A note on bare verbal forms vs. verb-(n)ing in compounds etc.

In this talk I will discuss three contexts where bare verbal roots and de-verbal (n)ing-nominals seem to compete for the same “slot”. I will try to determine which the relevant factors are for determining the shape of the stem. Finally I will say some things about the so-called linking -s that sometimes turns up in nominalizations, and about lexical categories of “roots” in general.

First, in many nominal contexts, verbs surface either in the (n)ing-form, or as something that looks like a bare root (or some other nominal form).

(1) a. Jag hörde ett rop / ??ett visk
   b. Jag hörde en viskning / ??en ropning

Secondly, in V-N compounds, the verbal left-hand member can come out either in a bare form, or as a (n)ing-nominal (or another nominalized form). If overt nominalizing morphology is present, the linking -s is obligatory. If the verb appears in its bare form, the linking -s is only seen if the verbal element is clearly complex, as seen in (2-c):

(2) a. skriv-maskin, spring-tur, vänt-rum
   b. kopiering-s-maskin, träning-s-läger vandring-s-led, övervakning-s-kamera
   c. ut-tal-s-övning, in-kör-s-port etc.

Finally, the derivational suffix -bar attaches either to a bare form (2-a), or a (n)ing-nominal (2-b) (see Josefsson 1998 for discussion). The linking -s is once again present in the (n)ing-forms, but it is however (preferably) absent both when the left-hand element is simple and complex:

(3) a. åt-bar, reparer-bar, stapel-bar etc.
   b. behandling-s-bar, öppning-s-bar etc.
   c. ut-tal-bar (??ut-tal-s-bar), in-fäll-bar (??in-fäll-s-bar) etc.

Given the existence of such a thing as zero-derived de-verbal nominals (or noun-verb-conversion), one could suspect that all verb-looking left-hand members in nominalizations and -bar-derived adjectives, are in fact nominal. That would mean that we don’t have any V-N compounds in Swedish, and that adjectives derived by -bar in fact are compounds. Looking closer at the data, it however becomes obvious that there are different forces at work in all three cases. In the bar-cases, (n)ing is only used if the outcome of bare root + -bar would violate phonotactic constraints of Swedish (i.e. *vandr-bar).

We can see clearly verbal stems in the bar-adjectives, most notably verbs that end in er(a), as in reparer-bar. Verb forms ending in er(a) can otherwise never form zero-derived nominals, and only very rarely appears as the left-hand member in V-N compounds, unless they appear in unambiguously nominal form (the only exception that I know of is friser-salong). The (n)ing-form is also more likely to be used if the verbal stem is morphologically complex. In the compounds, the (n)ing-form is also more likely to be used if the left-hand member is complex (compare hyr-bil and ut-hyr-ning-s-bil), though other factors are involved as well. When it comes to nominalizations, certain verb groups are more likely to have corresponding zero-derived nominal forms than others (see Hale and Keyser 2002 for discussion). In the end though, noun-verb-conversion is not productive, and the zero-derived de-verbal nouns probably have to be listed in the lexicon, in contrast to the -(n)ing-forms that are productively formed. Taking everything together, it seems like only a subset of the verbal roots that come out in their bare form in -bar-forms will come out as bare when they appear as left-hand members in compounds, and only a subset of them come out as bare/zero-derived nominals.

I will lay out the different patterns and tendencies, and then speculate about the linking-s and the nature of stems/roots in compounds and derived forms.