

Chapter 4

Brazilian encounters

Buyers and bloggers appropriating content

Ushma Chauhan Jacobsen & Alessandra Meleiro

Abstract

This chapter examines the ultra-niche and peripheral appearance of Danish television drama in new markets such as Brazil through three interrelated discussions supported by empirical material produced from interactions with buyers and cultural intermediaries based in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo. The first discussion focuses on buyers' motivations for new content. The second discussion considers the perceptions of Danish drama series among regular viewers. The third discussion focuses on bloggers as important cultural intermediaries who view and circulate information about Danish television drama to promote different forms of conversations; for example, critiquing socio-economic challenges rife in contemporary Brazil or spreading their own socio-cultural or political interests to like-minded individuals intricately connected through online networks. The chapter ends with a consideration of how the achievements of the periphery include diverse forms of appropriation by buyers operating in competitive media environments and by viewers and bloggers interacting on new social media platforms.

Keywords: Danish TV drama, Nordic Noir, cultural intermediaries, Brazil, global television

Introduction

Transnational television is characterised by the passage of media content across the boundaries of nationally regulated markets and the practices of cultural intermediaries who mediate and maintain relations between national and transnational spheres (Kuipers, 2011). Unlike the discussions of popularity and success unfolded in many of the other contributions in this anthology, the international circulation and appearance of Danish television drama in new markets such as Brazil can best be described as an ultra-niche and peripheral phenomenon. We engage with this peripherality in this chapter by weaving empirical material produced from interactions and interviews with cultural intermediaries (journalists, bloggers, and cultural producers), viewers,

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and buyers and distributors based in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In doing so, we consider the extent and implications of the appropriation of Danish television drama for different purposes. Although there is ample documentation showing how the global interest in Danish television drama has led to multiple positive outcomes for the television media industry in Denmark (Jensen & Waade, 2013; Redvall, 2013) and for Denmark's cultural diplomacy efforts on the international scene as a producer of high-quality television drama (Jensen & Jacobsen, 2017), less is known about what Danish television dramas do for the Brazilians who encounter them, and how these series serve to further their own interests. Muanis (2015: 91) writes:

It is impossible to research television without relating television programmes, their analysis, content, form and means of production with technology both for production and distribution, exhibition and dialogue with other media, their political and communication dimensions as agents of a discourse and their relation to their spectator.

In this chapter, we demonstrate an explicit interest in the “spectator” in a broad sense. We understand the transnational travel and reception of Danish television drama as a series of multidirectional processes initiated by the cooperation of the global “merchants” of television series (Havens, 2006); their promotion and publicity engineered by old and new cultural intermediaries such as journalists, bloggers, and advertisers; and the affective engagement of regular viewers who watch them. We align ourselves with the definition of cultural intermediaries as embracing not only established actors associated with specific professions involved in the production and circulation of symbolic goods and services in the cultural economy (Bourdieu, 1984; Maguire & Matthews, 2014; Negus, 2002), but also new and emerging actors that actively use the affordances of new technologies to participate in glocal conversations. Characterised as “tastemakers”, “influencers”, or “intercultural mediators”, cultural intermediaries are not only concerned with media occupations but *use the media* to do their promotional work (Hesmondhalgh, 2006).

At the risk of pursuing a line that may be seen as a form of outdated methodological nationalism, as the global is already part of the national (Sassen, 2010), we wish to emphasise three general and commonly articulated perceptions of differences between Brazilian and Danish society from the outset. We do this to emphasise that hypothetically, Straubhaar's theory of “cultural proximity” that describes the trade and reception of television content by the logic of the “seemingly common attraction that audiences feel for cultural products [...] close in cultural content and style to the audiences' own culture(s)” (2007: 26) would be significantly challenged in the Brazilian context given the cultural “non-proximity” between Brazil and Denmark. This non-proximity can be seen in diverse ways, and here we offer three areas of non-proximity.

First, there is a non-proximity of national television histories and practices: this parameter of difference is defined by a strong commercial television regime in Brazil contrasted with a strong public service-oriented television regime – albeit under transformation – in Denmark. Second, there is a non-proximity of national societies with

different intensities of cultural homo- and heterogeneity. Brazilian cultural (or ethnic or racial) heterogeneity is evidenced in a number of categories and words to describe race, ethnicity, or colour: Indian, White, Black, Yellow, Pardo, Mulatto, Cafuso, and Caboclos (Fernandes, 2007). This stands in stark contrast with the homogeneity that is frequently (and often mistakenly) used to point to the nature of Danish society (see Jenkins, 2011). Third, there is a non-proximity afforded by acute differences in socio-economic disparities of Brazilian and Danish citizens. Denmark is seen as a nation promoting equality between genders and social classes, and offering equal access to education and health; Brazil is swamped in socio-economic inequalities – critically documented from both within and outside the country (Neri, 2018; Samans et al., 2015). Although the notion of class distinctions is commonly swept away in Denmark – and many Danes are embarrassed to articulate them – social classes in Brazil are explicitly articulated and commonly used. For example, the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics defines the social classes A–E as “a useful tool for strategists and marketers, as a way to segment the 200+ million people living in Brazil” (Nes, 2016).

We now continue with a description of our methodology followed by three inter-related discussions. The first discussion provides an overview of the appearance of Danish television drama series in the Brazilian televisual space with a specific focus on buyers. The second considers the expressions of interest and diverse perceptions of these series among regular viewers. And the third focuses primarily on bloggers as cultural intermediaries who subtly appropriated Danish television drama to promote different forms of conversations. These conversations include critiquing socio-economic challenges rife in contemporary Brazil and spreading personal interests and concerns to like-minded individuals connected through online networks. We end by considering how the achievements of the periphery include the appropriation of Danish television drama by buyers operating in competitive media environments and by viewers and bloggers interacting on new social media platforms.

Methodology

Our methodology was aligned with the project’s overall method of “the three-leaf clover” (Jensen & Jacobsen, 2017) where we identified, connected with, and gathered information from buyers, cultural intermediaries, and regular viewers. Our primary interactions and interviews took place in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in March 2017 where we interviewed television channel executives, journalists who wrote for online and print publications and niche magazines, bloggers, and festival organisers of the Nordic Bridge Film Festival. In addition, we attended the 2017 Rio Content Market in Rio de Janeiro – the largest annual television marketplace in Latin America – and interacted with independent producers, television executives from TV Cultura and Mais Globosat, as well as digital media professionals. We also met with representatives from the Danish Cultural Institute based in Rio de Janeiro and a representative

from DR (Danmarks Radio) who was invited as a keynote speaker at the Rio Content Market. Our interactions in São Paulo included meetings with television industry executives from FOX/FX and Net Now, as well as in-person and Skype interactions with bloggers and other active viewers of Danish television drama in Brazil. The names of all interactants and interviewees are anonymised.

Unlike in other countries where newspapers and magazine journalists have critically reviewed and promoted Danish television drama among national audiences (see for example, Esser in this anthology), we were unable to locate any breadth or depth of journalistic material in Brazil. The Brazilian media, in a traditional sense, is silent on the matter of Danish television drama. However, preparatory work conducted before our interactions showed some references to the Danish series in a number of online forums. Thus, our material also includes references to user-generated content from online social networks that were monitored in 2016–2017 through Brazil's OPSocial platform. This platform is often used by companies to gain information on consumer profiles, behaviour, and preferences in order to shape audiovisual content. The OPSocial tool retrieved 2,870 viewer posts, comments, and shares from several networks, stored in a single account on this platform. Among them, 770 were analysed and coded through the NVIVO software.

Our data, which can best be described as a patchwork of information and small data, has resulted from a bricolage of networking and following potential cues for information. It is important to stress that the nature of the relationship between academic researchers and Brazil's audiovisual industry is often difficult; thus, it is not uncommon for television executives to refuse or simply ignore requests for interviews. Successful connections were largely granted on the basis of previously established relationships of trust. These relationships of trust, however, did not necessarily secure access to reliable ratings offering some indication of the presumed audience. In some cases, company memories were foggy, and our interactants could not remember the details of the Danish series specifically. In other cases, they were neither willing nor able to share them. One company representative explained that their inability to share resulted from a change in company software.

The names of individual bloggers were identified through the digital traces they left on the OPSocial platform. Some bloggers agreed to meet us personally at coffee shops and restaurants to talk about their interest in Danish television drama; others spoke with us through Skype. The written material appearing on blog posts was later retrieved and treated as a form of observable activity, as argued by Latzko-Toth et al., who write, "Content production (writing a tweet, posting a picture) *is* the activity, and the content itself is a trace of this activity" [emphasis original] (2017: 201).

These types of "small data" – collected from an abundance of small talk – were "thick" in other meaningful ways: "It's the sticky stuff that's difficult to quantify. It comes to us in the form of a small sample size and in return we get an incredible depth of meanings and stories" (Wang, 2016: para. 7). We worked with this data – a fragmented tapestry – while negotiating other methodological peculiarities: slip-

pery language exchanges in Portuguese, Danish, and English; explicit rejections of interview requests; and disappointments when promises that information would be sent were broken.

Brazilian encounters – television in Brazil

Renato Cruz (2008) reminds us that since the first broadcast of the World Cup in 1950, Brazil has developed one of the world's largest and most commercial television systems. Brazil is a powerhouse in the production and export of (melo)drama in the *telenovela* genre, which has demonstrated a strong capacity for international export. Telenovelas are seen to provide a “pleasure of viewing” from their ability to invigorate discussions between groups of viewers who use them as “fictional narratives as a sounding board for ethical issues that are difficult to discuss as first-person issues” (Slade, 2010: 57).

In terms of foreign television content imports, the Brazilian telescape displays a concentration of 251 cable channels with largely non-Brazilian content (ANCINE, 2017) and 17.9 million cable television subscribers (as of December 2017) (ANCINE, 2018). One study shows that, out of 92 cable channels monitored in 2016, only 7 per cent of the channels broadcast Brazilian content, while 80 per cent featured international programmes – mainly from the US, the UK, France, and Germany – with a focus on action-adventure television series, feature films, canned programmes, and licensed television formats (ANCINE, 2019). We were informed that the content of Mais Globosat HD was 70 per cent international and 30 per cent Brazilian.

Traditional television broadcasts reach about 55 million households in Brazil and continue to be important. Only four broadcasters account for over 70 per cent of television audiences: Globo (37% market share); Sistema Brasileiro de Televisão (14.9%); Record (14.7%); and Band (4.1%). Ranking fifth by market share, TV Cultura is the only public broadcaster among the top five and the only free, non-subscription channel featuring Danish series, (in addition to educational content from the US and UK, as well as the Czech Republic, Spain, Germany, Japan, Russia, and Italy).

More recently, the demand and penetration of Video on Demand (VoD) services enabled by internet technologies – for example Netflix, Amazon, Apple +, Claro Video, and Net Now – and the growth of over-the-top premium services in Brazil, supplements the complex multi-platform access that Brazilian audiences have.

Danish television drama series in Brazil

The following table (Table 1) provides an overview of the different channels and services in the Brazilian telescape through which Brazilian audiences had access to Danish television drama produced and exported internationally between 2012–2017.

Table 1. Danish television drama series in Brazilian channels and services

	Launch	Platform	Service
The Killing <i>Forbrydelsen</i>	2012	Mais Globosat HD	Pay TV
	2015	Netflix YouTube	SVoD* FVoD (Free VoD)
The Bridge <i>Broen</i>	2015	Mais Globosat HD	Pay TV
		Globosat Play	Pay TV
		Now/NET	Pay TV
		FX	Pay TV
		Netflix YouTube	SvoD* FvoD (Free VoD)
The Government <i>Borgen</i>	2012	Mais Globosat HD	Pay TV
		YouTube	FvoD (Free VoD)
The Legacy / Os Herdeiros <i>Arven</i>	2015	FOX e FX	Pay TV
	2014	TV Cultura	Broadcast TV
		YouTube	FvoD (Free VoD)
Rita	2017	Netflix	SvoD*
		YouTube	FvoD (Free VoD)

Source: Compiled by the authors

Apart from documenting the different channels and services through which Danish television drama penetrated the Brazilian context, the table draws attention to three additional points. First, apart from *The Legacy* [*Arvingerne*] (DR1, 2014–2017)¹ being publicly broadcasted by TV Cultura, Danish series have otherwise only been accessible by viewers who have the purchasing power to pay for television. Their expectations of good quality are high, as is their comfort and tolerance of images and sounds of different cultures and languages. Second, based on information provided by the viewers we spoke with, the table fails to show that many viewers accessed these series using illegal internet streaming services (e.g., torrent software such as BitTorrent, Pirate Bay, Torrentz2, LimeTorrents, TorrentDownloads, EliteTorrent). Third, the descriptive listing gives no information about the popularity of the series that can otherwise be determined by reliable ratings data. Although TV Cultura shared some basic ratings information for reruns of *The Legacy*, the ratings were strikingly insignificant.

Buyers' search for content

The programme director and acquisitions manager at TV Cultura confirmed that *The Legacy* had been broadcast in a dubbed version according to their official policy of making content accessible to all of Brazil's social classes. An emphasis was placed on *content* and not the origin of production: "The language might be strange but the

geography and the cultural diversity, it's not a problem – some people are looking for something different from their reality” (Interview with TV Cultura, 8 March 2017).

In our interview with the representative of Mais Globosat, we were able to get a basic overview of the complexity of the largest media conglomerate in Latin America, Grupo Globo. The pay channel Mais Globosat falls under Grupo Globo, which also owns the national newspaper O Globo as well as the free television channel Rede Globo – a critical platform for the broadcast of Brazilian telenovelas. Grupo Globo was described by the Content Director at Fox as “The King’s Court”, in reference to its long history of dominance in Brazil’s media market. Although our interviewee did not describe Mais Globosat as a niche channel (unlike Arte, for example), Mais Globosat was described as a “window to the world”. Similar to TV Cultura, our interviewee echoed a similar perspective as that expressed at TV Cultura – that the country of origin of drama series was unimportant, and that only content was considered. In these instances, the Danish aspect was of peripheral concern.

The search for lucrative content by buyers occurred through several processes, of which two were made explicit to us: through word-of-mouth recommendations made to buyers, and through television marketplaces such as the Rio Content Market (renamed Rio2C after 2018). An executive at Claro Net described the former in the following way:

How do I know that content exists? Because someone at a personal level in social media recommended me and as curator, I took her advice and I love it [...] There is no language barrier here because the content is subtitled, the people who usually watch this kind of show is upper class, or high medium class... so for me, if I have to choose between watching a show in subtitled or dubbed... subtitled of course. (Interview, 16 March 2017)

Global television marketplaces are described as exuberant, paparazzi-filled sites for the aggressive business exchange of new television content (see Bielby & Harrington, 2008; Havens, 2006). In comparison to the MIPCOM marketplace held at the Palais des Festivals in Cannes that we had attended earlier, the annual Rio Content Market, although the largest of its kind in Latin America, was a more informal and low-key affair, hardly noticeable outside the Windsor Hotel where it was held. The focus in 2017 centred on black voices and the asymmetric representation of black media professionals. Global television marketplaces always have specific themes, but the theme of Nordic Noir, to which Danish television is related in international marketplaces, has never featured at the Rio Content Market.

The 2017 event did, however, include a speech delivered by DR Kultur channel’s documentary representative at a market and pitching session. Apart from describing DR’s market shares, genres, and objectives of the public service channel, the speech outlined the ambition of DR to engage in increased transnational co-productions. Questions from the audiences included: how can you do the co-production in Brazil? how would the money work? and how does pitching of product happen? (provided by

session moderator). The speaker largely evaded concrete issues of capital investment and focused instead on promoting DR as an intrinsically credible partner by appropriating the international success of its television drama series that he described as having “strong characters” and “surprising stories”. He continued:

DR is a national broadcasting company in Denmark, and you have to remember that Denmark is a very small country in Scandinavia, we only is 5.5 million people in Denmark... so, it's smaller money, smaller audience than you see here in South America...DR1 is for locally produced content and also here that we show our internationally famous fiction drama. (Sound recording from pitching session, Rio2C, 8 March 2017)

Apart from this fleeting appearance of Danish television drama at the Rio Content Market, references to this pool of television content – including other examples of Nordic Noir series – were clearly absent.

Our conversations with content buyers impressed upon us that their acquisition decisions were not necessarily based on a deep understanding of audience needs or a committed effort to offering consistently good quality television content. Rather, such decisions were more like calculated responses to key trends in the global television market and opportunistic decisions to appropriate different forms of television content to saturate and quench the demands of a volatile market. For example, the Content Director at Fox was far more captivated by the need to secure lucrative market benefits from the migration of audiences towards VoD. Another interaction with the Director of Programme and Contents for ClaroNet echoed this position and characterised the Brazilian telescape as fiercely competitive; strapped by complex legal regulations; racing to harness new technologies as first movers; experimenting with new business, marketing, and advertising models that capture new technological platforms; coping with the abundance of television content being churned out on a monthly basis; and fixated on the fragile loyalties of viewers. In such a climate, Danish television drama series were only a drop in the ocean – respected for their good stories that appealed to a niche audience, but not quite the subject of unparalleled attention.

Furthermore, he drew on publicity practices and the importance of the American remake of *The Killing* in paving the way for broadcasting the Danish version:

It's mainly the promotion done by those who bought the shows... because when you have 50,000 titles you decide what's going to be more successful... because you have a supermarket, and you give more attention or less – and if the niche gets no attention it will be close to zero... I think *The Killing* had more audience after the American show was launched... why? Because [the Danish version] got the promotion done after the American show. (Claro Net interview, 16 March 2017)

John Fiske (1987) describes three types of television texts: the first type are the programmes; the secondary texts are advertisements, publicity, and news stories; and the tertiary texts are those generated by the public through word-of-mouth. In many

national contexts (e.g., Australia, Germany, the UK, and Turkey) analysed in this anthology, Fiske's first type of television text, the programme itself, is highlighted as being critical for the acquisition and reception – and indeed, the appropriation – of Danish television drama. In the Brazilian context, from the perspective of the merchants of television, Fiske's secondary texts appear as critical to making decisions about acquisition and audience reception. In addition, Fiske's tertiary type of texts, word-of-mouth, also seem important. We will now consider the role these texts played in the reception of Danish television drama and how they were appropriated for other purposes.

Expressions of interest in Danish television drama

When audiences in the Brazilian context describe their perceptions of Danish television drama, which were articulated during our interactions, they often refer to similar elements as audiences in other chapters in this anthology: the visual aesthetics including landscape ambience; the sense of authenticity (especially portrayed in multilayered, complicated characters); the representation of gender relations and the role of women; and the display of societal challenges. And very often, Danish television drama is positioned as *different* from Brazilian telenovelas.

Danish television drama attracted very little media coverage in Brazil. Three short articles, simply alerting readers to the presence of *Bron/Broen* [*The Bridge*] (SVT1/DR1, 2011–2018) and *Forbrydelsen* [*The Killing*] (DR1, 2007–2012) on Fox/FX, were published between 2013–2014 in the daily newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*². Further mentions were found in the OPSocial database, and although this data was thin in terms of elaboration, some examples (translated into English by us) are given here to show how peer-to-peer communications serve as tools to express interest, evaluate, rate, question, and actively contribute to opinion formation (see Van Dijck, 2009). Some viewers appropriated Danish television drama to express personal opinions on what gave them personal pleasure: “*The Bridge* is cool, with the same dramatic and initial suspense as *Borgen* or *The Killing*” or “Most people do something and I just lie down watching my Danish series”. Some asked questions or provided further information related to the series: “Is *Borgen* on Netflix?” or “So *Borgen*'s Katrine appears on *Pitch Perfect 2*”. Viewers used the Danish television drama as a way to connect to others (“If you watch *The Bridge* call me, I want to be your friend”) and explicitly recommended them (“I recommend the *Borgen* political series. I think you'll love it. It is about the first woman prime minister of Denmark”). An example of a viewer who showed a feeling of connection to a character stated: “There's a character I wanted to be able to take care of and protect. Her name is Saga Norén, from the Malmö Police”. Another used sequences to compare the differences in Danish and Brazilian practices: “I'm here to see a Danish series, and I can only wonder about how their teaching is so fucking different to the Brazilian teaching”. A less enthusiastic post reflected a recently erupted debate accompanied by an internet campaign voicing the absence of black people in

Globo's new telenovela *Segundo Sol* [*Second Sun*] (despite its location in Bahia state where 76% of the population is self-declared black or brown)³, by asking: "Why do Danish series fail to respect on-screen racial diversity?" (viewer posts compiled using the OPSocial tool).

Adding to the line of less positive associations, two further comments from our interactions with bloggers express a form of pity for people living in well-functioning and orderly societies. One stated, "they usually seemed bored about their country, [...] we are usually more enthusiastic – it's a little bit messy" (13 March 2017), and another said:

I see very organised cities with very nice gardens, everything well set... I see very polite people, educated people... not that warm, but nice people, respectful people, organisations that work accordingly, doing exactly what they're supposed to do... maybe because of the hard winter... Maybe people a little bit sad, there's not much sunlight. (Cultural entrepreneur, 9 March 2017)

Finally, a comment made by a woman with extensive textual knowledge of non-Brazilian television drama from all over the world critiqued the storylines of some Danish series:

There is something that intrigues me, and to be honest, bothers me to an extent. It is the fact that plots don't go so deep in their political and social aspects. I have in mind precisely the finales of *Bridge* (s3) and *Killing* (s1) These endings were quite disappointing to me, seeing that such complex storylines ended up being resolved as problems of one very disturbed individual. (Private e-mail correspondence, 19 March 2017)

Cultural intermediation

Cultural intermediaries (e.g., bloggers) have been seen as "anonymous heroes" of communication (de Certeau, 1984), playing the roles of mediators and transformative agents involved in the production and circulation of symbolic goods and services in the cultural economy. Their practices construct, validate, reject, or promote cultural objects and representations. Cultural intermediation occurs through practices associated with specific professions involved in the articulation of taste in the fields of journalism, music, advertising, food branding, and arts promotion (see Maguire & Matthews, 2014). Increasingly, the advent of internet technologies – with their affordances of democratisation and participation – allow social media platforms to stand as "an alternative to the top-down structure of the older mass media" (Dahlgren, 2012: 100). Today, the practice of cultural intermediation has been extended to cover the activities of bloggers, vloggers, and YouTubers who choose, select, and express their opinions in diverse domains such as fashion and business (e.g., Jenkins et al., 2013; Kuleva & Maglevanaya, 2017).

Verboord discusses how “the available space for discussing cultural products has significantly increased with the proliferation of the internet” (2014: 924), and how the participatory activities of individuals who use new platforms to share their ideas erode the cultural authority and positions of traditional media critics. However, this newly available space also allows individuals to discuss subjects meaningful to them. An important social media platform is the blog, described by Brainard as “the penny press newspapers of the 21st century, allowing every citizen to share his or her views on the world” (2015: 171). However, blogs display great variation. Rettberg (2014) suggests three major types of blogs: “personal” or “diary-style”; “topic-driven”; and “filter” blogs. For the purposes of understanding the appropriation of Danish television drama by bloggers in Brazil, we focus on filter blogs – those that record the blogger’s experiences and “finds on the web” that are filtered from their own point of view. In the following, we give examples of how five different cultural intermediaries appropriated Danish television drama to promote different forms of conversations. This is followed by a brief discussion of the promotion of Danish television drama by the Danish Cultural Institute, based in Rio de Janeiro.

Antonio, blogger and writer for an online magazine

Antonio, a man in his late 20s, had watched all three seasons of *The Killing* by downloading (without being specific about the source) *after* he had seen the American remake and *after* he had heard other people talking about it on the internet. When probed in an interview (10 March 2017) to describe the difference between the original and the remake, Antonio responded:

The original is more low in... in a good way, you can understand the characters more... The remake is like things are already solved, the original is more... original. I think you understand more the character in the original one.

He pointed to the many Brazilian internet sites focusing on reviewing television shows and movies, supporting our assumption that one way of understanding the impact of Danish television drama was to focus on emerging platforms of discussion and exchange. Antonio saw his blogging activities as a form of independent space where he could articulate and express his views to a smaller, connected audience unlike what was possible in traditional media:

People like me, they are searching for... I like to know things that are not there every time, when I think there is something important to talk about. In the traditional media it's for a lot of people, so you have to choose more. In the independent, is not for everyone, it's easier to choose what you like, what you are connected with. I have more space in the independent media. (Interview, 10 March 2017)

Continuing, Antonio pointed to how *The Killing* offered another sort of “reality” to connect and identify with:

In the end it's all about people and what connects people... it doesn't really matter where it is from, but the personal dramas and the family, even if you are from another reality, you can connect in some way. (Interview, 10 March 2017)

Andressa, blogger and translator

Andressa described herself as self-taught literary translator, writer, proofreader, and blogger. Her blog described her interest in content originating from outside the Anglophone world and focused on the strong female protagonists (something that audiences from other countries have also commented on) and the way the series addressed societal issues:

It attracted me for two reasons: one, to follow a political drama outside the English-speaking world, in a country about which we know much less than we imagine. Another, to know the story of a strong and interesting female protagonist. [...] I found it quite empowering. [...] In Brazil, it is happening on +Globo channel. [...]

Update: I saw the 30 episodes and it's as good as I expected. It unreservedly addresses issues such as colonialism, abortion, legalization of prostitution, public health. (Andressa, blog entry, 2014)

Andressa explained that the point of writing her blog, which she saw as “a personal space”, was to spread references and recommendations for ideas that mattered and – in Andressa's specific case – new forms of feminism. Relating to the precarious position of women in leading positions in Brazil, Andressa noted the importance of television shows – that they had the capacity to achieve more than only providing entertainment:

We look forward to TV shows that really tell a good story... even more than in the movies. But now we have a huge offer of different stories with good characters, and this is worldwide. And we are currently experiencing like a fourth wave of feminism, which is really connected to the internet, also on the streets and in protests, but we are passing information to the Internet and trying to educate a bit women of my generation. (Interview, 13 March 2017)

Echoing Antonio's thoughts, Andressa described how she used her filter blog and the capacity to be present online to display how she captured different types of content with the purpose of promoting her own feminist interests:

I am part of a group of women who make a website and it's about any type of content that relates to nerd/geek culture from a female point of view and a feminist point of view. We are always looking for TV shows which show women being real people and also being strong and doing things and making things happen... if it doesn't happen on Facebook, it never happened... being online is really important. (Interview, 13 March 2017)

Izabel, journalist and active blogger

Our interactions with Izabel helped to exemplify how individuals use other dissemination platforms as alternatives to the top-down structure of the older mass media and challenge them (Dahlgren, 2012: 100). Izabel worked earlier as a journalist for a Brazilian weekly news magazine – who hired her on the basis of her blog activity – to report on television shows. Being dissatisfied with her task to write “not serious things, just a list of the best thing, the worst thing, what’s on Netflix... they want clicks”, Izabel left her position. She asserted how “media companies put up structural barriers for the dissemination of quality drama” and considered the establishment of her own blog site (with two other writers) as a space “to write something beyond the obvious” (Interview with Izabel, 14 March 2017). Her goal was to show alternatives to American television content that audiences could engage with. Her appropriation of Danish television drama as an example of these alternatives fed directly into that overall ambition.

Izabel’s blog relates *The Killing* to the Nordic Noir genre, which she saw as crucial for establishing “Scandinavian production on the world television map”. Furthermore, the blog explains how this genre differs from American productions in techniques, character portrayal, and articulation of socio-political, economic, and cultural issues, as well as how audiences could reflect on the domination of American content in Brazil:

The term usually defines series that, in the case of the police genre, presents a detective or a team doing investigations (usually of a case per season) without the use of the technological paraphernalia commonly seen in the American productions. In both police productions and dramas, the stories (which feature a cinematographic photograph) are situated in a chilling, melancholic environment, presenting the contrast between an evolved society and heinous crimes (depicted with cruelty refinement and in detail of images) and hypocrisy (in the case of non-police dramas).

[...] In the midst of all this, the series make a harsh social critique of their respective countries (including cultural clashes), without necessarily offering a happy ending. The series offer a plot with a “domino effect” (one situation leads to another that leads to another, [...] full of twists and turns, amid present socio-political-economic-cultural issues.

Despite their success, Scandinavian productions are still not able to establish themselves in the Brazilian market. This is because the channels (open and closed network) are dominated by American production. (Izabel, blog entry, 2017)

Eric, filmmaker and screenwriter, and Renato, journalist and activist

This section presents two further blog posts related specifically to the series *Borgen*, which are similar to the Japanese audiences expression of curiosity towards the representation of a female prime minister negotiating the tensions between private and public life (see Jacobsen, 2018).

The first blog post is written by Eric Bitencourt, who writes reviews for the film and television review website *Pipoca e Guaraná*. Eric refers to *Borgen* as a television series with “the ability to make a whole nation question its values”. He further writes that public broadcasting allows for the creation of television content that stimulates controversy:

In Denmark, television is public, that is, paid for and administered by the government. This has consequences: First, TV has a history of being educational, since, being paid for by taxes and not by advertisers, you do not have to worry about attracting audiences. Secondly, this would make the content sensitive to state interests. But Denmark proved to be capable of producing high-quality content and commercial potential and freedom of expression laws allowed *Borgen* to create controversy. (Bitencourt, 2015)

The second blog post is written by Renato Guimaraes, co-founder of Together, a communication agency dedicated to promoting social change by mobilising and engaging people, companies, and organisations in social causes. Described as a “journalist and activist for a better world” in the liberal magazine *HuffPost Brazil*, Renato is explicit in appropriating the content of *Borgen* to critique Brazilian politics in his blog, as well as drawing similarities between political arenas, irrespective of national differences. He writes:

More revealing is the slow, steady, and unrelenting process of initiating the progressive Nyborg to the rituals of power. Especially the greatest desire of everyone who comes to a position like hers: to remain in power. Besides, it exposes the often carnal relations between politicians, the mass media and capital. It is interesting to see that scandals, traps, and corruption are not, by far, exclusive attributes of Brazilian political life. (Guimarães, 2014)

Eric and Renato’s blog entries articulate both non-proximities between Brazil and Denmark in terms of television histories (i.e., the commercial contrasted with the public broadcast model) as well proximities (i.e., similarities of the national political arenas). This resonates with Slade’s work on the international popularity of telenovelas and Australasian soap operas, where she claims that audience pleasures do not simply lie in the audiences’ ability to identify with the characters and stories of televised drama, but more in their ability to see “their own lives through the lens of similarities and differences in the lives portrayed” (2010: 59). As shown here, this understanding may be extended to include lenses of similarities and differences that not only touch audiences in terms of their own biographies, but the socio-political contexts within which their lives unfold.

The Danish Cultural Institute

National cultural institutes are prime sites for intercultural mediation and active promoters of the branded cultural images and expressions of the nation state. The Danish Cultural Institute (DCI) has a presence in 18 countries around the world

promoting knowledge of Danish and international culture by facilitating cultural events involving music, theatre, and dance; supporting artist residencies; and offering Danish language courses. National cultural institutes are, in other words, bona fide instruments of international cultural diplomacy (Paschalidis, 2009).

Our interactions with DCI representatives in Rio de Janeiro revealed that in contrast to the Danish Embassy, which focused on showcasing Denmark, DCI focused on intercultural dialogue. Although aware of the relative popularity of *The Killing*, *Borgen*, and *The Bridge* outside Denmark, the DCI representatives could only faintly recall *Borgen* having been shown on Mais Globosat. The Facebook site Cultura Nordica, started by a DCI employee, gives a scant reference to the Danish series when alerting visitors to a new Netflix series *The Rain* (2018–present) by writing:

Have you heard about the Danish television programs “Borgen” and “Broen” that have gained international fame? A new Danish TV program produced by Netflix produced by Natasha Arthy, director of “The Killing”, tries to expand this success. (Cultura Nordica, Facebook post, 11 November 2017)

Apart from this slight mention, Danish television drama was not consciously appropriated by DCI for the promotion of intercultural dialogue. When probed about the reasons for this, we were told that DCI privileged concrete interactions – unmediated by screens – between people in their music, art, theatre, and dance projects.

DCI had done more to promote Nordic films than television drama. They supported the film festival *Ponte Nordica* held in Sao Paulo in 2016 where 32 screenings attracted 30–100 guests that, according to the festival organiser, “were either cinema addicts or those interested in music, green economy, social issues and urban development” (Interview, 12 March 2017). Although television drama is currently seen as competing with film in the age of Subscription VoD (Tryon, 2013) (something echoed by the content manager at FOX/X when he spoke about the blurring line between film and television), it seems that films are still considered more representative of a nation’s repertoire of cultural products than television series are.

Conclusion

The Brazilian case offers a sober example of a market where the hype about the global popularity of Danish television drama series is subject to a reality check. Our investigations strongly suggested that although Danish television drama series were respected for their good stories, they were not quite the subject of unparalleled attention. If viewer ratings or extensive media coverage in written and online newspapers are assumed to be significant indicators of success, then the absence of these indicators suggest that their appearance in Brazil had limited significance and impact. However, the voices heard in a peripheral market still allowed us to consider peripheral forms of significance and impact, that is, the achievements of the periphery.

Our interactions with buyers of Danish content, who acted in turbulent, intensely competitive media environments driven by a “brutal commercial logic” (Dahlgren, 2012), uncovered attitudes of disinterest in the “Danish” but interest in “content” (Mais Globosat; Fox). The provision of television series options were seen as integral to maintain and reinforce consumption patterns. Danish television drama series were used as a resource that gave further options to customers, temporarily reached new audiences, and filled empty slots. The peripheral market in Brazil thus capitalised efficiently on trending content, whilst Danish producers enjoyed economic and symbolic profit from having their content bought and watched by non-proximate Brazilian audiences.

Our data from the OPSocial platform and interactions with cultural intermediaries – primarily bloggers – also provide glimpses into what peripheral markets can achieve. Danish television drama was appropriated as temporary focal topics to promote different forms of conversations among like-minded people in dense online networks. These conversations included the showcasing of Danish television drama as dialogic ammunition for societal and political critique of the Brazilian context. However, it should be noted that Brazil has its own telenovela tradition – and even though telenovelas were often referred to as overly-dramatic and artificial, they have also been seen as provokers of emancipation and social change (see Vink, 1988). Representatives at the DCI noted the potential of the periphery:

The poor cannot access a computer and the very rich, they are not culturally curious – but the middle class, with all the political turmoil, have a way to see alternatives that are presented on the screen. (Interview, Rio de Janeiro, 7 March 2017)

Interestingly, our data showed small glimpses of how Danish television drama did this.

Other forms of conversation provoked by the peripheral engagement focused on contrasting the differences in the sense of “reality” in American and Nordic audiovisual genres (see Eichner, Kaptan in this anthology). Other conversations introduced and recommended topics of novelty sourced from places beyond the national or regional. Bloggers not only articulated their own engagement and spread the news of interesting television drama series in their online networks embedded in “spreadable media” (Jenkins et al., 2013), but they also subtly appropriated Danish television drama to promote their own cosmopolitan selves, their careers, and their aesthetic and political interests.

Notes

1. The channel and years of broadcasting for the series in question are referenced at the first mention of a television series.
2. See, for example, *Noir nórdico’ da Dinamarca tem versões e fãs ao redor do mundo* [Denmark’s Nordic Noir has versions and fans around the world]. *Folha de São Paulo*. Retrieved April 5, 2019, from <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/2014/02/1419009-genero-noir-nordico-da-dinamarca-tem-versoes-e-fas-ao-redor-do-mundo.shtml>

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3. See MPT notifica Globo por falta de negros em novela e recomenda mudanças [MPT notifies Globo on the absence of blacks in telenovelas and recommends changes]. *Agência Brasil*. Retrieved April 5, 2019, from <http://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/geral/noticia/2018-05/mpt-notifica-globo-por-falta-de-negros-em-novela-e-recomenda-mudancas>

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