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## **From Nordic Noir to Euro Noir**

*Nordic Noir Influencing European SVoD Serial Drama*

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## Chapter 14

### From Nordic Noir to Euro Noir:

#### Nordic Noir Influencing European Serial SVoD Drama

Kim Toft Hansen <sup>1</sup>

What has been termed Nordic noir has performed a significant influence on serial drama production outside the Nordic region during the past decade. Glen Creeber points out that already shortly after the wide distribution of the Danish television serial *Forbrydelsen* (*The Killing*, 2007-12), which increased after the BBC broadcast in 2011, Nordic noir was not only “gradually influencing TV drama made elsewhere,” but as a style and brand had also played a “crucial role in creating a new form of contemporary miniseries” (2013, 22). According to Annette Hill and Susan Turnbull (2017), Nordic noir as a style and form now reaches far outside the geographical confines of the North European Nordic region. And as my recent work with Anne Marit Waade reveals, “it is *not* the places, the clothes, the furniture, the architecture, the Nordic landscapes and cityscapes that have travelled to other places,” although they have done so too in foreign productions taking place in the Nordic region, “rather, what has travelled is technique, style and character traits” (2017, 302). In other words, several scholars have emphasized the international influence of Nordic noir, especially within original serial drama production, adaptation strategies and remake interests.

In this chapter, I will further this argument by exploring Nordic noir as an influential factor and European location-based market driver for global SVoD services. Firstly, I will highlight the notion of “influence” as a strategy less legitimately signaled or credited in drama

production. Instead, other productions and general generic awareness may exist at a level of inspiration rather than direct appropriation and adaptation. Secondly, I will highlight the “missing children topos” as the most influential narrative device in Nordic noir serial drama production. Thirdly, I analyze the impact of Nordic noir in HBO Europe’s *Pustina (Wasteland, 2016)* and Netflix’s *Dark (2017)*, including raising awareness about one of the most widespread contemporary variations of crime serials, that of supernatural noir. Lastly, I will stress that manifestly localized settings – similar to those in Nordic noir’s distinguishable sense of place – have been a strategy for entering and maintaining local affiliation and brand loyalty. <sup>2</sup>

### **Influence and Intertextuality**

Adaptations and remakes differ from the notions of appropriation and influence as they are openly binding in a legal sense as intellectual property is reused, often for commercial purposes. Naturally, appropriation and inspiration from similar sources may also have a patent mercantile profit-orientation, but “the appropriated text or texts are not always as clearly signaled or acknowledged as in the adaptive process” (Sanders 2006, 26). As an appropriation for Sanders may be a direct tie between one text and novel variation of that text, influence is rather an unchained flow of inspiration from several sources at once or perhaps even generically associated texts. With Scandinavian crime fiction as her object of interest, Alacovska highlights how “a specific genre’s formal and conventional properties are reactivated and enacted in work processes” (2016, 193). This is similar to Hill’s concept *genre work*, in her case specifically used in her analysis of Nordic noir: “The genre work within Nordic noir as a category is shaped by producers, including marketing and distribution, in the making of this crime genre, and audiences in their engagement with this as a dramatic experience” (2018, 75). For Alacovska and Hill,

instead of being only a textual and paratextual category, genre becomes a much more performative factor during the actual production and reception of a creative work. Genres are, then, both tacit knowledge for creatives as well as active ingredients during the creative process; producers in creative industries are also *genre participants* (Alacovska 2016, 187).

Nevertheless, producing narratives influenced by other similar works does not have to be directly based on *genre* work as such, since variations of genres and stylistic qualities often also take inspiration from texts outside a specific generic universe such as Nordic noir. Hansen and Christensen (2017) find substantial empirical evidence in a production study of a Danish crime series that various films and serials may be a “common language” for the creative production team, that the influence of both same-genre texts and others exist as an *intertextual consciousness* during production, and that such references may be re-activated in the promotional framing of a production afterwards. As such, intertextuality consists not only of references clearly or less obviously marked in a single text, since the intertext of a new production may also involve a generic, stylistic and narrative inspiration from several similar source texts at once. In this way, ideas like genre work, genre participation and intertextual consciousness defines the unrestricted and even “un-contractual” ways that creatives use and consult previous material as inspiration for a new production. This is what I here will refer to as influence.

For Creeber, Nordic noir dramas

are typified by a dimly-lit aesthetic . . . matched by a slow and melancholic pace, multi-layered storylines and an interest in uncovering the dark underbelly of contemporary society . . . , allowing the central murder mystery to act as a catalyst

around which a whole number of other storylines and themes . . . can revolve. The issues are frequently reflected in an intense sense of place, their enigmatic barren landscapes often seen as symbolizing the psychological mood of its troubled detectives. (2013, 22)

Here, I wish to stress that such textual qualities similar to Nordic noir, re-found by Creeber in a number of British and American television serials, may also be empirically confirmed in qualitative data on each production. As a result, style, narrative pace, logic of place and a specific variation of the crime genre are not only aesthetic characteristics, but also qualities that reflect the ways that especially serials actively construe new narratives around a recognizable style and use of place.

### **Dead Girls and Missing Children**

Influence knows no national or regional boundaries. Rightly, *The Killing* has often been singled out as one of the most influential original television crime series in the tradition of Nordic noir (a door-opening game-changer) (e.g. Eichner and Mikos 2016, 20). “In many ways, *Forbrydelsen* became the epitome of Danish *high-end* television drama,” writes Andreas Halskov, stressing that “it came to exemplify a genre called *Nordic noir*” (2015, 206). However, this does not mean that the production of the series was without influences itself, and contrary to the indication in the brand name *Nordic noir*, the series was directly influenced by American titles. According to both Christiana Gregoriou (2017, 17) and Gunhild Agger (2012), the ending of *The Killing* was clearly influenced by David Fincher’s film *Se7en* (1995), while creator Søren Sveistrup has made no attempt to conceal his inspiration from *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991), a point also made by

Creeber (2013, 23). Rather than indicating originality as something distinctly different from everything else, this indicates a circular geographical logic in the influences that made up a core example of Nordic noir: the American influence that returns to USA in order to be re-formed in the American remake of *The Killing*.

On the one hand, stating an influence from *Twin Peaks* is both obvious and perhaps to be taken with a pinch of salt: as a creator in television, who does *not* want to be associated with the emblematic critical acclaim of *Twin Peaks*. As the Danish director Christoffer Boe says, there “is no direct line from any of the quality shows we see right now going back to *Twin Peaks*, but most people who make television now have probably been inspired by *Twin Peaks*” (quoted in Halskov 2015, 206). On the other hand, at the core of both *Twin Peaks* and *The Killing* we find what Alice Bolin (2018) calls “the dead girl show,” a common television trope and a narrative crime motor that runs underneath two seasons of *Twin Peaks* and all 20 episodes of the first season of *The Killing*. Precisely the combination of a certain style and narrative pace, as described by Creeber, and the investigation of the murder of a teenage girl is what makes *The Killing* different from *Twin Peaks*, which included an obvious parodic sensibility toward both crime series and other genres. In contrast, the severity of the storyline created a somber tone and re-sparked an international interest in the dead girl show with a significant aspiration towards the seriousness embedded in what Emma Wilson refers to as “the missing children topos” (2003, 12). The solemn trope of the dead teenager is now associated so closely with Nordic noir that a recent 2018 episode of *The Simpsons* (S29:E20), in which the Simpsons family visits Denmark, parodically refers to the country as the home of “bruiting TV dramas about teenagers getting killed.”

Bolin does not offer a definition of the dead girl show as such, since it may appear somewhat self-explanatory. Naturally, such a show implies the finding of a dead, perhaps murdered girl that – for some time during the narrative – may be missing, often construed around the missing child topos. For Bolin, the narrative often involves a criminal act, while for Wilson the missing child does not necessarily entail a crime, since the missing child may also appear missing due to other reasons, e.g. a car accident in Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Bleu (Blue)*, 1993). For Wilson, a narrative about missing children involves “a knowing, and melancholic, recognition of the inter-relation between childhood, loss and representation” (Wilson 2003, 13). For Bolin, the dead girl show often articulates sexual themes, male control of the female sex, incest taboos, knotty family relations, while characters often “experience frustrating lacunae in their memories” (Bolin 2018, 20). As the main source of international inspiration, the intensity of *The Killing* is an attentive combination of these two topoi in a creation of a melancholic representation of loss and mourning at all levels of the narrative.

Missing children or dead teenagers have played a generally important role in crime narratives and certain spatial sensibilities also reverberated in a range of notable cinematic crime films. Here, a core reference in noir is of course the disappeared children in Fritz Lang's urban noir *M* (1931), which also accentuated the urban focus in the subtitle (*Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder*), although the film was shot entirely in studio. With its presence in Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö's novel *Mannen på balkongen (The Man on the Balcony)*, 1967 and Daniel Alfredson's filmic version from 1993, the dead girl trope is also a conspicuously built-in feature of the alleged hotbed of modern Scandinavian crime narratives. Wilson starts her book with an introductory reference to Bruno Dumont's *L'humanité (Humanity)*, 1999, a film that not only involves a detective story and the investigation of a murdered girl, it also involves a heavy

accentuation of “the green flat landscape” and “the grasses in the surrounding fields, grassland where the child’s brutalised body . . . has been found in shock scenes” (ibid., 1). Clearly, Wilson’s description of the crime scene and the surrounding landscape resembles Stijn Reijnders’ notion of *the guilty landscape*, which he uses as a description of European TV crime series, included *Wallander* (2005-2013), a show often referenced as quintessentially Nordic noir (2009). For Wilson, the “issue of the missing children enables films to mobilize questions about the protection and innocence of childhood, about parenthood and the family” (ibid., 2) as well as the ambiance of mourning. The Spanish serial *Desaparecida* (*The Disappearance*, 2006-2007) predates the attention towards *The Killing* and was, as the Danish series, also structured “around a central plot that spanned a single season” (Virino 2018, 65). These references emphasizes that murdered children and teenagers have been a powerful emotional and narrative motor in crime film and television, and that, embedded in the dead girl show, lies an attention towards conflicted families, guilty landscapes and logic of mourning.

When *The Disappearance* and *The Killing* were broadcast, “the theme of the “missing child” . . . was about to take over the genre” (Virino 2018, 165). After the international attention towards *The Killing*, we have seen a range of television serials engaging in especially missing and murdered children and youths. This includes the Swedish *Jordskott* (2015-) and *Ängelby* (2015) continuing the interest on a Scandinavian level, the French adaptation of *Desaparecida* as *Disparue* (*The Disappearance*, 2015-) and *Le forêt* (*The Forest*, 2017), the Australian *The Kettering Incident* (2016), the Belgian *Hotel Beau Sejour* (2016-), the New Zealandic *Top of the Lake* (2013) as well as the British *The Missing* (2014-) and *Broadchurch* (2013-17), the last of which Creeber indicates to be evidently influenced by specifically *The Killing* (2013, 27-8). All of these serials fit the above description of Nordic noir as slow-paced and multi-layered



narratives, dark settings and intensity of on-location shooting, reflecting and ongoing influence from Nordic noir in general and *The Killing* particularly. With these titles as a backdrop, I will now turn to my two examples, *Wasteland* and *Dark*, serials that in different ways use the missing children topos and clearly employs a stylistic influence and narrative pace from Nordic noir.

### **Desolate Landscapes in HBO's *Wasteland***

*Wasteland* revolves around the disappearance and death of the 14-year old Misha, daughter of the mayor of the small North Bohemian village Pustina in the Czech Republic. At the time of disappearance, the mayor, Hana, is at the height of her struggle against a foreign coal mining company who wishes to access the coal reserves underneath the town, consequently wiping the village off the map. The basis of the narrative is the search for the vanished girl and later the investigation of her murder, but as the investigation ventures on the story unveils the seamy sides of the otherwise tightly knit village community life, including Hana's political struggle against commercial exploitation of the Pustina underground. Gradually, the suspicion centers in on Misha's violent, alcoholic and psychologically disturbed father, Karel, although dark secrets in the local community end up cracking up society as almost everybody falls under suspicion. The Czech title literally means "wasteland" (and is not to be confused with the actual village called Pustina) and refers to the consequential desolate landscape of the mining industry in Northern Bohemia.

In publicly disclosed material on the series, creators and producers are often quick to stress the originality of *Pustina*. "I don't think *Pustina* is a successor to anything," says Steve Matthews, the executive producer at HBO Europe; "it is its own unique piece of storytelling" (Czech Film Center 2016). Antony Root, HBO Europe's executive Vice President of Original

Programming and Production, frames the series within the global HBO brand: “It’s a signature HBO piece with authorship and point of view. . . . It’s not like anything else around in its country of origin and it will have some international reach. It’s a very original piece, certainly something with a voice” (Pickard 2016). Even if it is the case that *Wasteland*, by producers with a commercial interest in the series’ success, can be edged out as something distinctly original, screenwriter Štěpán Hulík references an intertextual context around the serial: “I wanted to make something that would be appealing both for our audience in the Czech Republic and also abroad – like *True Detective*, *Top of the Lake* or *The Missing*. This was my hope and our dream” (ibid.). In this way, Hulík directly associates *Wasteland* with three serials all exercising the missing children topos and the dead girl show, and indirectly an influence from Nordic noir, since all series – according to scholars and television criticism – have been influenced by Nordic crime dramas (Eichner and Mikos 2016, 17; Creeber 2013, 30).

In her work on HBO’s Eastern European brand, Aniko Imre (2018) demonstrates that the influence from Nordic noir has a much wider sway than an indirect reference through Anglo-American productions. The series produced by HBO Europe are, firstly, embraced as a localized viewing experience of the global HBO art house brand, but the trends and themes of the serials are, secondly, directly associated with Nordic crime shows. The Norwegian crime serial *Mammon* (2014-2016) “inspired two HBO adaptations in Eastern Europe”: the Polish *Pakt* (*The Pact*, 2015-2016) and the Czech *Mamon* (2015), while the Hungarian serial *Aranyélet* (*Golden Life*, 2015-2018) was “loosely based” on the Finnish crime serial *Helppo elämä* (*Easy Living*, 2009-2011) (Imre 2018, 57-9). In addition, Imre does not mention the Romanian remake of the Norwegian crime series *Eyewitness* (2014) as *Valea Mută* (2016). Altogether, this indicates a very literal adapted and appropriated influence from Nordic crime serials, but Imre notes that the

Romanian *Umbre* (2014-), besides an association with “the art films dubbed the Romanian New Wave,” also rests on “the realism of Nordic noir” (ibid., 60). In general, the crime genre has had a heavy hand in HBO Europe’s market strategies. According to Imre, the original series produced for HBO Europe “foreground genres, modes of expression, and issues that consistently resonate in the process of border-crossing: for instance, a similar affective predisposition toward melancholy, the experience of distrust and corruption, the endangered role of small nations within Europe, the “fractured dream of the welfare state,” and the “aesthetics of landscape as a catalyst for crime, with national anxieties about globalization conveyed in the DNA of the mise en scene,” as Janet McCabe characterizes Nordic noir” (ibid., 61; McCabe 2016, 119-122). In the light of such adapted and indirect impact of Nordic noir on HBO Europe’s production, it seems highly reasonable to suggest that *Wasteland* should be added to the list of series, at least, influenced by Nordic crime serials.

The way that *Wasteland* implements Nordic noir has a range of similarities with other serials influenced by the narrative pace and stylistics of *The Killing* and the like. “Altogether, in dramas like *Marcella*, *Broadchurch* and *Hinterland*, the technique, character comprehension and style may establish a range of techniques borrowed from or inspired by Nordic Noir television dramas, but the local color content of the dramas is very much locally London, Dorset landscapes and Aberystwyth, respectively” (Hansen and Waade 2017, 302). On the one hand, the exposure of the autumnal atmosphere in *Wasteland* and *The Killing* is, in both serials, stressed by bare branches and naked trees as well as the grey skies and creeping darkness that underlines the melancholic tone of the images. As in the titles mentioned by Creeber, the barren evocative landscapes emblematically represent the mentality of the characters, especially Hana’s sorrowful mind after the loss of her daughter. On the other hand, the landscape and village atmosphere is

highly marked by the local color of Northern Bohemia, one of the country's and Europe's important coal mining areas. Essentially, the locations as such in the series are *not* similar to those of Nordic noir, but the *way* the locations are used and the way the narrative is executed around the locations – as both a banal place to live and as an indication of eco-social criticism – bears an obvious influence from the darkest stories from Nordic noir. The attention towards locations and the North Bohemian setting is significantly stressed by the locative title sequence that ends with the Pustina town sign and includes an accentuation of the key social story about the effect of the mining industry on the small village. As a result, the vanishing of Misha in *Wasteland* becomes a metonymic allusion to the potential disappearance of Pustina as a village. Hence, the relationship between locations/setting, character psychology and socially sensitive themes is a general similarity with a range of Nordic crime serials.

If a range of Nordic noir serials are identifiable by its “slow and melancholic pace” (Creeber 2013, 22), *Wasteland* decelerates the narrative speed even further. For viewers, a slow narrative pace may be signaled through a slow cutting style and a narrative focus on character introspection and increased attention towards a psychologically expressive settings and landscapes rather than the density of plot points, action and narrative information. In *Wasteland*, a combination of the missing girl topos, at first, and then the dead girl show is the engine that drives the story forward, but the transition from disappearance plot to murder investigation is significantly delayed in *Wasteland* compared with *The Killing*. In the Danish serial, the girl is missing for the main part of the first episode and found dead in the end of that episode, which appears reasonably slow in comparison with traditionally episodic crime narratives where the plot resolution is normally found in the end of each episode. In the Czech serial, the girl is missing for four episodes – half of the complete serial – and found dead in the end of the fourth

episode. For *Wasteland*, the reduced plot point density, the slow cutting style and the gloomy relationship between evocative landscape and character introspection protracts the narrative pace significantly. Nevertheless, the final scene of the fourth episode in *Wasteland* clearly quotes the final scene from the first episode of *The Killing*, intertextually indicating its indebtedness to the series as the epitome of Nordic noir and as an influential serial for *Wasteland*. In deep November darkness, the bodies of the dead girls are found in both serials, the father is present in *The Killing* while the mother is present in *Wasteland*, and both parents unsuccessfully attempt to push through hindering police officers in order to get to the body (see Fig. 14. 1). The lighting, the cinematographic framing, the spoken words and the melancholic severity of the scenes are so similar that it can be no coincidence. As Creeber notes, a similar scene in *Twin Peaks* unmistakably inspired the final scene of episode 1 in *The Killing*, so when reviewer Houxbois (2017) highlights that “*Twin Peaks* looms large over *Wasteland*” this altogether stresses both serials’ appreciation of David Lynch’s instrumental TV serial and its use of the crime story as narrative motor underneath a multi-plot storyline.

The three-way combination of an investigative plotline, a political intrigue and the gloomy story about grief and the loss of a child in a smaller community where everybody is affected is a general similarity between *Wasteland* and *The Killing*, although *Wasteland* conflates the political and the personal stories into one with Hana being both the mayor and the mother. While both *Twin Peaks* and *The Killing* has a central story line that revolves around the high school, *Wasteland* moves this youth perspective to the discouraging setting around a juvenile detention center, keeping in mind a youth setting that here plays a comparatively important role as the high school in the influential serials. In sum, *Wasteland* may be promoted as a highly original Czech serial crime drama, but in line with many other HBO Europe productions for its

Eastern-European territories the influential characteristics of Nordic noir have had a powerful effect on this serial too.

### **Supernatural Noir in Netflix's *Dark*** <sup>3</sup>

In Eastern Europe, “localizing the viewing experience through native content and language has given HBO an edge over other competitive streaming platforms,” writes Imre. “Most prominently, Netflix’s expansion outside the saturated North American market has encountered difficulties in Eastern Europe” (Imre 2018, 58). Even if this is the case, Netflix has begun – during the past few years, and perhaps influenced by HBO Europe’s localization model – to cater local markets with productions in the native languages. Although, Netflix has expanded their category ‘Originals’ exceedingly faster than HBO’s local subsidiaries, and has exploited a wide range of genres, the crime genre has had a heavy hand in the expansion. According to Biesen, the “recent explosion of noir-influenced long-form original series indicates both the lasting impact of noir cinema and how Netflix has used binge-watching to relocate noir within the home-viewing environment” (Biesen 2016, 134). Regrettably, she only mentions *House of Cards* (2013-) and *Daredevil* (2015-) as two examples of this “explosion.”

Nevertheless, this tendency dates back to Netflix’s collaboration with the Norwegian PSB NRK on the crime-comedy serial *Lilyhammer* (2012-2014), which was the first local venture for Netflix (Sundet 2017). This indicates a Netflix interest in Nordic crime serials as a way to enter, in this case, the Norwegian market, but the global player has since used the crime genre as localized market penetration. For instance, the *Narcos* franchise now includes both the Colombian-American *Narcos* (2015-2017) and the Mexican-American *Narcos: Mexico* (2018-), while the crime serials *Le forêt*, *Marcella* (2016-) and the recent *Kriger (Warrior)*, (2018) all

follow the *Lilyhammer* model by co-producing or buying local serials that would later appear on Netflix as “originals” in order to cater the French-speaking, the British and the Danish markets, respectively. Examples include the Italian *Suburra* (2017-), the Spanish *La casa de papel* (*Money Heist*, 2017-) and the Belgian *Hotel Beau Séjour*. The first Danish original serial produced directly for Netflix, *The Rain* (2018-), engages in a post-apocalyptic drama that generically shares only few traits from the crime genre narrative, but stylistically it borrows the autumnal grey atmosphere, the deep Scandinavian forests and especially the heavy rain as a plot device (rather than an ambient background) directly from Nordic noir. Localization is, as a result, apparently at the same time a significant way to exoticize content and expand the global portfolio of drama serials. Although, the Netflix model is slightly different from that of HBO, Netflix has unmistakably now also turned to a localized viewing experience in order to poach viewers from the competitors – and as the first German Netflix serial *Dark* does this for the German market.

The series revolves around different interrelated families in the small village Winden and the investigation of the disappearance of the high school boy Erik and, later, the pre-teen Mikkel. The serial uses the missing children topos as a base from which to expand the generic content of Nordic noir influenced stories into a narrative that draws heavily on fantastic science fiction traits as well. The investigation of the boys’ disappearance and later the death of a youngster is the narrative cement that holds the plotlines together, but a time travel mystery makes it possible for the implicated parties to investigate disappearances and youth murders through three different periods of time (the 50s, the 80s and the near future), creating a dense temporal connectivity from one family mystery to another. German spoken language and on-location shooting in and around Grünewald south-west from Berlin localizes the serial, though the creators Baran bo Odar

and Jantje Friese rather attempted to transform the local imagery into a translocal visuality of a “somewhere that could be everywhere” (Webb 2017). “We don’t believe in local stuff,” says Odar; “we don’t believe in genre – we just believe in good stories” (ibid.), settling the serial within the Netflix interest in creating local content that pushes the generic boundaries and would work well internationally. When Imre then observes that HBO’s local ventures works well “in specific national contexts while they travel easily from market to market precisely because they consist in shared European and global narratives” (Imre 2018, 62), this fits increasingly well with Netflix’s local productions as well.

Because of *Dark*’s 1980s nostalgia, the initial reception often compared it with Netflix’s serial *Stranger Things* (2016-), but Odar points in a different direction for influences: “We like the Scandinavian cases very much. In any case, *Dark* is more related to the genre called Nordic noir than to *Stranger Things*” (Reinhardt 2018, my translation). Nevertheless, Odar and Friese has made no attempt to hide their inspiration from *Twin Peaks*, which once again encircles a great tendency going from “the dead girl show” in *Twin Peaks*, across the un-parodic seriousness of the same topos in *The Killing*, to the missing children topos in *Dark*. In employing disappearances of children and dead youngsters, all three serials revolve around twilight surroundings, dark weather conditions and the gloomy family home as a representative grieving space, with autumnal decay as an aesthetic marker of this connection between outer locations and personal psychology. *Dark* highlights the seasonal influence from *The Killing* by emphasizing November as the time of year in the story and literally by using a conspicuously Danish name for the disappeared boy Mikkel Nielsen. Just as the parka coat in *Marcella* appropriates the outer garments of Sarah Lund (the knitted sweater), the yellow Friesennerz raincoat in *Dark* signals a similar strategy: Lund’s Faroese jumper localizes her in the Nordic



region, Marcella's parka coat is a popular outer garment in London, while Jonas's Friesennerz coat also carries a local reference to the north-west German area Friesland – and the yellow coat was heavily used in the promotion of the series (see Fig. 14.2). Once again, it is not as much the local color of Nordic noir that is visible in the international inspiration, it is rather through the stylistic appearance of the serials that we see the darkened autumnal lighting, the seasonal accent in the easily evoked attire of the main character, and the exploratory use of an evocative landscape aesthetics and heavy rain for a tangible melancholic tone underneath the crime plot engine. Altogether, Nordic noir has been explicitly credited as an influence through the creators' paratextual comments as well as the intertextual signals in the serial itself.

The sources of influence for *Dark* carry a much more complex intertextual relationship besides the obvious references to *Twin Peaks* and *The Killing*. Besides the seasonally styled influence from Nordic noir, Odar underlines a direct appropriation of “creepy feeling of suburbia” in Gregory Crewdson's photography, a twilight aesthetics that expands the evocative realism in Nordic noir with a surreal universe: “everything seems normal until you notice there's something really weird going on beneath the surface,” says Odar (Woodward 2017). *Twin Peaks* also carried the surreal sensibility that, at present, is one of the most widespread tendencies in the crime genre: the synthesis of fantastic elements with the investigative plotline in supernatural noir. Here, the Vancouver forest used heavily in *The X-files* (1993-2002) is still an unnoticed intermediary, but the creators of *Dark* has also stresses a substantial influence from Stephen King, specifically from the novel *It* (1986) (by coincidence, the 2017 adaptation of the novel also includes a main character in a yellow raincoat). In the stories by King and in many adaptations and appropriations, such as the serial *Castle Rock* (2018-), we find a similar somber atmosphere and attention towards the gist of a specific location (for King, this is of course Maine). For that

reason, the adaptation of King's *Stand by Me* (1986) is unmistakably quoted in a central scene in the first episode of *Dark* in which the high school children follow the railroad tracks through the forest, a scene from *Stand by Me* that was also quoted in *Stranger Things*. Moreover, the dense darkness in this scene in *Dark* points back towards the serial's title while also indicating the influence of the often pitch-black visuality of Nordic noir. Indeed, this means that Nordic noir is not the sole influencer of Netflix's *Dark*, but rather that Nordic noir has become a part of the international stylistic and narrative vocabulary that works side by side with references to *Twin Peaks*, Stephen King, and different global popular cultural tendencies.

Besides a historical connection with a range of influential sources, the supernatural noir in *Dark* also places the serial within a pervasive contemporary trend within the crime genre. In Nordic noir serials, we find a similar blend in the two serials *Jordskott* and *Ängelby*, two serials explicitly commemorating *Twin Peaks* and ruralizing Nordic noir into the deep Swedish forests while establishing a supernatural explanation around the missing children. Obviously inspired by Nordic noir, *The Kettering Incident* also traces the scent of the supernatural, and together with *Jordskott* and *Dark* this highlights a tendency towards an eco-critical propensity within contemporary crime narratives, which comes mostly to the fore when crime is combined with fantastic tropes from either sci-fi or horror (e.g. *Dark* comments on nuclear power, *Jordskott* on exploiting natural resources). The Flemish drama *Hotel Beau Séjour*, noticeably influenced by Nordic noir's gritty autumnal style, takes the dead girl show to a supernatural extreme in the way that the ghost of the murdered is the main character of the serial, influencing the investigation of her own murder. However, supernatural noir stays with the recognizably local settings established in recent television tendencies, including Nordic noir, naturalizing the improbable plots of the serial narratives. For instance, *Jordskott* was filmed in natural surroundings in

Västmanland in Sweden, which was exploited in the international distributor's "fake" tourist website about the fictional town Silverhöjd (ITV Studios 2015), while *Hotel Beau Séjour* used the real Hotel Beau Séjour in the Belgian small town Dilsen-Stokkem and generally intensive on-location shooting as a local flavor to the drama. In all cases, translocal imagery works well as a localizing factor while at the same time being sufficiently universal for global audiences.

### **Conclusion: Noir as European SVoD Market Driver**

With Germany as his main example, Stiegler makes a point about Netflix very much comparable with the one made by Imre about HBO Europe: "these strategies indicate that it [Netflix] seeks content that strikes a balance between international flair and local appeal. Netflix also wants content that is safe and easy for most viewers to consume," and most content on Netflix signposts an "appeal to mainstream audiences" (2016, 243). While HBO carries an "affinity with art film" (Imre 2018, 59), the simultaneous local and global strategy seems to share a range of aspects in the way that especially locations are used as translocal markers of recognition, viewer emotion and character psychology. Nevertheless, the difference in the narrative pace between *Wasteland* and *Dark* shows remarkably how the two institutions cater different audiences.

Although *Dark* deals with (only) one mystery throughout one complete season, the information density is thicker and cinematography and editing style is faster than, especially, *Wasteland*, and also the influential examples of Nordic noir. In this way, *Dark*'s style in some ways resembles the first Danish Netflix original *The Rain* in the way that the dark setting and rainy atmosphere clearly picks up an influence from Nordic noir, but the implementation of the style spins it forward in a faster narrative pace. The intertextual influences signaled in these series are, in

*Wasteland* and *Dark* respectively, induced with a slower and faster narrative rhythm that indicates a lot about the intended model reader of the serials.

Despite the differences between the two global media institutions, it is clear that the crime genre in general and Nordic noir in particular are very important components in the way that the SVoD services attempt to reach local and global audiences at once. Here, the crime genre shows global recognizability in the use of a crime plot as a narrative engine within which a multiplotted narrative can progress. In relation to localization, the crime genre is privileged by the narrative departure in places rather than characters. In a narrow sense, the crime scene is often the place from which the rest of the narrative is built, while this also sparks an interest in using the surroundings of the crime scene as a local backdrop in commercially attractive international titles. Of course, on-location shooting and local settings are in no way exclusive trait to crime fiction, but since the institution of the genre in the western popular cultural tradition in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it has fed from the local atmosphere of the crime setting as a reality effect.

While most crime serials for HBO Europe and European Netflix audiences center in on local settings and locations, the recent history of television crime dramas has also shown a tendency towards pan-European serials that use specific recognizable locations across Europe as a locative feature of what has been called Euro noir (Hansen, Turnbull and Peacock 2018). For example, the Nordic noir influenced *The Team* (2015-) has used translocal imagery from various larger European cities, producing what has been termed banal transnationalism (Hansen and Waade 2017, 209). The ideals behind the transnational investigation in such series are quite easily paralleled with the European Union's goal in the 1997-version of the Television Without Borders Directive of "cultivating a shared European identity" (Imre 2018, 54), in which the

trans-European investigative unit becomes a metonymic representation of the political principle of continental identity and collaboration.

However, as Imre notes, the 2007-update of the EU-directive “revised its objective as the preservation of cultural diversity” (ibid.). With only few examples of the pan-European model in crime serials, the breadth and sum of localized serials with an international appeal from SVoD services indicates that the crime genre verges on the culture behind the motto of the EU “In varietate concordia” (unity in diversity). Historically, the notion of Euro noir has been associated with the degrading idea of Europudding, “a perversion of the system, forcing filmmakers to alter their projects . . . in order to maximize their chances of gaining access to state subsidies” (Liz 2015, 73). As noted by Hansen, Turnbull and Peacock (2018, 6), the idea of Euro noir may be shifting towards a new, neutral meaning indicated in Barry Forshaw’s book *Euro Noir* in which the concept merely refers to crime narratives from somewhere in Europe. Pia Majbritt Jensen and Anne Marit Waade (2013) analyze how Nordic noir, by way of pushing subtitled and non-Anglophone dramas to foreign audiences, challenges English as the language of advantage, but for them this also includes the exoticism of the local settings which, according to them, in Nordic noir becomes a significant production value. This means that Nordic noir may have been narratively and stylistically influential for localized tendencies for global SVoD services such as HBO and Netflix, but if we include the points made by Jensen and Waade, the influence appears on a much more general level: today, global audiences may be more inclined to choose content that is not in English or local languages. Nordic noir crime narratives have appeared instrumental in promoting such content.

Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Netflix was launched as an online video-rental store, but a declining DVD-market later paved the way for the global SVoD-service known today. The HBO brand began as a pre-Internet premium channel service in the US, and when HBO Europe launched their services in Eastern Europe throughout the 1990’s, this was as premium channels. Today, HBO maintains premium channels in this European region, supplemented by local VoD-services, while other contemporary European activities are mostly SVoD-services (besides linear television in The Netherlands too). At a market today where linear TV consumption is decreasing, the point of view of this chapter is that both services are becoming increasingly SVoD-based.

<sup>3</sup> This chapter was written before the 2019 premiere of the second season of *Dark*.

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