

Public Service Broadcasters Versus Streaming Services

Evidence of Negotiations and
Intersections in Online Television

Elke Weissmann, Edge Hill University,
UK



Edge Hill
University

Context

- US Context:
 - ‘peak TV’
 - ‘death of television’
- European context:
 - Audiovisual Media Services Directive (2020 Amendment; in particular Articles 35-37)
 - But also: pleas by academics to safeguard public service television (e.g. Johnson, 2019)
 - General sense of PSB being under threat (by streaming services, but also neoliberal to fascist governments)





Today

- As always: things a bit more complex than that
- Lay out the complexity with a PSB-focused point of view
- One case studies: *Parfum* (ZDF Neo, Netflix, 2018)
- Method: industry studies (including interviews) and textual analysis

Theoretical framework



- Transnational multi-platform age
 - Transnationalism: academic buzz word
 - Inbetween-ness (Hilmes, 2012; Weissmann, 2012)
 - Transnational fields (Kuipers, 2011)
- Proposal: transnational frame (emphasis on perception and discourse)
- Multi-platform:
 - As new era (TVIV, Jenner, 2016); emphasising different delivery technologies (and the competition amongst them) but also different opportunities (see Dunleavy, 2018)

Netflix and the local

- Audiovisual Media Services Directive (2020): greater focus on enabling regulation (though vague) of the need for streaming services to provide and fund local content
- Netflix increasing its local bases in Europe (Spain, UK, Sweden, France etc.)
- Production (often co-productions) with local broadcasters and/or companies
- Underlying assumptions of cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 1991)

Public Service
Broadcasters
– from
protectionist
to exploitative

- Role of EBU in making sure their ‘view [is] heard on the EU’s landmark online platform rules – the Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA)’ (EBU Report, 2021)
- Development of competing portals for streaming (e.g. BritBox, etc.)
- Co-productions with EBU partners and other local partners (e.g. local telecom companies)
- ‘we’ve worked with our colleagues at ZDF to ensure that there is a form of branding that marks the ZDF or ZDF Neo as originator’ (Nadine Bilke, personal communication, Dec 2019)
- Exploitation of existing content across different platforms (good example *Parfum*)
- Co-productions with streaming services in order to facilitate transnational distribution/ access to international markets (e.g. *Giri/Haji*, BBC, Netflix, 2019; Taylor-Jones, 2019)

Concern about Co- productions

- Significant number of co-productions (including country-internal ones)
- At high-end: established norm (including co-financing)
- What does that do for cultural representations?
- Homogenising?
- 'Tourist gaze' (Urry, Larssen, 2011) to 'touristic gaze' (Blandford, 2005)
- Heterogenising?
- Both at the same time: emphasis on cultural differences while also stylistic similarities become more marked (McElroy, 2013)

Parfum (ZDF Neo, Netflix, 2018)



- Three-throng distribution within ZDF: Neo first, 'for binge in the Mediathek' (Bilke, personal communication, Dec 2019), then main programme, ZDF and then later on Netflix
- Clear evidence of understanding of the role of distribution to different target groups (Netflix as an opportunity as well as a danger)
- 'Event' Serial – one of the first originals; and defining of what 'original' means (binge-watching for Neo)
- Central developments there (but also elsewhere): conflicted characters ('zerissen' – pulled apart) and emphasis on local



zdf
neo



Niederrhein



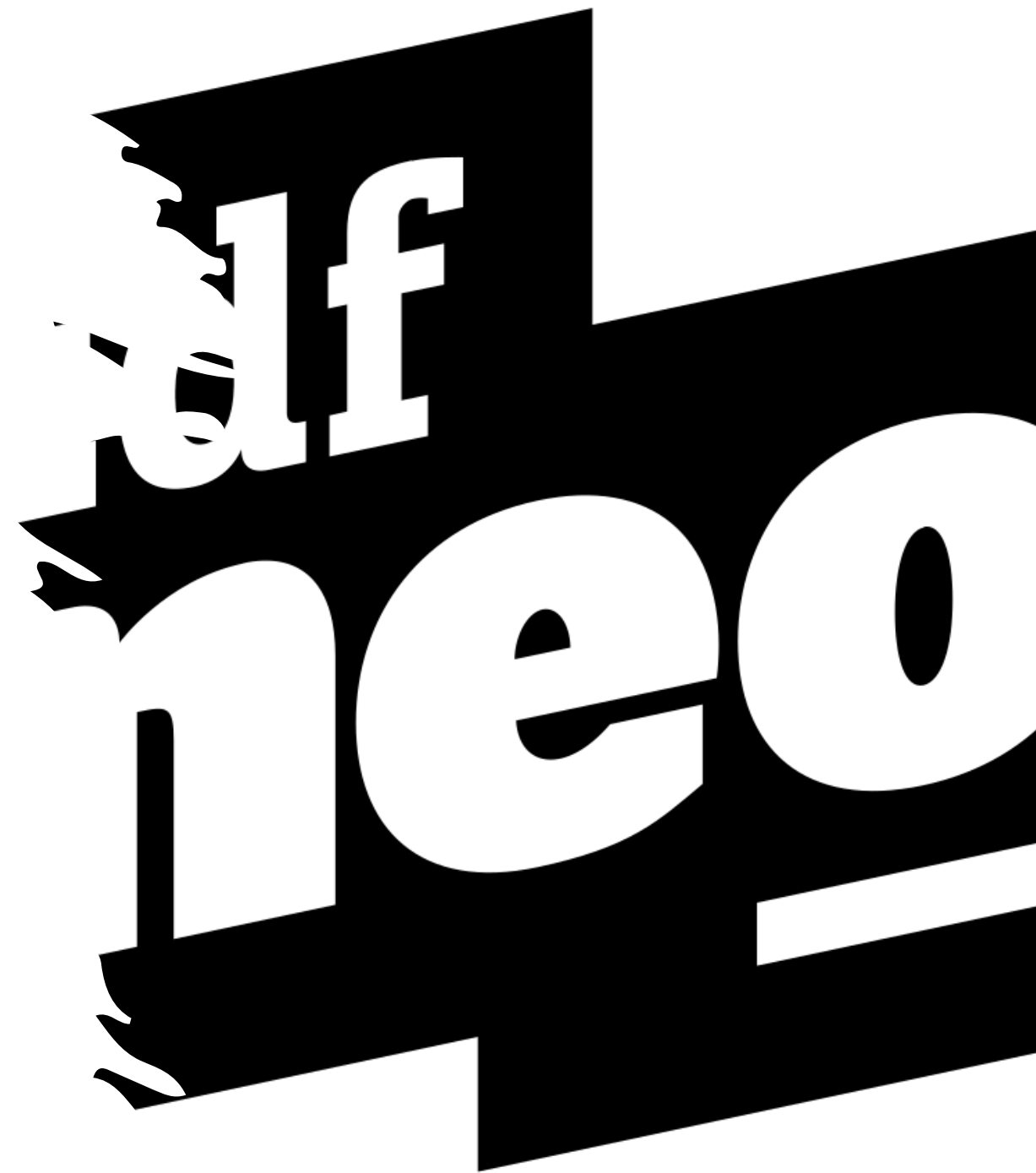
zdf
neo





Conclusions

- Netflix/streaming services versus PSB?
- Not as easy as that
- Changes to perceptions and conceptualisation of high end TV drama
- Diversification of target groups (as result of multiplatforming)
- This includes a very undefined international target group
- Bingeworthy connects to particular aesthetic elements (character conceptualisation, representation of the local) – but within a transnational frame
- The transnational frame operates at all levels: development, (co)production, distribution, textual, consumption



Contact



- weissmae@edgehill.ac.uk
- [@TellyElk](https://www.instagram.com/TellyElk)