have affected public life in the Netherlands more deeply than many Dutch would like to admit. And this is no different for life at the railways. Most ticket inspectors or other employees indicate that they are not more scared or that they do not think about the possibility of terrorism all the time, they do indicate that they are more aware, for instance whenever there is a piece of left luggage in their train. Maybe they do not appear to be affected that much, also because they try to maintain their professional image, but at specific instances at the backstage of their daily life the emotions related to such and other security threats become visible.

\textbf{In the Line of Fire}

‘Good afternoon, tickets please’, the ticket inspector cheerfully announces as he enters the compartment. All around him people start digging in their purses and wallets for their tickets. A young man who fell asleep is clearly annoyed that he has to wake up to show his student public transportation pass.

The ticket inspector is not easily daunted and teases the man: ‘sleep tight’.

\textsuperscript{52} Nederland Tegen Terrorisme: The Netherlands Against Terrorism.
The man is not amused and grumbles something undecipherable. The ticket inspector continues his way through the compartment.

As he checks the tickets of a few more compartments, the train suddenly comes to a full-stop. Without hesitation he picks up his radiophone and calls the train driver. The driver explains that they are stuck behind a freight train for a moment. The inspector walks to the intercom system and informs the passengers of the trains:

‘Ladies and gentlemen, we are waiting for a freight train in front of us. This will take a few minutes’.

In the next compartment an elder woman asks about her connection at the next station. The ticket inspector consults his PDA-device and explains patiently that the delay will not affect the lady’s connection.

‘Your connecting train will leave at the other side of the platform. You have plenty of time to board’.

When he proceeds to the next compartment he smiles to himself. Often his passengers display their dissatisfaction whenever there is a delay, even though it is beyond his control. Fortunately, today most people seem to be in a good mood...

In general, NS and its employees are subject to a lot of scrutiny in the media, in the political realm and also from their customers. An often used phrase during the research was that ‘NS has no less than 15 million managers’ \(^53\). The ticket inspectors, along with other frontline employees working at the stations and on the trains are the most visible representatives of the company towards the public and therefore they generally receive a lot of the comments and criticism during their work. People aim their frustrations with the company (delays, increasing prices, etc.) towards this (vulnerable) organizational group. Nevertheless, the professional role of these employees does not provide them with much opportunity to engage in a discussion or dialogue with the people who criticise them. Their text is primarily restricted to phrases like: ‘Good afternoon, may I see your ticket?’, ‘We have a short delay, my apologies for the inconvenience’; ‘your connecting train leaves at platform 5’, etc. They have a responsibility to continue providing ‘service with a smile’ even though they sometimes get blamed for things that are outside their scope of control. Even though they cannot ‘talk back’ at the same moment, this group of employees does have a strong voice and they look for different ways to make themselves heard.

\(^{53}\) ‘15 million’ refers to the approximate number of inhabitants of the Netherlands
Stories From the Frontline: Workfloor Autobiographies

Over the last few years, at least four books have been published by (former) employees. All four authors work or used to work as a ticket inspector or train driver and their books tell stories about their daily life as a railway frontline employee in the Netherlands. Although there are many books written about a great variety of organizations and their members (usually the CEO or another inspirational leader), what is remarkable about these three ‘workfloor autobiographies’ is that they are written by ‘regular’ frontline employees. Why did these people decide to write down their stories, and what did they want to achieve by this? These are among the questions that came to mind after encountering these books. I would argue that writing a book might be a way for them to talk back and give their views on the situation and reflect on their own professional identity narrative.

As data for any research on the culture of NS, the books constitute a unique source. Available written narrative accounts are typically limited to official documents (e.g. annual reports, company biographies, speeches, business histories), management accounts (e.g. strategic reports, minutes), communication means (e.g. e-mails, memos, magazines), or purposely sought after accounts for the research (e.g. diaries). It is generally difficult to find written narratives authored by frontline employees. Usually the points of view of this group of organizational actors are captured in interviews and or on-site conversations and observations. Yet as Chreim (2005: 573) underlines, conversation are fleeting and, unlike written texts, difficult to retrieve for later study.

The books consist of intentionally written narratives, with the purpose of publication beyond the organizational context in mind. The difference between oral and written narratives is that the author of a written narrative has had time to think about the text. “Writing offers time for reflection, allowing lingering thoughts to develop, free from the pressures of a listening audience” (Horrocks & Callahan, 2006: 73). It therefore presents a more coherent story, representing the retrospective reflections of the author. Apart from being able to retrospectively rationalize their experiences and carefully formulate their opinions, writing authors have the opportunity to employ a great variety of literary styles and strategies, depending on the messages they want to convey. These styles may vary between epic, tragic, romantic, ironic, heroic, or humorous (Beech, 2000; Brown, 2006; Brown & Humphreys, 2003; Currie & Brown, 2003; Gabriel, 1995). As such the books were a valuable addition to the data that was generated throughout this project, mainly also because they treat events and situations that took place in the past and offer a different point of view. In addition to analyzing the books, I ap-
proached three of the authors for a conversation about their book\textsuperscript{54}. I met with two of them in person and the third author I spoke over the phone. In the following section I will briefly discuss the four books and present a few quotes from them\textsuperscript{55}.

**Van Loon: Coping with Aggression and Violence**

In his book, Ernest H.O. van Loon writes about the difficult moments of the life of a ticket inspector. Ranging from drunken, rude or aggressive passengers to suicides, fights and terrorist threats he describes the downside of what he still thinks of as a very nice job. His book has a strong focus on the manifestations of current societal problems in the daily operations at the railways.

When you really pay attention to the use of language and manners you notice that a simple ‘good morning/ good afternoon’ already seems to be too much, these days. These past few days I have come to realize what kinds of things passengers actually say to me and consider to be normal. But I know that it is not normal. But society is changing and this is a new trend that has been initiated and is impossible to reverse (Van Loon, 2007: 45).

The book by Van Loon is mainly centred on the theme of aggression and violence. His motive for writing the book is to cope with the stress that is related to being confronted with often very upsetting incidents. After being employed as a ticket inspector for three years and after numerous incidents of (verbal and physical) aggression, accidents, and terrorist threats something broke inside of him. He spent a couple of months psychologically recovering from a serious post-stress syndrome. It was during this period that he decided to write a book about his struggle to cope with these emotionally and physically upsetting situations.

Before you lies the book that I made on the occasion of my third anniversary as an employee at the Nederlandse Spoorwegen and the fact that I spend two months at home because I couldn’t deal with it anymore. The past 3 years, a lot has happened, both positive and negative. I made this book for information purposes: to give people a glimpse in the kitchen of NS. And not to blame certain people, because we all draw little benefit from that in retrospect. Despite the fact that things happen everywhere that cannot bear the light of day (Van Loon, 2007: 8).

\textsuperscript{54} The fourth author, Dick van der Meulen, was not approached because I came across his book at a very late stage in the project.

\textsuperscript{55} The excerpts used in these paragraph were all originally published in Dutch and are translated into English by me.
When all the emergency services have left, and you’re standing at the platform again, a very strange feeling comes over you. It’s only then that you really start to think about what you’ve just experienced. It starts to hit you what kind of threat you have just been confronted with. (...) At that moment everything fell to pieces for me, I emotionally collapsed. Suddenly all previous incidents resurfaced in my mind. I had to deal with everything that happened during the last 3 years, all over again. I entrust this to the always patient paper now: and at the same, step by step, I can leave the past three years behind me (Van Loon, 2007: 53)

The book by Van Loon has been received very positively within NS and beyond. The issue of aggression against public servants is a salient theme, not only for the railway sector, and as such his book is seen as a critique of the increasing aggressive attitudes in society. He launched a website, produced a song about the theme, and is thinking about many different ways in which he can get attention for this problem.

Van der Meulen: Circling Around the Church

Dick Van der Meulen (2007) – a train driver who was an important actor in the collective resistance during the conflicts in 2000 – recently wrote a book about his experiences during the ‘crisis’ period between 1999 and 2002. Van der Meulen wrote this book to document his (and with him a large number of operational staff members) emotional perspectives on the crisis at NS. Van der Meulen describes the developments leading up to the formation of personnel collectives that represented the operational staff in an unprecedented process of resistance.

The resistance against the introduction of a new logistical concept, the infamous ‘circle around the church’, spread to colleagues across the country and was very intense. Partly because of that NS ended up in a complete crisis: bad performances, unsatisfied customers, meddlesome politicians, seriously disturbed work relations, and very eager journalists (Van der Meulen, 2007: 7).

In this quote that has been taken from the preface of the book, Han Noten – a former member of the top management of NS - gives his summary of the internal conflicts during his time as personnel director at NS. The tensions between operational staff members, the NS Management and Trade Unions dominated the media and political arena for a while and turned into one of the largest – and most publicly displayed - labour conflicts in the history of the Netherlands. Van der Meulen, along with a group of employees collectively expressed their anger and distrust towards the management. At the time he was seen as one of the key ‘trou-
ble-makers’. From what he describes in his book it seems that the top of the company lost their control over the staff. Despite the heated conflicts and his public role as one of the representatives of the personnel collectives Van der Meulen got permission from the NS Passenger Services to publish his book, only a few years after the facts. He even succeeded in persuading one of his ‘opponents’ during the conflict to write the preface to the book.

… it is time for a retrospective view on the introduction of ‘the circle’ and everything ‘around’ it. It caused a significant amount of damage to the company. On all levels for that matter. NS was shaking on its ground, was portrayed negatively every day, the image outside was even that the operational staff was on the verge of a collective mutiny (Van der Meulen, 2007: 11).

The book is written for colleagues (to experience it all again), for passengers to get a backstage view of our actions, for those interested in labour-disputes, for managers (how it should not be done!), for trade unions (how to turn the enthusiasm of collectives into union-work), and it is written for myself: I succeeded with this account to write-off four years of anger and frustration about so much injustice and idiocy (Van der Meulen, 2007: 11).

Van der Meulen carefully describes the events and periods leading up to ‘the birth of the circle around the church’ and proceeds to discuss in great detail the different phases of the conflict (including several letters and other correspondence in the appendices of the book). As mentioned at the end of his book Van der Meulen still works as a driver and remains an active member of the employee participation body.

**Lunenborg: Longing for the Past**

The other two workfloor autobiographies focus mainly on the changing work conditions at NS. Arend Lunenborg wrote a book that tells the stories of his and two of his friends’ careers with NS. The stories take us back to the very beginning, back in the 1970/1980s when they started working for the railways. Lunenborg expresses the motive for this book as follows:

Why this book? Well, that’s not so hard; we just want to put our experiences to paper. It cannot be that so many years at NS, with so many stories, just disappear (Lunenborg, 2005: 7).

On the back cover, the book is introduced as follows:
Arend Lunenborg is a ticket inspector at the Nederlandse Spoorwegen and he writes about the adventures of three people. He is one of them. People from the frontline. They tell their adventures, what happened to them, what they experienced. Often humorous, sometimes with a smile, but also at times with a lump in the throat and a tear in the eyes. The story begins when they are assessed at NS, from that moment they experience normal, funny, weird, annoying, and touching things. All true, nothing made up, even though it seems improbable at times. It is their story, but it could have been the story of any railway man (Lunenborg, 2005: back cover).

The stories in the book are mainly about the past, describing what it was like to start working for NS and how the work practices changed over time. The stories, filled with railway jargon, present a romantic, nostalgic image of the ‘great railways’ as a magnificent workplace, a sentiment that is not uncommon among railway employees (Strangleman, 1999, 2002). At the end of the book, the author presents the opinions of the three protagonists about the current state of the company and their ideas about the future of NS:

I’m not negative, Sjaak said, I’m positively critical, that is very different. “It was and is, a magnificent company, only it is too bad that there are many people at a wrong position.” According to him, NS is dangerously ill and the company is going down because it is impossible to keep track of all the decisions being made. Millions and millions are spent on projects to improve the image of the company. […] It’s all about prestige, to show the outside world what NS does with the money? All bullshit! Meanwhile the company is bleeding to death (Lunenborg, 2005: 90).

To Cees it was all incomprehensible. “If I would have to run a company the way NS does it, I would go broke.” […] “Listen more to the people at the shop floor, that’s where the best ideas come from. Don’t throw all the technical knowledge out the door and don’t let a manager, who has to get his knowledge from a rule book, make all the decisions.” (Lunenborg, 2005: 90).

And Arend? Oh, he still works at NS and he is still a ticket inspector because he cannot imagine a better job. Too bad, it’s a shame that managers think of something different every time and thereby complicating the life of the customer and the employee. The service, that was always considered to be of paramount importance, is gone or far away. Trying to make money, in any way possible, is now written on the banner of the company. […] Time is money, people don’t count. Is it a problem of these times… is that how society is these days? Is it a fact that people are longing for a NS with a lot of commissioners? According to Arend, a passenger just wants to get from A to B, as comfortably as possible and they couldn’t care less if the big director of the Nederlandse Spoorwegen is named Piet or Jan! Arend thinks back on all those years and thinks: too bad, it’s a shame! (Lunenborg, 2005: 91).
It becomes clear from these fragments that the author is rather sceptical about the current direction of the company. The managerial discourse that is dominating these days is worrying him. When he approached the company with his plan to publish a book, the initial reactions were enthusiastic. However, once he showed his direct boss the manuscript that sentiment turned around and he had some trouble getting it published without many alterations. The love of writing made him follow through and he has been working on several other books since then.

**Van Tuinen: The Disappearance of a Job**

A similar opinion to the one by Lunenborg can be found in the book by Klaas van Tuinen (published in 2006), entitled: *The ticket inspector tells: Image of a disappearing occupation*. Like Lunenborg, Van Tuinen has a long experience working for NS and he too is somewhat critical when it comes to the management of the company:

> Managers, they come and go; NS sometimes seems like a pigeon coop. But in a short time they can cause a lot of stress and frustration among the employees, with yet another reorganisation, which obviously always turns out to be a cutback, despite the nicely concealing package. I know, these people do the job they were hired to do, so how can you blame them, but sometimes I think: is it possible that the great railway company of olden days, where there was plenty employment opportunity, be downsized even more? (Van Tuinen, 2006: 10).

Whereas Lunenborg sketches a romantic image of a glorious past, Van Tuinen uses a lot of humorous anecdotes and sarcasm to express his criticism.

> If I can follow the signs within NS, to stay in railway jargon, it may very well be that soon the ticket inspectors will disappear as well, starting with the stop trains. ‘Flying teams’ will randomly sweep these trains clean as well, just like on the regional lines [...] And then possibly also on intercity trains, the train inspector will be replaced by a service-employee, with a lower position of course; it’s easy money! No, the future of the ticket inspector occupation is not very rosy. And that’s a pity, because it is an adventurous, challenging and exciting profession. To deal with people and everything else that goes on in and around the train is constantly changing and it appeals to a variety of competences such as: resilience, flexibility, the ability to improvise, and a sense of humour (Van Tuinen, 2006: 13).

This is just one of the many fragments in which Van Tuinen refutes or even mocks the plans of the management to take the ticket inspector off the trains. At the same
time he explains what he sees as the central characteristics of the job that he loves so much. The prospect of seeing this occupation fade away was is main motive to write this book:

Since NS announced that the ticket inspector will eventually disappear, Van Tuinen thought it was a good idea to put in writing all the things an officer like this may encounter in his work […] Those who have read this fascinating look behind the scenes, will now see the familiar figure with hat and clipper in a different light (Van Tuinen, 2006: back cover).

In the introduction of the book he states that he wants to give the most complete description possible of all the things someone can experience while working for NS. Although many anecdotes are funny there are also stories that show the downside of this line of work:

In 1991 a colleague has paid for a confrontation with an aggressive fare dodger with his life and since that moment many have had to stop their work for shorter or longer periods of time, or even definitely. In the newspaper you read about aggression towards rail personnel every once in a while, but NS, understandably, gives as little attention to the issue as possible (Van Tuinen, 2006: 76).

The incident that Van Tuinen mentions here is refers to the much-cited ‘Harlingen incident’. It clearly was one of the most tragic incidents in the history of the company and came to symbolize the increasing aggression and violence towards railway personnel (as well as other public transportation companies). Since that moment, the issue of personal security has received growing attention within the company, although Van Tuinen is not completely convinced about the precise measures taken:

A train driver who experiences these practices daily tells me: ‘Sometimes they take down the house behind my back,’ but the management, looking at the figures, says: ‘Things are not that bad.’ And in case passengers complain, we can always install cameras, right? Even though there will be only blank images recorded if some troublemaker sticks a piece of gum or sticker onto the lens. But in the newspaper a cheering article appears about how the security in the train has improved significantly, because there are hardly any complaints since the installation of the cameras. (Van Tuinen, 2006: 12).

Van Tuinen too experienced some problems when he revealed his book to the company. He indicated that he does not want to go into the details of the negotiations, but it took him some effort to get it published. Meanwhile he retired from
the railways and he too continues to write. Once more the fear of receiving negative media attention seems to be a dominant theme for NS.

**NS: Love to Hate It/Hate to Love It**

Besides a glimpse of the variety of work practices and aspects that are part of the working life of railway staff, what the four books presented in the previous paragraph also show is the complex relations among NS employees and the company they work for, the management, the public, the government, and the media. The authors have used very different approaches to describe why they both love and hate the company they work for. Although they are all in a way discomforted and frustrated with certain aspects of the daily life at NS, their stories also highlight their almost infinite loyalty to their occupation. For me these texts constituted an interesting addition to the data from my observations, conversations and document analysis.

Now that I have introduced the two organizations that constitute the focus of this study I will proceed to delve deeper into the matter of security in these two settings. The main theme of the next chapter is related to the role of security in the daily practices at the frontline of NS and Renfe Operadora. I will describe more in depth a wide range of situations and issues that take up a prominent place in the lifeworlds of railway employees, both at the actual frontline (stations, trains) but also the daily life in the offices of the companies (i.e. the security departments).
6 Service, Surveillance and Security

Railway Security: Operational Measures

When it comes to security practices in railway organizations, the most visible locations to observe these is in and around the stations and trains. The operational personnel at the frontline of the organizations are the ones who have regular contact with customers and who therefore are (perceived to be) responsible for their security. To their clients, anyone wearing a uniform from the railway company (or in some cases private security companies) represents the company and everything related to that. Regardless of the different tasks of different groups of employees, in the eyes of the customers they are all equally responsible for the different processes. When there is an incident or delay, customers want information and they will approach the first person they see who, to them, belongs to the company. From different studies among customers (such as customer satisfaction surveys) it becomes clear that the presence of organizational staff is perceived as imperative for the perception of comfort and security during their journey at the stations and in the trains. If you consider this, it becomes apparent that service tasks and human presence are very important for the ‘subjective security’ of railway operations. Interestingly, technological advances are likely to gradually replace parts of the tasks of operational personnel (for instance the use of electronic tickets and entrance controls) and these technological developments are often presented as a means to improve the security of both passengers and staff members.

At any particular railway station (or metro station, bus station or airport for that matter) the security of passengers and employees is organized and monitored in several ways. Usually there is some type of access control, either mechanical (tourniquets) or human. The degree of security checks varies between different countries or transportation modes. For airports the checks are generally most advanced although some of the techniques are increasingly taken over by other transportation systems as well. In addition to access controls, human surveillance is generally present around the station. These employees often carry out a mix of tasks ranging from service tasks like providing information, to the monitoring of flows of passengers or enforcement tasks. Depending on the company, location of a station, or time of day/night more or less security guards or police officers are present to watch over the security at the station. Furthermore, station areas are increasingly monitored through CCTV systems. This is a technology that is developing rapidly and most companies in the public transportation sector are developing extensive plans to use intelligent cameras for the surveillance of their operations. Again,
depending on the specific legal framework of the country or region of the station, the use of camera surveillance is more or less advanced. Finally, the specific design and lay-out of the station premises plays an increasingly important role in the protection and control of the passengers and staff.

In this chapter the focus is on these operational aspects of railway security the daily life of railway employees in our two companies. In addition, I will focus on the technological side of operational security measures. The human-technology interface as well as the social construction of surveillance and the public debates surrounding surveillance and security techniques will be discussed. The main focus of the chapter is on the daily practices of staff members both in the trains and stations, as well as those working in the offices of the Renfe Operadora and NS.

‘I Had the Highest Number of Incidents’

The day I tag along with Raquel, her shift starts at 7.00 am. Because it is Sunday there are only two information hostesses present at the railway station. At the major stations, like the one we are now, on weekdays there are usually three hostesses working each shift, but during the weekend there are only two. There are two daily shifts, the first is from 7.00h – 15.00h and the afternoon shift is from 15.00h – 23.00h. Raquel prefers the morning shift because that gives her some time to spend doing work around the house or spend time with her kids in the afternoon. But sometimes she also has to work the afternoon shift because the shifts are divided among all hostesses for a month at a time. At times she also has to work on one of the smaller stations. She really does not like that because there is only one hostess working each shift and the stations are much quieter, making the work a bit boring.

When we arrive at the station it is still very quiet. There are only a few passengers, including a group of young people who clearly come straight from a club and are waiting for the train to take them home after a long night of dancing and drinking. Although they are rather loud they are not bothering other people, so she lets them be. Sometimes these youngsters can get pretty annoying for other customers and then she would have to call one of the security guards present at the station. The security guards, working for different private companies that provide security services for Renfe, are responsible for taking care of all incidents related to passengers that are misbehaving. Sometimes Raquel herself would like to interfere by telling people

\[56. \text{ In Spanish the title of this job category is } \text{azafata de información. At times the job is also referred to as auxiliar de orientación.}\]
to be quiet or something like that, but formally she is not allowed to do so because she does not have the proper qualifications.

Although she feels capable enough she understands the reason why she cannot act in such situations. ‘Whenever things escalate and I would be in a difficult situation, for example with an aggressive passenger, I would be personally liable since I am not officially authorized to intervene. That’s why we have to call the security guards in these situations, even though we think it is a harmless situations’.

Tourniquets at Atocha (Photo: Hanneke Duijnhoven)

Today Raquel works with Carolina, one of her favourite colleagues. Raquel likes to work with Carolina because they always have a lot of fun and make a lot of jokes. Raquel was the one who helped Carolina when she came to work here and even though she herself had only just started the job, Raquel was the one who made the first days so much easier for Carolina. Thinking back on those first days, Carolina is very glad that Raquel was there to help her get started. This is also the foundation for their friendship. Before the shift starts we sit in the small room where the hostesses can leave their belongings during the shift. This is also the place where they can go when they take a cigarette break or where they can leave memos for their colleagues. The room is very small and has no windows. There is a table and three chairs, a microwave, a couple of lockers and some boxes lying around. On the wall above the table hangs a schedule for this month. Some of the shifts are changed with pen. Next to the schedule a form is pinned to the wall, mentioning a total of 13 incidents that occurred during a single shift. As Raquel and Carolina explain, an incident can be anything ranging from assisting a disabled passenger, to a situation in which back up from a security guard or the police is required. At the end of each shift the hostesses have to fill out a form to record all the incidents that occurred during that shift. These forms are then processed by operational personnel working at the office of the security department. According to the women an important reason for the existence of these forms is so that the company can check if they work hard enough. For them the forms symbolize the proof of their capability and work ethos.
Carolina proudly tells the story behind the form on the wall: ‘I was only working here for a very short time, but during that day we had 13 incidents in one shift. That is the highest number ever for one shift at this station. I can’t remember exactly but we had a few incidents where we had to help disabled passengers to the platform or off the train and also a couple of angry passengers. Anyway, it was a great feeling to have the highest number of incidents; it made me feel very capable and useful, especially only being at this job for such a short time.’

As Caroline tells her account, I am struck by her interpretation of the situation. I find it remarkable that they are so proud of the high number of incidents, regardless the nature of the incidents. From my conversations with people at the company’s central security department, I understand that they would be pleased to have as few ‘negative’ incidents (referring to incidents that pose a threat to the security of passengers and personnel, or that inflicts damages to material belonging to the company) as possible because that would indicate that the ‘objective security’ has improved. One of the central goals of the department is to increase the number of auxiliary activities (thereby increasing the service level) and decreasing the number of risks and threats to the security level. From the perspective of Carolina, Raquel and their colleagues however, the fact that they have to act in any kind of situation actually gives them a sense of importance, which might also be explained as a purpose of their position, in reaction to the uncertainty of the future of this job. Repeatedly they remark that they prefer to have a very busy shift because otherwise they feel as if they haven’t really performed well (which in their minds is literally the case because they feel they are being held accountable for the number of incidents).

Before the shift starts Raquel and Carolina change into their uniform, in the same purple colour as the new Renfe Operadora logo. Raquel explains that they got these new uniforms only recently. They are part of the complete transformation of stations, trains, uniforms and offices. All the old logos for the different business areas of Renfe are replaced by new signs that show the fresh purple logo of Renfe Operadora or the green logo for ADIF. Although the uniform makes it clear for customers that the hostesses represent Renfe Operadora, a logo on the sleeve of the jacket indicates that they are actually employed through one of the private security companies.

After changing into their uniform and smoking one last cigarette Raquel and Carolina leave their office and go to the area of the station where the local trains depart. This area, in the middle of the building, is where they have to spend most of the time. The hall is situated on the lower floor of the building and has a round shape with large automatic stairs coming down from the upper floor, where the metro arrives and the boarding area for high-speed train (AVE) passengers is located. In order to enter that area a valid ticket is required and everyone’s luggage is screened in an X-ray machine. Compared to the lively chaos in the rest of the station, the AVE lounge breathes an
atmosphere of serenity and exclusivity. There is a bar and a few shops where you can buy luxury items like chocolates and perfume. There is also a store that specializes in souvenirs and all kinds of merchandise items with the AVE logo. In the centre of the lounge is an information stand with a number of scale-models for new stations. The green ADIF logo makes clear that upon the separation of Renfe Operadora and ADIF, the station buildings are the area of responsibility of the infrastructure manager. A young woman in a green, ADIF uniform stands next to the scale-models.

In the back of the boarding lounge there is a door with a sign stating that it is a special lounge for first-class passengers. This lounge is only accessible for passengers travelling first-class, at the door the passengers are kindly requested to show their tickets. It is nicely decorated with big leather couches and chairs. This privileged group of passengers can choose from a wide variation of magazines and newspapers to entertain themselves while waiting for their train to depart. To the side of the lounge there are fridges filled with cold drinks, machines that serve coffee or tea and all kinds of snacks, available to the customers (free of charge).

Back in the main hall of the station, the information hostesses have to be visible for customers and open to all kinds of questions. Raquel explains that she prefers to walk around a bit and sometimes she approaches customers herself, especially elderly customers or people that obviously can't find their way. As the morning progresses the station becomes much more alive and busy. It is a different crowd than on weekdays and there are more people that need help or have questions, according to Raquel. During the week the majority of customers are people travelling to and from their work and they are usually experienced passengers. In the weekend there are much more tourists and people who are less experienced with travelling and these people often feel a bit insecure. As she is speaking about this Raquel's attention is caught by an elderly woman who is standing in a long line in front of the ticket booth. Raquel walks up to the woman and tells her that it would be quicker to buy a ticket at one of the machines. She asks if the woman would like her to show her to the machine and buy a ticket with her. The woman seems grateful and walks towards the machine with Raquel. Slowly and patiently Raquel walks the lady through the steps of buying a ticket. When the woman is having trouble finding the right amount of coins in her wallet, Raquel kindly takes the wallet and takes the coins. She shows them to the woman before putting them in the machine. She gives the ticket and wallet back to the woman and after showing her the direction for the right departure platform the woman thanks her and walks away.

The recent introduction of ticket machines at the stations creates an additional task for the information hostesses. The hostesses are supposed to stimulate passengers to use the machines rather than the ticket offices. They are also required to help customers who have troubles operating the machines. Raquel explains that the future of her job function is not certain, especially because of the task to assist customers in the transition period will probably disappear in the future she does not know how long this job will exist. She finds the introduction of the function as hostess rather
short-term oriented. When I ask her what it is that makes her think that, she refers to the fact that there is absolutely no training whatsoever for the new hostesses. They are thrown in at the deep end and have to figure out for themselves what the tasks entail and especially all the information that customers ask questions about (such as time-tables and departure platforms) is something they have to learn themselves. The only training they get is from their colleagues who show them the ropes. And if you are appointed to a smaller station you are on your own because there you don’t have a colleague with you. It is all because the company doesn’t want to spend a lot of money on this project, is the explanation of Raquel.

While both are busy helping customers, every now and then Raquel and Carolina check in with each other and have a short chat. Sometimes they chat with one of the other employees at the station like Eduardo the cleaner, or José and Víctor who work as security guards. Both Raquel and Carolina have a mobile phone with them and sometimes they are called by somebody at the Customer Service desk, for instance if a disabled passenger has requested help. Today a group of blind students need to be accompanied to the right platform. Depending on the type of request Raquel and Carolina both leave the hall to answer to the call. It turns out that the three students all have to leave from a different platform. Carolina takes one of the students by the hand and walks towards the platform where the train with the right destination will depart. Raquel gives both of the two other students an arm and walks with them towards the part of the station where the high-speed train leaves. They first pass a small souvenir shop and one of the students asks her if she can help him to buy a present for his sister. They enter the shop and Raquel describes a number of different articles to him. Eventually he chooses a key-chain with the logo of the Real Madrid soccer team. After Raquel has helped him pay for the souvenir the continue walking to the other side of the station. After entering the downstairs lounge of the AVE Raquel approaches a hostess working for this operator. She hands over the two students to this hostess, who will make sure that the customers arrive at the platform in time for the departure of their trains.

During the walk back to the Cercanías area she explains that she doesn’t mind taking passengers all the way to the platforms, but that it is better if she can hand over the task to one of the hostesses at the AVE, since it regards their customers. She tells that although they all work at the same station there is a rather big difference between the groups of employees for the different operators. She does not dislike the other girls but she wouldn’t want to work there. She finds them somewhat arrogant sometimes.

When returning to her position she finds a pretty chaotic situation. A large number of passengers is standing in line to buy a ticket and another group of passengers is waiting in front of a gate that closes off the way to the platforms. She quickly looks at her watch. Within a few minutes they will start boarding the passengers for the mid-distance train. Raquel explains that the tourniquets in the hall are only valid for the
local (commuter) trains. For the few mid-distance trains that depart each day from the platforms in this part of the station they need to check the tickets manually.

Before taking her position at the gate she points a number of people standing in line to the availability of the ticket machines. The long line quickly resolves. Carolina is waiting for her at the gate and precisely at the indicated hour they open the gate and after checking their tickets they let the passengers pass. Some of the passengers have a ticket for another train and they are told to come back later. Some of the passengers are rather impatient and react irritated towards the two hostesses. Regardless of the situation the two women remain calm and explain to the passengers that they can’t go faster and that there is time enough for everybody to get to the platform in time.

Then a group of people approach the gate. Only one of them is going to travel, but the others want to join her to the platform to say goodbye. Raquel explains to them that this is only possible if they get a special ticket from the Customer Service desk. One member of the group becomes angry. She does not understand why she cannot accompany her mother to the platform and she curses loudly. Again, Raquel explains that she can indeed accompany her mother but that she has to go to the Customer Service desk and ask for a special ticket to enter and leave the platform.

‘Can’t you just let us through, I promise you that we will come right back’, the angry woman continues.

‘I’m sorry madam, but if I would do that you would get a fine when you want to leave the platform without a valid ticket.’ Raquel points to the other side of the hall where the exits for the platforms is located. A couple of security guards check the tickets of the passengers that have just arrived. The hostesses are not allowed to perform that task since they are not authorized to give people fines or, in extreme cases, to make an arrest. The woman and her family finally leave to go to the Customer Service desk to get the ticket and Raquel looks relieved.

‘Some of these people are rather annoying; they just don’t want to listen. Sometimes I have to explain things three or four times and although I am pretty patient, it can give me a headache. Especially when so many people are waiting to get through and you see the crowd it can become a bit intimidating.’

After the last passenger has gone through the gate and the train has left, it is time for a short break. Raquel and Carolina go through another door in the back of the station and enter the toilet. They both light up a cigarette and gossip a bit about one of the security guards. Meanwhile they point to the camera that is hanging in the toilet.

‘We better hope they don’t see us here. If they see that we’re having a break again, we’ll be in trouble.’

Then they start making weird faces to the camera, according to the women ‘to give the people in the control room something to laugh about.’

After fifteen minutes or so Carolina’s phone rings. As she picks up Raquel looks at the time and whispers that they really have to get back to work. Carolina hangs up the phone and says to Raquel that they have to hurry because one of the inspectors is on
his way to the station. The call was from a colleague at another station and he told her
that the inspector just left that station on its way to this station. The women hurry to
back to the main area and immediately inform the security guards about the message
they received. These are able to tell them that it is a ‘false alarm’ because they just
heard on their radio that the inspector is going somewhere else. Raquel and Carolina
explain that sometimes the inspectors come and check up on them.

They quickly rush back to the gate because the next mid-distance train is about to
depart. Again a large group of passengers is waiting for them. As they start to check
the tickets Carolina steps away for a minute to help a woman to find the Customer
Service desk. While Raquel is alone at the gate, her attention is caught by a man who
is begging for money from the people standing in line. She keeps her eye on him and
waits until Carolina returns to take over the checking in. She walks away and a few
minutes later she returns with a security guard who sends the beggar away. Again she
explains that her function does not authorize her to take care of those kinds of inci-
dents.

Especially with the mid-distance trains many people take a huge amount of luggage
with them. Contrary to the high speed and long-distance trains, the luggage for mid-
distance trains and local trains is not screened.

‘You know, anything could be in those bags’, Raquel remarks. She does not know if
the company is planning to screen the luggage for these trains as well in the future.

Although she doesn’t explicitly say so, it is obvious that Raquel really does not want
to think about the possibility of a terrorist attack too much. I notice that she glances
in the direction of the impressive monument to commemorate the victims of the
horrific terrorist attack on March 11, 2004. For a moment, Carolina and Raquel quietly
continue their work. I feel relieved when Carolina makes a joke about the outfit of a
man who had just passed the gate. The three of us laugh and the silent tension dis-
appears...

The job of information hostess is relatively new within Renfe Operadora. The job
is integrated in the Customer Service department and the task-description
mainly consists of walking around the station and providing customers with the
necessary information about the departure of trains, the newly installed ticket
machines, showing them the way to different locations at the station, assisting
disabled passengers, controlling tickets at the entrance of platforms. The concept
of having special employees dedicated to assisting passengers emerged along
with a new orientation of the company’s security policy in 2002 (partly stimu-
olated by the 9-11 terrorist attacks in New York). A number of measures have been
introduced, among which a special security tax included in ticket prices (dedi-
cated to the financing of security equipments like x-ray scanners), the installa-
tion of security delegates in the various business units of the company to coordi-
nate the activities of the security department and the rest of the company, and
the introduction of information hostesses in the biggest stations (Lamas, 2002). Also around 2002, the security department added a special type of incident to the list of possible incidents. In contrast to traditional types of incidents (involving all kinds of security threats and risks) the new figure represents the number of auxiliary actions provided by employees (helping disabled passengers, elderly, passengers with small children, etc.). The idea behind this was that apart from the objective number of (negative) incidents, an important aspect contributing to security is the (subjective) perception of security among passengers and employees (Ordóñez, 2004: 44). From the point of view of the security department, this changing orientation has been developed over the years and is in line with the increasing importance that the company places on service provision and customer orientation. In the strategic plan of the company for the period between 2005 and 2009 a plan is incorporated to improve the customer services of the company, for instance in relation to the accessibility of trains and stations for disabled customers (Renfe Operadora & ADIF, 2007). Whereas traditionally the operating of trains was the central goal of the organization, the changes in the sector since the late 1980s have refocused the company’s orientation towards working in a more commercial, competitive way. Interestingly, the shifting ideas with regard to security measures and incidents is experienced differently among operational staff who have not been involved during every step of the development. Thus, as the example of Carolina and Raquel in the narrative show, the idea of a distinction between negative and positive incidents is adopted in some situations (when they talk about the various types of incidents) but at the same time, when it comes to evaluating their performances they focus on the absolute number of incidents without making any distinction.

With regard to the specific lay-out of the security measures in Spanish railway stations, there is a difference between the multi-modal stations that are connected to the high-speed network and smaller regional stations. In Spain, the station buildings are placed under the authority of ADIF, the infrastructure manager. The different service operators that are part of Renfe Operadora thus exploit (parts of) the stations under the authority of ADIF. As a consequence, a mix of different security systems is present at the stations. At the bigger stations there are usually security guards that are hired by both ADIF and Renfe Operadora (and sometimes also other companies such as Metro operators). Similarly, the camera systems in the station and on the tracks that are used for traffic control belong to ADIF, whereas the CCTV systems that are used for civil protection and personal security are connected to the monitoring centre of Renfe Operadora (CECON).

At the stations that are connected to the a high-speed network, Renfe Operadora uses x-ray luggage screening and special boarding areas for high-speed and
long distance trains. The use of x-ray screening systems for luggage was first introduced with the inauguration of the Madrid-Seville high-speed connection. After the terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001, the use of x-ray screening was extended to other long-distance trajectories and all new AVE connections. Everyone who has ever travelled with the AVE in Spain is familiar with the boarding procedures that are carried out at the station. After buying a ticket (usually reserved in advance to guarantee availability) passengers and their luggage are led through airport-like (x-ray) security screens, into a special departure lounge for high-speed trains. These strict security measures (luggage screens and restricted access to platforms and trains) have been introduced with the inauguration of the first AVE trajectory (Madrid-Seville) on the 20th of April 1992 (the same day of the opening of the World Expo in Seville). Due to the increased terrorist threat before and during the Expo, increased security measures were used around the inauguration. For instance, the Spanish army patrolled the railway tracks (both conventional and the new high-speed tracks) between Madrid and Seville (Pedrote & González, 1992). It was feared that ETA would attempt to sabotage the inauguration of the AVE (a critical date for Renfe and the government) or the Expo.

The inauguration of the first high-speed connection was a crucial moment in the development of Renfe’s security policy. Along with the introduction of the AVE Madrid-Seville, the company installed a network of control systems. The main control point was the control room (CES 24 Horas) in Madrid that connected the six regional control rooms (CPS). There was also a direct connection with railway traffic control, police, ambulances and other emergency services. The technology of the CES was very advanced at the time, employing high-resolution plasma screens connected with the surveillance cameras across the network, alarm systems and communication technologies (Ordóñez, 2004: 48). From the very first development plans of the Spanish high speed network, the AVE has been top priority for both Renfe and the Spanish government. The AVE project received a lot of attention (both nationally and internationally) and the ambition is high. The idea is to connect all major cities in Spain through an extensive high-speed network. Since the opening of the Madrid-Seville connection, a lot of resources have been invested to build additional connections such as Madrid-Lleida, Madrid-Malaga, Madrid-Segovia-Valladolid, and Madrid-Zaragoza-Barcelona. However the process has been far from flawless. Whereas the development of the Madrid-Seville connection went rather smooth, the subsequent projects have experienced many
problems, delays and criticism (e.g. Chamizo & Ruiz del Árbol, 2003; Sala, 2002, 2003). The construction of one of the most important connections, from Madrid to Barcelona (and subsequently to the French border), started in 1995 and was scheduled to open in 2004. Despite the priority given to the project, deadlines were not met repeatedly and eventually the connection Madrid-Barcelona was inaugurated in February 2008, although the glory of the inauguration was overshadowed by the problems and criticism (e.g. Cadena Ser, 2008; El País, 2008; Ordax, 2008).

When it comes to the use of luggage screens and other airport-like security measures - such as restricted access to platforms - the Spanish railway sector is a frontrunner compared to other countries (Ordóñez, 2004: 49). According to Carlos Roman – a former Director of Civil Protection and Security at Renfe - this can be partly explained by the exposure of the sector to terrorist violence in the history. He indicates that over 100 (attempted) attacks with bombs have been registered for the sector since 1980 (Ordóñez, 2004: 49). Nevertheless, the strict screening of passengers and luggage is, until now, limited to the high-speed and long-distance trajectories. One of the managers of the security department tells me that these measures require large investments, not only for the equipment but more importantly to adapt the stations to the separation of passenger streams entering and leaving the platforms. For this reason the modification of stations is usually coined with the inauguration of a high-speed connection because there is already a lot of construction work involved with the creation of these trajectories. Furthermore, regional and commuter trains are not particularly suitable for these types of measures due to the dense flow of passengers and high number of stops. Intensive screens would seriously affect the travel time on these trajectories.

Although surveys carried out by Renfe among passengers indicate that their customers are generally satisfied with the quality of security of the company, in the media a large number of criticisms and complaints can be found, written by passengers as well as journalists. An example is the apparent priority that is given to AVE passengers over commuter passengers, the first group being denominated as ‘first-class passengers’ and the second as ‘second-class passengers’. Another often heard critique is aimed at the railway security in general. This line of argumentation usually involves stories of passengers who were able to by-pass the security checks (e.g. La Página de los Cuentos, 2007), or criticisms towards the behaviour of security guards at the stations (e.g. La Razón, 2003). Not uncommon in this type of comments is a latent attempt to place part of the blame for the 11-M terrorist attacks on Renfe, the government, or other public authorities.
‘1.700 Passengers in Just Two Hours’

‘Not all of my people are gonna like it that you’re here, you’ll see. They don’t like it if someone is breathing down their necks while they work’, Jaap, the team leader of the Mobile Inspection Team61 (PBT) team, warns me right before we walk into the gathering room on the first floor of the station where the offices of the company are situated.

It’s 6.50 in the morning and the early shift of the PBT team is about to start. Little by little the people who just worked the nightshift are leaving, while the people for the morning shift arrive.

‘We’re a little understaffed today, only 5 while normally we’re with 9 people’.

First I get to change into a uniform so that I can really participate with the team. When everybody is present, Jaap starts the briefing by announcing that the team will go to a smaller, but very busy station in the vicinity to do their usual entrance control during the morning rush. Because of the enormous amounts of people travelling through that station (especially since alternative transportation means are not available at the moment) there are often problems with processing the streams of people that cause significant delays.

‘To prevent problems and also to convince the management about the urgency of the problems, we have to be present at the station each day to monitor the flows of people and count the number of passengers passing by onto the platforms. Last week we counted over 1.700 passengers in just two hours, and it seems that the number is growing each week. So today I ask you again to count them, all right? It will help us to know more about the congestion at that station in the rush hours. Jaap looks around his team.

‘We should ask each passenger for €0.50 then we would be rich after two hours!’ Harry jokes.

The others laugh and Jaap divides the tasks among the team members. It is decided that I will ride along with Harry, Sasha and Jeffrey. After the short briefing the team splits up and leaves the office. If my presence makes them ill-at-ease, they are certainly not showing it. As we walk towards the door, Harry is already chatting with me and making jokes about my uniform (indeed I look somewhat silly in the borrowed uniform).

It is a few minutes past seven when we walk towards the platforms. Our group will do the entrance control at the small station we talked about during the briefing. It will take us a few minutes by train to get there. On the ride over, Jeffrey announces by radiophone to the train manager that we will be riding with him to the next station and that we’ll ‘do’ a few carriages. Harry and Sasha go in one direction, and Jeffrey and I go the other way.

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61. The mobile inspection teams as they existed until the recent changes are called PBT, Proces Bijzondere Taken (Special Task Process).
‘Good morning ladies and gentlemen,’ Jeffrey announces as he enters the carriage, ‘tickets please.’

For me it is still very new to be checking the tickets and it makes me a bit nervous. Luckily, all passengers in this carriage possess a valid ticket.

After a short ride, we arrive at our destination. As we leave the train, Jeffrey waves goodbye to the train manager. The train manager blows his whistle, the doors close and the train proceeds to the next station.

The team and I descend the mechanical stairs to the main hall of the station. It is still very early in the morning and the shops and other facilities are closed. Apart from a cleaner there are hardly any people. I wonder why they need to do an entrance control here, wasn’t this supposed to be an extremely busy station?

‘The crowd comes and goes with the train schedule’ Sasha explains to me, as if she could read my mind. ‘You’ll see, right before a train is scheduled to depart there will suddenly be an enormous crowd’.

Harry approaches the guy behind the coffee counter who is still preparing to open his shop. After a while he comes back with four cups of hot coffee. Since the station is rather cold and draughty, the coffee is welcomed with a lot of enthusiasm by the three of us.
'Let’s go ahead and set up’, Jeffrey says, ‘it’s almost time for the next stream of passengers.’

Harry tells me that it is better if I step aside. The crowd can be very intimidating and it goes really fast, so they don’t feel comfortable letting me participate with this activity. I position myself at a safe distance but still within hearing range. Sasha and Jeffrey each stand on one side of the stairs leading to the platform, and Harry takes the counting device and takes his place next to Sasha.

Soon the first passengers arrive and they are asked to show their tickets before they enter the platform. Some of them are clearly used to the procedure because they enter the station with their ticket already in hand, whereas others have to dig deep into their pockets or bags to find their ticket. In just a few minutes, the crowd grows bigger and bigger. It’s like watching a group of ants swarm around a pile of sugar.

Jeffrey looks at his watch and turns around towards me, ‘five more minutes before the train leaves. You’ll see, the people will get more hurried and angry towards us now’, he says with a smile. Meanwhile, Harry clicks away at the counting device.

I look around at the station and notice the huge difference compared to the tranquillity when we arrived. Numerous people are standing in line for the ticket machines and the guy at the coffee counter can hardly keep up with all his customers. In a corner the cleaner is still mopping the floor at the same slow rate as before.

At that moment I hear an elevated voice behind me. I turn around, and see a middle-aged man arguing with Sasha. Apparently he refuses to show his ticket.

‘I come here every day, I have a season pass for this route. Do you really need me to show it every day? My train is about to leave’, he grumbles.

‘Well sir, we encounter thousands of people here each day, so you can imagine that I don’t remember everybody by face. If you can just show me the pass, you can still catch the train’, Sasha replies in a calm but firm manner.

‘Why don’t you focus on those young people who are always misbehaving instead of your loyal customers?’ the man moans, while he looks in his backpack for his pass.

His face gets angrier when he cannot immediately find the pass.

‘If you make me miss my train, you will regret it’, he screams.

‘Hey mister, threatening my colleague won’t help you. If you are a regular customer, you should know that we check the tickets every day. It is your responsibility to show us a valid ticket’, Jeffrey interferes.

Finally the man is able to show his pass and he runs up the stairs to catch the train.

‘I bet he doesn’t make it’ Jeffrey grins.

Although he jokes about it I can see that they continuously look behind at the staircase coming down from the platform. Jeffrey and Harry shuffle around to position themselves so as to form a human barricade.

Then everything happens very quickly. Harry and Jeffrey turn around and block the way as the man comes back yelling at Sasha. Apparently he missed the train and it looks as if he is ready to attack. Harry holds him back and Jeffrey tries to calm him down.
‘You know, the next train is leaving in a few minutes, I’m sure you are able to catch that one and still be in time for work’.

‘It’s a disgrace’, the man yells. ‘You people are here to make our lives miserable. Why don’t you get a real job!’ With a firm gesture the man pulls away the arm that is held by Harry, turns around and walks back up the stairs, still mumbling something in an angry tone.

I notice that my heart is beating fast and around us, people have stopped to look at what the fuss was about. Harry, Jeffrey and Sasha already returned to their posts and continue checking and counting.

Slowly but surely the crowd disappears again. Was that all? I look at my watch; we’ve been here less than an hour, but I already feel exhausted.

Jeffrey stretches his arms and asks us if we’re ready for another cup of coffee.

While Jeffrey walks away to buy the second round of coffee Harry goes up to the platform to smoke a cigarette at the ‘smoking pole’.62

When they are both back at the checkpoint the new crowd is starting to arrive. Again the emergence of large amounts of people occurs surprisingly fast.

Suddenly there is some commotion at the top of the stairs, on the platform. The flow of people stagnates. With some difficulty, Harry makes his way through the crowd, up the stairs.

Meanwhile, Sasha consults her Railpocket.63

‘The train from Amsterdam has a 10 minute delay.’

Harry comes back and announces that a very big crowd has gathered at the platform.

‘That’s gonna be a problem when the next sprinter64 comes in. There’s no way on earth that all those people can fit in that train,’ he says.

‘Let’s go up stairs and try to manage the crowd,’ Jeffrey says.

‘Good idea, you go ahead. I’m gonna call traffic control to ask if the next Intercity can make an extra stop here to pick up the majority of this crowd.’

Sasha and Jeffrey walk back through the crowd, up to the platform. Harry makes the phone call and within a few minutes he has arranged that the train will indeed make an extra stop.

62. *Rookpaal* – in the Netherlands it is prohibited to smoke in public spaces. A few years ago smoking at the station premises (even outside platforms) was banned, except for certain areas around a designated ventilation/ashtray pole. The design of the poles is criticized and ridiculed extensively among passengers and in the media.

63. The *railpocket* is a special PDA device carried around by all operational staff that keeps them updated on incidents, delays, and other important information. They can also access the entire train schedule to provide passengers with information about connections. The system is also used to report incidents during the shift.

64. Sprinters are a type of smaller trains in the metropolitan area that stop at all stations on a route, whereas intercity trains only stop at the bigger stations.
‘You know, I believe in thinking proactively. This way we can provide all those people with an extra service without much effort. It is not always possible, but I happened to know that there is an intercity passing by shortly that could relatively easily make this extra stop.’

Once more, the problem is solved very quickly and after the trains have passed the crowd has disappeared again.

After a few hours, Harry announces that it is time to pack up and get on the road.

‘How many?’ Sasha asks.

Harry checks the device, ‘1763. You think it’s a record?’

‘Nah, it was only a regular morning’ Jeffrey says.

Together they decide that we will take a train towards the opposite direction of their base station. We will check a few compartments in trains that are infamous for the high number of fare-dodgers. Then we will change trains and do a part of another trajectory before returning home.

I ask if they are free to choose where they go.

‘Well, in principle we can choose, but sometimes our team leader specifically asks us to check certain trains based on the statistics of that particular trajectory. For instance, if there are records of misbehaving passengers in a specific timeframe we are asked to check at that specific time. But other than that, we decide at the moment what to do. Anyhow, if you check the same routes everyday the fare-dodgers will figure it out eventually, so we need the element of surprise.’

When we’re all packed up we walk up the stairs on the other side of the station. The train is just arriving at the platform. Clearly the worst morning rush has passed because the train is only partially occupied.

This time it’s a double-decker train and Harry and I take the upper floor, while Jeffrey and Sasha enter the compartment downstairs. As we proceed from compartment to compartment, I begin to feel more comfortable with my newly learned task. This is actually a lot of fun!

At the end of each compartment Harry waits until I catch up and then we go on to the next one together. At one point I notice that I am finished with my side, and there is no sign yet of Harry. I look back and see him standing with a passenger. I walk back and see what is going on. It turns out that it is a student that attempted to travel with his new student pass that is not valid for another week. He claims that he did not know that the pass was not valid yet and that he already has classes that week. Harry explains to him that he still has to write a fine. When the boy tries to talk himself out of it again, Harry refers to the new company policy. Ticket inspectors of NS always have to write a fine if someone travels without a valid ticket. In case the passenger feels that they are unrightfully given this fine, they can write a letter to the customer service department to plea for a remission of the fine.

When Harry is finished taking note of the personal data of the student we walk to the next compartment. At that moment we see that Jeffrey and Sasha approach us from the other side, apparently they finished their floor and started at the back to-
wards us. We all go downstairs and take a seat in a first-class compartment. Jeffrey asks Harry what the incident was while Sasha is typing something on her railpocket.

For the remainder of the 15-minutes journey we stay in the compartment and I take advantage of the moment to ask them about their views on the current changes in the security organization of the company.

Jeffrey answers that he is not quite sure yet. ‘On the one hand I understand the need for these changes, but I also fear for my job. I am a special member of the mobile ticket inspection and I don’t have the proper qualifications to work as a ticket inspector. So with all these changes, the question is what happens with my job.’

‘Yeah, but although I am a qualified ticket inspector, I don’t know if I want to go back to the regular train duty’ Harry remarks. ‘Most of the people in the PBT are here because they are better at enforcement tasks than service tasks. You know, we are strongly built, tough and not easily affected by passengers who yell or swear to us, or those that get aggressive.’

‘The biggest problem is the uncertainty’, Jeffrey goes on. ‘Like I said, I don’t mind changes, I understand that it is necessary, but I would like to know where we stand. I mean, if they decide to outsource all the security tasks to private companies I think that would be very bad. Those guys don’t have a clue about the work of railway employees. It’s very different from other work processes. But you know, when it comes to this type of decisions, the money is often more important than other things.’

Compared to earlier that morning Sasha is remarkably silent. She continues to look down at her railpocket. She slightly turns her back to the rest of us and starts calling someone with a lowered voice. From the conversation she has, I gather that she is talking to a friend.

The train comes to a stop and we get out onto the platform. We only have to wait a few minutes to catch the next, train, the last train for us today. While checking some tickets one more time, this train will take us back to our home station. As we proceed through the train I feel I’m already getting more used to checking the tickets. I find that I feel increasingly comfortable. People around me don’t seem to really notice anymore that I am new at this.

Back at our home-station I thank my guides for their company and their help. They ask me if it was helpful at all. I eagerly confirm that the shift had been a very interesting and insightful time. Nevertheless I have to admit that I am completely exhausted and cannot wait to get home.

In 2000, NS started a project with mobile inspection teams under the name *Proces Bijzondere Taken* or PBT. In all geographical product areas around the country, special teams were created. These teams are devoted to a variety of se-

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65. Special Tasks Process.
curity tasks, such as entrance controls, back up for problem trajectories, extra ticket inspections, etc. These teams consist of ticket inspectors and special members of the mobile ticket inspection team\(^{66}\). When the project started it was relatively small, but due to the successful results of the operation, it was expanded to cover the whole network.

Sometimes the PBT teams work together with the national police to conduct extra surveillance on specific notorious routes and stations. NS has also carried out projects in which undercover inspectors carry out surveillance on the trains to take on the ‘smart’ fare-dodgers or pick-pockets who disappear as soon as they see someone in uniform entering the train. Furthermore, cooperation with local authorities and the police are set up to expand the security measures beyond the direct premises of the station and make the stations surroundings a safer place (for instance through innovative lighting, spatial planning and increased surveillance). In particular for notorious ‘problem’ stations so-called ‘security-arrangements’\(^{67}\) are drafted to formulate the relations and responsibilities of different stakeholders (public as well as private) in the vicinity of the stations to enhance the cooperation and thereby dealing with the localized problems hands-on (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijkrelaties, 2004a, 2004b).

Nevertheless, despite the good evaluations of the project, the current developments with regard to the institutional position of NS in the railway sector (in particular with regard to the railway police) have urged the company to rearrange the structure of the back-up organization and the PBT will cease to exist in its current form.

**Surveillance, Enforcement and Service**

An important aspect of railway security is related to the surveillance of people and processes. Surveillance is an increasingly important mechanism in modern societies and is used to counter the insecurities and perceived threats of terrorism and crime that belong to the dominant images of the contemporary world (Monahan, 2006a). Apart from protection and control it has been argued that surveillance techniques are used also for symbolic (ritualistic) purposes (Campbell, 2006) to create an illusion of security – or that ‘everything possible is being done’ (Beck, 2002). Surveillance may take various shapes and forms ranging from camera surveillance, entrance controls, customer behaviour records (through automated tick-

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66. *Mederwerkers Mobiele Controle* (MMC), employees without the full qualifications of ticket inspectors.
67. *Veiligheidsarrangementen*
et sales), or human surveillance in and around the railway stations and trains. This section focuses on different aspects related to human surveillance and the general philosophy behind the different approaches to surveillance. For instance, it is important to recognize that surveillance is not exclusively aimed at passenger behaviour but staff members are also monitored (whether or not purposively).

Surveillance has become an integral part of daily operations and while some types of surveillance are subject of debate others are less contested (or less visible). Furthermore, there are different groups of actors involved in surveillance practices (employees who work in the camera control rooms, security guards, ‘regular’ operational staff, etc.) The relations between these different actors constitutes an important aspect of the role that surveillance has in the organizational processes. Questions with regard to who is subject to surveillance mechanisms and why, or how such mechanisms influence behaviour and become routinized are leading in this paragraph. As Monahan strikingly asks (2006a: ix) “But just what is being secured by modern surveillance technologies?” The idea that surveillance and security systems have a profound effect on social life and that such systems are not only technical but also social is by no means a new idea (Monahan, 2006b); studies such as the famous works by Weber on the bureaucratic organization (1978) and Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1977) highlight the pervasiveness of technical systems of social control. Nevertheless, the current emphasis on security related issues in public discourses sheds new light on the symbolic and controlling functions of surveillance and security.

**‘To Report Incidents is Crucial’**

On Monday morning a group of men walk into the office. Since there is no meeting room available they sit down at a larger table in the office space. Available chairs are pulled up in order to seat everyone.

Alejandro, the manager from Renfe Operadora opens the meeting with a short introduction, stating who is absent and why.

Like every Monday the meeting starts with an evaluation of the past weekend. The representative of each company shortly summarizes the most important incidents and issues that were reported to him by his inspectors and security guards. Some of the representatives have a very short list while others have a lot to discuss. Most incidents involve vandalism, public drunkenness, drug abuse, stolen railway properties (mainly copper cables), etc.

One of the representatives, Ricardo suggests that his guards have too much work at certain stations. A discussion follows about the allocation and patrols of different guards (from different companies).
Santiago, another representative, talks about the use of dogs on the patrols. According to him, the dogs are not used that much, making them a burden (both financially and practically).

Alejandro responds that he wants to see the dogs used better. Another point of critique that he utters (and it seems as if this is not the first time) is the fact that incidents are not reported properly.

‘To report incidents is crucial for all parties involved because I have to report them back to my bosses and if I don’t have anything to report I cannot account for the current budget for private security services. That would mean that next year there will be fewer contracts and the guards will have an even busier task,’ he explains with a firm tone.

Miguel, one of the inspectors for Renfe Operadora takes this remark to utter his annoyance with the fact that some important incidents are not reported at all during the meetings. ‘For instance a few days ago a man carrying seven passports was discovered at a station, and nobody mentioned this in the meeting.’

Nobody responds and Miguel continues.

‘I mean, these are incidents that should be reported above yet another fare dodger. Those are everyday business and not the type of incident that we should dwell on during the meetings, but other types of incidents is where we can learn from or need to take precautions.’

Throughout the meeting it becomes clear that the companies have to account for the work of their employees and their general service delivery to Renfe Operadora. Some of the representatives do not have all the information ready and Alejandro is clearly not happy about that.

The general tenor of the meeting is friendly and cooperative, but at times it becomes clear that the companies are also each other’s competitors. A few representatives argue a bit among themselves about the cooperation between their guards, in particular between mobile teams and static guards.

Alejandro interrupts them and indicates that these mobile teams should not stay together during the whole shift.

‘The agreement is that they work in small groups or duos and only if it is really necessary they should be at the same place together. I want them to work according to this agreement, and you should urge them again.’

Alejandro inquires about the cooperation between the guards and the mobile teams from the police. Renfe Operadora has an agreement with the police that their mobile teams will be present at certain stations or at certain times (because of recurrent problems with groups of youngsters or graffiti).

Some of the representatives indicate that their guards are not very pleased with the assistance they receive from the police.

‘As my guards tell me, those mobiles usually only stay a few minutes at each location of their route and they mostly remain outside instead of patrolling the actual station premises,’ Ricardo says.
‘It’s the same as those guys from the metro’ Gonzalo, another representative adds. ‘Do your employees ever notice the metro security guards at the multimodal stations?’ Alejandro asks.

‘No, these guards are hardly ever there and if they are present, they certainly don’t do a lot’ Gonzalo mumbles.

Alejandro makes a note of this on his paper and whispers something to his colleague Alfonso, who is sitting next to him.

After the round of evaluations they talk briefly about the coming days and the specific division of guards across the different stations and trajectories. That Wednesday there will be an important soccer match between Real Madrid and Getafe (two rival teams from the Madrid area) and it is expected that the transport system around the stadium will be heavily congested.

‘Please instruct the guards carefully about the meeting. You have all received the detailed action plan, haven’t you?’

Everyone grabs the sheet with the scenario description and they discuss the roles for specific teams. Alejandro explains that he and several of his colleagues will all be present that night to monitor the process.

‘We’ll be in touch tomorrow about the definite time-plan but I suppose most things are clear?’ Alejandro looks around the table.

A few people have some more questions with regard to the up-coming event and they discuss the matter a bit further.

Altogether the meeting lasts over 2½ hours. After the meeting, all representatives hand in the paper forms, reporting all the incidents that have been written down by their employees, to a group of security officials working at the security department. They will now proceed to enter the reports into the department’s database.

Alejandro and Alfonso, his assistant manager, briefly review the meeting, scribbling down a few notes (for the files on each of the companies that will be used for the re-evaluation and reallocation of the contracts), before they get back to their own desks.

Some of the guards linger a bit in the hallway and talk among each other or with the secretaries and other employees at the department. When they have all left, the quietness is striking, as if the department was briefly hit by a storm.

In a Spanish weekly newspaper about the employment market an article about private security guards is published (Mercado de Trabajo, 2007). The article states that the market for security guards in Spain is growing fast. In 2006 the sector employed a mere 121,730 people, and the demand for new personnel is high (according to the article 21,000 positions still need to be filled). In Spain, the use of private security companies is relatively high compared to other countries. The use of private security services is strictly regulated by the government. Security personnel (security guards as well as security managers) are required, by law, to receive a special training. The qualifications of private security guards are
the same as any other citizen except that they are authorized to detain people, asking for identification and register their names. Carrying a weapon is only permitted for those guards who have a personal licence, which is limited to specific areas of service (Bosch et al., 2004). Private security guards are subordinate to public security forces (e.g. La Guardia Civil or Policía Nacional) at all times. Private security guards are working in many different areas such as surveillance of public places (including public transportation) and security controls in governmental buildings, shops or other offices. The railway sector is a large supplier of employment opportunities for private security organizations.

Within Renfe Operadora, the security department is responsible for the contracting of private security companies and for the coordination of their activities. Renfe Operadora works with a number of different companies to increase the flexibility and the competition between the companies. Furthermore, the companies have different competencies and specializations. The companies do not only provide security officers and inspectors to work on the stations and in the trains but also as security guards for the offices, certain administrative personnel and information hostesses at stations. By contracting the services of private companies, Renfe can keep its permanent staff as small as possible. The performances of the security officers are closely evaluated. Twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays) representatives of the companies and the department come together to evaluate the incidents of the past few days and to allocate the resources for the coming days. During these meetings each representative needs to account for the activities of their officers and hand-over the reports written by them. The data are compared with the data received by the department and in case of irregularities these are discussed until an agreement is reached. The department keeps a dossier for each of the companies and these are the basis for the periodical revaluation of the contracts and reallocation of resources.

‘Information is More Important Than Trust’

When the inspector arrives at the parking lot next to the station he looks around to see if he finds the guards that are scheduled to be patrolling the station. At first he doesn’t see the guard because he is looking for a bright yellow slip-over.

He walks to the cabin near the entrance of the parking lot and knocks on the door. No one answers.

He walks to a security guard at an adjacent parking lot that is not part of Renfe’s property.

‘Have you seen my people?’ the inspector asks.
The guard does not know the answer and the inspector decides to call the CECON and have them locate the security guard.

At the same time a man is walking towards the inspector. When he gets closer it turns out to be the security guard, but he is not wearing his uniform.

The inspector tells the security guard that he really should be wearing his uniform and he makes a note on his control sheet. Then he places his signature on the paper that the security guard hands to him and says goodbye.

As he walks back to his car the inspector thinks to himself that it has become clear once more that information is more important than trust. After all, it’s his job to inspect the services that Renfe buys from security companies. This information, then serves to keep these companies on their toes. The inspectors report any irregularities and the security companies need to take care of it. He smiles, thinking back to the time when he was working as one of those security guards. He did not like the inspectors checking up on him either. But that’s how the system works...

Renfe Operadora has a number of inspectors on contract to monitor the services that are provided by the private security companies. Most of these inspectors have a background as a security guard. Their job is to patrol the stations, trains and other railway premises to see whether the security guards are doing what they are supposed to do. At the same time the private companies have to report to Renfe Operadora as well (for instance during the meetings that take place at the security department twice a week and the incident forms). That way, there will be minimal problems between the security guards and Renfe Operadora. In case of irregularities, this is solved between the management of the specific company and Renfe Operadora.

‘It’s Our Responsibility To Make the Passengers Feel Safe’

Thomas walks into the waiting area of the mobile ticket inspection team (PBT) before his shift begins. It is a large room with a huge oval table in the middle. In an adjoining room there is a small desk with a computer and a cupboard with files and books. This is the office of the team leaders. The walls around the large table display all kinds of posters and newsletters from different divisions and committees around the company (such as project letters about the electronic ticketing system, newsletters from the different trade unions, representative advisory council, etc.). In the corner there is a large refrigerator and coffee machine. The windows in the back offer a view part of the platforms and rail tracks. In the room a discussion in going on about the management plans to reorganize the company’s security and back-up organization.
When he walks in his colleagues Bert and Marco are involved in a heated discussion about the new plans of the management for the security teams. Both of them had been to the latest work conference organized by the management to involve the operational personnel in the development of the lay-out for the company’s new security organization. Bert is rather sceptical about the intentions of the management, while Marco has a slightly more positive take on the subject. He believes that the management will take their views into account and that together they will come up with the best possible system.

Bert accuses Marco of being naïve. ‘Haven’t you learned anything from the past? It’s always the same bullshit. They say that they value our opinions and want our input, but then it turns out they had already made up their minds about the plans long before.’

Thomas did not attend this meeting because he was on holiday that week, but he did go to the previous conference. At the time he had been very enthusiastic. After a long period of mutual distrust between management and operational employees he had felt that a new wind was blowing through the company. Meanwhile however, he has become a bit more sceptical because it all takes such a long time and it is not clear what will happen.

‘I really don’t think they had already decided upon the plans beforehand,’ he says coming into the conversation, ‘I mean, if they had, there would be a more concrete plan by now don’t you think?’

‘Maybe’, Bert replies, ‘but I still don’t trust them to actually listen to us. They have no idea what it means to be out there with all those aggressive bastards around us. They wouldn’t last a day in the field...’

‘Exactly’, Arjan who had just walked in interrupts, ‘I don’t understand why they have to change everything. I don’t want to have to choose between working on the trains or in a security team.’

‘Right, we have been through so many changes already’, Bert continues, ‘in the past there have been a lot of different plans and pilots, for instance the PBT (special mobile security teams) or undercover surveillance but it has never been formalized. Although these projects have all been successful and we want to continue them, they never seem to be willing to follow through and really go for it. There is always some doubt.’

‘Yeah, they say that the issue of personal security is important in the company, but there is always something, I don’t know how to put it, eh something that they just don’t want to have to deal with. We are a service providing organization, we have customers, and a lot of things happen on the trains because there are always customers that don’t behave as we want them to behave. And we are working hard to try and keep them out of the train, with our special teams, but from the company you still notice some kind of doubt about this. Maybe they are afraid to scare customers away. If they would just make up their minds...’
At this point Jan-Willem, the team leader, defends the plans by stressing once again that it’s not just up to the management. The government actually demands that the security organization of NS professionalizes by training specialized employees for enforcement tasks.

‘That’s all very well’, Thomas remarks, ‘but that doesn’t mean that they cannot give us any clarity on the job descriptions and conditions. They want us to think with them and make choices for our local teams, but how can we do that if they cannot provide a clear picture of the consequences of the different options. In the end we all want to make a living.’

‘I know that change is difficult, but you all know that the current system is no longer optimal because of the separation of the railway police force from NS to the national police.’ Jan-Willem looks around him to see whether everybody is listening. ‘We now have to make sure that our own back-up system is operating effectively because we cannot fall back on the police for all minor incidents anymore. We have to rely on our own people and therefore specialization of tasks is necessary. You know better than me that there is a difference between enforcement tasks and providing service for our customers. It is our responsibility to make the passengers feel safe and comfortable.’

‘Well, I’ll tell you this... I am not going to work as a mere “service host” on the train’, Bert mumbles. ‘I need the action, or I’ll go crazy.’

‘I don’t know’, Marco contemplates, ‘if working in a security team means that I won’t be working train shifts anymore, I am not so sure if I want it. I would miss working on the train too much. In the end that’s why I started working here in the first place and my father before me.’

‘Well, the latest idea is that there will be mixed positions’, Jan-Willem reassures them; ‘you can work part as a security officer and still remain on the train for a few shifts.’

Bert is still critical: ‘Hmm. Before I make any choice I want to know about the payment and benefits. I surely don’t want to get paid less.’

At that moment, the door opens and a group of colleagues walks in. They just finished their shift and start telling about this annoying passenger who was giving them a hard time when they asked for his ticket. They had to detain him after he almost attacked one of the ticket inspectors. Fortunately, they could hand him over to the railway police before the situation escalated...

After the usual briefing from Jan-Willem about the specific circumstances and the division of routes for this shift, Bert, Marco, Arjan and Thomas get their stuff ready to head out and start their shift.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, NS is in the midst of a reorientation and restructuring of its security and back-up organization. During the time of the research there was still a lot of uncertainty about the precise lay-out of the
changes and therefore it was a recurrent theme in most of my conversations with staff members. In particular the members of the old security and back-up organization – the mobile inspection teams – are concerned with how the changes will affect their position.

Conform the initial plans, the members of the teams are offered a choice between working in a so-called ‘Service & Security Team’ and a job in the regular business process (as ticket inspectors or service employees at the stations). In addition, employees who currently work in the regular business processes at the stations or on the trains are also offered the opportunity to switch to the Service & Security Teams. As it is interpreted by most people in the company, this means that on a daily basis, their work will radically change. If they choose to continue in the enforcement area, they will no longer be working ‘regular train duty’ but they will be posted at the stations. In the regular business process they will lose their enforcement qualifications. Nevertheless, the fine-tuning of the plans was still ongoing at that time and there was already talk about mixed jobs to make the choices more attractive to the staff. It is clear, however that the operational staff will all be brought together in the new Passenger Services organization (whereas before that the train personnel belong to NS Passengers Services and the station personnel is located in the NS Station division).

In March 2006 an internal letter from the NS chairman Aad Veenman leaks out, stating that the company is planning to take away the special enforcement qualifications of its train ticket inspectors. At that moment, all ticket inspectors are qualified as Special Investigation Officers (BOA). The letter states that the company is planning to split up the operational tasks related to ‘service’ and those related to ‘security’. As it is the two tasks are integrated into the position of ticket inspector and, according to the letter, in practice this is causing increasing tensions for the employees involved. Also the exception the company received from the Ministry of Justice would expire. That means that by January 1, 2008 the regular BOA inspectors would lose the power to use force unless they had received the training. Due to the large costs and time investment necessary, NS received an extension of the deadline until July 2009, valid for 200 ticket inspectors (Ministerie van Justitie, 2008b). But that implies that NS would still have to train all 3800 ticket inspectors if the security organization is maintained as it is.

In addition to the issue of the BOA qualifications, the introduction of the planned electronic ticketing system (OV-Chip) will change the focus of the tasks for ticket inspectors from control to service. The checkpoints for passengers will

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68. Service & Veiligheid Teams.
no longer take place on board of the trains, but will be moved to the ‘land’. Third, the denationalized company has to take its own responsibility for maintaining the order in its operational processes and will receive less (proactive) assistance from the railway- and local police forces. Finally, the government expects NS to take up its responsibility in the area of counter-terrorist activities (NS Directie, 2006).

Immediately after the publication of this letter worried ticket inspectors, passenger association ROVER and the labour unions expressed their opinions in the media. They saw the plans as the hollowing-out of the traditional ticket inspector profession and eventually feared for their positions. Furthermore they argued that it would endanger the security in the trains because the personnel on the train play an important role in the security perception of passengers. FNV Bondgenoten, one of the largest labour unions in the sector conducted a survey among 600 ticket inspectors, and the results indicated that the vast majority of this group was against the proposed plans (FNV Bondgenoten, 2006).

Due to the worries and protests, the Board of Directors decided not to go through with the plan as formulated but to work together with the different actors towards an acceptable alternative. For now the BOA-status of all ticket inspectors will be guaranteed, although only a limited number of ticket inspectors belonging to special security teams will receive the so-called BOA-GB qualification, which includes the powers to use force.

To Be Safe, To Be Monitored?

Apart from human surveillance, people, objects and processes are also monitored through the use of technological systems, like CCTV or x-ray scanners and intelligent cameras. In general this is almost unconsciously accepted by the people who are subject to the surveillance. Sometimes it leads to discussions about privacy invasion and critical arguments about ‘big brother’ watching us at all times (Wagenaar & Boersma, 2008). Technological developments have made current day surveillance measures increasingly intrusive (Wagenaar & Boersma, 2008: 185).

At the same time, such measures are reinforced and legitimized through the construction of a shared enemy that requires everyone to be extra vigilant and attentive. The emergence of what Oswick et al. call the ‘new securocracy’ involves a discourse of a continuous state of emergency, with an elusive enemy ranging

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69. Within the company, the nautical terms ‘boord (board) and ‘wal’ (land) are used to indicate the distinction between operation on the trains and at the stations.
70. BOA-GB refers to Special Investigation officer with the powers to use force (Bijzonder Opsporingsambtenaar met Geweldbevoegdheid)
from terrorist threats, refugees, illegal workers, etc., in which public sector workers and the public are involved to take up their responsibility to vigilance and surveillance each other… policing identities (often contradicting service roles) (Oswick et al., 2008). Interestingly, as Oswick et al argue, employees in the (semi) public sector play an especially interesting part in this development. On the one hand they are citizens like everyone else and they are generally employees in a service role (which is increasingly emphasized in the managerial turn within the public realm). At the same time however, the new securocracy demands them to adopt a ‘policing identity’, which is often incongruous with their service role (Oswick et al., 2008).

Throughout the fieldwork in The Netherlands and Spain, I have observed many instances in which the tension between increased (technological) surveillance and policing responsibilities on the one hand, and demands from the growing emphasis on service and customer orientation on the other hand. The discussions about ‘Service and Security’ in the previous paragraph are an indication hereof. Also, remember the way Raquel and Carolina in the first narrative of this chapter felt monitored by the cameras that were protecting them at the same time? And how they interacted with the cameras? People are constantly monitored in different ways and they themselves are urged to be alert (even suspicious?), all ‘in the name of service and public responsibility’. The following narratives represent some interesting issues that are related to this. What these narratives share is a tension between contradictory effects that the use of technology can have on the behaviour and feelings of people (both employees and passengers).

‘Go Back to Work, I Am Watching You’

From the office of the secretaries there is a clear view of the ‘aquarium’. Today, like many other days, it is rather busy in the CECON. Besides the usual staff members a group of five ‘suits’ are walking around in the room.

The director of the department, together with the manager who is responsible for the CECON are giving yet another tour to some of there business relations. Since the inauguration of the CECON in October 2006, there have been regular visits to the control room with external relations. Beside business relations from Spain, occasionally there are also people coming from abroad to visit the CECON. Usually it involves colleagues from railway operators across Europe, but at times delegates from other industries also come to study the security system applied here.

Without overhearing what is said, it is obvious from the enthusiastic gestures that the manager is explaining all the innovative features of the system.

The security officers who work in the CECON continue with their tasks as usual.

The screens offer a view of very different locations throughout the region. One screen displays a platform at one of the stations where a few people are waiting for
their train. Another screen gives an overview of the central hall of Atocha, with the tourniquets and electronic stairs.

‘Another tour to show off the pride of the company?’ Andrea asks when she walks in the secretary.

‘Yes, a group of visitors from the French railways is here,’ Sofia says.

Andrea gives Sofia a few papers and walks back to her own desk again. Meanwhile, the group has finished with the tour of the CECON and disappears into the office of the director. The tranquillity in the office has returned.

CECON (Photo: Renfe Operadora)

A few hours later the security guard at the entrance of the office building calls to the secretariat to announce the arrival of two police detectives from the homicide unit.

Fernanda, who answered the call, walks into the hallway to meet them and escort them to the waiting area of the office.

In the meantime Nuria calls the sub-director to announce the arrival of the police detectives and a few minutes later he comes out of his office to greet the detectives.

As the sub-director opens the door to the CECON with his index fingerprint and leads the way for the police detectives the secretaries observe their movements from the corner of their eyes, while they continue to sit behind their desks.

‘What do you think happened?’ Fernanda asks.

‘What I gathered is that they need to see the images from last night with regard to a crime’.

‘I bet they came to arrest Carlos,’ Maria Jose jokes.

The sub-director comes out of the CECON and walks back into his office. The detectives are discussing something with one of the staff members in the CECON and watch one of the screens.

‘Can you see what they are watching?’
‘No, it’s too small. I can’t make out the images from here’ Nuría says, slightly disappointed.

Then the phone starts ringing and the secretaries are taken-up by their work again. The detectives stay for an hour or so and then they leave the office.

Later that afternoon, Fernanda, María José and Nuría get up from their desks and put on their coats to leave the office for a cigarette break. They take the stairs to the basement and open the door to the side of the building. There is a small area below the street level, where three big containers full of trash are standing. The door of the office building can only be opened electronically by scanning the security identification card or index finger.

This afternoon it is pretty cold outside and the women decide not to go for a walk but to quickly smoke their cigarette outside the door.

‘Please step away from the door’, a low, serious voice sounds apparently out of nowhere.

For a moment the women seem startled by the sudden interruption but soon burst into laughter.

‘Who is there?’ Nuría asks to the camera located above the door. ‘Is that you Carlos?’

The women all turn to the camera and cheerfully wave to whom they believe is Carlos.

‘Go back to work, I am watching you’, the voice sounds again.

‘Yes, I am sure it is Carlos. He is working in CECON today and he always makes this kind of jokes,’ María José says. ‘Just pretend we don’t hear him or he won’t stop bothering us.’

‘Maybe we should go back in’, Fernanda clearly feels a bit uncomfortable.

‘No way, he is just joking’ Nuría reassures her as she lights another cigarette. ‘Just turn your back to the camera.’

After a few minutes they finish their cigarettes and they walk back in the door.

When are back upstairs in the hallway and walk towards their desks, they greet Carlos through the glass windows of the CECON.

Nuría sticks out her tongue and makes a funny face.

Carlos and his colleagues are laughing back at them. As a tribute to their joke they display the images of the camera in the hallway on one of the big screens. The image shows the three women as they walk in the hallway, still goofing around a bit.

At that moment one of the managers enters the hallway with a guest and the women immediately stop laughing and take on a more serious posture.

The CECON, located at the security department, was inaugurated in October 2006. In CECON, a number of specially trained monitors are continuously watching video images (real time) from cameras that are placed at the stations, along the tracks, within trains, offices and other locations belonging to Renfe.
From the CECON, Renfe can intervene as soon as there is an emergency or an important incident. The railway network is divided into territorial delegations that are connected to the CECON through the regional equivalents, the centres of protection and security (CPS)\textsuperscript{71}. The personnel in these centres filter the information coming in from the cameras in their region and when necessary the images and other information are sent to Madrid. Furthermore, these territorial delegations are responsible for the coordination of local security operations and the relations with local authorities and other actors. If necessary, the CECON can receive direct information and images from these regional centres.

The CECON has several functions in Renfe Operadora’s security system, such as providing and administering operational information about security related issues to facilitate real-time decision-making, assisting the regional delegation in case of emergencies and incidents, taking the lead in case of major incidents, exchange information and coordinate the dialogue between ADIF and other relevant actors, and participate in the development of innovative security solutions (Securitecnia, 2008).

The CECON is the pride of the security department since it is equipped with state-of-the-art technology. The technical staff of the security department is currently working on an advanced integrated technical system with intelligent cameras and automated information sharing. Most of the technical staff is hired-in from an external company, specialized in communication technology in transportation systems. The modern design of the room gives it an appealing and professional look and business relations are almost without exception offered a tour of the centre. At times this causes laughter among other employees who are able to witness (through all the windows) the ‘monkeys in the cage’ when there is yet another visit going on and all staff members with a high position are urged to join the group during the tour. Nevertheless, all the attention for the CECON also has its downside according to some of the members of the technical staff. As they explain, the current CECON is actually designed as a pilot project. The idea is to build an even more advanced and bigger centre in the (near) future. However, they sometimes get the feeling that the management of the department is already so satisfied with the current CECON that they wonder whether there will be a bigger one.

The access to the control room is restricted to people who need to enter from time to time. Everybody else needs to be escorted into the room. During the research, access to the CECON turned out to be limited, mainly due to the sensitivity of the information that is processed. When I asked if it would be possible for one of

\textsuperscript{71} There is a CPS in Galicia, Asturias, Irún, Barcelona, Valencia, and Sevilla
my MA students\textsuperscript{72} to do some observation inside the room, the recently appointed manager was quite hesitant about the request. Even after I emphasized that I was not interested in the actual images, but the work practices it remained a problem and together with my student I decided not to push too much. From the department hallway and secretariat we were able to view some of the ‘action’ going on inside, and we spoke with people about the CECON.

\textbf{Abuse of the System Will Be Punished’}

At 14.00h we all gather in the hallway of the security department. Almost everybody is joining today’s fieldtrip. We take the elevator down and go through the tourniquets in the main hall of HGB IV (the head office). As we walk out the building, several people going into the building look at us with a strange face. I realize that we look like a noisy school-class, all excited to go on an excursion.

We take the back entrance that leads to platform 4 of the Utrecht Central Station. We have to wait a few minutes for the train to come and we get a cup of coffee. When the train comes we enter a first-class carriage and occupy two six-person compartments.

Jennifer insists on sitting in the opposite direction of the direction of the train. She claims that it is actually safer to ride in the opposite direction although many people prefer facing the direction of the train.

‘When the train has to brake suddenly, you are thrown to the front and you may hit something, whereas if you are facing the opposite direction, you are pressed against the seat and nothing can happen.’

The group laughs a bit about her theory but nobody really responds. During the hour-long trip we discuss the weather, which has been excellent the past few days. Martijn dozes off, while Youri engages in a heated discussion with Marion about politics.

After an hour or so, we arrive at Rotterdam Central Station where we get off. Florien calls our guide and after a few minutes Marjolein, a service agent at the station warmly welcomes us. We stand around her while she explains some things about the current status of the project.

\textsuperscript{72} During parts of my research one of my Master students who wrote her thesis about Renfe Operadora, participated in my project. We were present at the security department in separate periods but I stayed in contact with her throughout her stay.
‘In the Rotterdam area, NS and the RET\textsuperscript{73}, are conducting a pilot study on the OV-Chip card\textsuperscript{74}. As you can see, the entrances to the different platforms are closed off by electronic gates.’

I look around and see that there are indeed a lot of these gates and we are actually standing in the middle of an area from where you can chose between the metro and train. For both transport systems, the same gates are shielding off the entrances. As we listen to Marjolein, I see some passengers struggle to open the gates. Others have obviously done it before and pass through them without a problem.

‘I’ll give you all a rechargeable card that you can use to try the system,’ Marjolein announces. ‘Also, you will get a few coins to load upon your card as credit for travelling.’

Again, we seem like a bunch of small children, all excited to get a treat.

One by one we go with our card to one of the machines and follow the steps on the screen. After a while, we have all successfully loaded the money onto our card.

OV Chip card reader (Photo: NS)

‘Now, pay attention please,’ Marjolein tries to get our attention, ‘we will now split up into two groups. Each group will take a different train along the route to try out the system. First open the access gate to the platform by placing the card in front of the

\textsuperscript{73} RET is the regional transportation company in Rotterdam
\textsuperscript{74} The electronic ticketing system
card reader. If it doesn’t work, you may use the regular ticket sleeve. This will function with any piece of paper or even your tie. The reason for that is to make people get used to the practice of using their card (or ticket) to open the gate. We expect that this will ease the transformation once the system is fully implemented.

I open a gate with my pass and fortunately it functions correctly. Of course some of the people try to open the gate with a piece of paper, just for the fun of it.

Once we are at the platform we split up into two groups. My group will take a Sprinter\textsuperscript{75} to a smaller town in the vicinity of Rotterdam. We are accompanied by Gerrit, a colleague of Marjolein. The ride only takes us a few minutes because we get off at the next station.

‘Okay,’ Gerrit says, ‘When you entered the platform through the gate, the card has registered that you checked-in. From there it will count the distance that you travel and therefore, to get out of the system and actually pay the correct fare, we now have to check-out. This is done in the same way as the check-in, by scanning the card with the card reader. Please, have a try.’

One by one, we go through the gates again. Some of the people in the group ask Gerrit questions about the details of the system or if he likes the system himself.

‘I think it can be great’ Gerrit says. ‘If the system can work flawlessly there will be a lot of improvements in all of our jobs.’

‘How do you like the implementation of the pilot so far?’ Wouter asks.

‘I think it is great that we have this chance to try-out the system. I feel very good about the way it’s been going. I know that there is a lot of criticism, and the media is breathing down our necks to see the project fail. But I think the company takes it very serious. I especially like these kinds of tours with people from other parts of the company. It makes me feel very knowledgeable and I can really make you guys see how it works.’

As we are standing around him and talking, we see a woman with a baby carriage approaching the gates. She does not use the regular gate, but she pushes another button and a bigger gate next to the normal ones opens up.

Immediately Gerrit starts explaining: ‘That is actually the emergency button. I’m not sure yet how they will use that. As it is now, some buggies cannot fit through the regular gates so they are forced to use the emergency button. But of course, it should be just an emergency button, you know, for real emergencies.’

‘Are the Service & Alarm Pillars\textsuperscript{76} working already?’ Jennifer asks.

‘Yes, but not many people use them as of yet. I guess they are a bit hesitant because they don’t know what it is. Furthermore, as I understand, most people prefer face-to-face interaction with real people,’ Gerrit answers.

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75. Sprinters are a type of train that resembles a metro train. They are increasingly used in metropolitan areas in the Netherlands.
76. Service & Alarm Zuilen
'But if we would press the button now, we can speak with someone at the security control room?' Youri asks playfully.

‘Abuse of the system will be punished,’ Gerrit replies with a big smile.

Some of the others try to re-enter the station without opening the gates or try to enter and exit within a few second. Both fail. The gates are equipped with a timer that makes it impossible to use the same card twice within second, to prevent abuse of the cards.

We all enter the gates again and wait for the next train to come. That train takes us back to Rotterdam and we wait to meet up with the other group again.

To complete our entire introduction with the system we also briefly enter and exit the metro station with our card.

After this last ‘test’ the excursion has come to an end and we all take the train to go home.

With the introduction of the new Passenger Transportation Law in 2000, the local or regional possibilities for alternative tickets and prices in addition to the national public transportation tickets are broadened substantially. Regional companies can now offer their clients tickets with special prices to make traveling with the various modes of public transportation more attractive. Simultaneously, the ideas about a uniform, electronic ticket for all transportation modes emerged in the 1990s, leading to an initial agreement in 1998 to develop such a system (Bergmans, 2004).

After several studies and a long period of discussions and negotiations, the main transportation companies and the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management agree about the introduction of an electronic ticketing system, to be ready to operate as of 2004. The OV-Chip card, as the ticket is named, will replace all other tickets and uses a different pricing system from the current Strippenkaart. One of the main problems of the current ticketing system is that tickets can be purchased anywhere, but it is impossible to know exactly where they are used. This complicates the division of revenues, also because many transportation companies are commercial organizations nowadays, and consequently the distribution of revenues is a sensitive topic. The new system registers the exact use of the transportation system per kilometre and the revenues will be distributed accordingly. In addition, the companies will receive more specified information about the traveling behaviour of their passengers, which they can use in their marketing strategies.

77. Wet personenvervoer 2000
78. Strippenkaart
Although the initial discussion about the new system are dominated by financial motives and the liberalization of the public transportation sector (Bergmans, 2004), as the development progresses other arguments are increasingly used as motivation for the development of this system. Not only a more equal division of revenues, but also the security and problems with fare-dodgers are mentioned as motives for the introduction of the OV-Chip system. The stations and platforms will be closed off by electronic gates and passengers need to ‘check-in’ using the OV-Chip Card in order to access the chosen mode of transportation.

The process leading up to the development of the OV-Chip Card is characterized by a lot of uncertainty and doubt. The constant changes in network of actors in the sector and the recent crisis with regard to the denationalization of NS have affected the position of the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management in such a manner that many actors express doubts as to the feasibility of the plans (Bergmans, 2004). Nevertheless, the advantages of the proposed system weigh heavier than the risks and the decision is made to continue the project.

Since the start of the project, there have been many problems that have caused increasing delays in the implementation. Sensitivity of the card to fraud (e.g. De Volkskrant, 2008; Elsevier, 2008; NU.nl, 2008a), conflicts between the different actors (NRC Handelsblad, 2008a; Trouw, 2007, 2008), protests from customer organizations (Dag.nl, 2008; NRC Handelsblad, 2008b; NU.nl, 2008b) and the Dutch Data Protection Authority about the registration of personal data (College Bescherming Persoonsgegevens, 2009), and heavy critiques in the popular news media and subsequent political debates are among the problems that have emerged in the course of the project. At the moment of writing this book it is still unclear when exactly the system will be inaugurated. Several regional transportation companies in the big cities in the Netherlands already use the card, but NS, among other actors, have indicated that they foresee more delays due to problems with the cards and the access control gates.

The OV-Chip Card has not only led to heavy scrutiny in the media, but also within NS (as well as other transportation companies) there have been fierce discussion about the system. Within NS, the introduction of the system will involve a radical change in the ticket control system. As became clear in previous chapters, many ticket inspectors do not want to become ‘mobile service agents’ on the trains. Furthermore, not everyone is convinced of the effects the system will have on the existing problems with fare-dodgers or aggressive passengers.

Many customers of the company fear that their personal data will be abused by the transportation companies. In addition, many of them are apprehensive about

79. College Bescherming Persoonsgegevens
the increasing replacement of human surveillance for technological systems. NS has indicated that the system will not mean that human surveillance will be replaced. What is more, they are very much aware of the effect that human surveillance has on the experience of customers with the business processes of the company. The security department is constantly working on innovative security measures to increase the perception of security of the passengers and employees. Furthermore, the members of the security department are also involved in the company’s strategies with regard to the OV-Chip Card.

‘A Pleasant Place’

Mrs. Jansen walks into the station. She is always a bit apprehensive when she travels and she firmly grabs hold of her purse. She looks around her and feels relieved to see an employee of NS in a blue uniform with a red cap. She gets in line for the ticket machine. As her turn comes up she smiles to herself and thinks about the jokes her grandchildren always make when she struggles with those modern-day technologies. They should see her now, buying a ticket from a machine without problems!

After she gets her ticket and puts it away in her wallet she walks towards the platform. The large digital screen above the staircase indicates that she is 15 minutes early for her train. She thinks about the cold draught and turns around. Her eye is caught by a comfortable looking red sofa in the corner of the station. She approaches the sofa and sits down. Next to her a couple of youngsters are enjoying a cup of tea.
She looks around the area and is pleasantly surprised by the cosiness of this space. Three large red sofas are pointed towards a large wooden pillar. The pillar displays a clock and two screens. The upper screen is showing the current departure information of the trains and the lower one is showing a fireplace. Above this small area two big lamps are hanging, giving the space a homely ambiance.

Mrs. Jansen sits back and feels relaxed. For a moment her eyes even seem to close, but then she is wide awake again. A friendly voice over the intercom announces the arrival of her train. She hurries to get up and walks to the platform.

One of the measures that have been developed in connection to the OV-Chip project is the so-called ‘Service and Alarm Pillar’. On the platforms, next to the entrance gates, as well as at smaller stations without a continuous presence of employees, these pillars are placed. Via a red button on the front of the pillar there is a direct connection with the central security control room in Utrecht. A similar system has been tested on board of the trains, yet the results of this pilot indicated that it needs further development before it can be implemented. Amongst others, NS is conducting studies to see if it is possible to place cameras in trains that, in case of emergencies can be activated and connected directly to the control room by pressing a button.

The pilot and studies with regard to intelligent cameras in trains are part of the INES project for which NS obtained a subsidy from the Ministry of Transport Public Works and Water Management in 2005 (NS & ProRail, 2006). The idea was to develop and experiment with a series of innovative measures aimed at improving the perception of personal security among passengers and employees. The project was carried out in cooperation between NS, ProRail and several research or technological companies. A total of 15 different experiments were undertaken at five stations in the Amsterdam area, in several infamous train trajectories (known for their problems with aggressive passengers or fare dodgers) and at other locations throughout the company. After the completion of the experiments, five out of the experiments were perceived to be successful, nine experiments have the potential of becoming successful with further developments, and one experiment will remain “a good idea” for now (NS & ProRail, 2006: 42).

One of the experiments within the INES project was labelled ‘a Pleasant Place’. This experiment was aimed at creating a comfortable and pleasant atmosphere at the station by using nice areas with comfortable seats and appealing lighting. The idea was that this would discourage possible offenders and make people more at

81. Prettige Plek
ease. This experiment was considered a success and will be followed by further actions. For instance, the security department has been involved in projects with the use of classical music and art in station buildings, and a group of NS employees has participated in a workshop at an amusement park in the Netherlands to exchange knowledge and experiences with regard to the relations between physical design of station areas, service, and the perception of security.

82. The experience of passengers was positive, during the experiment there were no acts of vandalism on the ‘pleasant places’. An area of focus for possible continuation of the project is that regular cleaning and maintenance of the pleasant places are imperative (NS & ProRail, 2006: 14-15).
‘Sure, I’ll keep you up on that, and then we can go for coffee or lunch. It would sure be nice to see the others again.’ Martina points towards the row, ‘have you seen it already?’

‘No, we’re standing in line right now.’

‘I was there last week; I don’t think it’s all that impressive. I can’t understand why it took so long and why it cost so much money,’ Martina shakes her head.

‘I’ve heard it’s because of the plastic or something, apparently that was really difficult to construct.’

Martina turns to me: ‘It’s a monument for the attacks in 2004. It was supposed to be inaugurated on the first anniversary, then the second and eventually they opened it last week at the third anniversary of the killings.’

‘She knows all about it Martina,’ Sofía interrupts, ‘she studies security at Renfe and she knows more about these things than you and me.’

‘That’s okay’ I say, ‘I don’t mind, please tell me what you thought about the monument. I’m very curious.’

‘Well, I don’t like it. It doesn’t do justice to the victims.’ Martina seems distracted,

‘But girls I have to go, I am running late. I’ll come by your office one of these days and we’ll have coffee, right?’

‘All right honey,’ Sofía kisses Martina goodbye ‘you take care.’

Martina and I also kiss goodbye and then she is off.

‘She’s very nice; we used to have so much fun together in the office. Very different from our office now. I think we worked together almost 10 years or so.’ Sofía explains.

The row of people in front of us is moving slowly towards the entrance to the monument. I turn around and behind me the row is twice as long as before. Apparently, a lot of people are curious to see what the result is.

Next to the entrance, a woman in a red uniform is standing. She counts the number of people that enter the first door. After the first door there is a small hallway. She
explains that only one of the two doors may be opened at the same time, because of the draught that could harm the plastic inside of the cylinder. For that reason, only a limited number of visitors can enter the monument at a time.

After going through the first door we are urged to move towards the back. While we wait for the people to come in, I read the text on the wall. The names of all the victims of the attacks are displayed. People immediately become silent or whisper to each other softly. When the first door is closed by the hostess, she opens the second door and we enter the monument.

Once inside, the silence is striking. The room has dark-blue walls, making the space rather dark. The contrast with the big circle in the middle of the ceiling is remarkable. I am immediately drawn to the opening in the ceiling, offering a view inside the cylinder. The inside is covered by a special type of plastic on which a selection of all the messages from the espacio de palabras is displayed.

I personally find the monument very impressive. But then again, I can also understand that for someone who has experienced the horrific events close by, no monument will be enough to do justice to the memories.

Next to Sofía and I, a man comments on the plastic. He does not think that the monument will not last very long. The plastic will deteriorate soon, giving the monument (and the station) a very negative atmosphere.

All around me, including Sofía, I can hear people commenting on the monument. Most of them are not very pleased with the result, but then again, maybe the critical attention in the media gives them no choice but to be critical too... who am I to judge?

On March 11, 2007 the official monument for the victims of the attacks is finally inaugurated. Initially, the monument was supposed to be ready for the first anniversary in 2005, but a number of problems related to the construction and the budget for the monument led to the extreme delay. The idea for the monument, a large glass cylinder with a dark space underneath, won the public contest for the design of a monument that would appeal to the victims’ families and the people of Madrid. From the moment the selected design became public just weeks after the attacks in 2004, the development of the monument was surrounded by controversy.
Nevertheless, the public was very curious to see the result. The big plastic tent in the middle of the square outside Atocha, shielding off the monument for months before the inauguration, as well as the construction of the space underneath it, inside the station, caught a lot of attention. Since the inauguration, large amounts of people have been visiting the monument and reactions are diverse.

On the Use of Camera Surveillance

This morning is very hectic at the office. Everyone is talking about the testimony that the director of the department is going to give in court during the 11-M trial. It seems that many people are anxious because it will be broadcasted directly on internet. The exact time of the testimony is uncertain because that depends on the duration of the preceding testimonies.

We receive regular updates by Bernardo, the driver of the director, who is waiting with him in court. Meanwhile, preparations take place to try to watch (and record) the testimony on the big television screen in the meeting room, and one of the screens in the CECON is tuned in to the live broadcast of the trial.

The moment has arrived; after quite some delay the testimony of the director starts. Virtually everyone present in the office gathers around the screen to watch the live testimony.
It gives me a sensation as if we were waiting for a big movie-star to appear on the screen. When the director appears some people are surprised that his identity is not protected, like we saw before with many of the victims and other people who give a testimony.

‘He looks handsome,’ someone says
‘He seems a bit nervous,’ someone else remarks.

As soon as the testimony starts everyone is quiet and listens attentively to what is said.

The director is questioned by the different lawyers about a number of issues, mainly related to the security measures taken by Renfe at the time of the attack, as well as newly developed measures since then, the (limited) use of cameras, and the timetables of the trains that were used in the attacks.

The first reactions of his colleagues are mainly that he did well, but that the defence lawyers gave him a hard time, trying to put part of the blame on him and on Renfe.

They agree that most of the questions were expected.

Alma indicates that he answered according to what they had talked about in preparation.

The staff talks a bit further about the testimony and then returns to their work.

* * *

The next morning the director’s testimony appears to have raised some commotion in the media.

One of his answers is widely discussed in various newspapers, talk shows and on a number of Internet forums (e.g. 20 Minutos, 2007; Sotero, 2007b).

The night of the testimony, the director was apparently mocked and ridiculed in a radio talk show, hosted by a well-known, critical commentator.

The secretaries search for a broadcast of the radio programme on the internet, and as soon as they find it they listen to it together with the director and a few other people that happen to be around.

According to the radio talk show host and his fellow discussants, ‘very ignorant people work at Renfe and they have no idea about what they are doing.’

They basically accuse the company to have allowed the attacks to happen.

Their main point is about an answer that the director gave to the question whether or not it would, theoretically, be possible that one person would have changed trains on the morning of March 11, 2004, leaving a bag with explosives in each of the trains.

The question was referring to the timetables of the different trains, the departure time from Alcalá de Henares (where all trains in the attack had a stop or departed from that morning) and departure platform.

The director responded affirmative to the question, since *theoretically* there would have been enough time to get on and off each of these trains.
In the radio programme, as well as on a number of critical online forums, it is stated that the director has suggested that only one person has placed the explosives, which they find ridiculous (e.g. Libertad Digital, 2007; Peones Negros, 2007).

The company is also associated with the Zapatero government\(^{83}\) and is therefore subject to the same critiques.

While listening to the radio programme, the director laughs the criticism away. Obviously these people are trying to create support for their conspiracies, taking every opportunity to create unrest among the public. He doesn’t stay to listen to the end of the show.

As he leaves, most other people that had gathered around the speakers of the computer also return to their work. Only a few stay to listen to the rest of the show.

* 

A couple of weeks after the testimony of the director, the department is preparing once again for the broadcasting of a testimony of one of their colleagues.

This time one of the managers has to testify. Again, people are a bit anxious about the event.

The moment the testimony starts, a group of colleagues, including the director, gather around a computer to watch the declarations. As the different attorneys pose their questions, the people at the department speculate how the manager will respond.

Although they are making jokes amongst each other, like the other time, this time they seem a bit more nervous about the specific content of the questions.

The attorneys ask for more detailed information about the specific security measures at the time of the attacks. In particular, the attorneys want to know more about the nature of the cameras at the different stations and why there are no images available.

The manager answers all the questions patiently and with many details.

‘He’s trying to bore them to death with his answers’ Alejandro says approvingly.

The others laugh.

The manager explains that at the time of the attacks the use of cameras in the railway sector was mainly restricted to traffic controls. Therefore, the cameras that were present at the stations did not record images of the people getting on or off the trains, but they were aimed at the tracks.

Only after the attacks the legislation with regard to CCTV use in public places was expanded.

\(^{83}\) The position of the General Director of Renfe (and other public companies) has traditionally been a political appointment, and therefore subject to change with each newly elected government.
He further provides some details about the extra security measures that were implemented right before 11-M, as a reaction to the ETA attacks in December 2003 (El Mundo, 2003a; El País, 2003).

When he finishes with his testimony the people at the department discuss the course of the trial so far. Most of them do not have much trust in the results of the trial and see it merely as a ritual for the victims to get a form of closure.

On February 15, 2007 the trial against the suspects of the terrorist attack in Madrid (11-M) started. During this trial the public prosecution tries to prove the involvement of a total of 29 suspects. At the start of the trial it was reported that between 570 and 680 witnesses, victims and officials will give their testimony (ABC, 2007a; Sotero, 2007a). There is wide media attention for the trial, and from the start there is much controversy. Because of the saliency of the issue of terrorism in Spanish society (and beyond) and the political tensions and ambiguity surrounding the subject, the trial immediately turned into a spectacle used by different political parties to accuse and blame each other. The general feeling is that the trial will not really amount to anything and that it is just a symbolic power play. Nevertheless it opens a lot of old wounds among the victims and people that were otherwise involved.

Altogether the trial lasts until the beginning of July 2007. The sentence is pronounced on October 31, 2007. The main suspects of carrying out the attacks are sentenced to serve almost 43,000 years in prison, whereas the suspected ‘brains’ behind the attacks are not convicted. The rest of the suspects receive variable sentences in prison. Furthermore, the sentence states that the victims of the attacks receive compensations of between €30,000 and €1,500,000. Finally, it is now completely discarded that ETA was involved in the attacks (Romero & Yoldi, 2007).

Designing a Train

A group people leave early in the morning to visit the factory where the new trains are developed and built. Everyone leaves from different stations close to their homes but call each other to be able to sit together.

It’s a varied group of people and not all of them know each other. Besides a few members from the security department there is someone from the logistics department, someone from NS Passenger Services, someone from NS Commerce and a few external people including someone from the fire department, the national police force and two members of the Public Authority for Bomb Disposal.

During the trip they occupy two different small first-class compartments. The NS staff sits together and uses the time of the two-hour trip to discuss a few issues with
regard to the plans for mobile ticket control devices. Furthermore they talk about the purpose of today’s trip.

‘I don’t know why we are going at this point in time,’ Pieter states. ‘All major decisions about the design of the trains and technological specificities have already been made. I don’t see how we can still change that.’

‘I know, it’s a bit silly, but there was no earlier opportunity,’ Els says.

‘Maybe, but I heard that a whole crew of people including operational staff went last month. I don’t understand why we didn’t go together with them.’

‘Well, I guess it’s not so bad. Today there are also people with different expertise present. It will be good to see how they perceive the lay-out of the new Sprinters,’ Tom responds. ‘I think it would be wise to let them give their opinions before we do. That way we can make use of their expertise and we can use their arguments to convince NS if there’s any changes that need to be made in the design.’

After a while, Els states that it surprises her that they have been in the train for quite a while now and there is still no sign of the ticket inspector.

‘I’ve been travelling since 6.30 this morning and my ticket has not been checked even once!’ She complains.

In defence of the ticket inspectors, Pieter tells her that his ticket was checked twice already.

A few moments later, the ticket inspector indeed passes by and asks their tickets. They all show their company card and the inspector continues his way.

Els is not very satisfied by the behaviour of the ticket inspector. She mainly criticises that he did not really look at the cards.

When the ticket inspector announces something about a short delay over the intercom, the group starts to laugh and mock the inspector a bit.

After two hours the group arrives at their destination. From there a car will take them to the actual factory.

When they arrive at the factory a representative of the construction company awaits them in a big meeting room. Before they will visit the model train they briefly discuss some points about the protocol at the factory. It is prohibited to take pictures and safety rules should be followed strictly.

The group gets to put on a safety jacket and helmet before the guided tour starts. They do not immediately go to the model train but are shown around the factory to see how the trains are actually built.

After an hour they arrive in the hall where the model train is set up. It is a real-size model of a first-class and a second-class compartment. In small groups the people get to enter the train and look at it closely.

Pieter enters the train with the bomb disposal experts. The first thing they remark is about the glass separation between the compartments.

84. Explosieven Opruimingsdienst (EOD)
'That is not a really good idea. If a bomb explodes that glass will fly around and hurt a lot of passengers.'

Pieter thinks to himself that from the perspective of their counter-terrorism unit the glass walls are very useful because they make it a very transparent space, which can be checked by the ticket inspector or someone else in one look.

The three of them talk about possible solutions. Maybe a special layer on the glass can help prevent the extra damage by causing a controlled shattering of the glass.

The next group consists of the NS Commerce representative, a police officer Els and Tom. They discuss the cameras that are situated above the doors of the train.

‘Does anyone know if that is a camera that is directly connected to the security control room? Tom asks.

‘I don’t believe it is,’ Els says. ‘I don’t think the technology is quite there yet.’

‘From a commercial point of view, the use of cameras is very expensive and it would only be economically efficient if the images are directly transmitted to the shore.’

‘Well, for the investigations and apprehension of offenders it is already very useful if the cameras record the images as well’ the police officer says.

When they have all seen the train they return to the main building for a quick lunch. After the lunch they get back to the station and during the trip back they discuss the issues they have noticed in more detail.

In the end they are all convinced that it has been a very insightful visit.

The new Sprinter trains contain a lot of technological innovations with regard to security. As part of the company’s strategy to relieve the congestion in the metropolitan area of the Netherlands, and gradually change the timetables in that region from a static schedule to a more flexible one where passengers can expect a train every few minutes, these trains are operational more or less like metro lines. They stop at all stations and are lighter than other trains. In the design of the trains, several innovative applications that the company has developed (or are still in the process of development) have been taken into consideration. Even though not all of these application are totally ready for implementation, the design of the Sprinters anticipates some of the future advances. For instance, the company is planning to increasingly work with real-time data communication between the trains and control rooms to provide accurate travelling information to their passengers. Also, in case of emergencies the passengers would be in immediate, direct contact with the control centre either by pressing an alarm button or because the intelligent cameras report unusual movements to the monitoring staff.

In addition to the technological aspects of the design, in which various expert groups – such as the police, bomb squads, fire department – as well as the own
staff have been involved, the company also considered the aesthetic aspects of the new trains. Surveys among passengers and personnel have resulted in the choice for specific colours and patterns for the chair fabric (red en blue for the first- and second-class) and other interior-design features of the trains. After all, the passengers and operational staff are the people who will spend most of the time on board of the trains so it should be a pleasant environment for them.

**In Retrospect**

Before we move on to the final section of this book, I want to stress again that the narratives presented in the last three chapters are based on my analysis of the data. It is not a presentation of ‘raw’ data, but part of the complex hermeneutic circle of interpretation that is involved in any research project (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Yanow, 2006b; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006a). In fact, data are never ‘raw’ in a sense that it takes a researcher to designate texts and events as ‘data’. It may be argued that, to use the terms from phenomenology the three chapters constitute the first level analyses from the fieldwork. I have analysed my field notes, interview transcripts, documents and from that I have written these narratives. As discussed in the methodological chapter, I have used literary techniques to compose fictionalized narratives that represent my analysis. The characters that I wrote about are composite characters and the events described are combinations of different events and scenes. In the final section I will focus on the second level analysis of some of the most striking aspects that have come to the fore.
Part III: Interpretation and Conclusions

‘It is very hard to determine when the department is successful. Can one say that it is successful when in 10 years there has been no terrorist attack? But when there has been an attack, does that immediately imply that you’re not successful?’ (Member of the security department at NS).

In what ways can organizations in the railway sector protect their employees and passengers from security threats? When are they efforts ‘sufficient’? When is it ‘too much’ and invading the privacy of individuals? Who is responsible for the protection of railway passengers and employees against security threats such as terrorism, aggression, violence? What is the role of the government? These are a few of the central issues that comprise the context of railway security. Security managers need to consider such issues when they develop and negotiate the strategies of their company. The narratives that I presented in the previous chapters have provided a part of the picture of the complexity of railway security. There are many different perspectives and interests and although at first sight it may seem pretty straightforward that a railway company has the responsibility to do ‘everything possible’ to protect their passengers, employees and business operations, if we take a closer look it becomes clear that there are a lot of uncertainties and ambiguities that constitute the circumstances within which security is organized.

In the final section of the dissertation I will go back to the initial points of departure of this study and further theorize some of the findings of this research. This section of the book consists of two chapters. In Chapter seven the focus is on the results from the fieldwork with regard to the main research questions. I will highlight three dominant storylines that can be drawn from the fieldwork and discuss the various (localized) ways in which these storylines become manifested in the daily life-world of railway employees. Chapter eight, then, reflects upon the latent aim of the study to explore and experiment with the literary genre of academic research narratives. The chapter discusses the yield of this approach and explores the ways in which the insights from this study might be used in further research projects.
7 The Quest for Security

Security is mostly superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure.

– Helen Keller

Discourses about (In)Security

It has become clear throughout this study that the topic of security is a salient theme when it comes to the public realm in (Western) societies. Several developments have contributed to the ‘securitization’ (Grey, 2009: 34; Oswick et al., 2008) of public discourses. Not only the major terrorist attacks in the last decade (9/11, 11-M, London) have invigorated the ‘sense of threat’, but also general changes in societies at large have played an important role. One of the explanations for the growing saliency of security issues can be found in an increase in aggression and violent outbursts (Van den Brink & Schuyt, 2003), not in the least towards public service officials such as police officers, ambulance personnel, railway ticket inspectors, bus-drivers, or fire fighters. Members of these professions have to deal with aggressive customers and other irregularities, often on a daily basis (e.g. Dickinson & Bevan, 2005; Ferwerda, 1997; Middelhoven & Driessen, 2001; Van Ingen & De Waal, 2005). A number of studies have indicated that there are not only more instances of aggression or violence, but also that this is one of the issues that worries citizens the most (e.g. Bruinsma, 2004; De Haan, 2003; Stol, 2004).

Furthermore, various disasters have caused critical debates about the possibility of large-scale disasters and the safety of all kinds of institutions, products or industries. In the Netherlands for instance the fire in a bar in Volendam (New Year’s eve 2000/2001) has brought about an increase in control of fire precautions in public spaces, the major explosion in a firework factory in Enschede (May 2000) increased the control and legislation in this industry, several outbreaks of infectious diseases among cattle caused strict controls and restrictions in the transportation and processing of cattle in the European meat-industry, as well as precautions in the health industry. In Spain, the role of the government in the evolvement of the internal conflicts with the terrorist organization ETA is continuously scrutinized, the Spanair crash at Barajas airport in Madrid (August 2008) reemphasized air traffic safety issues, and the environmental disaster with the oil tanker ‘Prestige’ (November 2002) raised questions about the (possibly corruptive) role of Spanish,
French and Portuguese authorities upon the initial signals of problems. On a more global scale, the outbreak of the H1N1 ('Swine' or 'Mexican') flu, contemporary environmental threats due to the climate change, or the current financial crisis are examples of situations that cause social unrest. What these large-scale incidents have made clear is that they are often used as a political motive and legitimation to increase or review security and safety measures, as well as the involvement of different authorities and stakeholders (Campbell, 2006; Den Boer, 2007; Monahan, 2006b). The topic of security seems to be everywhere, all the time, and in some cases security seemingly has become more important than the actual events and disasters that steered up the debate in the first place (Boutellier, 2005). Security has become a political issue par excellence, making the discussion about public and private responsibilities - a recurrent theme throughout this study - all the more interesting.

While traditionally the security and safety of citizens has been one of the central tasks of democratic governments (Raes, 1994; Van Zuijlen, 2004), recently the tasks and responsibilities of the government are increasingly being revised and even questioned (e.g. Boin et al., 2005; Huisman, 2004; Van Dijk, 2004). From a historical perspective the task to protect citizens has been one of the main reasons for the existence of nation states and a central legitimation for government authority (Hansen, 2006; Van de Bunt & Van Swaaringen, 2005: 5). Historically, the concept of security has become inextricably bound up with the concept of national security, explicitly or implicitly drawing upon the connection with the state as the main provider of security. This conceptualization is based on a modernist, rationalist approach with a dominant logic of “material factors, military capabilities, and the defense against objective threats” (Hansen, 2006: 33). The modernist assumptions with regard to security and risk are generally based on a rationalist worldview and informed by probability theory (Hansen, 2006; Miller, 2009). Modernist thinking is still prevailing in many studies in the areas of security and risk and its assumptions largely continue to be taken for granted (Miller, 2009). Security is predominantly constructed as ‘national security’ due to the dominant conceptualization of the state as the responsible authority to secure domestic life. As Hansen argues:

Underpinning the concept of ‘national security’ is a particular form of identity construction – one tied to the sovereign state and articulating a radical form of identity – and a distinct rhetorical and discursive force which bestows power as well as responsibility in those speaking within it (Hansen, 2006: 34).
Since long, this places security at the core of the legitimacy and identity of the state as a sovereign authority. To question this relation is to question the position of the state.

In this view, security is an ontological necessity for the state, not because the state has to be protected from external threats but because its identity depends on them. Threats and insecurities are not just potentially undermining of the state and things that could be eliminated, they constitute the state: the state only knows who and what it is through its juxtaposition against the radical, threatening Other (Hansen, 2006: 34).

Over the last decades, the modernist worldview has been losing ground to poststructuralist and so-called postmodernist ways of thinking. This, as Miller (2009) puts it, creates new opportunities for research in the area of risk and security. From a poststructuralist point of view, threats and problems can only become security questions if they are successfully “constructed as such within political discourse” (Hansen, 2006: 34). This means that instead of taking threats and risks as ‘a given fact’ we should pay more attention to how specific issues become securitized (Bourellier, 2005; Gephart et al., 2009; Grey, 2009; Oswick et al., 2008). Despite prevailing modernist assumptions in the study of risk and security, there is a shift in the way that security is constructed in contemporary societies. Gephart et al. (2009) and Miller (2009) describe this as a shift in how risk was viewed in Early Modernity versus how it is viewed in current Late Modern (or Post Modern) society. Whereas in Early Modernity “the world was seen as governed by laws of probability and risk was viewed as a straightforward matter, measurable and calculable” (Gephart et al., 2009: 141), the overly rationalistic worldview has currently been replaced by uncertainty and the recognition that risks are unquantifiable and can never be known entirely (Gephart et al., 2009). According to Beck and others, risks are not only perceived differently in the contemporary world, the nature of modern-day risks has also changed radically (e.g. Beck, 1992, 1999; Gephart et al., 2009; Giddens, 2002; Miller, 2009).

According to these authors, the changing nature as well as shifting discourses with regard to risk call for renewed attention for the ways in which risk and threat are embedded in social and cultural settings in general, and in organization studies in particular (as this field has paid only limited attention to the issue of risk). Gephart et al. argue that – not in the least because of the current saliency of the issues of risk, threat, security and safety – it is important to further explore risks and their organizational implications to enhance the field of organization studies. As they put it, one of the key issues in this regard is “the social construction of risk
including the ways risks are sensed, imagined, interpreted, and measured by individuals and organization” (Gephart et al., 2009: 142).

The shifting conceptualizations of security and risk in contemporary societies are reinforced by another shift in the current social climate. Increasingly, the position of the state (the central provider of security according to modernist world-views) has become scrutinized. The notion of a passive citizen, receiving services and protection from public organizations under the direction of the state has slowly shifted towards a more reciprocal relation between citizens, organizations and the government. Citizens as well as organizations are stimulated to take their own responsibility in creating a safe and comfortable society.

Following the arguments put forward by Gephart et al. (2009), Hansen (2006), Miller (2009), Monahan (2006b) and Oswick et al. (2008), amongst others, the current saliency of risk and security should, however, not be taken at face value. If we want to understand the shifting attitude towards risk and security, it is important to look at and problematize the different ways in which the issues are emphasized in different realms and contexts. As the data in this study indicate, the issue of security (and particularly insecurity) is emphasized in many ways in different realms of the public arena. In the popular news media for instance, many events are framed in a narrative about terrorism or terrorist threat (for instance the example in chapter 2 about the airplane crash in Amsterdam) and thereby, through association, reinforcing the dominant discourse. The dominant public discourses also have an impact on the way security is made sense of by actors in organizational settings such as the railways.

The departure point for this study has been the question how dominant discourses in society (such as with regard to the role of the state or public conceptions of risk) influence the ways in which (organizational) actors make sense of security and how this is enacted in their daily practices. The railway sector offers a particularly interesting vantage point for this project since in most countries it is a sector that operates at the intersection between the public and private realm. In addition, railway transport is traditionally seen as a core public service in many societies, and in general railway companies are important suppliers of employment and at least in the past are characterized as social employers; ‘the railway family’. Last but certainly not least, the issue of security has become especially salient for the railways and other public transportation organizations after the terrorist attacks in the US, Madrid and London. As Sullivan-Taylor and Wilson (2009: 253) argue, “[t]o date, little empirical research has been conducted into how managers deal with uncertainties created by the threat (and sometimes the actuality) of terrorist attacks”. In their study about organizational responses to the threat of terrorism in the British travel and leisure sector, they focus mainly on the management of organizations. According to them, the recent stream of terrorist attacks constitute ‘exo-
genous jolts’ or ‘hyperturbulence’ for the organizations in the travel and leisure sector (Sullivan-Taylor & Wilson, 2009).

The present study has set out to investigate the ways in which security issues are anchored in the daily lifeworlds of actors in railway organizations. As sites for the fieldwork I chose to study the daily practices at the Dutch railway operator NS and the Spanish railway operator Renfe Operadora. As discussed in chapter 3, the choice of these particular cases is threefold. In the first place, the obvious differences with regard to the political and cultural contexts in which these companies operate constitute an important reason for their selection. Renfe Operadora has a relatively long and extensive experience with terrorism compared to the Netherlands where – apart from a series of hijacks in the 1970s – there is practically no experience with terrorist acts towards the railway sector. Furthermore, both companies - following the EU incentives - have recently been restructured and split up, radically altering the institutional context with regard to their responsibilities and relations with the government. Thus, on the one hand there are obvious differences between the two locations, whereas on the other hand it seems as if the companies operate in a similar institutional context. Finally, there were practical reasons for the selection of these companies (e.g. access, language).

Leading from the data presented in this study, three main storylines can be identified. I choose to call them storylines mainly for clarity reasons; yet if we follow some of the definitions of these terms, they might also be called discourses, master narratives (Andrews, 2004) or (grand) narratives (e.g. Phillips & Hardy, 2002). To keep with the terminology used throughout the study, I talk about discourses when I am specifically referring to public or (broader) organizational discourses. The term narrative is used mainly for the texts that I have produced in order to represent my interpretations of the empirical data or for specific pieces of ‘found’ data. The three main storylines in this study are not solid or clear cut storylines with a neat plot, but they consist of different, interrelated practices, interactions or texts that draw upon specific public discourses and that constitute part of social reality for the actors involved. At any given point in time there exist more or less stable cultural storylines which become “the vehicle through which we comprehend not only the stories of others but crucially of ourselves as well” (Andrews, 2004: 1). These storylines constitute, in other words, a blueprint for all stories that exist at a certain moment. This does not mean, however, that they are static and everlasting. The dominant storylines are dynamic and constantly evolving. What is more, such cultural storylines do not constitute a blueprint for all stories in a sense that every story mirrors a dominant storyline. Any type of cultural storyline can elicit stories that explicitly resist particular storylines (counter-narratives), yet even through such resistance the main storylines may be reinforced (Andrews, 2004).
Based on my analysis of the data, I have identified some key elements in the daily life-worlds of railway employees in the Netherlands and Spain that are interrelated in such a way that – at least to me – they may be seen as specific storylines. These storylines highlight some of the areas of tension as well as contradictory, incomplete or ambiguous discourses that influence the processes of production and reproduction of social reality for individual actors. The main actors this study is concerned with are the organizational actors in the Dutch and Spanish railway companies. Nevertheless their actions and interactions are not taking place in a vacuum nor are they passively influenced by external stimuli. Organizational actors are involved in processes of negotiation, sensemaking and power struggles with a wide range of actors and this is reflected in the storylines.

The first storyline focuses on the ongoing ‘battle’ between different actors in the field of security to define and influence security practices. The tension in this area is related to the professional identity of organizational actors with regard to their security ‘expertise’. The members of the security departments, ticket inspectors, service employees, or security guards together with external actors such as actors from other transportation companies, the government, police, the public, customers, or journalists are involved in a constant process of negotiation with regard to the problem definitions, improving security practices, while at the same time strengthening and legitimating their own (professional) position. The debates with regard to the division between public and private responsibilities are a clear manifestation of this storyline. This issue is not limited to debates about security, but extends to general debates about the divisions between the public and private sector, which is one of the dominant issues that are manifested in the second storyline.

The second storyline is related to a general feeling of uncertainty and dissatisfaction among organizational actors with the current (institutional) situation in the railway sector. The main source for this unrest is the unclear position of the railway companies in the current institutional field, as well as uncertainty with regard to the future. The problems related to the New Public Management doctrine is strongly intertwined with the uncertainty and dissatisfaction of actors.

The third storyline centres on the idea of creating an ideal society against all costs. In this almost utopian society people are free from threat and there is a guaranteed security. The driving force behind this idea is an illusion of creating a state of security through the implementation of specific measures. The plea for more measures, increasing control, allocation of budgets etc. is framed as the means to realize a more secure environment. The promise of a state of total security is contradicted in many ways, for instance through the recognition that such measures are never entirely effective in preventing incidents, that it is impossible to know all risks, or that these measures are seriously impairing freedom and priv-
acy. In a way this storyline is intertwined with the second storyline in the sense that it is related to the uncertainty with regard to the future. The current social climate or postmodern condition “is distinguished by an evaporating of the “grand narrative” – the overarching “storyline” by means of which we are placed in history as beings having a definite past and a predictable future” (Giddens, 1990: 2).

Although these three main storylines are interrelated and recognizable across both research sites (and beyond), the local manifestations, interpretations and enactments vary from situation to situation. In this chapter I will first discuss these three areas of tension, with a special attention for the different expressions of the underlying meta-discourses in different realms. Then, based on my analysis and interpretation of the data, I will focus on the localized enactment of these areas of tension in both of the research sites, as well as various interpretations and (unintended) consequences that seem to have emerged. The final part of the chapter reflects upon the three storylines (Table 7.1) and reviews the main theoretical and empirical contributions of the study.

‘Negotiating Security: the Battle of Experts’

The field or railway security is build up by a large variety of different actors. Not only the operational staff and management of the companies, but also the customers, the trade unions, other public transportation companies, the police department, emergency services, the government and other institutions have a role in the area of railway security. When it comes to the ways that all these different actors perceive security and their role in the organization of railway security it is clear that they hold their own views as to what they see as important aspects of security.

For operational staff, security is one of the many aspects of their work, whereas for people at a department dedicated to security it constitutes the most important issue. For policemen, fire-fighters or bomb squad specialists, railway security has a different connotation, influenced by their professional identity and technical expertise. In public debates security is mainly a political issue, used in (rhetorical) battles about resources, security measures or privacy. Railway companies have several interests and goals (as formulated in their corporate mission-statements) but at the end of the day they need to make money to survive. These are all issues that should be taken into regard when talking about railway security. Throughout the study, negotiations, discursive battles, sheer political debates and the like figured prominently in the daily life at the railways.
Service Above All?

A proclaimed central value in both companies is customer orientation and service provision. Developments in the railway sector in the last decades have placed the issue of service to the forefront of business operations. As independent, commercial organizations the opinions of their customers are (today more than ever) indispensable for the continuation of the operations of Renfe Operadora and NS. As such ‘service’ is approached as an important foundation for successful operations. Security is another important pillar for these organizations, and functions as a central issue when it comes to the opinions of the customers. Within both companies, the distinction is made between tasks related to security and tasks related to service provision.

Decision-making in the area of enforcement is often incompatible with decision-making in the area of service delivery. While the emphasis traditionally lies at the enforcement side, there is a shift taking place whereby decision-making in all pillars within the NS organization is increasingly based on a service vision (quote by a member of security department at NS).

One of the catch-phrases that is uttered many times and in many different ways by organizational actors at NS is that ‘service constitutes the foundation of security’. This motto reflects the importance that is placed upon customer satisfaction. The argument is that whenever people feel comfortable and at ease, they will feel safe. So by taking good care of passengers, the perception of security will improve. Interestingly, the tasks related to providing purely service tasks and maintaining security are increasingly separated within the company. Remarkably, this separation has led to the creation of special security teams that are called ‘Service & Security’ teams. The frontstage argument is that these tasks demand inherently different competences and combining the two can lead to conflicting situations. Without undermining this argumentation, at the backstage, different versions of the reasons for this separation are uttered. Tightened regulations and increasing costs would make it untenable to maintain the enforcement qualifications of all ticket inspectors. Furthermore, the story goes that this separation is part of a more elaborate plan by the management to slowly eliminate the job of ticket inspectors. For many of them, the separation entails an almost impossible choice. Whereas the security tasks are seen as a necessary challenge by many, most of the ticket inspectors do not want to ‘give-up’ working regular train shifts. The choice for a service role however is deemed undesirable because that would involve a loss of status. This perceived difference in status between different roles comes to the fore also in the discussions with re-
gard to the new uniforms for the Service & Security teams. The proposed red hat carries is perceived by many members of the mobile security teams as belonging to the service employees and therefore prefer not to wear a red hat.

The changes that were announced have been picked-up by many news media as ‘yet another negligence’ of NS. The tenor of the opinions expressed in many newspapers with regard to the Dutch railway sector has been negatively influenced by the crisis at the end of the 90s. During that crisis, management, operational staff, personnel collectives and the customers fought a harsh battle about proposed organizational changes. A large portion of this conflict has been played out through the national media, with NS portrayed as a flawed and selfish organization. Despite enormous improvements in the public image of the company over the last years, the tone of media accounts is still generally negative towards the company and its management.

For Renfe Operadora service is also one of the main pillars in the organization; customer satisfaction is one of the main performance indicators. However, when it comes to the security strategies of the company, service is not explicitly pronounced as part of the security policies. The company’s security strategies evolve for a large part around the management of contracts and performances with private security companies, the technological developments and CCTV monitoring. In the operational structure of the company, the tasks related to enforcement and security are almost entirely outsourced to private security companies. As a result there is a sharp distinction between security personnel and the own internal staff (not only in tasks and with regard to their employment contracts but also in their physical appearance). Interestingly, the private security companies also increasingly provide Renfe Operadora with employees who are specifically dedicated to service provision at the stations. These information hostesses are employed through a contract with a private security company and fulfil tasks related to providing assistance for passengers.

The relations between Renfe Operadora, the private security companies, other transportation companies, and public security organizations are not always clear. Especially when it comes to daily routines and agreements, the different parties do not always meet each other’s expectations. Although this is partly a consequence of the recent restructuring of the institutional arrangements in the sector (for the position of the different actors need to be renegotiated), to a certain extend the relations are also subject to different interests and power struggles. As reflected in the narrative about the meeting between Renfe’s security department and representatives of the private security companies, each of these actors brings their own set of values and goals to the table. This structure leads to interesting dynamics when it comes to the evaluation of performances and allocation of budgets.
Although at the frontstage these meetings function to review the events of the past days and discuss the plans for the coming days, at the backstage negotiations and tensions between collective and individual interests dominate the relations. From the perspective of the private security companies it is essential to convey the message that their services are adequate and contributing to the security of business operations. At the same time, they seek to obtain a substantial portion of the total allocation of security services by stressing the need for more guards, based on the occurrence of incidents. Thus there is an inherent tension between keeping their (perceived) level of services high, and maintaining a sense of urgency when it comes to the legitimation for their services. With regard to the people at the security department of Renfe Operadora they seem to adopt a strategy whereby they evaluate the services of the different companies in interaction with the representatives, making them aware of their competition. Furthermore, the reports and incident sheets provided by the security companies constitute a valuable source for Renfe Operadora to evaluate and justify their own performances with regard to security (at least when it comes to the number of incidents).

Security and Professional Identity

Even though security is perceived as a central value with regard to railway operations and most organizational actors recognize the urgency of the topic, at the level of daily practices security issues often become entangled with struggles of (groups of) employees to maintain or legitimize their professional position. The division of tasks and the perceived hierarchies and status of specific positions constitute an important aspect of employees’ sensemaking with regard to their jobs.

Inspectors from the security companies are often more aware of what is happening on a daily basis among security guards than the CECON operators. If an inspector runs into a security guard who is sleeping, he might report to the CECON operator that the guard went to the toilet. Wherever possible, inspectors try to avoid negative reports about their security guards (Inspector at Renfe Operadora).

A striking example of the battle over security expertise where professional identities are at stake is manifested in the relations between Renfe Operadora’s inspectors, the employees of the CECON and the hired security guards from the private security companies. In addition to monitoring railway operations, these groups of employees are involved in a complex system of monitoring each other as well. There is a lot of criticism between these groups about their performances and competences. Interestingly, most of these employees started
out as security guards. The attitude towards each other shifts according to the situation. During the meetings at the security department, Renfe’s inspectors are critical of the private security company’s inspectors and vice versa. The security companies defend the behaviour of their security guards. In the field, inspectors are mostly critical about the security guards’ performances. They continuously stress the importance of checking up on the guards, for instance with regard to their appearance. They write meticulous reports about the behaviour of security guards. These reports not only serve as information with regard to the performance of security guards, they also serve as proof that they themselves are doing a good – and important – job. In a similar manner as with the information hostesses at the stations, the reports are perceived as a legitimation for their own performances. When it comes to the relation between the inspectors and CECON operators, the inspectors often defend the security guards and dismissing any authority that the employees of the CECON hold. The CECON operators use their position to monitor the behaviour of employees at the stations and trains. These employees in turn, mock or dismiss the CECON operators, for instance by making funny faces towards the cameras.

In the Netherlands, security issues have variously been ‘used’ as arguments in organizational conflicts. During the infamous conflict around the simplification of duty-rosters in the 1990s, train drivers in particular stressed the dangers of repetition in their already rather monotone activities. Several serious incidents involving aggressive customers recurrently stir up (internal as well as external) debates about the security and protection of uniformed staff. Current debates about the reorganization of the security system at NS and particularly the separation of service and security tasks and the joining of the station service division and the train operating personnel has caused quite some unrest among employees with regard to their identities and position in the company. Some employees perceive the changes as an opportunity to develop certain aspects of their jobs, where as many employees see the changes as a threat to their existing job. Despite the involvement of operational staff in the design of the new back-up organization, uncertainty dominates the sentiment among these groups of employees. An interesting development at NS is the appearance of (at least) four books written by operational staff members, focussing on their experiences ‘on the line’ dissatisfactions, and preoccupations with regard to the company and their role in it.

The internal negotiations and rhetorical battles with regard to expertise, authority, legitimacy or status are not the only place where security becomes part of complex interactions and demarcations of professional authority. Different actors in
the railsector all have their own ideas about security and the division of tasks. Although these actors are very much aware of the urgency to work together, when push comes to shove, each of them tries to maintain or strengthen their own position. Again, the perceived hierarchy and roles of these different actors is an important underlying factor in interactions. The relation between NS and the railway division of the national police is an interesting example. This relation has been under a lot of pressure and change. On the one hand, the old ties (from when the railway police was still part of NS) are still visible, they share a part of their history. On the other hand, there is a changing relation whereby the railway police is distancing itself from the company and NS is forced to take up its own responsibility as an independent company. With regard to information exchanges, the relation between NS and the police force is complicated. Information about incidents has a different meaning for both organizations. Something that is very grave or serious in one context might be less ‘relevant’ in another context. Also, the issue of hierarchy comes into play when there are incidents or situations whereby NS needs assistance from the police. In those cases, the security control room immediately sends the information to the police. From that moment, the police takes the lead and NS is dependent upon them for any information (and often no updates are fed to them). Although the members of the security department at NS understand the need for the police to ‘take over’ in certain situations, they feel reluctant to give control away too soon because that interferes with the regular operations of the entire network. If NS employees do not know what is going on, they cannot provide their customers with information and that seriously interrupts the operations as well as negatively influences the public image of the company.

‘Future (Im)Perfect: Where Do We Go From Here?’

The second storyline that figures prominently in both companies is related to the institutional arrangements in the railway sector. In the recent past both companies have experienced radical changes with regard to the position of the company vis-à-vis the government and the public sector. Within the companies these changes are the cause for feelings of uncertainty and unrest. The repositioning of the company within the broader field is reflected also in internal shifts and reorientations of central values. In the daily practices, these changing orientations constitute an important area of tension for actors involved. In particular the change from a public service company to a commercial-driven company involves a specific cultural re-orientation that leads to difficulties. The dominant discourse that accompanies these changes draws from the (infamous) New Public Management ideology. Pop-
ular concepts and terms like ‘key-performance indicators’, ‘efficiency’, ‘account-
ability’ etc. are used frequently. A major problem with the prevalent NPM dis-
course is the lack of clear connections and translations to the life-worlds and daily 
practices of the actors involved.

The Netherlands and Spain in the European Railway Sector

Throughout the study, the changes in the institutional environment of both Renfe 
Operadora and NS have been discussed several times. In the slipstream of the 
widespread reforms in public service sectors across (Western) societies, the railway 
sector has not remained unaffected. The developments in the Netherlands and 
Spain have been congruent with the general direction of railway reform, as insti-
gated by the European Commission and the frontrunner United Kingdom.

The railway sector in Europe has experienced significant reforms over the last 
few decades. Although there are striking differences across different countries, in 
general the European railways were increasingly faced with financial problems and 
ever since the 1970s there have been proposals in the European Commission to 
liberalise the European railway sector (Knill & Lehmkuhl, 1998). Nevertheless it 
was not until the 1990s that there was an agreement among Member States on the 
direction of the reforms. In 1991 a European Directive, 91/440/EEC on the devel-
opment of the Community’s railways, was approved (European Union, 1991). The 
idea behind this legislation was to stimulate and support reforms at the domestic 
level of the Member States in order to pave the way for a liberalised railway area. 
The demands of the 1991 Directive are rather non-compulsory and leave local pol-
icy maker with sufficient room and flexibility to implement them according to the 
domestic situation (Knill & Lehmkuhl, 1998).

The most important demand of the Directive is the requirement of accounting 
separation for railway operations and infrastructure management (Profillidis, 
2001). It is remarkable that most Member States have gone further with railway 
reforms than the requirements in the Directive, and physically separated the rail-
way operations and infrastructure management. For instance, the UK has priva-
tized its State Railway company (British Rail) and split it up into a large number of 
different companies (Bradshaw, 1996; Mathieu, 2003; Smith, 2003; Strangleman, 
2004; Zahariadis, 1996). Other Member States have chosen less radical forms of 
reform, varying from commercialized state-owned companies, through joint-stock 
companies that are largely private- or state-owned, to fully privatized joint-stock 
companies (Obermauer, 2001). Thus, although the actual Directive did not have 
far-fetching legislative implications for the railway sectors it brought about signifi-
cant reform efforts among Member States. Knill and Lehmkuhl argue that part of
the design of the Directive was to get Member States in the right state of mind to implement reforms in the sector “by providing (1) legitimisation for political leadership, (2) concepts for the solution of national problems, and (3) strategic constraints for domestic actors opposing domestic reforms” (1998: 1).

As discussed, the Netherlands initially intended to follow the British example and fully privatize the railways. The developments in the EU supported the increasingly critical attitude of the Dutch government to continue with the large financial support of the sector, and the decision was made to denationalize NS. As we have seen, the plan encountered substantial problems during the implementation and as a result, the full privatization was put on hold indefinitely. The structure that was chosen for the railway sector consists of an infrastructure manager (ProRail) and various railway operators (NS being the main operator, at least for the duration of the concession). Both report back to the Minister of Transport, Public Works and Water Management. The Dutch state remains the main stockholder of NS.

In Spain, the influence of the European Union has developed relatively late. This can be explained by the country’s internal struggles, the relatively late establishment of its democracy (the first general elections of the Spanish democracy took place in 1977) and the late developments of its welfare state (Kickert, 2005; Sainz Moreno, 2003; Torres & Pina, 2004). Up until the mid-1970s, the idea of Spain entering the European Commission in a near future seemed rather unrealistic (Barbé, 1999). Nevertheless, after the death of Franco in 1975, the country underwent a radical transition towards a democratic State. In 1986 Spain became a Member State in the European Commission and from there experienced a rapid expansion of its activities and role within the European Union. With regard to public sector reforms, the Spanish government has implemented a number of reforms that are inspired by the New Public Management doctrine (Lobo García, 2006; Sainz Moreno, 2003; Torres & Pina, 2004; Valdivielso del Real, 2001), yet a coherent reform plan is lacking. The reforms are said to be mainly superficial and aimed at improving the image of the functioning of the public sector among citizens (Kickert, 2005; Torres, 2005; Torres & Pina, 2004).

With regard to the railway sector Spain was also among the (relatively) late adopters of the 91/440/EEC directive. Only in 2005 did the formal separation between the infrastructure management (ADIF) and the railway operator (Renfe Operadora) become formal. The institutional arrangements in Spain resemble the Dutch sector in the sense that the state remains the main stockholder, the infrastructure manager operates under the direct authority of the Ministry of Public Works, and the concession of the main railway network has been assigned to the former state railway operator for a limited period in time, in anticipation of the liberalization of the European railway network (Campos, 2005; Ramos Melero,
2002). Also like the Dutch situation, there is a contract between the Ministry of Public Works and Renfe Operadora (Renfe Operadora, 2006a), explicating the performance of the company.

**Translating the Grand Narratives of Public Sector Reform**

Although the institutional changes and liberalization of the railway sector is not a central focus in this study, the grand narratives surrounding the reforms in the sector (both the reforms as stimulated by the European Commission in the realm of the railways, and the public sector reforms at the national levels in general) hold an important position in the perceptions and meanings of (organizational) actors’ daily lifeworlds. In that sense, the discourses surrounding public sector reform (or New Public Management discourse) are a fundamental part of the construction and the enactment of security in the daily practices within the railway organizations (Caldwell, 2005; Fairclough, 2003; Pettigrew, 1985; Phillips et al., 2004). In this second storyline, the (intertextual) relations between so-called security discourses and NPM discourses becomes visible (Oswick et al., 2008). The point here is not to extensively analyse the consequences of the institutional and organizational reforms as such, but I want to stress the interrelations between different grand narratives and organizational discourses that together shape the interpretive frameworks of actors (Fairclough, 2003; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Weick et al., 2005). Furthermore, I do not want to claim that the public discourses related to security and public sector reform are the only or most important societal discourses at this point in time, but throughout this study they came most clearly to the fore (which is partly explained by the initial aims and problem statement of the study).

What has become clear throughout the study is that the institutional arrangements in both countries are the cause for quite some uncertainty and ambiguity among organizational actors. Typically, any organizational change involves insecurity and uncertainty when it comes to the future. The relative stability of the ongoing organizational narrative is disrupted and the existing frames of reference no longer offer the organizational members a satisfactory explanation/meaning with regard to the situation and their role in it. The narrative of change that should replace the ‘old narrative of who we are and what we do’ is however far from unambiguous or clear. This is why processes of identity work are so vital for understanding how individual and collective actors make sense of organizational changes (Beech et al., 2008; Down & Reveley, 2009; Ybema et al., 2009a). Through processes of editing, actors try to make sense of and adopt what they believe is the most suitable version of the new narrative (Bacharach et al., 1996; Berendse et al.,
2006), in relation to how they see the past and future of the organization (Gabriel, 1993; Ybema, 2004, forthcoming) and their own position in it (Brown & Humphreys, 2002; Davies & Harré, 1990; Down, 2006). It is important to recognize here that at the frontstage of organizational processes, often a connection is established to dominant overarching grand narratives - such as the New Public Management doctrine - that prevail in society at large. In the case of public sector reforms the strength of the NPM ideology is invigorated by the constant reiteration of 'ideas' and 'solutions' by practitioners, politicians, and academics (Veenswijk, 2005a). It is precisely this type of reiteration that Giddens (1990) warns about when he talks about the double hermeneutics that social sciences have to be aware of. Like Giddens, Van Maanen (1995b) also stresses the need for reflection on behalf of academics with regard to the types of theories and texts they feed back into society.

When it comes to the situated enactment of the NPM discourse at the level of organizational actors, it turns out that at the frontstage level, the discourse related to NPM has clearly permeated organizational life both at Renfe Operadora as well as NS. The language of accountability, efficiency, performance measurements and the like have been widely adopted (thereby contributing to the strengthening of the grand narrative of public sector reform). At the same time however, the backstage expressions of organizational practices and culture seem to be much more elusive and difficult to change (Noordegraaf & Abma, 2003; Torres & Pina, 2004; Veenswijk, 2001, 2005a). The backstage processes of sensemaking and enactment of the meanings of 'performance measurements' or 'accountability' are less straightforward than might be suspected from the frontstage point of view. The localized interpretations seem to continue the reiteration of the discursive elements of the reform doctrine but giving them a localized translation (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; Emery & Giauque, 2003; Sahlin-Andersson, 2000; Veenswijk, 2005a). It is the (intertextual) relations between societal representations of the New Public Management and localized enactments through this continuous process of reiteration and reification of particular discursive elements that makes such discourses so powerful and persistent (Fairclough, 2003; Keenoy & Oswick, 2003; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). In other words, reform programs such as those related to the NPM doctrine offer a specific narrative that is presented with much emphasis as the way to go. They are usually full of tangible and clearly defined problems and solutions, and offer a seemingly straightforward script for the direction in which the changes should go. However, the discursive power of such programs and reports often leads to a process of reification and there is a lack of flexibility to involve what is going on in the backstage realm of daily life in such organizations. This decoupling between frontstage and backstage culture (Hakvoort & Veenswijk, 2004; Noorde-
graaf et al., 2004; Veenswijk, 2005a) becomes manifested in various ways in this study.

In Spain, the demands formulated in the contract (contrato-programa) between the Ministry and Renfe Operadora in relation to the new institutional structure of the company forces the management to formulate specific performance measures. With regard to security the company’s security department has developed measures that can be divided into two broad categories: customer satisfaction and the number of incidents. Customer satisfaction is measured regularly through surveys. With regard to the number of incidents, the company has developed a system in which a distinction is made between positive incidents and negative incidents, in order to build in a different layer of measuring the performance of the security organization (instead of focussing exclusively on what is problematic, the management of the security department decided to emphasize successful activities as well). However, for operational employees the recognition that incidents are very different in character has been adopted only partially. When it comes to their perception of different tasks most employees are very much aware of the difference between ‘aid-incidents’ and ‘enforcement-incidents’, yet when it comes to translating this into their performances they do not perceive the distinction in the same way. In their view, counting the number of incidents, regardless their character, can (and will) be translated directly as a measure for their job-performance.

Another manifestation of the problems related with the persistence of ‘old’ cultural patterns and the discrepancy with the expressed ‘new’ organizational orientation is the perceived uncertainty with regard to the future position of the company. Throughout the study, many organizational actors made remarks about the prospect for Renfe Operadora of becoming one player amongst many operators in a liberalized rail sector. In general, they do not see the future in a positive light. As far as they are concerned Renfe will not be able to meet the qualifications necessary to continue their business as usual. What is remarkable is that it seems to become clear from these conversations that many employees still think of Renfe in the way they have come to know (and love) the company, and they are sceptical of the intention of the government and the management of the company. They hold nostalgic feelings towards the past and fear for the future. The prospect of competition and commercialization does not fit with their perception of what the company is, even though a lot has changed already.

With regard to the so-called New Public Management discourse, the company has already internalized several important notions and ideas in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This is remarkable because in general, Spain is perceived to be lacking behind other countries with regard to the implementation of EU regulations or the
adoption of popular ideas with regard to the modernization of public sector organizations (Sainz Moreno, 2003; Torres & Pina, 2004; Valdivielso del Real, 2001). As mentioned, the restructuring of the railway sector according to the 91/440/EEC directive has been adopted relatively late (in 2005) by the Spanish government (e.g. Ramos Melero, 2004). Yet this relates mainly to the institutional arrangements in the Spanish railsector. Internally, the company has travelled a slightly different course. Already under the direction of Mercè Sala (1991-1996) Renfe moved away from a traditional bureaucratic structure of public organizations towards an organizational structure inspired by business-like models from the private sector (Quintana & Solé, 2001; Sala, 2000). In the area of security this strategy has been translated in different ways. One of the most important developments in the late 1980s has been the outsourcing of enforcement and surveillance tasks to external private security companies. Almost entirely congruent with the ideas put forward by key authors with regard to the restructuring of public sector organizations (e.g. Osborne & Gaebler, 1992), the arguments for contracting private security guards is related to the idea that competition between service providers can be used to improve the quality of services and performances whilst preserving flexibility to respond to changing circumstances (Corona, 1990; Duijnhoven, 2007b). In practice, however this idea brings along other (unintended) consequences. The competition and accountability systems trigger legitimating behaviour on behalf of the security guards and inspectors. The need to perform well and maintaining the legitimacy of their job can sometimes elad to a specific form of goal-displacement. The formal output or ‘proof’ of their performances may become more important than the qualitative aspects of doing a ‘good job’.

In the Netherlands NS is required to write a yearly report to account for their performances towards the Ministry of Public Works and Water Management. In the report key performance indicators for several different areas need to be formulated and elaborated. One of the areas involves personal security. At the security department of NS, the formulation of a reliable measurement system for the performance in this area has been complicated. A first step has been to stress the distinction between ‘subjective security’ (the perception of security by both customers and employees) and ‘objective security’ (the number of incidents). The measurement of objective security seems rather straightforward and involves reporting and counting the number of incidents. However, as came to the fore during many instances, the practice is more complicated. What constitutes an incident is subject to interpretation, and the system depends on people who report the incidents (i.e. the ticket inspectors, service agents, train drivers, etc.) This is also where subjective security comes into play. If staff members do not feel insecure they are less likely to report every minor incident. Similarly,
whenever someone feels unsafe a small incident may have large (emotional) effects. Furthermore, the reporting of certain types of incidents is contingent upon the normalization of such incidents.

In some regions (mainly metropolitan areas) aggressive passengers are more common than in rural areas. Consequently, even though aggression might be a larger problem in the metropolitan area, the statistics might show a different picture if employees in those areas do not report every instance of aggression—something that might be the case in the rural areas. A member of the security department illustrates this problem with an example. At a certain point the statistics were indicating a rise in the number of incidents at a particular station in the evening. In an internal investigation of the causes for this increase, it turned out that the railway police had decided to increase surveillance at that station during the nighttime. As a result, they detained more people without a valid ticket or that were behaving badly, hence more incidents were reported. Thus the rise in incidents may have been a direct consequence of the increased surveillance. This type of ‘explanation’ is not reflected in the absolute numbers that are used to measure objective security (this is also related to the third main storyline that will be discussed next).

Much like in Spain, Dutch railway employees also showed their apprehension with the future of the company. The concession will end in 2010, and whereas before most people felt confident that they would be able to prolong the concession of the main railway network—after all the government would not let this important company lose their concession—there are increasing concerns about this. The old conflicts between the management and staff with regard to the commercialization of NS (in the late 1990s) is still lingering and discussion about the future of the company often are referring back to that episode in the company’s history. In specific, many employees do not trust the motives of the management for implementing certain changes. They are anxious to know what changes mean for their personal jobs and attempts to involve them in the development of changes are both appreciated as well as distrusted. According to many employees, before they are able to think about what the security and back-up organization of the company should look like they need to know if they will still have a job in a few years, if they can continue with their tasks and sustain the level of income they have.

The company history and past image is reflected in the relation with their customers as well. Despite increased service levels, the company is still struggling with their past image among the public and problems related to the introduction of the new electronic ticketing system among other things does not much to help improve the perception of customers with regard to the company.
‘In Control or Under Control: Towards a Security Utopia?’

The way security is perceived among different actors is part of broader societal discourses with regard to security. It has been argued that there has been a shift in the way security is constructed from modernist to post-modernist ways of thinking. Whereas modernist conceptualizations of security draw upon a rationalistic worldview, the postmodern perspective emphasizes the discursive construction of security and the impossibility of fully protecting ourselves from all possible threats. In fact, the notion of a secure world in itself needs problematization. In sociological or political discussions about a safe and secure world are often centred around the idea of the state as the main provider of security and protection. As Feldman (2004) argues, the current “securocratic regime” leads to the reframing of history into a (false) dichotomy of an ideal state safety on the one hand and a state of total disorder and malice on the other hand (Feldman, 2004; Oswick et al., 2008). Despite the clear shift towards the postmodern approaches towards security, other societal developments (such as the reorientation of the institutional arrangements in the public sector) have caused renewed attention for the measurability of security performances. This rationalistic perspective on security is aimed at making risks quantifiable and security measureable.

Is There Security in Numbers?

This storyline elaborates the previous storylines. Whereas in the second storyline the focus is on institutional changes and the changing position of the companies as well as (groups of) actors within the companies, this storyline revolves around the notions of ‘accountability’ and ‘measurability’ that figure prominently in public discourses such as the NPM discourse.

Minister Remkes should let go of the idea that a decrease in crime is based purely on numbers. Focussing on numbers mainly leads to an urge to score among the police. The number-fetishism that dominates the Netherlands […] also has repercussions on Minister Remkes. He still seems convinced that figures of declining criminality are indicative of improving security. Professionals are thus tied to the logic of numbers. It no longer matters how they do their job, the output with regard to agreed objectives as formulated in performance contracts is what counts (Trouw, 2006: 9, my translation).\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{85} Original article in Dutch (my translation): “Minister Remkes [Minister van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties van 2002-2006] moet af van het idee dat je het dalen van de criminaliteit puur kunt
The fragment in the text box, taken from the Dutch national newspaper Trouw on June 20, 2006, highlights various developments that are related to the topic of this study. In the first place, it focuses on a general tendency to believe in the 'logic of numbers' (Porter, 1995). As long as there is 'objective proof' that the outcomes of certain policies, behaviour, organizational measures are congruent with the aims, in general this is seen as a causality that is not questioned. As Porter (1995: 11) argues: “The credibility of numbers, or indeed of knowledge in any form, is a social and moral problem. This has not yet been adequately appreciated”. However, it is often forgotten that aims are formulated in relation to the expected outcome, which is in turn interpreted in light of that aim. Behind the ‘objective’ numbers there is a lot more ambiguity than first meets the eye. It is often overlooked that numbers, as much as words, need to be interpreted and this interpretation is based on personal, subjective sensemaking that often takes the shape of self-fulfilling prophecies (Weick, 1995) whereby a façade of numbers or statistics retrospectively confirms the aims of asking a particular question in the first place.

In the narratives that are presented here we see that much of the activity in the area of railway security is based on the perception of security (by passengers and employees). It is recognized that there is a difference between objective security (the number of incidents) and subjective security (the feeling of security). Yet at the same time, both are measured through specific performance indicators that have been formulated, not in the least because the contracts with the government require so. When there is a lack of grounded rules to measure the performance of business operation, formulating a measurement with a scientific logic behind it and ‘unambiguous’ numbers as the outcome, often seems a safe bet.

A decision made by the numbers (or by explicit rules of some other sort) has at least the appearance of being fair and impersonal. Scientific objectivity thus provides an answer to a moral demand for impartiality and fairness. Quantification is a way of making decisions without seeming to decide (Porter, 1995: 8).

This constant search for performance measurements is an expression of the dominant narrative of ‘professionalism’ and ‘accountability’ that is part of the current neoliberal ideology in (semi) public organizations. The discourse of neoliberalism - including the tendency of governments to increasingly retreat from what had
previously been part of their core responsibility, namely the provision of public services – has come to dominate the public sphere and citizens as well as organizations are urged to take up their responsibility as active members of society. The market should replace government intervention.

As mentioned, under the term ‘New Public Management’ this discourse has become known for the stimulation of liberalization of public services and public organizations (e.g. Hood, 1995; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Osborne & MacLaughlin, 2002; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). Despite (or because of) the great number of scholars that have written about the NPM doctrine, its merits are disputable and the effects it has had on public organizations is mainly manifested through ‘blue-print’ change programs that do not reach further than the frontstage of organizational lifeworlds, leaving the organizational actors at the backstage almost clueless as to their position or identity (Duijnhoven, 2007a; Noordegraaf & Abma, 2003; Paulsen, 2005; Veenswijk, 2005a). There is increasing recognition that the NPM doctrine (as an expression of neoliberalism), more than a reform plan, constitutes an intrusive discourse or dominant cultural narrative that has permeated our societies at many levels.

Monahan discusses the role of neoliberalism in shaping the contemporary attitude towards surveillance and security:

Neoliberalism is understood here to indicate the simultaneous advancement of social control mechanisms and retreat from social programs in societies. It manifests in policies such as those for the privatization or elimination of public goods, services, or spaces; in technological systems, such as surveillance architectures or inadequate public transportation; and in cultural dispositions, such as the widespread beliefs about the inefficiencies of public programs and the necessity of individualized responsibility. As a cultural shift, neoliberalism advances new social and moral orders that normalize its assumptions as fundamental truths (Monahan, 2006a: x).

In the cases presented in this study, the tensions and dilemmas for individual actors and organizations related to the shifting cultural orientation in the public sector has become clear at various instances.

If we think back to the narrative about the information hostesses in Madrid, the fragment about the women being proud of having dealt with ‘13 incidents in one shift’ makes clear that numbers can have different meanings for different actors. Whereas the woman in the example felt competent and a hard worker, another explanation of the situation may very well be that the reason for the high number of incidents is a problem with the security system of the company. Yet somehow, the operational staff members make sense of their tasks in terms of output and quantifiable performances.
The tricky side of security is that it costs a lot of time and investments and there is no direct outcome. It is hard to measure. This in contrast to (traffic) safety, which can be more directly related to the products of the organization. As a consequence, there are hardly any concessions in the area of safety; the requirements are very strict and firmly rooted in rules and legislation. There is no discussion about it, while in the area of security measures are constantly subject of discussion (member of the security department at NS).

Another example of the obscuring power of a focus on one-sided, quantifiable aspects of certain security measures is related to the changing task-divisions between different actors in the Dutch railway sector. The new institutional arrangements in the field have led to a different role for employees of NS in the area of enforcement. This change involves more than ‘just’ a new orientation or task, but it has a radical influence on the identity and position of operational staff, and the division of enforcement tasks between the company and external parties such as the police, private security companies, etc. The discussions in the media and elsewhere about the necessary reshuffling of enforcement tasks in the Dutch railway sector are blurred by a “rhetorical smoke screen, hiding deeper motivations and logics behind surveillance and security” (Monahan, 2006b: 2). For instance, the scrutinizing comments in public discourses are related to the number of ticket inspectors at NS that will be trained as security officer, instead of considering the actual changes in responsibility and logic behind the new situation.

The importance of safety is recognized, but in particular the traffic safety. Safety issues are anchored in a legal framework with little room for doubt. From way back, this has been an issue and the costs and benefits are clear. In that area, the company is obliged to stay within the legal framework and there is no room for negotiation. For security issues, the situation is different; there is no clear legal framework, no standard. For that reason, people tend to stay near the bottom of what is deemed necessary, because that is cheaper. At the management level, security is but one of the many decisions that have to be made within the same budget, and therefore it is always subject to negotiating (member security department at NS).

Similarly, the number of cameras often seems more important than questions with regard to the effectiveness of camera surveillance. Again, it appears as if there is ‘trust in numbers’ without taking “the ramifications […] of quantifying ‘security’ (e.g., by the number of video cameras) for political purposes” into regard (Monahan, 2006b: 2). What is more, research has indicated that many crimes and security threats are not prevented by such surveillance measures (Monahan, 2006b), but they do convey a message to the outside world that ‘everything possible is being done’. At the same time, there is a lot of negotiation involved in finding the ride
balance between costs and benefits of security measures and still maintaining a positive image towards the outside world. The problem is that the outcomes of security measures are not clearly defined or measurable.

As such, the public discourses with regard to security and terrorism play an important role in the ways these issues become manifested and enacted in the two companies. The constant reiteration of certain events or the framing of what may be 'harmless' accidents in terms of terrorism lead to a heightened awareness and threat, urging organizations and actors to take actions. In other words, certain critical events or episodes gain a symbolic meaning, or – as Gabriel describes it – they become “symbolic landmarks in cultural life of organization” (Gabriel, 2000: 2). The intensive media attention for the topic also constitutes an increased legitimisation and support for the introduction of certain measures or policies. Studies have shown that “U.S. security agencies and industries were already moving toward the widespread application of biometric and other surveillance systems prior to 9/11. The attacks, however, provided the impetus for rapidly deploying the systems with as little public scrutiny or debate as possible” (Monahan, 2006b: 7). In a similar vein, Den Boer discusses the ways in which the 9/11 attacks have been used as a legitimation of specific security policies in the Netherlands (Den Boer, 2007) and Europe (Den Boer & Monar, 2002). Such legitimating effects of 9/11 have only been invigorated by the events of March 11, 2004 in Madrid and the attacks in London in 2005. Such critical events further heightened discussions about railway security, the use of camera surveillance and other measures, making the acceptance of such measures almost indisputable. According to Boutellier (2005), the issue of security should not remain an unquestionable legitimation for more and more measures, without reflecting upon the consequences. Similarly, Monahan argues that very often the wrong type of questions are asked.

Why are questions about surveillance and security always framed in terms of trade-offs [between security and liberty; security and privacy; security and freedom; costs and benefits]? Regardless of the forum, from popular media broadcasts to political speeches to academic publications, trade-offs are taken as the starting point for any discussion (Monahan, 2006b: 1).

According to Monahan, framing security questions in that way obscures “the real changes underway and issues at play with the incorporation of surveillance technologies into public life” (Monahan, 2006b: 1). This dominant attitude towards the use of surveillance technologies and the consequences of quantifying security for political purposes negates the notion that most risks cannot be prevented by such measures, which may lead to a “false sense of security whereby [people] expose themselves to increased risks” (Monahan, 2006b: 9). At the other hand, even
though it might be largely a symbolic function, the perception of a sense of security in itself may be a satisfactory result of such measures, especially when taking into regard the complex interplay between objective and subjective security.

The power of public discourses such as those related to security and surveillance is a striking example of the way sensemaking processes work. As Weick (1995) argues, sensemaking is very much a retrospective process whereby actors justify their past behaviour in light of what they know now. Specific events or stimuli in the environment of the actors are used to build their case for particular actions or measures. Throughout the study it became clear that events like 9/11 or 11-M constitute ‘exogenous jolts’ (Sullivan-Taylor & Wilson, 2009) that disrupt the evolving story of organizations like Renfe Operadora and NS. Nevertheless the organizational reactions to such events are not always a radical break with the past. Sometimes, such dramatic events merely create momentum for the (rapid) implementation of measures that were already being developed. For instance, both in the Dutch and the Spanish railway sector the expansion of the use of CCTV systems and other technological surveillance measures has been framed as direct reactions to 9/11, 11-M and the London bombings. During the trial against the suspects of 11-M, Renfe Operadora was retrospectively scrutinized for the lack of camera surveillance, despite the fact that the law at the time restricted the use of CCTV. In the Netherlands, 9-11 and to an even greater extent 11-M has created momentum for several institutions and organizations to follow through on the plans to develop certain security systems, despite continuing criticism and debate with regard to matters of privacy.

**And So This Story Comes to Its End**

The three storylines presented in this chapter are the product of my analysis and interpretations. It is important to note that these storylines are not intended to be taken as static. Rather, they are constantly evolving and manifested in many different ways at many different levels. At the same time, counter-narratives or alternative narratives emerge that may contest the central ideas of the dominant storylines. One way to get a hold of the interaction between these narratives and discursive realms is to focus on the intertextual relations of the narratives. Unsurprisingly, the data in this study do not let themselves be categorized neatly as part of either of the three storylines, yet the analysis does point towards these dominant discursive constructions. However, most elements across the data figure in one or all of the three general storylines. People make sense of stimuli in their environment and enact them according to their own interpretive frame. As a result, the
elements of the main storylines are not entirely congruent, but ambiguous and at times even contradictory.

In table 7.1, the three storylines are summarized for both research settings. The table is divided into two parts. The upper part of the table lists the central actors for both the Spanish and Dutch context that played a part in the study. This list is divided into main (organizational) actors and other (external) actors. These lists are obviously not exhaustive, but they represent those actors that figured prominently in the analysis and, thus, in the narratives that have been presented. In the bottom part of the table, the three storylines are summarized in the left column through reference to the ‘title’, main topics and some key elements (which closely resemble the codes that came out of the data analysis). In the other two columns I have listed some main ‘expressions’ of the storylines in each of the two settings. They are formulated as statements, ideas or short descriptions. Again, they are far from exhaustive, and some of these expressions are clearly contradicting each other (once again indicating the ambiguity of interpretations among different actors). Nevertheless, I believe that together they show a broad spectrum of manifestations of the different meanings and enactment of security.

If we return to the shift between Early Modern worldviews and their Late Modern counterparts, as described by many authors, some questions arise with regard to some of the elements of these worldviews. According to Gephart et al. (2009) and Miller (2009) amongst others, one of the central shifts in the ways in which people and organizations conceptualize risks is from a rationalizing view of risks as calculable probabilities to unquantifiable uncertainties. Throughout the data in this study, the recognition that risks and threats are never fully known or quantifiable dominated discussions at the management levels. However, at the same time, the actions of the same people often pointed towards a different attitude, namely an approach to security in terms of highly instrumental and calculable measures and outcomes. It seems that there are contradictory discourses at work here. On the one hand, it is recognized and accepted that security threats are uncertain and thus impossible to prevent entirely, yet another grand narrative (of efficiency, accountability & transparency) intervenes and requires organizational actors to identify and formulate concrete indicators to measure performances and the security ‘rates’. At the core of the matter, this contradicts the nature of these performances and as such this is a possible cause for unsatisfactory outcomes and confusion.
Table 7.1 – The Three Storylines In Short

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protagonists</strong></td>
<td><strong>Main actors</strong></td>
<td><strong>Main actors</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>security guards</td>
<td>security team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>information hostesses</td>
<td>service employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inspectors Renfe Operadora</td>
<td>ticket inspectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inspectors security companies</td>
<td>regional (team) managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CECON operators</td>
<td>members security department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>management</td>
<td>management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>security director</td>
<td>security director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other actors</strong></td>
<td><strong>Service employees</strong></td>
<td><strong>Other actors</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>government</td>
<td>government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ADIF</td>
<td>ProRail</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>national police</td>
<td>railway police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>popular (news) media</td>
<td>popular (news) media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trade unions</td>
<td>trade unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>customers</td>
<td>passenger associations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the public</td>
<td>the public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Negotiating Security**

- Service and security are both central values.
- Renfe’s own operational staff should mainly focus on core operations.
- Outsourcing security tasks leads to higher quality and specialized staff.
- Competition among private security companies leads to better services.
- Service tasks are separated from security tasks.
- Uniformed and armed personnel contribute to security at railway premises.
- Accountability, performance and legitimation are strongly related when it comes to the relations between Renfe Operadora and security companies.

**Expressions**

- Service constitutes the foundation of security and Service tasks are inherently different from security (enforcement) tasks.
- NS, as a commercial company, needs to take its responsibility in the area of security.
- Separation of service and enforcement tasks is the result of increased regulations and costs.
- Separation of tasks will ultimately lead to the disappearance of specific jobs (i.e. ticket inspectors).
- Service tasks have a lower status than ticket controlling or security tasks.
- The plans for restructuring the security organization are mainly aimed at reducing costs at the expense of public security.
Future (Im)Perfect
Discourses of Public Sector Reform Changing responsibilities and competition

New Public Management, EU-directives, reforms, separation, operator, infrastructure management, responsibility, accountability, commercialization, customer-orientation, performance indicators, competition, liberalization, privatization, measuring security, institutional relations, uncertainty, nostalgia, positioning

Prospect of competition leads to uncertainty with regard to the future of the company.
The ideas of competition and commercialization contradict ‘old’ values and perceptions of the company.
Organizational changes with regard to security as well as institutional reforms lead to a reorientation and redefinition of (organizational) identity narratives of actors involved.
Renfe: implementation of businesslike measures since early 1990s.
Outsourcing security tasks should lead to (cost) efficient services from security companies.
Performance indicators for security divided into customer satisfaction and statistical data on incidents.
Distinction between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ incidents.
For operational staff the absolute number of incidents represents the quality of their performance.
Performance measurement are perceived to be more important than qualitative level of performances, leading to a tension between organizational goals in the area of security in individual aims with regard to job security and legitimacy.

Prospect of competition leads to uncertainty with regard to future of the company and the future of certain job categories.
The ideas of competition and commercialization contradict ‘old’ values and perceptions of the company.
Old conflicts between management and operational staff re-emerge in reaction to the prospect of liberalization and commercialization. In the past, the plans for privatization led to serious conflicts, this is still existing on a deeper level.
Performance indicators with regard to security are combination of indicators for objective and subjective security.
There are different perceptions of threat, insecurity and danger among different groups of actors.
Relations between objective and subjective security are complex and often ambiguous.
Customer perceptions are influenced by history of the company and past representations in the popular media.
An area of tension occurs between the (collective) organizational goals with regard to security and individual goals with regard to job security and legitimacy.
In or Under Control

Security illusion
Risk prevention

Security carries with it an inherent legitimacy.
There is a striking difference between personal and professional approaches to security problems in light of past experiences.
The issue of terrorism is approached in an instrumental manner, leading to instrumental, technological measures.
Discussion about performances in the area of security and risk prevention often focus on statistical data.
Critical episodes in the history of the company have not radically altered the direction of security policies.
Quantification of performances are strong means for (retrospective) legitimation and justification of actions.
Technology is (rhetorically) used to improve security perceptions as much as to actually prevent incidents.

Security carries with it an inherent legitimacy.
Despite recognition of the difference between subjective and objective security, in practice the strength of objective (statistical) measurements is very powerful.
The legal framework and budget allocations are less established for security in comparison to safety.
The pressure of preventing certain risks and threats requires a careful balancing between perceptions of threats and cost-benefit analyses.
Critical incidents are used to strengthen decisions and developments of specific measures.
Quantification of performances are strong means for (retrospective) legitimation and justification of actions.
Technology is (rhetorically) used to improve security perceptions as much as to actually prevent incidents.

In the narratives throughout this dissertation, many issues and anecdotes were presented ‘through the eyes’ of different groups of employees working at the frontline of Renfe Operadora and NS. Nevertheless, their ‘perspectives’ have been mediated through my personal interpretations and experiences with them. The stories are composite narratives, constructed out of a variety of data sources. As researchers, we always mediate the stories that we write (if not as explicitly as in my case, still through selection, analysis and styling). However, during our fieldwork, we also encounter stories that are prefabricated and constructed without provoking them for research related purposes. These ‘prefab’ – or ‘found’ (O’Reilly, 2005; Silverman, 2007) – narratives can take many forms and shapes, and by now there is a wide recognition of the polyphony of narratives within organizations, among scholars in the area of organizational discourse and narrative approaches.
Again, I want to stress that the storylines presented in this chapter should not be taken unproblematically. As stated, they are products of my interpretation and analysis and although I believe they can serve to illustrate and highlight some of the main issues that are at stake for organizational actors at the railways we should remain open for and not overlook alternative interpretations or counter narratives. In the first part of this book I have intended to provide an insight into the design of the study and the specific perspective I have used. As mentioned, the study was not designed as a classical comparison between the Dutch and Spanish case. Nevertheless, the differences and similarities between the two settings naturally constitute an important focus, if only because people continue to ask about what I have seen in both cases. The presentation of the three main storylines (in particular in table 7.1) might suggest that I have tried to generalize between the two cases and come up with clear-cut, coherent narratives that can be applied to both. I hope it is clear that this is not my intention. The narratives I presented throughout the study and my further analysis have led me to distil these broad storylines out of the polyphonic accounts about security in both organizations. To me the storylines can be used to highlight both the similarities as well as the differences with regard to the meaning of security in the Spanish and Dutch railway sector (and beyond).

What then, can we learn from these three storylines and the multitude of ways they are manifested in the Spanish and Dutch case? One important conclusion that needs to be drawn is that we should not overlook the importance of negotiations of meanings with regard to security. The saliency of the topic often obscures the underlying meaning of security. As Monahan (2006b) argues, too often the debates with regard to security measures evolve around questions of trade-offs between security and freedom or privacy. Throughout this study it has become clear that this is an overly simplified representation of the issues surrounding security. Questions with regard to security are often part of a complex interplay between different groups of actors with different perceptions and (political) interests. The saliency of security and the often unproblematic conceptualization makes it a ready argument in debates about the division of resources or the legitimation of specific measures and tasks. Nevertheless, I do not want to suggest here that the urgency of security is always overstated. Events in the recent past have shown the importance of attention for the issue. Rather I want to make clear that it may be useful to be more critical about the discursive power of security related discussions. The excessive reiteration of security-related issues in public discourses has created a situation in which organizations are expected to act and be explicit about measures to protect their operations from security threats. Any indication of a compromise in the area of security will be immediately reprimanded through media exposure. In case of incidents (regardless the seriousness of the incident) there is a collective search for who is accountable for the event. Questions about what could have
been done to prevent such a thing to happen lead to extreme public scrutiny of whoever is deemed responsible.

Another important lesson to be drawn from this study as represented through the three storylines is that it is important to take into regard the strong interrelations between dominant discourses in society and the ways in which this becomes enacted at the level of situated practices among specific groups of people and organizations. There is significant overlap between the areas of tension that became visible with each of the three storylines and this overlap suggests that societal discourses and institutionalized practices are so intertwined that it is often difficult to pinpoint the specific relations, let alone explain their (mutual) influence in the processes of production and reproduction of such discourses and practices. This might seem to be a rather obvious observation and in a way it is indeed very obvious. Yet, what is so important about this – and that is one of the contributions of this study – is that it may be so obvious that it is difficult to be aware of it. Individual actions, texts, practices, discourses are related in complex processes of (re)definition, (re)production, (co)construction, reification, sensemaking, and senssegiving. These are very illusive processes not in the least because as human beings we ourselves are part of these discursive processes.

This process is not only relevant with regard to security or public sector reforms. At this moment in time these discourses around security/risk and the so-called NPM discourses may be dominant in specific arenas, but over time these will probably become less important and other dominant discourses will emerge. Thus, the results of this study can be interpreted both at the empirical level (it can help us to understand and deconstruct prevailing ideas and perceptions with regard to security and organizational changes in the railway sector) and a deeper, more general level (it contributes to our understanding of how dominant discourses and situated meanings are related).

Finally, a different but equally important contribution of the study entails the exploration and experimentation with different writing styles and the use of a fictionalized narrative strategy to present the empirical data. In the next chapter I will look back and reflect on the main contributions in this regard.
8 Telling Tales

For the most part the lies of organizational ethnography are not lies that we can choose to avoid; the reality is that they are part of the methodology by which we prepare reality for presentation. Ethnography is ultimately about transformation. We take idiosyncratic behaviours, events with numerous causes, which may – God forbid! – be random (or at least inexplicable), and we package them as an understanding of an organization. We contextualize events in a social system, within a web of meaning, and then name a cause, excluding other patterns or causes. Transformation is about hiding, about magic, about change. This is the task that we face and the reality that we must embrace. Ethnographers cannot help but to lie, but through lying we also present truths about organizations that escape those who are not so bold (Fine & Shulman, 2009: 192-193).

Fictionalized Research Narratives or Lies?

The fictionalized narratives that I presented in this book are based on my interpretation of the fieldwork at Renfe Operadora and NS. As I have tried to make clear throughout this study, research narratives are always idiosyncratic constructions, moulded from the outset by the formulation of the research problems (however open at the start), the researcher’s background, the dynamic momentum of the actual field research, and the choices made during the study and writing-up. As Tangherlini (1998: xiv) puts it: “[E]ven if the stories were not edited, the simple act of committing them to paper fundamentally alters them”. Situations in ‘real life’ can never be directly represented or precisely imitated in a text (i.e. language). Paradoxically, social science research texts aim to do precisely that; describing and understanding real life situations (Fine & Shulman, 2009; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006b). Making claims to knowledge is therefore closely related to ontological, epistemological and methodological statements and it is imperative to be explicit about this, recognizing that the knowledge claims derived from research are inevitably coloured by the interpretations of the researcher/author as well as their audiences. In my study, I have argued that the use of literary instead of scientific conventions provide an opportunity to present large amounts of data in a way that guarantees the anonymity of research participants, is vivid and easy to read, and – more importantly – without creating an illusion of objectivity, because it is made explicit from the start that it is a necessarily subjective account. By recognizing and emphasizing from the outset that the text is a creation based on the interpretation of the author - based on empirical data - as well as the interpretation of the reader,
the reader is involved in the (co)construction of the knowledge that is derived
from the text.

It may be argued, as Fine and Shulman (2009) indicate, that research texts are
thus built up by a particular form of lies, but as they continue, such lies are an
inevitable part of the work of (ethnographic) researchers. Without such lies, eth-
nography (and other types of research, for that matter) would be impossible and as
a consequence certain ‘truths’ would remain untold. The arguments that Fine and
Shulman put forward in their chapter about the ways in which (organizational)
ethnographers deceive, obscure or masquerade some of the practices of conduct-
ing fieldwork are not exclusively applicable to ethnography. As far as I am con-
cerned, any type of social science research is burdened with similar limitations as
to its ability to represent social reality. Sophisticated statistical analyses, complex
survey research or rigorous qualitative studies, in all social research the choices
made by the researcher(s), as well as their interpretations of the social world they
study have an impact on the outcomes of their research. In other words, any un-
derstanding of social phenomena is by definition partial and subjective. Be this as
it may, it does not mean that they hold no value whatsoever. On the contrary, all
are pieces of the same big puzzle that is social reality. Because although it may be
inconceivable to directly represent the social world, it does not mean that there is
no such thing as a reality outside of our human understanding, it is merely impos-
sible to know that reality. Thus even though our accumulation of insights and
knowledge is coloured by the idiosyncratic whims of individual researchers, in the
end our knowledge about ourselves and our world increases and within the limita-
tions of our human brains it brings us closer to understanding the world. As such
this knowledge helps us to move around and get ahead within the intersubjective
lifeworlds of our reality.

**The Narratives: A Reflection**

In the first part of the book, I presented what I have termed the ‘fictionalized’
writing strategy (Chapter 3). One of the main reasons for this approach is to be
open about the ‘manipulation’ of research texts by the author behind it. In other
words, I acknowledged my role in the creative process of crafting a version of
reality, based on fieldwork in Spain and the Netherlands. Apart from constituting
an explicit argument against the dominant (positivistic) academic conventions,
this writing strategy is a productive way to guarantee the anonymity of the people
in the field, to conceal sensitive data without losing the interesting points that may
be referred from them, and the combination of large amounts of different data
sources without resulting in a dull, impenetrable narrative. Several scholars argue
that the use of creative fiction techniques can contribute to making research reports “less boring” (Caulley, 2008) and more intelligible (Van Maanen, 1995b; Watson, 2000).

As highlighted in chapter 3 through the presentation of two different versions of the same instance, as an author you have endless possibilities to enhance the texts that you write, regardless of the writing strategy you adopt (thus, not necessarily fictionalizing the accounts). Among the literary techniques that can be used to enhance (research) texts are the use of different points of view, different plots, voices, or characters, the introduction of dialogue or other forms of human interaction, switching between past and present tense, appealing to the readers’ senses by describing the setting’s visual surroundings, smells, tastes, feelings, etc. (Caulley, 2008; Genette, 1988; Novakovich, 1995; Rimmon-Kenan, 2002). In addition, researchers may choose to fictionalize the ethnographic accounts to be able to play around with and combine different observations and conversations into intelligible narratives. As you may have noticed while reading the narratives in part II of the book, I use different narrative perspectives and switched between styles now and again. At times, the stories I tell are shaped as a ‘documentary-like’ visualizations of a specific location (a railway station, an office), without a concrete protagonist. In other narratives one person serves as the main character, and some narratives consist of dialogue between two or more characters. Conversation, as Caulley indicates, “has the power to hold the reader right from the beginning” (2008: 425). In addition, in the case of research reports, conversations offer a ‘natural’ way to display different voices and points of view – a crucial part of (critical) social scientific research. To give an example, in the narrative ‘It is Our Responsibility to Make the Passengers Feel Safe’ (Chapter 6) the opinions by the staff are countered by the character of the team leader (‘Jan Willem’), who represents the perspective of the management of the company and thus provides another point of view to the reader. It’s important to acknowledge that neither of these perspectives represent the standpoints of all operational employees or all managers; on the contrary, they offer the reader a glimpse of the many different opinions and indicates that there is no single true interpretation of any situation. The fact that the different characters do not represent ‘real’ persons might, at first sight, give an impression that they are somehow representative of their entire population but this is explicitly not the case. The main function of this writing strategy is to make the reader aware of the multiplicity of opinions and perspectives that exist at any given moment and in any situation. The standpoints of the characters in the narrative are based on a combination of the conversations and statements of different people (with different points of view) I gathered during the fieldwork, and although they represent what I have experienced as a dominant viewpoint among
that particular group of employees there are many other opinions, some of which have been used in other characters or reflections.

The use of speech, dialogue and representing people’s thoughts and actions is a much debated issue in literary sciences as well as social sciences (Caulley, 2008; Rimmon-Kenan, 2002). Broadly speaking there are two different ways of writing about human interactions; telling and showing, or as Caulley also refers to the summary method and the dramatic method (Caulley, 2008). The telling or summary method is based on writing a summery of what happened during a particular situation whereas the showing or dramatic method displays an account of a scene as if it happens at that moment (although the ‘actual’ events took place in the recent or not so recent past).

In traditional qualitative research reports, facts are piled on facts, interview quotes are stacked on interview quotes – all in the name of rigor, completeness, and accuracy. Although creative nonfiction writers think facts and interview quotes are important, the basic building blocks of creative nonfiction are scenes. The scene creates sensual images in the mind of the reader… it gives the reader the sense that the action is unfolding in front of them – that the reader is part of the scene. The reader hears the conversation, sees the gestures, and follows the actions of the characters (Caulley, 2008: 429).

In my study I have used both methods, the narratives are written in a dramatic mode whereas the texts between the narratives (the ‘zooming-out’ part) is written in an informative mode, providing some additional information to the narratives. The main difference between the two modes of writing are the relation with the reader. With the summary technique, the reader does not have an active role in the interpretation, the author provides the ‘facts’ and there is little room for alternative interpretations or imagination. In contrast, the dramatic mode appeals to the senses and imagination of the reader. It recreates a scene that will be experienced and interpreted differently by different readers (Caulley, 2008; Genette, 1988; Rimmon-Kenan, 2002). Nevertheless, the difference between telling and showing is a relative distinction. Showing, in the sense of providing visual images that are similar to the real life situations, is not possible through text since texts are build up by language, making it impossible to directly represent or imitate actions (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002). To a certain extend all types of writing are ‘telling’ and the only difference is in the degree to which there is a narrator telling the story or if it uses vivid descriptions of the events to tell a story. The use of literary techniques such as dialogue, point of view and the use of specific and concrete details help build the scene and make it as if the event is unfolding in front of us, appealing to the senses of the reader.
Several of the narratives in my empirical chapters have been structured along a character who is arriving somewhere or who is going from one place to another. As Caulley argues, the opening paragraph of any text is vital for getting and keeping your readers’ attention. “One way to have an interesting opening is to show someone arriving … or departing” (Caulley, 2008: 425). Apart from a vivid opening, this technique also allows for a natural description of the setting, the environment as well as introducing the protagonist. Chapter four, for instance, starts with an arrival at the main railway station in Madrid, describing the location as well as some of the work environments of actors that will appear in other narratives. From the station, the description takes you to the office of the security department which is another central location in the Spanish case. In addition to the technique of moving from one location to the next, another literary technique that is used in this chapter is that there is an imaginative protagonist. The reader is pulled into the story because of the way he/she is urged to ‘imagine that…’. Thus, although there are few explicit characters in this narrative, the narrative is still personal.

In some of the narratives the first-person perspective was used. In those cases, I actually used a ‘real’ character, namely myself. Instead of being the omniscient narrator I become an character like the rest (albeit still omniscient to a certain extent). The reason to include myself as a character or witness in those narratives was usually because I experienced particular feelings or impressions that I wanted to include in my analysis. These narratives are slightly more reflexive than the others, maybe because I felt strong emotions with regard to the topic. For instance, in the Spanish context confrontations with the issue of terrorism were very foreign to me and I felt a need to highlight my relative distance (Ybema & Kamsteeg, 2009) to the topic. Or in the Dutch case when I put on a uniform, the experiences I had walking through a train and asking people to show me their ticket were – to me – valuable insights that I wanted to share. Among (critical) ethnographers, including the researcher in the text is both a means to be reflexive about one’s intrusion in the situation as well as a way to indicate that ‘I have been there’. The latter is often seen in a negative light. It is considered a part of creating the illusion of objectivity or truth (verisimilitude). As Fine and Shulman put it: “The illusion of verisimilitude is crucial for qualitative research…. But it is a belief that is at best only approximately true” (2009: 186). Some authors argue that this ‘illusion of being there’ is used as a way to get (ethnographic) authority (O’Reilly, 2005; Silverman, 2007). This is not the case here. As mentioned, my character is used occasionally as a literary technique to include my personal reflections with regard to the specific topic of that narrative. It is not meant to feign that the majority of my data are based on (participant) observations. Although I have spent a considerable time in the field (6-8 months in both organizations), most of that time I was either in the office of the security department or travelling around to meet people for on
site conversations (which also provided some interesting occasions for observations in offices, waiting areas and coffee corners). I haven’t been able to tag along with operational employees for weeks at a time. Most of the data that I gathered from the frontline is based on conversations and interviews. I did, however, spend a number of days ‘on the job’ with operational staff. This gave me very valuable data, because there is a great difference between talking about it and actually experiencing what it is like to work at a station or on a train. Furthermore, as I have indicated in chapter 3, I have collected a wide variety of documents from different sources and in different styles.

Thus, although the problem of representation is not solved by this writing strategy, in contrast to many conventional research reports there is less of a claim of (false) objectivity or direct representation of reality underlying these texts. When it comes to the actual process of transformation of empirical situations into data, into a text, the researcher needs to be ethical and honest about it. As Yanow and Schwartz-Shea argue (2006b: xiii), more transparency about research methods and explicit statements of methodological concerns are beneficial for the dialogue between different disciplines and research communities, as well as “provide more insights for improving theorizing about the ways in which researcher positionality may impact the accessing, generating, and analysis of data”. The problem with interpretive analyses is, according to Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006b: xiv), mostly related to the lack of explicit systematicity with regard to the accepted research techniques. As a result, outside their own epistemic community interpretive research is often perceived to be a ‘less serious’ methodology than traditional ‘rigorous science’. In that sense, interpretive research does not offer an adequate alternative to conventional (quantitative) analyses with regard to standards and quality evaluation. Interpretive researchers should, therefore, be more explicit and transparent about their methods and analysis and look for alternative ways to judge the quality of research (Schwartz-Shea, 2006; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006b). In my study I have tried to as be transparent and reflective about my choices as possible.

The chosen writing strategy has helped me to move beyond some of the ambiguous or even controversial aspects of the “standing operating procedures” (Fine & Shulman, 2009: 177) of ethnographers, such as the obscurity of the transformation of ‘data’ into ‘text’, accounting for the ‘polishing’ of the research process, creating the suggestion that the data “reflect what ‘really’ happened” or that “quotation marks reveal words that have been truly spoken” (Fine & Shulman, 2009: 185). By accepting that the written account of research is inherently manipulated, I found much more freedom to actually write about the things that I learned throughout the study. From the outset of this book I have consciously emphasized that the narratives reflect my interpretations and analysis, without the burden of getting at a imperfect notion of objective truth. What is more, when it comes to ‘trust’ in my
particular accounts, there is not much difference from more traditional ethnographic accounts. “Analysis *in situ* is private, field notes are rarely available for secondary analysis, and much ethnographic writing is accepted on faith” (Fine & Shulman, 2009: 178). As such, I feel that the (presentation of) my study isn’t less informative or less scientific. On the contrary, I think that if you can accept my approach, it may turn out that there is additional value to the narrative compared to studies that seek to reconcile the subjectivity of (ethnographic) research with the standard academic conventions.

**The Contribution of a Narrative Approach**

The use of stories to make sense of a situation or the world itself emphasizes their role as part of the interpretive repertoire of culture (Orr, 1996: 12).

As an academic approach narrative analysis has long had (and in many ways still has) an ambiguous position. According to Gabriel “science has stood as the opposite of storytelling, seeking to replace the lore of ‘old wives tales’ with provable generalizations” (2000: 3). In some disciplines, such as cultural anthropology or psychoanalysis, the contribution of storytelling and narrative analysis has consolidated throughout the twentieth century (Finnegan, 1998; Gabriel, 2000). In other fields of academic, including organizational studies, inquiry an interest for this type of approach has only started to grow rapidly in the last few decades (Boje, 1991, 2008; Czarniawska, 1998; Czarniawska & Guillet de Monthoux, 1994; Gabriel, 2000, 2004b). Among organizational researchers as well as practitioners the storytelling or narrative approach has also become increasingly popular as an intervention technique for organizational change processes (Bate, 2004; Doolin, 2003; Garcia-Lorenzo, 2004; Veenswijk, 2005b; 2006; Veenswijk & Berendse, 2008) There is obviously a great variety of different applications of narrative approaches in organizational change processes varying from very instrumental to more interpretive approaches. However, the basic point of departure of all such approaches is clear; storytelling is as natural to human beings as breathing (Boje, 2008; Finnegan, 1998; Gabriel, 2000; Orr, 1996; Tangherlini, 1998). Paul Bate summarizes what he believes to be the role of stories and storytelling in organizational change efforts as follows:

More than just a tool for formulating our autobiographies, storytelling is the frame for our general accounts too, even for our great meta-theories about the affairs and destiny of humankind (Finnegan, 1998: 1)
Language holds the key to change. If you want to change the way people think, start by changing the way they talk. You need to encourage them to devise new scripts and participate in new language games. You endeavour to shape intellectual and symbolic structures by giving people new topics of conversation to debate, gossip and fight about; and you give them new stories to tell and retell each other. The theory of change is therefore actually quite a simple one: if you can unfreeze and restructure language you can unfreeze and restructure thought... Stories and storytelling are a crucial aspect of organizational life... the narrative to tie experiences, views and interpretations together, something that has sequence, logic, flow and direction, that represents a coherent version of the emerging reality (Bate, 2004: 37).

In this study, I did not set out to conduct a narrative analysis or to focus on collecting the narratives of my respondents in order to steer or stimulate organizational change. Rather, I conducted an ethnographic study and from the anecdotes that people told me, my observations and document analysis (including narratives written by organizational actors) I constructed what might be termed ‘archetypical’ narratives that represent my interpretation of the life-worlds of organizational actors at Renfe Operadora and NS. As such I have used the techniques and insights from narrative studies to analyse and write up my own narratives. I specifically emphasize once again that these narratives are the result of my idiosyncratic experiences. However, this does not mean that they are meaningless beyond that. On the contrary, you could argue that they are abstraction from the situated empirical situations that may serve as ideal-type anecdotes or narratives that may shed a different light on the situation for various audiences. The accessibility of the narratives, through the fictionalization strategy makes it conceivable that this type of research reports can be used for reflection purposes among organizational actors in a way much like the ideas that Bate (Bate, 1994, 2004; Bate et al., 2000) puts forward in his work on cultural change processes.
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244


248


250


APPENDIX 1: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART RENFE OPERADORA 2005–2009

Level 1: Presidency

Presidency
Presidencia

Secretary of the Board of Directors
Secretaría General y del Consejo de Administración

Communication, Marketing and Public Relations
Comunicación, Marca y Publicidad

Security, Organization and Human Resources
Seguridad, Organización y Recursos Humanos

Economic-Financial Affairs and Planning
Económico-Financiera y de Planificación

Commuter and Regional Services
Servicios de Cercanías y Media Distancia

High Speed and Long Distance Services
Servicios de Alta Velocidad y Larga Distancia

Freight Services and Logistics
Servicios de Mercancías y Logística

Construction and Maintenance
Fabricación y Mantenimiento

Grey areas with a bold border indicate the main focus of the study.
Level 2: D.G. of Security, Organization and Human Resources

D.G. of Security, Organization and Human Resources
Dirección General de Seguridad, Organización y Recursos Humanos

Corporate Directorate of Human Resources
Dirección Corporativa de Recursos Humanos

Corporate Directorate of Organization and Development
Dirección Corporativa de Organización y Desarrollo

Corporate Directorate of Civil Protection, Security and Risk Prevention
Dirección Corporativa de Protección Civil, Seguridad y Prevención de Riesgos

Corporate Directorate of Education and Selection
Dirección Corporativo Marco de Relaciones y Calidad Servicios ADIF y Relaciones Internacionales

Chief of Office
Dirección de Gabinete

Corporate Directorate of Traffic Safety
Dirección Corporativa de Seguridad en la Circulación

Corporate Directorate of Service Quality, Relations with ADIF, and International Relations
Dirección Corporativo Marco de Relaciones y Calidad Servicios ADIF y Relaciones Internacionales

Appendices

255
Level 3: D.C. of Civil Protection, Security and Risk Prevention

Civil Protection, Security and Risk Prevention
Dirección de Protección Civil
Dirección de Seguridad y Previsión

Department of Advising and Support
Jefatura de Asesoramiento y Apoyo

Human Resources Administration
Dirección de RR. HH. y Control de Gestión

Department of Central Bodies
Dirección de Órganos Centrales

Technical Operational Area
Area Técnica Operativa

Finance And Human Resources
Area Económico Administrativa y RR. HH.

Delegation North
Delegación Norte

Delegation South
Delegación Sur

Delegation East
Delegación Este

CECON
Centro de Coordinación 24 horas

Technical Area
Area Técnica

Central Operational Delegation
Delegación Operativa Central

Area of Civil Protection
Area Protección Civil
APPENDIX 2: INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS IN THE SPANISH RAIL SECTOR

- Definition of Railway Policy
- Strategic Planning
- Guarantee Plurality of Offer
- Conflict Reduction between Adif and Operators

Ministry of Public Works

Rail Regulatory Committee

Services of Public Interest

Contract Programme and Agreements for Construction and Management of the Network

Administration of Infrastructure

Provision of Extraordinary Services

Charges for Infrastructure

Assigning of Capacities

Railway Administration

License

Service Delivery

Service Operators

ADIF

RENFE OPERADORA and other companies
APPENDIX 3: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART NS HOLDING 2006–2009

Level 1: NS Holding

- Executive Board
  - Directie NS

  - Supporting Organizations and Participations
    - Ondersteunende Bedrijven en Deelnemingen

  - Passenger Service
    - Reizigersvervoer

  - Hub Development and Operation
    - Knooppuntontwikkeling

  - Rail Infrastructure and Construction
    - Railinfra en Bouw

- NS Reizigers
  - (National Passenger Services)

- NS Highspeed
  - (International Passenger Services)

- NS Poort
  - (Commercial Management and Operation of Stations)

- NedTrain

- Strukton

Grey areas with a bold border indicate the main focus of the study.
Level 2: NS National Passenger Services

Director National Passenger Services
Directievoorzitter NS Reizigers

Business Development

Executive Secretariat
Directiesecretariaat

Internal Communication
Interne Communicatie

Human Relations Management Director
Directeur Human Relations Management

Service, Information and Security Director
Directeur Service, Informatie en Security

Transport Director
Directeur Vervoer

Commercial Director
Directeur Commercie

Financial Director
Directeur Financiën
APPENDIX 4: INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS IN THE DUTCH RAIL SECTOR

Ministry of Public Works and Water Management

Public Works and Water Management Inspectorate (IVW)

Controlling the Safety of the Rail Traffic System

Administration of Infrastructure ProRail

Rail Traffic Control
Maintenance
Construction
Distributing Rail Traffic Information

Assigning of rail capacities through transportation concessions

Service Operators NS and other companies

National Police Services Agency (KLPD)

Railway Police

Public Security: enforcement, surveillance and support

Concession for the management, maintenance and construction of rail infrastructure

Railway Legislation in cooperation with other Ministries
Nederlandse samenvatting

1. En zo begint dit verhaal...

Dit proefschrift vertelt verhalen over sociale veiligheid, uit de dagelijkse praktijk van medewerkers van de spoorwegen in Nederland en in Spanje. Veiligheid is een centraal thema in onze hedendaagse samenleving en veel discussies in de media concentreren zich rond dit moeilijk grijpbare concept. Er zijn vele definities en conceptualiseringen van het begrip veiligheid, maar in de kern gaat het om de condities voor een zorgeloos leven. Theoretisch gezien wordt het begrip veiligheid vaak opgesplitst in twee betekenis. Aan de ene kant gaat het bij veiligheid om de bescherming van en preventie tegen doelbewust schade toebrengen door mensen (zoals vandalisme, criminaliteit, terrorisme, of ander menselijk handelen). Deze betekenis van het begrip veiligheid wordt, overgenomen uit de Engelse taal, ook wel security genoemd. De bescherming tegen natuurrampen en het voorkomen van menselijk of systeemfalen omschrijft de tweede betekenis van het begrip veiligheid, oftewel safety. Het onderscheid tussen security en safety wordt vooral gebruikt om binnen sectoren als de spoorwegen het verschil aan te duiden tussen sociale veiligheid (het beschermen van personen) en technische veiligheid (het zorgen voor een betrouwbaar systeem). Hoewel over het algemeen in het dagelijks leven de twee termen door elkaar worden gebruikt wanneer mensen het hebben over ‘veiligheid’, staat in dit proefschrift de eerste betekenis van veiligheid, oftewel het concept security, centraal.

Wanneer het gaat om het begrip veiligheid is het tevens belangrijk om een onderscheid te maken tussen ‘objectieve’ en ‘subjectieve’ veiligheid. Onder objectieve veiligheid wordt verstaan het aantal incidenten dat de veiligheid aantast, terwijl subjectieve veiligheid refereert aan de perceptie van veiligheid. Vooral met betrekking tot de subjectieve veiligheid is het interessant om te onderzoeken hoe mensen in verschillende situaties betekenis geven aan veiligheid. Met andere woorden, in wat voor situaties voelen zij zich wel of niet veilig en welke invloed heeft hun achtergrond op de interpretaties die zij toekennen aan bepaalde situaties. Hiermee ben ik aangekomen bij het centrale onderwerp van deze dissertatie. In de studie heb ik

86. Wanneer ik in deze samenvatting schrijf over veiligheid heb ik het over de betekenis van het begrip security, tenzij expliciet anders vermeld. De uit het Spaans vertaalde gedeelten zijn aangepast aan het onderscheid tussen security en safety omdat ook in het Spaans geen (taalkundig) onderscheid bestaat. Ook hier gaat het in het algemeen over security wanneer ik over veiligheid schrijf, tenzij uitdrukkelijk anders vermeld.
geprobeerd om erachter te komen hoe lokaal geconstrueerde betekenis van veiligheid zich manifesteren in de dagelijkse werkwijze van organisatieleden bij de Nederlandse en Spaanse spoorwegen. Een belangrijk uitgangspunt hierbij is te onderzoeken op welke manier dominante vertogen in de samenleving bijdragen aan de lokale (binnen deze organisaties voorkomende) ontwikkelingen van beelden en betekenis op het gebied van veiligheid.

Veiligheid is een belangrijk thema in de hedendaagse Westerse samenleving (alsmede in academische kringen). Als concept en als vertoog is het begrip veiligheid sterk verweven met andere maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen en verankerd in de culturele en historische achtergrond van actoren. Om die reden is het zowel relevant als interessant om de relaties te onderzoeken tussen publieke vertogen en lokale betekenisconstructies en handelingen patronen met betrekking tot veiligheid. Door middel van verhalen over verschillende aspecten van het dagelijkse leven binnen organisaties in de spoorsector richt dit boek zich op de vraag op welke manieren actoren in de belangrijkste vervoersorganisaties in Nederland (NS) en Spanje (Renfe Operadora) betekenis geven aan het concept veiligheid. De verhalen gaan over dagelijkse praktijken op micro niveau van deze organisaties, maar zijn tegelijkertijd verankerd in bredere maatschappelijke meta-verhalen.

Naast de theoretische en empirische focus op het begrip veiligheid richt het proefschrift zich ook op het verkennen van de grenzen van academische conventies. Beïnvloed door een sociaal constructivistische ontologie en interpretatieve epistemologie beoog ik met mijn specifieke keuzes met betrekking tot de presentatie van de onderzoeksresultaten een aantal dominante opvattingen in de sociale wetenschappen te problemaseren.

2. Betekenis geven aan vertogen over veiligheid

In dit hoofdstuk zet ik de theoretische uitgangspunten van het onderzoek uiteen. Centraal staan theorieën uit het veld van discoursanalyse, organisatiediscours en betekenisgeving. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om te begrijpen hoe maatschappelijke, culturele en historische vertogen met betrekking tot veiligheid tot uitdrukking komen in organisaties en in de concrete handelingen van actoren binnen die organisaties. Vanuit het uitgangspunt dat publieke vertogen van invloed zijn op de aandacht van actoren voor specifieke onderwerpen, de manier waarop actoren deze onderwerpen verwoorden en daarmee tevens het gedrag van actoren, is het dus belangrijk om in dit onderzoek een micro perspectief te combineren met een macro (oftewel institutioneel) perspectief. Een belangrijke kanttekening hierbij is wel dat er ontologisch gezien geen onderscheid gemaakt kan worden tussen macro en micro niveaus. Dit zijn analytische constructen die aangeven dat de individuele
handelingen van actoren en hun interacties verbonden zijn in complexe patronen en netwerken die vervolgens in meer of mindere mate geïnstitutionaliseerd worden (waarbij die netwerken van handelingspatronen kunnen worden opgevat als macro actoren). Deze opvatting hangt nauw samen met een sociaal constructivistische ontologie, waarop dit onderzoek zich baseert.

Binnen het sociaal constructivistisch denken bestaat een grote verscheidenheid aan onderzoeksbenederings. Dit onderzoek sluit aan bij onderzoek binnen de traditie van discoursanalyse. Kenmerkend voor discoursanalytische benaderingen is de centrale focus op teksten als de basis analyse eenheid. Teksten worden hierbij opgevat in de breedst mogelijke zin van het woord (dus inclusief gesproken tekst en symbolische fenomenen waarmee betekenissen geproduceerd worden). Discoursanalyse heeft als doel het onderzoeken van de mogelijkheden van discoursen (oftewel verzamelingen intergerelateerde teksten) om de sociale werkelijkheid te produceren en te herproduceren. Teksten moeten hierbij worden gezien als elementen van sociale gebeurtenissen die, middels processen van betekenisgeving, het vermogen hebben om veranderingen in onze kennis, denkbeelden, opvattingen, waarden, identiteiten, enzovoorts te brengen. Teksten hebben geen individuele betekenis, maar krijgen pas betekenis in relatie met andere teksten (intertekstualiteit).

Ook binnen het veld van organisatiestudies is een groeiend aantal onderzoekers die voortbouwen op de theorieën van discoursanalyse. Deze theorieën over de discursieve constructie van organisaties en institutionalisering processen worden ook wel samengevat onder de naam organisatie discoursanalyse. Het zijn met name deze studies waarop ik me in dit onderzoek baseer.

Veel discoursstudies binnen het veld van organisatieonderzoek koppelen de uitgangspunten van discoursanalyse met theorieën over betekenisgeving. De gedachte hierachter is dat taal een centrale rol speelt bij processen van betekenisgeving. Om betekenis te geven aan situaties, construeren (organisatie) actoren teksten (verhalen) over deze situatie. In deze verhalen leggen zij verbanden met (hun eigen interpretaties) van eerdere ervaringen en de manier waarop zij zichzelf zien in relatie tot deze gebeurtenissen. Deze teksten worden vervolgens opgenomen in het repertoire van teksten die actoren gebruiken bij toekomstige betekenisgeving. Met andere woorden, processen van betekenisgeving hebben te maken met de intertekstuele relaties tussen verschillende gebeurtenissen. Tegelijkertijd beïnvloedt het proces van betekenisgeving het handelen van actoren en als zodanig speelt het een centrale rol bij de uitwerking van discursive praktijken.

Actoren zijn continue bezig met betekenisgeving en dit proces komt tot uitdrukking in een zich steeds verder ontwikkelend narratief construct. In het bijzonder ten tijde van radicale (organisatie) verandering of als reactie op storende of stressvolle gebeurtenissen, zullen actoren hun verhalen bijstellen om betekenis te geven
aan de situatie en om weerstand te bieden tegen de veranderingen of zelfs de veranderingen bij te sturen. Hierdoor bestaan er op elk willekeurig moment in een organisatie en haar omgeving een veelheid aan verhalen en counter verhalen die betrekking hebben op gebeurtenissen in de organisatie. Deze verhalen blijven niet beperkt tot organisatieactoren, maar ook daarbuiten (bijvoorbeeld in de politiek of media) ontstaan alternatieve versies van de verhalen over de organisatie.

Wanneer we kijken naar verhalen als analyse-eenheid binnen organisatieonderzoek is het belangrijk om onderscheid te maken tussen vier typen verhalen. In de eerste plaats verhalen die als het ware natuurlijk voorkomen in de organisatie. Deze ‘bestaande’ verhalen zijn tot stand gekomen zonder inmenging van de onderzoeker. Het tweede type verhalen zijn de reactieve- of counterverhalen. Deze verhalen zijn reacties op (dominante) verhalen die in de organisatie of daarbuiten bestaan. De derde vorm van verhalen zijn die verhalen die verhalen die doelbewust zijn gegenereerd voor onderzoeksdoeleinden, bijvoorbeeld verhalen in interviews, observatieverslagen en andere. Het vierde en laatste type verhalen bestaat uit de teksten die worden geproduceerd op basis van de interpretatie van de onderzoeker. Dit is een belangrijke toevoeging aan de lijst omdat, wanneer we de uitgangspunten van discoursanalyse serieus nemen, we niet de discursive kracht van academische teksten moeten onderschatten.

Zoals gezegd nemen de theorieën over betekenisgeving een belangrijke plaats in binnen dit onderzoek. Betekenisgeving is een basisactiviteit van mensen, gericht op het begrijpelijk maken van de wereld en de veelheid aan signalen en stimuli waaruit deze wereld is opgebouwd. Eén van de centrale arena’s van betekenisgeving wordt gevormd door de media. De manier waarop bepaalde onderwerpen belicht worden gevormd door de media. De manier waarop bepaalde onderwerpen belicht worden in de media, de mate van aandacht voor specifieke gebeurtenissen en de verbanden die in de media worden gelegd tussen verschillende onderwerpen is van grote invloed op de processen van (collectieve) betekenisgeving.

Als we op die manier kijken naar de publieke vertogen over veiligheid zien we dat de media aandacht een belangrijke rol speelt bij de totstandkoming en instandhouding van dominante vertogen over veiligheid en risico’s. Het onderwerp terrorisme bijvoorbeeld, is sinds de aanslagen van 11 september in de Verenigde Staten niet meer weg te denken uit de dagelijkse berichtgeving. Het vertoog rond terrorisme is versterkt door een aantal belangrijke momenten zoals de aanslagen in Madrid (2004) en Londen (2005). Enigszins paradoxaal is dat de hoge mate van aandacht voor terrorisme in de publieke arena ertoe leidt dat de beeldvorming over mogelijke dreigingen verstevigd wordt. Incidenten die op het eerste oog niet direct gerelateerd lijken aan enige vorm van terrorisme worden door associatie alsnog verbonden met het discours. Ook het constant herhalen van beelden van eerdere aanslagen zorgt ervoor dat de gebeurtenissen stevig worden verankerd in de betekenisgevingkaders van actoren. Hiermee worden ook (intertextuele) ver-
banen gelegd met andere vertogen, zoals bijvoorbeeld vertogen rondom de positi en verantwoordelijkheden van de overheid en publieke organisaties. Ook de aandacht voor specifieke onderwerpen in wetenschappelijke kringen levert een aanzienlijke bijdragen aan de discursieve bestendiging van publieke vertogen.

In het laatste deel van dit hoofdstuk maak ik nog een uitstapje naar fictieve representaties van spoorwegen en veiligheid in bijvoorbeeld literatuur en films. Hiermee wil ik aangeven dat het netwerk van intertekstuele verbanden (en daarmee de kracht van discoursen) niet beperkt blijft tot 'serieuze' media. Ook literaire en kunstzinnige representaties dragen bij aan de beeldvorming over specifieke onderwerpen. Deze link tussen wetenschap en fictie vormt tevens een centraal thema in het volgende hoofdstuk.

3. Fictionaliseren van wetenschap: over methoden en methodologie

In dit hoofdstuk beschrijf ik het ontwerp en de methodologie van het onderzoek. Het hoofdstuk begint met een filosofische onderbouwing van de ontologische en epistemologische standpunten. Ik beschrijf dat het onderzoek is gedaan vanuit een sociaal constructivistische ontologie en een interpretatieve epistemologie. Vanuit een sociaal constructivistisch perspectief wordt de sociale werkelijkheid gecreëerd in de interacties en intersubjectieve interpretaties van mensen. Binnen het sociaal constructivisme wordt onderzoek gezien als een interpretatieve handeling en de teksten die hieruit voortvloeien zijn betekenisgevende constructen die de idiosyncratische interpretaties van de auteur weergeven. Dit in tegenstelling tot onderzoekers binnen het realisme, die van mening zijn dat sociale wetenschappen de objectieve werkelijkheid kunnen representeren. Sociaal constructivisten problematiseren deze relatie tussen onderzoek, teksten en de sociale werkelijkheid. Met andere woorden, waar traditioneel kwalitatief onderzoek gericht is op het achterhalen van de meervoudige betekenissen van de sociale werkelijkheid, hebben constructivistische onderzoekers als uitgangspunt dat ideeën, objecten en structuren sociaal geproduceerd en in stand gehouden worden. Hiermee bouwt het onderzoek voort op studies binnen de zogenaamde linguïstische beweging (linguistic turn) binnen de sociale wetenschappen in het algemeen en op het gebied van organisatiestudies in het bijzonder.

Mijn bespreking van de wetenschapsfilosofische basis van het onderzoek mondt uit in een bespreking van de methodologie. In het onderzoek maak ik gebruik van een etnografische methodologie. Organisatie-etnografie is een steeds verder groeiend vakgebied met veel verschillende benaderingen en perspectieven (gebaseerd op verschillende epistemologische standpunten). De specifieke invulling van de
etnografische methodologie is sterk gerelateerd aan het interpretatieve karakter van dit onderzoek.

Vervolgens bespreek ik het concrete ontwerp van dit onderzoek. Hierin besteed ik aandacht aan de keuze voor de casussen. De keuze voor de Nederlandse en Spaanse spoorwegen is gebaseerd op het idee dat de betekenisconstructies en de praktische manifestaties op het gebied van veiligheid een uitkomst zijn van de lokale culturele en historische achtergronden van betrokken actoren. Wanneer men denkt aan spoorwegen en (sociale) veiligheid is terrorisme een van de centrale thema’s. Onder andere om die reden biedt de keuze voor Spanje een interessante invalshoek. De jarenlange ervaringen met terrorisme en dreigingen (van de ETA, maar ook de aanslagen in Madrid in 2004) bieden een relevante achtergrond voor een onderzoek naar de beleving van veiligheid. In contrast tot de Spaanse spoorwegen is er bij de Nederlandse spoorwegen weinig tot geen ervaring met concrete terroristische dreiging. Desalniettemin is het een urgent onderwerp dat een belangrijke rol inneemt in de dagelijkse praktijk van veiligheidsmanagement bij NS.

De keuze om twee casussen naast elkaar te leggen roept een aantal vragen op met betrekking tot het vergelijkende karakter van dit onderzoek. Belangrijk hierbij is dat het onderzoek niet is ontworpen volgens een klassieke opvatting over vergelijkingen. De interpretatieve en etnografische grondslag van het onderzoek leent zich niet voor een vergelijking op een afgebakend aantal variabelen. Deze methodologie leent zich er echter wel voor om een rijk beeld te verschaffen van de dagelijkse praktijken in twee zeer verschillende omgevingen, tegen de achtergrond van een aantal ontwikkelingen op het transnationale niveau (bijvoorbeeld institutionele ontwikkelingen in Europa en de wereldwijde aandacht voor onderwerpen als terrorisme).

Voor de uitvoering van dit onderzoek heb ik een periode van ongeveer 6 maanden doorgebracht in elk van de twee organisaties (NS en Renfe Operadora). In beide organisaties heb ik veel tijd toegebracht op de afdeling die zich op centraal niveau in de organisatie bezighoudt met het onderwerp veiligheid. Ook heb ik de werkpraktijken op het uitvoerend niveau van beide organisaties geobserveerd, heb ik enkele dagen kunnen meelopen met uivoerend personeel op stations en in treinen, en heb ik met mensen gesproken van verschillende lagen in de organisaties. Daarnaast had ik de toegang tot het intranet van NS en Renfe Operadora en een groot aantal relevante documenten.

In het laatste deel van dit hoofdstuk besteed ik uitgebreid aandacht aan de data analyse, data verwerking en presentatie van de onderzoeksresultaten. Met name op het gebied van de presentatie van de onderzoeksresultaten beschrijf ik uitgebreid de keuzes die ik heb gemaakt. Zoals in de inleiding al kort beschreven staat, wil ik in dit onderzoek de grenzen opzoeken van academische (schrijf) conventies. Ik heb geëxperimenteerd met het gebruik van literaire technieken om zo een aantal con-
servatieve principes te doorbreken. Ik baseer me hierbij op een aantal auteurs die de relaties tussen fictie en wetenschap bespreken en problematiseren. In de empirische hoofdstukken van het proefschrift heb ik een aantal verhalen opgeschreven die zijn opgebouwd uit een combinatie van verschillende typen data en die gebaseerd zijn op verschillende gebeurtenissen. Met andere woorden, deze samengestelde situaties zijn geen rechtstreekse weergave van ‘echte’ gebeurtenissen, maar een gefictionaliseerde uitwerking van mijn analyse. Zoals eerder al beargumenteerd, is het feitelijk onmogelijk om de werkelijkheid direct te representeren omdat er altijd sprake is van interpretatie en vertaling. Ook de personages die in de verhalen voorkomen zijn samengestelde karakters die niet direct te herleiden zijn tot specifieke personen. Hiermee biedt deze schrijfstrategie ook de mogelijkheid om de anonimiteit van personen te garanderen. De gefictionaliseerde verhalen worden afgewisseld met meer beschouwende stukken tekst waarin ik aanvullende informatie verschaf en reflecteer op mijn analyses van de data. Tenslotte beargumenteert ik dat het verkennen van de mogelijkheden die literaire schrijftechnieken en genres bieden, kan bijdragen aan de leesbaarheid van wetenschappelijke teksten.

4. Renfe Operadora: veiligheid integreren

In dit eerste empirische hoofdstuk introduceer ik de Spaanse spoorweg vervoerder Renfe Operadora. Door middel van een aantal gefictionaliseerde verhalen, afgewisseld met beschouwende, informatieve teksten, neem ik de lezer mee op een tocht langs stations en kantoren in Madrid. Er wordt verteld hoe de organisatie in elkaar zit, wat de belangrijkste ontwikkelingen zijn van de afgelopen jaren en welke positie veiligheid inneemt in de organisatie. De afdeling die verantwoordelijk is voor het veiligheidsbeleid van Renfe Operadora is gevestigd in een kantorenpand vlak bij het grootste station in Madrid, Atocha.

Dit kantoor en de omgeving van het station vormen de achtergrond waartegen een aantal centrale onderwerpen met betrekking tot veiligheid aan bod komen. We zien bijvoorbeeld hoe er binnen de afdeling wordt gesproken over de positie van de afdeling in het institutionele veld. Een ander belangrijk thema als het gaat om veiligheid en de Spaanse spoorwegen is terrorisme. In een reconstructie van de aanslagen van 11 maart 2004 op het spoornetwerk van Madrid laat ik zien op welke manieren deze tragische gebeurtenissen hun weerslag hebben gehad op de organisatie en haar medewerkers.
5. **NS: een concern voor veiligheid**

In hoofdstuk 5 staat de Nederlandse spoorweg vervoerder NS centraal. Op het hoofdkantoor van NS, in Utrecht, is de afdeling ‘Concernveiligheid’ gevestigd. Deze afdeling, voortgekomen uit een toenemende aandacht voor sociale veiligheid naar aanleiding van een reeks ontwikkelingen sinds de jaren ’90, houdt zich bezig met het ontwikkelen van beleid en maatregelen op het gebied van veiligheid. Net als in Spanje is ook in Nederland de veranderde institutionele omgeving van de organisatie een onderwerp van discussie in alle lagen van het bedrijf.

In de verhalen die worden gepresenteerd in dit hoofdstuk passeren een groot aantal onderwerpen de revue. We zien hoe er intern bij de afdeling concernveiligheid wordt gesproken over een belangrijke werkconferentie op het gebied van veiligheid waarbij de relatie tussen service en veiligheid centraal staat. Een aantal interne reorganisaties die onlangs zijn doorgevoerd of gepland staan vormen een rode draad door dit hoofdstuk. De posities van verschillende groepen uitvoerend personeel, met name op het gebied van toezicht en handhaving, zullen in de toekomst wellicht drastisch veranderen en dat houdt de gemoederen flink bezig. Maar ook de dreiging van terrorisme en de problematiek van agressieve passagiers komen aan bod in de verhalen in dit hoofdstuk. Speciale aandacht is er voor een aantal publicaties geschreven door uitvoerende werknemers van NS. Zij hebben onafhankelijk van elkaar hun ervaringen als NS’er op papier gezet. In elk van hun verhalen speelt het onderwerp van veiligheid een andere rol.

6. **Service, toezicht en veiligheid**

Dit hoofdstuk beschrijft een aantal centrale onderwerpen met betrekking tot veiligheid en laat zien hoe in beide organisaties op vergelijkbare of verschillende wijze betekenis wordt gegeven aan deze situaties. We zien bijvoorbeeld hoe in beide organisaties wordt omgegaan met de verschillen tussen objectieve en subjectieve veiligheid en hoe wordt getracht om het niveau van veiligheid en de prestaties van de eigen organisatie te meten. Ook de inrichting van de interne veiligheid en back-up organisatie wordt beschreven. Daar waar in Spanje bijna uitsluitend wordt gewerkt met private beveiligingorganisaties kent men in Nederland nog altijd een speciale eenheid van de Nationale politie die zich met het spoor bezighoudt. De verzelfstandiging van de spoorvervoerders in beide landen heeft geleid tot een wat andere relatie met politie en andere overheidsdiensten. Hoe hier mee omgegaan wordt komt uitgebreid aan bod in de verhalen in dit hoofdstuk.

Een ander centraal thema in dit hoofdstuk is het gebruik van technologische toepassingen voor veiligheidsdoeleinden. Cameratoezicht, elektronische tickets,
toegangscontroles, bagagescanners en andere technische snufjes worden ingezet om de veiligheid op en rond het spoor te vergroten. De manier waarop actoren hiermee omgaan en de dilemma’s die deze technologische ontwikkelingen met zich meebrengen staat beschreven in dit hoofdstuk.

7. De zoektocht naar veiligheid

Dit hoofdstuk geeft de belangrijkste conclusies uit dit onderzoek weer. Het onderzoek laat zien op welke manier actoren binnen de Nederlandse en Spaanse spoorweg vervoerders betekenis geven aan en omgaan met de veiligheidsproblematiek. Hierin komt een duidelijk spanningsveld naar voren als het gaat om de afweging tussen risico’s en het meten van de prestaties van een organisatie. Dit spanningsveld wordt extra complex doordat het zich afspeelt tegen de achtergrond van institutionele veranderingen in de spoorweg sector en de verantwoordelijkheden van de overheid en de publieke sector op het gebied van veiligheid. Waar voorheen de overheid werd gezien als de hoofdverantwoordelijke partij voor het beschermen van burgers, komt dit uitgangspunt in toenemende mate onder druk te staan. Voor de spoorwegorganisaties biedt de nieuwe onafhankelijke status een veranderde werkelijkheid waarbinnen zij hun veiligheidsbeleid dienen te organiseren. Hoewel deze institutionele en maatschappelijke omgevingsfactoren voor zowel de Spaanse als de Nederlandse spoorweg organisaties min of meer vergelijkbaar zijn, laat dit onderzoek zien hoe op het niveau van de dagelijkse praktijk er belangrijke verschillen bestaan met betrekking tot de manier waarop veiligheid is verankerd binnen de organisaties en in de samenleving.

Ik presenteer in dit hoofdstuk een drietal verhaallijnen die in de analyse naar voren zijn gekomen en als een rode draad door de casussen heen lopen. De eerste verhaallijn concentreert zich rond de ‘strijd’ tussen verschillende actoren om hun visie op veiligheid naar voren te laten komen en de veiligheidspraktijken te beïnvloeden. Dit spanningsveld hangt nauw samen met de professionele identiteit van groepen werknemers. Medewerkers van de veiligheidsafdelingen, conducteurs, service medewerkers, veiligheidsbeambten, alsmede externe actoren zoals politie, de overheid, de media, het publiek en de klanten zijn verwikkeld in een continue proces van onderhandeling als het gaat om de probleemdefinitie en het verbeteren van veiligheidsmaatregelen. Tegelijkertijd spelen allerlei andere belangen een rol, zoals het rechtvaardigen en legitimeren van hun eigen posities.

De tweede centrale verhaallijn gaat over de gevoelens van onzekerheid en ontevredenheid die gepaard gaan met de recente institutionele veranderingen in de spoorsector. De belangrijkste bron van deze gevoelens is de onduidelijkheid met betrekking tot de verantwoordelijkheden en positie van de spoorweg vervoerders
in het institutionele en maatschappelijke veld. Ook onzekerheid over de toekomstige positie van de organisaties en beroepen spelen hierbij een belangrijke rol. Eén van de uitwerkingen van deze verhaallijn concentreert zich rond de prestatieverantwoording die wordt geëist van de verzelfstandigde spoorweg organisaties. Onder andere op het gebied van veiligheid is het moeilijk om de prestaties te meten (het gaat hier immers voor een groot deel om gevoelens) en dit resulteert in sommige gevallen in paradoxale situaties waarbij de betekenis die wordt toegekend aan bepaalde prestatie-indicatoren zeer uiteenlopende invulling krijgt.

De derde verhaallijn gaat over het ultieme doel om een ideale (utopische) maatschappij, vrij van dreigingen, te creëren. Een drijvende kracht achter dit doel is de illusie dat het mogelijk is om een veilige situatie te bewerkstelligen door middel van het toepassen van veiligheidsmaatregelen. Specifieke gebeurtenissen lijken soms te worden gebruikt als hefboom om bepaalde maatregelen te legitimeren. De belofte van een situatie van totale veiligheid wordt op uiteenlopende manieren tegengesproken, bijvoorbeeld door de acceptatie van het idee dat veiligheidsmaatregelen nooit waterdicht kunnen zijn omdat ook nooit alle risico’s bekend kunnen zijn. Veel risico’s worden pas achteraf herkend. Ook speelt het spanningsveld tussen veiligheid en vrijheid een belangrijke rol. De mate waarin maatregelen inbreuk maken op de vrijheid en privacy van mensen is een centrale discussie hierbij.

In dit hoofdstuk bespreek ik deze drie verhaallijnen en laat zien hoe ze tot uitdrukking komen in de beide casussen aan de hand van illustraties uit het empirische materiaal. De resultaten hiervan staan samengevat in een overzichtstable (Tabel 7.1). Deze tabel en de verhaallijnen hebben het karakter van ideaaltypen en er bestaan vele alternatieve invullingen en counter verhalen. Deze verhaallijnen zijn het resultaat van mijn analyse en bieden inzicht in de complexiteit en ambiguïteit van het onderwerp. Tevens biedt het de mogelijkheid om de situaties in beide casussen naast elkaar te leggen.

8. Verhalen vertellen

In het laatste hoofdstuk van dit boek reflecteer ik op de methodologische consequenties van het fictionaliseren van de empirische verhalen. De belangrijkste conclusie is dat hoewel de discussie over de relatie tussen fictie en feiten en over de verhouding tussen tekst en werkelijkheid niet opgelost zijn, de keuze bijdraagt aan het doorbreken van een aantal conservatieve principes die de sociale wetenschappen domineren. Wanneer we accepteren dat iedere onderzoeker een persoonlijke invloed heeft op zijn of haar onderzoek en dat iedere onderzoekstekst per definitie een subjectieve interpretatie is van door de onderzoeker gegenereerde data, dan is
Het naïef om vast te blijven houden aan het ideaal van objectiviteit als hoogste doel van wetenschap.

Hoewel het fictionaliseren op zichzelf de schijn van objectiviteit niet wegneemt, kan het wel bijdragen aan het ontwikkelen van nieuwe vormen van presentatie van wetenschappelijke kennis. In dit proefschrift heb ik vanaf het begin duidelijk aan-gegeven dat ik mijzelf literaire vrijheid verschaf en dat ik niet de illusie wil wekken dat mijn vertellingen een directe representatie zijn van de sociale werkelijkheid bij de Nederlandse en Spaanse spoorwegen. Hiermee heb ik geprobeerd om geen valse verwachtingen te scheppen bij mijn lezers aangaande de status van het materiaal. Dus hoewel de verhalen het product zijn van mijn idiosynchratische interpretaties, heb ik door een uitgebreide beschrijving van de methodologie tegelijkertijd geprobeerd duidelijk te maken dat de verhalen die ik presenteer, gebaseerd zijn op een gedegen analyse.

Los van de discussie over de relatie tussen mijn analyse en de sociale werkelijkheid heb ik in mijn proefschrift ook beargumenteerd dat het fictionaliseren van de onderzoekresultaten op een aantal punten een behulpzame strategie kan vormen. Zo maakt deze strategie het makkelijker voor onderzoekers om de anonimiteit van hun respondenten te garanderen, zelfs als het niet mogelijk is om de organisatie te anonimiseren. Het gebruik van samengestelde karakters en situaties maakt het moeilijker om uitspraken terug te herleiden naar individuele personen. Ook wordt het op deze manier makkelijker om de veelheid aan data van verschillende bronnen te combineren in een aantal leesbare verhalen. Al met al is de conclusie in dit hoofdstuk dat het experimenteren met schrijftechnieken een aantal mogelijkheden biedt die nog verder uitgewerkt kunnen worden.

Tenslotte ga ik kort in op andere mogelijke toepassingen van verhalen en schrijftechnieken in organisatieonderzoek. In de laatste jaren is er een aanzienlijke toename van het aantal onderzoeken op het grensvlak van wetenschap en advies, die gebruik maken van een narratief perspectief. Ik ben van mening dat ook in dit type onderzoek het verleggen van de grenzen op het gebied van schrijven wellicht een bijdrage kan leveren.
Curriculum Vitae

Hanneke Duijnhoven was born in Amersfoort on May 31, 1980. From 1999-2004 she studied Culture, Organization and Management and received her MA in Social Sciences at the VU University in Amsterdam. During her studies she spent six months at the Universidad de Sevilla in Spain and she conducted six months of fieldwork for her MA thesis on the impact of tourism on small entrepreneur in the Dominican Republic. After her studies she started working as a junior lecturer at the department of Culture, Organization and Management (VU University Amsterdam) where she started her PhD research in 2005. Since 2009 she works as a post doctoral researcher and lecturer at the same department. She is involved in a research project that focuses on a narrative approach towards Dutch administrative culture and decision-making processes in the infrastructure sector.
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280