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From *The Kingdom* to *The Killing*

Eva Novrup Redvall

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This research could not have been conducted without the openness and trust from a range of people at the DR in-house drama production unit DR Fiction. When the project was still a mere mission statement on paper, former Head of Drama Ingolf Gabold saw an opportunity to learn more about the mode of production of DR Fiction. This was before the international success of *The Killing* and *Borgen* made journalists take an interest in what British newspaper *The Guardian* branded as the Danish 'hit factory', and I am thankful to Gabold for supporting the project from the very beginning and opening many doors.

From the outset, the degree of access I was granted to many different kinds of rooms, meetings and processes has been remarkable. I have had the opportunity to follow the fragile, initial stages of development of a new high-profile series by head writer Maya Ilsøe and producer Christian Rank, with a number of writers and script consultants (Per Daumiller, Lolita Belstar and Vinca Wiedemann), directors (Jesper W. Nielsen, Heidi Maria Faisst, Jesper Christensen and Pernilla August) and the cast of the series accepting my presence during the storylining in the writers' room through feedback and pitch meetings until readings on set and script meetings with the actors. In a similar vein, the *Borgen* team has been incredibly welcoming, with creator Adam Price and writers Jeppe Gjervig Gram and Maja Jul Larsen allowing me to observe their writers' room and the development of episode 25 for the third season, followed by the work on the script through different feedback meetings until the reading for the cast and crew. Producer Camilla Hammerich, line producer Pernille Skov Sutherland and researcher Rikke Tørholm Kofoed found

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It was also insightful to follow the feedback of Reich and Head of Drama Piv Bernth at the National Film School of Denmark when students of the so-called TV term in January 2013 presented their ideas for potential new series. The TV term is a now institutionalized collaboration on television writing and production between DR, the Film School and the School of Design, and it was of great interest to observe the final pitch as well as teaching sessions during the term. Hanna Lundblad invited me to observe her class on television writing, and the students of the 2012–2013 term were all very welcoming. Head of the Screenwriting Department Lars Detlefsen, Head of the Producers' Department Ib Tardini and Jakob Ion Wille from the School of Design were all helpful, providing information on the structure of the term and sharing documents like the 'dummy paper' in the Appendix.

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in terms of tracing similarities and differences between different modes of production. Other industry events such as the Scandinavian Think Tank Symposium organized in 2010 by the Think Tank on European Film and Film Policy headed by Henning Camre, and the Nordic TV Drama Days at the Göteborg International Film Festival 2010–2013, organized by Cia Edström, have also been excellent opportunities to listen in on industry debates and presentations by both practitioners and scholars.

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with an admired colleague on the other side of the world has been an inspiring experience.

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I am indebted to all these people as well as my friends and family who have taken part in the making of this book and have made the sometimes exhausting process interesting and worthwhile. It is my sincere hope that the book will provide food for thought for new conversations and foster collaborations in the years to come.

Introduction

With large domestic audiences and four Emmy awards for best international drama since 2002, the high-profile drama series produced by the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR) have had a remarkable success in the past ten years. In the 2010s, US and UK audiences as well as critics discovered *Forbrydelsen/The Killing* (2007–2012) and *Borgen* (2010–2013), despite the traditional fear of subtitled content and the local nature of the stories and settings. *The Killing* won the international BAFTA award in 2011, beating US productions like *Mad Men* (AMC 2007–) and *Boardwalk Empire* (HBO 2010–). This kind of audience appreciation and acclaim has led to an interest in whether there is a certain approach to making one-hour quality drama series at DR, suddenly being labelled by some journalists as 'the Danish TV hit factory' (Gilbert 2012).

This book explores the approach to writing and producing television drama series of the DR in-house production unit DR Fiction. Based on an understanding of the development, writing and production of television series as a highly complex and collaborative endeavour, the book argues that while the quality and success of series like *The Killing* and *Borgen* stems from the work of gifted writers, directors, actors and producers with unique visions, there is much more to creating a successful series than a good idea and talented people to make it come alive. The series are also the result of several years of working with a certain mode of production within DR Fiction, and there are many more factors to take into account than the vision of a specific head writer or showrunner.

Drawing on a number of case studies of the production practice since the late 1990s until today and interviews with writers and producers at DR, this book intends to create a nuanced understanding of these varied elements informing the recent rise of Danish television series, as well as

considering key issues related to writing and producing television more generally. The book combines scholarly work on film and television with models and concepts from studies of creativity and collaborative work processes with the aim of providing insights into different modes of writing and production in particular production cultures. The book targets students and teachers with an interest in issues of writing and producing scripted fiction. Readers with a broader interest in screenwriting, drama series or the television industry will find that the book also addresses several industry debates based on an ambition to provide new perspectives about ongoing discussions, such as how to understand the role of the showrunner in a European production context or how to think of writers' rooms in production cultures with limited traditions for this way of working for high-profile drama series.

In the past few years, several series from DR have moved from the national realm to the international scene. Accordingly, the study of this specific, small-nation production culture not only offers analysis of the work of a particular public service broadcaster with domestic success but also provides knowledge about the structures and strategies, choices and collaborations behind series which have recently proven to attract interest beyond the neigbouring Nordic countries. Since the late 1990s, the one-hour, character-driven family and crime series from DR have continuously had large, national audiences when shown in the prime-time television drama slot on Sunday evenings at 8 pm. Several series have also found international acclaim since the first of now four Emmy awards for best international drama in 2002. However, it is the growing UK and US audience and critical interest in the Danish series in the 2010s which have created a more widespread desire to learn more about not only the creators of the series but also the nature of their mode of production.

The 2011 airing of *The Killing* on BBC4 found impressive audiences in spite of being foreign fare and attracted substantial press coverage. There were articles about how the portrayal of a modern welfare society mirrored the state of affairs in the UK, and coverage of gender issues related to the portrayal of the series' detective Sarah Lund. On a less serious scale, there were attempts at doing semiotic analysis of Lund's iconic sweater, and encouragements to readers to send pictures of their similar knitting designs. Following the success of *The Killing*, the political drama series *Borgen* about a female politician becoming the first prime minister of Denmark also appealed to UK audiences. Meanwhile, American audiences watched a remake of *The Killing* on US cable channel AMC, and a remake of *Borgen* is currently being planned. The Danish version of *Borgen* also made it onto American screens, but on a

channel so difficult to find that the enthusiastic review in *The New York Times* was accompanied by a guide on how to locate the programme. As the reviewer concluded, '*Borgen* may be the hardest show to find on American television, but at the moment it's also one of the best' (Stanley 2012).

The review of *Borgen* in *The New York Times* point to the value of exploring different modes of production to better understand their specificity and to complicate discussions of institutional authorship and individual agency. As noted by reviewer Alessandra Stanley, '[T]he same team behind the original version of *The Killing* created *Borgen*, and it too focuses on a strong woman, only this time she leads not a homicide investigation, but an entire country' (2012). It is true that both series are from DR Fiction and that they share similarities by having strong female leads and an interest in larger societal issues besides aiming for an entertaining plot. However, the series were created and made by very different writers, producers and crews working within the same production framework. It is worthwhile investigating the extent to which this particular framework can be said to create certain kinds of productions and what might be said to characterize the mode of production at DR (Figure I.1).

Figure I.1 The cast of *Forbrydelsen/The Killing* (2007–2012) with Sarah Lund (Sofie Gråbøl) and the iconic sweater in front. Photo by Tine Harden. Courtesy of DR

For a small national production industry, the degree of international interest is quite unique and has given rise to discussion of a characteristic Danish approach to television production in the Nordic and European television industry (Bondebjerg and Redvall 2011; Redvall and Gubbins 2011; Redvall 2013). Many broadcasters and production companies are currently debating fiercely how to approach the future production of television drama in a media landscape marked by still more competition and media convergence. Audiences are now watching fiction on many other platforms than the television screen and new players like Netflix are moving into producing original content of their own. A pressing question for many European broadcasters is whether this is a great moment of opportunity for subtitled, scripted series on the international scene or whether this will lead to a decline in the popularity of the domestic series in the national realm with audiences now being able to (legally!) watch the latest episode of *Game of Thrones* (HBO 2011–) the day after its US airing on HBO Nordic or all 13 episodes of *House of Cards* (Netflix 2013–) in a row as part of a global, web-based release.

In 2012, a so-called European TV Drama Series Lab was organized to address some of the current challenges in the industry, particularly to try to understand what the European industry might learn from the American production framework with showrunners and writers' rooms. Several US executives and showrunners argued that the US mode of television production was 'broken', referring particularly to the vast amounts of money spent on developing projects in vain and the production of expensive pilots that never move into series (Redvall 2013, 5). A recurring point in several discussions at the lab was how DR has successfully implemented certain work methods from the American industry, but managed to integrate them into a public service mindset and the local production culture. Among the methods inspired by the US mode of production is the establishment of a head writer/episode writer structure of production since the late 1990s. Another method is the shooting of series as a 'relay', usually with blocks of two episodes, with different directors for each block and moving into production with only a few final scripts on hand, based on the intention of allowing for aspects of production to feed back into the writing process.[1]

Executives from DR Fiction like former Head of Drama Ingolf Gabold and producer Sven Clausen have been successful at creating a shared language around production and presenting an official story of the 'DR way of doing things' at both industry events and in the press. One can, thus, find discussions of a certain kind of 'Danish recipe' for television drama in the Nordic trade press and in, newspaper stories on the increased

interest in television series from DR. Many of the concepts presented and debated, such as the concepts of 'one vision', 'double storytelling', 'producer's choice' and 'crossover', are naturally an important part of this book. However, the book does not attempt to offer any such thing as a recipe for how to write and produce television drama, based on the conviction that it is impossible to boil the complex processes down into a simple checklist, which can easily be digested and copied. As *Borgen* screenwriter Jeppe Gjervig Gram commented in an interview for this book, nothing upsets him more than when people think that there is a definitive recipe of how to write good television series, let alone an episode of *Borgen*; 'there is no final recipe, and the work is never easy' (Gram 2012). As the case studies in this book demonstrate, there can be many different approaches within the same production system. Some structural aspects do create a certain framework and a specific work environment, which can be highlighted as significant for the creative practitioners, but all writers and producers find their own way within the system.

Rather than trying to pinpoint one final recipe, the intention of this book is to analyse the complexity of the processes and collaborations and to insist on the value of using detailed case studies as a basis for understanding their particularity. Some elements like the idea of having a writer with 'one vision' at the centre of production will be discussed as influential across time and cases, but a concept like one vision is also equivocal and can mean a variety of things, both in its implementation and in the interpretation of its essence among people working in what is regarded as a 'one vision' production framework within DR.

Screenwriting and the Screen Idea System

Taking a particular interest in the writing of new television series, this book builds on the recent rise of screenwriting research within film and media studies. This new body of work has revolved around the Screenwriting Research Network and through new books focusing on the history, theory and practice of screenwriting and the nature of the screenplay (e.g. Murphy 2007; Maras 2009; Nelmes 2010; Price 2010). Whereas many classical studies of screenwriting practices have been particularly interested in the emergence of the continuity script or the structures of the US studio system (e.g. Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985), research in the past few years has shown the value of a variety of approaches ranging from theoretical analysis of the ontology of the screenplay to practice-based analyses of screenplay development

Figure I.2 Birgitte Nyborg (Sidse Babett Knudsen) and her husband (Mikael Birkkjær) at the stairs of the seat of the Danish parliament Christiansborg (known as 'Borgen') at the end of the first season of *Borgen* (2010–2013). Photo by Mike Kollöffel. Courtesy of DR

and dealing with many different kinds of film and media cultures (Figure I.2).

The work growing out of this new field of screenwriting studies is often focused on the very process of how films or television series come into being. The research is not only on the development of the text and its properties but also on the complicated 'work groups' and production processes around the texts. Drawing on Helen Blair's concept of 'flexible work groups' (Blair 2001, 2003), Ian Macdonald has thus formulated the useful concept of the 'Screen Idea Work Group', which is to be understood as a grouping of the professional workers involved in conceptualizing and developing new works of fiction (2010). Bridget Conor has fruitfully investigated the labour conditions of British screenwriters (2010), and Steven Maras has proposed thinking about screenwriting as a process of 'scripting' where the stages of conception and execution are increasingly blurred with the coming of new tools and technologies (2009).

This book combines aspects of what Maras has described as the historical and the industrial/institutional trajectories in screenwriting research (2011, 278) with its interest in not only the development and nature of

specific writing processes but also in 'the rules of the game' (Maras 2009, 154). Drawing on the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Ian Macdonald has insisted that the practice of screenwriting cannot be separated from the particular way of thinking about film and television drama at a certain point in time (2004). We need to include the beliefs and understandings behind judgements and distinctions of practitioners as well as gatekeepers guiding the decisions around the script. The research in this book similarly builds on a highly contextual approach to screenwriting, expanding Macdonald's concept of the Screen Idea Work Group to a Screen Idea System, based on thoughts and models from the field of creativity research.

Within the field of creativity research, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has outlined what he calls 'a systems view of creativity', arguing that talented people are of course crucial to the creation of original work, but that the work of individuals must always be considered in relation to the existing knowledge in the domain as well as to the experts of the field who decide what work to select for development and financing, production and distribution (1988, 1999). Based on the systems view of Csikszentmihalyi, this book proposes a Screen Idea System framework for understanding the writing and production of new television series as an interplay between the three main shaping elements of the individuals, the domain and the field. Creators of new series build on what is already produced within the domain of television drama and they are dependent on experts in the field to acknowledge the originality of their variation. The judgements of the experts are based on conceptions of quality or best practice in the current domain, and their decisions lead to the inclusion of new variations.

As analysed in later chapters, there are several aspects to consider in relation to the individuals, the domain and the field, such as the training and track record of the talent proposing new variations and the mandate, management and money of the experts making decisions on what to greenlight or not. As Csikszentmihalyi has remarked, creativity never exists in a vacuum (1999, 315). In creativity research, some scholars talk of 'the four P's of creativity', referring to the Person, the Process, the Product and the Press surrounding the three previous P's (Rhodes 1961). This book suggests similarly always considering what one can call 'the many P's of production'. Traditionally, film and television studies have tended to focus on the Person (as the artist) or the Product (the work of art). The intention in this book is to focus on the actual Process of how people develop new products in a specific, highly collaborative work context marked by many different types of constraints.

As I have previously demonstrated when studying collaborations between feature film directors and screenwriters (2009, 2010a, 2012b), screenwriters have become ever more influential in Danish filmmaking since the 1990s, but the director is still expected to be the driving force of new projects and to possess a vision of what is to be produced. The director is regarded as the artist or the auteur in the process, while the screenwriter is regarded as more of a craftsperson, helping to make the director's vision come alive. This focus on the director as an auteur has led to a marginalization of the screenwriter in many European film cultures (Finney 1996). However, the writer enjoys a much more respected position in the world of television, and a specific interest in the research presented in this book has been to explore the role of the writer in the production framework of DR Fiction and questions around who can be said to have the vision behind a series or be regarded as its creator or author. The collaborative nature of television production raises a number of important questions about individual, collective and institutional authorship, which this book attempts to shed more light on through the study of specific writing and production processes.

Television studies and media industries

While there is a long tradition of 'how to' books on writing for television and books about individual series and their reception from both an American and a European perspective, remarkably less has been written about the practice of making television from a scholarly perspective. Some of the classic studies have focused on the role of the producer, drawing on the understanding of television as a producer's medium (Cantor 1971; Newcomb and Alley 1983; Newcomb 1991). Studies of individual production stories exist (e.g. Elliott 1972; Levine 2001; Lotz 2004), but they are scarce, as are studies of the production culture of individual broadcasters such as Georgina Born's ethnographic study of the BBC, dealing with the work of the BBC drama unit as one part of an extensive book (2005). One of the values of several studies focusing on television production is their explicit focus on the collaborative nature of the processes, when discussing what has been called 'the polyauthorial' nature of work for television (Thompson and Burns 1990) and interpreted as the results of collective action (Sandeen and Compesi 1990).

In the 2000s, several scholars have analysed what is now discussed as 'quality television' (e.g. Jancovich 2003; Hammond and Mazdon 2005; McCabe and Akass 2007) or 'high-end' TV drama (Nelson 2007),

sometimes linking the analysis of the emergence, nature and impact of much-admired cable series like *The Sopranos* (HBO 1999–2007) or *The Wire* (HBO 2002–2008) to more detailed discussions of how they are marked by the targeting of niche audiences rather than the mainstream mass audiences of network television. Recent books and chapters on television drama cultures have enriched the understanding of approaches to production in individual countries (e.g. Dunleavy 2010; Buonanno 2012) as well as of the intricate interplay between the television industries of the UK and the US (Hilmes 2011; Weissmann 2012). While recent years have thus seen a wide variety of valuable research on remarkable developments in the worldwide television drama industries, there are still few studies with a main focus on the actual on-going processes of creating a new series, moving through the stages from pitch to product. This book contributes new knowledge in this regard.

The lack of production research is often explained by film and media studies focusing more on content and aesthetic analysis or reception studies than on production analysis. However, there seems to be still more interest in studying different aspects of production in the film and media industries, not the least because of notable contributions from the field of media industry studies. Several books within this cross-disciplinary field of study have recently outlined the value of a range of possible approaches to studying media industries from local, regional and transnational perspectives (Holt and Perren 2009; Mayer, Banks and Caldwell 2009; Havens and Lotz 2012). Concurrently, books on specific production cultures have emphasized the importance of studying the self-understandings, 'deep texts' and rituals of not only the people thought of as 'above the line' in production but also of 'below the line' work processes (Caldwell 2008; Mayer 2011; Dawson and Holmes 2012).

Whereas there have previously been several studies on the wider implications of how to think of production and working conditions in the cultural or creative industries (Hartley 2005; Hesmondhalgh 2007), this new focus on media industry studies seems to further not only important issues from the perspective of critical political economy, such as questions of ownership or the larger economic or regulatory frameworks for production but also issues of the specific nature of creative work within various cultural industries (Deuze 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010; Elefante and Deuze 2012). These studies often take a rather critical stance in relation to the labour issues and the precariousness of working in the creative media industries, and while these discussions are highly relevant in the world of screenwriting and television production, this book takes a greater interest in the nature of

collaboration and the possibility that certain media industries might create enabling as well as constraining conditions for creative work.

Institutional authorship and individual agency

There can be many disadvantages in studying a small, national production culture, such as the somewhat limited number of players and productions in a country with only 5.6 million inhabitants and the fact that the national output is often of little interest outside the language barriers and borders. One advantage of studying the Danish context has been the relatively easy access to key people and work processes. This book is based on data obtained from having had access to in-house production documents, to people and to observing work processes like the development process of the forthcoming series *Arvingerne/The Legacy* (forthcoming 2014) and the writers' room of the third season of *Borgen* as well as pitches, note meetings, readings and other events around the writing and production. Observational studies of work spaces like writers' rooms provide the opportunity to deal with basic, but nonetheless important, questions like: Who is in the room? How are things discussed? What seems to be the notions of quality? How are disagreements dealt with? Who seems to have the final call?

As will be discussed later in this book, studies like Patricia Phalen and Julia Osselame's *Writing Hollywood: Rooms with a Point of View* (2012) outline some of the challenges of working in American writers' rooms for comedy and drama series, and it has continuously been fruitful to compare the workings of a smaller, national production culture with studies from the US television industry. In the US context, the showrunner is gaining still more ground as the professional role often defined as 'the creative force' behind a series (e.g. Del Valle 2008, 403). Showrunners such as Matthew Weiner (*Mad Men*) or Vince Gilligan (*Breaking Bad,* AMC 2008–2013) are singled out as the creators and creative voices of series, but according to Denise Mann's analysis, it seems still harder to allocate authorship in what she terms 'today's blockbuster-style television production circumstances' (2009, 100). She argues that the showrunner is no longer only in charge of running the writers' room, but is also in charge of managing the show as a multi-platform transmedia franchise and mentions one insider talking about a shift away from the single showrunner to 'a six-pack of executive producers' (2009, 100). Her discussion of what can be perceived as the many different 'authors' involved in a show like *Lost* (ABC 2004–2010) contains interesting perspectives on how to think of creativity, constraints and collaboration on major series. Focusing on the showrunner in relation

to previous studies of the television producer, Alisa Perren has similarly provided enlightening examples of the work experiences of US showrunners through conversations on creativity in the contemporary cable industry (2011) and suggested how to think of showrunners as 'intermediaries' in the complex production processes (2013). Although there are, of course, major differences in the size, scope and speed of writing and producing television series in the US and Denmark, many of the fundamental questions about the nature of creative agency and issues of authorship remain the same.

A particular interest of the case studies in this book has been to analyse what the managerial concept of 'one vision' implies in a collective work process, and the extent to which one can say that the head writer of a new series in the DR model can carry his or her vision through during the many stages of production, since this concept of one vision is often highlighted as a major reason for the recent success of the DR series. However, it is one thing to put a concept down on paper in the official in-house mission statement of a public service drama unit and present it as crucial in the corporate storytelling of the department to the world; quite another is how this concept is at play during production and the extent to which it is regarded as implemented by the creative practitioners (Figure I.3).

Figure I.3 The writers Adam Price (on the right), Jeppe Gjervig Gram (in the middle) and Jannik Tai Mosholt (on the left) storylining in the writers' room of *Borgen* in November 2011. Photo by Peter Mydske. Courtesy of Polfoto

This book approaches the writing and production of Danish television drama from a scholarly perspective, but also with a clear ambition to offer constructive input and ideas for practitioners in the field. Much can be learned from bringing theory and practice closer together and from trying to bridge what is, at least in Europe, often a wide gap between academic film and television studies and the industry. This book is an attempt to bring the two worlds closer together and to provide food for thought to inspire future screenwriting, television and production studies as well as future productions.

Methodology and data

As John Thornton Caldwell has stated in relation to his seminal work on industrial reflexivity and critical practice in film and television, production cultures are 'far too messy, vast and contested to provide a unified code' (2008, 36). However, one can, as an 'interpretative bricoleur' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, xv), try to offer a theoretically and methodologically transparent analysis of specific issues, grounding explanations and interpretations of the 'bricolage' in the material. There might not be a recipe or a unified code, but there can be meaningful interpretations of what is going on.

Besides the challenging messiness and vastness of production cultures, Caldwell has also emphasized how the fieldwork of production is complicated 'by the fact that film and television today reflect obsessively back upon themselves and invest considerable energy in overproducing and distributing this industrial self-analysis to the public' (2008, 1). There is a substantial amount of what he describes as 'corporate scripts' (2008, 3). As already mentioned, the public corporate script around DR exerts a significant force with executives from DR Fiction having told and retold their perception of the reasons behind the recent national and international success on several occasions to both the industry and the press. As demonstrated in the work of Caldwell, much can be learned from analysing this kind of corporate storytelling by a specific media institution and an 'industry's own self-representation, self-critique, and self-reflexion' (2008, 5), but it is also important to try to move beyond the official version of what is being done, to study what is actually going on in production. The intention to do this calls for not only asking practitioners how they describe and interpret their practice but also the opportunity to study the actual work processes.

Georgina Born has described the process of negotiating access for her fieldwork at the BBC like waging a military campaign (2005, 16). As

mentioned in the acknowledgements, this has not been the case for this book. Whereas Born was investigating the BBC at what she described as a time of crisis, it has no doubt been easier to get access to DR at a time of perceived success. Besides the general sense of a time of successful best practice within DR Fiction, this is probably also due to the fact that the research was conducted at a time when one era could be seen as ending and a number of things were changing. There seems to have been a sense of value in having a researcher analyse the historical development and current practice in a drama department undergoing major generational and organizational changes, while the surrounding landscape for production and distribution was rapidly evolving.

One of the inherent risks of getting this kind of access and of conducting observational studies is to 'go native' and get smitten by the success story that most people and organizations would like to tell of themselves. This is not least the case when navigating among so-called elite respondents used to telling their story and presenting themselves in public. As argued by Caldwell, much can be learned from theorizing from the ground up and investigating the interpretative nature of practices (2008, 5). 'Looking over the shoulder' of practitioners can often offer more complex insights than direct talk, and what he has called 'embedded theoretical "discussion"' among practitioners often contains important knowledge (2008, 26–7). It has been central to this study to do observational studies that would allow for investigation of the everyday practices, language and thoughts of production. Born has argued that one strength of fieldwork is to discern not only unifying features but also possible divisions, boundaries and conflicts (2005, 15). Fieldwork creates the opportunity to explore potential gaps between principles and practice, but it is also a fundamental way of gaining detailed knowledge about the routines and spaces for production as well as of the more tacit knowledge in a specific work environment. Much can be learned from interviewing, but there is great value in being able to study the actual work if one is constantly wary of one's own position as a researcher in the process.

The fieldwork conducted, primarily the case study of *Borgen*, has been marked by a sense of observing constructive work processes, which have later been interpreted as examples of best practice by the people involved. It seems important to note that observing the work of other series might have raised more critical points. During the writing of this book, there has sometimes been a sense of almost having to apologize for the lack of tension and conflict observed so as not to appear to be taking a cheerleading stance. As will be discussed later, observing the work

processes at the competing public service broadcaster TV 2 would probably have painted a rather different picture of Danish television writing and production, and several of the *Borgen* practitioners have emphasized that their experience on this series has been rather unique in terms of the well-functioning writing collaborations and routines. As recently argued by television scholar Matt Hills when addressing the current state of television studies, there are good arguments in favour of doing 'failure studies' instead of always writing about acclaimed series and successful showrunners (Hills 2013). However, access to information on series considered to be failures is much harder to come by, and even if the degree of openness has been remarkable in the DR Fiction framework, it has proven hard to get detailed information on what was perceived as series which had been marked by substantial conflicts during their making.

This book thus primarily offers insights on what is considered to be best practice at a time of national and international success, building on extensive interviews as well as on the observations at DR. To gain a broader view of the production context, observational studies have also been conducted during the teaching of the so-called 'TV term' at the National Film School of Denmark in 2012–2013, while industry events like The European TV Drama Series Lab in Berlin 2012, the Nordic TV Drama Days at the Göteborg International Film Festival 2010–2013 and the Scandinavian Think Tank Symposium organized in 2010 by the Think Tank on European Film and Film Policy (Redvall and Gubbins 2011) have provided useful knowledge of current issues on the industry agenda and perceptions of best practice.[2] Combining the interview material and the observational studies with written sources like the in-house production principles (referred to as 'dogmas'), industry reports or statements from the press, the aim has been to provide a both informative and inspiring new perspective on writing and producing television drama.

Content of the book

Chapter 1 introduces the theoretical approach for studying television writing and production in this book. Referring to 'the four P's' in creativity research, the lack of production studies within the film and media studies' tradition of focusing on People and Products is discussed in relation to other fields of scholarship with a stronger interest in Processes and the Press surrounding them. The chapter suggests approaching film and media production as processes of problem finding and problem solving, focusing on the many choices of individuals in social situations