6 Screening the west coast

Developing *New Nordic Noir* tourism in Denmark and using the actual places as full-scale visual mood boards for the scriptwriting process

Anne Marit Waade

Figure 6.1 Filmby Aarhus' *New Nordic Noir* initiative encompasses ideas for several site-specific drama series, including an online, playable platform called *The West Coast Universe*, developed in close collaboration with Ringkøbing-Skjern municipality on the west coast of Denmark. The picture shows the German harbour in the popular tourist destination of Hvide Sande, one of the potential locations in the series and the online platform.

Source: Filmby Aarhus website. Reproduced with permission.

Introduction

Drawing on the international popularity of Nordic Noir crime series, *New Nordic Noir* is a project initiated by the regional media cluster Filmby

Aarhus to develop a new kind of “site-specific” crime series to attract international viewers and tourists and to create new co-production business models within the screen industry. The *New Nordic Noir* project is based on specific location and local investments; the ideas for the series are based on the actual landscapes, stories, and heritage of the coastal municipality of Ringkøbing-Skjern (RKS) in Denmark; and the series will be shot on the west coast of Denmark. So far, the project encompasses ideas for three distinct drama productions, all of which are still under development, with the first one due to be aired in 2021.

In this chapter, I will give a brief introduction to Nordic Noir tourism based on crime fiction and crime drama series from the region, such as *Wallander* (Ystad), *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Stockholm), *The Killing* (Copenhagen), *Dicte* (Aarhus), *The Bridge* (Malmö and Copenhagen), and *Trapped* (Reykjavik). The significant use of Nordic locations, climate, light, and seasons in Nordic Noir crime series fascinates viewers around the world (Creeber, 2015; Roberts, 2016; Jensen, 2016; Hansen & Waade, 2017). In continuation of this, I will present my empirical material based on the *New Nordic Noir* case study. I have followed the initial phase of the process, also called pre-preproduction (Wille, 2015), and the “screen idea development” phase (Redvall, 2013). My focus has been to study the role of locations in this early stage of the production process, as well as studying cross-sectoral collaboration. The modes of collaboration encompass collaboration between the culture, tourism, and strategic planning divisions of the municipality itself on the one hand and strategic partnerships with commercial players such as media producers and tourism agencies (as well as public partners such as museums and academic institutions) on the other. The study is part of the ongoing “Rethinking Tourism in a Coastal City” innovation project, which is funded by the Danish Innovation Fund.

This chapter contributes to the study of screen tourism in four distinct ways. First, it describes Nordic Noir tourism as a cultural phenomenon involving the significant use of locations, climate, and landscapes. Second, it illuminates an aspect of the production of “location imagination” which is often overlooked and hidden, since it takes place even before drama series are produced and broadcast. As such, the study draws attention to the imaginations, discourses, and expectations about landscapes that are already in play at the pre-production stage. For example, the way in which different imaginations of the coastline are embedded in cultural and historical contexts represents a hybrid landscape (Cosgrove, 1998; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Third, the study focuses on screen tourism as a form of cross-sectoral collaboration and partnership. Until now, screen tourism has most often been studied from the tourism point of view, either in terms of destination marketing strategy (Beeton, 2005) or in terms of tourist experiences (Reijnders, 2011). This study thus broadens the scope and looks at the specific modes of dialogue and collaboration that take place *across* sectors and industries. Finally, the study

reflects a new participatory and co-operative role of the researcher in screen tourism research and thus contributes to the location study approach in new and significant ways (Hallam & Roberts, 2014; Hansen & Waade, 2017).

Nordic Noir tourism

Scandinavian crime fiction has reached out to fans and readers around the world for decades, and authors such as Henning Mankell, Liza Marklund, Stieg Larsson, Jon Nesbø, and Jussi Adler Olsen have become extremely popular. Their books have been translated into many languages and exported to a number of continents and countries (Bergman, 2014; Stougaard-Nielsen, 2017). Following this popularity, Nordic crime series have also been acknowledged internationally. The term “Nordic Noir” started popping up in news media and among fans back in 2010 just after the Danish public-service drama *Forbrydelsen* (*The Killing*, 2011–2014) hit the British television market (Agger, 2016; Redvall, 2013; Hansen & Waade, 2017). Parallel to this story, fans, viewers, and readers of these popular crime stories started to travel to Scandinavia to take a closer look at the places where their favourite stories took place and where the series were shot. In fact, we have had screen (and literature) tourism within the Nordic region for a long time before Nordic Noir occurred, for example, tourism focusing on Astrid Lindgren (*Pippi Longstocking*, Sweden) as well as Thorbjørn Egner’s (*Kardemommeby*, Norway) amusement parks and the *Moomin* museum in Finland related to Tove Jansson’s works. However, until now, these attractions have primarily drawn domestic visitors and families from the other Nordic countries (Sjöholm, 2011).

In the early 2000s, the first German *Wallander* fans came to the local police station in Ystad and asked for inspector Kurt Wallander. The Swedish best-seller crime series is by Henning Mankell, and the media franchise consists of 12 novels and four TV series, of which there are one Swedish adaptation (SVT, 1994–2007) and one British adaptation (BBC, 2008–2016), starring Kenneth Branagh as the main character, and two spinoff series based on the characters from the novels, respectively, the Swedish series called *Wallander* (Yellow Bird, 2005–2013), starring Krister Henriksson as the main character, and the more recent Netflix series *Young Wallander* (2020–). The story about Wallander takes place in the small coastal city of Ystad, and the television series are shot in the city. When the German visitors asked for Wallander, the police officer was surprised that they could mix fiction with reality, but after a second, she decided to answer that Kurt unfortunately was not at work and suggested instead that they visited Mariagata, where Kurt Wallander lived (McClintock, 2010). In fact, this was the very beginning of Nordic Noir tourism, and it marked a new paradigm for the popular Scandinavian crime stories – they were no longer only books and television series that one could read and see but also destinations that people could visit. Parallel to this, we have also experienced a Nordic wave that included

a global interest in food, design, and architecture from the region – as well as a more recent interest in Arctic destinations and winter tourism in the Nordic region. As Jon Sadler, the distributor of Nordic crime series on the British market, explains, it was not only the series and the stories themselves that fascinated the audiences but also an interest in the Nordic region itself: its culture, nature, and way of living:

They [the viewers] just became very interested in design as well as fashion and interior. People want to learn about tourism and culture, so why just tell them about upcoming DVD box sets? Maybe we should also be telling them about the different tours they can do, the places they can visit.

(cited in Hansen & Waade, 2017: 2016)

The fans, readers, and viewers of Scandinavian crime fiction and crime series are relatively well educated and relatively well off. In terms of age, they are 40+ (Jensen, 2016), and in a tourism context, this is a very strong segment with the resources needed to travel and an interest in doing so. In Ystad, the local tourism and culture division decided to take advantage of the new interest in the town and developed a wide-scale film tourism policy to attract tourists and engage local investors, institutions, and citizens. Wallander tourism has developed into a very successful and sustainable form of tourism (Waade, 2013), inspiring other destinations within the region as well as new collaborations across the creative, business, and tourism divisions of local municipalities. Here are some examples of this development: *Millennium* tourism in Stockholm (based on Stieg Larsson's *Millennium Trilogy*), *Forbrydelsen* tourism in Copenhagen (based on the television series *The Killing*), *Bron* tourism in Malmö (based on the television series *The Bridge*), *Fjällbacka* tourism on the west coast of Sweden (based on Camilla Läckberg's *Fjällbacka Murders* books), *Dicte* tourism in Aarhus (based on Elsebeth Egholm's books), and *Trapped* tourism in Reykjavik (based on the television series). The significant use of Nordic locations, climate, light, and seasons in these crime series has fascinated viewers around the world (Creeber, 2015; Roberts, 2016; Saunders, 2017; Jensen, 2016; Hansen & Waade, 2017).

Even though there are many examples, the number of screen tourists visiting each place is quite small, and in general, Nordic Noir tourism cannot be regarded as a big industry. However, screen tourism is something that news media wants to cover. Furthermore, the fact that the viewers can visit locations from global media franchises such as *The Hobbit* (New Zealand), *Harry Potter* (London), and *Sex and the City* (New York) becomes part of the buzz and brings both extra funding and marketing to the production; screen tourism has increasingly become part of the business model for recent television drama series, both on local and transnational levels. For example, *Game of Thrones* has developed screen tourism as part of its business model

by initiating partnerships with local film producers and tourism agencies in places such as Northern Ireland, Dubrovnik, Barcelona, and Iceland.

Screen tourism destinations offer visitors the chance to experience their favourite characters and stories first hand. They can see the places where the stories take place and the places where the series are shot. Screen tourists are keen to get close to the fictional world and to get behind the scenes and the production (Beeton, 2005; Månsson, 2015). Sometimes there are guided film tours and exhibitions showing the celebrities, locations, and set, with anecdotes being told by the crew. In other examples, there are online maps and mobile apps with a lot of routes and background information. For Nordic Noir series, it is particularly the Nordic landscapes, the cold (in some cases arctic) climate, the strong female characters, the gender equalities, and in general the Nordic welfare society and way of living that have fascinated the readers, viewers, and visitors. These elements have become selling points also when developing Nordic Noir tourism within the region (Roberts, 2016; Waade, 2018). This is the case for *Trapped* in Iceland, *The Bridge* tourism in Malmö, or the murder mystery tour in Fjällbacka in which you can “follow in the literary footsteps of Fjällbacka’s queen of crime, Camilla Läckberg, and see the crime scenes she describes with your own eyes” (Fjällbacka Information, 2020; Hansen & Waade, 2017).

The New Nordic Noir case study

New Nordic Noir is a project initiated in 2016 by the media cluster Filmby Aarhus with start-up funding from “Aarhus2017” (Aarhus was a European Capital of Culture in 2017). The idea was to develop a site-specific, transmedia crime drama series in collaboration with the coastal municipality of RKS. By calling the initiative *New Nordic Noir*, Filmby Aarhus sought to take advantage of the international popularity of Scandinavian crime series, as well as focusing on the Nordic rural landscapes, like many other recent crime series from the region (Roberts, 2016; Hansen & Waade, 2017). Since the first initiative, ideas for more than one series have been developed, and at the moment, the project encompasses three different ideas that are still at a very early stage. At the same time, Filmby Aarhus and the RKS municipality are collaborating to develop an online playable platform called *The West Coast Universe*, using an open design process in which local institutions such as the historical museum and NaturKraft are engaged as well as the National Museum in Copenhagen, gaming and digital design companies, architects, and researchers. At this stage, they are still brainstorming about what the platform might look like and what kind of technology (open-source gaming software, augmented reality, etcetera) should be employed. The overall ambition has been that local places and history should play a significant role in the crime series as well as in an online platform with games and background information titled *The West*

Coast Universe linked to the story in the television series. The series will also be shot within the municipality.

In addition to the *New Nordic Noir* project, the RKS municipality has also been involved in an innovation project called “Rethinking Tourism in a Coastal City” (2016–2019), funded by the Danish Innovation Fund. I became involved in the *New Nordic Noir* initiative as part of my engagement in the tourism innovation project. Despite the fact that RKS already has a strong tourist industry, the municipality had never been involved in screen productions or screen tourism before. Since my own field of expertise is television drama production and screen tourism, I was glad to help. My role as a researcher was thus not only to study the processes as they took place but also to contribute to the creative development process through participatory observations.

The *New Nordic Noir* initiative started with an on-site writing workshop in Hvide Sande (September 2016) aiming to train young European scriptwriters in developing strong ideas for crime series based in specific

Figure 6.2 Ringkøbing-Skjern municipality on the west coast of Denmark. Hvide Sande is a small fishing harbour and popular tourist destination.

Source: Google (n.d.).

Figure 6.2 (Continued)

locations. In April 2017, Filmby Aarhus hosted a pitch seminar in Hamburg in which they paired Danish and German production companies and asked them to present ideas for a new drama series. At that point, the German film cluster Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein was already on board, and Filmby Aarhus was in contact with the Danish broadcaster TV2 and later the public-service broadcaster DR. In August 2017, the three writing teams attended a creative writing workshop in Hvide Sande together with

the producers to develop their screen ideas further. One of the writing teams will finish their script by the end of 2018, and the plan is that the pilot for this series will be shot in the summer of 2019, with the series being shot in 2020 and premiere in 2021. At the same time, Filmby Aarhus and RKS municipality are co-hosting workshops for various stakeholders and creative partners to develop ideas and business models for the *West Coast Universe*.

Methodological considerations: screen idea development and tourism intervention

This chapter is based on three overall methodological approaches: the location study (Hansen & Waade, 2017), the screen idea development study (Redvall, 2013), and place interventions as part of a creative innovation (Waade et al., 2018). In general, when dealing with the relationship between mediated and imagined geographical places, the semiosis of local colour, it is important to distinguish between: 1) the physical, geographical place; 2) the mediated place as it occurs in print, television, film or web; and 3) an individual's imagination of the place (Hansen & Waade, 2017: 41; Falkheimer & Jansson, 2006; Waade, 2013). The cultural meaning of a certain place or tourist destination is embedded in the interweaving meanings based on these three different aspects. With regard to *New Nordic Noir*, the *physical, geographical place* is a particular part of the west coast of Denmark, namely the harbour town of Hvide Sande and its surroundings. The *mediated place* in this context does not yet exist because the production is still in its initial phase. For example, genre-specific elements and conventions about locations in the crime genre will influence the production when it starts. The individual's *imagination of the west coast of Denmark* that I study in this context includes the people involved in developing the screen idea such as the scriptwriters, the producer, the film advisor, the head of culture, the head of tourism, the local stakeholders, and their strategic partners. With a view to gaining insight into their ideas and imaginations, I have met and talked to them, as well as taking part in workshops and events. The study thus includes observations and interviews.

The study of narrative places and shooting locations is a new interdisciplinary approach drawing on aesthetics, cultural analysis, media studies, and geography and is a way to empirically study how locations influence and are reflected in actual screen productions, both on and off screen. The off-screen conditions encompass how the local screen industry facilities and expertise, the geographical place, the local policies and funding opportunities, tourism, and more general cultural conditions may influence the way that locations are displayed on screen (Hansen & Waade, 2017: 57). The on-screen location factors relate to the local colour in a specific drama series and cover elements such as how the shore, land, or islands are used as locations; how rural and/or urban elements are used; how climate, weather, and seasons are reflected in the story and the visual imagery; how mobility and

infrastructure indicate a certain type of location; and how architecture, art, and design are reflected in the visual style and narrative concept. In general, this approach looks at the relationship between the on-screen local colour and the off-screen production conditions. The methods used to study the locations in a screen production represent a wide range of approaches such as textual analysis, genre analysis, document analysis, media system analysis, production observations, interviews with creative staff and local authorities, and geographical analysis. In relation to the *New Nordic Noir* case study, I have so far carried out participatory observations, media system analysis, document analysis, and geographical analysis. The series has not been produced yet, so it is not yet possible to see how the different cultural conditions and off-screen dimensions will influence it. However, I am able to study the location imaginations that are involved at this early stage and the role that the west coast of Denmark plays in this context.

Studying a drama production even before it has started is something Jakob Wille (2015) describes as a “pre-preproduction study”. While preproduction is about finalizing the manuscript, the budget, casting, and setting up the production team, and the production phase is about shooting, pre-preproduction concerns the process involved when the very first ideas for a series come to life. Studying this conceptual and creative part of a drama series is what Eva Redvall (2013) defines as “screen idea development”. Redvall focuses on the scriptwriters’ creative work, and her idea is that the scriptwriting process depends a great deal on the actual industry (“field”) context; the predominant trends and traditions (“domain”); and the scriptwriter’s talent, track record, and training (“individuals”). In relation to the *New Nordic Noir* project, my focus is less on the scriptwriters’ work and more on the way in which the RKS municipality and Filmby Aarhus collaborate with each other.

In relation to the third approach dealing with creative tourism innovation and site-specific interventions related to the Rethinking Tourism project, my work employs participatory observations in screen productions (Caldwell, 2008), practice-based research (Ellström, 2010), and place intervention (Waade et al., 2018) as innovation methods. I will say more about my role as a researcher later in the chapter.

The coastline as a mythological and mediated place

In many ways, the coastline has a particular position in Danish culture, folklore, and religion. The different imageries of the coastline are embedded in cultural and historical contexts, and together they represent a hybrid landscape (Cosgrove, 1998). The coastline marks the border between land and sea, between life and death, between perishability and infinity. It is a liminal place, a threshold leading to imagined worlds beyond the physical place. For example, some religious rituals (funerals, baptism) take place at the waterfront or on the beach, and mythological creatures live and operate here, with

some of them only being visible at dusk or dawn (the threshold between day and night). Mermaids and the Norwegian “draugen” (Romano et al., 2005) are two examples of such creatures: they both operate in the water and at the coastline, and in the old fairy tales, the fishermen risked their lives if they did not resist the magic power of the mermaid or the “draugen” monster.

Beside the mythical and mediated imaginations of the beach as a certain place, the coastline has also served as an important workplace for fishing and shipping throughout history. In contemporary culture, the coastal landscapes have been transformed into places for tourism, adventure, and cultural consumption (Urry & Larsen, 2011). In this process, the beaches, a particular part of the coastline, have become crucial. The tropical dream on which modern Western tourism is based includes a particular way of looking at and using beaches. The European beaches underwent a “polynesianification” in which palm trees and tropical plants were planted all the way along the Mediterranean coastline (Löfgren, 1999). The tropical paradise became a popular music and media image, indicating a playful and sensuous life on the beach involving surfing, romance, food, and drink (Meethan, 2012). Parallel to the rapid growth in the tourist industry since the 1960s and the development of new coastal destinations for tourists, a great number of popular films and television series, as well as a great deal of music, have portrayed the beach as a playful and romantic place. Here are just a few examples: the US-based backpacker movie and book *The Beach* (2000), the television series *Baywatch* (1999–2001), and the reality show *Paradise Hotel* (2003–).

The transformation of the west coast of Denmark: from fishing and war to tourism

Fishing has always been an important occupation in the municipality of RKS, and for the farmers in the area, the coast has served as a source of extra food and income. In general, the west coast has undergone a transformation: from fishing zone to war zone and then to the tourist industry and the energy industry. During the Second World War, the Danish west coast became part of Hitler’s Atlantic Wall project, in which massive bunkers were constructed on the beaches and under the sand dunes as a coastal defence network and fortification system to provide protection against military attack. Today the bunkers remain on the beaches as concrete ruins and open wounds impossible to move or destroy.

After the Second World War, this stretch of coastline was transformed again by a new type of invasion: tourism. Today tourism is one of the biggest industries in the municipality, and 80% of the tourists are Germans (Ehrhorn, 2018). Since the 1970s, Danish families have built summer cottages along the coastal area, and during the summer period, many of these families rent their houses out to tourists. The main attraction for the tourists both winter and summer is the beach, where they can swim, walk, do yoga, go jogging or riding, have a barbecue, play, climb on the bunkers, take

EXPERIENCE THE BUNKERS IN HOUVIG

Take a walk in the dunes at Houvig and experience the unique nature and hear the story of the bunker plants from the occupation.

Figure 6.3 *Houvig* bunker from the Second World War is one of the many bunkers that attract thousands of tourists every year in Ringkøbing-Skjern. This picture appears on the local tourist website and illustrates the way the beach and the bunkers are presented as a destination.

Source: Photo by Jakob Høgel. Søndervig Tourism website. Reproduced with permission.

part in the kite festival, surf, or just gaze. The numerous German bunkers in the area attract and fascinate the visitors: they are like massive concrete sculptural ruins on the beaches (see Figure 6.3). Moreover, in the last two decades, *Cold Hawaii*, a brand name for the west coast of Denmark among international surfer communities, has attracted the attention of new groups of tourists from all over the world. It can also be argued that another transformation is taking place as well, something which does not replace tourism but supplements it: the wind energy industry. New wind turbines are being constructed along the coastline, and the municipality plans to develop further offshore wind farms a few kilometres from the coastline. Green energy companies in RKS not only produce and export windmill energy but also produce the turbines themselves within the municipality.

Edgelands in Nordic Noir

In fact, the idea that Filmby Aarhus suggested creating a crime series by using the west coast of Denmark as setting echoes other recent Nordic Noir series also using coastal settings as a distinct narrative and visual element.

This is the case for series such as *Inspector Wallander* (2005–2013) living at the edge of the Swedish coast (Waade, 2013); *The Bridge* (2013–2018) taking place in the Öresund region, encompassing both the Danish and Swedish coastal areas (Chow, 2016); and *Trapped* (2015–) taking place in Reykjavik (Hansen & Waade, 2017), as well as Nordic Noir series from outside the Nordic regions such as *Hinterland* (2013–), *Broadchurch* (2013–2017), and *Shetland* (2013–). The coastal setting not only works as a visual feature but also mirrors the characters in the stories, the society, and the criminal acts themselves. Gray (2014) explains that the coastal setting in Nordic Noir consists of tropes of *negative aesthetics* in which exterior darkness mirror the psyche of protagonists, and *liminal landscapes* stress “isolation and wilderness evoking vulnerability, exposure and insecurity” (ibid: 75).

Liminality . . . is characterised by narrative devices that cross thresholds and explore the notion of in/between spaces such as the possibilities for existing in/between fantasy and reality, life and death, being and unbeing.

(ibid: 74)

As the setting for a television crime series, the west coast of Denmark is already loaded with meaning. It is an assemblage of historical, mythological, genre-specific, geographical, and cultural layers. Since the scripts for the *New Nordic Noir* series still are in development, we do not yet know to what extent these elements are included in the narrative and the aesthetic of the new series. When studying the initial process of developing RKS as a screen production location and a screen tourism destination, I have focused on how these existing practices and cultural meanings of the physical, geographical places, as well as the genre-specific use of settings, are part of the creative process as well as the negotiations between the partners involved in the process.

As we will see in the following, the different partner and stakeholder ideas of how the west coast of Denmark can be exploited as film location and screen tourism destination have not been very clear from the beginning. Rather it has been a process of development in which the different partners involved needed to develop a common language across the sectors (tourism, culture, media production) and understanding related to locations in a screen production as well as an understanding of their respective roles in the process. Furthermore, since this was the very first time that the municipality had been involved in a screen production, it needed to build up competences and professionalize its own involvement.

Location placement: cross-sectoral collaboration

In general, developing screen tourism requires collaboration across the media and the tourism industry, something that until recently has been quite

rare. We are talking about two distinct industries with different professional training, mindsets, and values. Already when Filmby Aarhus initiated the *New Nordic Noir* project back in 2016, the idea of developing screen tourism was part of its ambition. It wanted to develop a transmedia crime drama with the potential to develop screen tourism. So RKS, with its well-established reputation as a popular destination for German tourists and amazing coastal landscapes, was a good choice of partner. For RKS, this was an opportunity to develop a branding strategy as well as screen tourism, despite the fact that the area lacked know-how about the film industry as well as any production facilities. This was the first time the municipality had been engaged in a screen production, so collaboration with Filmby Aarhus on the *New Nordic Noir* project was a challenge. Two public servants from the culture division took a leading role in the new partnership: project manager Rebecca Molders and the head of culture, Per Høgh Sørensen.

To build up their competence, professionalize their involvement, and attract political support locally, they developed a threefold strategy: 1) strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration and co-creation, 2) build local competences, and 3) develop a local film production policy. This threefold strategy was not defined in a carefully written policy document – it was just something that happened. The modes of collaboration related to the first part of the strategy encompassed new forms of collaboration between the culture, tourism, and strategic planning divisions of the municipality on the one hand and strategic partnerships with commercial players such as media producers and tourism agencies (as well as public partners such as museums and academic institutions) on the other. The great advantage for a small municipality like RKS is that many of the people involved know each other, and it is easy and natural to work across institutions, divisions, and disciplines. The online platform *West Coast Universe* and the *Rethinking Tourism* project have paved the way for new collaboration with creative industries and researchers, and during the last couple of years, they have hosted meetings and creative workshops with their new partners focusing on the *New Nordic Noir* project. The fact that the *Rethinking Tourism* project is taking place at the same time as the transmedia crime drama project has provided momentum for the partners involved, making it easier to convince the local council to invest funding and engage new partners. The *Rethinking Tourism* project brought groups of students and international scholars to the municipality, all of them engaging in new ways of seeing and staging the west coast. This process has furthermore inspired RKS to initiate a co-creative strategy involving groups of pupils and creative individuals within the area.

With a view to implementing the second part of the strategy (building local competences), the municipality organized a study trip to Ystad in April 2018 to learn how to develop a sustainable screen tourism and film strategy based on their experiences with the *Wallander* series. Representatives from the culture division as well as tourism and strategic planning divisions went

Figure 6.4 Stakeholders from Ringkøbing-Skjern municipality visiting Ystad Studios Visitor Center, April 2018.

Source: Photo by author.

on this study trip, thereby supporting the cross-sectoral collaboration strategy. During the study trip, they met representatives from Ystad municipality, local screen tourism partners and entrepreneurs, strategic planners and film commissioners in the Skåne region, and screen production companies. They achieved an understanding of the wide-scale potential of locally based screen productions and screen tourism, with great locations and local support being identified as key resources. To develop sustainable screen tourism, the stakeholders from RKS that took part in the study trip realized the need for long-term planning as well as a strategy for how to engage citizens, investors, local institutions, and national and international partners.

Inspired by the study trip and the new partnerships, the municipality decided to professionalize its own role in the partnership by appointing Rebecca Molders as a full-time screen production advisor. Furthermore, in August 2018, the local council agreed on a film policy and location placement strategy that aimed to attract more screen productions to the area, invest money in the productions and offer practical support, teach and engage pupils and citizens in screen productions, support a locally based film festival, and take the lead in new innovative projects such as *West Coast*

Universe alongside creative partners and researchers. Location placement is a place branding strategy in which the destination (or the city or the nation) places its locations in a film or a series for branding purposes. Location placement can also be part of a local policy aiming to build and strengthen the local creative industry. Moreover, and as part of its film policy, RKS developed a PR strategy to make sure that all initiatives and events were covered in the local news media and thus brought to the attention of citizens, politicians, and institutions in the area.

Creating and negotiating “location imagination”: avoid provincial stereotypes!

So how did the imaginations of the west coast of Denmark as a film location match the screen ideas developed in the pre-preproduction stage of the *New Nordic Noir* initiative? When Filmby Aarhus first met the local politicians to discuss their potential investment in the *New Nordic Noir* production, their immediate reaction was that they were worried about the images of the area that the new series would generate: they wanted to avoid comic and dark stereotypes, and they were afraid that murders and crime would have a negative impact on their brand image. The municipality had worked hard to build up a brand image, and the politicians were afraid that a new series could work against this. It is a general challenge for rural municipalities like RKS to prevent economic depression caused by companies closing down, lack of investment, local schools closing down, families leaving, and young people not settling down. In Denmark, these areas have been described as “rotten bananas”, “the outskirts of Denmark”, and “provincial”. When the politicians were asked to invest in the *New Nordic Noir* series, they wanted to make sure that the series did not confirm any of these discourses and ideas. In addition to the negative branding concerns, the politicians also wondered about the obvious contradiction in the idea of using crime and murders to attract future tourists, new residents, and investors. However, learning more about other crime fiction tourist destinations such as Ystad, Edinburgh, and Gotland made it clear that fictional crime and murders do not affect the brand of a destination – in fact, they are beneficial because good stories will generate media attention.

The first actual visual imagery of the *New Nordic Noir* series that has been shown is presented on the Filmby Aarhus website (see previously). This image shows the German harbour in Hvide Sande, with the foggy, cold weather being underlined in the green-blue colour palette. This picture echoes the Nordic Noir visual style and settings (Roberts, 2016; Creeber, 2015; Hansen & Waade, 2017). The German harbour is a very picturesque place, with small, old fishermen’s houses lined up in a row, forming the well-known “skyline” imagery shown in tourist magazines and postcards from the area. Many of these houses are still in use; some of them are worn down and have the nostalgic veneer of old paintings and rough weather that appeals to the

tourist gaze (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Since this is almost the only picture that has been circulated in relation to the *New Nordic Noir* initiative, it has become a visual icon for the series. The picture is used on the Filmby Aarhus website as well as by the local partners engaged in pre-production.

The last two elements that I will emphasize in this context are related to the creative process. First, screen idea development and the work of the scriptwriters take place on location, so to speak. This idea was part of the project from the very beginning, with the creative workshops involving scriptwriters, producers, and local partners from the municipality meeting in a summer cottage in Hvide Sande. Many television drama series are shot in and based on specific, actual places, but this way of developing site-specific television drama set in rural areas in which the places themselves inform and inspire the creative process has hardly ever been seen before.¹ It could be argued that the actual places function as full-scale visual mood boards for the scriptwriting. In addition, and as part of an open creative process, researchers and students have contributed to screen idea development through mapping, playful engagement, and visual productions of possible film locations in Ringkøbing-Skjern. Hundreds of students of architecture, anthropology, experience economy, media studies, and media production have visited the municipality, done on-site fieldwork, and produced visual material and creative ideas for future development as well as potential locations for the crime drama series. Twenty-five international PhD students also stayed in Hvide Sande for a week in June 2018 to work with Nordic Noir and come up with audiovisual mood boards and creative ideas for the site-specific crime drama series. The process involving students and young researchers has been carried out parallel to the work of the team developing the *New Nordic Noir* series, although some of the ideas were forwarded to them via teachers and local collaborators.

Location study conducted as co-creative and innovative collaboration

As mentioned previously, the study reflects a new participatory and collaborative role for researchers involved in screen industry research. My engagement in the *New Nordic Noir* project has been part of my commitment to the innovation project *Rethinking Tourism*, the objective of which has been to develop new modes of tourism on the west coast through site-specific intervention. The tourism innovation project has been based on close collaboration between researchers from the fields of architecture, anthropology, culture, and media studies on the one hand and local institutions, entrepreneurs, citizens, and authorities in RKS on the other. The overall ambition has been to develop tourism through site-specific interventions and new modes of cross-sectoral and co-creative collaboration.

In my case, the intervention was related to processes in which I was asked to help the municipality to develop expertise and knowledge on how to be a

partner in television drama production and how to build up screen tourism from scratch. So rather than studying the practices of others, which is the most common way of doing screen production studies (Caldwell, 2008; Redvall, 2013) and location studies (Hallam & Roberts, 2014; Hansen & Waade, 2017), I have engaged in the practice myself and contributed to the development of sustainable new modes of tourism in the municipality. As a result, I initiated meetings with Filmby Aarhus and stakeholders in the municipality, I shared my knowledge with my local partners, I took part in the initial meetings with the local council and gave a talk about screen tourism, I organized the study trip alongside my local partners, I suggested workshops and invited key persons to talk about the project at international research conferences, and I initiated fieldwork for my masters students at Aarhus University.

This way of intervening the processes differs from the other interventions in the *Rethinking Tourism* project, which generally involved objects and events that took place on particular sites within the municipality. Place interventions and “site-specific provotyping” aiming to engage local stakeholders and citizens is a method which is used in landscape architecture (Waade et al., 2018). However, in my engagement in the *New Nordic Noir* project, I have instead intervened in the processes with a view to strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration, supporting the role of the municipality in its partnership with Filmby Aarhus, and helping it gain access to knowledge and expertise about how to build screen tourism in relation to screen productions.

Conclusion

Location imaginations in relation to the *New Nordic Noir* case illuminate a particular part of the production process: screen idea development. The case study shows how the coastal municipality of RKS, which had no previous screen industry experience, realized during the initial phase of the *New Nordic Noir* initiative that its coastal landscapes and tourism could be exploited to attract screen productions, develop screen tourism, and engage citizens. In a coastal area and popular tourist destination like RKS, the idea that the landscape and countryside are a commodity with economic value is not new. The coastline has been one of the main sources of income and economic growth throughout history, from fishing and war to tourism and green energy production. But in this case, the municipality is a local partner in a screen production and is also using this initiative to develop a screen production strategy that aims to attract other screen productions, engage in screen productions, use screen productions as windows for place branding, initiate new creative collaborations across sectors, and engage citizens in small-screen productions. One could ask if this initiative will conflict with the existing tourism and the fact that most tourists visiting the west coast seek solitude, exercise, and nature. As such, the Danish west coast is already a mass tourism destination with its more the five million visitors per year, and the *New Nordic noir* initiative will not change this much. Rather, RKS hopes that screen

tourism can help attract different kinds of tourists from different countries and also maintain the groups of tourists that the region already has.

In general, locations in television drama series have significant economic, narrative, and aesthetics value. The values are related to the landscape imageries and site-specific aesthetics on the screen but also the funding and production facilities that are provided for on-location shooting and locally based productions. However, academic focus on location placement and site-specific television drama has so far been limited. As such, this study aims to contribute to this field and shed light on how location imagination is reflected, negotiated, and practiced in an early stage of a screen production.

Note

- 1 One exception is the Danish melodrama *Arvingerne* (*The Legacy*, 2014–) (Waade & Wille, 2016).

Bibliography

- Agger, G. (2016). Nordic Noir: Location identity and emotion. In: A. Garcia (ed.), *Emotions in contemporary TV series*, pp. 134–152. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Beeton, S. (2005). *Aspects of tourism: Film-induced tourism*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Bergman, K. (2014). *Swedish crime fiction: The making of Nordic Noir*. Milan: Mimesis.
- Caldwell, J.T. (2008). *Production culture: Industrial reflexivity and critical practice in film and television*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Chow, P. (2016). Traversing the Øresund: The transnational urban region in *Bron/Broen*. In: J. Andersson & L. Webb (eds.), *Global cinematic cities: New landscapes of film and media*, pp. 36–58. London: Wallflower Press.
- Cosgrove, D. (1998). *Social formation and symbolic landscapes*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Creeber, G. (2015). ‘Killing us softly’: Investigating the aesthetics, philosophy and influence of Nordic Noir television. *Journal of Popular Television* 3(1): 21–35.
- Ehrhorn, M. (2018). *Turisme for milliarder: Ringkøbing-Skjern helt i toppen*. Retrieved from <https://jv.dk/artikel/turisme-for-milliardere-ringkoebing-skjern-helt-i-toppen-2018-1-6> (05-04-2020).
- Ellström, P. (2010). Practice-based innovations: A learning perspective. *Journal of Workplace Learning: Studies Organizational Learning Organizational Change Innovations Adaptability* 22(1–2): 27–40.
- Falkheimer, J. & Jansson, A. (eds.). (2006). *Geographies of communication: The spatial turn in media studies*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Fjällbacka Information. (2020). *Camilla Lackberg murder mystery tour*. Retrieved from <https://fjallbackainfo.se/camilla-lackberg-murder-mystery-tour/> (02-04-2020).
- Google. (n.d.). *Ringkøbing-Skjern Municipality [map]*. Retrieved from www.google.nl/maps/place/Ringk%C3%B8bing-Skjern+Municipality,+Denmark/@56.017417,8.2005117,10z/data=!3m1!4m5!3m4!1s0x464a539ee50008e3:0xf6f6fed2d06524d9!8m2!3d56.0446887!4d8.50589 (08-08-2018).
- Gray, E. (2014). In/between places: Connection and isolation in the bridge. *Aeternum: The Journal of Contemporary Gothic Studies* 1(1): 73–85.

- Hallam, J. & Roberts, L. (2014). *Locating the moving image: New approaches to film and place*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hansen, K.T. & Waade, A.M. (2017). *Locating Nordic Noir*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jensen, P.M. (2016). Global impact of Danish drama series: A peripheral, non-commercial creative counter-flow. *Kosmorama* #263. Retrieved from www.kosmorama.org/en/kosmorama/artikler/global-impact-danish-drama-series-peripheral-non-commercial-creative-counter (10-04-2020).
- Löfgren, O. (1999). *On holiday*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Månsson, M. & Eskilsson, L. (2013). Capitalising on screen tourism: The attraction of screen destinations. *EuroScreen Report*, Film London and the EuroScreen Partnership, Pracownia Pomysłów.
- Månsson, M. (2015). *Mediatized tourism: The convergence of media and tourism performances*. PhD dissertation. Lund: Lund University.
- McClintock, A. (2010). *Wallanders värld/world/welt*. Malmö: Roos & Tegner.
- Meethan, K. (2012). Walking the edges: Towards a visual anthropology of beachscapes. In: H. Andres & L. Roberts (eds.), *Liminal landscapes: Travel, experience and spaces in-between*. London: Routledge.
- Redvall, E.N. (2013). *Writing and producing television drama in Denmark: From the Kingdom to the killing*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Reijnders, S. (2011). *Places of the imagination: Media, tourism, culture*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Roberts, L. (2016). Landscapes in the frame: Exploring the hinterlands of the British procedural drama. *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 14(3): 364–385.
- Romano, S., Esposito, V., Fonda, C., Russo, A. & Grassi, R. (2005). Beyond the myth: The mermaid syndrome from Homer to Andersen: A tribute to Hans Christian Andersen's bicentennial of birth. *European Journal of Radiology* 58(2): 252.
- Saunders, T. (2017). Peripheries of space, self and literary style in R. S. Thomas's readings of Søren Kierkegaard. *Scandinavica* 56(1): 59–95.
- Sjöholm, C. (2011). *Litterära resor – turism i spåren efter böcker, filmer och författare*. Makadam: Bulls Graphic.
- Søndervig Tourism. (2020). *Experience the bunkers in Houvig*. Retrieved from <https://sondervig.dk/en/experirnce-the-bunkers-in-houvig/> (05-04-2020).
- Stougaard-Nielsen, J. (2017). *Scandinavian crime fiction*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Urry, J. & Larsen, J. (2011). *The tourist gaze 3.0: Leisure and travel in contemporary societies*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Waade, A.M. (2013). *Wallanderland: skandinavisk krimi og filmturisme*. Aalborg: Aalborg University Press.
- Waade, A.M., Pasgaard, J.C., Nielsen, T. & Melgaard, M. (2018). Redesigning Nordic landscapes through place intervention. In: C. Cassinger, A. Lucarelli & S. Gyimóthy (eds.), *The Nordic wave in place branding: Constructions, appropriations and articulation*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Waade, A.M. & Wille, J.I. (2016). Production design and location in the Danish television drama series *arvingerne*. *Kosmorama* #263. Retrieved from www.kosmorama.org/en/kosmorama/artikler/production-design-and-location-danish-television-drama-series-legacy (05-04-2020).
- Wille, J.I. (2015). *Film som design: Design af levende billeder i film og tv-serier*. PhD dissertation. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School & The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts.