Prime-time Public Service Crime: 
*Forbrydelsen/The Killing*

**Introduction**

Søren Sveistrup’s crime thriller *Forbrydelsen/The Killing* (2007–2012) is the best-known example of a DR series, which has made it onto the international scene. The press coverage during the UK airing seemed unprecedented for a subtitled series with articles discussing how the portrayal of a modern welfare society mirrored the state of affairs in Britain, or gender issues related to the portrait of the series’ detective Sarah Lund. On a less serious scale, there were attempts at doing semi-otic analysis of Lund’s iconic sweater and encouragement to readers to send pictures of their own similar knitting designs. Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall, announced that she was an ‘addict’ of the show, and when visiting Denmark in the spring of 2012, she got a special tour of the set of *The Killing III* and a copy of the sweater as a souvenir. The series won the international BAFTA award in 2011, beating series like *Mad Men* (AMC 2007–) and *Boardwalk Empire* (HBO 2010), and it has been remade as *The Killing* (2011–) for the US cable channel AMC (Figure 7.1).

The series aired in the UK in 2011 – four years after its original premiere in Denmark – and from a Danish perspective the international reception was followed with both great pride and some surprise. The international coverage generated numerous national articles on how the series is perceived abroad, since some of the elements that seem to fascinate international audiences are those regarded as the everyday realism of the series from a domestic point of view. The interplay of fascination and identification takes on a different dynamic when content is moved out of the national realm and interpreted with a foreign gaze, not the least when a series like *The Killing* is suddenly exclusive and exotic programming on a niche channel rather than the major prime-time series.
for the large mainstream audiences in the domestic market (Redvall 2012d). Accordingly, the widespread interest in *The Killing* has led to writings on how the series raises issues of European social imaginaries across borders (Bondebjerg and Redvall forthcoming 2014) as well as books on how to be Danish ‘from Lego to Lund’, discussing the sudden UK interest in a range of different products and trends from Scandinavia (Kingsley 2012).

 Whereas there are many interesting questions regarding distribution or reception of European products to investigate in relation to the international success of series from DR like *The Killing* or *Borgen*, this chapter focuses on *The Killing* as a result of a writing and production process with central elements from the DR dogmas at the centre even if these have not necessarily been articulated during the making of the series. As the creator Søren Sveistrup states, it would be damaging for his creative process if someone told him to create a series based on an idea of double storytelling, and as soon as someone mentions anything that sounds like a recipe he intuitively wants to challenge it (Sveistrup 2012). However, he acknowledges that a series like *The Killing* could only come about since he found a producer and a broadcaster investing a great amount of trust and time in him and since he found people willing to run the risk of trying out something new. The case study illustrates how ideas from the production dogmas about one vision, double storytelling and crossover fitted his approach of deliberately trying to reinvent what a TV series can be even if the concepts from the dogmas were not explicitly discussed.