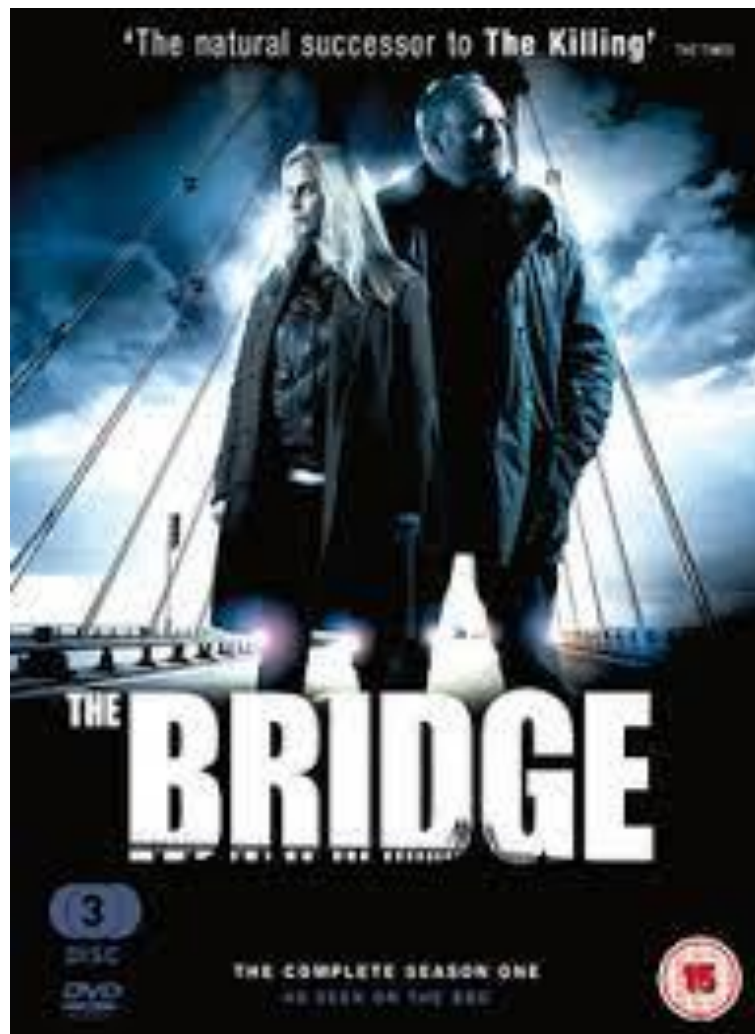


The Bridge

(Season 3 Episode 1, 2015)



The Bridge

(Season 3 Episode 1, 2015)

Section A: Television in the Global Age (A Level)

Focus Areas:

- Media Language
- Representation
- Media Industries
- Audiences
- Media contexts

PRODUCT CONTEXT

- *The Bridge (Bron/Broen)* is one of the A Level options studied for Section A: Television in the Global Age alongside *Life on Mars*. The set product is the first episode of Series 3 which was broadcast in the UK on BBC Four at 9pm on 21st November 2015.
- *The Bridge* is an example of a Scandinavian sub-genre of crime drama – Nordic Noir. The drama is set in Sweden, the title refers to the Oresund Bridge between Denmark and Sweden and is a metaphor for the collaboration between the two police forces which commenced after a body was discovered in the middle of the bridge in the first episode of the first series.
- The crime drama was a co-production between Filmlance International and Nimbus Film.
- *The Bridge* followed on from the success of other Nordic Noir crime dramas broadcast by BBC Four including the highly successful *The Killing* and *Wallander*. There were four series between 2011-2018.
- Series 3 opens with the murder in Malmo of a prominent Danish gender campaigner and owner of Copenhagen's first gender neutral pre-school. Swedish detective Saga Norén is assigned a new Danish colleague Hanne to help with the investigation, but their relationship does not get off to a good start with feelings still running high after Saga's involvement in sending her previous Danish partner Martin to jail for murdering the man who killed his son.

PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media Language

The codes and conventions of media forms and products, including the processes through which media language develops as a genre.

- In its simplest terms a genre is a type of media product, but it is more complex than that and also provides a way for producers to communicate messages to audiences. Audiences need to be able to recognise genres and the codes and conventions are established over time. The audience have expectations regarding genres and establishing the genre is key to the effective marketing of the product.
- Crime dramas have a recognisable repertoire of elements, these may be specific to a sub-genre, for example a psychological crime drama. These conventions have evolved over time and developed to reflect social and cultural change and the needs and expectations of audiences. However, these dramas share similarities which place them in the crime genre including:
 - **Narrative:** this is usually based on a crime that needs to be investigated and solved.
 - Structure. Crime dramas may use a range of different narrative structures. They may conform to Todorov's theory where the structure is linear from the initial disruption through to a resolution, or non-linear where time and space is manipulated. Inverted narratives show the crime and the perpetrator at the start and then may have a non-linear structure including flashbacks. Other examples of the genre create a restricted narrative in which information is withheld from the audience and they are involved in solving of the crime alongside the police. In *The Bridge* there are elements of a flexi-narrative. The characters are complex, storylines interweave, and the audience is challenged through enigma and engagement with complex characters.
 - Narrative disruptions occur that change the course of the story, these can be events that happen or revelations that are made by characters. Sometimes the audience are in a privileged spectator position whereby they

know more than the characters within the story world.

- Binary oppositions function as a narrative element including good vs evil, police vs criminal as well as, in the case of *The Bridge*, the cultural differences of Sweden vs Denmark, Saga vs Hanne, the nuclear vs the non-nuclear family and illusion vs reality. The resolving of some of these binary oppositions within the story world may have an ideological significance, for example evil being punished and justice prevailing in a crime drama (**Structuralism: Levi-Strauss**).
- Plot situations are included that are typical of the crime genre. For example, the discovery of a body, an arrest, an interview with a suspect or the denouement where the perpetrator of the crime is revealed by the detective. These situations are made slightly different in *The Bridge* due to the incongruencies in Saga's character. For example, in the interview with the victim's wife Saga has to be prevented from showing her the crime scene photographs.
- Story arcs and narrative strands occur in episodes and across the series of a crime drama. In *The Bridge*, as this is the first episode of a new series, there are several complex, enigmatic narrative strands, some new and some carrying over from other series, which will be interwoven across the episodes in this series, including:
 - Saga's past and her involvement with Martin, her role in this narrative and how she relates to others, her past and her mother
 - The partnerships and team dynamics, for example Hanne Thomsen and Lillian and the tension with the Saga and the Swedish team
 - The crime – who killed Helle Anker? The enigma of the murder scene set up as a nuclear family.
 - The additional storylines including the role of Aleksandr and his place in the narrative
 - The character of Henrik, his drug dependence and the enigma surrounding his family. The expectation of how he and Saga will work together.
- **Stock characters** usually including a hierarchy with a boss, a detective, a sidekick, and other characters, for example a victim, a range of suspects, the perpetrator of the crime and experts/witnesses who help in the solving of the

crime. Often the pairing of characters are binary opposites, and their relationships contribute to tensions within the narrative, this is the case with Saga and firstly Hanne and then potentially Henrik.

- **Setting and locations.** These will become synonymous with the programme and the brand and will relate to characters and the sub-genre. Some settings will be typical of the genre, for example the police station, the post-mortem lab and urban crime settings, others become iconic, for example the bridge.

Theoretical Approach: Narratology - Todorov

- All narratives share a basic structure involving movement from one state of equilibrium to another, separated by a disequilibrium. The opening of *The Bridge* establishes an initial **equilibrium**, Martin is now in jail, Saga is focused on work and Pettersen and Lillian are married.
- The **disruption** to this equilibrium is the discovery of the body of Helle Anker. **Enigma codes** are then established as a key element of the narrative in the attempt to find the killer.
- A series of story arcs are established which interweave across the episode.
- As this is an example of an episodic drama there would not be a resolution at the end of the first episode, instead there is a **cliffhanger** with an explosion where Hanne is seriously injured and the introduction of Henrik as Saga's new partner. The audience has been placed in a privileged spectator position regarding Henrik's situation which foreshadows possible future narratives.

How genre conventions are socially and historically relative, dynamic and can be used in a hybrid way

- Although genres have never been stagnant, it is increasingly the case that they are more dynamic and seek to challenge audience expectations. The genre now is a starting point to target the audience and then surprise them through hybridity and intertextuality.
- Some programmes, for example *The Bridge*, challenge and subvert genre conventions, in this case through the narrative, the characters and reference to other genres. The **Nordic Noir** crime dramas demonstrate their hybridity through reference to the conventions of film noir many, but not all of which are evident in *The Bridge*:
 - A dark, pessimistic tone and mood
 - Chiaroscuro lighting and shadows establishing enigma codes and a bleak melancholy aesthetic

AS/A Level Media Studies - Set Product Fact Sheet

- A sexually attractive femme fatale functioning as a strong protagonist, until the end
- Disillusioned, flawed anti-hero (detective), often with a past
- Claustrophobic and menacing setting; closed frames to connote entrapment; canted angles suggesting disorientation
- A slow pace
- Moral decline and ambiguity with a focus on the darker elements of life
- Themes of corruption, greed, obsession, duality, isolation
- Strong awareness of mortality and irony of human existence
- Complex narrative and convoluted plot
- Iconography – bars created by shadows through blinds, cigarettes, neon, rain, alleyways, trench coat and trilby.

Theoretical Approach: Genre – Steve Neale

- Neale asserts that genres may be dominated by repetition, but they are also marked by difference, variation, and change. Crime dramas have a recognisable repertoire of elements that place them in the genre, but to appeal to audiences they need to display something different to set them apart from other examples. Difference is essential to sustain a genre, to simply repeat the codes and conventions of the form would not appeal to an audience.
- In *The Bridge*, the Scandinavian setting, locations, and the enigmatic character of Saga proved novel for audiences.
- *The Bridge* demonstrates that genres change, develop, and vary as they borrow from and overlap with one another. Some contemporary crime dramas are less easy to categorise as they are hybrid genres and this variation consequently enhances audience appeal. *The Bridge* as an example of the Nordic Noir sub-genre, borrows conventions from film noir.
- Genres exist within specific economic, institutional, and industrial contexts. The recognisable codes and conventions of crime dramas make them easy to market to audiences. However, subverting and challenging these conventions by introducing more novel elements as in *The Bridge* can also ensure commercial success.

The Bridge demonstrates typical elements of a police procedural crime drama, but also, as Neale has suggested, incorporates differences illustrating the dynamic and socially relative nature of genre conventions and the hybridity of the genre:

- Nordic noir/ Film Noir elements
- Elements of the action genre, for example the chase scene
- Horror conventions, for example the build-up of tense music, audio codes suggesting supernatural elements, slow turning to camera and the execution of the crime
- Elements of the psychological thriller, for example the murder scene, the slow pace, and the use of silence/ lack of dialogue
- Gender representations – there are stock characters and representations we expect in a crime drama, but strong female roles challenging expectations. Saga is an unusual heroine, she is flawed but central to the narrative, with unpredictable and interesting behaviour traits.
- Setting and aesthetic, intensity of mood and dark, unsettling themes
- Technical codes which reference film noir, for example the low-key lighting, the use of torchlight, profile shots and intense close-ups and frames with isolated figures
- The unique setting, the bridge, represents the 'other-worldly' which links cultures but is neither one place nor another, shots of the bridge are used throughout the episode
- The narrative of the stylised murders referencing "art" and notions of the surreal.

How the combination of elements of media language influence meaning. Consider:

Visual codes:

- **Codes of clothing:** The connotations of characters' clothing and appearance create meanings. Clothing is a rapid way of communicating messages in *The Bridge*. Saga's versions of the same outfit and colour scheme contribute to the enigma surrounding her character and her behaviour traits. Clothing worn by the other detectives is informal and functional, unlike UK crime dramas clothing does not connote a hierarchy within the police force.
- **Gesture and expression:** non-verbal communicators are quick ways of constructing meaning. *The Bridge* frequently uses close-up shots of characters to communicate meaning and many of the expressions are serious, anxious, and fearful, reflecting the dark themes and melancholy aesthetic. Saga's passive expression rarely changes, and it is only after the explosion and in the final scenes of this episode where she is confronted with her mother, that she is seen to be disconcerted, confused and afraid.
- **Iconography and Setting:** props, backgrounds and settings work together to construct the narrative.

The settings in *The Bridge* clearly establish realism and the film noir elements of the genre and also employ the typical Scandinavian elements of the cold weather and the dark. The vast Nordic landscape creates a sense of isolation and alienation. The iconic image of the Oresund Bridge features regularly in the series. Many of the settings create a sense of entrapment including corridors and dimly lit locations, for example the warehouse crime scene.

Technical codes

Camera shots, movement and angles work together to communicate messages and 'show' the narrative. *The Bridge* has high production values and a distinctive style which is used to convey information without the use of dialogue.

- Close-ups advance the relationships between characters and establish tension and a dynamic. This is evident in the conversation between Saga and the other characters. Often the close-ups show the profile of the character or are in silhouette, the opening introduction to Saga in the lift combines both to construct her enigmatic character.
- Tracking shots are used to introduce both Saga and Hanne, constructing both as powerful women with a job to do and are also used to involve the audience as part of the investigative process as they follow the characters.
- Establishing shots are quick ways of communicating information, the bridge is used regularly to indicate changes of setting between Sweden and Denmark and bird's eye view city shots are used similarly. These shots also serve to create a sense of cultural verisimilitude establishing a real city in which the characters function, so reinforcing their believability.
- The film noir technique of shooting through windows, or behind obstacles is used, positioning the audience as looking in on the scene or the lives of the characters as an outsider. The sense of entrapment created by this filming in some cases suggests their isolation or that they have something to hide. For example, the audience often views Saga from behind glass or another barrier and Henrik and his children are first viewed through the window.
- The post-production editing creates a desaturated colour palette which contributes to the dark, melancholic feel of the programme.

Audio codes

Sound and music are effective in communicating meaning in this programme:

- **Music:** the haunting track used for the credit sequence foreshadows the slow pace of the

programme and creates expectations of the style of programme to follow. The tense music at the start of the episode has intertextual references to the horror genre building audience expectation of the macabre scene that unfolds.

- **Diegetic sound:** the clicking of the crime scene investigator's cameras at the start establishes generic realism. The sound of the cans at Morten's cabin is both unsettling and on the second visit, an action code for the explosion to follow which is then followed by a disconcerting silence.
- **Dialogue:** some of the dialogue is conventional of a crime drama and is related to the investigation and police procedure and as such advances the narrative. Other elements of dialogue serve to develop characters and relationships. Saga's clipped, at times forced, dialogue contributes to her idiosyncratic character. She is very literal in her understanding and her responses are refreshingly honest. When the owner of the site where the victim is thought to have been murdered asks her '*Could you hurry up a bit?*', she replies '*No*'. The conversations between the detectives and Helle Anker's wife create a back story and possible motives for her murder. Saga's mother's reference to '*your crime*' in relation to Saga creates an enigma at the end of the first episode and provides some insight into Saga's past, this is particularly intriguing as Saga has stated earlier in the episode, '*I don't like my mum*'.

PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Representation

Consider how representations are constructed through a process of selection and combination.

All representations are constructed and are not 'windows on the world'. Representations are constructed through media language, the information in the previous section will therefore be relevant when exploring representation in *The Bridge*. Media products are constructed through a process of mediation to communicate meanings using elements of media language including:

- **Technical codes.** Camera shots, angles, movements and editing combine to construct representations and to position audiences in relation to those representations.
- **Audio codes:** diegetic and non-diegetic sound including a soundtrack, mood music and dialogue contribute to the construction of representations.
- **Iconography:** clothing, particularly in relation to the cultural context, contributes to the construction of representations and will have been a key consideration of the producers in creating the characters and their roles.

How representations may invoke discourses and ideologies and position audiences

- Representations carry ideological significance and reflect the time in which the product was made. There is ideological significance to the way in which representations are constructed in *The Bridge* which positions the audience to look at social groups and issues in different ways, reflecting cultural shifts. For example, this episode explores the growing contemporary interest in gender and how it is more fluid and changing than in the past and is a subject for discussion.
- *The Bridge*, through the ways in which it constructs representations, constructs a feminist discourse that challenges sexist, patriarchal ideas, and values:
 - Women are not marginalised; they are active and central to the narrative
 - Women are not sexualised
 - Women are not portrayed in a domestic role or defined as carers or nurturers
 - The women in the programme challenge and/or subvert the typical social norms related to gender behaviour.
- The representations in *The Bridge* are influenced by contemporary attitudes and debates, and consequently audiences are positioned to consider how representations have changed over time to reflect changes in society.

The effect of social and cultural context on representations

The effect of historical context on representations

Representations of gender: Women/ Femininity

There are several representations of women in *The Bridge* which subvert and challenge the more typical representations of women in crime dramas. Whilst the victim is more typically female, in the detectives the representation of women is strong reflecting shifts in society, culture and audience expectations. These women include:

- Saga: this character breaks away from the more typical representation of a detective. She is often compared to the 'flawed' detective of film noir but could be more accurately described as 'different'. Whilst the actor and programme's creators have avoided attaching a label to Saga, in constructing this character more challenging, complex behaviours are explored. She is described on the BBC website for the programme as 'a hardcore investigator who is socially challenged.'
(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/I9KPrIQqjCN9IrtLSPGq9N/characters>)



- All aspects of this character are pared back to the minimum including her clothing, dialogue, and relationships with others. She responds very literally to situations and in conversations which creates humour at times.
- Interestingly, whilst her representation is constructed as a powerful female, there are characteristics of Saga that are more masculine, suggesting this has helped her to survive in a patriarchal world. Her stance and walk are masculine, she is active and dynamic, moving about a lot, she is unconcerned by conventionality, for example she is not worried about changing her t-shirt in the middle of the office. Her clothing is masculine, for example, the leather trousers, military style overcoat and neutral t-shirt.
- Her passive expression has become iconic and is shown in close up particularly when she is attempting to process several pieces of information and inter-relationships with colleagues. An example in this episode is when, late in the day and absorbed in the case, she asks John to find a map for her, Hans suggests that John needs to go home, this confuses Saga who replies, 'he's recently divorced and his ex-wife has the kids this week', illustrating her inability to comprehend anyone who has a life outside of the job. Saga continues to work through the night and the audience is rarely shown aspects of her life outside of work.
- Saga's construction allows the programme to explore a character who does not conform to social norms, but in doing so effectively represents a particular under/mis-represented social group. Saga struggles with social situations, she knows how she should behave, but finds this challenging, for example when she attempts to make small talk with Hanne. She also lacks empathy and does not read sensitive situations well; she thinks rationally and says whatever occurs to her at the time with limited awareness of its appropriateness. However, she is shown to

be vulnerable and afraid at the end of this episode when confronted with her past in the form of her mother.



- Hanne Thomsen is another example of a strong female character who is also a positive representation of an older woman who is well-respected, experienced, and good at her job. Like the other women in *The Bridge*, she is not objectified, her clothing is functional and her grey hair and serious expression aid in constructing her representation. She also exemplifies the cultural differences between Sweden and Denmark, 'From their first meeting hostilities begin to mount with Hanne showing her prejudices bordering on contempt for Swedish political correctness' (www.bbc.co.uk). She can barely disguise her disdain when interviewing Anker's wife at the idea of a gender-neutral pre-school, she describes her as 'a bit Swedish'.
- Lise Friis Anderson is powerful in a different way, she is middle class, the wife of a wealthy businessman. Her views are right-wing, and she is an opinion leader through her blog displaying her views of what constitutes a family which is in direct contrast to those of Helle Anker. She has no qualms in teaching her daughter to react with violence when bullied.

Representations of gender: Men/ Masculinity

The representations of masculinity in *The Bridge* challenge the idea of inequalities of power between men and women. The representations are not typical of crime dramas as the female characters are active and central to the narrative.

- Whilst Hans is in a hierarchically powerful position, he does not use this in an oppressive way and is understanding and supportive of those who work for him, traits that could be said to be more typically feminine. He has an equal relationship with his partner Lillian who is a strong woman. He is also a positive representation of age.



- Henrik is portrayed as a flawed, vulnerable character with issues.
- It is the men, rather than the women who are presented in domestic roles, Henrik cooks and cleans and appears to be nurturing his children, a role usually given to female characters. Lise has a male cleaner, Rikard who fulfils a domestic role.



Theoretical Approaches: Feminist theory - bell hooks and Van Zoonen

bell hooks assertion that feminism is a struggle to end sexist/patriarchal oppression and the ideology of domination can be explored in relation to *The Bridge*:

- whilst patriarchal representations of gender are still evident in crime dramas, the constructions of representations of women in *The Bridge* largely challenge bell hooks' concept of 'the ideology of domination', reflecting changing ideologies and engaging in a feminist discourse.
- Saga and Hanne challenge the norm of women in the police force as does Lillian who is the Danish Police Commissioner in Copenhagen.
- representations of the family also challenge stereotypes. Helle Anker is an LGBT spokesperson offering a positive representation of acceptance of lesbian marriage within society. Saga introduces Hanne to "Hen" as a gender-neutral pronoun reflecting changing attitudes to gender.
- men in *The Bridge* are also constructed as less dominant; Hans is gentle and caring, a father figure for Saga, and Henrik is vulnerable and coping with his own demons.

AS/A Level Media Studies - Set Product Fact Sheet

- however, patriarchal domination is reflected in the crime where the victim is a woman with liberal views suggesting that when patriarchy is challenged women are targeted. The way in which her body is displayed representing a more traditional nuclear family, is relevant in reasserting stereotypical gender roles.

Van Zoonen's assertion that gender is constructed through discourse and that its meaning varies according to cultural and historical context can be applied to *The Bridge*:

- The construction of representations in *The Bridge* reflects the changing roles of men and women in society and challenges typical stereotypes of gender. The creation of Saga's character reflects the interest in society in the changing ideas and viewpoints regarding gender, reinforcing Van Zoonen's assertion that the meaning of gender varies according to cultural contexts.
- In *The Bridge*, contrary to Van Zoonen's claim, women are framed and constructed in a similar way to men. Women are active, not passive, they are not objects of the male gaze and it is they who drive the narrative forward. When Saga takes off her t-shirt, the gaze between Hanne and John is intra-diegetic, in bewilderment at her action, she is not objectified by the camera.

Theoretical Approaches: Gender performativity – Judith Butler

Butler's assertion that identity is performatively constructed and that there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender can be explored in relation to *The Bridge*:

- Through the programme's inclusion of Helle Anker's narrative regarding gender identity, a discourse is opened up and debated within the programme focusing on the nature of gender. Hanne states regarding Anker, "she was very active in the gender debate, LGBT issues. You know, there's not gender, only humans".
- Saga subverts and challenges the accepted social norms regarding gender behaviour. The construction of her character through, for example, clothing, expression, and behaviour, challenges the typical representations of female characters in this genre.

PART 3: STARTING POINTS – Media Industries

Processes of production, distribution and circulation by organisations, groups, and individuals in a global context

Television is now a global industry and this globalisation has had a significant impact evident in:

- The global distribution of television products. There are now the means in place in the television industry to distribute products worldwide.
- Nordic Noir has gained global popularity regardless of the language barrier. Contemporary audiences are more accepting of sub-titles and BBC Four has been at the forefront of establishing Non-English-Language programmes as part of their schedule. Crime dramas including *The Killing* and *The Bridge* have become an important element of BBC Four's brand identity with trailers reinforcing it as the home of Nordic Noir.
- The BBC Four Service Licence, issued in April 2016 states: 'BBC Four's primary role is to reflect a range of UK and international arts, music and culture'. Part of its remit is to 'offer international and foreign language feature films and a range of foreign language dramas and documentaries... Foreign language output should regularly be subtitled, including in peak-time, to allow people from around the world to be heard in their own voices'.
http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/regulatory_framework/service_licences/tv/2016/bbcfour_apr16.pdf
- *The Bridge* was originally broadcast by SVT in Sweden and DR in Denmark. The settings, cast and crew taken from both countries reflect the economic context in which *The Bridge* was produced and helped to shape the programme. The UK broadcaster was BBC Four.
- The main distributor was ZDF Enterprises, and *The Bridge* was distributed to over 150 countries worldwide.
- A range of marketing strategies including posters, trailers and a website were used to attract and maintain audiences focusing on:
 - In the UK, the BBC Four branding connoting recognition of quality
 - The team of detectives establishing a sense of community and an ensemble, but in some of the marketing products with Saga in the forefront
 - The character of Saga as the troubled anti-hero
 - The Swedish/Danish setting with the iconic image of the Oresund Bridge
 - The *Radio Times* used a front cover image of Saga in her recognisable overcoat with the anchor 'Hot Scandinavian dramas for cold winter nights'
- There were international remakes of *The Bridge* illustrating its success, these included the Anglo/French production *The Tunnel* and the US version *The Bridge* set on the US Mexican border and produced by the FX network.

The significance of economic factors to media industries and their products

- Alongside the increasingly global nature of television there has been a rise in the number of international co-productions. These are attractive as the collaboration means that economic responsibility can be shared and the more contributors, the bigger the production budget.
- The way in which a programme is funded can influence production, for example to qualify for funding production companies usually have to guarantee that they will film in a particular location, employ crew members from a particular country (both Swedish and Danish crews were employed in the production of *The Bridge*) and work in collaboration with other international companies.
- *The Bridge* was co-produced by Filmlance International, an independent Swedish production company and by the Danish company Nimbus Film. It also received financial support from European public service broadcasters.
- The third season of *The Bridge* also received funding from:
 - The Copenhagen Film Fund. This co-funding resulted in more Danish crew members being employed on the third season than on the previous two because of the financial support of the CFF.
 - €1 million grant was received from Creative Europe MEDIA for Series 3 and helped to support and maintain the programme's high production values. Creative Europe provide financial backing for high quality, high budget European TV drama series.

Theoretical Approaches

Cultural Industries: Hesmondhalgh

- Whilst the BBC as a public service broadcaster is not under the same pressure as commercial broadcasters in terms of ratings and competition, it still uses a range of strategies to minimise risk and maximise audiences. One of these as indicated by Hesmondhalgh, is vertical integration. *The Bridge* was a Swedish/Danish co-production, received funding from several production companies and was distributed globally by ZDF Enterprises (a subsidiary of ZDF, Germany's national public television broadcaster).
- Another key strategy used by the BBC is formatting their cultural products. Where audiences can anticipate what to expect from new products through, for example familiarity with genre conventions, then the risk is minimised. In the UK, *The Bridge* was part of the Nordic Noir

branding; trailers employed the marketing strategy of grouping together programmes under this new brand, including *The Bridge*, *Borgen*, *The Killing* and *Wallander*, describing 'A world of flawed heroes and dark criminal minds' ('Nordic Noir & Beyond Trailer'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paEDB-337eA>). This enabled audiences to anticipate what to expect and used inheritance from previous examples of the genre to maximise audiences. Whilst containing an enigmatic narratives and complex, challenging characters, *The Bridge* also contains typical codes and conventions of a crime drama. Once the programme was established, the marketing materials used the recognisable characters, setting and iconic opening soundtrack to engage with audiences.

PART 4: STARTING POINTS – Audiences

How media products target, attract, reach, address and potentially construct audiences

- The programme attracts the more niche, less mainstream BBC Four audience who are targeted through their expectations based on the brand identity of the channel. In broadcasting Nordic Noir, BBC Four established that sub-titled stories could reach a British audience. 'BBC Four's primary role is to reflect a range of UK and international arts, music and culture. It should provide an ambitious range of innovative, high quality programming that is intellectually and culturally enriching' (www.bbc.co.uk).
- The programme may attract an inherited audience who will be familiar with other Nordic Noir dramas broadcast on this channel, for example *The Killing* and *Wallander*.
- *The Bridge* also offers a range of pleasures for the fans of crime drama (Uses and Gratifications theory), the programme has typical codes and conventions of crime dramas but an element of escapism and diversion through the different characters, setting and culture. Audiences will gain pleasure from following the investigators as they attempt to solve the crime.
- Loyal audiences will have become familiar with the character of Saga, this is the start of Series 3 and they will have expectations of how her character will behave and may develop based on the other series.

The way in which different audience interpretations reflect social cultural and historical circumstances

This may include:

- Different demographic factors, for example nationality. The programme constructs an idea of the cultural differences between Sweden and

Denmark where, for example, the Swedish characters are seen to be more politically correct than the Danish. Danish and Swedish audiences may feel that *The Bridge* confirms longstanding views and reaffirms the separate cultural identities. Conversely, some may feel that this is unfair cultural stereotyping.

- Cultural capital, for example an understanding of the conventions of film noir or of other Nordic Noir dramas will enhance the viewing experience of the audience.
- Gender, for example women may be empowered by the construction of positive female representations in *The Bridge*.
- Audiences who are interested in crime dramas that offer a different cultural experience are likely to have a positive response to the programme.

Theoretical Approaches: Reception Theory – Stuart Hall

Consider Hall's assertion that there are three hypothetical positions from which messages and meanings may be decoded, in relation to *The Bridge*:

- An audience may understand and accept the producers intended meaning, to construct a programme that appeals to audiences by including some typical conventions of the crime drama whilst offering something different and more challenging through the character of Saga and the Scandinavian setting. These viewers will be entertained by the programme, its complex narrative, and the intertextual references to film noir.
- Feminist audiences are likely to feel empowered by the inclusion of strong, powerful women in the storyline, by the representation of a lesbian relationship and the narrative addressing gender issues.
- Some audiences may assume a negotiated position, they may enjoy the typical codes and conventions of a crime drama, the enigmas, and the involvement with the investigative narrative, but feel more uncomfortable with the specific focus of the narrative. Swedish and Danish audiences may engage with the drama but feel that the cultural depictions are stereotypical.
- An oppositional audience reading may struggle to find Saga a sympathetic character. Audiences may view her behaviour traits with concern or find it difficult to connect to her emotionally as her responses are so different to expectations and she lacks humour. A more conservative audience may respond negatively to the Swedish liberal attitudes to sex, gender, and political correctness.

PART 5: STARTING POINTS – Media Contexts

- **Social and Cultural contexts. Consider:**
 - The fact that the programme reflects the changing attitudes towards gender and specifically introduces a discourse into the narrative of this series around gender, identity, and LGBTQ issues.
 - The representation of gender in the programme, including the construction of Saga's character, is influenced by changing social and cultural attitudes regarding the role of women in society.
 - The binary opposition of the Swedish and Danish cultures highlights how issues may be treated differently in different cultures.
 - Responses to *The Bridge* may reflect the social and cultural circumstances of the audience.
- **Historical context**
 - *The Bridge* demonstrates that genre conventions are historically relative and dynamic.
 - The representations constructed in the programme are affected by the historical context, they subvert and challenge typical representations that have been accepted over time and in doing so reflect the society of the time.
 - Different audience interpretations of *The Bridge* may reflect historical circumstances.
- **Economic contexts**
 - *The Bridge* demonstrates the economic advantages of international co-productions.
 - The creation of the Nordic Noir brand meant that programmes could be successfully marketed globally.
 - Establishing the codes and conventions of this style of programme builds a loyal fanbase and reduces the economic risk.

Acknowledgements

Images ©ZDF

All quotes from dialogue taken from *The Bridge* Episode 1, Series 3. Original Broadcaster: SVT1 (Sweden) DR1 (Denmark). UK Broadcaster: BBC Four