

Introduction

Audiovisual content for children and adolescents in Scandinavia

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ABSTRACT

This chapter outlines some of the many recent changes and pressing issues to consider when studying the production, distribution, and reception of audiovisual content for children and adolescents in the current Scandinavian media industries. Building on the work of media scholars Anthony Smith and Roberta Pearson, the chapter addresses five main specificities to consider: medium, national, institutional, technological, and audience specificities, the last being particularly important when thinking about content for a quite specific audience, such as children and young people. The chapter ends by introducing the chapters of the book.

KEYWORDS: children's and youth film and television, reaching young audiences, Scandinavian public service media, media production, media distribution, media reception, media use

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The Scandinavian countries have a long and proud tradition of taking children and adolescents seriously in cultural and media contexts, as an audience with their own specific needs, in wider policy frameworks focusing on children's culture [børnekultur], and in specific film and media productions as well as in literature and theatre (see Bakøy, 1999; C. L. Christensen, 2006; N. Christensen, 2003; Drotner, 1997; Juncker, 1998; F. Mouritsen, 1996; Rydin, 2000). In a film and media context, the media use and viewing habits of children and adolescents have changed dramatically in the past decade, challenging many of the traditional ways of thinking about what to produce for them and how to engage them. Audiovisual content in the shape of films, series, and various social media video content on, for example, Netflix, Disney+, YouTube, Twitch, or TikTok are now a major part of the media diet of young audiences, while encounters with domestic films and series are in decline. The contributions in this edited volume explore these recent developments in the context of the Scandinavian countries, focusing on the production as well as the distribution and reception of fictional content for children and young audiences in the digital and, if not globalised, then at least thoroughly transnationalised Nordic mediascape.

There are many reasons why it is important to study not only what is produced for this particular audience and how this content is circulated, but also what the young audience members actually watch in a time marked by pull rather than push patterns of media use (see also Livingstone & Das, 2013). One reason is that the representation of children and childhood in content for children reveals how a culture and society understand children and children's lives. In a Scandinavian context, since the 1960s, ideas of content production for children in a wide variety of genres form pairs with the concept of the welfare state, attaching importance to also inform, entertain, and create a public good for children in the Nordic region. From the early years of radio and television, the Scandinavian countries pursued a strategy of having children be heard and visible in the programmes made for them, reflecting their lives and concerns, and children are still a priority at the public broadcasters (Bakøy, 1999; C. L. Christensen, 2013; Rydin, 2013). In the world of film, the state-funded film institutes have for many years allocated money specifically for producing films for children and youth. As an example, the Danish Film Institute has earmarked 25 per cent of its production funding for this purpose since 1982 (Breuning, 2002).

While for many years it was rather easy to attract the attention of children and adolescents in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden – as the mediascape was dominated by national public service broadcasting – this exclusive access to domestic audiences has become increasingly challenged in the 2020s with the arrival of still more platforms, content providers, and devices on which to watch. A striking figure to illustrate this development is that young audiences in Denmark have access to an average of between four and five streaming

services each (DR, 2020). Another telling example is that, in 2021, young Danes spent an average of 90 minutes on social media each day, compared with 20 minutes dedicated to traditional television (DR, 2022). Finally, another recent report states that the young Danes who use TikTok regularly spend an average of 57 minutes a day on the platform, corresponding to no less than 225 videos (DR, 2022).

In this new and highly competitive market, characterised by an abundance of content and providers, domestic players (i.e., broadcasters, funding bodies, distributors, and production companies) have explored a variety of strategies to stay relevant. The public broadcasters have branched out with still more specialised children’s channels and online offers and, as such, have interestingly “ghettoised” the children’s content. For example, the Danish public broadcaster DR has three different children’s brands – DR Minisjang targeting 1–3-year-olds; DR Ramasjang targeting 4–8-year-olds; and DR Ultra targeting 9–14-year-olds. Also, the Norwegian public broadcaster NRK launched the TikTok series *Toxic* in 2022, filming every scene twice to accommodate viewers on TikTok with a vertical format, and viewers on platforms with a more traditional landscape format, such as YouTube, with a horizontal format (A. S. Mouritsen, 2022).

In addition, producing quality content is not enough in itself; efficient launching and distribution of new content has become increasingly important as well. Children and young audiences must be able to find this domestic content among the multitude of competing content productions, ranging from YouTube or TikTok videos to highly professional productions from global Anglo-American players such as Netflix and Disney+. Consequently, producers and distributors in Scandinavia must balance numerous considerations on how to be present in the lives of young audiences and, importantly, on which platforms. Since the 2010s, a recurring dictum from DR was that the national public service institution should be present on the platforms that young audiences are already using, rather than expecting them to find DR’s own platforms.

Pursuing this strategy raises several questions about who owns and controls the external platforms. This was illustrated when Google decided to remove access to the DR Ramasjang app based on arguments about the inappropriateness of programming with what was regarded as “subversive” characters such as Onkel Reje, a (liquorice) pipe-smoking, farting, and just generally misbehaving pirate, who was considered by the tech giant to be encouraging smoking and violence (Bjerregaard, 2020). Although the DR Ramasjang content was eventually allowed back on Google’s platforms, the incident poignantly illustrates tensions that beg to be addressed, for politicians as well as content producers, when hitherto domestic content providers act in a global and competitive market.

Content marked by both continuity and change

Before introducing the content of the individual chapters, which offer case-specific analyses, we outline some of the many current tensions and pressing questions linked to the production, distribution, and reception of audiovisual content for children and young audiences in Scandinavia today. When researching and writing about children and youth content, there are different specificities to be aware of. We draw on the work of British media scholars Anthony Smith and Roberta Pearson (2015) who, in the introduction to the anthology *Storytelling in the Media Convergence Age: Exploring Screen Narratives*, outlined different contexts of contemporary screen narratives in the age of media convergence. Smith and Pearson addressed how some scholars argue that traditional boundaries, such as the boundaries between nations or mediums or between audiences and producers, have diminished in importance. However, while acknowledging various recent changes, they challenged the notion of a general blurring of boundaries and argued in favour of “the continued importance of media distinctions and national borders to our understanding of the production and circulation of screen narratives in the media convergence age” (Smith & Pearson, 2015: 2).

The importance of media distinctions has also been highlighted by media scholars such as David Hesmondhalgh (2018), who argued that it is often easier to focus on change rather than continuity when studying technological and industrial developments and innovations. Most often, Hesmondhalgh (2018: 2ff) argued, new developments or innovations happen in an intricate interplay between continuity *and* change, with new ideas and practices building on traditional ways of doing things and on existing structures within, for example, a specific media system or industry. One such example could be that public broadcasters in the past used to encourage children to write letters, call on the telephone, or fax their thoughts about children’s television. Today, digitalisation has made these media redundant, but children are integrated in other ways, for example, in co-creation processes and online panels.

As argued by Smith and Pearson (2015), film and media studies have naturally been reconfigured following the radical impact of digitalisation on all aspects of the mediascape, and they have acknowledged that media scholars must think more about transmedial and transnational aspects. They also insisted that there are still many meaningful specificities at play, pointing to the value of approaching the current mediascape with an emphasis on continuity as well as change.

Smith and Pearson (2015: 4) advocated for analysis based on four main specificities: medium specificity, national specificity, institutional specificity, and technological specificity. In the following, we discuss researching content for children and young audiences in relation to these four specificities, adding a fifth dimension: audience specificity. This specificity refers to change and continuity with regard to perceptions of children and young audiences as a special kind of audience with particular needs in relation to audiovisual content in the 2020s.

Medium specificity

Even though mediums are converging in different ways, we argue along with Smith and Pearson (2015: 5) that “distinctions in production and circulation practices continue to preserve each medium’s identity”, with implications for each medium’s narrative forms, for example. Consider film versus television: Generally, films continue to be produced as single self-contained narratives, while television content is typically produced as serial narratives. Another example is how film and television still belong to fairly “distinct sets of cultural, and more specifically, industrial conditions” that work to preserve each medium’s specificity (Smith & Pearson, 2015: 5).

When zooming in on the Scandinavian countries in relation to fictional content for children and young audiences, we see this medium specificity in the ongoing discussions of whether the film institutes should also fund television series, or whether directors, producers, and other professionals of the audiovisual industries should be educated within film as well as television *and* social media. New support schemes, such as “Univers” from the Danish Film Institute, encourage the creation of cross-media content and immersive storyworlds. Yet, there are still limited cross-over and hybrid forms that truly challenge the fundamental specificities of each medium. While cross-media or transmedia storytelling has been a buzzword for many years, there are few examples of narratives trying to merge existing forms in new ways. Despite some important and interesting exceptions, such as the NRK hit serial *SKAM* [*Shame*] that worked with social media communication of the fictional characters around the scripted serial content (Sundet, 2019; Redvall, 2018), or the Danish television Christmas calendar series *Kometernes jul* [*Christmas of the Comets*] that integrated the teaching of natural sciences within the 24 episodes of fiction (Redvall & Christensen, 2021a), most content for children and adolescents is still produced independently for either film, television, streaming, or social media.

DR continues the long tradition of producing children’s television, but in the 2020s as more serialised content and with remarkably shorter episodes in the realm of scripted fiction. This is partly based on an analysis by scholars researching DR that children appreciate having many short episodes to engage with (see also the discussion about the DR “ingredients of a streaming hit” in Redvall & Christensen, 2021b). Combined with a general focus on producing national fiction for Danish children, this has led to DR Ultra offering 257 episodes of scripted fiction in 2020, compared with only 23 episodes in 2015 (DR, 2020). Moreover, the changed viewing patterns and attention span of children have made DR rethink classical dramaturgical models, sometimes working with the “dragon model”, which attempts to capture the audience’s attention with a dramatic hook from the outset rather than building the drama more slowly (Heiselberg & Ebbesen, 2022). In this way, the traditional television medium is being distributed online, affecting

episode length, number of episodes, and storytelling strategies. At the same time, though, many fundamental ideas about “good” public service television content remain the same.

Studies of viewing patterns reveal that audiences in fact still watch films and series in different ways (Johnson, 2019): Films are to a greater degree than series watched with others and without distractions from a second screen or other activities, whereas the consumption of television series happens mostly on an individual basis and, more often than not, whilst engaging in other activities (P. M. Jensen et al., 2021).

National specificity

When it comes to national specificity, Smith and Pearson (2015: 6) argued that national contexts “continue to distinctly inform how narratives are made and received” via, for example, specific national policies, regulations, and practices that all “have the capacity to influence the construction and understanding of screen narratives”. In our case, this is of course where the specific national perspectives within Scandinavia become interesting.

As we know from publications on the specificities of the Nordic media systems, such as Trine Syvertsen and colleagues’ (2014) *The Media Welfare State*, the Scandinavian countries and the larger Nordic region tend to cluster in global comparisons, characterised by high social welfare and a large degree of happiness and wealth, but also how media are regulated, managed, and consumed. An example in relation to children’s media is the generous allocation of public funds to produce films for children and young audiences (as discussed by Anders Lysne in Chapter 3 in this volume on Scandinavian screen fiction for youth). Another example is the comparatively well-funded public broadcasters and their ability to offer a relatively large variety of outlets and content catering to children and adolescents, despite the (small) size of the national markets.

As pointed out by international scholars, such as Anna Potter writing about Australian children’s television (2015, 2020), other countries also have histories of allocating funding for the youngest audiences in public service contexts. However, the Nordics have a long and quite unique tradition of sharing programmes and cross-border collaborations through established institutions such as the Nordic public service partnership organisation Nordvision (founded in 1959). The Nordic broadcasters still work together through Nordvision, and the Nordic drama co-productions for children doubled in 2015–2020 (Hartmann, 2020). 2020 saw the establishment of the B14 [Childrens14] framework intended to give children in the Nordic region access to at least 14 new Nordic children’s fiction series each year (I. K. Jensen, 2021). Initiatives such as these can be regarded as a continuation and even strengthening of existing national patterns of collaboration,

whilst at the same time adapting to the changing mediascape (Redvall, 2021).

There are other similarities in the general structure of the small national markets as well, such as the arrival of new platforms or issues of access and regulation. In small markets, relatively few commissioners, or gatekeepers, have extensive power to influence what content is produced and why. As emphasised by a production analysis framework such as The Screen Idea System (Redvall, 2016), screenwriting and production frameworks are an intricate interplay between creative practitioners proposing new ideas in specific contexts marked by certain trends, and the tastes and traditions of powerful experts in a field with specific mandates. In Danish children's television, for example, Mogens Vemmer, head of programming at DR's children and youth department from 1968 until 2000, managed to secure great freedom for groundbreaking – and at times rebellious – children's programming (see also C. L. Christensen, 2022).

Another example of the impact of commissioning decisions in small nations is DR's *FredagsTamTam* [*FridayBangBang*], a 60-minute-long cartoon show with a high share of Nordic cartoons that replaced the popular and long-running *Disneysjov* [*Disney Fun*] in the beginning of 2023. The latter, as the name reveals, was the Danish version of the American *Disney Afternoon*, and it had been offered as Friday-night entertainment for 31 years. This indicates that substantial funding is being spent on boosting the Danish and wider Nordic animation industry, whilst at the same time becoming more independent from global players such as Disney (Rasmussen, 2023). Such commissioning decisions have a huge impact on small national film and television industries, in terms of what content is produced as well as watched in a specific country.

Institutional specificity

Turning to the institutional dimension, Smith and Pearson (2015: 7) pointed to the fact that, even within the same national context, “the characteristics of the institutions that commission screen narratives – such as film production and distribution companies, television production companies and networks, and video game developers and publishers – can significantly vary”. In relation to the production, distribution, and reception of audiovisual content for young audiences in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, the nation-specific traits are evident in the different institutional revenue models. That is, the institutions are divided between those publicly funded by various taxes (to replace the licence fees of the past) and profit-driven commercial players, many of which operate on a transnational level, such as Discovery Network and the Viaplay Group, or a global level, such as Netflix and Disney+. The latter category of commercial providers focuses on attracting and retaining worldwide viewers and subscribers and hence aims to provide content appealing to as many within a target group as possible. Public service broadcasters,

on the other hand, cater specifically to domestic audiences, including children and adolescents.

In addition, publicly funded providers adhere to specific quality stipulations, such as genre variety, themes, and artistic ambitions, set up in public service and film-funding remits. These stipulations serve to assure that publicly funded content rectifies market failures by providing content that might not otherwise be provided by the commercial market. A poignant example of this is DR Ultra's news programme *Ultra Nyt* [*Ultra News*], a relatively popular short-format programme that digests important news for children. Another example is the series *Salsa*, a much-acclaimed series about high schoolers' sex lives, which DR produced with the intention of educating young viewers about sex with an entertaining fictional format (Ludvigsen, 2022). This type of content is less likely to be produced by commercial players due to relatively high costs of productions and uncertain returns.

That said, new and global players may be able to provide content mimicking what we have come to know as public service content. Netflix-originated series such as *Sex Education*, *Heartstopper*, and *The Young Royals* arguably contain elements that could be labelled as public service, namely educated and complex treatment of coming-of-age topics that adolescents around the world can clearly relate to, even though these series are playing out in the UK and Sweden, respectively.

YouTube provides more low-key examples of content that could have been produced by public service media. In 2020, the self-taught producer and director Jonas Risvig published the web series *Centrum* on YouTube, a series depicting Danish adolescents' lives during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Centrum* attracted a dedicated viewership, not least because Risvig involved viewers directly in the creation of the series (K. B. Christensen & Redvall, 2020). Risvig has since published other web series on YouTube and directed the above-mentioned series *Salsa* for DR. While the national legacy broadcasters and players still have an important role in the production of often-expensive fictional content, both global streaming services and more do-it-yourself practitioners entered this field in remarkable ways in the 2020s. This was partly due to changes in how content can be produced and circulated, which brings us to the fourth specificity focusing on technology.

Technological specificity

When it comes to technological specificity, Smith and Pearson (2015: 8) focused on the connections between contemporary screen narratives and their technological contexts. In our opinion, different technological specificities are at play when dealing with children and adolescents than with adults. First and foremost, children and adolescents are first movers and early adopters of new production and distribution technologies on media platforms such as

TikTok and Twitch. This is no wonder when children have access to mobile technologies early on, for example, in Denmark, the average age of a child getting their first smartphone is just nine years old (Hansen et al., 2020). Children thus quickly become independent media consumers and, sometimes, also skilled media content producers. A recent report found that Danish children love producing films as part of their school curriculum, but they are less fond of *watching* films at school (DFI, 2023). Gaming is another area where especially boys bond with their friends, outside the realm of their parents. In fact, gaming has become an important facilitator of boys' social lives and communities, and as such, a direct competitor to films, television series, and social media. When 9–14-year-old Danish children were asked in a large survey what they would prefer to do if they had three hours of free time, the majority of boys said they would play videogames (the girls would go to the cinema) (Hansen et al., 2020).

The above-mentioned and technologically led change in children's media consumption has forced established institutions producing content for children to react – for the most part through a mix of what Napoli (1998: 319) called diversification and differentiation strategies. Diversification happens when existing players adapt their content strategies to distinguish themselves from new technologies or players in the market, examples of which include the already mentioned *Ultra News* and *FridayBangBang*. Differentiation is when actors expand into precisely these new technologies and markets, such as NRK's strategies of producing short-form fiction for TikTok or Instagram and their live-streamed reality gaming show *LL35* on Twitch (NRK, 2022). Examples of diversification strategies discussed in this volume are Vilde Schanke Sundet's Chapter 5 on NRK's YouTube programme *4ETG*, and Andreas Magnusson Qassim's Chapter 7 on SVT's short-form and online-first tween drama *Kär [In Love]*.

There are also continuities in terms of certain forms of content maintaining popularity despite technological change and innovation. In addition, technological changes happen at varying speeds across different age groups, which is why we find it appropriate to add a fifth specificity to consider when thinking about children's content: audience specificity.

Audience specificity

While Smith and Pearson's terminology of four specificities is helpful, we propose a fifth one: audience specificity. Scholars such as David Buckingham (2005), Natalie Coulter (2021), Anna Potter and Jeanette Steemers (2021), Christa Lykke Christensen (2013), Stine Liv Johansen and Malene Charlotte Larsen (2019), and Kirsten Drotner (1999), have all pointed to the fact that children and young people are a particular and "special" media audience. Children are, for example, often considered as a particularly vulnerable au-

dience that needs to be protected from harmful content, but also sometimes from their own “questionable” (from an adult perspective) taste.

As discussed in Christa Lykke Christensen’s Chapter 2 in this volume, there can also be a tendency to consider children as “becomings”, that is, as individuals who are to become adults and not as “beings” in their own right. This perspective risks devaluing children as an audience. Consequently, it is often regarded as less prestigious to produce content for children, children’s content budgets are (much) smaller, and children are not always taken seriously and, even more rarely, actually involved or even asked for input in the production of content. However, as highlighted in Chapter 4 by Eva Novrup Redvall, some of these circumstances often make children’s content a fruitful place for talent development. Chapters 5–7 by Vilde Schanke Sundet, Ewa Morsund, and Andreas Magnusson Qassim similarly document new ways of approaching content for young people based on researching and engaging with audience members.

While there are general patterns and perceptions regarding children and young audiences across broadcasters and national borders, some scholars argue that producers of children’s media content in Scandinavia have in fact regarded children as independent, competent, and socially responsible to a higher degree than in other countries (C. L. Christensen, 2006, 2013; H. S. Jensen, 2017). This is in line with the traditions of the Nordic welfare state – egalitarian ideals of participatory citizenship and citizens’ right to freedom of expression and information – including children, at least more so than elsewhere. There have been recent initiatives of co-creation to ensure that authentic and relevant stories of children’s lives are reflected, particularly among tweens and teens (Redvall & Christensen, 2021a).

Finally, when speaking of the specificities of children as audiences, we must also remember, however, that children and adolescents are far from a homogenous group. Apart from the many developmental differences according to their age, the children come from varied socio-demographic, national, ethnic, and educational backgrounds (exactly as is the case with adults), all of which affect the way they see the world and, consequently, make use of media. To paraphrase Natalie Coulter (2021: 23), not only scholars, but also producers and commissioners of children’s culture and media must shed the idea of “the imagined global child”, who is often Western, white, and middle class.

Concurrently, there are still more research attempts to understand the rapidly changing interests and media use of the youngest viewers. A reason for this extensive audience research is that children and adolescents of today are “virtual natives” (Henry & Shannon, 2023) and, as such, first movers when it comes to the changes in the current mediascape. Children’s media consumption and media habits today may very well indicate the media consumption and media habits of us all tomorrow. That children and adolescents are very much in focus in the established media industry these years is evident in the many

industry reports containing analyses of this target group (see EBU 2020; Hansen et al., 2020; DFI, 2023; DR, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023). Testament to the fact that young media consumers constitute an important audience for the incumbent media institutions is the final chapter of this volume, in which Pia Majbritt Jensen and Petar Mitric, on the basis of a national survey among Danish 8–17-year-olds, reveal a preference for global American streaming services as well as American films and series. This preference is in fact so strong that American streaming services and content have arguably become the standard – as opposed to the nonstandard (or maybe even sub-standard) – for domestic services and content.

Structure of the book

The chapters in this edited volume relate to the five specificities outlined above and bring into focus aspects of production, distribution, and reception of audiovisual content for young audiences within a Scandinavian context. Some of the chapters present analyses primarily based on Danish empirical material and context, and others are primarily based on Norwegian or Swedish materials and contexts.

In Chapter 2, “Relevance and identification in television content for children: Analysing DR commissioners’ perceptions of children’s media interests”, Christa Lykke Christensen analyses the perceptions of children among commissioning editors at the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, DR. An historical overview of perceptions of children in earlier Danish programming for children is combined with interviews with commissioners at DR, to argue that increased competition, media professionalism, and digitalisation during the last 10–15 years have influenced how DR perceives their young audience. Before the turn of the century, children were perceived as representatives of informed future citizens. Today, children are primarily perceived as media users whom media professionals must take into consideration as a sort of partner to meet stipulated requirements, stay relevant for children, and attract as many viewers as possible. In this process, Christensen argues, relevance is understood by the DR commissioners as recognisability. For content to be relevant, it must mirror (Danish) children’s close surroundings and activate emotions and moral feelings to increase identification.

Chapter 3, “Coming out differently: Making queer youth known in Scandinavian screen fiction”, deals with the representation of queer adolescence in fiction series produced for young audiences in Scandinavia. Anders Lysne analyses the representational strategies of two different screen media texts produced for young audiences: the Swedish youth film *Fucking Åmål* [*Show Me Love*] and the Danish youth drama *Puls* [*Pulse*]. As queer characters and themes become increasingly visible in youth screen media, so does the need to explore just how these texts make queer youth known. Lysne shows

that the conventional coming-out narrative – emphasising coming out as the ultimate narrative climax in queer coming-of-age stories – is challenged in the two Scandinavian media texts, and he argues that the process of queer identity formation represented does not fit within a tight linear narrative frame. Instead, queer identity formation is negotiated and challenged through representational strategies gesturing towards new beginnings instead of a finite ending. As such, the two media texts are examples of how queer youth can be made known by coming out differently.

While the national broadcasting landscapes have become more competitive with regard to content for children and young audiences, broadcasters have increasingly specialised their offers for the youngest viewers. In Chapter 4, “Creating serialised live action drama for children: Talent development, affordable volume fiction, and portable brand characters at DR”, Eva Novrup Redvall examines how the Danish Broadcasting Company, DR, has adapted their production strategy to these competitive conditions when making live action fiction for its young audience of 4–8-year-olds. Based on a case study of the fiction series *Oda Omvendt* [*Oda Upside Down*], Redvall explores the guiding commissioning ideas as well as the screenwriting and production practices behind the series. The analysis deals with three components in the processes of producing fictional content: working with talent development, working with notions of affordable volume fiction, and working with portable brand characters. All three are found important for production, on limited budgets, of relevant and recognisable serialised live action drama for young audiences.

In Chapter 5, “Public service youth content on social media platforms: Reaching youth through YouTube”, Vilde Schanke Sundet investigates the Norwegian public broadcaster NRK’s efforts to reach young audiences. Sundet analyses public service content on third-party platforms and how legacy media organisations adapt to social media logics when creating content for youth. The analysis builds on a production study of *NRK 4ETG*, which was a recent NRK YouTube programme with the goal of creating “authentic” online content to serve the young audience with popular entertainment. The chapter deals with the strategic function of the programme, and Sundet discusses how it fits NRK’s overall ambition to serve youth with public service content. In particular, the chapter highlights empirical evidence of producers’ self-perception concerning the creation of YouTube content within a public service context. Sundet argues the future importance of YouTube programmes in two respects: They serve important strategic functions by engaging young audiences as well as new content creators, both of which, according to Sundet, will be essential to public service media in the future.

In the context of general discussions of public service media’s role in the production of youth content, in Chapter 6, “Representing and engaging new target groups: The case of the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation and

Rådebank”, Ewa Morsund also addresses the strategies and production of media content for young audiences at NRK. Morsund specifically focuses on how NRK works to achieve representation for different demographics in their media production. Through the case study of *Rådebank*, a youth drama series about young, less-educated men living in rural areas of Norway and dealing with mental health issues, Morsund discusses the challenges and dilemmas for public service broadcasters who have, on the one hand, a public mission to reflect societal diversity, and on the other, difficulty attracting so-called niche groups of viewers who, for a long time, have been a problematic audience segment to reach.

Reaching young audiences in a digitalised media-saturated environment has clearly required thinking in new directions for producers of public service media in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Online-first and mobile-first strategies are implemented as public service media initiatives for reaching young audiences in competition with YouTube, subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) services, gaming, and social media. In Chapter 7, “SVT Barn online and *In Love*: Searching for a new identity in a world of smartphones and digital interaction”, Andreas Magnusson Qassim analyses how SVT Barn, the Swedish public service broadcaster for children, with its online-first policy (i.e., focusing all efforts on its streaming platform rather than traditional broadcasting), has maintained the attention of children up to the age of twelve. Qassim’s analysis builds on a case study of the short-form tween drama *Kär* [*In Love*]. Based on interviews with SVT creatives and executives involved in the production, *In Love* is analysed as an example of a mobile-first strategy, as the series was crafted specifically for the smallest screen and revolves around mainly smartphone-mediated interaction between two lead characters of the drama. Qassim argues that, with *In Love*, SVT succeeded in reaching the targeted audience, and that digital strategies such as online- and mobile-first, combined with intensive audience investigations and interactions with the young audience, may be a successful path for the public service providers in the future.

The public service broadcasters in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the larger Nordic region find themselves in great competition with other content providers, such as commercially driven production companies and global players like Disney+, and they go to great length to reach young audiences. Still, they have difficulty catching the attention of young media users, and in keeping them loyal. In Chapter 8, “The appeal of public service fiction in an internationalised media context: Findings from a survey of 8–17-year-old Danes”, Pia Majbritt Jensen and Petar Mitric take an audience perspective on audiovisual screen content for children and adolescents. Jensen and Mitric present the results of a survey among Danish children and adolescents regarding their media habits and preferences when it comes to fictional content. The results point to the fact that children prefer global (or, rather, American) and

genre-driven content, and that they spend time on YouTube with gaming, music videos, and memes. Jensen and Mitric thus point to several dilemmas for public service broadcasters of how to strategically develop audiovisual content that can appeal to, attract, and stay relevant for young audiences. Jensen and Mitric also reflect on methodological challenges in the process of designing the survey.

By outlining the many pressing questions linked to audiovisual media content for children and young audiences in Scandinavia today, and briefly introducing the contributing chapters, this introduction has emphasised what an exciting moment of time it is to be researching screen content for children and youth. It is therefore our hope that the chapters in this volume individually and together will address several of these questions and make its readers a little wiser, as well as inspire new research questions and projects about children's and adolescents' media.

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