

From the “glass cliff” to the “ice floe”. Gender, ageing, and crisis leadership in *Borgen - Power and Glory* (Netflix–DR, 2022)*

Paola De Rosa**

Link Campus University of Rome

Anne Marit Risum Waade***

Aarhus University, Denmark

This article examines the narrative construction of crisis leadership at the intersection of gender and ageing through the analysis of the Danish political drama *Borgen - Power & Glory* (Netflix–DR, 2022), situated within the Nordic noir tradition. Focusing on the trajectory of Brigitte Nyborg – a former Danish prime minister who returns to high political office as Minister of Foreign Affairs in her fifties – the study investigates how the series represents leadership under conditions of overlapping crises and how these conditions shape the legitimacy of female later-life leadership.

Methodologically, the study combines a background analysis which situates the series within its cultural and production context with a qualitative narrative analysis of the season, organised around two interconnected dimensions: crisis visibility as the condition through which leadership is continuously evaluated, and gender and ageing as intersecting sites of public legitimacy and personal vulnerability. The findings show how Nyborg’s leadership is progressively shaped by the accumulation of crises – namely geopolitical, environmental, institutional and personal ones. While early assertions of sovereign authority increase political visibility, they also contribute over time to isolation, delegitimation and moral strain. Leadership evaluation is further intensified by gendered and age-related expectations, as authority becomes entangled with motherhood, generational conflict, emotional conduct and the visible ageing female body, particularly through the narrative problematization of menopause.

The article argues that, rather than conforming to the logic of a sudden fall implied by the glass cliff, *Borgen - Power & Glory* articulates a shift from the “glass cliff” to the “ice floe”, capturing a gradual process of erosion, in which prolonged crisis management, adaptive compromise and sustained visibility destabilize leadership from within, contributing to a more complex and ambivalent representation of female leadership in contemporary serial drama.

Keywords: crisis leadership; female leadership; serial drama; Nordic noir; glass cliff; *Borgen*

* Article submitted on 26/02/2026. Article accepted on 28/06/2026.

** p.derosa@unilink.it

*** amwaade@cc.au.dk

This paper aims to investigate the narrative construction of crisis leadership at the intersection of gender and ageing through the analysis of a compelling case study from contemporary serial drama: *Borgen - Power & Glory* (Netflix-DR, 2022), the fourth season of the long-running Danish political series *Borgen* (DR, 2010-2012), which follows Birgitte Nyborg – former Prime Minister of Denmark – as she returns to high political office in her fifties, as Minister of Foreign Affairs. More specifically, the study seeks to explore how the series contribute to shaping cultural imaginaries of female leadership under overlapping crisis contexts, while negotiating tensions between political pressures and embodied vulnerabilities.

The analysis is situated within a broader understanding of contemporary serial drama as a key cultural space in which social tensions and collective uncertainties are explored, with recent television narratives increasingly engaging with experiences of crisis in ways that allow social, political and personal dimensions to intersect and evolve over time. Building on insights developed especially in relation to environmental crisis and *cli-fi* narratives, scholars have highlighted how the global screen industry is at the forefront of raising awareness for the political and social issues (Saunders, 2021; Vaughan & Kääpä, 2022; Waade & Leyda, 2022; Waade & Grønlund, 2024), thus fostering a deeper engagement of viewers with complex and often abstract dynamics of crisis governance. In this sense, serial narratives do not merely mirror contemporary anxieties but contribute to shaping how crises are culturally imagined, emotionally processed and socially internalized. This double function aligns with the role of “popular culture”, as identified by Storey (2018) – describing it as the domain in which collective desires, fears and forms of shared, non-expert knowledge are articulated and circulated in socially meaningful ways – and Colombo (2025), referring to it as a lens through which contemporary social transformation, contradictions and aspirations can be observed and interpreted.

Within this representational framework, the function of serial drama as both *mirror* and *shaper* of social reality becomes particularly salient when crisis – and the managerial and symbolic role of crisis leadership – is examined through a gender lens. This perspective invites a closer look at how crisis and gender intersect at a broader social level, focusing on the reciprocal relationships between society and crisis, and revealing how gender meanings are negotiated in critical contexts (Ferrerri, 2011; 2013).

Within this debate, a significant tension characterises discussions of female leadership, where the persistence of the *glass ceiling* in ordinary contexts (Powell, 1999; Powell & Butterfield, 2015) coexists with the emergence of the *glass cliff* in crisis situations (Ryan & Haslam, 2005; 2007; Ryan et al., 2015; Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010). While the former points to the enduring structural barriers that limit women’s access to top leadership positions (Hymowitz & Schelhardt, 1986), the latter highlights how women are often appointed to leadership roles precisely when the likelihood of failure is greatest. Taken together, these dynamics offer a crucial analytical lens for understanding gendered management of leadership under conditions of risk and instability, particularly at the intersection with other axes of potential discrimination, which for women often converge

around age (Richardson & Loubier, 2008) as a double marker of personal and public vulnerability.

Theoretical framework: Applying female leadership ideas to television drama

In recent years, contemporary serial dramas have increasingly established themselves as privileged cultural frameworks for interpreting and making sense of experiences of crisis. In a historical moment characterized by a condition of “permanent crisis” (Reitter & Wellmon, 2021) or “cascade crises” (UNRISD, 2022) – resulting from the overlap of economic, environmental, geopolitical and institutional disrupting events – serial storytelling proves to be particularly suitable to engage with this global scenario of sustained uncertainty. Its long-form narrative structure and narrative complexity (Mittell, 2006; 2015; Dunleavy, 2017) allow crises to be layered, interconnected and revisited over time, capturing their cumulative effects on institutions, social relations and individual lives, and thereby actively contributing to the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) by shaping shared frameworks of meaning.

The central role of crisis in contemporary serial dramas goes hand in hand with representations that foreground the key figures responsible for its management and resolution, making leadership a key narrative and a symbolic driver through which crisis is made visible and meaningful. This narrative centrality reflects insights from crisis management studies, which frame crisis as an intrinsically political moment (Boin, t’hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2017), as well as a strategic testing ground for leadership. Crises can accelerate processes of political and symbolic transformation, destabilising established power relations, and opening space for the emergence or consolidation of legitimacy, consensus and reputation. Crucially, these dynamics unfold under conditions of increased crisis visibility: by concentrating attention and urgency, crises force leadership into the public eye, making authority, responsibility and credibility continuously observable and subject to evaluation (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2019).

As Ansell, Boin and t’Hart (2014) suggest, in crisis situations, political leadership oscillates between three core (complementary or competing) functions: *sovereign*, *facilitator* and *symbol*. As *sovereign*, the leader retains ultimate decision making authority and is publicly credited – or blamed – for outcomes; as *facilitator*, the leader is expected to remove obstacles to effective action and align the responses of different institutional actors; as *symbol*, leadership gains an iconic dimension, embodying both crisis response strategies and a point of reference for the wider political community.

These dynamics are increasingly reflected and dramatized in serial narratives, where different leadership roles and styles take form through the sustained management of critical events involving organisations, institutions and communities, with political drama emerging as a key genre for staging these processes (Naumann, 2025). As noted by Corner and

Richardson (2008), “political fiction provides an opportunity to explore the cultural mediation of uncertainties and tensions in contemporary politics and political values” (p. 387), taking the form of what Baym (2017) describes as the “televisual public affairs narratives” (p. 17), which blend recognizable real-world phenomena with fictional storytelling.

Within this framework, the capacity of serial drama to simultaneously reflect and actively shape social reality becomes analytically relevant when leadership is examined as a mediated and gendered practice. Major crises of recent decades – economic, health-related and geopolitical – have made the relationship between gender and crisis especially visible, showing how gender functions not only as a marker of vulnerability, but also as a potential space for redefining roles, competencies and power relations (McCabe, 2026). While gender equality is often articulated as a normative objective in ordinary times, emergency contexts tend to marginalise it in favour of imperatives framed as more “urgent” (Di Sarcina, 2014; Allwood, 2020). At the same time, the crisis may operate as a testing ground for forms of gender empowerment that move beyond formal equal opportunities toward recognition, agency and effective participation (Desai, 2010; Ikmal, Indriastuti, & Suprayoga, 2022).

Despite this, research on female leadership in times of crisis remains relatively limited, largely due to the persistent underrepresentation of women in top-making positions. This gap has contributed to the dominance of leadership narratives centred on male perspectives, reinforcing the enduring myth of the “Great Men” of history (Keegan, 2002; Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2020), also contributing to the underexploration of how authority, legitimacy and leadership are shaped by gender, particularly in the case of female crisis leaders (O’Brien & Piscopo, 2023).

However, if – as the literature suggests – the characteristics attributed to and embodied by leaders possess strong explanatory power (Hannah, Lester, & Vogelgesang, 2003), approaching crisis leadership from a gender perspective (Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Klenke, 2004) enables the analysis of specific leadership styles and competencies, as well as their influence on the interpretation and management of critical events – an approach that has gained renewed relevance especially in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic (Johnson & Williams, 2020; McKeon, 2021).

An intersectional perspective further complicates this picture by adding, alongside gender, age as a crucial and often overlooked axis of differentiation, one that interacts with leadership expectations and evaluative standards in contexts of crisis.

The process of ageing for women has been repeatedly described as “traumatic” since it is shaped by “a problematically contested understanding of age primarily in terms of decline and disintegration rather than accumulation and growth” (Wearing, 2007, p. 280). This dynamic becomes even more evident when contrasted with dominant narratives of male ageing and what Sontag (1972) famously defined as the “double standard of ageing”. Within media and popular culture, these asymmetries are reinforced by representational narratives based on youthfulness and bodily control, which are deeply shaped by beauty standards, gender expectations and social roles (De Rosa, Mandelli, & Re, 2021).

As Tortajada, Dhaenens and Willem (2018) observe:

The ageing process is turned on its head and becomes an anti-ageing or 'successful ageing' enterprise that is but an attempt to slow down or even reverse ageing. [...] Mature female bodies are only interesting to media and popular culture insofar as they can be used as a visible proof of a deferred ageing process; otherwise, they remain hidden from the public eye, as they are considered to be abject bodies that do not fit the aforementioned model of successful ageing (p. 2).

Studies on audiovisual representation confirms this ambivalence, indicating that, although some series open spaces for exploring ageing from the perspective of women themselves, they frequently reproduce tropes that associate ageing with the loss of femininity and authority (Van Bauwel, 2018). In leadership contexts, these dynamics are furtherly intensified: ageing women leaders may simultaneously benefit from perceptions of experience and reliability, while facing heightened scrutiny regarding vitality, emotional resilience and legitimacy.

These age-related dynamics also need to be contextualized within broader shifts in the representation of female leadership in serial dramas, where women's role is increasingly portrayed through contradictions, rather than idealized models (McCabe, 2026; Waade & Leyda, 2022). As Pinedo (2021) argues, the emergence of "difficult women" and female antiheroes from the late 1990s onward marks a significant reorientation in television drama, moving female protagonists from stigmatised figures to central narrative agents within a postfeminist cultural moment still shaped by mechanisms of symbolic punishment. Within this scenario, the representation of women in leadership roles – often framed as "powerful women" across political and professional settings – have become prominent, not as exceptional anomalies, but as recurring figures through which serial narratives display the tensions of female authority under pressure (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016; McCabe, 2026). In doing so, the leader's credibility is staged and tested not only through decision-making and control, but also through exposure, emotional labour and the management of a female (and often ageing) body subject to public scrutiny.

Methodology: qualitative narrative analysis of crisis leadership

Building on the theoretical perspectives outlined above, this paper examines *Borgen - Power & Glory* as a case study through which to explore how crisis leadership is narratively articulated and made visible across the season. To pursue these aims, the study is guided by two main research questions: *RQ1*) How does *Borgen - Power & Glory* represent the challenges and tensions of leadership at the intersection of gender, ageing, and crisis visibility?; *RQ2*) How does the series contribute to broader cultural understanding of female leadership in crisis contexts, and what does it reveal about gendered structural constraints?

Methodologically, the study combines two analytical steps: 1) a background analysis aimed at situating *Borgen - Power & Glory* within its cultural and production context, introducing key features of Danish drama production, the creative team behind the series, and the ambitions and framing of the fourth season; 2) a qualitative narrative analysis

(Riessman, 2008) of all eight episodes of the season, focusing on how crisis leadership is constructed through recurring narrative patterns and key story arcs. More specifically, drawing on Riessman's taxonomy, the analysis adopts a predominantly "performative" reading of the narrative, according to which "storytelling is seen as performance [...] who involves, persuades, and (perhaps) moves an audience through language and gesture, 'doing' rather than telling alone" (p. 5). In line with this perspective, the analysis focuses on how meaning is generated through action, interaction and embodiment, and on how leadership is "done" rather than simply described.

The narrative analysis follows an abductive logic and was conducted in three interrelated steps. First, through close viewing of all eight episodes, we identified key crisis situations that structure the season's narrative, focusing on how crises are staged as public performances of leadership, and to the roles Nyborg assumes in managing them (namely *sovereign*, *facilitator*, *symbol*). Second, we analysed gendered and age-related evaluations of leadership, focusing on how Nyborg's authority is explicitly framed through references to experience, generational positioning, emotional conduct, bodily control, or relational roles (e.g. as a woman leader, an ageing politician, a mother). Third, the analytical categories were refined by examining how crisis visibility and gendered-ageing legitimacy interact across narrative arcs rather than in isolation, which led to the identification of two main analytical dimensions: crisis visibility and the public performance of leadership; gender and ageing as both sites of public legitimacy and personal vulnerability.

The decision to focus on the fourth season of the series is analytically motivated, as it offers a particularly salient example of female leadership in crisis times. While leadership and gender are central to the entire *Borgen* series – most notably in Nyborg's portrayal of Denmark's first female Prime Minister – the fourth season marks a significant turning point. Produced nine years after the third season and as a co-production between Netflix and DR, *Borgen - Power & Glory* presents a more complex and layered representation of Nyborg's character, now confronting multiple and overlapping crises: the geopolitical conflict over Greenland's oil resources, internal party tensions, a hostile media environment and a parallel familial crisis involving motherhood, the embodied experience of ageing (particularly menopause) at the intersection of private life and public performance.

Background analysis: "*Borgen*" between fiction and reality

Borgen - Power & Glory is the fourth season of the popular Danish political drama about the Danish female prime minister Brigitte Nyborg (played by Sidse Babette Kunudsen). The first three seasons were produced by the Danish Public service broadcaster DR in 2010-2013, and the series travelled worldwide together with the popular DR crime series *Forbydelsen* (The Killing, 2007-2012) and the Danish/Swedish co-production *Bron* (The Bridge, 2011-2018). Even though *Borgen* is a political drama and not a crime drama, the series became part of the popular Nordic noir brand (Hansen & Waade, 2017). In 2022 Netflix launched the

fourth season of *Borgen* as a co-production with DR, written by the same screenwriter as for the first seasons, Adam Price, but this time produced by SAM Production, a Danish production company that Price founded in 2014. In this season the author made the main character Birgitte Nyborg both older and darker.

The series critically asks what happens to people when they get (too much) power and glory, and the fact that there is a risk of falling apart as a person when you are taking a leading role in a country. This change is obvious when you look at the promotional material of the series – in the first three seasons Nyborg is smiling, dressed in red, hair hanging loose and surrounded by family and colleagues, and in season four, Nyborg is alone, dressed in dark, tightly pulled hair and her eyes are looking down (Fig. 1).



Figure 1: Comparison between the promotional materials of the series (seasons 1-3 vs. season 4)

Furthermore, the fourth season is set in Greenland, the plot is about the crisis in the Arctic region, in which Greenland is squeezed between Danish, Chinese and Russian political and economic interests. In the title sequence, we see Nyborg's concerned eyes behind melting bricks of ice floating around in the dark ocean, illustrating how the Arctic region is falling apart due to climate change, but also how Nyborg as a person and politician, is falling apart. As the new Prime Minister Signe Kragh and Nyborg's main political competitor proclaimed in the first episode: "You're alone on the ice floe now. Let's hope it doesn't melt under your feet". But this is exactly what is happening.



Figure 2: Minister of Foreign Affairs Birgitte Nyborg (Sidse Babett Knudsen) in the Netflix series *Borgen - Power and Glory* (2022) trying to manage climate crises, political conflicts and personal crises in Greenland. Photo: Mike Kollöffel.

In the series, Nyborg lives on her own, she has political power, but the freedom that she praises since she no longer has kids or partner to take care of, is replaced by extensive workload, loneliness, alcohol and troublesome menopause conditions. In the previous seasons, we have followed Birgitte Nyborg from being a mother with small kids and a husband entering the political stage and her way to becoming the first female Prime Minister in Denmark. The story later shows how she manages to balance between being a divorced single mother and a professional, competitive lead politician, furthermore how she navigates the intricate and complicated political culture between competing politicians, spin doctors and reporters. In season three, Nyborg has to make bad compromises dealing with international war, and her integrity as a person and a politician is at stake. In the end of season three, her private and political life collapses, and her female competitor takes over her role as the new Prime Minister.

“Borgen” (*the fortress*) is the nickname of Denmark’s parliamentary building, and reflects how power and publicity affect the person over time. In season four, as is the object for our analysis in this context, this development is taken a step further, this time Nyborg is balancing new kinds of crisis, including bodily, emotional, political and environmental.

The series comes out of a certain Nordic tradition of making high quality television dramas as well as crime stories that engage in societal and political conditions. Scandinavian crime fiction has been a global bestseller industry for decades, and many books are adapted for film and television (Bradly et al., 2020). Moreover, it has been known for its political and societal engagement, and many of the authors who originally set the stage (Sjöwall and Wahlö, Mankell, Guillou) were politically anchored in left wing values. In this context, it was not only about page-turning crime plots, but also a way to shed light on injustice, a failing welfare system and socially marginalized people. Parallel to this, the Danish broadcaster

DR developed their double-plot strategy (Redvall, 2013), training screenwriters and producers to tell stories that on the one hand demonstrated engaging plots, convincing characters and complex narratives, and on the other hand, due to their the public service commitment, wanted to tell stories that engaged in societal conditions and challenges. In addition, following the popularity of the Nordic noir series and the significant landscape aesthetics including icy mountains, snow, dark winters and cold climate, and also Nordic gender and welfare culture. This international fascination resulted in a triple plot-structure: the narrative plot, the societal plot, and the spectacular landscape and Nordic culture plot (Waade, 2020). In *Borgen - Power & Glory* we can easily identify this triple plot structure: the narrative plot is about the Danish government's interest in Greenland and how Nyborg as Denmark's foreign minister tries to handle the case where Russia and China are fighting to get access to oil resources in Greenland. The societal plot encompasses different stories, one is about the complicated relationship between Denmark as a coloniser and Greenland as the colonised country, another is about climate conditions in the Arctic region and the relationship between small nations as Greenland, and powerful international players and economic interests (Grønlund & Redvall, 2022). A third societal plotline is the one that is at stake in this article and emphasised in the title 'power and glory': how far will you as a politician and a human go to keep your power and glory? Finally, the third aspect of the story is the Arctic spectacular landscapes as well as Greenlandic culture, language and everyday life is central in the story. These different narrative and aesthetic layers are emphasized by Adam Price in an interview he gave to *Drama Quarterly* at the time when the series premiered:

Locating much of *Borgen* in Greenland not only served the plot but also added an extra layer to the visual aesthetic of the drama. "It's always used by politicians who want to talk about climate change. They go to Greenland and stand next to a glacier and point out how sad the glacier looks and how the rest of the world is also diminishing," he [Price] says. "I thought it would be a strange irony if we set the story in this pristine jewel of untouched landscape and contrasted it with the most terrifying, polluting fossil fuel there is on Earth. The irony gives us a beautiful political conflict". (Lawes, 2022).

Another predominant part of the framing and promotion of the series has been the close relationship between fiction and reality. When the first season of *Borgen* was released back in 2010 with Birgitte Nyborg as the Danish prime minister, in reality Denmark had not yet had any female prime minister. This changed the following year, when Helle Thorning-Schmidt became prime minister. This close relationship to reality is also something that has engaged viewers, fans and critics (Stougaard-Nielsen, 2022). The very recent and contested situation in Greenland, where the US president claims to take over the country, is also something that the people behind the series have picked up on and used in their promotion and commentaries (Carlsson & Little, 2025). For example, a Danish climate magazine explained in an article that the former climate and energy minister Martin Lidegaard was one of the brains behind the plot, and the minister comments on how the series has preempted the recent political crisis in Greenland:

Lidegaard stresses that the story is, of course, imagined. “But reality always overtakes fiction,” he says. “If I had told Price – why don’t we make a plot where the American president wants to buy Greenland? I’m sure he then would have said – “let’s be a little realistic Martin”. (Lorenzen, no date, p.1)

This close relationship between fiction and reality is also the case for gender performances and the strong female characters in the series, something that viewers and critics around the world have been very fascinated by and experienced as authentic (Jensen and Jacobsen, 2020). As such, the series is providing contemporary television viewers to identify, mirror and engage in the characters, the stories and the gender dilemmas that the series encompasses.

Narrative Analysis

The narrative analysis examines how crisis leadership is constructed in *Borgen - Power & Glory* through the interaction between crisis visibility and gendered and age-related forms of legitimacy. It is organised in two analytical steps: first, it explores how overlapping geopolitical and domestic crises configure Nyborg’s leadership as a continuous public performance; second, it analyses how gender and ageing function both as structural criteria for legitimacy and leadership evaluation in crisis contexts, and as embodied experiences that may themselves be narratively problematised as crisis.

Crisis visibility and the public performance of leadership

The first analytical dimension focuses on crisis visibility as a key condition shaping political leadership. In *Borgen - Power & Glory*, crises are not treated as isolated disruptions, but as situations that intensify public exposure and place leadership under continuous scrutiny. For Birgitte Nyborg, moments of crisis become arenas in which authority, credibility and legitimacy are tested in real time, under conditions of uncertainty, moral tension and media pressure. Each crisis transforms decision-making into a public performance, where competence and resilience are evaluated not only through outcomes but through visibility itself. As studies on crisis communication suggest, such moments can both reinforce leadership and accelerate its symbolic erosion (McLean & Ewart, 2020), making crisis visibility the narrative condition through which Nyborg’s leadership is repeatedly challenged, and eventually reoriented toward more pragmatic and transformative strategies (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

a) Greenland and the politics of crisis ownership

The first and most pervasive crisis introduced in the season revolves around the discovery of oil reserves in Greenland, a scenario that interweaves geopolitical, environmental and domestic political tensions. The issue immediately positions Nyborg at the centre of a highly visible and contested decision-making process, where questions of climate responsibility and international power relations converge, amplifying her public exposure.

From the outset, the crisis is framed through a struggle over ownership and authority (Waade & Grønlund, 2024). When questions arise regarding institutional responsibility, Nyborg firmly asserts her ministerial competence: *“The Danish Realm is the business of the PM’s Office. The Arctic is the business of the Foreign Ministry. And I have higher climate ambitions than Signe. The matter is mine”* [Ep. 01]. By explicitly claiming jurisdiction over the Arctic, Nyborg adopts a *sovereign* leadership position (Ansell et al., 2014), showing decisiveness and expertise. This assertion is reinforced when journalist Torben Friis initially assumes that a comment should come from the Prime Minister Signed Kragh, while Nyborg reclaims visibility for herself: *“You know what, Torben? You can actually ask me”* [Ep. 01]. In line with established crisis communication principles that stress the importance of speed and visibility in early responses, Nyborg seeks to establish herself as the primary authoritative voice on the matter.

However, this initial decisiveness also marks the beginning of a progressive isolation. As tensions with the Prime Minister escalate – exacerbated by unilateral decisions on the Arctic crisis and strategic leaks – the crisis becomes a site where leadership visibility turns against her. Signe Kragh’s ironic remark *“You’re alone on an ice floe now. Let’s hope it doesn’t melt under your feet”* [Ep. 02] clearly shows as Nyborg’s assertion of authority gradually reveals the limits of unilateral leadership, highlighting the tension between sovereign decision-making and the need for political coordination.

As the Greenland crisis expands, Nyborg’s leadership is further tested by overlapping challenges: revelations concerning Russian involvement in the management of the Greenlandic oil company, internal party dissent, and accusations of withheld information place her under sustained media and parliamentary scrutiny. Faced with mounting pressure, Nyborg adopts a strategy of communicative restraint, initially opting for “no comment” when confronted with evidence that contradicts her earlier statements [Ep. 03]. Within the narrative, this choice is explicitly criticised as anti-democratic, with the Prime Minister urging her to address the public directly. Here, Nyborg’s silence stands in clear tension with established *tactical advice* in crisis communication, which emphasises the need to speak early and proactively in order to maintain control over the narrative (Coombs, 2010).

In response, Nyborg attempts to reframe the crisis by foregrounding its “positive” dimensions, emphasising climate benefits and long-term responsibility – *“I’ll stick to the good news. The climate benefits”* [Ep. 03] – aligns with strategies of “differentiation” and “transcendence” (Ware & Linkugel, 1973), isolating her actions from their most controversial implications. However, as negotiations progress and Nyborg ultimately accepts dialogue on

oil exploitation, the crisis mutates once again, positioning her as a leader who has compromised foundational environmental values. This shift is explicitly acknowledged within the narrative: when a colleague confronts her with the accusation *"You're not yourself, Birgitte"* she replies: *"I am. I just adapt to the circumstances"* [Ep. 08]. The exchange shows the paradox of crisis leadership under sustained visibility: adaptability preserves authority in the short term, although risks erode moral coherence and relational trust. Nyborg's insistence that she must sometimes act *"to the detriment of the individual but for the common good"* [Ep. 02] further reinforces a top-down leadership style that can easily be reframed as elitist and detached.

b) When the private becomes political: climate crisis and mediated intimacy

The Greenland crisis is closely intertwined with a parallel domestic crisis, involving Nyborg's son Magnus, whose environmental activism collides with his mother's perceived betrayal of green values, turning the crisis of governance into a crisis of familial legitimacy. What emerges is a sustained blurring of public and private, where Nyborg's authority is not only tested in institutional arenas but also refracted through motherhood, intergenerational conflict and media exposure. This overlap becomes visible early in the season, when Magnus is arrested during an action against a pig transport. Nyborg initially tries to keep the episode separate from her political role, rejecting any form of preferential treatment – *"My son shouldn't get any special treatment"* [Ep. 03] – and framing the incident as a private matter that should not interfere with government negotiations. When a journalist source discovers the story and her staff ask whether to postpone the Greenland talks, Nyborg's refusal – *"No, are you crazy? That stuff is his problem"* [Ep. 04] – suggests how the political crisis remains the "real" arena of leadership. Nonetheless, the narrative quickly shows that this separation is difficult to sustain. Within the domestic space, Nyborg's public vulnerability is mirrored by a parental one, with the climate conflict becoming the central hinge between the two spheres: Nyborg condemns Magnus's methods – *"It was theft! It was a criminal act!"* – but Magnus reframes the issue as political hypocrisy: *"Wasn't animal welfare a key issue in your party when you started out?"* [Ep. 03]. The exchange shifts the focus from legality to integrity, turning his activism into a direct challenge to her political trajectory. Their argument also becomes explicitly "politicised" when Magnus draws a parallel between his own actions and Nyborg's potential legal violations: *"I'm not the only criminal in the family, then. Did you violate the Minister Accountability Act?"* [Ep. 03].

Significantly, the series does not keep this conflict behind closed doors. Instead, it stages the family crisis as a media event, turning intimacy into a strategy of crisis visibility. When Nyborg's advisor suggests postponing a TV appearance because of internal party turbulence, Nyborg refuses: *"That's exactly why we shouldn't change our plans. It shows I'm on top form when I'm doing things like that"* [Ep. 08]. The logic is explicitly tactical: public composure is used to signal stability, and the private sphere becomes a controlled space

through which leadership is reaffirmed under pressure. In the first televised exchange, Nyborg adopts a reconciliatory framing that redirects attention to positive intentions, drawing on a bolstering strategy aimed at highlighting her positive values as a parent: *“As a mom I’ve raised my kids to have opinions about the world. To believe you can make a positive difference”* [Ep. 05]. However, an escalation occurs in the second TV confrontation, which openly stages an intergenerational clash over climate responsibility. Magnus accuses her mother of wanting to *“destroy the world”* by exploiting oil, while Nyborg counters with appeals to expertise and historical perspective, dismissing his comparison as *“in bad taste”* and attributing it to *“ignorance”* and a *“lack of historical knowledge”*. Magnus’ reply intensifies the generational framing: *“Maybe it’s because your generation has destroyed the world so badly that my generation can do nothing else but fight for the future”* [Ep. 08]. The debate transforms Nyborg’s climate politics into an identity test: she is not only criticised as a minister, but as a representative of a generation whose authority is morally contested.

c) *From compromise to renewal: adaptive leadership under moral strain*

As the Greenland crisis escalates and intersects with internal party dissent and familial conflict, Nyborg’s leadership is increasingly characterised by ambivalence and strategic compromise. The narrative marks a visible shift from the positive and procedure-oriented leader associated with earlier seasons toward a more adaptive and darker figure willing to bend ethical boundaries to retain control. This shift becomes evident in Nyborg’s growing openness to the unorthodox strategy suggested by Michael Laugesen to counter environmental criticism by circulating alternative data that downplay the climate impact of Greenlandic oil: although she initially resists, rejecting what she calls *“pseudo-science”*, her subsequent insistence on approving the plan (*“I want a concrete plan and I need to approve everything”* [Ep. 06]) frames crisis leadership as a space of constrained choice, where maintaining sovereignty requires proximity to ethically dubious actions.

This transformation is repeatedly remarked within the narrative itself, most notably through the voice of Bent Sør, Nyborg’s mentor and moral anchor. His accusation – *“You’re beginning to talk like Signe Kragh. Even when you’re talking to the media”* [Ep. 07] – explicitly links Nyborg’s crisis discourse to a loss of distinctiveness and integrity. Nyborg’s response, deflecting criticism by invoking Bent’s dementia, further underscores the extent to which crisis pressure erodes relational boundaries and ethical restraint.

This trajectory culminates in Greenland, where Nyborg confronts the cost of the compromises she has made during a conversation with a local whaler, explicitly taking responsibility for the geopolitical consequences of her choices. When asked what she ultimately gained from allowing Chinese involvement in the Greenlandic issue, her answer – *“Power”* [Ep. 08] – frames the concept of power itself not as a means to higher ends, but as both the aim and the remainder of prolonged crisis management.

However, the series does not frame this moment as a definitive moral collapse; instead, it opens a space for redemption and reorientation in the final part of the season, where Nyborg's decisions are shaped by an explicit crisis of recognition. At the party congress, her long-time mentor Bent Sør publicly declares that he no longer recognizes her as a "true person" [Ep. 08]: faced with this disavowal, and rejecting the cynical advice to exploit Bent's mental condition for political advantage, Nyborg chooses to reverse her position on Greenlandic oil and to step down from party leadership. Her withdrawal is narrated not as defeat, but as a performative act and a way of reclaiming recognition as a "true person", rather than merely as an instrument of power.

Gender and ageing, between personal crises and leadership test

Following the analysis of the crisis as a public performance, this second analytical step examines how gender and ageing shape leadership legitimacy, focusing on the conditions under which Nyborg's leadership is judged as credible, resilient or fragile when crises intensify scrutiny and accelerate evaluation. By examining Nyborg's self-presentation, her interactions with younger political actors, and the progressive visibility of her ageing body, this section shows how legitimacy is negotiated across institutional, relational and embodied registers, with gender and ageing emerging as intersecting dimensions through which leadership is tested and challenged, and at times reframed as a form of crisis in itself.

a) Age, experience and the "old-fashioned" model of democracy

The fourth season of *Borgen* explicitly situates the character of Birgitte Nyborg within a temporal register marked by both *continuity* and *return*. Her re-entry into high political office, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, is framed as an expression of her long institutional expertise, built through her past role of Prime Minister. This temporal dimension plays a dual role in the narrative: on the one hand, it grounds Nyborg's authority in maturity, competence and international credibility; on the other hand, it exposes her to evaluations that express a misalignment with contemporary political culture.

From the first perspective, Nyborg's age and professional record are often highlighted as sources of institutional legitimacy. Early in the season, this is made explicit when the U.S. Ambassador informally encourages her to consider a candidacy as UN Secretary-General: "*the time has come for someone who is both European and a woman to hold this position. Given your experience as Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Relations, you are the ideal candidate*" [Ep. 02]. Experience here emerges as a symbolic capital, conferring her authority beyond the national context, and stressing her role as a stateswoman whose leadership comes from institutional continuity.

At the same time, the series makes clear how this same experience becomes narratively fragile. One of the clearest expressions of Nyborg's position comes when she describes herself as "*old-fashioned when it comes to democracy*" [Ep. 01]. The line shows her dual positioning: she defends her attachment to a democratic model grounded in formal representation, while also acknowledging how this position risks being perceived as outdated ("old-fashioned") and as belonging to a former era.

This tension is further emphasized through Nyborg's contrast with the younger Prime Minister, Signe Kragh, whom she openly criticizes as "*a perfect example of someone who came into power much too early*" [Ep. 03]. Here, Nyborg asserts the authority of age as a positive resource, highlighting the added value of experience against the risks of immature leadership. However, by staging this opposition, the series also makes visible a broader generational opposition in which authority grounded in experience risks being reinterpreted as a resistance to change, thus dramatizing the paradox identified in ageing studies: experience is both a legitimizing resource and a marker of decline (Woodward, 1999).

This paradox becomes particularly visible in the domain of political communication, where age and experience intersect with changing media logics. Nyborg's reluctance to rely on spin doctors and communication consultants ("*I'm doing fine without a spin doctor. And it shows my different view on self-promotion compared to other politicians*" [Ep. 03]) is progressively reframed as a failure to adapt, contrasted with the effectiveness of the Prime Minister's more engaging communication on social media. Within the narrative, Nyborg's resistance against contemporary media practices is progressively emphasized – "*I absolutely hate seeing politicians using their private lives to market themselves*" [Ep. 05]. However, her strong reluctance is quickly reframed as incompetence in the interaction with Michael Laugesen who criticizes Nyborg's direct management of her social media profiles, dismissing them as ineffective and outdated, and pointing to Signe Kragh as "*a goddamn pro*" at digital storytelling: "*Yours is 12 years old. Cooler and younger things keep happening*" [Ep. 05].

b) Female leadership, between solidarity and symbolic alignment

The tension between experience and obsolescence outlined above finds a further articulation in the representation of different models of female leadership. The series places Nyborg's later-life leadership alongside that of the younger Prime Minister, Signe Kragh, staging a comparison between two women occupying the highest levels of political authority. While generational differences are central to this contrast, the narrative also uses their relationship to explore the ambivalence of female solidarity in contemporary politics.

This tension is symbolically condensed in the hashtag repeatedly used by Kragh to brand her leadership on social media: "*The Future is Female*". By contrast, Nyborg initially positions herself at a distance from this form of symbolic feminism; commenting on a magazine cover portraying both leaders under that slogan, she expresses her discomfort

with a form of leadership storytelling that turns gender into a branding divide (“*So I’m officially part of the brand now*” [Ep. 01]).

Over the season, however, this stance becomes more ambivalent as Nyborg is gradually encouraged to adapt to contemporary media practices, partially recalibrating her position towards the Prime Minister communicative model. This shift culminates when Kragh appoints her as Deputy Prime Minister, a moment publicly marked by both leader through an Instagram post featuring exactly the hashtag *#thefutureisfemale*. When Nyborg’s advisor notes the irony of adopting a slogan previously criticized, her remark (“*I thought Signe deserved that. It means too much for her*” [Ep. 07]) frames that choice as an act of accommodation – rather than a genuine endorsement – highlighting the ambivalent nature of female solidarity, which emerges more as a normative expectation rather than a spontaneous alliance.

This ambivalence is also explicitly voiced earlier in the season, when Nyborg reflects on working under a younger woman and invokes Madeleine Albright’s well-known dictum that “*there’s a special place in hell for women who don’t help each other*” [Ep. 02]. This expression makes clear that, on the one hand, visible alignment between women in power can amplify their collective presence and symbolic legitimacy; on the other hand, it risks being absorbed into the promotional logics of pop politics (van Zoonen, 2006; Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009), turning gendered alliances into a communicative performance.

c) Menopause, emotional labour and the public body of leadership

Building on the generational and communicative tensions outlined above, the narrative further tests the resilience of Nyborg’s public leadership persona through the embodied dimension of female ageing, represented by menopause (Merrill, 2019; Waade & Leyda, 2022). Nyborg’s menopausal symptoms are introduced early in the season [Ep. 01], she has become more upset and emotional, she has difficulties in sleeping, she is suddenly sweating, she forgets, and she has difficulty in navigation in social and professional context. The menopause conditions are progressively made legible through a series of everyday situations in which she struggles to balance the demands of public office with the effort required to regulate her body, emotions and moods. During a medical examination, after receiving confirmation of her entry into menopause, she attempts to manage the process by asking for medication, only to have her request denied due to her previous breast cancer treatment. The doctor’s sharp remark – “*You can’t control nature*” [Ep. 03] – marks a symbolic limit to bodily self-regulation, contrasting with the normative expectation that political leaders should appear stable and fully in control.

This perceived loss of control indeed extends beyond the private sphere and becomes also a matter of public presentation: before televised appearances, Nyborg anxiously asks for anti-sweat powder [Ep. 02], a seemingly minor gesture that nonetheless shows the gendered labour required to prevent bodily signs of ageing from becoming publicly visible.

The series further reinforces the gendered asymmetry of ageing by juxtaposing Nyborg's experience with representation of male ageing. In a family exchange, her son Magnus remarks that his sister's eventual pregnancy would make Nyborg "*a grandma*", while their father – waiting for a child with a much younger partner – would become "*a dad and a granddad at the same time*" [Ep. 02]: a contrast which implicitly reproduces the double standard of ageing (Sontag, 1972).

Embodied ageing is also closely linked to emotional regulation within her professional environment: as crises intensify over the season, her emotional register becomes sharper, particularly in interactions with staff and colleagues. Her secretary repeatedly urges her to moderate her tone, and Nyborg herself acknowledges this loss of composure, jokingly asking her team: "*Could we agree that if I go [crazy], you'll let me know, okay?*" [Ep. 04]. This framing is further reinforced by an exchange among her advisors, who explicitly discuss how and when to communicate difficult information. One suggests postponing bad news, describing the decision as "*just an objective assessment of her mood*", while another admits reluctance to confront her, noting that "*the right moment rarely comes*" [Ep. 06]. In these scenes, Nyborg's emotional state becomes an organizational variable, shaping internal communication strategies and revealing how ageing effects intersect with everyday leadership practices.

End of story: from the "glass cliff" to the "ice floe"

One of the central contributions of *Borgen - Power & Glory* lies in its construction of crisis not as a sequence of isolated events, but as a cumulative condition in which personal and societal dimensions are deeply intertwined, emphasizing the leadership role as a contested public performance. In this sense, Nyborg's leadership unfolds within a scenario of *permanent* or *cascade crisis* that closely resembles the one characterising contemporary society: geopolitical tensions surrounding Greenland's oil resources, internal party conflicts and domestic pressures interact and contaminate one another, progressively eroding the boundaries between public and private spheres. This dynamic is narratively reinforced by the series' triple plot structure: the narrative plot, societal plot and the spectacular landscape plot.

Nyborg tries hard to navigate and manage the different crises, but without further success. She fails to help the Greenlandic people who she as a Minister should protect, she also fails when it comes to protecting the Greenlandic nature and climate by deciding to start an oil industry in the country in collaboration with China. Her son tries to explain to her that she is making a big mistake, but she cannot hear, and she cannot see. Her work has become her life, leaving minimal time and energy to her private life and family.

The final blow to Nyborg's legitimacy arrives not through policy but through the judgement of those closest to her, namely her long-time mentor Bent Sør who publicly declares that he no longer recognizes her as a "true person" highlighting how admiration for Nyborg's integrity has been replaced by fear and estrangement. Once that narrative collapses, even loyal allies

retreat, sealing the symbolic decline of a leader whose authority can no longer be credibly performed. Even the amazing white and blue Greenlandic landscapes, the icebergs and the arctic seascapes include irony and tragedies: the ice is melting, and Nyborg is making the climate crisis worse by initiating oil industry.

Within this complex context, Nyborg's crisis leadership is strongly shaped by a dominant *sovereign* style: she claims ownership over crises, centralising decision-making particularly in the early phases of the Greenland crisis, as part of an attempt to reassert authority in her renewed role as Minister of Foreign Affairs. While initially reinforcing her political visibility, the series also highlights the limits of this approach making them clear in marginalizing and, at times, reversing the *facilitator* dimension of leadership. Indeed, rather than removing obstacles, Nyborg's leadership choices often generate new frictions, intensifying conflicts across institutional, media and familial arenas; as a result, crises are not progressively resolved but further complexified, producing a leadership position characterised by increasing isolation and delegitimisation. A similar pattern also emerges in respect to the *symbolic* dimension of leadership: as personal and societal crises converge, Nyborg struggles to function as a unifying figure capable of embodying shared values and collective orientation; instead, she becomes an increasingly polarising presence, whose leadership is questioned not only politically, but also morally and relationally.

Crucially, Nyborg's leadership is not evaluated only in terms of institutional competence, but is constantly filtered through gender- and age-related expectations, which become particularly salient under crisis conditions. With regard to gender, these expectations intersect, on the one hand, with Nyborg's maternal role and, on the other, with the persistent comparison with the younger Prime Minister, where symbolic solidarity between women in power coexists with differentiated female leadership styles. This tension is further intensified by the explicit narrative visibility of Nyborg's ageing body, particularly in relation to menopause, which introduces a bodily dimension of vulnerability that functions both as a "life crisis" in itself and as a challenge to normative expectations of emotional stability and self-control in political leadership.

Building on the dynamics outlined above, *Borgen - Power & Glory* articulates established gendered frameworks of leadership such as the glass ceiling and the glass cliff in a more complex way. Nyborg does not encounter a *glass ceiling*, as she has already reached the highest levels of political power. In this sense, she represents a positive model of female leadership that has overcome the structural barriers traditionally limiting women's access to top political positions; this is further confirmed by the recognition of her competence within the narrative, most notably when she is informally encouraged to consider a future candidacy as UN Secretary-General, and later when the series hints at her possible political trajectory within European institutions.

At the same time, Nyborg's trajectory does not fully align with the *glass cliff* model. While the concept of the glass cliff is commonly used to describe the appointment of women to leadership positions in moments of crisis characterised by a high risk of failure (often framed as gestures of inclusion) (Ryan et al., 2015), Nyborg is not strategically placed in charge of a crisis created by others. Instead, the series shows a different configuration of risk and

exposure, in which leadership vulnerability is progressively produced through the active claim of crisis ownership, as well as through the ambivalent and morally ambiguous choices she makes as a leader, both in the public and private spheres, which increasingly isolate her. This dynamic is explicitly condensed in the metaphor articulated within the narrative itself: being “alone on an ice floe”.

We therefore suggest a shift from the “glass cliff” to the “ice floe” as a more appropriate interpretative framework. Unlike the sudden fall implied by the glass cliff, the ice floe evokes gradual erosion, instability and isolation, recalling the slow fragmentation of ice masses under changing environmental conditions. Across the season, this erosion operates on multiple levels: *politically*, Nyborg’s authority is progressively delegitimised by her repeated shifts in position in the management of the Arctic crisis, which place her at odds with party lines and electoral commitments; *relationally*, her leadership style and increasingly detached attitudes contribute to the breakdown of trust with colleagues, party members and family; *morally*, prolonged crisis management leads to growing compromise, marking a clear shift from the transparent leader of earlier seasons in favour of a darker figure willing to engage in ethically questionable choices. Finally, from a bodily and emotional perspective, this process is mirrored in the visible stress placed on Nyborg’s ageing body and affective regulation, further destabilising her precarious stability on the floe.

In analytical terms, the “ice floe” can thus be understood as a form of leadership trajectory structured around three interrelated dimensions: 1) the accumulation of crises over time; 2) the progressive erosion of legitimacy (across political, relational and symbolic domains); and 3) the increasing isolation of the leader as a result of sustained visibility and centralised crisis ownership. While derived from the specific Nordic Noir context of *Borgen* and symbolically grounded in the Arctic and Greenlandic crisis imagery that permeates the fourth season of the series, the “ice floe” metaphor may be read both as reflecting broader genre conventions – where protagonists are often characterised by isolation and moral complexity, as in the cases of Sara Lund in *The Killing* (Hansen & Waade, 2017, p.169) or Saga Norén in *The Bridge* (McCabe, 2026) – and as an interpretative framework for analysing crisis leadership in serial narratives and beyond. Future research could further test the analytical potential of this framework across a wider range of narratives, particularly in political and institutional dramas that foreground long-term crisis management, as well as in narratives centred on “difficult women” (Pinedo, 2021), whose authority is gradually destabilised through the interplay of public responsibility and private vulnerability.

Building on these broader implications, the article shows how the representation of female leadership partly reflects socially embedded expectations, while also departing from traditional readings that frame women’s leadership primarily in terms of structural constraints. From this perspective, and in line with the acknowledge key role of serial drama to operate simultaneously as a mirror and a shaper of social reality, a relevant direction for future research would be to explore how these narrative configurations are perceived and negotiated by audiences and female leaders, and to what extent a series – that has already proven prophetic in relation to contemporary geopolitical tensions surrounding Greenland –

contributes to processes of identification, recognition, and understanding of female leadership in an era of permanent crisis.

Biographical Notes

Paola De Rosa is an Assistant Professor in Sociology of Cultural and Communication Processes at Link Campus University of Rome, where she teaches Crisis Communication and Corporate & Institutional Communication. Her research focuses on crisis communication, the analysis of media representations and their effects on audiences, with a focus on gender issues and female empowerment. She took part in the activities of the European project GEMINI-Gender Equality through Media Investigation and New training Insights (CERV-2022-GE).

Anne Marit Risum Waade is Professor in Global Media Industries at Aarhus University. Her research interests include Nordic noir, Danish television drama, location studies, film tourism, place branding, transnational television, gender and sustainability in the screen industry. Waade has attracted national and international funding, been heading large scale research projects and networks, and published extensively, including *Locating Nordic noir* (2017), *Danish Television Drama* (2021), and *Screening Greenland in Borgen: Power & Glory* (2023).

References

- Alexander, D., & Andersen, K. (1993). Gender as a factor in the attribution of leadership traits. *Political Research Quarterly*, 46(3), 527–545. <https://doi.org/10.2307/448946>
- Allwood, G. (2020). Gender equality in European Union development policy in times of crisis. *Political Studies Review*, 18(3), 329–345. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929919863224>
- Ansell, C., Boin, A., & 't Hart, P. (2014). Political leadership in times of crisis. In R. A. Rhodes & P. 't Hart (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political leadership* (pp. 418–434). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199653881.013.035>
- Badley, L., Nestingen, A., & Seppälä, J. (Eds.). (2020). *Nordic noir, adaptation, appropriation*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38658-0>
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2005). *Transformational leadership*. Psychology Press.
- Baym, G. (2017). Journalism and the hybrid condition: Long-form television drama at the intersections of news and narrative. *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*, 18(1), 11–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916657521>
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Doubleday.
- Boin, A., 't Hart, P., Stern, E., & Sundelius, B. (2017). *The politics of crisis management: Public leadership under pressure*. Cambridge University Press.

- Bruckmüller, S., & Branscombe, N. R. (2010). The glass cliff: When and why women are selected as leaders in crisis contexts. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 49(3), 433–451. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466609X466594>
- Carlsson, I., & Little, T. (2025, January 24). ‘Borgen’ creator says fiction challenged by Trump’s Greenland gambit. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/borgen-creator-says-fiction-challenged-by-trumps-greenland-gambit-2025-01-24/>
- Colombo, F. (2025). *Lezione sulla cultura popolare*. Vita e Pensiero.
- Coombs, W. T. (2010). Crisis and allied fields. In W. T. Coombs & S. J. Holladay (Eds.), *The handbook of crisis communication*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Corner, J., & Richardson, K. (2008). Political culture and television fiction: *The Amazing Mrs Pritchard*. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 11(4), 387–403. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549408094979>
- De Rosa, P., Mandelli, E., & Re, V. (Eds.). (2021). *Aging girls: Identità femminile, sessualità e invecchiamento nella cultura mediale italiana*. Meltemi.
- Desai, M. (2010). *Hope in hard times: Women’s empowerment and human development* (Human Development Reports Research Paper No. 14). United Nations Development Programme. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2351509>
- Di Sarcina, F. (Ed.). (2014). *Cultura di genere e politiche di pari opportunità: Il gender mainstreaming alla prova tra UE e Mediterraneo*. Il Mulino.
- Dunleavy, T. (2017). *Complex serial drama and multiplatform television*. Routledge.
- Ferreri, E. (2011). Identity and diversity today. In P. Palmeri (Ed.), *Understanding diversity in development process* (pp. 51–70). Nuova Cultura.
- Ferreri, E. (2013). La ‘crisi’ al tempo della crisi: Soggetti, strutture, istituzioni. *Rivista Trimestrale di Scienza dell’Amministrazione*, 3, 129–139. <https://doi.org/10.3280/SA2013-00300>
- Gjelsvik, A., & Schubart, R. (2016). *Women of ice and fire: Gender, Game of Thrones and multiple media engagements*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Grønlund, A., & Redvall, E. N. (2022). *Borgen is back! This time with an arctic arena and also targeting international audiences*. *CST Online*. <https://cstonline.net/borgen-is-back-this-time-with-an-arctic-arena-and-also-targeting-international-audiences-by-anders-gronlund-and-eva-novrup-redvall/>
- Grønlund, A., & Waade, A. M. R. (2024). Screening Greenland in *Borgen—Power & Glory*: The on- and off-screen contestedness of Arctic landscapes and locations. *Critical Studies in Television*, 19(3), 352–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17496020241258709>
- Hannah, S. T., Lester, P. B., & Vogelgesang, G. R. (2005). Moral leadership: Explicating the moral component of authentic leadership. In W. L. Gardner, B. J. Avolio, & F. O. Walumbwa (Eds.), *Authentic leadership theory and practice: Origins, effects, and development* (Monographs in Leadership and Management, Vol. 3, pp. 43–81). Elsevier.
- Hansen, K. T., & Waade, A. M. (2017). *Locating Nordic noir: From Beck to The Bridge*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-59815-4>

- Hohenstein, S., & Thalmann, K. (2019). Difficult women: Changing representations of female characters in contemporary television series. *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 67(2), 109–129. <https://doi.org/10.1515/zaa-2019-0012>
- Hymowitz, C., & Schellhardt, T. D. (1986). The glass ceiling: Why women can't seem to break the invisible barrier that blocks them from top jobs. *The Wall Street Journal*.
- Ikmal, N. M., Indriastuti, I., & Suprayoga, S. (2022). Gender equality and women's empowerment: Women's participation in era 4.0. In *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Democracy and Social Transformation*. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.15-9-2021.2315556>
- Iszatt-White, M., & Saunders, C. (2020). *Leadership*. Oxford University Press.
- Jensen, P. M., & Jacobsen, U. C. (Eds.). (2020). *The global audiences of Danish television drama*. Nordicom.
- Johnson, C., & Williams, B. (2020). Gender and political leadership in a time of COVID. *Politics & Gender*, 16(4), 943–950. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X2000029X>
- Kääpä, P., & Vaughan, H. (Eds.). (2022). *Film and television production in the age of climate crisis: Towards a greener screen*. Springer Nature.
- Keegan, J. (2002). *Winston Churchill*. Penguin Books.
- Klenke, K. (2004). *Women and leadership: A contextual perspective*. Springer.
- Lawes, R. (2022, May 27). Rebuilding *Borgen*. *Drama Quarterly*. <https://dramaquarterly.com/rebuilding-borgen/>
- Lorenzen, A. (n.d.). The former Danish energy and climate minister behind the plot for *Borgen* – Real life overtakes fiction. *Discover CleanTech*. Retrieved February 3, 2026, from <https://discovercleantech.com/the-former-danish-energy-and-climate-minister-behind-the-plot-for-borgen-real-life-overtakes-fiction/>
- Mazzoleni, G., & Sfardini, A. (2009). *La politica pop: Da Porta a Porta all'Isola dei Famosi*. Il Mulino.
- McCabe, J. (2020). Why we fell for *Borgen*. In A. M. Waade, P. M. Jensen, & E. N. Redvall (Eds.), *Danish television drama: Global lessons from a small nation* (pp. 43–62). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-40798-8_3
- McCabe, J. (2026). *Disconnected TV heroines, global femininities*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- McKeon, L. (2021). *Women of the pandemic: Stories from the frontlines of COVID-19*. McClelland & Stewart.
- McLean, H., & Ewart, J. (2020). *Political leadership in disaster and crisis communication and management: International perspectives and practices*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Merrill, D. M. (2019). *Mastering menopause: Women's voices on taking charge of the change*. Praeger.
- Mittell, J. (2006). Narrative complexity in contemporary American television. *The Velvet Light Trap*, 58, 29–40. <https://doi.org/10.1353/vlt.2006.0032>
- Mittell, J. (2015). *Complex TV: The poetics of contemporary television storytelling*. NYU Press.
- Naumann, S. (2025). *The politics of serial television fiction: Structural developments, narrative themes, and the nonlinear turn*. transcript Verlag.

- Nielsen, J. I. (2024). Netflix and *Borgen*: A match made in...? In T. Dunleavy & E. Weissmann (Eds.), *TV drama in the multiplatform era* (pp. 57–79). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35585-1_3
- O'Brien, D. Z., & Piscopo, J. M. (2023). Gender and political representation in times of crisis. *Politics & Gender*, 19(3), 891–899. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X22000228>
- Pinedo, I. (2021). *Difficult women on television drama: The gender politics of complex women in serial narratives*. Routledge.
- Powell, G. N. (1999). Reflections on the glass ceiling: Recent trends and future prospects. In G. N. Powell (Ed.), *Handbook of gender and work*. Sage.
- Powell, G. N., & Butterfield, D. A. (2015). The glass ceiling: What have we learned 20 years on? *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*, 2(4), 306–326. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOEPP-09-2015-0032>
- Redvall, E. N. (2013). *Writing and producing television drama in Denmark: From The Kingdom to The Killing*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Reitter, P., & Wellmon, C. (2021). *Permanent crisis: The humanities in a disenchanted age*. University of Chicago Press.
- Richardson, A., & Loubier, C. (2008). Intersectionality and leadership. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, 3(2), 142–161.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Sage.
- Ryan, M. K., & Haslam, S. A. (2005). The glass cliff: Evidence that women are over-represented in precarious leadership positions. *British Journal of Management*, 16(2), 81–90. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2005.00433.x>
- Ryan, M. K., & Haslam, S. A. (2007). The glass cliff: Exploring the dynamics surrounding the appointment of women to precarious leadership positions. *The Academy of Management Review*, 32(2), 549–572. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2007.24351856>
- Ryan, M. K., Haslam, S. A., Morgenroth, T., Rink, F., Stoker, J., & Peters, K. (2016). Getting on top of the glass cliff: Reviewing a decade of evidence, explanations, and impact. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(3), 446–455. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.10.008>
- Saunders, R. (2021). *Geopolitics, Northern Europe, and Nordic noir: What television series tell us about world politics*. Routledge.
- Sontag, S. (1972). The double standard of aging. *Saturday Review of Literature*, 39, 29–38.
- Storey, J. (2018). *Cultural theory and popular culture: An introduction*. Routledge.
- Stougaard-Nielsen, J. (2022). *Borgen* is back – What the series gets right (and wrong) about Danish politics. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/borgen-is-back-what-the-series-gets-right-and-wrong-about-danish-politics-185462>
- Tortajada, I., Dhaenens, F., & Willem, C. (2018). Gendered ageing bodies in popular media culture. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1410313>

- Ulmer, R. R., Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2019). *Effective crisis communication: Moving from crisis to opportunity*. Sage.
- United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. (2022). *Crises of inequality: Shifting power for a new eco-social contract* (UNRISD Flagship Report 2022). United Nations.
- Van Bauwel, S. (2018). Invisible golden girls? Post-feminist discourses and female ageing bodies in contemporary television fiction. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(1), 21–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1409969>
- Van Zoonen, L. (2006). The personal, the political and the popular: A woman's guide to celebrity politics. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9(3), 287–301. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549406066074>
- Waade, A. M. (2020). Arctic noir on screen: *Midnight Sun* (2016–) as a mix of geopolitical criticism and spectacular, mythical landscapes. In L. Badley, A. Nestingen, & J. Seppälä (Eds.), *Nordic noir, adaptation, appropriation* (pp. 37–53). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38658-0_3
- Waade, A. M. R., & Leyda, J. (2022, October 18). Petro-menopause in *Borgen*—*Power & Glory*. *Los Angeles Review of Books*. <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/petro-menopause-in-borgen-power-glory/>
- Ware, B. L., & Linkugel, W. A. (1973). They spoke in defense of themselves: On the generic criticism of apologia. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 59(3), 273–283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335637309383176>
- Wearing, S. (2007). Subjects of rejuvenation: Aging in postfeminist culture. In Y. Tasker & D. Negra (Eds.), *Interrogating postfeminism: Gender and the politics of popular culture* (pp. 277–310). Duke University Press.
- Woodward, K. (1999). *Figuring age: Women, bodies, generations*. Indiana University Press.