

## **“It feels like home, this is my Malmö”: Place, media location and fan experiences of *The Bridge***

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### **Abstract:**

This article focuses on fan experiences of place in the Scandinavian crime series *The Bridge* (*Bron* / *Broen*). It offers four in-depth portraits of fans representing different modes of engaging with geographies of the imagination based on participant observations and qualitative semi-structured interviews with 80 audience members conducted in Denmark, Sweden and the UK. The analysis draws attention to fans’ emotional engagement with the show, and to how the experience of the media location of a drama set in the borderland between Denmark and Sweden induces a ‘sense of place’ in fans’ imagination. Based on the analysis of fans’ experience of place in the drama and the emotional landscapes of Scandinavian crime fiction more broadly, the article engages in a broader discussion of the significance and contingency of place to fans’ emotional experience of television drama. I argue that the relationship between media fandom and sites of media production is best understood in terms of a series of continuities and disjunctures between the materiality/virtuality of media tourism and travelling. These are actualised and shaped by the different dimensions of knowledge – from locality to genericity, embodied to imagined – that fans bring into the playful and affective process of engaging with media. The findings of this kind of longitudinal, empirical research into the lived experiences of place thus add to a nuanced understanding of the relationship between media fandom and sites of media production based on prolonged and in-depth interactions with audiences.

**Keywords:** Fan engagement, emotional experiences, place, media location, places of the imagination, worldbuilding, Scandinavian crime fiction.

## Introduction

The past decade has seen an explosion in crime fiction coming out of Scandinavian countries and an equally overwhelming interest in these novels, films and drama series from audiences, critics and media professionals outside of the Nordic countries. While Nordic crime fiction has long enjoyed cult status catering to a minority-taste audience, television series such as *Wallander* (2005-present), *Borgen* (DR, 2010-2013) and *The Killing* (DR, 2007-2012) have made strides globally, entering the Anglophone market as commercial successes. The gritty and dark dramas, that have become known under the banner Nordic Noir, are characterised by their complex plot and storylines, strong female characters and critical comment on the decline of Scandinavian welfare states (Agger, 2011; Forshaw, 2012; Messent, 2013; Waade and Jensen, 2013). One of the latest newcomers to this genre, the television series *The Bridge* (SVT and DR, 2011-), set on the border of Sweden and Denmark, has so far been shown in 130 countries worldwide, and remakes of the show have been transposed onto the national contexts and border politics between UK and France as well as Mexico and the US.

The empirical research presented in this article is part of a larger project on the producers and audiences of the drama series in Denmark, Sweden and the UK. It builds on multi-site, multi-method research and draws on production interviews and observations with 30 creative and executive producers, and a combination of in-depth audience interviews, focus groups and participant observations with 80 audience members of the second season conducted between October 2013 to September 2014. The results of this larger study show how the television series attracted loyal and linear viewership, going against the grain of fickle commitment among increasingly restless audiences, to instead prompt viewers to immerse themselves in drama as social ritual (Hill, 2016). To some audiences even, their encounter with the show resonated so powerfully in their imagination that it prompted them to venture into, for them, new forms of fan practices and productivity, some travelling to Scandinavia to visit the site of filming. It is towards the strong engagement and emotional investment of these self-reported fans of the show, that this article directs attention. The analysis offers four in-depth portraits of fans in Denmark, Sweden and the UK, detailing their real or imaginative journeys to the place in which the series is set through their engagement with the show. Their stories provide insight on I) the experience of location/place to the local fans exemplified by a portrait of Katarina and Bengt, a couple from central Malmö in Sweden; II) place to the genre-savvy crime fan based on the encounter with Camilla, a Danish crime blogger; III) place to the non-Nordic 'armchair traveller' embodied by Hanna, a former British police officer visiting Scandinavia in her mind and through her 'fan productivity'; and finally IV) place to the media tourist as represented by a British fan Jeff who travelled to Scandinavia to visit Malmö and Copenhagen and to cross the Öresund bridge himself. These four portraits, I use to distil and draw out key differences and patterns in the overall data set and to, hopefully, provide engaging and lived stories of the relationship between media engagement and sites of media production, from the perspective of the fans themselves.

*The Bridge*<sup>1</sup> is explicitly anchored in a very particular place and regional landscape namely the integrated Öresund region between Denmark and Sweden, which as an actual-material place, plays a very active role *in* the story and, as we found, in audiences' engagement *with* the story. In this article, I take a particular interest in how fans experience and imagine place in different ways. Analytically, I focus on the notions of 'places of the imagination' (Reijnders, 2011) and 'emotional landscapes' to understand fans' lived experience of place, and the relationship between their affective investment in the show and engagement with both the fictive place in which the drama unfolds and the real place in which it was filmed.

### **Fans, emotional experiences and place**

There is Baltimore to *The Wire*, New Orleans to *Treme*, New York to *Sex and the City*, Ystad to *Wallander*, Cardiff to *Dr Who* etc. Serial drama is often embedded into the particulars of the city or region in which it takes place. The construction and representation of place in film and television entertainment and its relation to authenticity and claims to reality has often been the focus in textual analysis of various television series (see e.g. Hru, 2010; Fuqua 2012; Thomas, 2012; Knudsen and Waade, 2010). Less attention however has been directed at the multiple ways in which viewers actually engage with place as a starting point for understanding how they emotionally connect with a text; 'what it means to feel, televisually speaking, at home' (Fuqua, 2012) or perhaps a stranger to the place narrated. To many audiences, the location of a certain television series may be nothing but a backcloth upon which the story unfolds. To others, the specific place in which the drama takes place is at the very core of their engagement inspiring them to "travel to" these places in their mind and imagination. Some even go a step further and decide to actually visit the physical locations of a media production. They take the step from dedicated viewers or fans to becoming 'media tourists' (Reijnders, 2010; 2011).

Adrian Athique (2014) argues that audience studies generally fail to account adequately for the specificity of place to audiences' experience of media. In a similar vein, Reijnders (2011) argues that while the key to understanding the phenomenon of media tourism and audience engagement with place more broadly lies in the analysis of the personal experience of the fan-tourist, very little research on these matters involves doing actual audience research. This article responds to these calls to further investigate these matters empirically to gain a more detailed understanding of place in media fandom and audience engagement with television more broadly. It examines the lived experience of engaging with place by listening to and understanding people's own accounts of what place meant to their overall experience of the drama. In doing so, the research is first and foremost a contribution to discussions in media and cultural studies on the importance of place and localization to audiences and fans. To some of the respondents in this study, their fan practices cross over and take the analysis into the field of media tourism; an interdisciplinary field of research at the intersections of tourism studies, fandom studies and cultural geography concerned with questions of how and why fans travel to sites of film and

television productions. From the perspective of media and communication studies, such questions have primarily been addressed in the context of the so-called 'spatial turn' in the discipline (Jansson and Falkheimer, 2006; Jansson, 2007; Morley, 2006). Various labels and vocabularies have been applied to describe and analyse the phenomenon. These include televisual tourism (Fish 2005), movie tourism (Riley et al., 1998), media pilgrimage (Couldry, 2003), film-induced tourism (Beeton, 2006) or symbolic pilgrimage (Aden 1999). Reijnders (2011) proposes the concept of 'media tourism' to recognize the multimedia character of our current media environment in which a film or a television show is 'spread out' across a wide range of online and offline screen media. Reijnders draws on the work of Couldry (2000; 2003) to investigate media tourism as a type of pilgrimage that involves an 'affective travel' to get closer to the 'media centre': the ritual heart of the media product. In doing so, he argues that one of the most neglected questions in studies of media tourism concerns the meaning-making processes involved for the fan tourists themselves, their personal experience and the meaning they ascribe to their imaginative or real journeys to these places. Reijnders (2011) thus offers a useful conceptual framework for understanding how viewers engage with the concrete locations of a drama series and experience a sense of place in their actual or imaginative journey to these locations. Drawing on Pierre Nora's theory of 'lieux de memoire', he builds a framework around the notion of 'lieux d'imagination' – *places of the imagination* – as a way of understanding the relationship between place and space, between the imagined or fictive elements of a show and the real places it portrays, from the perspective of the fan. By exploring how fans experience place in Scandinavian crime fiction and respond to the construction of the dystopian borderland between Denmark and Sweden of this particular show, I also touch upon ideas and concepts in the growing body of interdisciplinary research on worldbuilding, some of it emerging from within the context of this journal (see e.g. the themed section from May 2016: vol. 13, issue 1). In this sense, this piece may partly be considered a response to Proctor and McCulloch's (2016) call to shun generalisations and assumptions about audiences and place, and to instead 'test' existing theories about worldbuilding and 'geographies of the imagination' (Saler, 2011: 4) by empirically studying 'real audiences and fan cultures' (Proctor and McCulloch, 2016: 483). Reijnders' work sits well with the recent emergence of scholarship on worldbuilding and the on-going efforts to connect this field to 'audiences' reception of worlds, and the vicarious experiences, and participation, of visitors to imaginary worlds' (Wolf, 2016: 476). On my agenda is thus also a modest attempt to push the concept and horizons of the imaginary world beyond sci-fi and fantasy genres to explore what this concept might mean, and how it may be fruitfully adopted in the context of crime fiction and a serial television drama more specifically. So, my key analytical concern here is with the broad concept of 'geographies of the imagination', with a particular focus on Reijnder's notion of 'places of the imagination'; but in exploring these, I also draw upon the increasingly rich field of studies contemplating the interplay between fan practices, worldbuilding and media tourism (see e.g. Couldry, 2007; Hills, 2002; Norris, 2016; Saler, 2011; Wolf, 2012).

### ***The place-specific qualities of the genre***

While, at its core, television crime drama is concerned with crime, violence and punishment, such multifaceted themes are developed from a wide range of different perspectives focusing varyingly on for example detective work, police procedures, forensic work etc. (Turnbull, 2014). As a genre then, television crime series may fruitfully be understood as ‘an unstable cultural category derived from clusters of cultural assumptions that are constantly evolving’ (Mittell, 2004). When using the label of Scandinavian crime fiction, I place a particular emphasis on the common point of origin shared by texts placed within this category. Rather than a self-contained or stable genre, *Nordic Noir* then is best understood as an umbrella term to describe a particular type of Scandinavian crime fiction, ‘typified by its heady mixture of bleak naturalism, disconsolate locations and morose detectives’ (Creeber, 2015). The emotional landscapes around these, often gloomy, locations form an important part of the fabric of the genre. Indeed, Nordic Noir has a number of specific traits that makes the notion of place and location particularly interesting (Waade, 2013: 15). Various recent works have highlighted the place-specific characteristics of Scandinavian crime fiction (See e.g. Agger, 2011; Arvas and Nestingen, 2011; Stigsdotter, 2010; Forshaw, 2012). Textual analysis has detailed how the landscape is one of the key narrative vehicles in the storyline and in how characters are constructed. Drawing on a close reading of both *The Killing* and *The Bridge*, Creeber (2015) for example shows how the portrayal of location and landscape can be seen to implicitly reflect the main characters’ inner moods, personality and dispositions. In her work on the media tourist practices around the Swedish series *Wallander*, Waade (2013) explores ‘the colour locale’ as a way of understanding how Scandinavian drama is explicitly anchored in a very particular ‘eccentric local landscapes’, and how aesthetics of the cold Nordic climate add layers to the story of recognition and identification to local audiences and a sense of exoticness to non-Nordic audiences. Such emotional and imaginative landscapes have been conceptualised in various ways. Ehn and Löfgren (2010) use the term ‘dreamscapes’ to describe how the portrayal of specific landscapes serves to carry meaning. Reijnders (2009) revisits the notion ‘guilty landscapes’ as a way to assign the landscape an active role in the narrative around a murder and to understand how in crime fiction, a landscape, like people can harbour trauma and guilt. In the analysis, I pull together these various perspectives on emotional landscapes to apply and reconsider these against the backdrop of the empirical findings and examine how the place-specific qualities said to be inherent to the genre are actually experienced by the viewers.

### **Methods: Researching fans, experiences and fan experiences of place**

Drawing primarily on participant observations and ethnographically inspired audience interviews, this study is firmly located in qualitative research methodologies at the intersection of media and cultural studies. By adding ‘ethnographic’ to the mix of how I describe the approach, I am aware that I lend myself to the kind of criticism that is often directed at fan studies and media and cultural studies more generally. From the vantage

point of anthropology or sociology, in which ethnography has a tradition of being practiced in much more depth, drawing on scrap books, blog posts, observations or even extended and recurring qualitative interviews with the same respondents as I do here, does not necessarily qualify as ethnography (for a discussion on this criticism and the lack of rigorous methodology discussions in fan studies more broadly, see Evans and Stasi, 2012). When I do this nonetheless, it is to indicate that I follow a set of ideas and theories looking to research *experiences* rather than audiences' *readings* or *interpretive strategies*, as is often the case in the more reception-oriented strands of media and cultural studies.

This case study on the fans of *The Bridge* (SVT and DR 2011-) is part of a larger research project on the producers and audiences of television entertainment in Denmark, Sweden and UK (Media Experiences, 2013-2016). Within this larger project, the case study of this particular serial drama is based on production research involving 30 interviews with actors, creative and executive producers and participant observations during the production of the drama, and audience research involving 80 individual and group interviews with audiences and fans, and participant observations with audiences in their homes and at fan events in Sweden, Denmark and the UK<sup>2</sup>, and a series of recurring in-depth interviews, both face-to-face, over Skype and telephone, that took place both during and after the broadcast period with the respondents.<sup>3</sup> Recruitment for the larger *Media Experiences* project primarily took place through word-of-mouth using snowball sampling while some respondents were recruited through flyers distributed in cafes, libraries and other public venues and in social media. All of the interview materials have been translated, transcribed and submitted to a qualitative analysis in which they were coded for general patterns and recurring themes.

From this extensive material, I want in this article to pull out a specific group of five viewers from the total population to offer four in-depth portraits of fans we have engaged with over a period of two years and in different kinds of research settings. These participants stood out in the overall data set as the five respondents from which this article builds its analytical narrative were actively seeking for opportunities to share their feelings and experiences around this particular show and would often times contact the research team at their own initiative. The interviews therefore were longer and based on multiple encounters (compared to the larger body of focus group or individual interviews). In addition, they were (all but 1) self-reported fans and thereby "stood out", which further motivated the seclusion of these respondents from the sample of "ordinary" audiences. The portraits of these fans in turn work to provide us with an idea of distinct fan types in the data, representing different ways in which we may consider fans to engage with place and media location more generally. As such, I focus on these respondents, not just to give them voice as individual distinct audience members, but also to let them represent certain fan types and explore the underlying more generic qualities in their individual stories. This selection provides me with a reasonable mix of contrasts and similarities identified in the overall material and it allows for comparisons to be made between how for example some viewers draw on local and place-specific knowledge and competencies - noticing and

appreciating small details on familiar venues and locations - whereas others draw from a pool of more generic knowledge and media literacies related to crime fiction and popular culture more generally. The four portraits also showcase differences in experiences across fans conducting a primarily 'symbolic pilgrimage' (Aden 1999) and material pilgrimage to the world built around the show thereby allowing me to explore two parallel processes of media pilgrimage, where fans bridge their ordinary reality with that of the show, and the media scaffold, where *The Bridge* becomes a way to understand them selves and the world around them. In this sense, the stories of Katarina and Bengt from Malmö (I) and Jeff from the UK (IV) have an analytical relationship in terms of how they display an activated sense of place as viewers who read the mediated against the lived, whereas the experience shared by Hanna (II) and Camilla (III) illuminate a more 'virtual' senses of geography. In this sense, their personal stories of engaging with place in different ways may provide us with deeper insights into the relation between fan engagement and the production of place more broadly enriching our knowledge of how fans experience these imagined, diegetic spaces or actual places, as well as the interplay between the two.

One of the strongest and most recurring themes emerging in the interviews is the idea of place and the specificity of a Nordic or Scandinavian place to audiences' experience of the drama. Audiences react to how your typical tourist image of the picturesque cobblestoned streets of the historic centre of Copenhagen or the sweeping forests and mountainous landscapes of Sweden are replaced by a cold and dark cityscape in which the two countries and cities blend together in a grey border territory. In fact, some commentators have even gone so far as to suggest that Nordic Noir series are essentially 'anti-touristic' and, while the contrary has arguably been the case, they should in theory put off tourists from visiting Scandinavia (James 2016). The self-reported fans of the show in particular demonstrated a very intensive engagement with the construction of this dark and dystopian place. The following analysis focuses on how the particularity of what fans describe as a 'Nordic Noir landscape' induce a rich and ambiguous sense of place that forms an important part of the fabric of their emotional experience and affection for the text.

### ***Researching fans***

I draw on the work of Hills (2002) to understand fandom as a 'form of cultural creativity or play, which moves across the usual boundaries and categories of experience rather than being caught up within a particular field (Ibid: 90). Moving beyond a fixed or text-specific definition, fandom is instead considered a 'site of cultural struggle over meaning and affect' (2002, xi). It is inherently 'intertextual, moving across the artefacts of popular culture and drawing people together into historicised, biographical networks of affect and meaning (Hills, 2014:9). The respondents in this study are all but one self-reported fans of the show. I want however to suggest a practice-based definition of fandom,<sup>4</sup> which understands the engagement of the respondents as fandom, based not just on what they say or how they themselves describe their engagement, but on how it materialises in different kinds of practices and fan productivity. In this sense, I consider for example scrapbooks, blogs, their

personal notes of the show and the practices of fan tourism etc. as different fan practices performed by the respondents in this study. So, by bringing these dimensions of how fandom is performed through cultural artefacts into the mix, I extend the analysis of fans' discursive articulations to also include the analysis of how their fandom is materialised and 'taking place'. Such a definition takes into account the proviso that 'fans are not an unproblematic source of the meaning of their own media consumption' (Hills, 2002: 39). The 'asking the audience' approach is not a guarantee of knowledge of the precise or 'real' nature of their experience. Indeed, narrative interviews are potentially reductive as they assume cultural activities can be adequately accounted for in the audiences' own language and discourse (Reason, 2010). Hills (2002) discusses how interview questions probing the nature of and motivations behind engagement may cause fans 'to cut into the flow of their experience and produce a kind of discursive justification' (p. 66). This indeed was the case in some interviews in which the respondent would start out sentences with 'well, I am not a sad person but...' or stop in the middle of a sentence exclaiming: 'God, I must come across as a complete lunatic'. Fear of being portrayed as a 'sad person', a 'lunatic', as 'having no life', reflecting the kind of social stigma, which seem to still stubbornly stick to the fan label, might have impinged upon the data, had it not been for the prolonged and recurring contact and conversations we had with the respondents, which eventually broke down these barriers. Stretching over two seasons each of ten winter weeks, the extended time span in which this show had been running at the time of the interviews, has enabled regular extended interactions with audiences that have fostered familiar even close relationships of trust and openness between the researchers and the respondents.

### ***Researching fan experiences***

As my concern here, is which the broadly emotional experiences of fans (Hills, 2002), I draw on qualitative, ethnographic research methods, which allow me to capture such a porous and subjective unit of analysis. The empirical material analysed for this article comprises a multifaceted data set which, besides interview data, field notes, audio recordings and visual documentation from the observations, include personal notes and private photographs shared by respondents with the researchers, a scrapbook and blog entries produced by respondents. In the in-depth interviews, I have strived for a conversation, which moves beyond the respondents' reading of the text to instead capture some of the nuances of the overall experience this particular text gave them. The methods of qualitative interviewing and participant observations have been engaged to understand how audiences 'interweave talk about television with (...) personal and social experiences' (Gillespie, 2005: 151). Looking specifically to understand fans' lived experience of place requires capturing what Reijnders describes as the processes taking place 'in the head and heart of the fan/tourist', as this is how we might come to understand the motivations behind visiting media locations and the moments of connection in which 'the world of the imagination temporarily comes together with – or perhaps perfectly contrasts with – the sensory experience of physical reality' (Reijnders, 2011: 7).

Further, studying fans' emotional experiences involve temporal aspects that evoke questions of how the different phases and levels of intensity in an experience are best captured in different kinds of interview situations. Most often as audience scholars we interview people in retrospect, asking them to reflect back upon their experience of a certain text: to uncover and describe conscious, reflective responses. Skeggs and Woods (2012), in their work on watching TV *with* audiences, probe methods for capturing what they call 'affective textual encounters' that enable researchers to record audiences' subvocalized reactions while watching. This kind of engagement works on a highly different register, which goes missing in focus groups or interviewing in retrospect. By combining the informal observations and interactions that took place *while* watching an episode or parts of an episode with respondents with the more formalised and semi-structured interviews that took place hours, weeks or even months after the show ended, we sought to take into account the different temporal layers of experiences in different contexts with audiences as they were both 'looking at' and 'looking through' television (Hill, 2007). With this mix of interview forms, we have thus sought to capture 'what is going on in a person's mind and body during a performance but also understanding what they do with the experience afterwards' (Reason, 2010: 24).

### **Fan experiences of the world of *The Bridge* and its places of the imagination**

In the following sections, I offer an in-depth cultural analysis structured around four fan portraits. These are generic in the sense that they offer thick descriptions of distinct modes of engaging with place distilled from the larger data set. Yet they are narrated around actual encounters with individual fans from the pool of 80 respondents. These fan portraits detail: I) the experience of location/place to the local fans exemplified by a portrait of a couple from central Malmö in Sweden; II) place to the genre-savvy crime fan based on the encounter with a Danish crime blogger; III) place to the non-Nordic 'armchair traveller' embodied by a former police officer visiting Scandinavia in her mind and through her 'fan productivity'; and finally IV) place to the media tourist as represented by a British fan who travelled to Scandinavia in an active search of material references to the show.

#### **I: *Place to the 'fan residents'***

Katarina and Bengt live in one of the areas in Malmö where many of the scenes from the second season of *The Bridge* were shot. From their apartment on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor in central Malmö, they have a panoramic view of the old industrial stronghold with its worn-down areas and abandoned buildings and the bridge to Denmark in the horizon. They live in the middle of the set, so to speak, and when the filming took place in their neighbourhood, they would often meet the crew in the streets or watch them work from their window. In this sense, they represent what Mills (2008) refers to as 'fans residents' (see also Hills forthcoming). These are fans for whom the experiences of fandom and of seeing/visiting the actual locations are not a matter of pilgrimage or fan tourism but entwined with the

everyday, mundane routines of going about daily business in their neighbourhood. One day, on an extraordinarily cold afternoon, they invited the production team in for tea and a chance to film from their balcony. On the premiere night of the second season, they were thrilled to recognize the view from their own home in the first episode.



**Fig 1:** The view from Bengt and Katarina's apartment overlooking the bridge to Denmark.

To them, watching the show on Sunday nights engages them not just imaginatively in the geographies of the fictive narrative but also invokes 'real-world memories of watching the filming' take place (Hills, forthcoming) and a sense of having part-taken in the production. It is a case in which the ordinary space of everyday life becomes intertwined with an extraordinary space of a filmic location for a couple of weeks over the winters in which the series was filmed.

To Katarina and Bengt, the shared experience of preparing for, watching and discussing an episode is something that takes place between the two of them alone. They describe it as an intimate Sunday night ritual before he has to rush off to take the night train to Stockholm where he works. Their emotional engagement with the show comes primarily from their love for Malmö and in how Malmö is being represented to the outside world. Katarina describes her experience of how Malmö is portrayed as 'a feeling of belonging, suddenly you're at home in the fictitious. It might as well be on my street, in my house'. They engage in the proximity they feel to the scenes and the locations and the extent to which they can identify with the gloomy, grey, bittersweet look and feel of the show. They feel at home in the images and feel that although the show does not convey a very bright or happy picture, the portrayal of Malmö is done with a care and tenderness to the region that they appreciate.

It feels just right. It describes with sound and image exactly the feeling you get. Very Malmö-ish weather. It's always a bit windy here. And it's not even proper rain, it just hangs in the air. And it's dark, and there are windscreen wipers, and it's all very drab.

These reflections on the idea of home and feeling at home expressed by the local fans, remind us how an important aspect of subjective worldbuilding in relation to serial television drama and this kind of long-form storytelling is its ability to build, not only imagined worlds, but also 'homes in the minds of the audience' – or more specifically of inspiring to processes of 'homebuilding' (White 2016: 499).

To the audiences, the flat, bleak and frozen landscapes of the Öresund region in between the two counties – from the worn down, abandoned industrial areas of Malmö to the cold, windy streets of Copenhagen deprived of all signs of nature, thus play a crucial role in setting the emotional tone of the show.



**Fig 2:** Katharina takes us on a guided media location tour around their local neighbourhood<sup>5</sup>

The fact that it takes place in the Öresund region and that it represents Malmö as integrated with Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, is important to them as well:

It means so much to me that it's from the Öresund region. Partly because I think the region should be featured more, but also because it's nice to recognize things. I'm tired of seeing scenes from Stockholm all the time. But I'm also tired of these postcard images of undulating fields of rapeseed in Scania, like in *Wallander*, especially the British version.

They appreciate how, instead of a fast-paced, action-intense urban scenery, the narrative around the police procedurals is embedded into an aesthetic of what they describe as ‘the boredom of daily life here. The grey. It’s doesn’t look very nice, but it’s where we live’.

Further, to local citizens the representation of Malmö in terms of both storyline and aesthetics is inscribed into a struggle over a persistently negative image of Malmö in the rest of Sweden in which they feel the city is often highlighted for its crime rates or considered provisional and far from the capital.

As a Malmö-ite you have to put up with so much shit about our city. The media coverage of Malmö is all about how shitty things are in down here. Even though this (the series) may not be the most positive image of Malmö they have constructed – be it true or not – I love that they have managed to capture that Malmö-feeling. It’s rough, cold and troubled but for us living here it is such a wonderful place too. This is my Malmö. I feel proud.

This feeling of pride and sentiments of local patriotism shows how the production of place in drama may work to make audiences feel ‘flattered as an insider, an honorary citizen’ (Hsu 2010: 511). *The Bridge* is a show, which like other place-specific shows, has ‘built-in rewards for close readers’ (Ibid.: 510) and local audiences who will recognize venues, building and cafés known only to “the local connoisseur”. The same kind of mechanisms are at work when the couple describe how every Sunday they would indulge in a game of spotting or catching the producers in “cheating” when a scene purportedly taking place in Copenhagen is in fact shot in Malmö (which for economic reasons were true for a large part of the scenes supposedly located in Copenhagen). This dislocation of place does not seem to disgruntle them, however. Rather, they describe how ‘many of the scenes weren’t even shot here but they gave us the *feeling* that it was here’. An essential part of what fascinates these local fans is that ‘It feels real’. To them, the drama evokes a feeling of realness and authenticity illustrating the dual process of how location can induce a sense of reality to the fictional narrative and the fictive can provide locations with a sense of reality and authenticity (Reijnders 2011). Katarina and Bengt describe how Malmö feels at the same time strange and staged, yet also real and authentic. This duality is reflected in how they describe the urban landscape in which the plot unfolds as both very ‘realistic representations’ of their neighbourhood and at the same time as highly fictional in how only parts of the city are displayed, and in how a grey-blue filter exaggerates the dim, barren tone of the landscape and projects an idea of endless Scandinavian winter. As local audiences, they are well aware of the fact that this image of what they describe as ‘Nordic melancholia’ is constructed and produced for them as a form of ‘staged authenticity’ (MacCannell, 1973). Pointing out the window on a grey afternoon Katarina contemplates:

They (the producers) could have added candlelight and poetic music to a view like this but instead they leave the landscape naked and all depressed, add sad

music, complicated people with serious problems, relationships that fall apart, people who die.

Katarina thus demonstrates an awareness of how producers are creatively ‘making place’ for her and playing with the image of her immediate surroundings in a way that makes her feel both at home and estranged, as if she was watching her own neighbourhood from the outside. Stigsdotter (2010) calls this being ‘displaced from within’: a process in which viewers see and recognize their own culture or territory portrayed through a different lens, which can invoke a strange and wondrous attraction. For local audiences, the experience of place thus ‘becomes an internal journey in which moments of recognition and alienation meet and mesh in the creation of new (...) spectatorial pleasures.’ (Ibid: 259).

## **II: *Place to the genre-savvy crime fan***

Camilla is a freelance journalist and blogger who lives with her husband and three children in Jutland, Denmark. She runs a blog where she gives vent to her passion for crime fiction in all shapes and forms. Camilla is an old hand in the art of blogging and she has been active in the blogosphere ever since the early days of the 2000s ‘when it was still called web logs’ as she points out. Camilla is slowly becoming a name in the blogosphere and has recently started to make some money from the blog, which she hopes at some point can become a full-time profession. These professional ambitions form part of her fan identity and are reflected, for example, in how she explains having tried to fill the void left by the second season ending by consuming factual books to read up on theoretical perspectives on the genre and better understand its current popularity around the world. As a semi-professional crime blogger, Camilla is extremely reflexive and articulate in her way of talking about and interpreting the drama. As a particularly knowledgeable and genre-savvy viewer, she inscribes the aesthetic and narrative portrayal of Scandinavia in the drama into a literary tradition within crime fiction in which place takes on a powerful role in the story. Camilla is primarily engaging with place in terms of the society portrayed and the subtle social critique embedded in this portrayal. In her ways of reflecting upon her sense of place, she engages in a kind of meta-analysis of her own reactions to a set of literary tricks that she, as an expert viewer, is well aware of:

We’re in this safe place and we’re the good ones but then in the story it is as if something is dead wrong and there are these bad apples or cracks. It is about tearing down this idyllic image of us as a society.

Her engagement with place is not with a number of specific places in Denmark or Sweden that she recognizes but rather with an image of our societies with all of their contradictory qualities. She is primarily engaging with place through the genre, and the production of complicit places in the murder plot or what has been described as ‘guilty landscapes’ (Armando 1988). Coming out of the analysis of the landscapes around the concentration

camp from the Holocaust, the notion most often carries negative connotations; Guilty landscapes are traumatised places in which gruesome events have unfolded. She describes how the ambiguous landscape constructed in *The Bridge* is 'not swamped in rain like *The Killing*'. Instead, she says:

There's the darkness and then it goes bright and then dark again. But all the time this gloomy, dramatic feeling. But there is also a very everyday feel to it. So, there is both this very dramatic but the everyday is there too. I thought a lot about why these Nordic series are so scary. I think in the North we are so sound and safe. You are situated in the Swedish welfare society but still something is dangerous. I mean you are not in a jungle or in the ghettos of LA. You're in a nice villa area but still something is dead wrong.

In the drama, death and horror is played out in a familiar, everyday-like and apparently safe society, which makes her reflect upon how evil is not outside us, how it is not an external enemy or threat. Instead, it is something among and within us and built into the structures of our societies. Camilla articulates these concerns as follows:

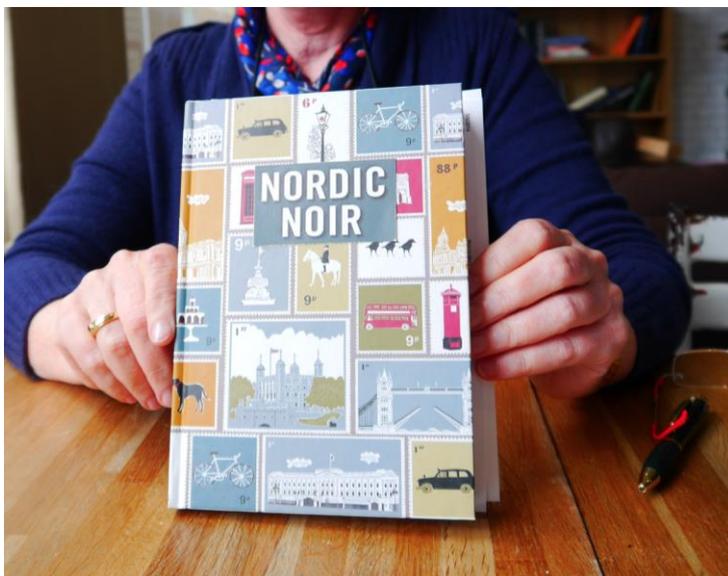
There is something about this safe society that turns out to be not so safe after all. Some have considered the Scandinavian countries as ideal types. We have the welfare state but then you start scratching in the surface and realise that the state is evil.

The notion guilty landscape has been used to describe the role of the landscape in other Scandinavian productions such as *Wallander* where yellow undulating rapeseed fields, red wooden houses and blue skies prevail (see e.g. Waade, 2013; Reijnders, 2009; 2011). In these studies, the term is used to denote the strategy whereby a pastoral setting, presented as idyllic, inviting and peaceful, becomes the scene of a horrible crime, and in the process, loses its innocence. In this case however, it is quite the opposite of a beautiful, innocent landscape in which an opaque evil hiding behind the scenic facades is only hinted at. Instead, evil or the 'creepiness of everyday life' as Camilla puts it, is an intrinsic part of the landscape. Whereas the antithesis to these landscapes in other Swedish crime productions such as *Wallander* lies in the action, in the grim social realities and thorny problems faced by the characters, the gruesome crimes and gory murder scenes, in *The Bridge* these aspects are built into the landscape itself. Society's flipside is not hidden from sight or indicated between the lines. On the contrary, all we see is the flipside, the 'cracks' are out in the open and reflected in the cold and barren landscape. Camilla is thus primarily engaging in the imaginary world of *The Bridge* and the specific landscapes and places in it through her knowledge of the literary 'Noir' aspects of the genre. To her, it taps into and contributes to a longer history of Scandinavian crime fiction and its tradition of echoing a fractured dream of the social democratic welfare state through for example emotional tones, characters'

internalised and externalised conflicts, storytelling and the ways in which these elements are embedded into dystopian and fictive, yet strangely familiar worlds.

### **III: Place to the 'armchair traveller'**

Hanna is a retired policewoman who lives in suburban London. In February 2014, she was one of the 2500 people who participated in the two-day fan convention, Nordicana; a promotional event in which British fans of Scandinavian crime fiction could, among many other attractions, meet the main characters from the show, *Martin and Saga*. The fan convention offered screenings and celebrity panels, Scandinavian cooking, a stall with merchandise (DVDs, food, woollen sweaters etc.). Hanna describes *The Millennium Trilogy*, (Stieg Larsson 2005-2009) as 'day one' in her journey into the universe of Scandinavian crime fiction, which took to new heights when she encountered the original version of *The Bridge* on BBC. In fact, her enthusiasm with the show prompted her to start investigating literally every single Scandinavian television series, past and present. She describes how during the second season of *The Bridge*, she began engaging with the show in ways she had never engaged with television before: writing notes, printing the cast lists from websites to know more of the actors, and she would re-watch several episodes before watching anew to refresh her memory. Finally, when the last episode was over she gathered her notes and online research and started putting together a 'Nordic Noir scrapbook'.



**Fig. 3:** Hanna's Nordic Noir scrapbook

In this home-made scrapbook she is listing, cataloguing and writing about every crime-related 'text' coming out of a Scandinavian context; films, television and novels. As a former police officer, her engagement with the show, and in particular the detective elements in the narrative, takes on an almost professional form. Her scrapbook is systematic, thorough and serious in a way that indicates how she takes virtues and experiences from her former line of work with her into her fan engagement and into the dedication to analyse and assist

in these fictive police procedures in her post-retirement. She enjoys having time on her hands to immerse herself in ‘solving the crime’ and dissecting what is and what is not a ‘realistic representation of the police work carried out’. Hanna refuses being labelled a fan, as she does not want to be associated with being ‘a sad person’. To her, this is about solving the case and as she says ‘I am coming to this from a mainly academic perspective’. Rather than a strictly emotional, passionate labour, to Hanna fandom thus implies a more rational, professional activity.

Hanna started compiling her scrapbook after the final episode of the show. She has never been to Scandinavia, so to her the locations first and foremost represent ‘places of the imagination’; places she travels to when watching the show. She talks about her work with putting together the scrapbook in terms of filling in the blanks on a map:

Next year, I would like to go to Denmark and Sweden. Not because of *the Bridge* because actually that could be anywhere, not because of *Borgen* because that could also be anywhere. But just because it fires my imagination. To look at the map and think oh that’s where that is and that’s where the bridge is. And that there is Lund. (...) . But before this you know I could almost not tell you where Denmark was. But this has made me look at the map and think about you know the setup, the remoteness and the relationship to Europe or Russia. So I am definitely going to go there.

Places of the imagination are material places, which serve as material-symbolic references to a common imaginary world. They can serve as the setting of memorialization of something that never took place; for reliving a fictional event (Reijnders, 2011). We may think of Hanna’s fan productivity as a way of memorizing her own imaginative journey and systematising her thoughts over the course of the two seasons. The scrapbook pays testimony to a certain professionalism and seriousness to fans’ ‘passion work’ (Hill, 2015) in this particular show and to engaging with entertainment more broadly. In it she stores the information she gathers from her online research on the subject, piecing it together with various forms of found or ‘borrowed materials’ (Jenkins, 2006) such as postcards and other promotional material filling its pages to index and describe various media products, involving not just crime fiction, but Scandinavian popular culture more broadly.

Audiences outside Scandinavia, like Hanna, whose reference points to these places are mediated through the fictitious, may experience place as unknown or uncharted, in ways different from local or national fans. In the series, the many explicit references to specific places or areas in the Öresund region are left sufficiently abstract and scant, invoking the curiosity of fans to further identify these localities and give meaning to what can only be read between the lines. In this manner, it remains for the viewers to ‘fill in the geographical blanks’ (Reijnders, 2011: 18). To Hanna who has never visited Scandinavia, filling in these blanks on the mental map becomes a very literal exercise, taking on a concrete, verbatim form.

We may think of Hanna's engagement as one of the ways in which television feeds off and contributes to the geographical imagination as a form of 'interior mapping system of the world' that includes areas we have not visited, apart from through our engagement with mediated popular culture (Stigsdotter, 2010: 246). In a sense, Hanna's engagement and her fan productivity is a way of travelling to the geographical region in her mind. She is an 'armchair traveller' transported to these places by her imagination and in the processes trying to fill in the blanks. We may think of these geographical blanks in at least three different ways; one being blanks left by the ending of the show but also a very literal blank in her knowledge of the region as the show prompted her to actually sit down and locate various locations on a map. Finally, her meticulous work with the scrapbook is filling the blanks left by the intertwined open-ended complex narrative that leaves the viewer hanging in a number of ways.

#### **IV: Place to the 'media tourist'**

Jeff is a 61-year old Scott living in Wales. He is a long-time crime detective fan but his passion for Scandinavian crime fiction took off with *The Killing* and 'became hard-core with *The Bridge*' as he describes it. He remembers his first encounter with the genre as a feeling of becoming part of an exclusive club:

When *The Killing* first came out, it had 675 000 people watching it, and then it went up to three and a half million. We kept on saying to people: "We're going home to watch *The Killing*, haven't you seen it?" and it just rocketed. By word of mouth more than anything else. I loved the jumpers, because it felt like being part of a club. To understand the jumpers.

His passion for crime fiction goes back to the British classics of Sherlock Holmes and Inspector Morse. One of his first memories of engaging with crime fiction was when he, as a child, used to throw what he refers to as 'Inspector Morse parties', having over friends for snacks and watching episodes. In the summer of 2014, Jeff crossed over from being an "ordinary" fan to becoming a so-called media-tourist as he travelled to Scandinavia with his wife to cross the Öresund bridge connecting Denmark and Sweden and visit the various locations in which the series had been filmed. On the morning on his return to Britain after his visit to Scandinavia, Jeff describes his experience of seeing and crossing the bridge to us:

We saw the bridge at 1 o' clock in the afternoon and it was absolutely beautiful and there was lots going on the water as well. There were big cruise ships and there was a ship that was sinking while we were going over. I would move to Scandinavia tomorrow. But I think you know that anyway. (...) it was amazing.

With Jeff giving evidence to media tourism and the practices of imagination condensed within it, the analysis thus moves further into questions of the importance of real and

imagined places to the emotional experiences of audiences and the intricate relation between their sense of place and emotional investment with a media text. Such practices of 'touristic pilgrimage' have been described as 'an affective interpretive process which spills into and redefines material space' emerging out of experiences of affective play (Hills, 2002: 144).

I took a lot of photos and I did a whole sort of movie going over the bridge. So while filming I met someone who has a restaurant in Malmö but lives in Copenhagen and he said that the next time we come over he would drive us across the bridge. Going under (by train) was still wonderful and magical through, I was filming and shouting 'oh look at this, we're going under the bridge' and all these people were looking at me going 'what is that guy doing?'

While at first sight Jeff might provide an ideal type fan tourist demonstrating all the defining characteristics, a closer look at what he is actually telling us about his fascination with place complicates his profile as a media tourist. He is not necessarily drawn to the 'media centre' by the symbolic powers of media institutions (Couldry, 2000). Instead of going on an organised location tour by one of the agencies offering this in the region, he arranges his own tour for him and his wife. Further, his motivation for coming to Copenhagen and Malmö is not primarily to be closer to actual material film locations. Instead, Jeff describes how he was fascinated with meeting people commuting between the two countries on the train, people living and working on different sides of the bridge 'just like in the show'.

We spoke to a lot of people about the show and we met someone who actually lives in Malmö but works in Copenhagen, who knew loads about it. We also met all these people who met all the cast of *The Killing* so they knew what we were talking about and they asked us loads of questions on why the British are so fascinated by Scandinavian crime. It was really fantastic.

Jeff generally loves sharing his thoughts and feelings about the show and Scandinavian television and culture more broadly. When finally in Copenhagen and Malmö he took every opportunity he could to engage in a conversation on the topic; with people in bars, people serving him in restaurants and passengers on the train between Denmark and Sweden. He describes these encounters in the following manner:

We would sit down with someone and three hours later we were still talking. That's what I do. I just ask people anything and I would tell them about the show. And when people ask me about where I come from or why I am here. Their reaction would be: Is this really what you came for?! (seeing and crossing the bridge) and I am like yes!

His primary destination thus seems to be people, not places and his engagement with place is about *socialising* in that place and with reference to that place. Jeff in this sense complicates Couldry's (2003) understanding of the primary driving force behind media tourism as a desire to be closer to the 'media centre'; the ritual heart of the media product, the industry, and the stars. Jeff's enthusiasm and his reasons for travelling to Scandinavia seem only partially to be driven by an urge to discover the physical places and specific locations where moments in the fictitious narratives were enacted. He did not take any organised tourist tour or went roaming the suburbs of Malmö for material references of the production. Rather, he went in search for the political and cultural spaces hinted at in the series and in a hunt for locals with whom he could engage in a discussion about the broader moral questions of society, politics, culture, gender etc. invoked by the show. He is creating his own form of tourist pilgrimage and, in the process, enhancing his own experience of fandom by gathering other people's experiences of living in the place where the show is made. Reijnders (2015) points out that the world of the imagination is not an individual matter, but largely a social one. When people engage with stories from television, film and other forms of popular culture they are best understood, not as Homo Sapiens, but as 'Homo Narrans: a creature that likes to tell and hear stories, in order to provide meaning to the chaos that surrounds him' (Berger, 1997: 174). Jeff is passionately immersed in the fictive story of *The Bridge* but also in his own stories about the story: those we tell about ourselves and others as we are trying to make sense of the world around us. So even though he physically travels to this place, it is more of an internal journey in which he engages with the core ideas and ideals of "the good society". It becomes a way of investigating his own culture and background through the dystopian mirror of the crumbling post-welfare state because as he says 'in many ways Scandinavian societies are 10-20 years behind when it comes to facing some of the problems we've had in Britain for years'. He continues to explain that:

It is not a perfect society, there are questions being raised at this moment in time and some of it is being realised through the Scandinavian crime series: (...) here are these perfect societies but then you have this underbelly going on.

In this sense, the dualism in the portrayal of the Nordic countries as safe and familiar on the one side and crumbling and facing uncertain futures on the other, is also reflected in how fans outside Scandinavian countries experience place. To a fan like Jeff, the boundaries between the fictional and the non-fictional world of *The Bridge* are not easily discerned. His experience illustrates some of the multiple ways in which fans explore 'the vistas and visions of imaginary fiction' (Proctor and McCulloch, 2016) through tourist practices. The place he travels to is neither an exclusively authentic or "real" place nor is it an entirely fictional world. The dark, grey and gloomy fictional version of Scandinavia constructed in the show subtly points towards – through aesthetics and storytelling – and bleeds into "real" problems and social issues in a not so distant future post-welfare scenario of a cold and

individualised society. This allows him to explore his own anxieties and engage in conversations with others about the directions in which society and the world in general is heading.

In this sense, we may also think of the ‘Scandinavia in decline’ that Jeff is imagining and engaging with in terms of worldbuilding practices. As *The Bridge* is diegetically set in the Öresund region, the locations on screen conform, although often only nebulously, to those Jeff encounter in the ‘real world’. Yet the Öresund of the show is a gloomy, dark and crime-ridden place in which the characters move around in an endless snow-free winter and a landscape deprived of all signs of nature. It is also a world with blurry contours in which you never quite know which country the scene is set in. Jeff returns to the idea time and time again that the place of *The Bridge* is a ‘Nordic unity’, not Sweden or Denmark. Indeed, commentators and literary critics have called the place portrayed in the show ‘a Malmö that does not exist and an Öresund region yet to come’ (see e.g. Flykt 2013) To be sure, even when physically present in the actual-material location of Öresund, Jeff is playfully engaging with the parallel and utopian version of Öresund as this is envisioned by the scripts writers and constructed in the show; a friction-free, intercultural, binational and fully integrated region – where it takes 2 minutes to cross the bridge/border and everybody understands each other despite the different languages (for a more detailed discussion on audiences’ engagement with the construction of a utopian Öresund community in the show, see Askanius 2017). Jeff thus typifies a fan responding to the worldbuilding of a parallel society created and crafted by the producers of the show; he is looking for traces of this world - built for him and by himself - when he goes hunting for cross-border commuters on the train and locals with an everyday life on both sides of the bridge ‘just like in the show’.

### **Conclusions: The contingency of fans’ experience of place**

Fan audiences engage with place and the site-specific realism of Scandinavian crime fiction in different ways. Their sense of place is part of what attracts and seduces them and pulls them into an emotional journey; from being audiences to becoming fans. Their emotional engagement with the characters and the story line is linked to a sense of place induced by the construction of place and localization in the narrative. In this sense, the relation between fan engagement and place is best understood as a circular movement: it is to a large extent the place-specificity of the drama and the emotional landscapes conjured up in fans’ imaginations that draw them into a strong engagement, and then this emotional engagement leads fans to further engage with these locations in actual or imagined ways. Place is thus a key vehicle in fuelling the imagination of fans and can be seen to strengthen and add layers to their emotional engagement and investment in a fictional drama.

To be sure, for engaged audiences, imaginary worlds and the places of imagination within these worlds are much more than mere backdrops upon which the narrative unfolds. Rather they are ‘places that audiences vicariously inhabit and return to again and again’ (Wolf, 2016). The fan experiences of place probed in this research are suggestive of a complex set of relations between place, imagination and worldbuilding. These are slightly

different from the kind of imaginative processes at play around shows such as *Game of Thrones* (Spanó 2016; Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2017) or *Lord of the Rings* (Carl, Kindon, and Smith 2017; White 2016). Contrary to these purely fictional sci-fi and fantasy worlds, the crime fiction genre invites audiences into a different kind of world, which is more explicitly anchored in a real and concrete place and in the everyday realities and social realism of that place. When engaging in the world of *The Bridge* and its geographies of the imagination, fans are thus simultaneously tapping into a certain strand of Scandinavian sensibility or ‘mood of alienation, pessimism and uncertainty’ (Boyce in Peacock, 2014) specific to the trajectories of Nordic welfare societies.

In particular, the analysis draws attention to how fan engage with the locations of a media production in a constant interplay between the mediated and the sensory, between space and place, the imagined and the real. These are not incompatible dichotomies or separate spheres. Rather it is the dialectic between the real and the imagined, which ‘enables fans to stay culturally connected’ (Reijnders, 2011). The world of the imagination and the material world of our sensory experiences coexist and sometimes coincide, and it is this sense of them being interwoven in subtle ways, which urges people to try to ‘unravel the two’ through engaging with media and popular culture. These ‘push and pull dynamics’ are key to understanding ‘the specificity of place as it is created through television institutions, and co-productions, and as it is experienced by audiences’ (Hill, 2016).

Exploring some of the different ways in which place engages fans, the portraits pay testimony to the breadth of fan engagement while at the same time giving voice to the specificity of their experiences. By detailing how place shifts meaning over the portraits we may come to understand their experience of place on a ‘spectrum of engagement’ (Hill, 2017) between something very literal and something taking place in the imagination. The portraits display different modes of traveling to ‘places of the imagination’: some are mentally brought to these places in their mind by letting the story transport them into an imaginary diegetic world, others go in search of actual material references to confirm or dismiss their notions of imagination and reality. While these forms of travelling are not necessarily mutually exclusive or defined solely by fans’ own geographical location or proximity to the mediated place portrayed, they are indeed shaped and informed by the different forms of knowledge and literacies on the genre, the geography, the language, the politics of the region etc. that fans take with them into the (viewing) experience.

Bringing the four portraits in dialogue with each other, by comparing and contrasting the different stories shared on experiences of place in some more detail, allows us engage with issues of what these personal accounts can tell us about media location, place and engagement more generally. First of all, the analysis has highlighted the significance but also the contingency of place to fans’ experience of media and popular culture: what place means for Jeff is different from what it means for Camilla for example. Whereas Camilla engage with place as part of the genre’s place-making capacities invoked by the emotional tone of Nordic melancholia and undertones of the political climate in the society portrayed and fictionalised, Jeff is engaging with place in a much more literal and real way as he turns

to the site of the media production to create his own experience of the place narrated through fiction. To the 'fan residents' (Mills, 2008) in Malmö, the drama may best be understood in the words of Sandvoss (2005) as 'a text called home'. Place in this context is embedded into the physical territory of everyday life forming part of their local identities and the intimate private realm of domestic media consumption. The British fan Jeff and the Malmö-based couple share a sense of place that is connected to an actual locality and physical/material encounters. Yet if we bring the two portraits into dialogue with one another by comparing and contrasting their different experiences of place in relation to the idea of worldbuilding, differences emerge. Whereas Jeff responds and contributes to processes of worldbuilding – both around the construction of a dystopian post-welfare Scandinavia and a utopian borderless Öresund region, we might think of Katarina and Bengt as engaging, not in worldbuilding, but perhaps first and foremost in 'homebuilding' (White 2016) understood as a process whereby texts can become 'virtual homes, as viewers locate personal memories in the context of favoured viewing experiences' related to their home town and neighbourhood (Altman 1999: 187). Looking to compare and contrast the stories of Hanna, the 'armchair traveller' and Camilla, the 'expert reader', on the other hand, with their shared creative practices of writing about the show in analogue scrapbooks or online blogs, suggests that media pilgrimage and traveling to places of the imagination can involve a meaningful remixing of the fictional into the real to produce experiences of place that do not necessarily require actual travelling or psychical-material encounters. These parallels and patterns in the thick descriptions of fans' place-experiences give evidence to the connections between the material and virtual aspects of media locations and to the creative processes whereby the real and the fictional are transformed through engaging with place and media tourism. One of the central findings concern how fans draw on different forms of knowledge and geographical and media literacies when engaging with place in crime fiction. Further, the analysis show how the emotional relationships to mediated places can be cognitively framed in quite different ways that are not always about imagination but can take up concrete expressions and involve physical places and locations when media texts become catalyst for fan productivity or media pilgrimage. The relationship between media fandom and sites of media production is thus best understood in terms of a series of continuities and disjunctures between materiality/virtuality of media tourism and travelling. This nexus is in turn shaped by the different dimensions of knowledge – from locality to genericity, embodied to imagined – that fans bring into the playful and affective process of engaging with media. In this sense, place can be many, but never one thing. Place to the people portrayed in this study is about recognition and exoticness, home and away, the familiar and the strange.

**Funding:**

This research is funded by the Alice and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation, Sweden (MMW 2012.0027).

### **Biographical note:**

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## Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> In the following, I use the English translation and refer to the show as *The Bridge*. In doing so, I refer specifically to the second season of the show, while for stylistic reason I omit the suffix 2 in the title. In the Scandinavian version, the title changes for each season with *Bron/Broen* referring to season 1, *Bron//Broen* to season 2 and *Bron///Broen* to season 3.

<sup>2</sup> The fieldwork and interviews have taken place during 2013-2016 in Sweden, Denmark, UK, USA and Mexico and were conducted by a project team consisting of professor Annette Hill, Tina Askanius, Koko Kondo and José Luis Urueta. Audience interviews and observations with Scandinavian respondents have been carried out by Tina Askanius as have some of the follow-up interviews with British audiences. The majority of the empirical data on British audiences and fans has however been collected by Koko Kondo.

<sup>3</sup> From the total population of 80 audiences (aged 17-61) interviewed for this project in Scandinavia, I pull out 5 respondents (3 individuals and 1 couple) with whom we have conducted 16 in-depth interviews and participant observations. Hanna (UK) was interviewed at the fan event Nordicana in London and twice in cafés also in London, Jeff (UK) has been interviewed at the fan event Nordicana in London, three times over the phone and once in London with his wife. Camilla (DK) has been interviewed three times face-to-face and over the phone just as participant observations were conducted with her in home settings in Denmark. We have visited Katarina and Bengt (SE) twice in Malmö to conduct in-depth interviews and participant observation in home settings and their local neighbourhood in which the researcher was invited on a guided tour to see the media locations around their block. Katarina has been interviewed alone three times.

<sup>4</sup> For further discussion on the so-called practice-turn in fan studies and in media and cultural analysis more generally, see e.g. Bird's (2006) discussion of the value of practice theory in understanding fans and audiences or Couldry's (2013) work on practice theory and digital media.

<sup>5</sup> Photograph taken by the researcher from a guided tour around Katarina and Bengt's local neighbourhood in which Katharina showed me the different locations in which the crew had filmed.