

This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 22 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



Edited by Rob Stone, Paul Cooke, Stephanie Dennison  
and Alex Marlow-Mann

## The Routledge Companion to World Cinema

Rob Stone, Paul Cooke, Stephanie Dennison, Alex Marlow-Mann

### Contemporary Scandinavian cinema

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315688251.ch11>

Olof Hedling

**Published online on: 27 Sep 2017**

**How to cite :-** Olof Hedling. 27 Sep 2017, *Contemporary Scandinavian cinema from: The Routledge Companion to World Cinema* Routledge

Accessed on: 22 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315688251.ch11>

**PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT**

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# 11

## CONTEMPORARY SCANDINAVIAN CINEMA

### Between art and commerce

*Olof Hedling*

#### Introduction

In a recent essay, Thomas Elsaesser gives a harsh verdict on the state of European cinema today. From a geopolitical position in which “the new ‘marginality’ of Europe” is assumed, a number of “negative qualifications associable with European cinema” are put forward. Among those are that the continent’s cinema is:

artificially kept alive with government subsidies, Council of Europe directives [...] and cheap television co-production deals; bolstered by being co-opted for cultural tourism and city branding; speaking on behalf of no constituency, and for the most part, speaking to no public other than festival audiences, loyal cinephiles and university students.

*(Elsaesser 2015: 19)*

This judgment, moreover, may be seen as a development of one of the themes underlying the same author’s earlier work, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (2005), which has been designated as “the most important book on European cinema to emerge in recent years” (Harrod *et al.* 2015: 6–7). Here, one of the main arguments is that European cinema has experienced what, to use a football analogy, is described as “relegation”: it has dropped in rank, to become just another sub-set under the generic label of “World Cinema” (Elsaesser 2005: 497).

However, despite Elsaesser’s efforts and many productive suggestions, what precisely was meant by demoting European cinema to the supposedly less prestigious status of “World Cinema” remains somewhat elusive. As has been argued in response: “World Cinema is a contested concept and its boundaries are as yet unclear” (Berghahn and Sternberg 2010: 38). Nevertheless, inspired by Elsaesser, Berghahn, Sternberg and others have offered a few tentative suggestions, such as that “migrant and diasporic cinema marks the World Cinema turn in European cinema” and, not least, that “the concept of World Cinema implies transnational connections on the level of film production, financing, distribution and reception” (Ibid.: 36, 38). While transnational cinema is, in turn, thought to comprise “different aspects of film production, distribution and consumption which transcend national film cultures”, it seems generally to be presumed that the concept of national cinema is in a state of flux (Ibid.: 22; Higson 1989).

In what follows, Scandinavian cinema over the last two decades or so will be scrutinised from the perspective suggested by the viewpoints outlined above. Scandinavian film will be placed in the contemporary European context, revealing that some of the “negative qualifications” put forward by Elsaesser to some extent seem to hold true, while others, perhaps paradoxically, may in fact be viewed as, in a way, beneficial. Additionally, processes such as transnational exchange, globalisation, internationalisation, increasing migration and the role of diaspora will also be explored. Here, Mette Hjort’s proposed typology of the different kinds of transnationalism pertaining to audio-visual production will serve as a stepping stone to illuminate not only the forces propelling contemporary Scandinavian film production specifically but, more generally, a great deal of film production in Europe and globally as well (2009).

### A Swedish success?

In 2009 the principal “Swedish” box-office successes in domestic theatres were, by far, the three feature-length films adapted from domestic crime writer Stieg Larsson’s so-called Millennium trilogy. The first instalment of the series is a story about a disillusioned investigative journalist who, thanks to the help of a highly introverted and asocial computer hacker, succeeds in solving the disappearance of a woman while simultaneously exposing an internationally oriented Swedish business magnate as a corrupt criminal.

*Män som hatar kvinnor* (The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, 2009, Sweden/Denmark/Germany, Niels Arden Oplev)—hereafter *The Girl*—went on to sell more than 1,217,000 tickets in domestic cinemas in a country of less than ten million people (SFI 2010: 22). It also attracted audiences of almost one million in Denmark and slightly over 500,000 in Norway, despite the fact that the neighbouring countries only have a population about half the size of Sweden. Altogether the film sold 1.8 million tickets in the tri-national Scandinavian region within its first thirty days of release—a record (Stenport and Traylor 2015: 80).

The film also exported very well outside of the Nordic region, in territories such as France, Germany, Spain and the UK. In the latter market, the film was even theatrically distributed in both dubbed and subtitled versions and was, perhaps paradoxically, presented with a BAFTA Film Award as the best “Film Not in the English language” in 2011. A 2014 research report ranked the film second behind the French box office sensation, buddy comedy *Intouchables* (The Untouchables, 2011, Olivier Nakache and Eric Toledano), among a very limited group of non-English language European films released between 2005 and 2012 that were very successfully distributed in Europe in territories outside of their domestic market (Jones 2014).

On a parallel note, the film’s success in the Nordic region did not follow established patterns. Despite claims that Scandinavia is “a film and television culture with a strong affinity between the three countries”, in reality, studies demonstrate that “[t]he exchange of films between the Nordic countries doesn’t indicate a natural cultural connection with an obvious audience interest in films from the neighboring countries” (Bondebjerg and Redvall 2013: 127, 140). It is therefore truly remarkable that *The Girl*, according to the European Audiovisual Observatory’s Lumière database, attracted more Danish cinemagoers than any film made in the country’s domestic language during the two decades since 1996.

The film’s runaway success obviously did not go unnoticed in Sweden. The Swedish Film Institute (SFI), the main national Swedish film support agency and one of the film’s funders, thus exclaimed in its annual report:

The massive success of the Millennium trilogy in 2009 put Sweden on the international film map. Internationally, the phenomenon was termed “Swedish noir” [...] today the three films in the trilogy are the biggest export success in Swedish film history.

(SFI 2011: 26)

However, making the film a matter of national pride in this fashion—using the descriptive moniker “Swedish” rather than the more established “Nordic Noir”, or the previously common “Scandinavian crime”—is somewhat unconvincing and problematic, given that the film clearly illustrates the contemporary problems involved in “pigeon-holing films by nationality” (Jones 2015: 2). Accordingly, Norwegian, German and Danish funds made a considerable contribution to the financing of the film, as did the Nordic Film and Television Fund (NFTF; a co-production fund created in 1990). Moreover, while this version of *The Girl* was shot in Swedish on wintry, cold and occasionally dark domestic locations (with the exception of two scenes set in Australia and the Caribbean which were filmed in the south of Spain), was based on a Swedish literary work and starred Swedish actors, it was also supported by the Danish Film Institute as well as by Danish public broadcaster DR. The Danish financial involvement was not, of course, merely a sign of some altruistic confidence in the production *per se*; rather, it was conditioned by the fact that the production included a considerable Danish contribution of artistic and craft expertise, with virtually all the so-called “A-functions” behind the camera being handled by Danes, including a Danish director, director of photography, producer, editor, sound designer, production designer and music composer. In addition, the film’s script was also written by two Danish screenwriters.

The producer’s decision to employ an abundance of Danish above-the-line personnel was presumably not motivated by the idea that the Danes were much more artistically proficient at their crafts than their Swedish counterparts. Rather, the incentive for the strategy appears to have been that it gave the producers means to access significant funding from both the aforementioned NFTF and the Danish state by exploiting the Danish film support directive which posits that a film is still eligible for public film subsidies even if it lacks a Danish setting and is not in the Danish language, provided that key members of the crew are Danish. This directive dates from the 1980s and was prompted, among other factors, by national *auteur* par excellence Lars von Trier’s penchant of shooting in English, using international actors and almost always situating his plots either abroad or in non-defined locations (Hjort 2005: 12).

*The Girl* was consequently an international co-production, shot and post-produced at particular locations in Sweden, including at the geographical sites of two major regional film funds. These funds had presumably inserted localisation clauses stipulating that part of the shooting or post-production was to take place in the fund’s vicinities with a certain part of the production personnel being locally or regionally registered in exchange for the fund co-financing the venture (Hedling 2010a: 336).

Moreover, by using the practice, common in Scandinavia since the early 1990s, of exploiting the film and its two sequels to produce a spin-off extended TV-serial—which included more footage, re-edited and divided into episodes and broadcast later—the producers additionally secured significant funding from several TV sources in various countries, while simultaneously ensuring that the final product was diversified and marketable in more than one way. Indeed, at least one scholarly text refers to *The Girl* as a “Swedish TV adaptation”, comparing it to HBO shows such as *Game of Thrones* (2011–, USA/UK, David Benioff and D.B. Weiss) and *The Wire* (2002–2008, USA, David Simon) (Byg and Torner 2013: 119).

The interest among broadcasters in financing film can be traced back to the deregulation of the television sector in Scandinavia in the late 1980s, when the era of public broadcasting



Figure 11.1 Violence against women: Noomi Rapace and Peter Andersson in *Män som hatar kvinnor* (*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, 2009, Sweden/Denmark/Germany, Niels Arden Oplev). ©Yellow Bird.

monopolies ended. As private actors entered the market, competition for programming increased. Ever since, television companies—public and private, Scandinavian, as well as repeatedly German ones—have been frequent suppliers of film funding. For complex reasons, having to do with public film funding regulations, the wishes of television companies to exploit material as much as possible, together with thoughts about convergence and synergy, this development has occasionally, as in the instance of *The Girl*, resulted in material being presented in both television and film formats. In various ways one may consequently speak of how film and television have increasingly merged during the last couple of decades. In terms of Nordic Noir productions, the practice has been examined as a “pan-Scandinavia media concept” (Hedling 2010b: 129–143).

*The Girl* was therefore not a “Swedish” film in the bounded, differentiated and perhaps outdated sense the SFI attempted to appropriate it as. Going back to Andrew Higson’s original stipulations about what constitutes a national film, *The Girl* hardly qualifies as national cinema defined in either “economic” or “textual” terms (Higson 1989: 36). With its crime investigation/rape-revenge plot, conventional, linear narration, overriding themes of sexualised violence, the oppression of women and the iniquities of contemporary capitalism, its genre, form and themes appear perhaps “Western” rather than particularly Swedish (Figure 11.1). Thus, the film can be considered an example of that increasingly common entity, a “Scandi-pudding” with additional German funding, constructed around the idea of convergence and synergy between film, television and internationally distributed bestselling crime literature. The German co-funding, which has been an almost constant in Nordic Noir productions during recent decades, moreover, can be ascribed to a peculiar German attraction that has come to project Sweden and Scandinavia as in some sense “pleasurable” (Vonderau 2010: 148). Simultaneously, the production is also part feature film and part TV serial and as such very much a “borderless, transnational filmmaking” product that “is in many ways typical of contemporary European cinema” (Higson 2015).

### The transnationalism of the present

In a critique of the ambiguous ways in which the term transnational has been repeatedly used, Mette Hjort has attempted to outline what she calls a “typology of transnationalisms”

in connection with contemporary audio-visual production (2009: 12–33). Hjort’s palpable purpose is to more specifically illuminate and contextualise the concept. She consequently identifies nine specific types of cross-border collaboration, several of which help to shed light on the various aforementioned production strategies employed during the making of *The Girl* as well as revealing the powers, interests, aspirations and motifs of the entities that put up the funds and that propel current transnational film and, to some extent, dramatic television production in Scandinavia.

First, the Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and German co-interests in the film and television series may be described as affinitive transnationalism. With regard to this type of transnationalism, cooperation is the outcome of cultures being alike with “similarity understood in terms of ethnicity, partially overlapping or mutually intelligible languages, and a history of interaction giving rise to shared core values, common practices, and comparable institutions” (Hjort 2009: 17). German co-productions with Scandinavia and especially Sweden have been common at least since the 1970s. Since the early 1990s and with regard to Nordic Noir content, collaborative networks, ways of cooperation and pre-supposed division of production tasks have gradually been developed that eventually have smoothed out glitches typically associated with Euro-puddings, such as for instance dubbing (Bergfelder 2005: 327). Between the Nordic partners there is also a shared experience regarding difficulties that are typical of the audio-visual contexts in many small nations, or to minor cinemas in more general terms, a context that the NFTF, moreover, was originally set up in part to remedy.

Second, *The Girl* can be said to straddle two of Hjort’s types of transnational collaboration, what she terms “milieu-building transnationalism” and “modernising transnationalism”. The former type can be seen in the case of the Swedish, mainly publicly supported, regional film funds that acted as co-producers on the film and television series and thus guaranteed that a certain portion of the production would and did take place in the respective geographical areas. In this instance, attracting a production of comparatively large scale—from a Nordic, and perhaps even European, perspective—and markedly dominated by Danish creative talent may be seen in conjunction with the funds’ aims of developing an artistically innovative and economically viable production environment or, to put it differently, a self-sustaining audio-visual cluster (Hedling 2010a: 335). In short, the hope may have been that members of what has been described as the internationally celebrated Danish thriving film milieu would complement those in Stockholm and Trollhättan—the southwest Swedish former industrial town where one of the funds is located—and thus add some constructive features (Elsaesser 2005: 14). Viewed from another perspective, it can equally be suggested that the Danish led crew and the mainly Swedish cast sought out these centres to jointly develop solutions to “problems that hamper the development of thriving film milieus” (Hjort 2009: 19).

However, to bolster the audio-visual milieu is not the only objective of these regional film funds. As a result of the end products coming out of them as well as the general climate projected as a result of the audio-visual production, they also serve the function of marketing the location and raising visibility, promoting a process of reinvention that also has significant economic implications. Accordingly, at least one motive behind starting the funds was to aid societal transition in areas that were marred by unemployment, economic distress and post-industrial decline (Hedling 2010a: 335). Being associated with the resulting symbolic cultural capital was consequently part of the regions’ and towns’ attempt to become, simply put, more modern. Attracting audio-visual production to particular locations in Scandinavia has in fact become such a large-scale operation that it has occasionally led to government ministers becoming involved in hands-on negotiations with global media majors regarding production location (Rossing Jensen 2015). Such was the case, for instance, with Universal and Working Title’s

production of the first instalment of Norwegian bestselling author Jo Nesbo's series about Oslo detective Harry Hole, *The Snowman* (2017, UK, Tomas Alfredson).

Third, the collaboration between different partners in various, if closely situated, nations may be deemed what Hjort calls "opportunistic transnationalism". Here purely economic thinking takes precedence and the selection of partners, the blend of cast and crew and locations are considered in such a way so as to maximise possible economic opportunities. As implied above, this appears to have very much been on the producers' mind as the project was set up. The main production company behind *The Girl*, Yellowbird, established its own subsidiaries in several countries, in part as a way to anchor themselves to national public funders. This strategy is now well established and had already been pioneered by Scandinavian production houses beginning with Lars von Trier and Peter Aalbæk Jensen's company Zentropa, started in Copenhagen 1992. According to their website, Zentropa at present have more than ten subsidiaries in almost as many countries, all with the word Zentropa in the company name and with the purpose, one assumes, of making them eligible for public funding, which is almost always in some way limited along national lines. One employee explained the strategy thus: "We traipse about Europe like gypsies and set up camp wherever we happen to find financing opportunities and the best locations" (quoted in Hjort 2009: 20). Local, regional and national economic incentives consequently appear a central part of what Dina Iordanova has described as "the intensifying migratory dynamics and the transnational essence of contemporary cinema" that "make it necessary to re-evaluate the concepts of belonging and commitment to a national culture" (2003: 149).

Like Zentropa, Yellowbird and the producers of *The Girl* had a long history of setting up similar Nordic Noir transnational projects, while also being pioneers in terms of bringing the Germans on board, something that they had started with as early as the early 1990s. In short, the various personnel and location strategies employed during the production of *The Girl* display great resourcefulness on the part of the producer in generating the greatest opportunities for eligibility for funding from as many transnational co-production funds, national public service broadcasters, national film support agencies and different regional funds as possible.

In other words, purely economic thinking, often seen as an undesirable distinguishing trait of Hollywood's traditional way of operating, has become extremely important in Europe and Scandinavia as well, despite the continent's sometimes supposed heritage of a more creatively inclined and altruistic production culture (Elsaesser 2005: 494). This particular economic thinking however is not quite of the relatively transparent Hollywood kind, traditionally based on profit maximisation while keeping costs down. Rather, several national and international, regional and local organisations and agents negotiate diverse interests such as national prestige, the benefits of international collaboration, local and regional visibility and economic regeneration as the supposed paybacks of financing and accommodating international and domestic productions.

### Further sides of the transnational and migratory coin

The kind of transnational partnerships, migratory movements and regional interaction propelled by various impetuses for cross-border collaboration exemplified by the production of *The Girl*, have become increasingly standard practice in Scandinavia during the last two decades or so. And even if various Nordic Noir projects have been at the forefront of this development, what can be described as "film production as usual"—in other words, the making of art films, national epics and a long line of domestic comedies and dramas—has adopted similar cross-national co-operation strategies. For instance, the Danish director Suzanne Bier's well-received, genre-driven romantic comedies such as *Den skaldede frisør* (*Love Is All You Need*, 2012, Denmark/Italy/

France/Germany/Sweden/Japan/Norway) starring Pierce Brosnan, and relationship melodramas like *Brødre* (Brothers, 2004, Denmark/UK/Sweden/Norway), starring Connie Nielsen, testify to an ever-increasing transnational working practice and a global consciousness from the point of view of production, outreach and subject matter. While also having worked in Hollywood on occasion, Bier's "Danish" films such as *Efter brylluppet* (After the Wedding, 2006, Denmark/UK/Sweden) and the Academy award winner *Hævnen* (To a Better World, 2010, Sweden/Denmark/Norway) consequently thematise Danes, and frequently Swedes, working abroad, while the films engage with social issues pertaining to global conflicts and inequalities. Hence, they put assumptions about Scandinavian life, Swedishness and Danishness into stark relief.

However, in recent years, further forms of exchange and more extreme examples of migratory patterns and entanglements in the Scandinavian audio-visual production environment have emerged that barely existed a few years ago. In mid-November 2011, a local newspaper in the city of Malmö in the southernmost part of Sweden posted a two-minute audio-visual snippet on its homepage. The occasion was that sixteen days of location work for the romantic horror sequel 1920—*Evil Returns* (2012, India, Bhushan Patel), a Bollywood movie and reputedly an Indian remake of *The Exorcist* (1973, USA, William Friedkin), was being conducted in the vicinities (Figure 11.2). Some of the principal crew and several of the film's stars were interviewed, all praising the natural splendour of the locations and the landscape as well as the hospitality they encountered. Two local filmmakers, provided through the regional film fund and the Öresund Film Commission, and employed by the Indian production as location managers, also gave enthusiastic testimony about the collaboration. Not least, they stressed the event as a regional breakthrough and how local sights and historical treasures now got exposure among the massive audiences of the sub-continent across the globe. The economic potential, including paving the way for tourism, was profound. On the one hand, of course, Bollywood movies are constantly filming in Europe, with the UK, the Alps and Italy used repeatedly. On the other, for Southern Sweden, isolated by the Baltic Sea from the Continent and on the margins of Europe, this was a first. In general, the event was received as an encouraging part of larger global developments.

Locations in Scandinavia have, of course, occasionally been used in international productions through the years, either for short sequences or more substantial parts of films, such as the Stockholm-shot Robert Mitchum espionage thriller *Foreign Intrigue* (1956, USA,



Figure 11.2 Bollywood promoting southern Sweden. Tia Bajpai and Aftab Shivdasani in 1920—*Evil Returns* (2012, India, Bhushan Patel). ©ASA Production & Enterprises/BVG Films.



Sheldon Reynolds). Similarly, Alfred Hitchcock's *Topaz* (1969, USA) includes Copenhagen settings. However, as Lars von Trier's English language productions *Dancer in the Dark* (2001, Denmark/France/Sweden/Italy/Germany), *Dogville* (2003, Denmark/Sweden/UK/France/Germany/Netherlands/Norway/Finland/Italy) and *Manderlay* (2005, Denmark/Sweden/France/UK/Germany) brought Hollywood nobility such as Nicole Kidman, Lauren Bacall and James Caan to the streets of the post-industrial town of Trollhättan—the setting of the regional film fund Film Väst—a buzz started to surround audio-visual production in a way that had not previously existed in Scandinavia.

More recently, the BBC's decision to produce its television adaptations of crime writer Henning Mankell's novels about Kurt Wallander, starring Kenneth Branagh, on authentic locations in Ystad, Southern Sweden, as well as media conglomerate Sony's decision to have David Fincher shoot his remake of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011, USA/Sweden/Norway) in the Swedish capital, were widely covered in the news. The latter even spurred a television documentary by public service broadcaster SVT (Swedish Television). Here, the experiences of the people in a small northern community, as Fincher, Daniel Craig and Rooney Mara came to the village for a few days of location work, was told very much in terms of global developments reaching even remote parts of sparsely populated northern Scandinavia. One of Stockholm's larger museums similarly launched The Millennium Tour, a guided walking tour through the locations used in the story.

From an industrial perspective, interviews with Swedish crew members were also published, stressing the productive process of knowledge transfer regarding, for instance, forms of organisation, division of work, problem solving, communication and means of efficiency. Working on such an unusually large (for Scandinavia) film resulted in useful production skills, treasured by the local filmmaking community (Cederskog 2011). Interestingly, little evidence of a discourse of cultural imperialism with regard to either production was palpable. Accordingly, no one pointed to the fact that all of the Wallander novels had already been adapted in Swedish. Similarly, the fact that a fairly recent version of the same story Fincher was about to tell already existed was obviously mentioned, but without much antipathy. A certain resentment regarding the American film's supposedly less convincing portrait of what was considered the novel's prevailing sense of feminist resignation was perhaps the one area where the Fincher film came up for criticism (Larsson 2014: 116–117).

The Indian film crew, the BBC and Sony were welcomed to various degrees as a fresh source of skilled jobs in a glamorous industry, as vehicles for local place marketing and as agents of recognition of Swedish culture and its visual qualities, signalling a breakthrough on a limited but nonetheless global stage. In sum, these various attitudes can be seen as a symptomatic Scandinavian response to what sociologist David Hesmondhalgh has proposed about how the “cultural industries have moved closer to the centre of the economic action in many countries and across much of the world” (2013: 2).

However, there have also been less forgiving attitudes toward recent developments within the audio-visual production sector, what can be called a certain resistance to globalisation. Of late, a few Scandinavian productions have started to migrate abroad, mainly to be shot in the Baltic countries or in Eastern Europe, in places such as Prague, Budapest and Sofia. This is of course due to the fact that this practice reduces production costs. These films and television series—for instance the mainly Norwegian *Kon-Tiki* (2012, Norway/UK/Germany/Sweden/Malta/Denmark, Joachim Rønning and Espen Sandberg), the mainly Danish *Flammen & Citronen* (Flame and Citron, 2008, Denmark/Germany/Norway/France/Sweden/Finland/Czech Republic, Ole Christian Madsen), the television series *1864* (2014–, Denmark/Norway/Sweden/Germany, Ole Bornedal) and the mainly Swedish *Den allvarsamma liken* (A Serious Game, 2016, Sweden,

Pernilla August)—have all been produced on a certain scale as runaway productions in locations where labour and services are less expensive than in Scandinavia. Moreover, with tax breaks or various forms of financial incentive, production costs are further diminished as a result of using these locations. Consequently, these productions could only be made on location in Scandinavia on a less ambitious scale or not at all. This, obviously, is opportunistic transnationalism in its most crystalline form.

Until very recently, when Norway finally subsumed, the Scandinavian countries did not participate in the contest of enticing runaway audio-visual production through tax breaks or other forms of economic incentives (Rossing Jensen 2015). Such incentives have obviously been introduced in many European territories. This so-called “subsidy race” has been under investigation by the EU Commission (EAO 2014: 10). As a result of the increasing number of Scandinavian runaways, however, calls for the introduction of incentives have emerged. Consequently, in the last few years, people within the film business and particularly those attached to regional film funds have attempted to influence the national government in the direction of supplying schemes that would make production in Sweden more attractive. At the 2015 Cannes film festival, regional film fund Film Väst accordingly presented a report, written by the British consultancy firm Olsberg-SPI but financed by the fund, which called for the introduction of incentives (Olsberg-SPI 2015).

Another way of attempting to keep domestic production at home and, on occasion, attracting international shoots, is of course film funds. When public film funds were set up in Sweden in the 1990s, and later to a lesser extent in Norway and Denmark, they were swiftly able to attract a majority of the domestic production as well as several of von Trier’s productions by supplying approximately 10–25 per cent of the budget (Hedling 2010a: 335). Similarly, a film fund was started in Copenhagen 2013 in an attempt to counter the drift of productions away from the Danish capital. Beside domestic productions and Scandinavian television series, the fund has so far additionally been able to attract part of the shoot of the comparatively high profile, international production *The Danish Girl* (2015, USA/UK/Denmark/Belgium/Japan, Tom Hooper).

Compared to tax incentives, however, the strength of film funds appears limited. They simply do not seem to have the means to attract the kind of films made in Europe’s runaway centres such as London, Berlin, Prague and Budapest. For now, at least, Scandinavia consequently appears somewhat on the margins as a European film production location and as a film community and there is certainly the risk of ever more of its domestic production becoming runaways. Voluntarily or not, film funds and production service providers in Scandinavia have had to become aware of what has been termed “the unstable and unequal partnership between a footloose international production economy and situated local actors and intermediaries” (Goldsmith and O’Regan 2005). In the context of such a global situation, it is difficult to predict the future geographical developments of a comparatively small film production environment in terms other than a continuation and expansion of the trends exhibited over the past few years.

## Conclusion

To return to *The Girl*, the film is by far the greatest success in terms of international audiences that Scandinavian film has experienced during the last few decades. Moreover, films in the same vein such as *Hodejegerne* (Headhunters, 2011, Norway/Denmark/Germany, Morten Tyldum) and a number of television series of the Nordic Noir variety have noticeably registered with spectators outside of the Scandinavian region. Similarly, in terms of critical acclaim, reviews and festival awards, we can also observe a concurrent increase in interest, especially in Danish

cinema (Elsaesser 2005: 14). Dogme 95, the maverick figure of Lars von Trier, regular domestic market shares of 25 per cent and more, as well as internationally recognised actors such as Nikolaj Coster-Waldau and Mads Mikkelsen have been interpreted as signs of a particularly vital, domestic film culture, ever ready to renew itself.

All of these achievements, however, can be questioned in a number of ways. First, the aforementioned examples can be seen as just the small tip of an iceberg, the atypical outcomes of a body of work that for the most part may be regarded as mediocre and not very attractive to audiences. Second, the accomplishments have seemingly not translated into any of the Scandinavian film industries becoming less dependent on public support. In fact, these film industries very much remain a benefits culture and, if on-going discussions are anything to go by, will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. Third, the relative international success of the Nordic Noir titles has been called into question. In relation to its theatrical run in the US, *The Girl* has been described as “effectively a low-budget film in the US context [. . .] when the film travels across the Atlantic, it arguably transforms into an upmarket art film, screening primarily in urban centres and college towns rather than ubiquitously at suburban multiplexes” (Stenport and Traylor 2015: 80). Similarly, the same film’s performance compared to Fincher’s remake in the UK was also commented on in slightly critical terms: “It was successful *for a foreign language film* and, to some extent, because it emulated the conventions of Hollywood” (Mazdon 2015: 209, italics in the original). In the same vein, it has been remarked that while “the increasing transnational distribution and reception of Nordic Noir represents an indisputable advance [. . .] the reception, particularly in the US and the UK, testifies to a situation where the effect of cultural discount still lingers on” (Hedling 2014). In short, Scandinavian cinema can be said to be just as successful—or rather unsuccessful—as most non-English language cinemas on the international stage. Thus, it can, indeed, to a degree at least be seen as just another sub-set under the generic label of “World Cinema”. Returning to Elsaesser’s argument about the “negative qualifications associable with European cinema”, several of these hold true even with regard to a film such as *The Girl* and to Scandinavian cinema in general. Government subsidies, Council of Europe directives, television co-production deals, cultural tourism and city branding indeed all matter greatly in getting projects under way. Occasionally, however, and contrary to Elsaesser claims, some of these films also speak to a public other than festival audiences, loyal cinephiles and university students.

## References

- Bergfelder, T. (2005) “National, Transnational or Supranational Cinema? Rethinking European Film”, *Media, Culture, Society* 27 (3): 315–331.
- Berghahn, D. and Sternberg, C. (2010) “Locating Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe”, in Berghahn, D. and Sternberg, C. (eds) *European Cinema in Motion: Migrant and Diasporic Film in Contemporary Europe*, London: Palgrave, 13–49.
- Bondebjerg, I. and Redvall, E. N. (2013) “Transnational Scandinavia? Scandinavian Film Culture in a European and Global Context”, in Palacio, M. and Türschmann, J. (eds) *Transnational Cinema in Europe*, Zürich and Berlin: Lit Verlag, 127–145.
- Byg, B. and Torner, E. (2013) “Divided Dirigisme: Nationalism, Regionalism, and Reform in the German Film Academies”, in Hjort, M. (ed.) *The Education of the Filmmaker in Europe, Australia, and Asia*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 105–126.
- Cederskog, G. (2011) “När jag mötte Hollywood ...” [When I Met Hollywood ...], *Dagens Nyheter*, 20 December, [www.dn.se/kultur-noje/film-tv/nar-jag-motte-hollywood/](http://www.dn.se/kultur-noje/film-tv/nar-jag-motte-hollywood/).
- EAO (2014) *The New Cinema Communication (Iris Plus 2014–1)*, Strasbourg: European Audiovisual Laboratory.
- Elsaesser, T. (2005) *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

- (2015) “European Cinema into the Twenty-First Century: Enlarging the Context?”, in Harrod, M., Liz, M., and Timoshkina, A. (eds) *The Europeanness of European Cinema: Identity, Meaning, Globalization*, London: I.B. Tauris, 17–32.
- Goldsmith, B. and O’Regan, T. (2005) *The Film Studio: Film Production in the Global Economy*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Harrod, M., Liz, M. and Timoshkina, A. (2015) “The Europeanness of European Cinema: An Overview”, in Harrod, M., Liz, M. and Timoshkina, A. (eds) *The Europeanness of European Cinema: Identity, Meaning, Globalization*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1–16.
- Hedling, O. (2010a) “The Regional Turn: Developments within Scandinavian Film Production”, in Larsson, M. and Marklund, A. (eds) *Swedish Film: An Introduction and Reader*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 334–345.
- (2010b) “Historien om ett brott. Kriminalfilmsserier som regionalt och panskandinaviskt mediekoncept”, in Agger, G. and Waade, A. M. (eds) *Den skandinaviske krimi: Bestseller og blockbuster*, Göteborg: Nordicom, 129–143.
- (2014) “Notes on Nordic Noir as European Popular Culture”, *Frames Cinema Journal*, <http://framescinemajournal.com/article/notes-on-nordic-noir-as-european-popular-culture/>: 201v214.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. (2013) *The Cultural Industries* (3rd edn), London: Sage.
- Higson, A. (1989) “The Concept of National Cinema”, *Screen*, 30 (4): 36–47.
- (2015) “The Cultural Politics of European Cinema” (blog post), 3 July online, <http://mecetes.co.uk/the-cultural-politics-of-european-cinema/>
- Hjort, M. (2005) *Small Nation, Global Cinema*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- (2009) “On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism”, in Đurovičová, N. and Newman, K. (eds) *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 12–33.
- Jordanova, D. (2003) *Cinema of the Other Europe: The Industry and Artistry of East Central European Film*, London: Wallflower Press.
- Jones, H. (2014) “Which Feature Films Travel within Europe? A report by Dr Huw Jones for the MeCETES team meeting. Presented at the University of Copenhagen, 14 March 2014”, 3 July, [www.academia.edu/7440414/Which\\_Feature\\_Films\\_Travel\\_within\\_Europe](http://www.academia.edu/7440414/Which_Feature_Films_Travel_within_Europe)
- Jones, H. D. (2015) “The Cultural and Economic Implications of UK/European Co-production”, *Transnational Cinemas* 7 (1): 1–20.
- Larsson, M. (2014) “En queerfeministisk utopi?: Sexualitet i Millenniumserien”, in Hedling E. and Wallengren, A-K. (eds) *Den nya svenska filmen: Kultur, kriminalitet & kakafoni*, Stockholm: Atlantis, 111v126.
- Mazdon, L. (2015) “Hollywood and Europe: Remaking *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*”, in Harrod, M., Liz, M., and Timoshkina, A. (eds) *The Europeanness of European Cinema: Identity, Meaning, Globalization*, London: I.B. Tauris, 199–212.
- Olsberg-SPI (2015) *A Production Incentive for Sweden*, 5 November, <http://filmvast.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/A-Production-Incentive-for-Sweden-final-draft-2015-05-11.pdf>.
- Rossing Jensen, J. (2015) “Norway Introduces 25% Rebate for International Film and TV”, *Cineuropa*, 8 October, <http://cineuropa.org/nw.aspx?t=newsdetail2016-03-07.&l=en&did=299934>.
- SFI (2010) *Filmåret i siffror 2009*, Stockholm: Svenska Filminstitutet.
- (2011) *Filmåret i siffror 2010*, Stockholm: Svenska Filminstitutet.
- Stenport, A. W. and Traylor, G. (2015) “The Eradication of Memory: Film Adaptations and Algorithms of the Digital”, *Cinema Journal* 55 (1): 74–94.
- Vonderau, P. (2010) “Inga Lindström and the Franchising of Culture”, in Hedling, E., Hedling, O. and M. Jönsson (eds) *Regional Aesthetics: Locating Swedish Media*, Stockholm: Kungliga biblioteket, 141–152.