Television Drama from Germany

Production, Storytelling and "Quality"

Florian Krauß

OPEN ACCESS

palgrave
macmillan

Palgrave Studies in Screenwriting

Series Editors
Steven Maras, Media and Communication, The University of Western
Australia, Perth, WA, Australia
Eva Novrup Redvall, Department of Media, Cognition and
Communication, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark
Miranda Banks, School of Film and Television, Loyola Marymount
University, Los Angeles, USA

Palgrave Studies in Screenwriting is the first book series committed to the academic study of screenwriting. It seeks to promote an informed and critical account of screenwriting and of the screenplay with a view to understanding more about the diversity of screenwriting practice and the texts produced. The scope of the series encompasses a range of approaches and topics from the creation and recording of the screen idea, to the processes of production, to the structure that form and inform those processes, to the agents and their discourses that create those texts.

Florian Krauß

Television Drama from Germany

Production, Storytelling and "Quality"

palgrave
macmillan

Florian Krauß
Berlin, Berlin, Germany

University of Siegen
Siegen, Germany

Cover illustration: Netflix

If disposing of this product, please recycle the paper.

Acknowledgements

CONTENTS

About the Author

Florian Krauß, Ph.D. lecturer (Privatdozent) at the University of Siegen, Germany. He lad the projects *Reaching Out to Adolescent Audiences: Teen TV Drama from Germany* (funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020/Marie Skłodowska-Curie Grant, 2022–2024) and *"Quality Series" as Discourse and Practice: Self-theorizing in the German TV Series Industry* (funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, 2018–2022). He was a substitute professor in Media Literacy at the Technische Universität Dresden, a lecturer in Media Studies at the University of Siegen and a research associate at the Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Potsdam. Furthermore, he is a co-founder of the Netzwerk für Drehbuchforschung [Network for Screenwriting Research in the German-speaking world] and co-head of the working group Media Industries at Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft [German Society for Media Studies]. He additionally works as a freelance script editor for Bayerischer Rundfunk [Bavarian Broadcasting], a member of the public-service ARD network. In 2011, Krauß completed his PhD thesis on the diasporic reception of Bollywood films in Germany (*Bollyworld Neukölln: MigrantInnen und Hindi-Filme in Deutschland*, published in 2012, UVK Konstanz). He is the co-editor of the special issue "Media Industries" of the German journal *Navigationen* (2018) and of the anthologies *Teen TV* (2020, Springer VS), *Fernsehen und Klassenfragen* (television and class, 2024, Springer VS) and *Drehbuchforschung* (screenwriting research, 2022, Springer VS). Further recent publications on media industry studies,

screenwriting research and German television include articles in *Global Media Journal* (2023), *Illuminace* (2023), *Critical Studies in Television* (2021), *Journal of Popular Television* (2020), *VIEW Journal of European Television History & Culture* (2020), *SERIES, International Journal of TV Serial Narratives* (2018–2019) and *montage AV* (2018). His primary research interests are media industry and production studies, screenwriting research, German television, television series, gender in relation to audiovisual media, Hindi cinema and media literacy.

Personal profile on the University of Siegen website: https://www.uni-siegen.de/phil/medienwissenschaft/personal/lehrende/krauss_florian/?lang=de.

LinkedIn: https://de.linkedin.com/in/florian-krau%C3%9F-18b72547.

Abbreviations

ARD	Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten (Consortium of the Public-Law Broadcasting Institutions)
BR	Bayerischer Rundfunk (Bavarian Broadcasting)
DFF	Deutscher Fernsehfunk (German Television Broadcasting)
DR	Danish Broadcasting Corporation
HR	Hessischer Rundfunk (Hessian Broadcasting)
MDR	Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (Central German Broadcasting)
NDR	Norddeutscher Rundfunk (Northern German Broadcasting)
NRK	Norsk rikskringkasting AS (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation)
ORF	Österreichischer Rundfunk (Austrian Broadcasting)
RBB	Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (Berlin-Brandenburg Broadcasting)
RTL	(from Radio Télévision Luxembourg, a German-language free-to-air television channel owned by RTL Deutschland)
SRF	Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen (Swiss Radio and Television)
SWR	Südwestrundfunk (Southwest Broadcasting)
VDD	Verband Deutscher Drehbuchautoren (Association of German Screenwriters)
WDR	Westdeutscher Rundfunk (West German Broadcasting Cologne)
ZDF	Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (Second German Television)

List of Figures

Introduction

The German-speaking television market is considered the third largest in the world, after the US and China. It has 72 million viewers, 37 million television households and 22 trillion euros in annual revenue (Eichner and Esser 2020, 190). As in other areas of society, a radical transformation has been unfolding across this television market for some years. However, in recent media, television and screenwriting studies, the current changes in the German television industry have been explored in only rudimentary form (see e.g. Eichner 2021; Krauß 2020a). A systematic investigation is needed. Such an analysis—one exploring the transformation processes and the media professionals affected by them—is also relevant and informative for more fundamental perspectives on today's societies. How so? Firstly, the working practices of television and screenwriting professionals are representative of many contemporary working practices in general: these industry workers are organised in project networks (see Sydow and Windeler 2001) and they must constantly confront creativity imperatives in the "creativity dispositif" (Reckwitz 2017, 9) as well as the digitalisation of media forms. Secondly, these practitioners contribute to the production and expansion of cultural formats with a special narrative, aesthetic, creative, ludic and moral-ethical quality, as Andreas Reckwitz (2018, 227; 2020, 146) attests is common among today's cultural objects. Amid a digital media environment, the television industry and its personnel strive for aesthetic "singular goods […] that contain the

1

promise of something authentic and non-interchangeable" (Reckwitz 2020, 158)—and, importantly, that attract viewers' attention. The notion of "quality" is a central motif in this desire and an ever-present topic in the associated industry debates.

1.1   Previously On …

"Quality. That was my keyword in the spring of 2004. We would sift through and evaluate all new ideas from this point of view". In the anecdotal retrospective *Die TV-Falle* (*The TV Trap*) on his time as managing director of the German private broadcaster Sat.1, Roger Schawinski (2006, 96, my translation) clearly and repeatedly highlights quality. He talks especially about the impact that US TV dramas have had on the German television landscape. During 2003–2006, the period he worked at Sat.1, US-made series garnered attention in terms of narration arguably because of their quality. These US imports were "better, more cleverly written and more elaborately produced than anything we had to offer from our own kitchen". Schawinski thus asks: "What else could we do but try for a much higher quality than before in our new series?" (2008, 97–98, my translation). Schawinski's view of commercial television in the noughties is certainly subjective, concerned with presenting himself as a champion of "quality" and thus with putting himself—and notions of quality television—in a positive light. However, beyond the familiar self-promotion common to public statements by film and television producers, the example proves that so-called quality TV, mostly associated with US drama serials, was already resonating as an important factor in German television production in the early 2000s.

Schawinski also explains the difficulty of achieving "quality" and the barriers to the realisation of a quality TV serial in Germany. One of Sat.1's own attempts, which he particularly emphasises, was the thriller *Blackout – Die Erinnerung ist tödlich / Blackout – Remembering Is Lethal* (Sat.1, 2006) about a corrupt, drug-addicted policeman who can no longer remember the past. It achieved disastrous ratings for an original fictional series at the time, with a market share of around 6% (Schawinski 2008, 114). This led Sat.1's commissioning editors—and probably the German television industry in general, with its long-standing focus on the purely quantitative aspect of audience figures as a central criterion for success (Eichner 2021, 197)—to come to various conclusions. In particular, there arose convictions that productions could work for a broad audience only

if the protagonists had a clear moral assignment (which was not the case with *Blackout*'s disoriented police-officer-turned-criminal) and that both complex, convoluted narrative structures and overly "dark" content and tonalities should be avoided (Schawinski 2008, 115–116).

Similarly, in the early 2000s, an "optimisation paper" (*Optimierungspapier*) by the public-service broadcasting network ARD—Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten (Consortium of the Public-Law Broadcasting Institutions), had called for as simple a narrative as possible (Bergmann 2012) and an emotive, cheerful-comic direction (Heinz 2012, 299) for prime-time television films. In the following "sweetener debate" (*Süßstoffdebatte*) around 2001 (Volker 2009, 11), television critics vehemently condemned the corresponding narrowed programming at ARD and at the country's other major public broadcaster, ZDF—Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (Second German Television). In this context, critics problematised the increased orientation towards audience ratings measured solely in quantitative terms and identified it as a central cause for quality deficits in German and especially public-service television fiction (see Kammann et al. 2007, 16).

Since the *Süßstoffdebatte* on ARD's and ZDF's allegedly shallow and kitschy fiction and the short-lived quality TV ambitions at the commercial station Sat.1, which along with *Blackout* included the dramedy *Bis in die Spitzen/To the Tips* (2005, based on the British series *Cutting It*, BBC One, 2002–2005), the television landscape in Germany—as in other countries—has undergone considerable structural change and expansion in recent years. This change has been accompanied by a change in the field of so-called quality drama, its writing and its narrative styles.

1.2 The Quality Drama as a Current Industry Discourse: An Introduction

The current "post-network era" (Lotz 2009), with many different programme providers instead of a few broadcasters, has seen an obvious increase in what Amanda D. Lotz (2017) calls "internet-distributed television" in her book *Portals*. It's the same phenomenon that cultural researcher Ramon Lobato (2018, 4) summarises as heterogeneous, "professionally produced content circulated and consumed through websites, online services, platforms, and apps, rather than through broadcast, cable, or satellite system". The transformations in content, aesthetic, reception, distribution and financing associated with online offerings are particularly

visible in those television serials categorised as "quality TV" (Thompson 1996), "high-profile drama" (Redvall 2013, 131), "premium" (Barra and Scaglioni 2021a, 1) or "high-end" (Dunleavy 2009). Such serials are the focus of this study. The term "quality TV (drama)", which is the term I use throughout this book, needs to be critically reflected upon. To a great extent, it is a concept from the US television industry. Particularly, the well-known pay TV provider HBO used "quality TV" as a marketing tool from the 1990s onwards (McCabe and Akass 2007b). From the 2010s at the latest, the Anglicism "quality TV" found its way into German-language media studies (see e.g. Blanchet 2011). Many academic discussions of quality TV have uncritically adopted marketing narratives and have hardly reflected on the elitist and inevitably judgemental tendencies connected to the quality TV concept as well as its economic origins (see e.g. Dasgupta 2012). Amid the great enthusiasm for sophisticated and complex narrative structures in serials whose dramaturgy develops over a sequence of episodes instead of within each individual episode (see e.g. Rothemund 2011), few have noticed that the label "quality TV" originated in the US television economy. In that context, it referred to a particular, difficult-to-reach, wealthy and therefore commercially extremely valuable audience segment (Feuer 2007, 147). The expression "quality TV" was, therefore, initially based on an economic consideration and categorisation of people, which we certainly have to view critically. In this study, I take the term "quality TV (drama)" back to its commercial roots in the television industry. From the perspective of critical media industry studies, I consider it less in terms of particularly "good" programmes that have high aesthetic or content-based value. Rather, I explore quality TV drama as an industry discourse around serials and their narrative styles as well as their production and screenwriting cultures. And instead of contemporary US television since the 1980s—which the majority of especially German-speaking analyses of quality TV have so far examined in a one-sided way (e.g. Schlütz 2016)—I take a look at the television (drama) landscape in Germany. In this specific context, the motif of the quality series has played a major role for several years, starting with the previously mentioned Sat.1 production *Blackout – Die Erinnerung ist tödlich* from 2006 and up to the current thriller drama *Blackout* (2021), which, despite its shared name, is rather about the momentous effects of a Europe-wide power blackout. In 2023, this serial found its way into Sat.1's linear programme, but the primary distributor and client is now Joyn Plus+, a subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) service by

ProSiebenSat.1 Media (in temporary cooperation with the US media company Discovery). Joyn Plus+ is one of the many current "internet-distributed television services" (Lotz et al. 2018, 42) in the diversified and digitalised German television market.

How have television professionals in Germany negotiated the so-called quality TV drama from 2015 to the present? The central hypothesis is that practitioners have adapted quality TV, most strongly associated with serial drama from the US, into a national context and, at the same time, through this concept have dealt with recent broader transformations of television and the local television industry. Alongside changes in the content and form of TV series, transformations in production practices, structures and organisations play an important role for producers of TV. Both aspects—the text and the production—are closely connected in their discourse. Again and again, they argue that modes and cultures of production, including screenwriting, contribute to the pre-structuring and shaping of televisual texts.

Following this basic assumption, for a long-time television professionals in Germany focused on processes that they considered to be the cause of the perceived quality deficit in German television fiction, and especially serial drama (see e.g. DJ Frederiksson [Anonymous] 2014). For years, then, their discourse on fictional quality TV was primarily problem-oriented—with accusations and complaints. Practitioners criticised a lack of willingness in German television fiction to innovate and take risks. Often, they decried a lack of originality, surprise and novelty, characteristics repeatedly called for in the "creativity dispositif" (Reckwitz 2017, 9) of current (Western) society, which they linked to a potential "international appeal" (Eichner 2021, 191) of German TV fiction. Other countries—first and foremost the US and Denmark, which made a name for itself beyond Scandinavia in the 2010s with "Nordic noir" drama (e.g. Waade, Redvall and Jensen 2020)—were considered by television producers to be more courageous and progressive in terms of production methods and content (e.g. Zarges 2015a). Similar views and diagnoses of a lack of German quality drama also burgeoned in television criticism and the feature pages of German newspapers, where serial quality TV was intensively negotiated into the 2010s (Koepsel 2015). In 2013, for example, the TV critics Georg Diez and Thomas Hüetlin (2013, 131, my translation) asked in the weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel*: "Why are the Germans, of all people in the world, sleeping through TV's future?" Meanwhile in the US and Scandinavia, according to Diez and Hüetlin,

dramas such as *Homeland* (Showtime, 2011–2020) and *Borgen* (DR1, 2010–2013; Netflix/DR, 2022) had "revolutionised" television. Such voices had an impact on the television and film industry in Germany.

The problem-oriented, negative voices that long dominated the discourse on German quality drama have been joined by increasingly positive ones, which have predicted—or at least hoped for—a "new German series wave" (Lückerath 2014, my translation) or "German TV renaissance" (Hughes 2016). The year 2015, which marks the beginning of this production study, can be considered a "pivot point for quality drama" (Eichner 2021, 205) in German television, after which both perceptions of local series and the production landscape and its output changed considerably. Increasingly, pay TV broadcasters also began to commission German-language fiction, and *Deutschland 83* (RTL, 2015) became the first German TV series to run on a US channel, albeit only on the niche pay channel SundanceTV. At least for "high-end" miniseries such as *Deutschland 83* and its sequels, *Deutschland 86* and *Deutschland 89* (Amazon Prime Video, 2018/2020), transnational distribution has been increasingly pursued since then. Opportunities for transnational distribution have also multiplied due to online distribution and the content demands of the numerous streaming platforms worldwide. In view of foreign sales, increased investment in "high-end" dramas from Germany and the diversification of commissioners and distributors, some observers have detected a "gold rush mood" in the German television and film industry (e.g. Lückerath 2019). This very positive market sentiment has been relativised by the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting production restrictions and economic gloom (Krauß 2023a), as well as by subsequent rising energy costs and high inflation (see Gangloff 2022). The announcement by Sky Deutschland in the summer of 2023 that it would no longer commission fictional productions marked a turning point (see Krei 2023b), as the increasing reluctance of pay TV and SVoD companies to fund expensive serials, as well as their lack of reliability for practitioners and production companies, became apparent. However, the way things stand at the moment (in 2024), the volume of drama productions and variety of commissioners is still very high in Germany.

Despite many platforms' and pay TV operators' reluctance to invest in drama productions as quickly and as comprehensively as they did a few years ago, serial drama is often still considered to be both artistically promising and prestigious, as well as financially more lucrative, than the single feature film. This is because for many years it has been relatively

easy for producers to find commissioners and financiers, and likely also audiences. The shift in values in favour of the serial thus has been evident not only in the feature-page debates but also in economic terms. Christopher Meir (2019) has both economic and artistic perspectives in mind when he describes the current European television sector as the "leading industry in terms of prestige and earnings power" (213): "If there was once a fear that television's involvement in film financing would dampen the artistry of cineastes, now television is becoming the medium that is most associated with artistic freedom and ample financial resources" (7). This perspective on artistic content and economic potential is clearly reflected in the industry discourse on the German quality drama under investigation. In my study, I therefore examine questions of economics as well as those of aesthetic and creativity, following the correspondingly broad perspective of media industry studies (e.g. Herbert et al. 2020). The particular focus is on screenwriting, which has likewise been accentuated in media, academic and industry discussions on quality TV drama (e.g. Jost 2021, 130) and is a field that poses artistic-creative as well as economic and organisational challenges in existing production structures.

1.3   Screenwriting in Focus

The focus on the processes and actors of screenwriting is justified, in the first, for reasons of research economics, as it is important to limit the field under investigation. Above all, though, I am trying to do justice to the special significance that academics (e.g. Davies 2007) as well as members of the industry in Germany have attributed to this phase as a foundational stone. "Now is the hour of the writers, the storytellers", emphasised, for example, the well-known screenwriter Annette Hess (2019) with regard to the changing German television industry. The practitioners whose discourses I examine in this study have repeatedly argued that the serials included under quality TV, with their cross-episode, nested storylines, require particularly intensive and elaborate development work—much more than is afforded by the well-rehearsed development methods for procedurals, with one case per episode, which dominated large swaths of German TV fiction for years. However, screenwriting is not only a frequent subject but also a central context of the industry discourse on quality drama in Germany: the conversations around script development include discussion of how quality drama can be generated. In

general, questions of quality and value always permeate the early phase of screenwriting and lead to foundational decisions.

Last but not least, I have made script development the focus of my study because it is precisely in this phase that current transformations of television and its modes of production manifest themselves. "[I]t is an interesting time for studying television writing since the status, production and distribution of television are changing so fast, with screenwriters and the process of screenwriting being important elements of this change", Eva Novrup Redvall and John R. Cook (2015, 131–132) point out, noting that television is increasingly perceived as the "medium of the writer, the writer-producer or the showrunner". There are also clear signs of the heightened importance and agency of screenwriters in Germany—such as the widely followed workers' initiative Kontrakt '18 (Zahn 2018), through which screenwriters demanded more say in filmmaking processes and which was mentioned in several responses to my surveys. However, this book refrains from a naive "auteur" approach, which characterises some studies on television series (e.g. Dreher 2010), by reflecting that the emphasis on individual writers and their supposed creative freedom has served as branding and marketing for providers such as Netflix and HBO (see Wayne 2018, 729) and by explicitly addressing economic aspects and the collaborative nature of screenwriting.

This study examines script development and the industry discourse on the state and quality of German TV drama in relation to the roles, but also the perspectives, of the different, interconnected actors involved, or potentially involved, in the screenwriting process: screenwriters, producers, commissioning editors and directors. The analysis's central bases are participant observation at industry workshops on producing TV series and about 40 interviews with practitioners involved in TV fiction production. These "exclusive informants" (Bruun 2016, 139) were primarily selected via 13 case studies, ranging from expensive prestige projects such as *Babylon Berlin* (ARD/Sky Deutschland, 2017–) to low-budget and up-and-coming productions such as the political satire *Eichwald, MdB* (ZDF, 2014–2019) and the transmedia teen drama *DRUCK/SKAM Germany* (Funk/ZDF, 2018–).[1] The case studies cover very different approaches to the quality drama and its various production contexts, screenwriting practices, content and genres. A central goal in the selection of experts was to capture as many facets as possible of the discourse on quality drama, its screenwriting and the transformed television (series) landscape in Germany. Various positions

and perspectives were deliberately taken into account. Attempts to give quality drama greater visibility and prestige in Germany and more space in production reflect, in some respects, the wishes and hopes of numerous television professionals. At the same time, however, quite a few practitioners might perceive such plans and desires in the industry as pressure or even a threat. After all, most in the industry earn their living on productions outside prestige projects such as *Babylon Berlin*, whose high budget in turn requires cuts elsewhere. Working on a quality drama can also function as cultural and symbolic capital (see Bourdieu 2010, first 1979), especially for creatives such as screenwriters and directors. In the television and film industry, such symbolic capital is often used to demand a high level of commitment or gloss over problematic working conditions, as shown in multiple production and media industry studies (e.g. Caldwell 2008, 331).

The present book is situated in this field of media industry studies (e.g. Havens, Lotz and Tinic 2009) and in the area of screenwriting research (e.g. Macdonald 2013) and builds on these two (often related) perspectives to analyse the changing production cultures and narrative styles in TV drama in Germany. Internationally, media industry studies and screenwriting research have been extremely productive for some years. However, in German-language media studies and in relation to the German television industry, media industry and screenwriting studies are only gradually becoming more widely practised and discussed (e.g. Krauß and Loist 2018b; Udelhofen et al. 2023; Henschen et al. 2022; Knöhr 2018). A more detailed disciplinary classification in the following section further contours the specific research interest of this volume.

1.4   Media Industry Studies and Screenwriting Research

Media industry studies can hardly be understood as a new discipline in its own right; rather, it is an interdisciplinary research area with diverse characteristics and multiple traditions (see e.g. Powdermaker 1951; Rosten 1941). Paul McDonald (cited in Freeman 2016, 9) has described "media industry studies" as a blanket term for research and teaching that critically examines processes, procedures, structures, policies, mechanisms, professional ideologies and historical developments in the work of media industries. The debate about what exactly constitutes this field is ongoing

(e.g. Holt and Perren 2019, 31). In this study, I follow a broad understanding of an interdisciplinary field dealing with very different facets of media industries, across different media sectors and beyond individual media (Krauß and Loist 2018a, 8). With such a broad view, I avoid premature exclusions and consider works of varying natures relevant to the explored industry discourse on German quality TV and its screenwriting.

With its focus on screenwriting practitioners and processes, the present book could at first glance fall under production studies, which is decidedly oriented towards the production phase. Yet, this study tends to go beyond such a prioritisation. On the one hand, it takes up the crucial assumption of production studies to consider production as a cultural field in its own right (see Caldwell 2008, 14) and as a process in which social, technical and material factors interact (Vonderau 2013, 13), but, on the other, my investigation also follows the broader scope of media industry studies by including the other end of the industrial chain: distribution (see, among others, Lobato and Meese 2018). Distribution is highly relevant in the industry discourse on quality drama explored here, since it is closely interwoven with production in contemporary, digitised television. Today's convergent and digital media environment makes it harder and harder to determine where exactly the production process begins and ends. "When a book may become a movie that becomes a television series that becomes a theme park ride that becomes a video game that becomes a line of toys, production researchers find themselves involved with new sets of issues", noted Horace Newcomb and Amanda Lotz (2002, 77) as early as 2002, several years before the current expansions and transformations of the television drama.

With its focus on script development, my study is specifically located in screenwriting research (e.g. Conor 2014; Batty and Baker 2018) and benefits from its multi-layered approaches to the screenplay and its genesis. For the following analysis of TV drama writing and production in Germany, the model of the "screen idea work group" (e.g. Macdonald 2010, 2013) forms a particularly important basis: this cluster is flexibly located around the development and production of a film or television idea. In television drama, such screen idea work groups usually consist of mostly freelance creatives alongside institutionally integrated actors. In analyses of these practitioners' interplay and division of labour, the boundaries between media industry and screenwriting studies become blurred.

Research on collaborative screenwriting, on the other hand, focuses on the specific nature of the work done in this stage. David Hesmond-halgh (2010, 6) cites this focus as one of the three main areas of media industry studies, with the other two being, according to him, the owner-ship and size of media companies as well as the organisation of production and distribution. All three aspects play a role in this study, albeit to varying degrees. Especially structural–functional variants of the sociology of production, with an interest in the role of the subject within an institu-tion (Hesmondhalgh 2010, 5), led to relevant perspectives and methods for my research. Works on the "project network" as the predominant organisational form in the production of television drama in Germany (e.g. Sydow and Windeler 2001) provided important findings, and thus points of departure, for the analyses of the current television fiction landscape in Germany. In contrast to these organisational-sociological studies, however, my work goes further, firstly by addressing content-related and artistic aspects, with recourse to the screen idea work group, and, secondly, by taking up the critical impetus of production and media industry studies as well as the underlying influence of cultural studies, according to which hierarchies and precarisation are to be taken into account. For this study is not least about such tensions, which arise when practitioners negotiate the production cultures under which quality TV dramas are (not) created.

1.5   Cultural Studies and Television Industry Research

Among the various strands of media industry studies, this book is, of course, located in the television-specific approaches (e.g. Gray and Lotz 2019, 116). Works in this field have successively expanded the concept of television by understanding the television industry as closely related to the film industry and as part of a "multiplatform digital landscape" (Bennett 2016, 124). Amanda Lotz, Ramon Lobato and Julian Thomas (2018, 36) make a corresponding argument in a special issue of *Media Industries* on "internet-distributed television services": "Clearly, there is no singular internet-distributed television 'industry' distinct from estab-lished film and television industries". The fact that established television broadcasters, as they diagnose, make use of various distribution chan-nels, including internet-based ones, and that different productions of television, film and online industries, and even sometimes user-generated

content, are distributed on online platforms, is equally evident in the context of Germany. The complex interweaving and fluid boundaries between these areas, which Lotz, Lobato and Thomas emphasise, become even clearer in Chapter 4 through a detailed look at Germany's hybrid, network-like television fiction landscape.

Especially in the case of television-specific media industry studies, it is instructive to consider the relationship with cultural studies, which is highly interdisciplinary, since numerous important television theories and analyses come from this academic field of British origin (e.g. Hall 2006, first 1973) or have been—in the German context—strongly influenced by it (e.g. Hickethier 1995). Several scholars have emphasised the connection between cultural studies and media industry and production studies. Chris Paterson, David Lee, Anamik Saha and Anna Zoellner (2016b, 8), for example, speak of the "cultural studies of media production" in the preface to their anthology *Advancing Media Production Research.* Another anthology, *Production Studies* (Mayer et al. 2009b), offers the subtitle *Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, and John Thornton Caldwell (2008, 7) states at the beginning of his influential monograph *Production Culture*: "My research in this book can be described as a cultural studies of both industrial film / video theorising (a cognitive and social activity) and production (a cultural practice)".

In central communication models from cultural studies, the level of production was established many years ago: first and foremost, in Stuart Hall's "encoding/decoding" approach (2006, first 1973) and in the later "circuit of culture" model (e.g. Du Gay 1997), which other scholars have repeatedly further developed, and which various researchers from media industry studies (e.g. Banks 2009) have also taken up. Attempts in German-speaking media studies to tie in with such theories and to research media from multiple perspectives also include production as a level of analysis (e.g. Mikos and Prommer 2005). In Knut Hickethier's concept "*Dispositiv Fernsehen*" ("dispositif television"), which has been influential for German-speaking television studies, media institutions—or the "media-industrial complex" (1995, 69, my translation)—form a central element alongside the programme, the image, the viewer's position and the spatial context of television reception. In many studies that refer to such theories, however, the reception and the television programme receive significantly more attention than the production. In

this respect, an analysis focused on the television industry and its actors—
such as the present book—can complement and amend many works of
cultural studies and television studies.

1.6 Production Cultures

Media studies is increasingly foregrounding economic factors through
research streams that focus on media industries. At the same time, scholars
have repeatedly emphasised the particular concern that cultural aspects
should not become lost from view. "[M]oving once and for all beyond
the long-standing 'political economy vs. cultural studies' (or political
economy *and* cultural studies) debates" is how Jennifer Holt and Alisa
Perren (2019, 31, emphasis in original) describe the central intention of
media industry studies, which is also formative for the present book, with
its interest in economic *and* cultural-aesthetic aspects.

Media industry studies differs from the pure media economics research
conducted in economics and communication studies through not only its
consideration of cultural issues but also its interest in individual cases and
its (at least ideally) critical approach (see e.g. Havens et al. 2009, 236).
Instead of merely economic aspects and superordinate structures, media
industry studies is also about individuals' precariousness, employment
relationships and practitioners "below the line" (e.g. Mayer 2011), that is,
those working outside the better-known trades associated with creativity.
In this context, "invisible" (Banks 2009, 91) and "unpaid" labour (e.g.
Siebert and Wilson 2013) as well as inequalities of gender, class, disability,
age and race or ethnicity are also explored (e.g. Conor et al. 2015).
At first glance, the present book, with its focus on screenwriting and
its participants—who are mostly classified as "above the line"—and its
emphasis on the discourse on quality dramas, which is strongly influ-
enced by aesthetic questions, hardly deals with such hierarchies. However,
precarious employment relationships and "invisible labour" (Mayer 2011,
3) can indeed be observed in the different steps of screenwriting. Some
of the practitioners interviewed and observed for this study, such as
dramaturges and commissioning editors, are hardly visible in official
media representations or "publicly disclosed deep texts" (Caldwell 2008,
357). Moreover, in their negotiations regarding quality, television profes-
sionals address not only questions of content and aesthetic but also the
conditions and cultures of production.

In this book, "production culture" refers to a key concept of media industry and production studies that reflects a broad understanding of culture, taken from cultural studies, that includes, for instance, everyday routines (e.g. Du Gay 1997). Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks and John Thornton Caldwell describe their interest in viewing production as culture in this way:

> [W]e are interested in how media producers make culture, and, in the process, make themselves into particular kinds of workers in modern, mediated societies. We want to look up and down the food chains of production hierarchies, to understand how people work through professional organizations and informal networks to form communities of shared practices, languages, and cultural understandings of the world. (2009a, 2)

What this summary suggests—in addition to the interest in informal and marginal areas of production—is a qualitative look at individual media practitioners: those "particular kinds of workers in modern, mediated societies" and, as these scholars describe elsewhere, their "experiences, observations, conversations, and interactions" (Banks et al. 2016a, x). Still, in the opening panel of the Media Industries Conference at King's College London in 2018, participants made calls to analyse micro and macro levels, from individual practitioners and productions to broader industry structures, in tandem (Lotz et al. 2018). The present book remains committed to a qualitative orientation but draws on broader media economic study results to contextualise the findings and describe the television series landscape in Germany. Thus, this book also addresses institutional, bureaucratic and regulatory contexts under which television professionals operate in screenwriting and as they have been addressed by various media industry researchers (e.g. Born 2005). By considering these contexts, my book brings to light fundamental production cultures in German TV fiction production without neglecting the heterogeneity of this local industry. After all, what Caldwell (2008, 36) has stated also applies here: "Production cultures are far too messy, vast, and contested to provide a unified code—to either job aspirants or scholars—for breaching its walls".

Caldwell has been instrumental in shaping contemporary production and media industry studies as well as the term "production culture". Many of his fundamental ideas and concepts are relevant to my work, in particular his framing of media practitioners as critical and interpretative

actors in the making of cultural media products. Caldwell (2008, 5–7) attributes "critical industrial practices" to film and television workers, by which he means interpretative measures that contain a critical dimension despite their embedding in institutional contexts and relationships. In this context, he also questions the common (especially in Germany) strict separation of film theory and practice. The industry and its practitioners, Caldwell argues, continually engage, often informally and in various forms, with issues that are usually considered part of film (and television) studies. He writes:

> This form of embedded theoretical "discussion" in the work world takes place in and through the tools, machines, artifacts, iconographies, working methods, professional rituals, and narratives that film practitioners circulate and enact in film/video trade cultures and subcultures. (26)

In his 2008 monograph *Production Culture*, Caldwell develops the concept of "self-theorising", which usually takes place in informal, and by no means always written, ways and often outside the public sphere (15–26). According to him, the practices of theorising are sometimes so strongly integrated into production departments and contexts that they are perceived much more as "common sense" than as theory—for example, in the conventions and rules for screenwriting and dramaturgy. Dramaturgical rules and issues also shape the industry discourse on German quality drama. In general, this localised discourse displays several of the characteristics that Caldwell attributes to self-theorisation in the film and television industry, such as a one-sided focus on the present and the future as well as personalisation in the talk of media professionals and in production reports, through which the many below-the-line practitioners tend to be forgotten. Following Caldwell, the quality TV drama negotiated in the German industry can be understood as a kind of theory with which its producers abstract and generalise current transformations of the television industry. However, it is not always the case that a theory is actually formed via the negotiations described throughout this book. Oftentimes, it seems more appropriate to speak of an "industrial reflexivity", as Caldwell also calls it in the subtitle of his influential book *Production Culture*.

If we follow Caldwell, what the television industry and its representatives reveal to researchers can be considered a performative production of the industry. This idea is central to the interpretation of the different

materials available to researchers—the "deep texts and rituals" (Caldwell 2008, 347)—and is taken up in Chapter 3 in the section on the study's methodology. Researchers' varying degrees of closeness to industry also need to be reflected in the evaluation of surveys. Caldwell and other media industry scholars have critically addressed such questions of "industry proximity", finding that, on the one hand, locating researchers in the media industry can promote a well-founded analysis and sometimes represents the only possibility to look behind the official organisational charts (Hammett-Jamart et al. 2018, 7). On the other hand, some media industry studies run the risk of focusing too much on an (alleged) "insider position" and naively celebrating this access. The view from the outside can also be instructive.

The present study strives for a balance between an informed, questioning perspective, which is only made possible by a certain knowledge of the industry, and a critical, outside perspective. An analysis of the industry and an exchange with it are in principle productive and perspective expanding, since in addition to the media texts and products, this study also takes into account their genesis and distribution. The corresponding attention to production contexts can stimulate and expand research on quality TV in particular, as textual analyses on such valorised series currently predominate in German-speaking academia. An investigation of the television industry and an exchange with it can also help keep pace with the rapid, ongoing developments in the hybrid television market. This work analyses the specific temporal and local context of German television fiction and thus captures a hitherto insufficiently studied but crucial phase of the current upheaval.

1.7   Temporal and Geographical Context

Digitisation will lead to pluralisation not only in the technological media used but also in how production is organised for TV series in Germany, Jörg Sydow and Arnold Windeler (2004, 3) predicted as early as the first half of the 2000s. Indeed, we have seen the rise of new production companies and programme providers (especially streaming services), and established institutions are also changing their production methods. In this context, transnationally oriented drama serials with German participation are also becoming more prevalent, as Arnold Windeler, Anja Lutz and Carsten Wirth (2001, 120) theorised may happen back in 2001.

This book's goal to explore current TV fiction production in Germany and its transformation is of interest not only because of the resurgence of European co-productions (see Hammett-Jamart 2018) but also because of the size of the market beyond national borders. In the European context, the German television and film industry leads in terms of the number of fictional productions (Fontaine 2017, 11; Fontaine and Pumares 2018, 19). However, many studies on German television in media studies and media economics are now outdated and refer to a television landscape that is completely different from today's (e.g. Zabel 2009; Hickethier 1998). The need for a study like the present one is particularly striking when one considers how other European markets have been studied more closely or systematically, especially the British (e.g. Born 2005, 2003) and the Scandinavian (e.g. Philipsen and Hochscherf 2016). An analysis of the reasons for the comparatively weak state of research on recent television drama from Germany would also certainly be worthwhile. It is conceivable that many researchers, as representatives of an academic milieu with a certain taste, simply had no interest in previous German television drama, which for years was geared towards mass appeal (Eschke and Bohne 2010, 15) and was considered very conservative. In addition, a "national bias"—referring to a more critical and also more emotional look at German series as compared to US ones—may be decisive, as Tanja Weber (2019, 243) suspects might be the case when it comes to the discourse on so-called quality TV in Germany. An exception to the widespread ignorance of German-speaking research on current German television drama is the crime genre (Simon 2023), and especially the film-series hybrid *Tatort/Crime Scene* (ARD/ORF/SRF, 1970–), which is popular among a wide variety of milieus and which has been the subject of several analyses, primarily in terms of content (e.g. Eichner and Waade 2015) and to some extent regarding its production (e.g. Bendix and Hämmerling 2014). *Tatort*, clearly, plays a key role in German TV drama—or is "our quality TV", as producer Ulrike Leibfried (2016) stated. Like her, other practitioners also frequently brought up this show in the interviews.

By focusing on Germany, this book transfers approaches of recent television, media industry and screenwriting studies into a specific national context. This focus is due, on the one hand, to the need for media industry and production studies that relate to contexts other than the Anglo-American one and, on the other hand, to the continuing relevance of the national and the local, which, in addition to television practitioners

(e.g. Tereszkiewicz 2020), various scholars point out: "National institutions do not disappear", emphasises, for example, Giselinde Kuipers (2011, 555). In her study *Transnational Television and National Media Landscapes*, on the four European countries France, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland, Kuipers shows how national fields developed their own dynamics and remained relatively autonomous even when they were integrated into the "transnational arena" from the 1990s onwards. Nina Vindum Rasmussen (2018, 106) highlights the importance of national borders especially in the European context: "national contexts continue to define cultural policy and industry practice in Europe".

However, this relevance of the national does not at all mean it's possible to maintain the idea of a clearly delimitable German national culture and a purely German television industry. Germany's television market has been transnationally shaped for years due to the global trade in formats (Chalaby 2012), transnational media groups and the importance of transnational production companies such as Fremantle, a subsidiary of the RTL Group based in London. The present book takes into account transnational and transcultural dimensions of television in Germany and at the same time national and local particularities, such as the federalism of the public broadcaster ARD, which is inscribed in its programmes (such as *Tatort*) and continues in other production companies and funding agencies. Especially in the industry discourse on the German quality drama researched in this book, all sides—the local and the national, the transnational and the global—are relevant and interwoven. We will see how the interviewed and observed television practitioners, especially in the face of an international market, repeatedly make national attributions, thus reproducing an alleged "Germanness" in television. At the same time, they compare German drama with productions and production methods from other countries. Several times, the analysed television professionals raised questions about "German content" or a "local colour" (e.g. Eichner and Waade 2015), on the basis of which series produced and financed in Germany can possibly circulate beyond national borders. "There's this famous saying" (Hackfort): "the more local, the more global" (Konrad)—so said the "HaRiBo" writer trio (Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018), behind the gangster drama *4 Blocks* (2017–2019) and the Netflix action thriller *Kleo* (2022), with an ironic undertone while pleading for specific, local settings in German TV dramas for a transnational market.

The simultaneity and interconnectedness of globalisation and localisation processes have been framed as "glocalisation" (Robertson 2014)

and have already been observed in quite a few academic studies of television. In a longitudinal study of national fictional television productions in Germany, Italy, Spain, France and the UK, Gerd Hallenberger (e.g. 1998, 2002, 2010) has shown how a genre canon of its own developed in each country. Those genre canons emerged simultaneously in the confrontation with US television and against the background of the respective country's media and television history, shaped to a large extent by national influences. From early on in West Germany television history, the presentation of US series parallel to domestic ones played an important role (Hickethier 1998, 356–363). A look at West German television history underscores how local series repeatedly took up and reshaped US-American patterns (Schneider and Zimmermann 1992, 7). In the GDR, as in other Eastern European countries of "real socialism", such links to US television hardly existed, at least officially. Television series in these places took more influence from theatre and radio dramas and radio adaptations of literary material than from Western "soap opera genres" (Bílek 2013, 1). Still, "glocal" dimensions can be identified in GDR television history, namely in relation to the "ambiguous media communication" ("*doppelbödige Medienkommunikation*") that Peter Hoff (in Hickethier 1998, 182) attributes to the country's television: GDR citizens accessed, on the one hand, the state-run media programmes aimed at legitimising state actions and, on the other, the Western, border-crossing programmes that offered satisfaction of individual needs.

Transnational or glocal features have also shaped German television drama at large, in that it usually addresses a larger German-speaking region and frequently develops from cooperation between Germany, Austria, Switzerland and, to some extent, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein. The German-speaking TV market is an example of a region that ranks above the nation, according to Victor Roudometof's scalar model of glocalisation (2016) as well as the later conceptualisation by Kim T. Hansen (2020, 87). The fact that German television series and film are often created and broadcast only in this German-speaking region proves that, while there is cross-national action here, it is rarely truly global.

The present book's extensive focus on Germany is primarily motivated by the pragmatic need to narrow the field of research. Certainly, discourses and tendencies towards the so-called quality drama can also be found in Austria and Switzerland—see, for example, the ambitious Swiss crime drama *Wilder* (SRF 1, 2017–) or the various miniseries that the Austrian director and writer David Schalko has been involved with,

including *Braunschlag* (ORF, 2012), a comedy, and *M − Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder / M − A City Hunts a Murderer* (ORF/TV Now, 2019), a serial TV adaptation of Fritz Lang's classic film *M* (1931). However, to take up other German-speaking nations' series in detail would go beyond the scope of my study. Still, this book takes into account the fluid boundaries of the German-speaking world as well as more general transnational and transcultural dimensions when it expounds upon how practitioners negotiate transformations of television and screenwriting in Germany through the issue of quality drama.

1.8   STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The two chapters that follow this introduction present some definitions and conceptual basics and explain the industry discourse on quality drama at a more abstract level. Chapter 2, titled "Quality TV Drama: Fields of Research and Practitioners' Perspectives", drills down into the term "quality TV (drama)" and the related field of research, dealing with the connection between television and quality. In addition to discussing the well-known quality TV criteria of Robert J. Thompson (1996), which a number of analyses use (e.g. Blanchet 2011), this chapter identifies gaps in quality TV research as well as other contexts, which have mostly arisen through single-minded attention on US series. German and public-service television fiction represent different contexts through which these gaps can be addressed. I then explain that the aesthetic evaluations that inevitably arise from the discussion of quality TV take place in specific contexts. This then opens up into an explanation of the book's approach of considering quality TV drama as both a category and an evaluation discourse of the television industry. Quality judgements, as becomes clear, shape different phases of television production and consistently take place in project networks and screen idea work groups. The last part of Chapter 2 incorporates initial findings from the interviews and participant observations and explains which textual aspects the interviewed producers attributed to quality drama and which transnational examples they referred to. Similar to the quality TV discourses found in television criticism and television studies (e.g. Nesselhauf and Schleich 2016, 11), here we see prototypes crystallise, so to speak, in the form of repeated reference to and thematising of specific shows, such as *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008–2013). With reference to corresponding examples,

especially from the US and also from Denmark, the practitioners emphasised in particular serial storylines across several episodes and associated character development as (desirable) characteristics of quality drama.

Chapter 3, titled "Drama Production in Networks: Starting Points, Methods and First Results", explains the two concepts of "project network" and "screen idea work group", which form a central basis for the following investigation. The methodologies I use build on these two models, in particular because the study includes interviews with members of such screenwriting and production networks. In addition to the method of interviews with experts or "exclusive informants" (Bruun 2016, 139), that of participant observation is presented. Furthermore, Chapter 3 discusses the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained. Here, the project network and the screen idea work group (in addition to more fundamental considerations from media industry and production studies) once again represent an important basis of analysis. The aforementioned hierarchies in these networks are illustrated through an analysis of commissioning editors and their influence on screenwriting. The presumed high status of editors has met considerable criticism in recent discourse on quality TV drama from Germany, and practitioners have made repeated pleas for production cultures that allow writers to act more autonomously (Krauß 2020a, 178). Against this background, the final section discusses how editors are involved in project networks and screen idea work groups and how this aspect of their role and their hybrid profession in general is changing.

Chapter 4, "Germany's Television Landscape: Actors and Production Areas", begins the actual investigation of German television drama with an introduction to its structures. In doing so, the chapter also provides important information for readers less familiar with German television. I first describe production areas and central actors by focusing on programme commissioners. This role has diversified considerably since the 2010s, particularly since pay TV and SvoD operators began producing drama in the German language. Established broadcasters have also changed considerably—as can be seen with the example of Das kleine Fernsehspiel (The Little Television Play), ZDF's traditional and influential department for "auteur" and debut films, which has now opened up to series. With regard to the different broadcasters and platforms, I describe various business models or "dispositive structures" of television in terms of production (Hickethier 1995). The second part of the chapter focuses on production companies. These companies represent a

very decisive factor in Germany, since they—and not the broadcasters themselves—are who generally develop and produce series. Regarding the quality or "high-end" drama segment, this look at production companies shows that the boundaries between television and film are becoming increasingly blurred. In addition to current quality productions—which, in Germany, mostly materialise as high-budget miniseries and overlap with multi-part television films (so-called *Mehrteiler*)—Chapter 4 presents other series types and production areas that shape the German television series landscape. Hybrid forms of television film and series as well as broadcast slots are taken into account. Schedule placements—that is, whether a drama's episodes are shown in a daytime programme or on Sunday night—continue to structure German series production up to the present day; despite the non-linear distribution channels enabled by the internet, they still represent an important reference point in practitioners' negotiations.

The fifth chapter, "Financing and Distributing Television Drama: Economic Networks", follows on from the overview of current broadcasters and platforms to explain the networks they form to finance and distribute series. The special consideration of economics is undertaken in view of the fact that practitioners repeatedly deal with economic issues in their discourses on quality drama. When US-based SvoD companies are among the funders, the economic networks bear transnational traits. The second part of Chapter 5 details such approaches to transnational co-production and co-financing, which have gained new momentum in Europe since 2015 (the start of this study), but which practitioners also regard as a challenge. This chapter also deals with opportunities and challenges by taking a closer look at the economic interplay between the commissioning broadcaster or platform and the production company. Due to the increasing number of distributors, changes have occurred in the relationships between the two sides and, linked to this, how television drama is financed and initiated. The model of "100 per cent financing by broadcaster" that has dominated for years and the associated "total buyout" model, where the broadcaster receives all rights (e.g. Fröhlich 2010, 123), is increasingly being called into question. Some cases, however, show tendencies towards the studio model, where commissioners take over large parts of the production in addition to distribution, and as such bind creators to them. The new, central player Netflix in particular relies on such practices and on "exclusive" content, which in the course of the pursued "glocal strategy" (Hansen 2020, 97) serves

not only the local German-speaking market but most Netflix territories worldwide.

Beyond the specific case of Netflix, the following Chapter 6, titled "Quality Drama as Transnational Expansion: Exports and Local Specifics", analyses how the television industry in Germany is expanding transnationally. This chapter takes local aspects and particularities into account that accompany processes of transnationalisation in the sense of glocalisation. First, I describe transnational and local dimensions of the German television industry in more detail. On the one hand, trends in the transformation of television "from a national, largely broadcasting, market to a transnational multiplatform market" (Turner 2018, 137) are also evident in Germany; on the other hand, national specificities such as federalism continue to shape large parts of public-service broadcasting and media funding (which is increasingly also involved in TV drama). The chapter's second part specifically deals with negotiations on series exports, which, in Germany, has historically been a sporadic endeavour (Krauß 2020f, 2–3). However, today a larger number of licensees in different countries and territories are available, through various "internet-distributed television services" (Lotz et al. 2018, 42), and English-speaking markets in particular are showing greater openness to non-English (i.e. also German-language) series (Redvall 2018, 138). At the same time, non-English series remain niche programmes in the Anglo-American distribution context, and mainstream SvoD players more recently seem to be refocusing once again on more predictable and mainstream content in English (see Krauß 2023e). The third and final section of Chapter 6 demonstrates how individual project networks or screen idea work groups and their practitioners are transnationalising in the context of export ambitions and the expanded television industry. The transnationality of individual players, working groups and production companies can become a decisive criterion for evaluating, selecting and finally greenlighting television dramas, alongside the transnational potential of the content, narrative style and aesthetic at the textual level.

Chapter 7, "Contents and Forms of German TV Drama: Aesthetic and Narrative Styles and Criticisms", also addresses transnational and local aspects in describing how the interviewed and observed television professionals discussed the content and forms of German television series. The first part describes how the interviewed producers, on the basis of their attributions for transnational quality TV, debated the state of

current television fiction from Germany. The comparison with productions from other countries played a decisive role. The chapter's second part looks more closely at the practitioners' criticism of specific quality drama projects from Germany. Finally, the last part of Chapter 7 shows how the producers dealt with German television history in this engagement with German TV fiction (see also Krauß 2021a). Their statements not only revealed the impression of a "golden age" in the present or recent past—with very different and increased distributing and licensing opportunities—but also reflected on numerous reasons why quality serials initially faced difficulty gaining ground in German television. In addition to a certain tepid perspective on serial television drama (compared to the television film, which has long been held in higher esteem), this chapter indicates how German production cultures historically evolved within institutions.

The eighth and final chapter is titled "Quality TV and Its Production Cultures: Negotiations on Writing and Producing". It is fundamentally concerned with production cultures as a central object of the industry discourse on quality drama, and its particular focus is screenwriting. The interviewed and observed practitioners considered this early phase of script development to be a cornerstone of quality and discussed deficits and barriers in this regard. The chapter begins by describing the economic framework of screenwriting in detail, including certain payment patterns and creatives' special commitment to quality projects, which is accompanied by the danger of self-exploitation. The second part elaborates on how producers negotiated the writers' room—a US working group export—and, linked to it, the more generally collaborative nature of writing for television as compared to film (see Newcomb and Lotz 2002, 76). I then delineate writers' room practices in the German industry, including looking at obstacles posed by its production cultures (first and foremost, an adherence to the work of individual authors, which dominated for years). The third part of Chapter 8 focuses on practical and discursive approaches to the "showrunner", the leader in the series production process who is responsible for both business and creative aspects (e.g. Newman and Levine 2012, 40). The showrunner figure is closely interwoven with the writers' room, because this person commonly leads and recruits that writing collective. The showrunner, another US export, is a particular example of changes in German series production and heavily factors into discussions about hierarchies in script development. The chapter's fourth section dives into the industry discourse regarding the

agency of screenwriters. In addition to illuminating screenwriters' historical marginalisation, here I investigate the often complicated relationship between director and writer in project-based script work.

"To Be Continued: Conclusion and Outlook" concludes the book. This chapter highlights the broader transformation processes of television against which practitioners have negotiated quality TV drama in Germany as well as its narrative styles and production cultures. Linked to the multiplication and expansion of the television landscape (both in and outside Germany), I address changes in distribution, programmes, production methods and especially screenwriting as well as reception. Although this study focuses on the production side, the researched industry discourse frequently referred to the audience and its changes. That is, the interviewed practitioners repeatedly dealt with the socialisation of viewers in Germany, which is manifesting in increasingly specialised and diversified target groups with tastes in foreign markets, set against a transforming digital media environment. The discussions also repeatedly touched upon other criteria for and ways of evaluating viewers' feedback besides the quantitative audience rating that has dominated for years. The German quality TV drama, as negotiated and approached by the researched practitioners, stands at the beginning of a digitalised television landscape based on data and algorithms (Holt and Perren 2019, 36), which in turn requires new conceptions of audiences. In describing the multidimensional industry discourse on quality drama, the book also maps such fundamental, ongoing changes in television at large, in Germany and beyond.

Note

1. The full list of German series case studies to acquire the interviewees is: *Babylon Berlin* (ARD/Sky Deutschland, 2017–), *Club der roten Bänder / Red Band Society* (Vox, 2015–2017), *Dark* (Netflix, 2017–2020), *Deutschland 83/86/89* (RTL/Amazon Prime Video, 2015–2020), *Drinnen – Im Internet sind alle gleich / Inside – On the Internet All Are Equal* (ZDF, 2020), *DRUCK / SKAM Germany* (Funk/ZDF, 2018–), *ECHT / Real* (ZDF, 2021–), *Eichwald, MdB* (ZDF, 2014–2019), *Mitten in Deutschland: NSU / NSU German History X* (ARD et al., 2016), *Die Stadt und die Macht / The City and the Power* (ARD/NDR/Degeto, 2016), *Das Verschwinden / The Disappearance* (ARD et al., 2017), *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo /*

We Children from Zoo Station (Amazon Prime Video et al., 2021) and *4 Blocks* (TNT Serie, 2017–2019). See also Krauß (2023c, 23–30).

Quality TV Drama: Fields of Research and Practitioners' Perspectives

2.1 Location in the Research Field of "Quality TV"

The notion of "quality TV" is highly controversial—in parts of the German television industry, as several interviews showed, and in media studies. Critical reflections on, for example, the elitist and inevitably judgemental tendencies or the small, often seemingly arbitrary corpus of so-called quality TV (e.g. Dasgupta 2012) can be highly productive: these voices may prevent us from unquestioningly adopting this US-origin term when analysing German or European TV drama. Why, then, does this book refer to the controversial term "quality TV", which is also now somewhat outdated (in referring primarily to a past era of US television). First of all, because of its "realpolitik" relevance: the discourse on quality TV drama had, and still has, quite a strong presence in the German television industry. This is evidenced by, for example, the titles of the talks I observed at various industry workshops: "Quality TV as a European co-production" (Blumenberg 2018), "Everywhere quality TV?" (Eschke 2018) and "German quality TV drama in pay TV" (Jastfelder 2018b). Furthermore, quality TV—that is, "high-end television [or] premium TV series production" (Szczepanik 2021, 14)—is an important field for today's television industry in Germany and Europe. The negotiations on quality TV also have had an impact on screenwriting, as practitioners seek ways to increase aesthetic value specifically in the script development

phase. In the context of this book, "quality TV" is also fruitful because this term is equally discussed in media studies. It thus reveals interfaces between the television industry and academia that are especially rare in the German context. My study aims at investigating these interfaces, making them productive and promoting further exchange between the two sides.

This book also looks to build on the concept of quality TV—as it can hardly be totally banished from television studies, even if some scholars (e.g. Borsos 2017, 20) have called for that. The motif of quality has historically and continues to play a major role in discussions of television—for example, when television was first differentiated from other individual media (*Einzelmedien*) such as film, which usually had higher cultural prestige (see Weber 2019, 231). More generally, the issue of quality characterises today's society, which (at least in the Western context) clamours for uniqueness and "singular goods" (Reckwitz 2020, 148).

Television and Quality

From its beginnings, television found itself in a constant process of legitimisation (e.g. Newman and Levine 2012, 4). Debates about a "better" television, as echoed in the industry discourse on German quality drama analysed here, have thus taken place at different times, in various contexts and with diverse emphases (for example, in relation to individual programmes or broader programme structures and developments; see e.g. Gould 2002). In the context of current society's "creativity dispositif" (Reckwitz 2017, 9), issues of quality have gained further importance. In some cases, the television industry itself has initiated these discussions, such as when seeking to improve the image of television or when certain TV channels wanted to distinguish themselves from competitors (e.g. Lentz 2000). Often programmes other than fictional series have been foregrounded; now, with the more recent debate on quality TV drama, these other types of programmes have been lost from view.

For a long time, the television series was considered low value—especially in Germany. Amid the influential television theories of the Frankfurt School in the 1950s, several scholars started emphasising its repetitive and uniform character in a negative light. According to Theodor W. Adorno (2009, first 1953, 68), it is precisely the formulaicness of productions of the "culture industry" that reinforces viewers' conformism and thereby consolidates the status quo under capitalism. Against this backdrop, many

academics saw television, and particularly TV series, as predominantly a commercial and mass cultural phenomenon, and therefore as a necessarily trivial form (see Engell 2012, 14).

Cultural studies, originated by British Marxist academics in the 1960s and gradually widely received in German-speaking media and communication studies, led to other perspectives on television, entertainment and seriality. For example, one central assumption of the Frankfurt School's critical theories—that politics can be found in fiction and entertainment (see Knilli 1968, 7–8)—is represented in the later television and media theories of cultural studies. However, these cultural studies theories refrain from simple manipulation theories that attribute great power and a uniform character to mass media. Following Stuart Hall's (2006, first 1973) influential "encoding/decoding" model and the reception studies that followed it, television viewers themselves came into greater focus. These theories and studies positioned them, at least to a certain extent, as active participants who ultimately "create" the meaning of the television text (see e.g. Johnson 1996, 97). In view of different readings and appropriation processes, scholars considered rash ideological and also qualitative classifications of television programmes to be increasingly questionable.

In discussions of quality TV, however, this problematisation of quality judgement is often not reflected. Furthermore, the term and its adaptation in German-language media studies more recently have been accompanied by yet another paradigm shift in the analysis of television. My work takes up this change in a critical way.

Quality TV

The quality TV drama has had increasing presence in German-language media studies from the late 2000s onwards, and many have hailed it as an aesthetic reinvention of television fiction and its narrative styles (see Schlicker 2016, 15). Television studies have also transformed, and, as a result of all this, the subject of television has become ennobled. But, as Herbert Schwaab (2010, 137) has critically commented, the research on quality TV tends "to deny television as television" (my translation) by placing such drama in the realm of the older and more "respectable" medium of film (e.g. Kinder 2008, 51) or the bourgeois novel (e.g. McGrath 2000) while separating it from "ordinary" television. "Quality TV is best defined by what it is not. It is not 'regular' TV", states Robert J. Thompson (1996, 13) in the foreword to his anthology *Television's*

Second Golden Age, a text that anchored "quality TV" in the academic debate in the mid-1990s (see Schlütz 2016, 55). Thompson's criteria for quality TV (drama) also include:

- "a quality pedigree"; such shows are made by "artists", who receive much greater creative freedom than is typical in television production;
- a focus on viewers defined as academic, "well-educated, [and] urban-dwelling";
- low ratings and the related struggle against broadcasters and main-stream, "nonappreciative audiences";
- a large ensemble of characters and, linked to this, multiple perspectives and plots;
- memorable diegetic worlds;
- linked divergent genre elements;
- high self-reflexivity;
- controversial, taboo subject matter;
- an aspiration towards "realism";
- critical acclaim and awards; and
- a "literary" narrative style; here, "the writing is usually more complex than in other types of programming" (1996, 13–16).

The last point makes clear that Thompson's criteria also touch upon writing and storytelling. Several academic works on quality TV have built on Thompson's classification (e.g. Blanchet 2011). In the German television industry, too, practitioners sometimes refer to this concept to negotiate quality drama (e.g. Eschke 2018). However, Stefan Borsos (2017, 8) criticises the German-language literature for its often uncritical, ahistorical adoption of categories that neglect the region's specific cultural context. Behind an enthusiasm for experimentation and complexity (e.g. Rothemund 2013), the economic background and origins of quality TV are often forgotten. Thompson's criteria at least indicate economic conditions, through the mention of "an audience with blue chip demographics" (1996, 14). In the US television industry, the term "quality TV" initially referred—as early as the 1980s—to programmes for a small target group considered to be of "higher quality" primarily for economic reasons. The advertising industry was prepared to pay higher prices to address

this affluent audience, which was generally more difficult to reach on television (Feuer 2007, 147).

Writing 12 years before Thompson, Jane Feuer, Paul Kerr and Tise Vahimagi contributed significantly to the migration of the quality TV concept from industry and journalistic discussions to academia with their anthology *MTM: Quality Television*. They use the term primarily as an evaluative judgement or aesthetic description but also to grasp the changed framework conditions in US television: "conditions which make 'quality' profitable" (1984, ix). Quality TV is thus related to an increased diversity of programmes, and thus target groups, that became apparent in US television beginning in the 1980s. In this respect, "quality" was above all a category of *viewers*, and as such related to the industry's economically determined hierarchical structure—which we both should view critically and cannot ignore.

As discussed, my book extends the research on quality TV through the perspective of media industry studies, and I view quality TV less in terms of particularly "good" programmes (i.e. programmes deemed valuable in terms of aesthetic or content) and more as an industry discourse. The study's particular focus is television fiction in Germany, which is in a current state of transition, and not contemporary US drama since the 1980s.

German and Public-Service Contexts

By concentrating on Germany, I do not intend to revive the anti-American stance that permeated former West German debates on US television shows (see Hallenberger 1990, 39–40). It is inarguable that many influential TV dramas, rich in both aesthetic and theme, of the present and recent past originate in the US. However, an evident US-centricity, including in recent German-language research on television series (e.g. Schlütz 2016), tends to naturalise and universalise quality and evaluation criteria specifically applicable to US productions. This puts alternative television cultures and traditions at risk of being forgotten. In the particular context analysed by this book, issues of television and quality have long been intensively negotiated—well before the German "quality TV" hype began in the 2010s (see e.g. Bolik and Schanze 1997). As such, the present study takes into account such traditions and specific frameworks in Germany.

A decisive difference between German and US quality TV—which most quality TV research touches upon—is, obviously, that public broadcasters play a central role in Germany but not in the US. To this day, they contribute to "auteur" and arthouse productions often regarded as quality (especially ZDF with its department Das kleine Fernsehspiel [The Little Television Play]) and remain by far the most important commissioners for fictional productions in Germany (see Castendyk and Goldhammer 2018, 35–36). For the analysed industry discourse on German quality TV drama, this tendency is relevant in two main respects. Firstly, public-service broadcasters are crucial actors in television as well as a primary object of debate regarding how to enforce quality in German TV drama. Secondly, certain conceptualisations of quality traditionally have been linked to public-service broadcasting: repeatedly, quality served to justify public broadcasters' existence and was seen as something to be communicated to the audience (see Williams 1968, 131). Over time, however, such a conception of viewers and quality has come to be seen as elitist and paternalistic and thus outdated and problematic (Bennett 2016, 133–134).

As early as the 1980s, the public-service concept of "audience-as-public" (Ang 1991, 29)—describing a national society that must be united, informed and educated—came under pressure in Germany due to popular US series imports, which filled the apparent gap in a market that was less audience- and entertainment-oriented (Hoskins and Mirus 1988, 508), and also in the face of the introduction of advertising-financed private television. The alternative configuration "audience-as-market" (Ang 1991, 29) now became formative and, with it, a long-running focus on quantity. Not long ago, all commissioners of TV series in Germany aimed at reaching a target audience that was as large as possible (Sydow and Windeler 2004b, 6). Similar to the US market, which once focused on maximising the audience and mainstream compatibility (Hoskins and Mirus 1988, 505–07), the German industry's changing approach to the quality drama reflects a shift towards target-group-specific narrowcasting (Parsons 2003) and, later on, greater personalisation through online platforms (Holt and Perren 2019, 33), albeit under decisively different conditions: Germany's television landscape is obviously much smaller than the US's and more strongly characterised by public-service broadcasters. Ideally, public-service content should reach all citizens and not just a specific, economically attractive target group.

Another differing parameter, which the practitioners frequently brought up in their negotiations on German quality TV drama, is the continuing importance of the television film in Germany, especially in public-service fiction. Hybrid forms of the TV film also exist, such as loosely serialised 90-minute procedural programmes (*Reihen*), which receive more detailed attention in Chapter 4, surveying the television landscape in Germany and its production areas. The very successful *Tatort / Crime Scene* (ARD/ORF/SF, 1970–) is the best-known example of such individual films united by recurring characters (teams of investigators) and shared opening credits, but which are usually helmed by different directors and scriptwriters (see Hißnauer et al. 2014b). By involving ever-changing creatives, *Tatort* is also open to experiments in the popular sphere and can therefore be considered a long-standing German expression of quality TV (as producer Leibfried [2016] suggested).

Linked to audience and programme orientations, another prominent aspect of the discourse on quality TV drama is distribution. Supposedly valuable productions stand out as "events", in contrast to daily, weekly and other more regular television. At the same time, especially in the case of fictional series, the current expansion of channels and platforms and the increase in online distribution in particular are coming to light. So-called binge watching—a practice strongly co-constructed and promoted by the industry—is in turn related to "quality", as a certain valence and claimed difference to "conventional television" legitimises such concentrated reception of a series: "[I]f viewers stand to earn valued cultural capital, it is socially acceptable to binge, rather than watch several hours of scheduled television", notes Mareike Jenner (2017, 305).

The quality drama thus also functions in Germany as an "agent of media change" (Beil et al. 2012, 197, my translation), in terms of programmes, distribution and audience orientation. My examination of local television's transformations follows on from work that has considered quality TV as a particular historical development in television fiction (e.g. Logan 2016, 145). However, I try to avoid the tendency in much research on quality TV to assume too much about *the* central paradigm shift and a chronological progression while neglecting the heterogeneity of television. Particularly in public-service fiction from Germany, contradictory, parallel processes are visible alongside the rise in quality TV projects. We should not forget them. My study further counters potential

problems of the "quality TV" approach by not ignoring the valuation stemming from this term. Instead, it explores a discourse of value contained to a specific context.

2.2   Quality TV Drama as a Discourse on Values and the Industry

"Quality TV (drama)" is a genre label unlike any other: it is automatically accompanied by valence and normativity (see Cardwell 2007). In this context, it needs a negative counterpart. The devaluation and appreciation of popular television—that is to say, its perception as trash or art—are simultaneously present and condition each other, states Brigitte Frizzoni (2014, 340). Seen from this angle, the idea of "quality TV drama" is closely linked to "distinction". If we follow Pierre Bourdieu's examination of questions of taste and class differences (2010, first 1979) as well as the heterogeneous cultural studies with their broad concept of culture (e.g. During 1993, 10), then we can say that aesthetic evaluations and demarcations are historically variable and integrated into broader social hierarchies. The TV practitioners' judgements explored in this book are also related to sociocultural affiliations. The relevance of structural and institutional factors, in addition to subjective ones, has already been pointed out by Charlotte Brunsdon (1990), in her influential paper "Problems with Quality". She accentuates the contexts of taste formation: "Quality for whom?, Judgement by whom?, On whose behalf?" (73).

Which Quality and Whose?

Not only can people with diverse interests, sociocultural position and backgrounds be differentiated, so too can the objects of evaluation. While the academic discourse on "quality TV" has mainly revolved around serial television fiction from the US, other focal points and yardsticks are conceivable. Take, for instance, discussions on the "public value" of public-service broadcasting, in which news in particular has been attributed great social significance (Mayer 2013, 81–82; 99–102). Given public-service broadcasting's important role in the context of Germany, such questions of value to the public also shape the debate on quality drama, which is more aesthetic than political.

Overall, the assignment of value is a relational and dynamic process. Quality results neither solely nor conclusively from an object but only from the interplay between offer and recipient, as Christoph Neuberger (2011, 28) summarises. The practitioners researched in the following are part of such an interplay. They evaluate programmes at their genesis (including during screenwriting) and, in addition, are consumers. My study takes up Brunsdon's important interjection "Quality for whom?" (1990, 73) by focusing on the specific context of the television and film industry in Germany and the professionals who work in it.

Quality Judgements in the Television Industry

Brunsdon emphasises "[p]rofessional codes and practices" (1990, 77) as an elementary discursive framework in which television quality is negotiated. First, as already discussed, the industry produces "quality" in order to distinguish itself from competing products and earlier "ordinary" television. Moreover, quality judgements take place in the production processes themselves, as Sibylle Bolik (1997, 16) emphasised in her analysis of television-specific media valuation research many years ago: quality is negotiated and constructed in permanent, discursive production practices.

For researchers of TV series, listening to practitioners can be enriching, as it puts focus on further facets and criteria of quality and on embedded evaluations in production contexts. "If we are seriously interested in how television works and how cultural and the other values are arrived at, these are voices that need to be heard", contends Máire Messenger Davies (2007, 172). These voices include "producers (whether writers, directors, editors, sound, music, costume, [or] makeup artists)". When it comes to these different trades and production phases, the diversity and potential discord of quality judgements becomes visible, for in these varying contexts, different standards for "quality" may apply.

While academic discussions on quality TV share an overall focus on narration and scriptwriting, other areas, such as post-production, also can determine quality. That notions of quality are related to production techniques and their transformations is clear from John Thornton Caldwell's reflections on "televisuality" as an "industrial product" (1995, 7). As technology and production methods changed in the US television of the 1980s—Caldwell's object of study—so too did its aesthetic. Similarly, Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (2007a, 8) hold that, when

it comes to serial quality TV, innovations in production techniques made visual effects possible that previously were achievable only in Hollywood films. Likewise, technical changes in viewers' environments—with upgraded widescreen plasma and HD televisions and top-of-the-line sound systems—in turn resulted in demand for programmes with corresponding technical improvements. However, for practitioners, such quality demands from the audience or from the production process can mean immense pressure. When commissioners, viewers or production members want something that seems almost impossible to finance, quality becomes an economic challenge.

Television series from Germany are, obviously, created under economic restrictions. Accordingly, financial resources were a common subject in the examined industry discourse. On the one hand, the budget often functions as a decisive criterion for "top production quality drama series" (Hoskins and Mirus 1988, 502). On the other hand, what McCabe and Akass (2007a, 6) state is also true: "quality is ultimately censored by economic pragmatism, industrial trends and financial constraints". Artistic-cultural aspects often exist in tension with economic ones—as is evident, for example, in the film and media funding of Germany's various federal states and its consideration of "local effects" (i.e. economic benefits for certain regions and their media industries) alongside or instead of artistic success (see Hammett-Jamart 2018, 249). At the same time, German film and media funding's increasing stake in TV drama production points to the economic relevance of supposed "quality" status, as such status can be a condition for securing subsidies. In 2020, for example, the federal government's 50 million euro deficit fund—meant to compensate for production losses caused by the Covid-19 pandemic—only went to films with a cinema release and "high-quality series" ("*hochwertig[e] Serien*", Niemeier 2020c), without the latter being precisely defined.

Quality and economy are further intertwined because the reputation resulting from prizes, nominations and reviews can determine the remuneration of those involved in the production. In terms of payment as well as media funding, attempts to measure and reward artistic quality are multiple. Such remuneration practices also aim to address the tendency for production companies and their staff to hold little economic interest in the quality or success of a series, given that full broadcaster financing remains the dominant scenario in Germany (see Fröhlich 2007, 43). The "achievement model" ("*Leistungsmodell*") of ARD, for example, aims

to evaluate and accumulate "special qualitative achievements on behalf of public television, which are reflected in outstanding and prestigious awards and nominations of a production as well as in the number of broadcasts" (ARD 2019, 17, my translation). Producers earn points not only through linear broadcasting on channels that belong to or are co-organised by an ARD network (Arte, 3sat) but also through festival prizes and other nominations deemed relevant.

The importance of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 2010, first 1979)—which includes prestigious awards, at least within the industry (Szczepanik 2018, 159)—is particularly high in quality TV drama. After all, it is precisely in this programme segment that linear broadcasting and associated remuneration practices are losing importance, while other criteria are (once again) becoming more important. Additionally, some signs are emerging, in both the European and to some extent German quality TV drama segment, that financing methods are converging with those of independent cinema,[1] for which festival funding has traditionally played an important role.

Long before any awards are handed out or festival, television or subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) distribution takes place, quality judgements begin with the early selection processes for TV programmes. In purchasing, programme planning, concept and script selection and the screenwriting process, different practitioners and departments appraise content, each with different agency. Eva Novrup Redvall attributes the power of selection especially to producing and commissioning broadcasters, who decide "which ideas should be given the opportunity to move from pitch to production" (2013, 28).

Both in this selection process and the screenwriting that follows, existing television and film texts can be central forces that shape TV professionals' ideas of quality. Incorporating initial findings from the interviews and participant observations, the following subchapter describes the analysed practitioners' perspectives on transnational quality TV and its features. It explores what the industry representatives understood "quality TV" to mean and what content-related and aesthetic properties they attributed to it.

2.3   Concepts and Attributions: Quality TV Drama from the Practitioners' Perspective

The scriptwriter Martin Rauhaus (2016) praised HBO productions, which at the time were repeatedly cited as quality TV, as "sensationally well written, made and acted" and compared them to "Swiss watches". "One asks oneself, why should I buy German or Bulgarian watches?" Like Rauhaus, who came up with the concept for the German quality drama attempt *Die Stadt und die Macht / The City and the Power* (ARD/NDR/Degeto, 2016), many of the other interviewed and observed TV professionals discussed the content and form of foreign transnational quality TV dramas, including their aesthetic and narrative styles. Practitioners' examination of these quality series and their textual characteristics veered into the glocal, since they were concerned with both national and transnational aspects.

The Quality Drama as a Transnational Discourse

Transnationality knows territorial boundaries. The TV creators referred exclusively to US series and (significantly less frequently) to Western European productions alongside German ones. In this context, the high regard for US dramas (as exemplified in Rauhaus's earlier statement and also visible in many German-language analyses on quality TV drama) was striking. This enthusiasm for US series differs significantly from the anti-American resentments of the past. "US series were regarded exclusively as prime examples of the trivial and the ideological", said Dietrich Leder (2015, my translation) in summarising the prevailing views found in German academia and feature pages during the heyday of *Dallas* (US 1978–91, CBS) and *Dynasty* (1981–89, ABC), both well-known prime-time soaps that had great success in West Germany in the 1980s. However, already back then some West German television producers were using "Americanisation" as a synonym for professionalisation in TV fiction (Hallenberger 1990, 40).

In the analysed discourse, TV professionals frequently relativised the idealistic notions of US series, arguing that only the cream of the crop makes it to Germany. When it comes to transnational streaming services, however, this diagnosis hardly seems to apply: the quantity or "inflation of series" (interview with von Borries 2019) available on these platforms

counters the "top selection" argument. Additionally, the historical situation whereby a US series had to first run successfully on US television before potentially being broadcast abroad is often no longer the case thanks to synchronous distribution in different territories. The presence of US-dominated streaming companies in the German market means that German productions compete even more intensely and directly with foreign productions than they did in the past. In addition, practitioners can acquaint themselves with the products of other markets more comprehensively, more quickly and with fewer barriers.

In this context, television professionals are obviously also viewers, as they frequently emphasised and reflected on themselves. On several occasions, they considered engaging with other TV series and films to be an important part of their work. At industry talks, for example, producers cited "must-see" series and pointed out that younger writers are more influenced by high-end dramas from the US. The commissioning editor Liane Jessen (2019) argued in an interview that "you need to know what else is out there in the world to flavour your own product".

The TV professionals also discussed foreign series' perceived production conditions and compared these with the situation in the German TV industry.[2] In respect to both production conditions and narrative styles, many considered the US television industry to be more progressive. Jörg Winger (2017), producer and writer of *Deutschland 83/86/89* (RTL/ Amazon Prime Video, 2015–20) and *Sam—Ein Sachse / Sam—A Saxon* (Disney+, 2023), for example, spoke of a "more mature television market that is a few steps ahead of us". However, it is above all Danish series from the 2010s that Winger regarded as significant for the German industry, as they come from a small, non-English-speaking country with limited budgets: "Then suddenly you no longer had the excuse that these series come from another planet".

Alongside US series, Scandinavian and especially Danish productions formed a central reference point in the practitioners' transnational discourse on quality drama. With the focus on Danish drama, as well as in other respects, their negotiations overlapped with those found in newspaper feature pages and other television criticism. Journalists have repeatedly contrasted "smart Scandinavian television" (as exemplified in the weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel* by Diez and Hüetlin 2013, 133, my translation) with Germany's supposedly stodgy and dated TV drama.

The Quality Drama as a Public Discourse

Generally, public media discourse on quality TV shaped the practitioners' debates. Especially in the 2010s, the feature and media pages of Germany's leading newspapers examined quality TV drama through a focus on storytelling and aesthetic. In the interviews, I myself introduced this public discourse by asking whether journalists' complaints about the lack of German quality TV series were justified. While several interviewees agreed in principle with this diagnosis in the transnational context, UFA managing director Joachim Kosack (2019) had a harsh verdict on German TV critics: the journalists, he complained, often compare "apples to oranges" and are rarely aware of the different facets of German television fiction. However, Anja Käumle (2015), at the time head of corporate communications and marketing at UFA, pointed to how the PR strategy for *Deutschland 83* took up the TV critics' lamentations about the lack of German quality TV. Problem-centred debates in the feature pages can thus be constructively integrated into marketing campaigns.

In any case, the practitioners did not seem to be completely indifferent to the television critics. The media's quality judgements can even serve as an important evaluation criterion (alongside others such as audience ratings and viewing figures) and thus as a "currency" of sorts. Anke Greifeneder (2017), vice president of original productions at WarnerMedia, pointed to aspirations of "critical acclaim" from both the industry as well as the media for the German productions of WarnerTV Serie and WarnerTV Comedy (formerly TNT Serie and TNT Comedy). Harald Steinwender (in the interview with Simionescu and Steinwender 2018), editor at BR—Bayerischer Rundfunk (Bavarian Broadcasting), rated the humorous and locally tinged provincial political drama *Hindafing* (ARD/BR/Arte, 2017–19) a success because of positive reviews, including its categorisation as quality TV, despite disappointing viewer numbers in the linear broadcast. He additionally addressed the fact that public broadcasters collect and distribute television criticism to their teams and spoke of "internal distinction". Within the complex federal structure of the ARD network, there seems to be competition between different local broadcasters (e.g. BR) and their editorial departments. According to Steinwender (in Simionescu and Steinwender 2018), the public-service backdrop also plays an important role: as a result of using public licence fees, "one wants to offer quality". Furthermore, according to him, "an element of feedback" runs from the newspaper reviews to TV and film

festival juries, on which critics often sit: "So you know what is being positively discussed there, and that is definitely reflected in the prizes". Steinwender's finding corresponds to the argument that film and television journalists are ultimately to be understood as part of the media industries (Waade, Redvall and Jensen 2020, 12) and underscores that discourses on quality TV drama within the industry and in the public media overlap. Similar to arguments in newspaper feature pages and in media studies, certain works repeatedly came to the fore when the practitioners explored the content and form of quality TV.

Quality TV Prototypes

In the TV professionals' negotiations, certain US series took on the role of prototypes, in the sense of works repeatedly identified as "classics" of the genre and thereby conventionalised (Schweinitz 1994, 111). The television practitioners frequently referred to *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999–2007), *The Wire* (HBO, 2002–08), *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008–13) and *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007–15) when exploring the supposed beginnings of quality TV drama and their personal enthusiasm for it. A European "best practice" example they often named and whose narrative they explored was the Danish political drama *Borgen* (DR1, 2010–13; Netflix/DR, 2022). More recent productions also represented central reference works, especially when their release coincided with the interviews and observations conducted for this study, such as the British police thriller *Bodyguard* (BBC One, 2018) at the turn of 2018–19. The practitioners' quality TV canon thus continually expanded, through, among other things, Danish and British productions and based on trends perceived in the industry as well as the TV professionals' individual reception.

Serial Storylines

An ingredient repeatedly attributed to quality dramas in the industry discourse, similar to in academia and the feature pages, were serial storylines across episodes or even seasons. In the eyes of the analysed practitioners, such ongoing dramatic continuity enables a broad, multi-faceted narration, or a "lavish economy". This feature, according to the screenwriter Bernd Lange (2018), does not exist in the same way in individual films. Mixed forms of ongoing and episodic narration, of series

and serial, which Robin Nelson calls "flexi-narrative" (2007, 48), sometimes were forgotten in this enthusiasm for serial storylines. However, some practitioners (e.g. Kraus 2018) precisely pointed out these sorts of hybrids, which also reveal themselves through closer dramaturgical analysis of many well-known quality TV prototypes, such as *Breaking Bad*.

Episodic plotlines in series can be justified by distribution methods, as is well-known. Television broadcasters in Germany, often still oriented to linear distribution, have for years preferred the "monster of the week" structure in TV series, above the daily or weekly soap opera. Why? Procedurals with a strong focus on the respective case story enables flexible programming and reception—even broadcasting out of order. In the face of commissioners' preference for procedurals, creatives until recently had to search for ways to integrate serial storylines into the script or "to weave them into the story", as Winger (2017) put it regarding his earlier work on *SOKO Leipzig / Leipzig Homicide* (ZDF, 2001–).

In view of new commissioners and digital distribution forms that enable flexible reception, the industry has become considerably more open to serials with ongoing dramatic continuity across several episodes in the course of the period studied (2015–23). Writers often described serial storylines and the shift towards them as appealing. Against the background of his own series' reception, screenwriter Richard Kropf, together with his co-writers Hanno Hackfort and Bob Konrad (2018), noted a wide narrative range: with cross-episode story arcs, it's possible to establish images that the viewers cannot classify at first and that only make sense later. It's also possible to convey aspects of the characters' past and to "open up something new and trust that it will fit into the narrative flow". Kropf's statement parallels academic findings that quality TV dramas have a "memory" (Thompson 1996) and experiment with narrative time (e.g. Kelleter 2014, 20). Kropf's words make one think in particular of the "complex narration" that Jason Mittell attributes to "complex TV" (2015) with its "ongoing stories across a range of genres" (2006, 32).

According to scriptwriter Annette Hess (2019), talk of complex narration has also circulated in the German television industry for the past several years. From her point of view, however, this notion is problematic because much of what is categorised as "complex" is ultimately badly told: "You can't really get to any character, no subject has really been taken seriously and then they say it's 'complex', or the viewer is too stupid.

That kind of thing, I can't stand that at all". At this point, Hess brought the audience into play. Viewers presumably become more active when it comes to ongoing, "complex" narratives. They must weave different parts together and cannot complete the story after only one episode (Mittell 2006, 32). However, the audience also poses a challenge in this context. How many and which viewers will engage with a complex narrative across episodes, and when and for how long? In the discussion of serial story-lines as a key aspect of quality drama, the practitioners repeatedly touched on the difficulty of reaching a larger audience. Here, they also repeatedly negotiated distribution. The TV professionals often considered linear broadcasting as the wrong, or at least a difficult, framework for dramas with strong serial story arcs. Creatives also complained about established German broadcasters' long-standing scepticism towards serial storylines and their frequent assumption that such dramas do not work in Germany. Meanwhile, Hauke Bartel (2017), then head of fiction at the commercial broadcaster Vox (part of the RTL Group), argued in an industry lecture that dramaturgy must understand what linear television requires: serial plotlines across episodes that are as "low threshold" as possible and primarily confined to the level of characters.

Character Development

Again and again, the practitioners connected cross-episodic serial story-lines with character development. Lange (2018), for example, distinguished serial dramaturgy from single film dramaturgy in this way: while the latter stays close to the main character and their life world and conflicts, serials generally narrate more broadly—through a larger arsenal of characters and by opening up the "temporal framework".

Practitioners repeatedly emphasised the ambivalent nature of protagonists when it comes to cross-episode character development. For example, Bartel (2018) stated that many US cable productions "à la *Breaking Bad*" are strongly "concerned with illuminating the darkest elements of being human", through "the long way down of a character". Bernhard Gleim (2016), former commissioning editor at NDR – Norddeutscher Rundfunk (Northern German Broadcasting, a member of the ARD consortium), also attributed to *Breaking Bad* a "brokenness, ambivalence, contradictoriness of characters" that does not exist at such an intensity in German television fiction. Hess (2019) contrasted "profound" and "multi-layered" characters with the, in her view, problematic attribute of

"complexity", citing as an example of the former the character Dunja Hausmann, the dissident singer and civil rights activist in the drama *Weissensee/The Weissensee Saga* (ARD/MDR/Degeto, 2010–18), for which Hess was largely responsible: "This was totally important to me, that she is an asshole as a mother". With such a focus on ambivalence, the studied professionals' quality TV attributions once again resemble those found in the feature pages and media studies, where complex and nuanced characters have been noted and associated with novels (e.g. Ritzer 2011, 20–21). However, Claudia Simionescu (in Simionescu and Steinwender 2018), the head of TV films at BR, made it clear in a dialogue with her fellow editor Harald Steinwender that creatives have "always" striven for multi-layered characters.

Hess (2019) doubted to some extent the fundamental connection between character sketching and series dramaturgy that is often claimed: serial storylines obviously offer more time "to build up characters and then turn them around". But even in a classic "monster of the week" crime procedural, it is, according to Hess, possible "to have multi-layered characters or not". With regard to multiple perspectives through different characters and their storylines, she accentuated the dramaturgical challenge of making sure "it doesn't fall apart". According to this line of argument, a quality drama is not only characterised by multiple perspectives and plots, a notion that Thompson (1996, 13–16) already included in his well-known quality TV criteria; rather, these strands must also be meaningfully combined. In this respect, the practitioners' negotiations also touched upon questions of craft and skill in dramaturgy and screenwriting.

In addition to multi-perspective and serial narration as well as multi-layered character development, the other well-known ingredients of quality TV that practitioners often highlighted were authenticity, realism and greater edginess.

Authenticity and Edginess

"Pay TV is characterised by being more explicit, […] in the depiction of sex or violence, in language", said Frank Jastfelder (2018a), director of original drama productions at Sky Deutschland, in regard to the area of pay TV that he represents, which is considered decisive in recent historiographies of quality TV from the US. The pay cable channel HBO, in particular, is said to have deliberately used sex and swearing to set

itself apart from other programme providers (McCabe and Akass 2007b, 63). However, most higher-budgeted fictional productions from German broadcasters, especially the public-service ones, aim for an age rating of 12 and above so as to qualify for prime-time linear broadcast slots, between 8 and 10 p.m. (in accordance with German media regulations). But in this respect, too, Germany's TV series landscape is in flux. More drastic depictions of violence and sexuality can be seen in "high-end" prime-time productions such as the gangster drama *4 Blocks* (TNT Serie, 2017–19) and the thriller *Parfum/Perfume* (ZDFneo/Netflix, 2018–), which have higher age ratings. The aim, now, is often not to reach the largest possible cross-generational audience, including young people and even children, but to hit specific target groups.

This shift in audience orientation also concerns authenticity and realism, which several practitioners identified as further important characteristics of quality drama in terms of content and form and often associated with edginess. Smaller, narrower audiences (another important aspect in their attributions of quality series) make more specific narratives possible—for example, in terms of authenticity. Several interviewees mentioned dialogue in particular, pointing to difficult-to-understand expert jargon that refrains from explaining everything as well as locally inflected language. Steinwender (in Simionescu and Steinwender 2018), for example, highlighted the "Baltimore vernacular" in *The Wire* and "the nastiest Southern drawl" in *True Detective* (HBO, 2014–19), adding that such linguistic specifics were "a bit of a niche thing after all".

Like Steinwender's reference to the niche, the practitioners did not stop at content and form but also discussed reception and production when exploring the quality TV drama. "In the meantime, viewers are spread out over series that appeal very, very specifically to their personal interests", Winger (2017) summarised the landscape in 2017. Editors at public broadcasters, however, described their differentiated framework conditions and the pressure "to not only address individual groups" (Steinwender in Simionescu and Steinwender 2018). With the dramas of the Danish public broadcaster DR, the interviewed and observed practitioners also brought up quality dramas that, at least in their nation of origin, are intended to reach the widest possible audience in an established prime-time slot, on Sunday night.

Unsurprisingly and influenced by their own interests, the TV professionals associated quality series with a comparatively high budget, which is reflected in meticulous research and the resulting authenticity as well

as in a striking visuality—the "special look", in the words of commissioning editor Johanna Kraus (2018). "Quality, of course, means money", pointed out the writer Hess (2019) and, in keeping with her profession, emphasised script development in particular. More financial resources allow for "a longer development of concepts and stories", but money often flows more into "visuals, settings, casting […], that is visual appeal *(Schauwert)*". Hess's statement implies that a costly "glossy" look is not enough and that often the script behind it lacks substance. With perhaps a similar impetus, director and screenwriter Achim von Borries (2019), one of the key creatives behind *Babylon Berlin* (ARD/Degeto/Sky Deutschland, 2017–), distinguished between television with a high production value and "real" quality television. According to him, the latter does not have to be "expensive at all" but is characterised by a "courageous and special" approach.

When it came to aesthetic, authenticity and the means of production, practitioners repeatedly identified deficits in German television fiction. Certain German series functioned in their negotiations as negative, almost "trashy" foils, which the classification "quality" generally requires, establishing its meaning through contrast (see Frizzoni 2014). Hess (2019), for example, called the medical procedural *In aller Freundschaft / In All Friendship* (1998–, ARD/MDR), for which she herself once wrote, a "commercial series" and spoke elsewhere of the "conventional […] dignified, old German television". Kraus (2018), head of the fiction department at MDR—Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (Central German Broadcasting, another member of the ARD network), discussed long-standing formats of the Tuesday night prime-time slot on ARD's national channel Das Erste (The First), such as the procedural *Um Himmels Willen/ For Heaven's Sake* (ARD/MDR, 2002–21), as "standard series, more conventional, solid, well told" but lacking the "exceptional" aspect that distinguishes quality from ordinary TV. Thompson's well-known quality TV postulate—"It is not 'regular' TV" (1996, 13)—returns here, adapted to German TV drama.

In addition to existing TV series and films, individual TV professionals are an important aspect in the practitioners' notions of quality and can function as another selection criterion (see Redvall 2013, 30). Alongside scripts and drafts for broadcasters and already available works, practitioners evaluate actors and institutions and their combination in individual "project networks" (Sydow and Windeler 2001) and "screen idea work groups" (Macdonald 2010). The following chapter outlines

these two network models as the central starting points for the production study and, following on from this, explains the study's methodological approaches.

NOTES

1. Chapter 5 takes a closer look at producers' negotiations on financing quality TV drama.
2. Chapter 8 deals with the practitioners' discourse on screenwriting and production cultures in greater detail.

Drama Production in Networks: Starting Points, Methods and First Results

3.1 The Project Network and Screen Idea Work Group in Television Series Production

"We had a whole pile of commissioning editors, co-financers and partners". So says director and writer Achim von Borries about developing *Babylon Berlin* (ARD/Sky Deutschland, 2017–). As early as the script review stage, almost 20 people, mostly men, are said to have taken part, with representatives from X Filme Creative Pool (the production company), Beta Film (the transnational co-financer) and the show's two broadcasters: the pay TV operator Sky Deutschland and the public-service broadcasting network ARD. The latter participated through ARD's biggest regional broadcaster, WDR—Westdeutscher Rundfunk (West German Broadcasting Cologne), and the commercial ARD subsidiary Degeto. But it is not just in such an exceptional cooperative scenario—which constituted a significant departure from Germany's traditional structures for funding and developing fiction productions—that very different institutions, departments and people co-contribute to the writing and producing of TV dramas. To frame these negotiations around development and production, as well as to systemise the study's methodology, I use two, rather concrete network concepts centred on human actors and the media industry: the "project network" (Sydow and Windeler 2001) and the "screen idea work group" (Macdonald 2010). Both models reveal the collaborative character of development

and production processes, which have been emphasised by various authors from media industry and production studies (e.g. Havens and Lotz 2012) as well as from screenwriting research (e.g. Macdonald 2004, 90). "Culture is produced through sustained collective activity", argue Richard A. Peterson and N. Anand (2004, 317), while John Thornton Caldwell (2013, 40) attests that media industries consist of series of networks assembled loosely enough to adapt to changing labour markets, new (digital) technologies and the whims of consumers. Here, Caldwell simultaneously addresses the flexible arrangement that characterises both the project network and the related screen idea work group.

The Project Network

The "project network" is decidedly about temporary business relationships and interactions related to individual projects (Sydow and Windeler 2001). Arnold Windeler, Anja Lutz and Carsten Wirth identified the project network as a fundamental tendency in television series production in Germany as early as the beginning of the 2000s, despite the industry's heterogeneous organisational forms. They explain the term "project network" as follows:

> The actors involved in producing television series coordinate their inter-enterprise cooperation in the form of a network. Because of the project- and at the same time network-shaped character of the cooperation, it is a special type of enterprise network: the project network. (2001, 94, my translation)

According to them, this project network consists of broadcasters, producers, writers and directors as well as service providers for both artistic (e.g. camera operators) and technical aspects (e.g. studio technicians; see Fig. 3.1).

According to Jörg Sydow and Arnold Windeler (2004a, 47), the project network also includes the "periphery" of rather marginal actors, reminiscent of the English-language categorisation "below the line", describing trades that are less associated with creative, artistic responsibilities than those that are "above the line". Outsourcing productions to external companies—especially in the field of TV drama—and the resulting development towards project-based networks characterise television and media industries in multiple countries (see e.g. Lee 2018).
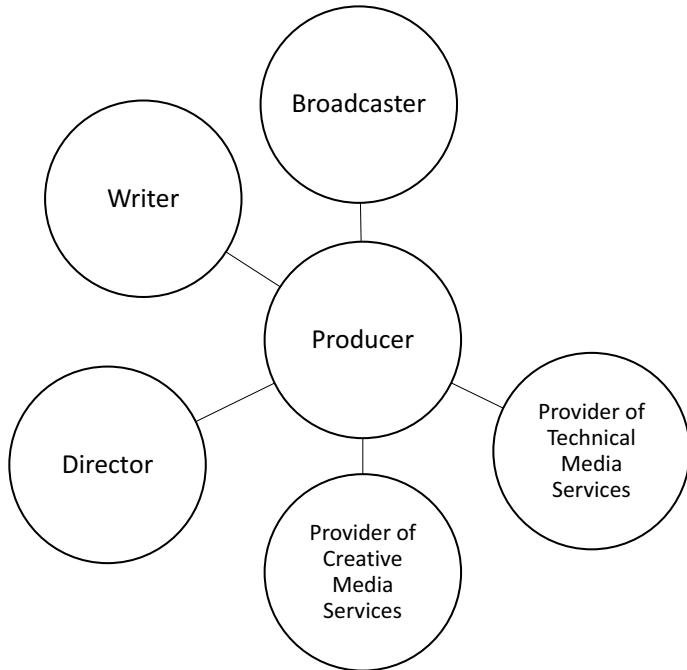
Fig. 3.1 A project network (my illustration based on Windeler, Lutz and Wirth 2001, 95; Sydow and Windeler 2001, 1050)

In West Germany—at least since the 1980s, when advertising-financed private television was introduced—and still today in the Federal Republic of Germany it is common practice to commission production companies and freelancers for single projects (see e.g. Meier-Beer 1995, 58). Alongside the nature of the particular TV show being worked on, practices and relationships from previous projects also play an important role today (Fröhlich 2007, 41). Freelancers in particular pursue "portfolio careers" (McRobbie 2006, 111) and depend on successful projects in order to obtain new contracts. In the case of TV series, expectations linked to the further development of the project can arise through seriality, if the production of further episodes, seasons or even spin-offs is planned or hoped for. Against this background, we can discuss seriality not only at the narrative level (as in many textual analyses) but also in terms of project

networks in the production process. Windeler, Lutz and Wirth (2001, 94) describe a fundamental interplay of project-related and cross-project coordination. The two sides sometimes form a field of tension in the discourse on German quality TV drama and its production modes.[1]

The project network is organised flexibly, although it tends to connect to earlier practices and networks in practitioner selection (Eigler and Azarpour 2020, 2–3). According to Mark Deuze and Mirjam Prenger (2019, 20), flexibility generally represents a "key governing principle in media work". Flexibility also characterises work under the "creativity dispositif" which Andreas Reckwitz (2017, 9) ascribes to contemporary (Western) society and which is also shaping the current transformation of Germany's television industry. This pliable character is often seen as conducive to innovation, among other things, on the basis of the flexible specialisation model, which describes a fluid form of economy that is characteristic of the present (e.g. Starkey and Barnatt 1997). Windeler, Lutz and Wirth (2001, 95) correspondingly argue that the form of the project network allows for much needed innovation in the field of fictional series through regularly changing cooperation partners. Paul Dwyer (2019, 355–56), on the other hand, objects that the data proves that formerly secure employment has been converted into more precarious freelance employment while hardly evidencing the innovation that this scenario supposedly produces. "[P]recarity of employment in the sector is driven not by the need for flexibility and innovation but by shareholder interests in reducing labour costs and increasing profitability" (357), he notes in relation to the profitable UK production companies often embedded in global entertainment conglomerates.

Various studies have found that temporary, project-based work leads to precarisation (e.g. Gill 2011, 252–59). Discontinuous and hybrid employment relationships—as Andrea Bührmann et al. (2013, 33) have identified for, for example, film and television performers in Germany—affect freelance workers in particular. According to Jörg Langer's (2015, 43) study on the situation of film and television professionals in Germany, freelancers are worse-off in terms of income, working hours and working conditions compared to permanent employees. In this respect, the project network can take on a hierarchical nature. In general, we can differentiate between free and fixed, or external and institutional, actors, and note that the latter generally have greater power over which projects are realised. Viewed via the principal agent theory (e.g. Pratt and Zeckhauser 1985), which originates in economics, Germany's film industry contains

an asymmetry of information and uncertainty between the commissioner (principal) and contractor (agent); that is, between the broadcaster or streaming service on the one hand and the production company on the other (Fröhlich 2007, 40). These different parties can, for example, have considerably different knowledge about a show's success and its viewers and their activities.

The fact that *agency* is distributed differently is also supported by the more comprehensive non-human actor-network theory (e.g. Latour 1996), which scholars have adapted to television studies (e.g. Teurlings 2013), media industry and production studies (e.g. Caldwell 2013, 43) and screenwriting research (e.g. Grampp and Stiftinger 2022).[2] The screen idea work group, which along with the project network is an important basis for the present work, also does not form a hierarchy-free space. According to this approach, every idea contributed during screenplay development is pressed into the official production hierarchy and production conventions (Macdonald 2010, 55).

The Screen Idea Work Group

Ian Macdonald (2010, 47) defines the "screen idea work group" as a flexibly arranged group organised around the development and production of a screen idea, which shows clear parallels to the project network. However, the focus here and in the related "screen idea system" (Redvall 2016) is more on individuals than on the project network, following the argument that the writing and production of television series begins with individuals and their screen idea (Redvall 2013, 29). This idea does not come from nowhere, just as creativity does not exist in a vacuum, Eva Novrup Redvall (2013, 29–30) argues. Philip Parker (1998) was first to lay out the concept of the "screen idea", and other screenplay researchers have continued it, Macdonald in particular. According to Macdonald (2004, 90), the screen idea represents the core idea from which a "screen work" is to emerge, and thus it encompasses "any notion of potential screenwork held by one or more people. Whether it is possible to describe it on paper or by other means". The screen idea work group, therefore, does not work with the screenplay alone but also contends with ideas about it in various ways, and the group can include very different actors, including, in principle, non-professionals (Macdonald 2010, 49–50). In Macdonald's view, the conventional understanding of script development is that the "triangle" of writer, director and producer holds responsibility

and these roles are clearly divided. But even in this traditional case, the screen idea work group changes in the course of the development process. In the case studies researched, this becomes clearly visible—for example, where the commissioner and the creatives involved changed from season to season. Macdonald distinguishes the screen idea work group according to two phases: first, there is the group as it exists before a production concretises; then there is the group as it deals with the practical application of the script, basing its decisions on feasibility. In this context, institutions and conventions play an important role and restrictions arise.

Redvall (2013, 31), in her related approach of the screen idea system, similarly differentiates between creative individuals and institutional gatekeepers with specific mandates and management approaches. She also highlights already existing television and film productions as another relevant force; these "trends, tastes and traditions" (31) help determine the genesis and further development of new projects.

Quality Attributions in the Project Network and the Screen Idea Work Group

The project network and the screen idea work group are both the subject and the context of the industry discourse on the German quality drama examined here. Besides the screen idea itself—the core of the plot, the "controlling idea" (McKee 2011, 130; see also McKee 1997) and the "unique selling point" (Eschke and Bohne 2010, 25) that screenwriting manuals call for—members of the temporary project network discuss what constitutes a good product, the costs framework, what makes a good producer and how to deal with dependencies like, for example, producers' need for broadcasters. In connection with quality determinations in the project network, Windeler, Lutz and Wirth (2001, 103) address selection processes concerning not only the idea for a TV show but also the various actors and their composition: decisive for broadcasters is the extent to which production companies can assemble and manage a project network capable of production and that meets the broadcaster's quality requirements. Production companies in turn place high importance on commissioners' image or profile as well as their content orientation, according to Windeler et al. (2001, 108). Does the broadcaster match the company's orientation? Furthermore, the quality and history of producers' relationships with commissioners play an important role in selecting a partner. However, Windeler et al. (2001, 118) make clear for the German

television industry (of the early 2000s) that few production companies can afford "the luxury of choice" (my translation). However, in view of the new commissioners, especially among streaming and pay TV services, selection possibilities have increased—as the look at Germany's current television series landscape in Chapter 4 makes clear. The hierarchies of project networks and screen idea work groups are changing as a result, including being renegotiated as part of the discourse on quality drama.

The "project network" and the "screen idea work group" offer the central starting points to consider hierarchies and selection processes in this production study. Once again, the importance of quality attributions in television production and the connection with questions of selection and power are indicated. "[W]ho has the power to commission it, who has the money to make it?" is how Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (2007a, 6) describe the "politics of producing quality drama". The analysed industry discourse on serial quality drama touches on not only aesthetic and narrative aspects but also questions of story development and production methods and selection. Both models also represent important touchpoints for the methodology and the interview sample, which the following subchapter outlines.

3.2   Methodological Approaches to the Industry Discourse

How can one undertake the analysis of Germany's television drama production landscape, including screenwriting? Very divergent sources are available for such an endeavour. They often bear risks, however—one thinks, for example, of publications by associations and institutions that show a bias in favour of the industry or a specific professional or interest group. As Caldwell (2008, 35) diagnoses: "The industry now constantly speaks to itself about itself, sometimes in public. It also makes these dialogues and debates available in various multimedia formats". In his monograph *Production Culture*, Caldwell proposes an "integrated cultural-industrial method of analysis" (2008, 4) that combines various methods, including interviews, ethnographic field observations of production spaces and professional meetings, and textual analyses of industry artefacts.

Caldwell differentiates the materials, or "deep texts" (2008, 347), that production research deals with primarily according to their degree of publicity. First, according to him, there are "fully embedded deep texts

and rituals" (347) that are "largely cut off from the public" (346), such as internal pitch sessions. Second are "semiembedded deep texts and rituals" (347), which

> also function as forms of symbolic communication between media professionals. Yet, these texts and rituals are simultaneously designed to spur and stimulate ancillary discussion and eventual awareness in the public sphere of the consumer as well. (346)

The third broad set of practices in Caldwell's model is "publicly disclosed deep texts and rituals" that are "self-consciously directed at the viewing public", including making-of documentaries (347). The boundaries between the three areas are fluid (346–49), especially because the public sources address not only potential audiences but also industry professionals. Thus, public and official practices and texts, such as news in trade magazines, also serve management purposes for the television industry itself.

In the analysed industry discourse on German quality drama, it becomes particularly clear that "publicly disclosed deep texts" also circulate transnationally. On several occasions, the observed and interviewed television professionals referred to making-of films or podcasts and the like when exploring quality TV and its modes of production in other projects and contexts. My study pays attention to the corresponding relevance of public representations in the industry and its analysed discourse by including trade magazines as one research object. I especially read and categorised articles on *DWDL.de*, the online media magazine central to the German television industry, to produce a first impression of the ongoing industry debates on writing and producing (German) TV series within the period under investigation (2015–23). I also considered further articles in other trade magazines and newspapers if they contained a clear reference to the researched industry discourse on German quality TV drama. At the same time, this study aims to look behind the official narratives of TV professionals on platforms such as *DWDL.de*. To these ends, I used two core methods of media industry and production studies: the expert interview with industry members and participant observation.

Expert Interviews

In addition to fundamental discussions on the expert interview in qualitative social sciences and media and communication studies research (e.g. Meuser and Nagel 1991), Hanne Bruun's (2016, 131–43) reflections in "The Qualitative Interview in Media Production Studies" were particularly central to the study pursued. Media industry and production studies often use interviews; however, according to Bruun's diagnosis, a lack of methodological reflection is usually evident. She names "exclusive informants" as a particularly relevant category and specific form of expert or elite interview. In interviews, experts from the media industries often do not speak on their comprehensive lifeworld and personal characteristics but rather primarily offer insights into the "inner workings of the media" (135). In addition to the goal of getting more information on the industry, Bruun focuses on the power relationship between interviewer and interviewee, which runs through various phases, from questions of access to publication processes. According to Bruun, researchers have access to the "public sphere" (139); therefore, their relationships with industry representatives are symmetrical and interviews between the two qualify as "meeting[s] between professionals" (142).

    Bruun's assessment approaches the concept of "studying sideways", as described in anthropology as a counter-design to the "studying down" of less privileged people (e.g. Hannerz 1998). When studying sideways, researchers and their subjects come from the same milieu and have a comparable level of education and a similar habitus (Ortner 2010, 224). In my study's specific case and its context of Germany, the interviewees and I belong to the academic and cosmopolitan "new middle class", which Reckwitz (2020) regards as decisive for the late-modern, singularist lifestyle. This class in general underlies the "creativity dispositif" (Reckwitz 2017, 9) of our contemporary "Society of Singularities" (Reckwitz 2020), and we can safely say that my interviewees—practitioners of script development and TV professionals "above the line"—are decidedly involved with creativity. "People who work on the creative (as opposed to the technical) side of the film industry are in many ways not that different from 'us', that is, from highly educated academics, journalists, critics, and the like", notes Sherry B. Ortner (2010, 227). Creative, dramaturgical and academic practitioners can, in principle, coincide to a certain extent, among other things through writing and conceptual work. For me personally, even more concrete interfaces to the interviewed television

professionals arise because, like several of them, I am a film school grad-
uate. Furthermore, as a part-time script editor, I regularly write expert
opinions on screenplays, treatments and exposés and thus participate in
screen idea work groups on the sidelines.

In view of my personal and societal position, it is fruitful to take up
Bruun's argument that a clear dichotomy between influential "human
agents" and "powerless victims of structural forces within and outside
the organisation" (2016, 136) should be avoided. She suggests focusing
on the interaction between "powerful human agents and powerful struc-
tures". Both aspects also play an important role in the industry discourse
on German quality drama, since it revolves around individuals and their
influence on project networks or screen idea work groups as well as
institutional and structural restrictions.

In various ways, power relationships characterised the interview surveys
themselves, as discussed by Bruun (2016). For example, in the final publi-
cation process, I submitted direct quotes to the interview partners for
approval. In rare cases, they disagreed with quotations or had critical
comments on them, which is why a small handful of statements could
not be included in this book. Power relationships also became visible
when some interviewees gave me access during very narrow time slots.
Influenced by the interviewees themselves, the almost 40 interviews—the
central basis of this book—are very heterogeneous. They differ signif-
icantly in terms of length (from about 45 minutes to almost two and
a half hours) and location: I conduced the interviews in broadcasting
stations, production offices, conference rooms and cafés as well as by tele-
phone and video conference, and thus in different spatial and temporal
contexts specified by the interviewees. In exceptional cases, more than
one interview partner was present.

Comparability between the interviews is established by the central
theme of quality TV drama in the context of Germany, as well as by
the semi-structured interview guide I used for about 25 of the inter-
views, which I repeatedly refer to in the following chapters.[3] Due to the
relatively loose form of the interview, the "exclusive informants" (Bruun
2016, 131) were able to set topics themselves. For me, the interviewer,
it in turn remained possible to ask questions and to engage with the
language style of the interviewee (Meuser and Nagel 1991, 451).

A certain flexibility also proved useful in the face of the continuous
changes in the television industry, which present a challenge for not only
practitioners but also researchers (Gynnild 2016, 117). To keep up with

developments, the semi-structured interview guide was slightly adapted again and again.

The concepts of the project network and the screen idea work group were decisive for choosing the sample of interviewees. Writers, producers, commissioning editors and directors—as classic official actors in screen-writing—were selected according to 13 case studies, each of which was a contemporary quality drama project from Germany.[4] Further inter-views took place with Liane Jessen, the former fiction head of ARD's local broadcaster HR – Hessischer Rundfunk (Hessian Broadcasting),[5] and managers of the visited and observed industry events and education programmes.

By primarily acquiring interviewees through specific drama produc-tions, this study considers various participants of the same project and their interactions. Linked to the project-based and collaborative character of TV drama production, the importance of individual actors and personal relationships in the television industry is therefore taken into account.

Participant Observations

This study also uses participant observation, a central method from media ethnography (e.g. Boellstorff et al. 2012, 65–66). Industry work-shops provided the central context, the observations of which are closely connected to the interviews: at these events, several of the series case studies were presented and negotiated as "best practice" examples, and many interviewees appeared as experts. The negotiation of individual projects accords with the project network, the organisational form that characterises the German TV industry. Participants and speakers at the workshops were also, at least implicitly, pursuing the goal of establishing contacts for future project networks. In this regard, Windeler, Lutz and Wirth (2001, 98) have already dealt with industry meetings and hold that they have a high significance for relationships and business among television producers. My participant observations at the industry work-shops and the dovetailing interviews pick up on the networked character of the television industry as "oral and person-to-person-powered forms of approaches" (Bruun 2016, 141).

The industry events also promoted networking for me, the researcher, because they facilitated access to the "exclusive informants" (for example, by providing names, email addresses or agency information)—particularly important in an industry considered quite closed and therefore difficult to

analyse, especially in Germany (Przybylski et al. 2016, 239). In general, the film and television industry tries to shield itself, even though it likes to propagate an idea of "greater industrial access" (Caldwell 2008, 339) to the outside world. Participation in these internal events made it possible to penetrate more deeply into the industry and its "deep texts and rituals" (Caldwell 2008, 347), whereas direct observation of production processes proved difficult. Still, the professional events I was able to attend pointed towards crucial and currently negotiated questions in the industry, and they furthermore informed me about practitioners' discourse on quality TV drama, which continued in my research and manifested in this study.

During the research period of 2015–23, participant observations took place primarily at workshops on TV drama production at the Erich Pommer Institut (EPI) in Potsdam and Berlin. The EPI is an affiliate of the Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf, Potsdam, and the University of Potsdam. It regularly organises further training for the industry. For my research, the annual *Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing* session was particularly instructive because of its focus on drama productions from Germany. To account for transnational—specifically transatlantic and trans-European—dimensions of the industry and their discourse on quality series, I also attended parts of the *European TV Drama Series Lab*. At this "high level training and think tank for leading professionals in the European television industry" (Erich Pommer Institut 2018), producers and commissioning editors from various European, especially Scandinavian, countries came together. Transnational and European dimensions were similarly evident at the *Berlinale Series Market*, a conference attended by a larger professional audience as part of the Berlin International Film Festival (Krauß 2020e; 2023e), which I attended in 2019, 2020 and 2023.

The rather extensive period chosen for the interviews and participant observations, from 2015 until 2023, is motivated by the goal of exploring transformations in the local television series landscape. The broad span also accommodates the significant time it takes for series projects to go from the development of screen ideas to production and distribution. Joachim Kosack, one of the managing directors of UFA production house, spoke of it in terms of "long-distance runs" at the *Winterclass* workshop (in Thielen and Kosack 2015).

The participant observations and interviews complemented each other not only through the intersections of people and case studies but also methodologically. At the industry events, the practitioners debated

without any intervention or pre-structuring from me. This ensured that it was not I, the researcher, who constructed the industry discourse on German quality drama. While the professional events provided condensed insight into current industry debates, the interviews enabled follow up with and expanded detail from the individual interviewees.

Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis and interpretation of the interview transcriptions and field notes utilised the *MAXQDA* programme and followed the interpretative analysis strategy of Michael Meuser and Ulrike Nagel (1991, 452).[6] The analysis led to a total of four main themes or categories, which I then incorporated into the structure of this study:

1. **Industry and economy**. This theme incorporates passages on the basic characteristics and structures of the TV (fiction) industry in Germany as well as questions of financing.
2. **Quality drama and textual aspects**. This aspect comprises collected notes and transcripts that foreground textual questions about and attributions to the content and form of TV dramas.
3. **Production cultures and networks**. This grouping describes how practitioners dealt with modes of script development and production and with the interplay of different production members, foremost writers, directors, producers and commissioning editors.
4. **Distribution and reception**. Under this theme, I group all notes and transcripts that focus on the programming and distribution of TV series as well as viewers' preferences and reactions.

Some passages were also grouped under **"Method and Subject"**, where methodological limitations or problems became particularly visible; for example, when interview partners only gave information off the record. In this context especially but also for the entire evaluation at large, an understanding of the performativity and self-interest of media practitioners played an important role. What the industry reveals to academics should always be considered as coming from a performative point of view—as industry enactment—argues Caldwell (2013, 42). Especially at the workshops, "corporate 'scripts'" and "trade stories" (Caldwell

2008, 3, 37–39) circulated. As Caldwell emphasises, such industry narratives are repeatedly recited, thus cementing themselves, and they often remain anecdotal while betraying clear vested interests. A comparison with industry publications and public interviews helped bring to light these official and learned accounts, which are not "wrong" per se but should be read critically. Such accounts generally link to the self-interests of the television professionals, as Caldwell makes clear with regard to expert interviews:

> Interviews with and statements by producers and craftspeople in film can be conceptually rich, theoretically suggestive, and culturally revealing, yet we should never lose sight of the fact that such statements are almost always offered from some perspective of self-interest, promotion, and spin. (14)

Television professionals have their own agendas and often focus on "professional legitimacy and accumulation of career capital", especially when making public and semi-public statements, as James Bennett (2016, 126) writes. In this respect, the project network and the screen idea work group again offer appropriate framings, as they point to the networked character of the industry: producers make statements about other people and institutions in the television industry against the backdrop of their existing or aspired relationships. The aforementioned hierarchies in project networks play an important role in this context, which the next subsection examines through the figure of the commissioning editor.

3.3   Commissioning Editors in Networks

Editors as Mediators

In the project network and the screen idea work group, commissioning editors play a special role in that they represent the wider interests of the broadcaster or the platform, and so they must keep in mind the project's suitability for the entire programming environment. It is relevant here that editors, unlike freelance creatives, do not get hired for a single-specific project but usually are permanent employees who work for the broadcaster for several years or even decades (Schirmer 2013, 101). In the project network, they have to hold "the big view from the outside", as Martina Zöllner (2018), from the ARD broadcaster RBB—Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (Berlin-Brandenburg Broadcasting), put it. To

a certain extent, editors function as translators who mediate between the interests of the commissioning programme provider and the creatives as well as between artistic and economic goals (Conor 2014, 74). Hauke Bartel (2018), a lead fiction editor at the commercial broadcaster Vox at the time of the interview, emphasised the need to integrate "the perspective of a broadcaster, with the experience gained from programme planning, from linear broadcasting, from work processes", into the screenwriting process. When it comes to larger projects, bigger broadcasters or extensive broadcasting networks, as well as diverse audience groups and different distribution models, editors' external perspective can be highly diverse.

Commissioning editors are integrated into a complex, hierarchical network, which in the case of public broadcasters traditionally includes roles ranging from editorial heads and heads of divisions and departments, to programme and television directors, to intendants (so-called *Intendanten*) of the broadcaster (Noelle-Neumann, Schulz and Wilke 2000, 79). Within this network, editors must first represent and implement their projects (Kinghorst 2020, 49), and then they must cooperate with internal colleagues and departments for the following work phases. Against this background, the interviewed editors considered a cohesive voice towards writers, directors and producers on the part of the broadcaster to be a central objective and basis for developing a "common vision" (as highlighted by Johanna Kraus [2018], employed by the ARD broadcaster MDR). The idea of a singular or "one vision", familiar from negotiations on the showrunner (see Redvall 2013, 102–30), also shone through in these self-reflections but, above all, became positioned as the responsibility of the network of editors.

In problem-oriented discussions on quality deficiencies and complex production conditions, practitioners questioned the extent to which a "singular vision" was possible given the multiple editors and parties who work within broadcasters and broadcasting groups. Such criticism must be seen in the light of public (and industry-specific) discussions on *Redakteursfernsehen*, or "editors' television".

Criticism of Editors

In debates on German quality TV dramas and their supposed short supply as well as their deficits, "*Redakteursfernsehen*" almost developed into an insult in the 2010s (see e.g. Zarges 2015d). The term became

associated with a lack of artistic courage, bureaucratic public-service structures and processes that dilute and reduce the quality of script ideas (Gangloff 2016). Several interviewed and observed practitioners likewise reflected critically on commissioning editors and their involvement in the screenwriting process, by, for example, problematising their influence and abundance in complex project networks or pleading for production cultures that enable writers to act more autonomously. In particular, many television professionals saw the federalism of ARD as an obstacle. In the interplay of this consortium of Germany's regional public-service broadcasters, a certain way of working seems to prevail, as described by Liane Jessen (2019), the former head of the fiction department at HR, a member of the ARD consortium, regarding centralised discussions under Gebhard Henke, the former coordinator of *Tatort/Crime Scene* (ARD et al. 1970–). *Tatort* is an ideal example here, since this popular crime procedural consists of different parts and episodes made by the various ARD members, which are shot and produced in their local contexts. According to Jessen, after the centralised *Tatort* meetings under Henke, all involved editors went to their respective regional broadcaster and did whatever they wanted. The scriptwriter Martin Behnke (2018) spoke of individual "kingdoms" less concerned with the quality of a project's content and aesthetic than with "making their own editorial team and their own station look good". However, smaller regional broadcasters in the ARD network can hardly manage to produce ambitious quality series on their own, and so different editorial departments and editors have to cooperate. Television professionals were critical of this situation because, in their view, processes become lengthy and difficult as a result of the many voices involved. If too many parties are participating, ideas quickly become watered down or lazy compromises are made, several practitioners claimed. In addition to divergent notes—that is, competing feedback—on the respective script versions, the practitioners negotiated programme selection criteria and the range of duties of the editor in this context.

Editorial responsibility and the creative development of content must not be delegated to third parties, Henke (2003, 133), a long-standing lead figure for fiction productions at WDR, the biggest ARD member, wrote at the beginning of the 2000s. However, many of the actors interviewed and observed clearly distinguished editorial work from artistic-creative work. Joachim Kosack (2019), managing director of the holding company of the UFA group (a leading production company in Germany

belonging to the media conglomerate Bertelsmann) and former editorial director in the fiction department at the commercial broadcaster Sat.1, argued that editors should not see themselves as creative heads but rather should adopt a "somewhat more unemotional […], strategic and analytical view". Several writers (e.g. in Hackfort et al. 2018) emphasised that "the story", as the core area of the creative, falls primarily within their field of activity and that they possess the greatest competence here. The production-related discourse on German quality drama thus revolved, once again, around agency—but this time for both screenwriters and editors.

Editors' Agency

Editors—and this was a recurring argument—have extensive power to act in the German television industry, and as a result they have a decisive influence on script development. Gunther Eschke (2015), a freelance dramaturge and formerly an editor at Sat.1, contrasted the current weight carried by the editor role with the showrunner model: "In public and private television, the editorial system would first have to change for a showrunner to make sense as part of the process. Because of course they have more creative power than an editor", he contended. Such assessments have by no means arisen only since the more recent discussions on the showrunner and quality drama serial. In the past, many producers found their self-image contradicted when staff from the commissioning broadcaster made central decisions, instead of allowing the producer to decisively steer project networks and screen idea work groups. In her media economic analysis of the television landscape from the mid-2000s, Kerstin Fröhlich (2007, 45) already stated that producers described the existing institutional structure as outdated. In her view, this structure was shaped during the time of the public-service monopoly and hardly changed after the emergence of commercial broadcasters. At the same time, the producer Günter Rohrbach, former head of the Munich-based Bavaria Film, problematised among the public broadcasters a disempowerment of editors who promote and also enable more ambitious programmes. In the documentary *Es werde Stadt!/It Will Be a City!* (WDR et al. 2013–14), Rohrbach (in Graf and Farkas 2014, my translation) explains:

> This loss of autonomy and also of competence simply leads to a loss of self-confidence. The commissioning editors, whose self-confidence is broken, have on the other hand the producers, [...] to whom they give the commission, to whom they are in a certain way superior. [...] [And the editors] have in turn also weakened the producer's self-confidence. That is, one weakened position further weakens another.

Jessen (2019) expressed a similar opinion. While not including herself, she attested that public-service broadcasters' staff were not so much "the Mick Jaggers etcetera" but instead "rather boring, stuffy people" who were looking for ratings and to meet the tastes of the editorial management. As for the producers from outsourced production companies, according to Jessen, they keep in mind the tastes of senior editors and their departments and, in order to play it safe economically, offer only "well-rounded products" and "no wild rock and roll stuff".

However, the relationship between editors, outsourced producers and freelance writers remains in flux in the changed television series landscape, influenced by a situation of diversified providers, greater demand for drama productions and new working areas for commissioning editors.

Editors' Changing Work in Project Networks

The editor's profession has undergone repeated and considerable transformation. For example, in the 1980s, the role was reshaped by the introduction of advertising-financed broadcasters and the linked commercialisation of public-service broadcasting, through which specific distribution strategies and formulas emerged. In the course of formatting—the orientation towards certain TV formats with clearly defined components and rules, which practitioners have repeatedly problematised in German television fiction—a central component of the editor's work has consisted of managing broadcast slots: tonalities and target groups of the respective programme windows are to be taken into account, and programming must be negotiated within the broadcasting network and with the offerings of the competition in mind. Bernhard Gleim (2016), who spent time as an editor at NDR, another member of the ARD consortium, suggested that consideration of the individual programme (such as a single TV film) gradually lost relevance compared to the overall programme. In this context, Gleim mentioned the flow of television, in the sense of Raymond Williams (1984, first 1975)—that is, the melting into each other of

programmes in both the schedule and in reception among the audience—thus also seeming to belie a certain expertise in television studies. In view of the current decoupling from broadcast slots in the context of non-linear, internet-based distribution, however, the individual programme is gaining in importance again—especially in the area of the quality or high-end drama, which, as we know, should supposedly stand out from the "ordinary" programme.

Additionally, new and, in terms of staff numbers and organisational structure, smaller commissioners can bring about changes to the editorial work within project networks. One possible scenario is that production companies and writers could gain more freedom as well as responsibility. "There's a big difference between working for a broadcaster that doesn't actually have a fiction department" compared to "a channel where there is a head of department, two editorial directors, and 27 editors", noted Jan Kromschröder (2018), a producer who has experience in the editor's role from his time at the commercial broadcasters RTL and Sat.1, speaking in regard to *Club der roten Bänder/Red Band Society* (Vox, 2015–17). This adaptation of the Catalan youth medical drama *Polseres vermelles* (TV3, 2011–13) was the first drama "original" for the relatively small ad-funded broadcaster Vox, which beforehand relied solely on purchased US series. At Vox, *Club der roten Bänder* was initially supervised only by Bernd Reichart, then managing director. Many television drama practitioners tend to prefer such lean structures, as they believe these speed up and simplify processes. Pleas to de-bureaucratise the script process also proliferated in discussions on the Danish public broadcaster DR. During a restructuring process at DR, in-house dramaturges were cut because writers had complained about their control and influence (see Redvall 2013, 71). In the meantime, public-service commissioners in Germany are also making efforts, at least for some individual projects, to achieve faster and more efficient decision-making and production processes. Most notable of these is ZDFneo, a slightly younger subchannel of the public broadcaster ZDF, which has developed a so-called instant series, through which it tested extremely rapid editor feedback, slimmed-down filming during the Covid-19 pandemic and references to current sociopolitical events. For example, the "instant" comedy *Drinnen—Im Internet sind alle gleich/Inside—On the Internet Everybody Is Equal* (ZDF, 2020, see Fig. 3.2), about a mother and wife contending with home-office isolation, aired when Covid-19 was determining the daily news. Like the

series' protagonist and many of its viewers, all those involved in production worked from home because of the contact ban in Germany at the beginning of the pandemic (see Krauß 2023a).

Shows such as *Drinnen* point to a new flexibility in the commissioning editor's work. However, the idea that editorial supervision could disappear completely, especially with the new transnational streaming platforms, public programme providers and smaller commercial stations with leaner structures, and that creative freedom automatically leads to more quality—a notion that has been circulating in the industry for a while—is increasingly turning out to be a pipe dream. On the one hand, my surveys found dismissive voices in the industry regarding critical failures such as the Amazon production *You Are Wanted*, which reportedly was made without editor input but nevertheless—or perhaps precisely because of this—developed an extremely complicated project network. On the other hand, Netflix and Amazon Prime Video are increasingly bringing experts in German-language fiction development in-house, including staff from public-service broadcasting, as evidenced by an editor for Das kleine Fernsehspiel (The Little Television Play) moving from ZDF to Netflix in 2018. Although long-time ZDF editor Lucas Schmidt left Netflix after just under a year (presumably due to a different corporate culture and

Fig. 3.2 An "instant" drama during the Covid-19 pandemic: *Drinnen—Im Internet sind alle gleich.* © ZDF/btf GmbH

less creative freedom; see Zarges 2019), it can be said that transnational platforms and German *Redakteursfernsehen*, or editors' television, have nevertheless come a little closer together.

Thanks to increases in staffing, US-based streaming companies no longer necessarily outsource editorial and dramaturgical support abroad, as they did with their first German "originals". The big streaming companies originating in the US still, however, support transnational networks, and thus clashes between different production cultures also still arise. In my interviews, the practitioners contrasted different ways of working in a transcultural manner. For example, Jantje Friese (2019) praised Netflix representatives, and specifically the company's vice president for international originals, Kelly Luegenbiehl, who oversaw *Dark* (2017–20), for being "very, very creatively oriented": "It's more about being the wind beneath the wings than the ballast on top". In Friese's opinion, a positive orientation towards productivity and a clear, shared goal characterises the US "mindset", while in Germany long-harboured doubts make practitioners question whether "the finish line […] somewhere way over there" can even be reached.

In this context, Friese was probably alluding to Netflix's early greenlighting within the German industry: the company gave the green light to several projects at a very early stage, on the basis of synopses—an approach that creatives and producers praised (e.g. Buffoni et al. 2020). The uncertainty typical to the long development of a screenplay—that is, whether it will ever be realised—is thus avoided. The other side of the coin, however, seems to be more comprehensive control from the very beginning. Fatima Varhos (in Buffoni et al. 2020), the producer of the Swedish family series *Bonusfamiljen/Bonus Family* (SVT/Netflix, 2017–), adapted by ARD in 2019, reported at the 2020 *Berlinale Series Market* that Netflix producers were involved every step of the way and gave continuous feedback on even minor decisions, beyond commenting on individual script versions. Varhos's diplomatic praise for the great transparency of the streaming company, which is generally considered a "black box" in the industry and in its analysis, can of course also be interpreted as meaning that writers and other actors in the project network are subject to strict control. Against this background, the idea of a quality drama free from editors' involvement at new platforms proved to be unrealistic.

An ambivalent picture of these new commissioners and their editorial work also emerged in view of indications that, in some cases, they pay below standardised industry rates or outside established structures (Pham

2022), along with the possibility that they are more concerned with quick development and producing a large number of marketable titles than with the quality of the series. More established or traditional competitors, on the other hand, have described themselves as being more selective and quality-oriented, presumably partly as a bid to present themselves as attractive partners in the industry-wide battle for talent and content.

In the next chapter, I provide an overview of these different commissioners in Germany—both the long-standing broadcasters and the relatively new streaming services. The chapter also describes further institutional actors in Germany's television landscape who work alongside the commissioning editors and within the project networks at discussion so far. It additionally delineates crucial production areas in the national industry.

NOTES

1. Chapter 8 clarifies this field of tension by discussing how practitioners negotiate production cultures in script development.
2. The issue of agency becomes more concrete in the discussions of financing and distribution (Chapter 5) and production cultures in screenplay development (Chapter 8).
3. The guidelines covered four areas in particular. The interviewees were first to briefly describe their activity in television series production and their path there; second, to assess the quality of TV drama from Germany; and third, to evaluate production and especially development processes. Fourth, the guidelines touched on the series project, as represented by the respective interviewees, and its genesis. An additional, smaller consideration was the changing distribution environment, which has also diversified modes of reception and target groups.
4. The full list of German series case studies to acquire the interviewees is: *Babylon Berlin* (ARD/Sky Deutschland, 2017–), *Club der roten Bänder/Red Band Society* (Vox, 2015–17), *Dark* (Netflix, 2017–20), *Deutschland 83/86/89* (RTL/Amazon Prime Video, 2015–20), *Drinnen—Im Internet sind alle gleich/Inside—On the Internet All Are Equal* (ZDF, 2020), *DRUCK/SKAM Germany* (Funk/ZDF, 2018–), *ECHT/Real* (ZDF, 2021–), *Eichwald, MdB* (ZDF, 2014–19), *Mitten in Deutschland: NSU/NSU German History X* (ARD et al. 2016), *Die Stadt und die Macht/The City and the*

Power (ARD/NDR/Degeto, 2016), *Das Verschwinden/The Disappearance* (ARD et al. 2017), *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo/We Children from Zoo Station* (Amazon Prime Video et al. 2021) and *4 Blocks* (TNT Serie, 2017–19). See also Krauß 2023c, 23–30.

5. At the time of the interview, HR's fiction department held a special role in the German TV industry. This broadcaster mostly still developed and produced television films in-house, instead of outsourcing them as commissioned productions, which is the more common scenario.

6. For a more detailed description of the analysis and interpretation of my data, see Krauß 2023c, 32–35.

Germany's Television Landscape: Actors and Production Areas

4.1 Programme Providers and Commissioners

Television series development and production in Germany is heterogeneous, such that it is not possible to identify *one* approach to quality drama. The chapter thus seeks to elaborate on this diversity when introducing the German television industry—an important manifestation of the "creative industry", with its increased importance for society (Reckwitz 2017). Focusing on central institutions, actors and types of drama, the following sections describe the central contexts and reference points of the analysed industry discourse on German quality drama. The local television industry, this overview makes clear, is changing fundamentally. By discussing and adapting quality drama, practitioners are dealing with the broader transformations of Germany's television landscape.

First of all, broadcasters and streaming platforms are central actors in this national television scene. Alongside individual freelancers and production companies, to which fictional productions are usually outsourced, these commissioners constitute the "project networks" (Sydow and Windeler 2001) and "screen idea work groups" (Macdonald 2010) and have significant influence on development and production processes. Compared to the 2000s and early 2010s, however, today many more programme providers order and distribute German TV dramas. In the past, just two main public-service stations—Das Erste (The First), run by ARD, and ZDF—and the commercial, ad-funded channels RTL and

Sat.1, run by two opposing media conglomerates, regularly commissioned series and single TV films (Hickethier 1998, 422–424). During the investigation period of 2015–2023, other providers have increasingly joined them (see Table 4.1). Especially pay TV and streaming services have further diversified the "multilayered world of television" in Germany (Straubhaar 2007, 1). In addition, the established institutions have transformed and expanded. These structural changes produced lively discussions at the industry workshops and in the interviews.

Public-Service Providers in Transition

One aspect that becomes strikingly apparent when looking at the public broadcasters is their media and institutional expansion: the ARD network, including its nine local broadcasters, and ZDF have been operating internet-distributed television services for some years now. But among the observed and interviewed practitioners, the degree of online engagement remained controversial. Several television professionals argued that ARD and ZDF still heavily orientate towards linear distribution and its audience figures. We can indeed still find evidence of this linear orientation—such as the many continuously produced crime procedurals anchored in fixed broadcast slots—but increasingly also counter-examples. Both ARD and ZDF now commission series viewable only online, or at least primarily designed for this non-linear form of distribution (e.g. Krei 2021b), such as *All You Need* (ARD, 2021–), allegedly Germany's first queer TV series.

Linked to the stronger turn towards online distribution, a gradual transformation of the public broadcasters is evidenced in their intensified production of fictional and documentary serials, enabling audiences to binge-watch several episodes online. Some local broadcasters of the federal ARD network are also increasingly focusing on drama productions—including those that show clear ambitions towards quality and innovation. *Hindafing* (ARD/BR/Arte, 2017–2019), an acclaimed dramedy about a corrupt mayor in a less than idyllic small Bavarian town, is an example of such a recent "local" quality drama.

In the case of larger series projects for the joint programme Das Erste, Degeto Film usually collaborates with ARD. Founded in 1959, this subsidiary of all ARD broadcasters acquires and produces programmes, historically and still today, especially series and television films for Friday and Thursday prime-time slots (see Mikos 2021, 179). Unlike the individual ARD stations, Degeto operates in a market economy, which

Table 4.1 Institutions and players in Germany's television series landscape (2023)

Individual actors	Production companies	Programme provider		Independent companies			
Authors, Directors, Crew	Producers	Public-service broadcasters	Subsidiaries	Private free TV	Pay TV	Subscription video-on-demand (SVoD)	Telecommunication companies
		ARD		RTL	Sky Deutschland (withdrawal from the German market)	WOW (Sky Ticket)	Magenta TV by Telekom (withdrawal from the German market)
		BR, WDR, NDR etc.		Vox			Vodafone
		One		RTL II			
		ZDF		Sat.1	WarnerTV Series (TNT Series)	Netflix	
		ZDFneo		ProSieben	WarnerTV Comedy (TNT Comedy)		
		Arte		Disney Channel	HBO Europe	Amazon Prime Video	
		KiKA		Nickelodeon	NBCUniversal: Syfy 13th Street	RTL+ (TVNOW)	
		Funk		Servus TV (Austrian)		Joyn/Joyn+ (Maxdome)	
						Disney+	
						Paramount+ (withdrawal from the German market)	

Table 4.1 (continued)

Individual actors	Authors, Directors, Crew	Producers				
Production companies	Subsidiaries		Independent companies			
Programme provider	Public-service broadcasters	Private free TV	Pay TV	Subscription video-on-demand (SVoD)	Telecommunication companies
				Apple TV+ Lionsgate+ (withdrawal from the German market)	

is why it can be classified as a neoliberal extension of public broadcasting. Through commercial subsidiaries and affiliations, the public-service system in general has developed into a corporation, if we follow the assessment of Dominik Graf and Martin Farkas (2014) in their documentary essay *Es werde Stadt!/It Will Be a City!* (WDR et al. 2013–2014) on the status quo of German television. Instead of remaining reliable partners in the free labour market of the hectically ramped-up media industry of the 1990s, ARD and ZDF set up profit-oriented film production companies, Graf and Farkas diagnose.

In addition to ARD, its local broadcasters and its subsidiaries, other public broadcasters are increasingly focusing on series, including the French-German culture channel Arte. It shows "arty", foreign-language and European series and is particularly interested in bilingual (especially French-German) dramas.

ARD's and ZDF's departments for films by young talent have also opened up to series, especially ZDF's Das kleine Fernsehspiel (The Little Television Play). It traditionally focuses on "auteur" and debut films (Schreitmüller and Stein 1986) but now also encompasses the subdepartment Quantum. Quantum, according to the ZDF website, is a "format lab" in which single films, web series and multimedia projects that "explore new avenues in content, technique, or form" are developed (ZDF 2023, my translation). *Eichwald, MdB* (2014–2019, see Fig. 4.1) and the Covid-19 dramedy *Drinnen – Im Internet sind alle gleich/Inside—On the Internet All Are Equal* (2020), both considered in my production study, are Quantum developments.

KiKA, the children's channel of ARD and ZDF, based in Erfurt, Germany, and aimed at children aged three to 13, also commissions drama originals.[1] Examples from the focused period of investigation are, in addition to the long-running weekly preteen soap *Schloss Einstein* (1998–), the serial drama *5vor12/The Eleventh Hour* (2017), about delinquent male youths in an Alpine boot camp, and the event Christmas series *Beutolomäus und der wahre Weihnachtsmann/Beutolomäus and the Real Santa Claus* (2017), which production participants described as "high-end" storytelling at an industry workshop (Schulte and Gößler 2017). The last example speaks to the fact that quality drama ambitions extend even into the realm of children's television, which is often lower budget, although not in itself less expensive to produce (Hackl 2005, 54).

The children's—or rather preteen—drama considered in my interviews, *ECHT/Real* (ZDF, 2021–, see Fig. 4.2), is the German adaptation of

Fig. 4.1 *Eichwald, MdB*, a TV series from ZDF's Das kleine Fernsehspiel (©
ZDF/Maor Waisburd)

the Norwegian tween series *Lik meg / Like Me* (NRK Super, 2018–) and
follows the real-time approach of *SKAM* (NRK, 2015–2017) (see Sundet
2020) and its German adaptation *DRUCK / SKAM Germany* (Funk/
ZDF, 2018–) (see Krauß and Stock 2021). The scenes and sequences
that make up the full episodes first appear online as clips. However, as
it is a children's programme, *ECHT* cannot integrate social media into
its distribution in the same way *SKAM* and *DRUCK* can, and thus still
relies on linear distribution on KiKA (see Krauß 2023d).

An entirely new, solely internet-based public commissioner is Funk,
ARD and ZDF's online media service for adolescents and young adults
aged 14–29, launched in 2016 (Stollfuß 2019, 513–514). As a decen-
tralised content network primarily integrating YouTube and various social
media, Funk represents a media extension of public-service broadcasting.
This "platformisation of public-service broadcasting" (Stollfuß 2021,
126) is controversial: It is often hard to recognise Funk, ARD and its
respective local broadcasters, or ZDF as being behind the Funk content

Fig. 4.2 *ECHT*, a preteen "real-time" drama (© ZDF/Studio Zentral)

circulating on these external platforms. Instead of public-service principles, the few "GAFAM" corporations (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft) and TikTok shape its distribution.

In terms of personnel and institutions, Funk's public-service media is expanded through the involvement of amateurs. Funk regularly recruits producers of digital, semi-professional formats through online video platforms such as YouTube and thus steps outside the established path of supporting new talent via state-run film schools (as analysed by Jenke 2013). However, Funk's few drama originals—the *SKAM* adaptation *DRUCK* and the mystery coming-of-age drama *Feelings* (2023)—involve alumni of the traditional Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf, Potsdam, as well as well-known production companies.

As for ZDF specifically, institutional and programmatic expansions are visible particularly in its channel ZDFneo, founded in 2009. While conceived as an innovation platform for ZDF targeting a (relatively) young group of 14–49 (Helten 2012), the programme in reality reaches an average 60-year-old viewership. Its greatest ratings successes in the period under review have come from repeats of well-known ZDF crime

procedurals, such as *Ein starkes Team/A Strong Team* (1994–) (Krei 2018). ZDFneo does, however, also produce new content: exclusive "Neoriginals". Under this label, drama series are shown in the linear ZDFneo programme and, in particular, on ZDF's online service (the so-called ZDF Mediathek, which unites ZDFneo and ZDF). Neoriginals include European co-productions such as the Danish-German *Gidselt-agningen*, *Countdown Copenhagen* (ZDFneo/Kanal 5, 2017–2019) as well as the six-part crime drama *Parfum/Perfume* (2018–), loosely based on Patrick Süskind's best-selling historical novel *Perfume* but set in the present, which Netflix distributed abroad. "ZDFneo's own series are our answers to Netflix and Amazon", announced Frank Zervos, head of one of ZDF's two editorial department for fiction, in the online trade magazine *DWDL.de* in August 2018 (Niemeier 2020b, my translation). His statement obviously serves promotional purposes within and beyond the industry but also reveals how established institutions are changing through new ones.

ARD seems to be taking cues from ZDFneo with its new channel One, which subsumed the ARD special-interest channel Einsfestival (formerly EinsFestival) in 2016, in that it also focuses on a relatively young audience and broadcasts foreign series. However, One does not come close to ZDFneo's market share (2.9% in 2020 and in October 2021; AGF Videoforschung 2021) and neither does it commission its own series to the same extent. In September 2020, the first One original finally debuted: the co-production *Parlement/Parliament* (One et al. 2020–). The political satire examines the European Parliament from the perspective of a young parliamentary assistant and was awarded the Grimme Award for fiction in 2021. Meanwhile, several indications suggest that One will be discontinued—due to increased political and public pressure on public broadcasters to downsize.

Advertising-Financed Channels

In advertising-financed commercial television—which in Germany means the duopoly of ProSiebenSat.1 Media and the RTL Group, as part of the Bertelsmann Group—smaller broadcasters have also started to commission drama series. In 2015, the beginning of the review period, the broadcaster Vox in particular came to the fore with *Club der roten Bänder/Club of Red Bracelets* (2015–2017), an adaptation of the Catalan original *Polseres vermelles/Red Bracelets* (TV3, 2011–2013). At the 2015

Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing workshop, the industry audience applauded proclamations about the ratings success of this teenage medical drama, which I used as one of the case studies to acquire interview partners. However, practitioners also criticised the programme for being produced too cheaply (Thielen and Kosack 2015). At around 400,000 euros per episode in the first season (see Bartel 2017), its production budget indicates the economic limitations of smaller broadcasters like Vox. Vox's subsequent series productions—including *Milk & Honey* (2018), another fiction format adaptation, and *Das Wichtigste im Leben/The Most Important Thing in Life* (2019), an everyday family series—did not achieve the same ratings success in linear broadcasting as *Club der roten Bänder*.

The rest of the period of review revealed further attempts at implementing German TV series into linear programming interrupted by advertising, especially at RTL, the German-language free-to-air television channel owned by the RTL Group. Whereas RTL's competitor Sat.1 (the first privately owned television network in Germany and part of the ProSiebenSat.1 Media group) now rarely invests in its own series (usually to little success), RTL tried to anchor another slot, Tuesday night, for German series fiction from 2018 onwards (Heine 2017). It ran, for example, the comedy of mistaken identity *Sankt Maik* (2018–2021) about a trickster disguised as a priest. In 2018, Hauke Bartel, then head of fiction at Vox and now co-head of all fiction for the German RTL Group, described RTL's programming orientation: "RTL still relies very strongly on a classic 'case of the week' structure for procedurals, plus event dramas that are then made as two-parters or as individual films". In 2023, RTL refreshed its Tuesday prime-time slot with crime procedural films such as *Dünentod − Ein Nordsee-Krimi/Death in the Dunes—A North Sea Crime* (2023), reminiscent of public-service crime shows; this move once more proved the popularity of 90-minute films in German TV fiction.

RTL Zwei (or RTL II), the second channel of the German RTL Group, is also trying its hand at commissioning original drama content. "Young fiction" (Krei 2019) such as *Wir sind jetzt/We Are Now* (2019–), a miniseries about a girl falling in love with her boyfriend's best friend, specifically orients towards a young audience. However, rather than appearing in the linear programme, its first season—a mere four episodes—was first released as online content on the platform

TV Now (now RTL+). At ProSieben, a German free-to-air television network owned by ProSiebenSat.1 Media, overlaps with video-on-demand subscription services are even more obvious. *Jerks.* (Joyn/Maxdome/ProSieben, 2017–2023), a mock-reality comedy about the friendship between the two leading actors Christian Ulmen and Fahri Yardım, ran in the ProSieben programme. However, it was initially conceived as the first German original for Maxdome, ProSiebenSat.1 Media's streaming service. In the meantime, *Jerks.* is available on the Maxdome successor, Joyn.

The streaming portals of Germany's two established commercial broadcasting groups constitute additional distribution environments and commissioners in the country's television landscape (including streaming). On the one hand, there is RTL+ (formerly TV Now and even earlier RTLnow) on the part of the RTL Group, and on the other hand we have Joyn, the ProSiebenSat.1 Media platform launched in 2019, which, until 2022, operated in cooperation with the US media company Discovery. Some series run exclusively on these streaming services, and others appear there in advance of their linear "free TV" broadcast. Among the RTL Group's German channels, Vox in particular has now positioned itself as a secondary distributor of RTL+ dramas, such as *Herzogpark* (2022), a satire of Munich's glitterati, and *Faking Hitler* (2021), a miniseries on the media scandal around the falsified diaries of Adolf Hitler in the early 1980s. Both RTL+ and Joyn have two tiers: an advertising-financed tier with basic offerings, and a paid "premium" tier. Exclusive, original dramas are especially relevant for the latter, as they help to attract and retain subscribers as well as generate image and visibility. For years, however, German viewers' interest in pay TV services has been rather low (see Hickethier 1998, 424).

Pay TV

Historically, pay TV played only a small role in Germany as compared to other European as well as international markets (see Eichner and Esser 2020, 190). In fact, until the 2010s, pay TV providers commissioned no TV dramas in Germany at all. Rather, Premiere and its successor, Sky Deutschland, invested more in licence fees for sports, and especially football, broadcasts. The comedy *Add a Friend* (2012–2014, TNT Serie), the first German series commissioned on pay TV, marked a turning point in this respect. The responsible broadcaster, TNT Serie (now WarnerTV

Serie), which belongs to the US Warner Bros. Discovery group, provides a case study in this production study with its *4 Blocks* (2017–2019), a gangster drama set in Berlin's multicultural district Neukölln North. Like its sister channel TNT Comedy (WarnerTV Comedy since 2021), which now also commissions series (e.g. *Arthur's Law*, 2018; *The Mopes*, 2021), TNT Serie/WarnerTV Serie so far has been available in pay TV "programme bouquets", for example from Sky and telecommunications companies such as Telekom. TNT Serie collaborated with HBO Europe on the German-Romanian cyberthriller *Hackerville* (2018). HBO—the programme provider most often associated with quality TV (see Feuer 2007) and which also belongs to the Warner Bros. Discovery group—has thus joined the German television industry. So far, HBO series have been available in Germany mainly via the pay TV provider Sky and through RTL+. In the longer term, however,[2] the HBO Max streaming service might directly market HBO productions in Germany (Lorenzen 2021). As things stand, however, it seems unlikely HBO will increasingly pursue its own German content, because in 2022 it announced it would no longer commission Scandinavian, Dutch, Central European or Turkish originals for HBO Max (Szalai 2022). The departure from a "highly selective and locally-oriented approach" (Szczepanik 2021, 208), which had been tried and tested in Central and Eastern Europe, is probably due to budgetary pressures, caused by revenue loss amid the Covid-19 pandemic (FitzGerald et al. 2020) as well as the merger of WarnerMedia and Discovery in 2022 and the resulting restructuring.

Since the late 2010s, the pay TV service Sky Deutschland also included its own German original dramas in its programme, among them *Babylon Berlin* (2017–, Fig. 4.3), a high-budget period crime drama made in cooperation with ARD; the endtimes dystopian thriller *8 Tage/8 Days* (2019); the German-Austrian crime drama *Der Pass/The Pass* (2018–2023), inspired by season one of the Danish-Swedish series *Broen/Bron/The Bridge* (SVT 1/DR1/ZDF, 2011–2018); and *Das Boot/The Boat* (2018–), a series sequel to the 1981 film of the same name, which was released in a multi-part television version in 1985. However, in the summer of 2023, Sky Deutschland announced, quite suddenly, that it would no longer be commissioning German fiction (Krei 2023b). The proclamation, which came as a surprise to industry insiders and media commentators, cited the rising cost of producing scripted content and the proliferation of streaming providers as reasons for the decision.

Fig. 4.3 *Babylon Berlin*, a cooperation between pay TV and public television (© ARD/Frédéric Batier/X Filme Creative Pool/ARD Degeto/Sky/Beta Film)

Outside the Sky and WarnerTV channels, less prominent and significantly more cheaply produced pay TV dramas from Germany include *Spides* (2020), so far the singular series production of Syfy, which specialises in science fiction, as well as *Post Mortem* (2019), a chamber-play-like miniseries on 13th Street, which focuses on thrillers and crime. Both Syfy and 13th Street are niche channels belonging to the US company NBCUniversal and—similar to the TNT/WarnerTV channels— have been distributed via pay TV programme bouquets, especially on Sky. However, further productions from these marginal pay TV providers are currently not to be expected.

Transnational Streaming Providers

Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, the transnationally operating, US-based representatives of "streaming, 'prestige' television through algorithmic predictions" (Shapiro 2020, 660), presently commission drama in the German series market. They contribute to driving its transnational

expansion (taken up in Chapter 6). In March 2017, Amazon Prime Video released its first German series, *You Are Wanted* (2017–2018), a cross-episode thriller about a hotel manager and family man who becomes the victim of hackers. The involvement of lead actor and director Matthias Schweighöfer, best known for commercially successful German cinema comedies (such as *Friendship*, 2010; *What a Man*, 2011; and *100 Dinge/ 100 Things*, 2018), points to a clear mainstream orientation and, to that extent, conservative selection criteria, as other German Amazon projects indicate as well. For example, Amazon Prime Video has relied on established brands for several German projects: *Pastewka* (Sat.1, 2005–2014; Amazon Prime Video, 2018–2020) is a remake of the earlier comedy with the main actor of the same name, and *Bibi & Tina – Die Serie* (2020) follows on from the well-known children's audio drama (1991–) and the four successful *Bibi & Tina* films (2014–2017). The Amazon production *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo/We Children from Zoo Station* (2021), which this study considers through an interview with head writer Annette Hess, builds on the transnationally successful non-fiction book by Christiane Felscherinow, Kai Hermann and Horst Rieck and its well-known film adaptation *Christiane F. – Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo/Christiane F* (1981). Thereby, the TV version of *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* joins various series that tie in with well-known films and retell them serially as remakes or reboots, as does, for example, the Sky drama *Das Boot*.

In December 2017, Netflix released its first German original, *Dark* (2017–2020, Fig. 4.4), as a counterpart to Amazon's *You Are Wanted*. A convoluted mystery drama set in different time periods and around several families' existential entanglements, *Dark* clearly aims to set itself apart from previously dominant genres and tonalities in German television fiction and also from a simple case-per-episode structure. According to unofficial information shared at the *Winterclass* industry workshop (Kosack 2017), Netflix initially tried to reach young "tech-savvy men on computers", a particularly elusive target group (Kosack 2017). Following German Netflix productions such as *Wir sind die Welle/We Are the Wave* (2019), a coming-of-age drama web series loosely based on Todd Strasser's 1981 novel *The Wave*, and *How to Sell Drugs Online (Fast)* (2019–), a comedy about a high school student starting an online drug business, orientate even more clearly towards teenage viewers, an audience that the German television industry has long neglected in TV fiction (see Krauß 2020d, 164–165) and that also represents a focus for Netflix in other territories (Krauß and Stock 2020, 17–19). For Amazon Prime

Video's German commissions, such an overarching tendency is so far less evident. In principle, both streaming services' German drama productions are continuing to diversify in both genre and tonality. Their German fiction programmes now include children's series: the aforementioned *Bibi & Tina – Die Serie*; fantasy: *Der Greif / The Gryphon* (Amazon Prime Video, 2023), based on Wolfgang Hohlbein's best-selling novel; and drama and "dramedy", for a typically older and female audience: especially *Das letzte Wort / The Last Word* (Netflix, 2020), starring the well-known comedian Anke Engelke, and *Zeit der Geheimnisse / Holiday Secrets* (Netflix, 2019). These and other originals are joined by licence purchases, making Amazon and Netflix not only commissioners but also buyers in the German fiction market.

Internet-based television, especially in the area of subscription video-on-demand (SVoD), continues to unfurl. In November 2019, Apple TV+ became available in Germany, then in March 2020, Disney+, and in December 2022, Paramount+. They all have commissioned "local" German dramas: Apple TV+ announced the dark comedy *Where's Wanda?* (2024) with the well-known actor Heike Makatsch. The first German

Fig. 4.4 *Dark*, the first German Netflix drama. (© Julia Terjung/Netflix)

originals for Disney+ address an adult audience and seem to aim at achieving diversity in content. *Sam − Ein Sachse/Sam − A Saxon* (2023), internationally marketed as a "Hulu original", is about the first Afro-German policeman in East Germany. *Deutsches Haus/German House* (2023), based on a novel by screenwriter Annette Hess, follows the first Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt in 1963. However, Disney+ cancelled the previously announced drama *Sultan City*, about a family of Turkish origin where the father of three children mysteriously disappears (Lückerath 2021), because of "creative differences" (Staff 2023).

Even more than Disney+ and its cancelled *Sultan City* project, the cases of the SVoD services Paramount+ and Starzplay point to the fast pace and uncertainty of the German streaming market. Shortly after it began operations in Germany, Paramount+ released *Der Scheich/The Sheikh* (2022). This comedy, about a German con man claiming to be a Qatari sheikh, was the first TV series project of Swiss filmmaker Dani Levy, a founder of the German company X Filme Creative Pool (responsible for *Babylon Berlin*) and director of several motion pictures, mainly comedies (e.g. *Stille Nacht/Silent Night*, 1995). However, in 2024, Paramount+ decided to concentrate solely on US series. German drama productions released in 2023 were taken offline, and dramas waiting in the wings, such as *Zeit Verbrechen/Love by Proxy* (2024), suddenly needed to find new distributors (Mantel 2024). The Starzplay service, available for purchase through Amazon's Prime Video Channels, announced in July 2022 the launch of its first German original, *Nachts im Paradies/At Night in Paradise*, a graphic novel adaptation starring the well-known German actor Jürgen Vogel (see Weis 2022). But just a few months later—shortly after Starzplay's renaming to Lionsgate+—it was clear: this SVoD service was withdrawing from Germany and other European countries (Krei 2022).

Fluid boundaries between the local TV series landscape and online platforms are evident in the few German series (such as the comedy *Bullshit*, 2018) that YouTube produced for its paid SVoD service YouTube Premium (formerly YouTube Red) around 2018. Furthermore, new players in the German TV series landscape include telecommunication companies that have joined the ranks of series producers, similar to in other European markets. Telecommunication firms' programme offerings point to further media transformations and expansions in Germany's television industry. Arnim Butzen, vice president for TV and entertainment

at Telekom, announced at the 2020 *Berlinale Series Market* that MagentaTV, which belongs to Telekom, would continue to focus on its original dramas—even after the critical failure of the German–French culture-clash comedy *Deutsch-Les-Landes* (MagentaTV/Amazon Studios, 2018; see e.g. Buß 2018). In 2021, MagentaTV accordingly released *Wild Republic* (2021), an adventure drama series about juvenile delinquents on the run in the Alps—another contribution to the growing number of teen TV dramas from Germany (Krauß and Stock 2021, 413); this was followed in 2022 by *Oh Hell* (2022), a dramedy about the post-adolescent antiheroine Helene, who is struggling with herself and her life. But in that same year, Telekom announced its withdrawal from the German drama business. In *DWDL.de*, Butzen justified this decision by saying that there are now fewer possible partnerships than in the past, as media companies prefer to keep distribution stages in-house (Lückerath 2022). Telekom's MagentaTV had primarily relied on co-producers for its drama originals—such as Arte, ARD's One channel and ARD's local broadcasters WDR and SWR—Südwestrundfunk (Southwest Broadcasting), in the case of *Wild Republic*. Such collaborations evidence new, more flexible and more intensified networking between commissioners when it comes to co-financing (see Eichner 2021). In the sample period of 2015–2023, diversified business models emerged in this context.

Diversifying Business Models

The various platforms and broadcasters commissioning German drama series have diverse business models, and therefore address and conceptualise viewers differently. In the case of pay TV and SVoD services, at first glance the focus is on attracting and retaining subscribers. Some series are conceived as "behaviour-altering titles" (Conrad in Zarges 2020b) that motivate previously unreached or lost viewers to purchase a subscription. In some cases, however, the boundaries to advertising-financed programming are fluid—especially with RTL+ and Joyn and their supposedly free basic online services. Since November 2022, Netflix has also offered a basic subscription, with advertising, at a lower price point in Germany. This example underlines that platforms—as theorised more fundamentally by José van Dijck et al. (2018, 9) in *The Platform Society*—can modify their individual elements, including their business models.

In the cases of Apple (whose streaming service Apple TV+ likely will commission German dramas in the longer run, too; see Lückerath 2023)

and Amazon, the streaming portals function merely as a kind of accessory so that their customers use their devices or corresponding online shops. The established advertising business in linear broadcasting, on the other hand, is declining into crisis and very likely will continue to shrink due to the digital transformation of the German TV market, accelerated by the Covid-19 crisis. In 2007, audience attractiveness (which derived its attractiveness according to the advertising industry) was still the central quality for commercial TV stations (Fröhlich 2007, 39), even though this quality is difficult to translate into production strategies (Kiefer 2001, 173). However, today, other and more complex economic approaches and evaluations are now conceivable. "Viewing numbers might no longer determine whether a series is renewed, as that decision may now be based on more discrete correlations", Stephen Shapiro (2020, 661) points out with regard to a current "algorithmic television" (658). Internet distribution promises the possibility to collect more precise data on audiences, which the industry had already sought to control (Ang 1991). Now, selection criteria for scripts and renewal decisions have become more multifaceted and, with this data, an economically usable commodity is sought. The streaming portals' various business models also include collecting data and selling it to other institutions (see van Dijck et al. 2018, 11).

Among the interviewed and observed practitioners, I found less a criticism of datafication, platformisation and their associated business practices and instead more of a feeling that, in view of the various commissioning and distribution options, the German TV drama industry is experiencing a "gold rush era" (e.g. von Borries 2019). This extremely positive finding of a "golden era" (the revelation of which Gunhild Agger [2020] deals with in more contexts and more generally) certainly is related to the period in which I conducted most of the interviews and observations: predominantly before the Covid-19 pandemic and before the quickly rising inflation and economic and energy crises that followed Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This more recent scenario Tilmann P. Gangloff (2022, 71, my translation) sees as "grey clouds gathering over the German production industry".

Even before the current economic gloom, concentration and shrinkage processes were repeatedly observed alongside the multiplication of distributors and commissioners. For example, Watchever, the streaming provider of the French media group Vivendi SA, announced its own German series in 2013 (Gropp 2013) but has long since ceased operations. Netflix and

Amazon Prime Video, on the other hand, have continued to gain users in the wake of the coronavirus crisis (Lobigs 2020, 46; AGF Videoforschung 2020). Is the German series landscape threatened, in the longer term, by the duopoly of Netflix and Amazon, as Sean Fennessey (2017) feared for US independent cinema some years ago? At least for the time being, the central importance of public broadcasters still speaks against such a scenario in Germany as well as in other European television fiction markets.

Relevance of Public Broadcasters

Predominantly fee financed, public-service broadcasters have continuous and quite stable revenue (Goldmedia and Schneider 2020, 17). According to statistics from the European Audiovisual Observatory, the public-service ARD network finishes up second among producers of European fiction, in terms of the number of titles produced. ZDF makes it into the top 10 (Fontaine 2023, 35; see also Fontaine and Pumares 2018, 31). According to the 2018 *Produzentenstudie* (Producers Study), ARD and ZDF are roughly on par in terms of investment in fiction programmes from Germany, at circa 400 million euros, which puts them well ahead of ProSiebenSat.1 and the RTL Group (Castendyk and Goldhammer 2018, 56–57). Public broadcasters clearly dominate among the five broadcasters with the highest revenues in Germany (Hennecke and Rau 2015, 31). This trend has not fundamentally shifted as of 2024 (at the time of publication), despite increased investment from Amazon Prime Video and Netflix, as our look at series types and broadcast slots later on will underline. In times of economic crisis, the importance of public broadcasters may even increase further, as they are less dependent on the commercial situation than private-sector and transnational players.

Moreover, as Joachim Kosack (2017), one of the managing directors of UFA production house, pointed out at an industry workshop, ARD and ZDF are well-known and, thanks to fixed budgets, reliable partners for producers. Tried and tested relationships form a central selection criterion for actors in project networks (e.g. Eigler and Azarpour 2020, 2). New programme providers, on the other hand, still often come with uncertainty about how cooperations will be structured and how comprehensively and for how long they will invest in fiction productions from Germany. Klaus Zimmermann, producer of European "high-end" series

such as *Borgia* (ZDF et al. 2011–2014), was therefore quite critical about commissioners such as Netflix in an interview published in 2018:

> [T]hey make more noise than spend money. […] Am I successful if I have my show on Netflix? Or am I successful when I have my show on a broadcaster that has 5 million viewers? A lot of producers spend a lot of energy to get in business with new players, and not enough serving the traditional ones and making better television. (in Harris 2018, 326)

That is to say, one cannot describe the television series landscape in Germany solely in terms of its medial and institutional expansions; rather, one must keep an eye on long-standing, historically nurtured, often public-service structures. Traditions and public-service influences also become evident when looking at production companies. As further central institutions, they constitute a prominent aspect of the television industry in Germany.

4.2 Production Companies

As early as the 1960s, ARD and ZDF, the only German broadcasters at that time, began to obtain programme content via the free market and to externalise risks to production companies (Meier-Beer 1995, 58). Consequently, these companies form an essential part of series production project networks and have significant input in arranging them. Programme providers, in turn, select production companies according to whether they can competently put together and coordinate project networks (Windeler et al., 116). Producers often engage in so-called packaging in advance to score points with the commissioners. This tactic involves not just presenting the most dazzling collection of well-known names as possible, with which production companies approach broadcasters and platforms, especially in the case of "high-end" quality projects, according to several practitioners (e.g. Lippold and Kraus 2019). Rather, packaging in advance is more comprehensively about several processes that span project stages, as Christian Zabel summarises in his economic study of the German TV sector, including "the profitability calculation, the commitment of central creative participants, the securing of financing and, if necessary, the optioning of film rights" (2009, 67, my translation). Valuations can play a role in this packaging, for example with regard

to well-known and esteemed creatives. Thus, the relevance of quality attributions inherent to the industry becomes visible once again.

Production Companies and Broadcasters: Interconnections and Overlaps

There is a basic differentiation to be made between broadcaster-independent and broadcaster-dependent production companies, with the highest-revenue companies in Germany belonging primarily to the second type (Mikos 2021, 177). UFA and its section UFA Fiction, for example, belong to the Bertelsmann Group via their parent company Fremantle Media, and are thus intertwined with the RTL Group. Studio Hamburg, whose subsidiary Real Film was responsible for the political drama *Die Stadt und die Macht/The City and the Power* (ARD/NDR/Degeto, 2016)—another case study used in recruiting interviewees—is a wholly owned subsidiary of ARD's NDR. In some cases, several programme providers stand behind broadcaster-dependent producers (Hennecke and Rau 2015, 32), exemplified by Bavaria Film, a leading film and television production company based in northeast Munich whose shareholders include ARD's local broadcasters WDR, SWR, MDR and BR. The picture becomes even more confusing in view of the subsidiaries through which the public broadcasters operate in a market economy and hold stakes in production companies. For example, the commercially operating ZDF subsidiary ZDF Studios (formerly ZDF Enterprises) holds stakes in 18 companies (in 2023; ZDF Studios 2023). Several of these companies have produced quality drama projects: Bavaria Film, for instance, made the series sequel *Das Boot* and the biopic *Freud* (Netflix/ORF, 2020), and Network Movie created *Morgen hör ich auf/Tomorrow I Quit* (ZDF, 2016), a drama significantly influenced by *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008–2013), and the European co-production *The Team* (ZDF et al. 2015–2018). The media economists Chris Hennecke and Harald Rau (2015, 30–33) criticise the opaqueness of the market when it comes to such interconnected structures, and they contend that essential players in TV production are ultimately still organised and financed under public broadcasting. From their point of view, it must be asked to what extent some television and film production companies profit from the connections. Commentators also voiced similar questions in *DWDL.de*, specifically in relation to increased production at the ZDF subsidiary Network Movie and its new offshoot Studio Zentral[3]: independent producers complained

about internal agreements between ZDF and Network Movie that left them out (Zarges 2021b).

Against the background of interconnections between broadcasters and production companies, it is doubtful whether—as Laura Glockseisen (2018, 30) claims—the digitalised German TV market has prevailed as an "independent structure" in the German production landscape. Particularly in the case of TV drama series, the tendency she identifies among many smaller productions to address only a limited target group is at best conditionally true. German TV series are, at least traditionally, more geared towards mass compatibility (Sydow and Windeler 2004b, 6) and involve a great deal of effort. Small production companies are more capable of producing individual films than serial projects that may take years to produce. They lack the financial resources to make advance financial contributions and invest in the more complex material development.

However, in the past decade, younger and comparatively small companies have joined the ranks of series production. NeueSuper, for example, a production company founded as recently as 2010 by three graduates of the film school Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film München, has maintained a series focus since the ZDFneo comedy *Blockbustaz* (2014–2018) and is now mixing it up in the more expensive quality segment with the Sky drama *8 Tage* as well as *Luden* (2023), a drama for Amazon Prime Video about Hamburg's red-light district St. Pauli in the 1980s. The company btf—bildundtonfabrik, initially associated primarily with programmes by the popular satirist Jan Böhmermann, produces the Netflix teen drama *How to Sell Drugs Online (Fast)* and the Covid-19 dramedy *Drinnen – Im Internet sind alle gleich*, a series considered in my interviews (see Krauß 2023a). The political satire *Eichwald, MdB*, another low-budget series with some clear influence on the interviewed practitioners, comes from Kundschafter Filmproduktion, an independent company created during the development work for the arthouse agent comedy *Kundschafter des Friedens/Scouts of Peace* (2017). With *The Billion Dollar Code* (2021), a miniseries about a real-life legal dispute between Google and a small Berlin agency regarding digital art and the online service Google Earth, this production company can now count itself among the ranks of German Netflix producers.

Television Production and Film: Flowing Boundaries

Linked to independent producers' high commitment to series, the boundaries between television and film—which in Germany are already "amphibiously" connected (Rohrbach 2009, first 1977)—became even more fluid during the period under study. This trend corresponds to similar convergence processes in other European and international markets (Meir 2019, 106) and affects both producers and their products. So-called quality or high-end dramas, which the following subchapter on series types describes in more detail, often comprise only a few episodes. Production companies that until a few years ago clearly specialised in arthouse cinema productions now develop such television series, partly because cinema distribution (even before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic) proved to be increasingly difficult to execute and financially less lucrative (Arndt in Arndt et al. 2017). Examples of such companies considered in this study are X Filme Creative Pool, which in addition to *Babylon Berlin* produced, among others, the family drama thriller *Die verlorene Tochter/The Lost Daughter* (ZDF, 2020) and the social-critical comedy *Tina mobil/Tina Mobile* (ARD/RBB, 2021), as well as 23/5 Filmproduktion, founded by director Hans-Christian Schmid, which produced *Das Verschwinden/The Disappearance* (ARD et al., 2017). *Das Verschwinden*'s ambitious genre mix of crime, family and youth drama tells the story of a mother's search for her missing teenage daughter in the Czech-Bavarian border region; it is incorporated into this production study through interviews with the head writer and two responsible editors from BR. Komplizen Film, founded and co-directed by acclaimed filmmaker Maren Ade, has also entered the series business with the co-production *Skylines* (2019), a Netflix drama on the Frankfurt hip-hop scene that was cancelled after the first season. Perhaps such companies, which are primarily associated with film and cinema and have some experience in transnationally circulating material (see, for example, the Komplizen production *Toni Erdmann*, 2016), represent the industry segment that will be able to fulfil the need for artistically ambitious and transnational quality series in Germany?

The connection with the cinema market, which tends to be more transnational, especially in the German arthouse segment, is also indicated in the case of Wiedemann & Berg, if we follow Kosack's outsider assessment at the 2017 *Winterclass*. The international success of the Oscar-winning GDR-era drama *Das Leben der Anderen/The Lives of*

Others (2006) helped UFA's competitor company generate commissions for Netflix series, he argued (2017). Wiedemann & Berg's TV offshoot, W&B Television, has positioned itself as a central producer in the young pay TV and SVoD series market, from the very first German pay TV drama, *Add a Friend*, through to *Der Pass*, and on to *Tribes of Europa* (2021). A science-fiction dystopia, *Tribes of Europa* follows three young siblings mixed up in a conflict between different future civilisations and was the second German series production for Netflix, after *Dark*. Besides *Dark*, two other case studies used for the study sample come from this production house: the gangster drama *4 Blocks* and *Mitten in Deutschland: NSU / NSU German History X* (ARD et al., 2016), a three-part miniseries presenting the crimes of the radical right-wing terrorist organisation National Socialist Underground in the 2000s from three different perspectives. Previously part of the transnationally operating Endemol Shine Group, W&B Television now belongs to the Munich-based film trading and production group Leonine Holding. Its founders, Quirin Berg and Max Wiedemann, confidently announced in the German industry magazine *Blickpunkt:Film* that this restructuring would fulfil the dream of a German studio that combines film, distribution, television, licensing and entertainment under one roof (in Müller 2019).

Like the case of Wiedemann & Berg, other semi-studio structures are emerging in Germany's television industry. Overall, however, this local TV landscape is dominated by medium-sized production companies with limited financial strength. UFA and the independent Constantin Film, which is behind the high-budget drama *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo*, provide further examples of houses that combine cinema and television and partly include distribution. The boundaries between production and distribution are also becoming blurred at Beta Film, the distribution company for film and television licences, which now invests in series such as *Babylon Berlin* and has stakes in several production companies, including Bantry Bay, the production house behind *DRUCK* and *Club der roten Bänder*. These occasional tendencies towards a studio system on the part of production companies, however, are countered by developments among commissioners to become producers themselves. The respective sides' different interests and the various forms of cooperation among them receive detailed attention in Chapter 5, on negotiating financing and distribution issues. But, first, we must attend to another important issue: a brief overview of other actors and institutions in the local television series landscape, which will help us draw as comprehensive a picture of it as possible.

Other Actors: Beyond Production Companies and Programme Providers

In television series production, actors beyond broadcasters, platforms and production companies are sometimes involved, such as film and media funds. In Germany, these state-run institutions have increasingly expanded their activities in the direction of series, specifically co-financing expensive high-end projects with multiple financial backers as well as smaller ones from the up-and-coming low-budget sector (see Mikos 2021, 181–182). This transformation of film funding is happening not least due to similar activities by transnational and European competitors and because the funders fear that larger TV drama productions will migrate to other countries, especially Eastern Europe (Niemeier 2017). Through subsidies, German media policy has a direct impact on the television market, which—as in other countries and in television history—comes with issues of state intervention, regulation and deregulation, as well as national and European political debates. In federally structured Germany, media funding also often intersects with regional issues. Many funding agencies are, after all, assigned to federal states and, when allocating funds, aim strongly at bolstering "local effects" (i.e. economic benefit for the respective region). The federal structure of the television industry—upheld in Germany by, among other things, the union of local public-service broadcasters in the ARD network and by the production companies interwoven with them—is thus perpetuated and intensified. The "diversity in funding policies of the regional film funds" (Appelgren 2018, 278) complicates interconnections in mixed and co-financing (which Chapter 5 looks at in more depth).

In addition to institutions such as funding agencies and broadcasters, individual freelancers have considerable sway on the forms television series production takes. In particular, personnel in the project networks and screen idea work groups who are considered "creatives" tend to be freelancers. Through hiring freelancers, programme providers and production companies outsource risks. This production study takes these freelance actors, especially scriptwriters, into account when analysing the German industry discourse on quality drama.[4] In Germany, writers, like other freelance television workers, tend to be less formalised and only partially unionised, with little assertiveness, as producer and writer Jörg Winger (2017) reflected in an interview. Seen in this light, many writers belong

to the "third labour sector", which John Thornton Caldwell (2008, 50–51) refers to as the "unregulated film and television related work worlds […] off the lot and out of the studio".

Individual newcomers often find entry into the industry difficult, as some interview partners critically discussed (e.g. Stuckmann 2016; see also Zabel 2009, 64). Barriers arise from television professionals' fundamental tendency to make recourse to their personal networks. Assembling project-specific teams usually means using existing contacts. A decisive criterion is whether the team's "chemistry" is right (so goes the repeated argument at industry workshops). A probable basis for this "chemistry" is previous collaborations, as compared to entirely new relationships. On the other hand, the industry depends on innovation. In the case of efforts to create quality and innovative series, the need for new perspectives is particularly evident (see Krauß 2020b).

Thanks to new entrants and the existence of marginal areas, the German television industry does not represent a completely closed entity that can be conclusively defined. Openings and fluid boundaries are discernible not only in terms of personnel but also in media, institutional, textual and national terms. These fluid boundaries apply all the more to the broad, contemporary concept of television that this work follows and which includes "internet-distributed television services" (Lotz et al. 2018, 42) of various forms. From this point of view, the types of series outlined below are not constant presences but merely central tendencies that assist in describing current series production in Germany.

4.3   Series Types and Production Areas

In terms of its different types of TV drama production, Germany's television industry is yet again very multifaceted. Writers and other actors involved in screenwriting work across varying production contexts. In some places transnational features emerge, but to a large extent national specifics shape the production areas. Therefore, we cannot speak of one "specific, national production culture" (Redvall 2013, 183), as tends to be the case in smaller and more homogeneous markets such as Denmark. Both in the interview and at industry workshops (Kosack 2017, 2019; Thielen and Kosack 2015), Joachim Kosack distinguished between primarily four types of series and their associated production: the "industrial" daily soap opera; the "weekly" drama; the "local" procedural; and the "high-end" drama. These four categories are strongly

influenced by the structures and focuses of UFA. That company's fiction efforts subdivide into UFA Serial Drama, where "industrially produced" daily soaps dominate, and UFA Fiction, responsible for other series as well as television and cinema films (Krauß 2019, 70–71). In this respect, Kosack's categorisation depicts Germany's overall series production to only a limited extent, but it at least represents a first starting point to summarise central tendencies.

Industrial, Weekly, Local and High-End Series

According to Kosack (2019), series with around 250 episodes per year fall under the "industrial" type. We are therefore talking about daily soaps, such as the long-running *Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten/Good Times, Bad Times* (RTL, 1992–), and telenovelas—or more precisely their German variant, created in the early 2000s with a strong focus on long runs (Weber 2013, 280–281). *Sturm der Liebe/Storm of Love* (ARD, 2005–) is a famous and economically very successful example, as this romantic telenovela about relationships in the fictional Bavarian hotel Fürstenhof was sold to more than 20 foreign broadcasters. As mentioned in other interview partners' statements (e.g. Leibfried 2016) and in German how-to books on writing TV drama (e.g. Feil 2006, 245), the industrial series has clear divisions of labour and precisely defined production methods (Knöhr 2018, 34–35), including a collaborative pool of authors (thus approaching the writers' room model).

Kosack (2019) also described how the "weekly" series operates its production process, with 25–50 episodes produced and broadcast annually. For the better part of the year (even if each season has only 25 episodes) most of the team—including the writers and supervising or executive producers, heads of production and so on—works only on this series. Kosack cited the example of the various local spin-offs of the *SOKO* police procedural (ZDF/ORF, 1978–; e.g. *SOKO Leipzig/Leipzig Homicide*, ZDF, 2001–, see Fig. 4.5). Other weekly series, such as *Notruf Hafenkante/SOS Hafenkante* (ZDF 2007–), also belong to the crime procedural genre, which is generally very present in German and especially public-service fiction (Maurer et al. 2020, 261). The medical drama is another common weekly; see, in particular, the long-standing *In aller Freundschaft/In All Friendship* (ARD/MDR, 1998–) and its spin-off *In aller Freundschaft – Die jungen Ärzte/In All Friendship—The Young Doctors* (ARD/MDR, 2015–).[5] Both weekly crime and medical dramas

Fig. 4.5 The crime procedural *SOKO Leipzig/Leipzig Homicide* (© ZDF/ Sandra Ludewig)

are procedural, with a self-contained plot in each episode, while other weekly series, such as the now discontinued *Lindenstraße/Linden Street* (ARD/WDR, 1985–2020)—a kind of German *Coronation Street* (ITV, UK 1960–)—skew more towards a soap opera format, with cross-episode storylines. The dramaturgical tendency towards self-contained episodes implies a certain style of script work, where writers develop scripts separately for individual episodes featuring individual cases.[6] In production, the weekly also differs from the industrial daily soap opera in that the producer has more influence on the individual books, according to an industry workshop lecture by Kosack and Barbara Thielen (2015), the managing director of the production company Ziegler Film Köln and former head of fiction at RTL.

The third type, the "local" series, has approximately 13 episodes produced and broadcast annually, a focus on specific broadcast slots and an episode budget between 500,000 and 750,000 euros. For this format, the producer is the exclusive "driver", possibly "collaborating with a head writer", as Kosack and Thielen (2015) summarised. In the local series stream, procedural dramaturgy and the crime genre are again formative. The examples *Beck Is Back!* (RTL, 2018–19) and *Sankt Maik*,

which Kosack mentioned regarding this series segment during the interview, were each relatively short-lived due to unsatisfactory ratings for RTL's prime-time slot. Other local series, however—especially in the crime genre—have run for several years, if not decades. *Großstadtrevier/Big City Police Station* (ARD/NDR, 1986–), a police procedural set in Hamburg, for example, reached its 36th season in 2023. *Um Himmels Willen/For Heaven's Sake* (ARD/MDR, 2002–2021), a light comedy about a group of nuns that in 2012 was the most-watched German television series, with more than seven million viewers (Mantel 2012), ran for almost 20 years.

According to Kosack (2019), the goal for local series is to produce them for many years, "season after season with a certain regularity", and keep them on the market as long as possible. The economic attractiveness and relevance of long-running local series as well as weekly and daily soaps for production companies is obvious. In our interview, producer and writer Gabriela Sperl (2018) spoke of "cash cows"; other practitioners (e.g. Kromschröder 2018) used the common term "bread-and-butter" series.

In Kosack's (2019) assessment, the fourth type—the "high-end" drama—leads to greater risk for the producer because of increased effort towards script development, lower predictability (compared to procedurals for established broadcast slots) and decreased longevity. High-end productions primarily take the form of miniseries, developed out of the tradition of so-called event television (Cooke 2016). These dramas of mostly two or three 90-minute episodes usually deal with twentieth-century German history, especially the Second World War and National Socialism. However, according to Kosack (2018), the potential for continuation and more episodes is increasingly important in the high-end or event sector. Given the mass of cultural objects in today's society of singularities (Reckwitz 2020), brands must establish themselves in order to become visible among the different streaming content, as was done, for example, with *Charité* (ARD/MDR, 2017–), an event miniseries portraying the famous Berlin hospital in different eras.

Kosack furthermore linked the high-end segment with tendencies towards the "showrunner", a hybrid writer-producer whose gradual adoption in the German television industry is effecting changes among the project network and screen idea work group and the collaboration therein.[7] Following Kosack's model for different series types and production areas, we can say that the roles of producer and writer are generally

decisive criteria for categorising television series in Germany. Combined with producers' and head writers' influence and the working methods of these professions, the various types of series oscillate between "assembly line" and labour division versus more individual and artistic work (see Schmid 2016, 51, 187). With Andreas Reckwitz (2020), we can distinguish between standardisation and singularisation. The budgets differ between these two poles and tend to increase from the quickly produced, "industrial" soap opera to the ambitious "high-end" segment. The classification becomes more complex, however, when we consider gaps in Kosack's categorisation as well as border areas and overlaps.

Classifying the Quality Drama

The "quality" drama, as discussed and pursued in the German television series landscape, goes hand in hand with higher budgets—following the tendency, found in media economic analyses, to equate quality with high production costs (Hoskins and Mirus 1988, 502). Obviously, development and production conditions differ according to budget. In the case of the comparatively high-budget drama *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo*, which head writer Annette Hess (2019) distinguished from the "daily business", the shoot for eight episodes is said to have taken 130 days (according to information shared at the 2020 *Berlinale Series Market* [Berben et al. 2020], which surely also serves marketing purposes). In the industrial daily soap process, on the other hand, a complete 20- or 45-minute episode is shot in only one day (Kirsch 2001, 47).

Cost-intensive series projects usually have a higher degree of transnationalisation, because foreign sales and co-financing with foreign partners play a more important role. In our interview, Kosack (2019) elaborated on the "high-end" drama: "It's almost always about how you then work with the world distribution money or with distribution to the world at all". However, in the case of some projects discussed or planned as quality or high-end content—such as ARD's political drama *Die Stadt und die Macht*—foreign sales were hardly relevant or occurred only at a very late stage. Some productions even originate from decidedly regional contexts, such as the aforementioned Bavarian dramedy *Hindafing*. Announcements that foreign sales were not planned—as by Jörg Winger (2019) regarding *Deutschland 83*—should be treated with caution, as they correspond to the tendency described by Caldwell (2008, 15) that many television and film makers describe their own actions as

"unintentional". Transnational circulation, thus mediated, appears less related to existing structures or an overarching strategy than to a series' specific content, one's own skills, supposed coincidences or personal connections. Indeed, these individualised aspects also play an important role: after all, the television industry is strongly characterised by personal networks and project-specific gatherings. But foreign sales also require favourable structural framework conditions to get off the ground.

A look at individual projects leads to a more complex picture of quality TV dramas from Germany and reveals the boundaries of Kosack's four series categories as well as overlaps between them. For example, some supposedly quality productions have budgets barely above those of more "regular" and mainstream local series, such as the first season of *4 Blocks*. Heavily shot on location, its cost per episode is said to have been just under 700,000 euros (Greifeneder 2017; Mikos 2021, 186). Furthermore, production companies and freelancers often oscillate between the different series terrains, for economic reasons alone. For many of these actors, the "bread-and-butter" shows produced over years are economically more important and lucrative. Such productions often provide a longer-term, predictable source of income for production companies, offering security to invest money and time in more cost-intensive and riskier quality projects with fewer episodes. At the same time, some professionals in the high-end segment also draw boundaries around lower-budget or more industrially produced series and can exclude those practitioners associated with them. "It is very difficult to rescue people from pigeonholes in Germany—it is practically impossible", Liane Jessen (2019), who at the time of the interview was still head of the fiction department at ARD's HR branch, problematised this issue.

However, actors in the supposed "non-quality category" (Weber 2019, 241, my translation)—which is easily forgotten in discussions on quality TV—also strive to tell more "complex" stories with cross-episode storylines (see Knöhr 2018, 32–33). The daily soap and weekly segments in particular offer many practitioners a field of experimentation regarding ongoing dramatic continuity and act as entry points into the industry. In general, a turn towards serials, and partly away from single films, has been in process for some years, especially among departments and production areas promoting young talents. This newcomer terrain is left out of Kosack's model, perhaps due to a lack of economic relevance for mainstream producers such as him. TV dramas by emerging talents—such as *Eichwald, MdB*, from the ZDF editorial department Das kleine

Fernsehspiel, and *Servus Baby/Hello Baby* (2018–), from BR—usually have very few episodes and are often considered underfinanced. However, experiments in content, form and production emerge particularly in the area of newcomer or low-budget productions and web series that involve semi-professional actors, and thus expand the television industry (see Kuhn 2016).

A prime example of the emerging field's experimentation is the transmedia youth drama *DRUCK* (Fig. 4.6) by Funk and ZDF, where the ongoing "real-time" distribution of individual scenes and sequences on different platforms required a very rapid working method. Through such novel mechanisms, according to the producer Lasse Scharpen (2019), the lean structures typical of low-budget arthouse films provide an important influence (see also Krauß 2020c, 279–280; Krauß and Stock 2021). Practitioners' commonly held view that experiments take place in marginal areas and in low-budget productions (e.g. interview with Leibfried 2016) must also be approached critically. Such arguments can gloss over or conceal problematic production conditions. Often, references to one's "'boot camp' experience" (Caldwell 2008, 42) in "artistic" projects outside the mainstream aim to portray the speaker as a particularly innovative, risk-taking and experimental individual.

Certain overlaps also exist between newcomers to the industry and high-end dramas: junior creatives are often involved in the latter, and especially in collaborative script development in the writers' room.[8] New programme providers in particular recruit young talent to develop concepts and scripts for TV dramas and as personnel; see, for example, the Netflix hip-hop drama *Skylines*, where the "showrunner" (Schultze 2019) was the inexperienced Dennis Schanz, a graduate of the series-specific training programme Serial Eyes at the DFFB – Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin (German Film and Television Academy Berlin). TV series by young talent do not always fall under the "high-end" category—but equally not under "industrial", "weekly" or "local", either. Rather, we can observe a turn specifically towards serial teen TV dramas. This further series segment, which falls outside Kosack's series grid, is relevant to the analysed industry discourse on quality TV because the pressure to produce "better" or "different" series often goes hand in hand with the goal of rejuvenation (Redvall 2013, 79). "[P]ublic-service television is becoming increasingly conscious of the need to match the standards

Fig. 4.6 A transmedia youth drama with "real-time" distribution—the German *SKAM* adaptation *DRUCK*. (© ZDF/Richard Kranzin)

of imported series, and of the demands of its media-savvy younger viewers", attest Eva Pjajčíková and Petr Szczepanik (2016, 118), specifically regarding public broadcasters (see also Eichner and Esser 2020, 191).

Quality drama projects involving young talent and that have manageable budgets also populate the documentary genre. Examples in the period under study that draw on the central (but by no means new) genre of true crime (e.g. Murley 2008, 109–132) include *Höllental / Hell Valley* (ZDF, 2020), about the still unsolved murder of nine-year-old Peggy Knobloch, and *Rohwedder – Einigkeit und Mord und Freiheit / A Perfect Crime* (Netflix 2020), looking at the 1991 assassination of the president of the Treuhandanstalt (an agency established by the GDR government to (re)privatise East German enterprises). The streaming provider Amazon Prime Video also has many documentaries among its German original productions, such as *Unzensiert – Bushido's Wahrheit / Uncensored—Bushido's Truth* (2021), about the well-known, controversial German rapper. With *German Crime Story—Gefesselt / German Crime*

Story: Deadlock (2023), Amazon also released a fictionalised true-crime production from Germany.

Another gap in Kosack's categorisation is the scripted reality genre, which Daniel Klug and Klaus Neumann-Braun (2016, 7, my translation) describe as an "ambivalent phenomenon of German-language entertainment television", which peculiarly blurs the usual genre boundaries between entertainment and informative content, fiction and non-fiction. Scripted reality formats—such as *Berlin Tag & Nacht / Berlin—Day & Night* (RTL II, 2001–)—represent another type of series in Germany's industry and overlap not only with standard reality TV shows but also with the industrial daily soap opera, in terms of both broadcasting rhythm and, to some extent, production, storytelling and distribution. In industry discourse on so-called quality TV, as in the observed industry workshops, scripted reality is largely negated or at best addressed as a counterpart: as "trash" at the lower end of the rating scale (Frizzoni 2014). In the case of Bantry Bay's youth series *DRUCK*, which strongly orientates towards authenticity, the comparatively elaborate casting process (among other things) used a database of actors from Seapoint, Bantry Bay's sister company that specialises in non-fiction formats and scripted reality (see Krauß and Stock 2021, 421). Similar strategies to achieve a more diverse and less "ordinary" cast and, if desired, to include up-and-coming talent or amateurs, including from historically underserved demographic groups, can generally find purchase in quality drama projects. After all, it is precisely such programmes that producers often associate with "realism", research and elaborate casting.

Television Hybrids: Between Film and Series

Yet another segment relevant to the industry discourse on German quality dramas and their production is television films as well as hybrids between these and series. Important series, in the broader sense, which still display strong links to single TV films, are the multi-part films—so-called *Mehrteiler*—that usually consist of two or three 90-minute episodes. The *Mehrteiler* currently forms an independent category at the German Television Awards, separate from "Best Drama Series" and "Best Comedy Series" (Deutscher Fernsehpreis 2023, my translation). The prevalence of the 90-minute format in German TV fiction also manifests in the so-called *Reihe*, a kind of procedural with feature-length episodes. These series consist of largely independent television plays,

usually held together only by genre, a common title and a few lead characters. Particularly well-known and traditional examples are the popular *Tatort / Crime Scene* (ARD/ORF/SRF, 1970–) and the related detective series *Polizeiruf 110 / Police Call 110* (1971–), which originated in the state television of the GDR, DFF – Deutscher Fernsehfunk (German Television Broadcasting), and was integrated nationwide through ARD and in Austria by the cooperating ORF – Österreichischer Rundfunk (Austrian Broadcasting) from 1990 onwards. Episodes of both *Tatort and Polizeiruf 110* tend to be made as individual films, with production entities—consisting of scriptwriters, directors, producers and production companies—changing each time. Often, only supervising editors and their editorial teams ensure continuity across the series. Through this structure that includes several local broadcasters, each with editorial oversight over its local teams of detectives (as regular *Tatort* protagonists), the federalism of the public ARD network is inscribed in both shows' production and text. "*Tatort* […] is not a series in the conventional sense", conclude Christian Hißnauer, Stefan Scherer and Claudia Stockinger (2014a, 9–10, my translation) in view of this regional breakdown. However, basic features of serial storytelling characterise *Tatort and Polizeiruf 110*, especially "the linking of the individual segments through recurring characters at specific locations".

More generally, overlaps between the TV film and TV series become visible when multi-part "event miniseries" or *Mehrteiler* are presented in 45-minute instead of 90-minute episodes outside the German-speaking region, as in the case of *Ku'damm 56/59/63* (ZDF, 2015–2021), or when series become pressed into the single 90-minute-film form in their later seasons, as happened with the German-Austrian medical drama *Der Bergdoktor / The Mountain Doctor* (ZDF/ORF, 2008–), a reboot of the 1990s series of the same name (Sat.1, 1992–1997). The adaptation to linear structures plays an important role here. Distribution patterns and broadcast slots generally have had a decisive influence on series and television films from Germany and therefore require closer examination.

Broadcast Slots and Linear Structures

Broadcast slots still determine, to a great extent, structures of Germany's television series landscape, including series types, production contexts and screenwriting guidelines. If one draws on actor-network theory (e.g. Latour 1996; and with a focus on television, Teurlings 2013)—and not

only the approaches of the project network or screen idea work group, which this work centres—broadcast slots can be understood as a kind of actor whose significance has developed over the course of television history and that continues to transform itself in interaction with other practices and processes of the industry. Broadcast slots form an object around which practices of screenwriting, including the associated training and evaluation of scripts and pitch papers, came to orientate themselves (as I myself was able to experience in internships and workshops). Broadcast slots have also decisively structured genres, tonalities and content.[9]

In the period under investigation—since 2015—a certain decoupling from place-based broadcasting distribution and financing is most definitely apparent. As a result, script development's orientation to broadcast slots has also weakened, as several interview statements concretised. But linear broadcasting continues to play an important role in terms of distribution and reception patterns. According to quantitative studies from 2019, television use at the immediate time of broadcast still dominates (Frees et al. 2019, 314–315, 317). Even more recent figures, however, show that non-linear use continues to rise (Hess and Müller 2022, 414; Rhody 2022). The 50+ age group, which is strongly represented in the overall German population, still watches (according to quantitative numbers from 2022) at least three-quarters of the time via "the current television programme" (Hess and Müller 2022, 419, my translation). The linear TV programme thus still has an extremely large and stable number of regular users in Germany.

The interviewed and observed TV professionals also repeatedly referred to broadcast slots, especially at the beginning of my research. It remains important to consider these slots, because they represent central, fundamental structures in and indicate the quantity of German television fiction. The need to fill the various slots links to Germany's very high number of productions compared to most other European countries.

When it comes to quality TV series from Germany, their commissioners have often remade or at least explored existing broadcasting schemes. The miniseries *Das Verschwinden*, for example, ran on a few Sundays when the political talk show *Anne Will* (ARD/NDR, 2007–2023) was on hiatus in the summer, and thus rerouted the well-worn paths of public-service drama programming. Individual broadcast slots can have their own tensions as well—such as when *Weissensee/The Weissensee Saga* (ARD/MDR/Degeto, 2010–2018), a period drama following two families in

East Berlin between 1980 and 1990, was broadcast in the Tuesday night slot of ARD's national channel Das Erste instead of a lighter series with simple dramaturgy (i.e. self-contained episodes), such as the nun comedy *Um Himmels Willen*.

Drama production in Germany's television landscape generally displays heterogeneity and tensions, as this chapter has outlined. In addition to the poles of linear broadcasting versus event programming and online distribution, Germany's TV fiction landscape is characterised by different production methods and budgets, varying degrees of transnationality and locality, the multitude of commissioners and their networks, and the various production companies. The industry's diverse actors should not be regarded as entities that exist entirely separate from one another; rather—especially in the case of broadcasters and production companies that cooperate on the basis of projects—interconnections and networks are always at play. The following chapter looks specifically at economic network formations and outlines how the observed and interviewed television practitioners negotiated these aspects in their industry discourse on German quality drama.

Notes

1. I use the term "original" to refer to productions that a broadcaster or platform has commissioned and largely co-financed. Series purchased later are not originals, even though some programme providers, notably Netflix, label them as such.
2. Probably from 2025, after HBO's licence agreement with Sky Deutschland expires.
3. Studio Zentral was founded in 2020 and, since then, has produced, among others, the ambitious relationship drama *WIR/ WE* (ZDFneo, 2021–), the preteen series *ECHT/Real* (ZDF, 2021–) and the mystery anthology drama *Die nettesten Menschen der Welt/The Nicest People on Earth* (ARD/BR/Degeto 2023).
4. Chapter 8 explores writers' work and their interactions with other production members in the context of debates on production and screenwriting cultures.
5. Yet another spin-off, *In aller Freundschaft – Die Krankenschwestern/ In All Friendship—The Nurses* (ARD/MDR, 2018–), has fewer than ten episodes per season and thus does not qualify as a weekly drama, according to Kosack's definition.

6. For further discussion on this long-standing tendency in screen-writing in Germany, see Chapter 8.
7. Chapter 8 offers a detailed discussion on the showrunner in the German TV industry.
8. For discussion on the writers' room in the German TV industry, see Chapter 8.
9. Chapter 7, examining the industry's content-aesthetic debates on German TV drama, explains these impacts in relation to broadcast slots in more detail.

Financing and Distributing Television Drama: Economic Networks

5.1 Networks in Production and Distribution

"It's the economy, stupid!" This famous phrase, uttered by James Carville in 1992 when he was advising Bill Clinton during his successful run for the White House, has somehow made its way into the industry discourse on quality drama from Germany. The interviewed and observed practitioners repeatedly emphasised the budget and, linked to this, dealt with economic options and networks. They explored cooperations to finance quality or high-end series—potentially very cost-intensive productions—and also addressed different distribution chains. These negotiations are clearly linked to the expansion of broadcasters and platforms described in the previous chapter. In the analysed time frame, since the year 2015, and in view of digitalisation and transnationalisation processes, a number of options have opened up for distribution via different channels and streaming services.

Distribution Partnerships

Digital distribution networks were something that the German television industry had already considered in the recent past. Around 2010, the two leading public broadcasting institutions, ARD and ZDF, sought to establish the online pay TV platform Germany's Gold together with

rights holders and both dependent and independent production companies (such as Bavaria Film, Brainpool and Ziegler Film). These various partners aimed to make 60 years of television as well as national and international film hits from Germany available online indefinitely (WDR mediagroup 2013). However, the Federal Cartel Office, the Bundeskartellamt, complained at the time about a distortion of competition (Sawall 2013), just as private broadcasters feared cross-subsidisation through public broadcasting fees. RTL and ProSiebenSat.1's bid to come together to form the video portal Amazonas also failed in 2011 due to concerns of the Cartel Office (Siebenhaar 2012). Why, asks Frank Lobigs (2020, 47), do the large private and public TV companies in Germany still have no overarching streaming platforms, almost ten years later, corresponding to the alliances in France (the now no longer operating Salto) and Great Britain (BritBox)? According to Lobigs, antitrust law should be adapted "in the sense of a competition law that is more journalistically oriented instead of only economically oriented" (47, my translation). In 2023, consideration of a German "mega-platform" gained new traction, because in neighbouring Austria, Joyn, the streaming platform of the ProSiebenSat.1 Media group, also includes content from the Austrian public broadcaster ORF and other programme providers (see e.g. Krei 2023a).

Still, the observed and interviewed TV professionals negotiated current, concrete distribution alliances rather than such desired or past ones. In its distribution, the German television industry once again proved itself to be significantly intertwined: individual programme providers become explicitly dependent on others when they make up part of third-party platforms' streaming content. WarnerTV Serie and WarnerTV Comedy (formerly TNT Serie and TNT Comedy), for example, are mainly accessible through Sky's German streaming service WOW (formerly Sky Ticket). Distribution cooperation between platforms also occurs transnationally. For instance, the period drama *Babylon Berlin* (2017–), commissioned by ARD and (until season 4) Sky Deutschland, can be seen on Netflix in the US, Canada and Australia (Meza 2019). However, in 2023 (at the time of writing) season four, shown on Sky Deutschland/WOW in 2022, still has not been released in North America, ostensibly because of Netflix's refusal to strike a fair deal. Licence sales, both in and beyond Germany, fall within the activities of distribution companies and can affect not only the commissioning broadcaster or platform but also the production company if it retains certain rights.

Networking Between Programme Providers

Linked to distribution, the period of research saw increased networking between programme providers on the production side. Who, exactly, is teaming up with whom to finance and distribute series? At first, there were indications of networking within media groups. The German-Romanian co-production *Hackerville* (2018), for example, was commissioned by TNT Serie (now WarnerTV Serie) and HBO Europe, both part of the transnational US company WarnerMedia (now Warner Bros. Discovery). While HBO previously solely focused on its own "exclusive" dramas, the "doors have since been opened", announced Antony Root (in Root et al. 2020), vice president of HBO Europe. He made this statement at the 2020 *Berlinale Series Market*, and thus in a setting clearly about promotion and marketing. His positive reference to *Hackerville* can be countered by the fact that the thriller drama, following the investigation of a hacker attack in Romania, reached a rather small audience, despite winning the Grimme Award (one of the most prestigious German television awards) and securing secondary distribution via ARD's online service. Therefore, *Hackerville* cannot necessarily be considered a forward-looking model. Moreover, for the commissioned company, UFA Fiction, the project was economically attractive only to a limited extent because of its comparatively low budget, as Jörg Winger (2018), the show's co-creator, suggested in his presentation at the *Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing* industry workshop.

The intermingling of different local broadcasters of the public ARD network additionally can be viewed as networking practices within media groups. For the purpose of centralisation, Günter Struve, programme director of Das Erste (The First) from 1992 to 2008, drove the introduction of joint editorial departments for TV series in the early-evening and prime-time slots. Additionally, Degeto, ARD's commercial subsidiary, was strengthened as a "central financing agency", according to Bernhard Gleim (2016), former commissioning editor for NDR (part of the ARD network). In the interviews, Gleim and other ARD representatives spoke about cooperation within the federal broadcasting network. Especially when it comes to larger, more costly series productions for the joint national programme Das Erste, different local broadcasters and their respective editorial teams often band together. Sometimes, editorial department and different pots of money are combined in unusual ways. *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens / In the Face of Crime* (ARD et al. 2010)

an ambitious and acclaimed crime drama and an early German approach to serial quality TV, for example, was financed not from series budgets but from the reallocated television film budgets of various broadcasters, according to Gebhard Henke (2018), who was still head of programming (*Programmdirektor*) at WDR at the time of the interview. Traditionally, pots of money and editorial departments are tied to broadcast slots, as several interviewed editors explicitly addressed. However, the tie between schedule and budget is increasingly coming undone among Germany's public-service broadcasters.

Production and distribution cooperation can now also take place between commercial and public-service institutions, with, in principle, very different financing models and audience concepts. The cooperation between ARD and Sky Deutschland on *Babylon Berlin* is the best-known example, which several interviewees cited as evidence of new, more flexible network formations but also as an exceptional case. The first two seasons of the historical crime drama were released in the autumn of 2017 on the Sky 1 channel and the Sky Ticket streaming service (now WOW), and only nearly an entire year later on the national channel Das Erste and within ARD's online service. While the alliance received considerable criticism, mostly around promoting a commercial pay TV operator using public licence fees (see e.g. Mantel 2018), Martina Zöllner (2018) from the ARD broadcaster RBB praised the cooperation as "a super construction". She explained in our interview that one must look at the external, commercial partner and its coverage as very differentiated and always individually. Her reference to "coverage" should probably be understood as meaning that initial distribution of *Babylon Berlin* in cooperation with Netflix or Amazon Prime Video would have been more problematic, or at least would have required a greater economic commitment from such partners, due to their larger number of subscribers (see e.g. Bartl 2020). However, cooperation between Netflix and public broadcasters also has been tested, for example, with the television film *Freaks—Du bist eine von uns / Freaks: You're One of Us* (2020), a co-production by Netflix and Das kleine Fernsehspiel (The Little Television Play), ZDF's department for arthouse films and emerging talents. For the period crime drama *Freud* (2020), Netflix and the Austrian public broadcaster ORF came together. Obviously, through such alliances Netflix can reduce the costs of the content it distributes within the framework of its "glocal strategy" (Hansen 2020, 97) to, on the one hand, the local, German-speaking market and, on the other, transnationally. Since Netflix's distribution

spans different countries, the partnerships with this streaming service point in the direction of increased transnational co-production or at least co-financing, which was an important issue in the industry negotiations on financing quality TV drama.

5.2   Co-productions and Co-financing

Co-productions, through which the German television industry continues to network transnationally, can encompass various forms of cooperation: economic as well as creative; between two or many more states and its broadcasters and production companies; in Europe or beyond; between equal partners or, in the broader sense of co-financing, where responsibility for artistic content lies primarily in one country. In this last scenario, cooperation is limited to the level of financing, to the effect that the series in question usually continues to be received and marketed as a national product (Mitric 2018, 64).

Especially in the case of cost-intensive high-end or quality projects, intensified ways of co-financing and co-production are being explored, as there is a "growing need for producers to find financing outside of their national territory", as Julia Hammett-Jamart, Petar Mitric and Eva Novrup Redvall (2018, 5) argue. Foreign partners promise further sources of funding to fill out these shows' higher budgets and also access to funding bodies in other nations. Cultural factors can play into the economic motivations when European and German co-productions are pitted against the "big shows" (Klaus Zimmermann in Harris 2018, 321) from the US (see Drake 2018, 83–84) or when national or European history forms the narrative (as in the case of the lavish historical epic *Versailles*, Canal+, 2015–2018). Especially for miniseries that deal with historical events or adapt literary classics, co-productions and co-financing between public broadcasters from Europe have been not uncommon for a long time.[1] Apart from established partnerships among the German-speaking countries, however, such transnational alliances remain the great exception for German TV series production (Windeler et al. 2001, 121–122).

Revitalising Co-production

Both industry publications (e.g. Pickard 2019) and individual TV professionals have noted a revitalisation of European series co-production

in recent years. The potential for networking between countries with different languages also seems to have increased due to greater openness to series in languages other than English. This trend, according to several interviewed and observed practitioners (e.g. Behnke 2018), is notable in various markets, including Anglo ones. The French producer Jimmy Desmarais (2016), who worked for several years on co-productions for Atlantique Productions, highlighted *Carlos* (Canal+/Arte/TV5 Monde, 2010) in his presentation at the *European TV Drama Series Lab* as a key turning point for more recent European co-production. The French-German co-production illustrates, on the one hand, transnational and trans-European content by fictionalising the life of the Venezuelan terrorist Ilich Ramírez Sánchez, alias Carlos the Jackal, depicting relevant settings, allies and prosecutors across different countries. On the other hand, *Carlos* represents "amphibious" connections between cinema and television (Rohrbach 2009, first 1977) as known from earlier German productions, where a cinema film was released before a television broadcast of a longer series version of the same story. Other examples of such film-miniseries hybrids are *The Baader Meinhof Komplex* (ARD 2008) and *Das Boot/The Boat* (ARD et al. 1981/1985).

Since 2015, various other series co-productions (now more clearly oriented towards online distribution) with German participation have entered the market. In addition to the case studies considered in the interviews, *Das Verschwinden/The Disappearance* (ARD et al. 2017) and *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo/We Children from Zoo Station* (Amazon Prime Video et al. 2021), examples include *Cape Town* (2016), a German–South African crime thriller without direct broadcaster participation; *Deutsch-Les-Landes* (MagentaTV/Amazon Studios 2018), a French-German culture-clash comedy and the first original drama from Telekom's MagentaTV; *Bad Banks* (2018–2020, see Fig. 5.1), a German-Luxembourg financial thriller from ZDF and Arte; and *Dignity* (2019), a drama about the Christian sect Colonia Dignidad commissioned by the German platform Joyn and the Chilean TV channel Mega.

Co-productions, or at least co-financing, occurred in the late 2010s not only for such serials with ongoing dramatic continuity and clear quality ambitions but also for procedurals with one case per episode. Both Red Arrow Studios International, the transnational subsidiary of ProSiebenSat.1 Media, and the RTL Group pursued the goal of producing crime procedurals with mainstream and "international" appeal together with US and French partners (Meir 2019, 107). Hauke Bartel

Fig. 5.1 *Bad Banks*, a German-Luxembourg financial thriller from ZDF and Arte (© ZDF/Christian Lüdeke)

(2018), at the time of the interview head of fiction at the commercial channel Vox, spoke of certain "parameters" for co-produced procedurals such as *Gone* (Vox et al. 2017): "It should be very catchy […], it has to be 'case of the week' structure, it can't be too top-heavy in terms of premise, so it shouldn't have three or more hooks".

Such procedurals can be understood as a counter-movement to the complex serial storylines of many quality dramas,[2] and their development arose from the needs of linear broadcasters. Several television professionals highlighted (at least in the late 2010s) an ongoing demand from advertising-financed commercial broadcasters for procedurals with one case per episode, as such shows offer more flexiblity when programming linear television. In this context, German and European TV professionals problematised a lack of supply from the US of such conventional procedurals, thus prompting their production locally.

Transatlantic co-productions taking up the guise of US procedurals not only show that trends and tendencies in US TV drama influence Germany's television industry but also reveal that the German TV market

and its needs can likewise affect US producers when looking for co-financiers and licensees. At the *Winterclass* workshop, Amelie von Kienlin (2017), then senior vice president for co-productions and acquisitions at Red Arrow Studios International, justified her company's co-financing of procedurals with a US setting and US actors (instead of German-language series) by saying that the demand for non-English-language productions in the US is still very limited.

In addition to Red Arrow, other production companies with German roots have focused on English-language co-productions. Tandem Communications is one such example. The company, a production partner on the German–French-Italian-American action crime thriller series *Crossing Lines* (Sat.1 et al. 2013–2015), is based in Munich and has belonged to Studiocanal since 2012. However, representatives of the US television industry are said to have wondered what exactly German TV stations wanted to get out of commissioning old-fashioned US crime procedurals and then dubbing them. Behind some closed doors, according to Torsten Zarges (2018), writing for the online trade magazine *DWDL.de*, the expression "German stupid money" was once again heard. This catchphrase first arose in the early 2000s to describe investments in Hollywood productions from German media funds (Knorr and Schulz 2009, 270). In view of the only mediocre success of several series born from European-transatlantic co-production partnerships, German and French producers have since refrained from such English-language projects (see Meir 2019, 213).

While the crime procedurals wearing US garb often try to obscure their co-production origins, the mash-up of different countries is clearly reflected in the content of other projects. *The Team* (ZDF et al. 2015–2018), for example, is about European investigators cooperating across borders, and *Eden* (Arte/ARD/SWR 2019) fictionalises refugee movements around the year 2015 as a trans-European drama. *Eden* was created within the framework of the Franco-German Tandem initiative of Arte (the European public-service channel) and SWR (an ARD local broadcaster). This initiative aims to produce television films and series with "European themes" (SWR and unnamed author 2018, my translation). When speakers presented such projects at industry events, the common argument was that a co-production should be motivated not only economically but also creatively. In this context, the so-called Europudding trope functioned as a negative benchmark—looming as a kind of spectre of problematic past co-productions to be avoided.

"Europudding" and Other Challenges

The term "Europudding" describes aesthetically incoherent, "identity-less" television productions, especially from the past, whose mediocrity is said to have resulted from trying to satisfy multiple and sometimes competing interests. Describing past Europudding programmes in an industry talk, the producer Desmarais (2016) attested to how each broadcaster had only its domestic audience in mind and feared that its constituency would not accept characters and content beyond its respective national border. More recently, however, co-productions are displaying a greater flexibility and independence from national origins, following the observations shared in *DWDL.de* on the series-specific international festival Séries Mania in 2015:

> TV series are increasingly created between partners from different countries who come together completely independent of their geographical origins because they believe in a certain subject and in the vision of a writer or showrunner. As a result, […] constellations can be observed that seemed unthinkable just a few years ago – without everyone wanting to see their own country and actors in the finished product. (Zarges 2015b, my translation)

Contrary to this positive assessment, however, many still have considerable reservations about co-productions in the German TV industry. The producer Ulrike Leibfried (2016) argued, by way of example, that when a great many people have a say in co-productions, it becomes difficult to pursue a clear idea. Production participants experience the notes from very different parties with divergent interests and practices as a challenge during the development and production process (Conor 2014, 71–74).[3]

Another challenge arises with distribution. What works transnationally or in other countries often proves difficult in the tried and tested linear structures of German television. Such was the diagnosis of Christian Friedrichs (2017), then executive producer at the production company Letterbox. Transnational co-productions, therefore, are likely to be adapted to existing schedules and schemes in German TV fiction. The six-part German-Swedish-British miniseries *West of Liberty* (ZDF/SVT 2019), for example, ran in its original full-length and multilingual version only on ZDF's online service. In the linear transmission, this story of a sleazy ex-agent was shortened and dubbed as a two-parter with 90-minute episodes—a very common form in German TV fiction.

Beyond the adaptation to local TV slots and forms, individual series can "relocalise" over time, as the example of *Das Boot / The Boat* (Sky Deutschland 2018–) proves. The war drama, set after the plot of Wolfgang Petersen's classic film of the same name, is a co-production in the broader sense, as the US film and television production company Sonar Entertainment (now Halcyon Studios) co-financed it. For the second season released in 2020, however, only Sky Deutschland and Bavaria Film were still involved. By the same token, eventual developments *towards* transnational production can arise. While the first season of *Deutschland 83* (2015), for example, was a commissioned production by RTL and was primarily conceived as an image-promoting programme for this broadcaster in the German-speaking sales market, the subsequent *Deutschland 86* and *89* (2018/2020) were financed by Amazon Prime Video and foreign distributors (SundanceTV and Hulu in the US; Canal+ in France; Channel 4 in the UK; Sky in Italy). A component of the budget thus came from foreign distribution.

In such mixed and co-financing, production companies potentially play an important role: they can seek out the various financiers and licensees, coordinate their coming together and initiate projects. In general, production companies have the ability to co-finance and pre-finance series, although the degree of their involvement on this front has been a matter of debate in the industry discourse under investigation. Linked to such economic questions, these debates included negotiation of the relationship between production company and commissioner.

5.3   Production Companies and Commissioners

A Proliferation of Commissioners

The television industry in Germany is also transforming in terms of project-specific and cross-project cooperation between production companies and commissioners. In both development and production, this cooperation is fundamentally characterised by a "divergence of goals", according to Kerstin Fröhlich (2007, 43, my translation):

> While the broadcasters pursue the goal of obtaining a high-quality, i.e. audience- and advertising-attractive programme, at low cost, the producer pursues profitability goals, i.e. the programme is to be produced using as few resources as possible and at the same time the highest possible price is to be achieved for it. (2007, 40–41, my translation)

We must add public-service broadcasters (quickly neglected in a purely media economic view) and their somewhat divergent expectations to this description. Furthermore, compared to Fröhlich's diagnosis from 2007, other forms of commercial television (including streaming) now exist, which do not necessarily strive for a mainstream "audience- and advertising-attractive programme". The expansion of channels and platforms has not only diversified the television series landscape in Germany but also changed the relationship between commissioners and production companies.

According to several interviewees as well as studies from media economics and sociology (e.g. Fröhlich 2010, 128; Windeler et al. 2001, 102), Germany's television industry traditionally has been characterised by an asymmetry of power in favour of the broadcasters. Liane Jessen (2019), then head of fiction at HR, the last bastion of in-house fiction productions within the ARD network, complained about the fact that production companies adapt to their commissioners. In this capitulation and production companies' economic focus, she saw a central cause for the mediocrity of many German TV films and series:

> Producers imagine the editor, the editorial management […]. And will present well-rounded products from the outset. They won't launch wild rock'n'roll stuff. Because that would damage their company – they'd have to lay people off. It's logical!

That is to say, the production company delivers what the broadcaster seems to want. The number of potential commissioners and their broadcast slots for fictional series was rather small in Germany until the early 2010s. However, in the focused period under investigation (since 2015), the options have increased considerably for many production companies as well as for many freelancers (as the description of the television series landscape in Chapter 4 has already made clear). More commissioners and distributors are available, especially for the series segment defined as "high-end". But quality dramas with cross-episode and multi-strand plots require a particularly high amount of screenwriting work and thus also usually demand a larger upfront investment by the production companies.

Financing Screenwriting

The economic discourse of the TV professionals often revolved around the question of who finances the script development phase, at what intensity and from when until when. The first step of script preparation is to develop an idea to the point where it is ready to present to a potential commissioner. In the case of a series, this usually involves writing a pitch paper or a somewhat longer series concept, if not a "series bible": working documents that describe characters, their relationships and central settings with varying levels of detail (Zabel 2009, 69). In some cases, initial scripts for individual episodes are prepared in advance, before a broadcaster or platform is contacted. In addition to the development contract between the commissioner and production company, which can follow the first concept and other presentation materials, independent development is conceivable. In this scenario, the production company or the writers, or both, continue to develop scripts without having a broadcaster or platform on board. According to the German "star writer" Annette Hess (2019), Constantin Film, for example, financed her development work together with five up-and-coming writers for the drama *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo*, without a channel or platform yet secured. "200,000 euros, 150,000 […] to get a 20 million contract from Amazon Prime" is how Hess (2019) outlined the budgetary framework. Zarges (2017a) notes that, for German production companies, minimum guarantees on later distribution revenues make it easier to budget for development projects— even if no broadcaster is involved yet. However, only large production companies can afford to finance elaborate development before a project is greenlit.

Generally, funding of the screenwriting stage is strongly project dependent. On the one hand, financial conditions can differ from show to show; on the other, the economic success of current projects impacts future developments. To a great extent, production companies use profits from their last productions to finance early concept and screenwriting work for new ones. Here it becomes clear that initial screenwriting is, economically speaking, closely related to production and distribution. In general, the way screenplay work is financed is embedded in basic production and distribution patterns. Especially the tendency towards the "total buyout" model for most German TV dramas stood, for a long time, in the way of the independent development of and stronger financial commitment from production companies.

Moving Away from the "total buyout" Model

Series production in Germany traditionally has been dominated by 100% financing by a broadcaster and the associated "total buyout" model, according to which the commissioner receives all rights (see e.g. Kauschke and Klugius 2000, 179). But, as with many other facets of the television landscape, the ways in which production companies and programme providers cooperate with one another are increasingly in flux. The case of the hoped-for quality TV drama, especially, demands other financing models and problematises existing, traditional production structures. Criticism of 100% funding has been going on for years: many in the industry see it as the central cause of the power asymmetry that favours the broadcasters (see Fröhlich 2010, 128). The total buyout model is often associated with lower innovation and quality, since producers have little interest in the success of a series financed in this way (Fröhlich 2007, 43). The retention of exploitation rights by the production company could contribute to increasing innovation, Fröhlich believes. In the interviews and at the observed industry workshops, similar arguments and demands for more responsibility and scope for production companies became visible. Joachim Kosack (2019) even described a "culture war" between commissioners and producers and highlighted the central question pushed by the Produzentenallianz, the alliance of German film and television producers: "How can producers better invest by also participating entrepreneurially in formats, if these are later a success?".

Especially in the segment of quality or high-end series, we can observe a move away from purely commissioned production, not least because of the increased budgets series require, which a single broadcaster or platform often cannot or does not want to handle alone. In the US, "deficit financing" (Meir 2019, 113) has been common for years for larger TV drama projects, where the commissioning broadcaster covers only part of the costs and the co-financing production company hopes to be able to recoup its expenses through sales in other markets.

Mixed and Co-financing

At the industry workshops, the observed practitioners repeatedly negotiated mixed and co-financing and explored sources of funding. The German television industry, it was noted several times, has some catching up to do in this respect. Due to the tendency towards 100% financing

by a commissioner, production companies have rarely found it necessary to look for further investors, noted producer Christian Friedrichs (2017) in his talk at the 2017 *Winterclass*. Moreover, according to Friedrichs, commercial companies in Germany are not all that used to giving "private equity" (i.e. off-market equity) to series. With the television industry's diversification, however, financing channels and their associated networks have likewise become more diverse. Jonas Anschütz (2015), then vice president of Red Arrow, presented an overview of various possible funding sources that can be interrelated: in addition to the contribution of the television broadcaster or platform, they can include, among others, the equity of the production company, income generated from product placement or crowdfunding and the minimum guarantee from world distribution, as well as "soft money", such as tax benefits and subsidies from media funding agencies. Film and media funds, as already discussed in Chapter 4, expanded their field of activity to include TV drama during the period under study. As a rule, they do not subsidise projects according to the total buyout model, as such bodies instead hope to participate in licence sales and receive a return on the subsidies, which are given as loans. For producers, potential subsidies provide a further reason to move away from purely commissioned production.

Through the involvement of film and media funds, and more generally through the combination of different pots of money, series financing is approaching that of cinema. In his study on the pan-European distribution and production company Studiocanal, Christopher Meir (2019, 113) identifies how financing and sales structures from the independent film sector are being adapted for series, similar to what the Swedish British producer Zygi Kamasa (in Barraclough 2017) argued in the industry magazine *Variety* some years ago:

> The film producers who have a lot of experience at putting together independent films – a patchwork of financing with gaps and tax credits, and two or three European partners – are extremely well set up to assemble television shows because TV is becoming very much like that.

In view of cooperative financing, broadcasters' influence may potentially decrease. At the industry workshops, at least some producers and creatives expressed a corresponding hope that this would be the case. However, the participation of a broadcaster or a platform is still

central—as producer Klaus Zimmermann emphasised with regard to co-productions and licence sales: "It's almost impossible to sell a show that you have co-produced without a broadcaster later on" (in Harris 2018, 320).

A counter-example—and a clear exception in German TV series—is the six-part English-language crime miniseries *Cape Town*, set in the South African city, which Annette Reeker, a scriptwriter, producer and managing director of the company all-in-production, shot "at her own initiative" (according to Zarges 2015c, my translation, published in *DWDL.de*). In Germany, *Cape Town* ran only on the crime and thriller pay TV channel 13th Street (available through a Sky subscription) and thus missed large parts of the German public. Licence payments from the German pay TV sector are low, as Friedrichs (2017) noted. The second season of *Cape Town*, reportedly already developed in a writers' room (Zarges 2015c), did not go ahead.

Production companies and broadcasters are often closely interwoven, as Chapter 4's examination of institutions in the local television industry has already brought to light. Broadcasters tend to generate content with the production companies affiliated with them and within their own media group (Windeler et al. 2001, 105). Some television professionals have criticised this tendency. Among them, for example, is the scriptwriter Martin Behnke (2018), who expressed the following regarding the script development for the political drama *Die Stadt und die Macht / The City and the Power* (ARD/NDR/Degeto 2016):

> The problem is, of course, that Studio Hamburg, Real Film […] are also a subsidiary of NDR and thus of ARD. That means they are also quite dependent on the broadcaster. […] Now I have to be careful, I'm probably telling a lot of internal information that I'm not even allowed to tell.

Behnke's final remark makes it clear that production companies' dependency on broadcasters can be quite a sensitive issue. In this respect, it became apparent that I mostly received only certain, filtered information on this topic through the interviews. Although it was often difficult to get information regarding broadcasters' dominion, it is thus safe to say that commissioning companies continue to be extremely powerful actors in series financing and distribution, despite the greater flexibility that comes with mixed and co-financing. Commissioners' continued—and in some cases even increased—importance is also visible when looking at

subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) providers, who in some cases tend towards purely commissioned production, that is, "total buyout", or even approach the studio model.

Trends Towards the Studio Model

Individual providers seek "exclusive" content, especially when it comes to prestigious quality drama, and in this pursuit, they rely on the total buyout model and, to some extent, in-house production. Purely commissioned production is sometimes seen as an easier and faster way to finance than putting together different funders, which requires a lot of time and effort (e.g. Lückerath 2020b). Practitioners sometimes even diagnosed tendencies towards the studio system, whereby programme providers take over large parts of the production in addition to distribution. In an industry workshop, producer and creative Jörg Winger (2019) spoke of the "silo model", in which all phases of series production remain in one house. He cited this as a central trend alongside mixed financing. TV professionals particularly associated the provider Netflix with approaches to the total buyout model and the studio system. As a rule, Netflix releases its series in all its territories around the same time and often exclusively on its own platform. In this context, production companies and authors usually cede all rights, which mostly is a problematic scenario for them.

Occasionally, Netflix binds creatives exclusively to itself, as in the case of Jantje Friese and Baran bo Odar (see Fig. 5.2), the head writer and director, respectively, of both *Dark* (2017–2020) and *1899* (2022). Friese (2019) explained her and Odar's situation—the first European "overall deal" (Niemeier 2018)—to me while exhibiting her connection by wearing a hoodie with a Netflix logo:

> This is ominously called a "multi-year deal" and nobody talks about how many years it is. But it's usually always two to three years. And that just means […] all new ideas we have to pitch to Netflix first, and we're not allowed to do them anywhere else within that period of time. In cinema we can do what we want, but we don't have time to do anything else at all—that's why it doesn't happen.

This arrangement indicates a regimentation of creativity due to the multi-year commitment, high production output and vague framework conditions, which once again point in the direction of the studio model.

Fig. 5.2 Jantje Friese and Baran bo Odar, the creators of *Dark* and *1899*, at a Netflix panel in Paris, 2016 (© Adrien Lachappelle/Netflix)

When I then asked Friese what role the production company behind *Dark*, Wiedemann and Berg, played under the "overall deal" conditions, she answered with a laugh that "time was up", as if it were a sensitive issue, and then immediately followed up with:

> They are also really good friends of ours and we have […] now simply […] taken a path together, in which we do it together, but everyone does what they do best. And that it is simply clear that the operative business is in better hands with us, because we simply work on it every day. […] That still means that certain production services are done by Wiedemann & Berg. But it's just the way it is, especially when you're in the second season. So many things are automatic anyway, and we have a producer employed by Wiedemann & Berg, Lars [Gmehling], who always sits here.

This interview excerpt clearly shows the difficulty of fathoming the networks at play and related "sensitive" subjects, such as possible push back from the production companies, in more detail. Often, I received information from interviewees only in an appropriately diplomatic form

and embedded in an "industrial performance" (Caldwell 2004, 186), characterised by self-interest and the cultivation of contacts. At the very least, it can be noted that in the case of the Netflix show *Dark*, changed cooperation models in German TV series production are becoming apparent. In particular, the position of the more or less independent production companies is potentially weakened. Creatives may become employees, or at least exclusively obligated parties, of providers, thus expanding cooperation arrangements across individual project networks. This trend may particularly affect writers, who traditionally work free-lance, and their collaboration with supervising editors.[4]

Beyond Germany, streaming providers such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video pose a threat to established financing methods, networks and processes in the television and film industry. It is obvious that related changes in funding and cooperation in project networks are hardly limited to a national context; rather, they are embedded in transnational developments. The transnationalisation of the local television (series) industry—a trend promoted by the new actor Netflix—was, in general, an important topic in the analysed industry discourse on German quality drama. The following chapter takes a closer look at negotiations surrounding exports in TV fiction and the possible transnationalisation of practitioners, project networks and screenwriting, and it also addresses local dimensions and particularities.

NOTES

1. For earlier public co-productions in Europe, see e.g. *Die Geschwister Oppermann / The Oppermanns* (ZDF et al., 1982), *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (ARD/WDR/RAI, 1980) and the various adventure miniseries by ZDF with the former French public broadcaster ORTF, such as *Der Seewolf / The Sea Wolf* (1971).

2. Similar counter-movements also arose in other local and temporal contexts. According to Robert J. Thompson (2007, xix), "procedural dramatic franchises" such as *Law & Order* (NBC, 1996–2004) were the US networks' answer to quality series like *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999–2007).

3. Chapter 8, on production cultures in screenwriting, and Sect. 3.3, on commissioning editors in networks, address the corresponding critique of bureaucracy and polyphony in more detail.

4. Section 3.3 discusses this cooperation between writers and commissioning editors in greater detail.

Quality Drama as Transnational Expansion: Exports and Local Specifics

6.1 Transnational and Local Dimensions of the Television Industry

In the recent past, through "platforms that span activities over different countries (and continents)" (Evens and Donders 2018, 3) and the "rapid growth of internet-distributed television services worldwide" (Lotz et al. 2018, 35), television has transformed "from a national, largely broadcasting, market to a transnational multiplatform market" (Turner 2018, 137). The German television industry is an obvious example, as it now includes new transnational commissioners, especially in the segment of pay TV and subscription video-on-demand (SVoD). This has, quite plainly, led to increased production of German-language series. In German drama projects for US-dominated streaming services (e.g. Netflix), the expansion and transnationalisation of the Hollywood film and television industry is also apparent. The economic basis of the global screen industry is shifting "from only being centred in Los Angeles and this is creating more opportunities to make and sell content by others outside of the traditional Hollywood elite" (Meir 2019, 214–215).

In light of these transnational developments, many of the interviewed and observed practitioners hoped for new commissioning and licensing opportunities, especially in the area of quality TV drama. Frequently, they diagnosed a greater openness towards non-English-language series,[1] in the Anglo-American markets and beyond (see Harris 2018, 327).

Regarding distribution in non-German territories, the TV professionals generally negotiated just how transnational the television industry in Germany is and can be. In this context, they also dealt with local and national specifics, which clearly show that the transnational, the national and the local intertwine, as has been analysed on a theoretical level numerous times (e.g. Kuipers 2011, 555). Furthermore, the practitioners' simultaneous discussion on local peculiarities illuminates how the nation retains its relevance as a historical and systematic point of reference for transgressing and overcoming borders in terms of cultural production (Wessler and Brüggemann 2012, 4).

The scalar model of glocalisation (Roudometof 2016; Hansen 2020) is helpful for ordering the different levels of production, content and distribution that practitioners mentioned in their negotiations on quality TV and that characterise the contemporary German television fiction industry. Kim Toft Hansen (2020, 87) visualises the scalar hierarchy as a circular model running from local → national → regional → global. However, departing from Victor Roudometof, he argues that the glocal is "a *consequence* of – and not *part* of – processes that oscillate between the local and the global, including the intermediate national and transnational opportunities" (86; emphasis in original). In Hansen's model, the "glocal" forms the context of the levels local → national → regional → global, and the "transnational" is located between the national and the global (see Fig. 6.1).

Other discussions of the term "transnational" highlight that cross-border media communication no longer takes place solely between countries, as "international" implies, but also extends beyond and across nation states and national cultures. Hartmut Wessler and Michael Brüggemann (2012, 3–4) also argue that most cross-border media do not have a truly global scope. Therefore, they argue that the term "global" often can be replaced by the term "transnational", which implies an exchange between individual countries but not necessarily a worldwide extension. Indeed, most TV series only travel to *some* countries, if any. Given such limits of global circulation, it is logical for television studies to more frequently use the term "transnational". Still, according to Hansen (2020, 85), the concept of transnationalism remains insufficient because it fails to inscribe the important dimension of the local or sub-national, other than through the term "glocal". Following this argument, I regard the industry discourse on German quality TV as *glocal* (see also Krauß 2023b).
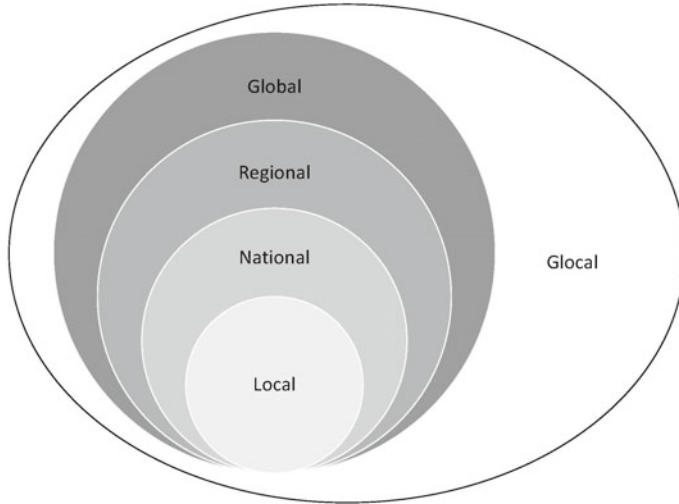
Fig. 6.1 Scalar model of glocalisation (My illustration based on Hansen [2020, 87])

Transnationalism and Regionalism in the German-Speaking Television Landscape

Aspects of glocal, transnational and regional traits first came to light when the interviewees referred to the tradition of addressing audiences not only in Germany but also in Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg. The tendency for media markets to expand to territories with the same language and a similar culture (McElroy 2020, 64) clearly manifests in the German-speaking world. This territory exemplifies the region that ranks above the nation in Roudometof's scalar model of glocalisation (2016, 32) and its adaptation by Hansen (2020, 87). Traditions of cooperation between Germany, Austria, Switzerland and, to a certain extent, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein show that drama production and distribution—as well as transnational media communication in general—are oriented towards specific geo-cultural markets, which traverse nations but are rarely totally global (Przybylski et al. 2016, 240–241).

Regarding recent quality drama projects, several collaborations have come to fruition in the German-speaking countries. Two of the many examples are *Davos 1917* (SRF/ARD, 2023), a Swiss-German period

drama on the noble spa town in the Swiss Alps during the First World War, and *Freud* (Netflix/ORF, 2020), a crime television series about the young Sigmund Freud, which was mainly shot in Prague and first aired on the Austrian public-service channel ORF before its release transnationally by Netflix. In some cases, the interviewed practitioners took a critical view of the size of the German-speaking region because, in their view, it leads to unproductive self-centredness. Edward Berger (2018), director of several episodes of *Deutschland 83* (RTL, 2015) and the award-winning anti-war film *Im Westen nichts Neues/All Quiet on the Western Front* (Netflix, 2022), spoke specifically of a "self-satisfied market that […] can survive if it produces for Germany, Austria and Switzerland instead of for the world" when he discussed structural reasons for German series' alleged quality deficit. Berger noted a difference in comparison with smaller countries such as Denmark, which is often referred to in the industry and media discourse on German quality drama. Smaller nations, he and others suggested, are forced to sell their series to foreign territories in order to secure larger budgets. A sense of self-centredness and intense closeness, as observed in past studies on TV drama production in Germany (e.g. Mikos 2016, 156), has also been discussed with respect to other larger European markets. For example, Marco Cucco (2018, 204) reflects critically on various obstacles to transnational cooperation in Italy, including "unambitious companies, […] that are unwilling to take risks and whose objectives do not transcend the limits of the nation". Germany's television and film industry has faced similar accusations of a lack of transnationalisation and, linked to this, of conservatism and low levels of innovation (e.g. Fröhlich 2010, 131).[2]

As far as the transnational networks of Germany's television landscape are concerned, the country's size and economic power can at the same time be seen as beneficial. Martin Behnke (2018), one of the writers of the political drama *Die Stadt und die Macht/The City and the Power* (ARD/NDR/Degeto, 2016) and the Netflix hit *Dark* (2017–20), argued that the German-speaking region is an "insanely financially strong […] interesting market" for foreign and transnationally operating programme providers (when he was asked to assess the status quo of German TV series and their production conditions). In the same vein as the scriptwriter Behnke, many other practitioners diagnosed increased transnationalisation in the German television sector. Further, against the background of this changing landscape, they discussed how the transnationalisation of German drama can be accelerated and intensified.

Advancing Transnationalisation

The TV professionals dealt with media and film funding, among other things, when they discussed how German TV series may transnationalise. Some funding pots and programmes specifically aim towards transnational, and above all European, cooperation. Sometimes funding from Germany flows into foreign or transnational projects with the aim of obtaining production knowledge from other countries' industries and thus promoting national or regional series production at another level. Accordingly, during a presentation at the *Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing* industry workshop, Veronika Grob and Oliver Ossege (2016) from Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg (the body responsible for film and TV series in the states of Berlin and Brandenburg) justified their investments in the fifth season (2015) of the well-known US drama *Homeland* (Showtime, 2011–2020), which was substantially shot in Berlin and Brandenburg. In the Medienboard representatives' praise for the local revenues generated through the production of *Homeland*, we can find the "neo-liberal ideology of supporting incoming investment and its spill-over effects, labour mobility, international competitiveness and knowledge transfer, and of de-provincialising the local film culture", which Petr Szczepanik (2018, 168) ascribes to funding policies in the Czech Republic.

In addition to the public subsidies available through Germany's various local film-funding institutions, foreign production companies, broadcasters and platforms have several other reasons for increasing operations in the country. First, the existing transnational connections in the German TV industry can be an asset to producers. Many Germany-based producers are affiliated with transnational conglomerates. Frequently and traditionally, such subsidiary firms act highly independently to adjust to national and local market conditions (Przybylski et al. 2016, 223). But transnational links within media groups can also be relevant, as the example *Deutschland 83* proves. Producers from this show and its production company, UFA Fiction, argued that an existing link to the mainly British Fremantle company played an important role by making the export of their show much easier (e.g. interview with Kosack 2019). Both RTL, the German commissioning broadcaster of the first season of *Deutschland*, and the German production company UFA Fiction belong to the Bertelsmann conglomerate alongside the transnational Fremantle. The exchange within Bertelsmann points to the "networked activities […]

from a local to a global level" brought up in Hansen's model of glocalisation (2020, 86) and to traditions of transnationalisation in the German TV market.

With respect to the industry's increased transnationalisation, Bob Konrad (in the interview with Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018), one of the writers of the gangster drama *4 Blocks* (TNT Serie, 2017–2019), emphasised the new commissioners, especially SVoD services, that have entered the German television market. Through these new players, German television drama has also become more interesting to production companies abroad. According to Konrad, British producers in particular have started to produce shows for the German-speaking region, under the purview of these new commissioners and distributors. In line with this diagnosis, in 2020 BBC Studios announced it was founding the production company BBC Studios Germany. In 2019, this commercial production and distribution subsidiary of the BBC—British Broadcasting Corporation had already entered into a strategic partnership with the German public-service broadcaster ZDF to develop and produce "high-end" content. The Mallorca-based crime action comedy *The Mallorca Files* (BBC One/ZDFneo/France 2, 2019–) was the first project to emerge from this British-German cooperation and points to the transnationalisation of public-service broadcasting.

Public Broadcasters as Glocal and Crucial Players in German Television Drama

According to the practitioners' discourse on German quality drama, public broadcasters, despite engaging in co-financing and co-production arrangements, have often served as an example not of transnationalisation but of national and local characteristics or—with a clear negative connotation—of provinciality. "They are still incredibly local. That's their job", the scriptwriter Konrad (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018) said about ARD, the joint organisation for Germany's regional public-service broadcasters (this response came when I asked him and his two writer colleagues about the possible transnationalisation of the German TV industry). Indeed, the broadcasting mandates of ARD as well as ZDF explicitly include regionalism (Gransow 2018, 217), in the sense of local content and local specifics (distinct from Hansen's and Roudometof's understanding of the region ranking above the nation; see

Hansen 2020, 87). Such regionalism can be a criterion of "quality journalism" as well, and as such might influence the discourse on the value of public-service media (Mayer 2013, 91). Nevertheless, in the analysed practitioners' negotiations, the federalism of ARD in particular was often framed as a problem: a structure of excessive bureaucracy that complicates screenwriting processes.

But for all their federalism and locality, public broadcasters also have transnational features to varying degrees. In a sense, transnationality is inscribed in their founding histories, as Britain's BBC was the central model for the organisation of television in the Federal Republic of Germany (Garncarz 2016, 175). For years, ARD and ZDF have transnationally networked through joint niche cultural programmes with foreign public-service partners. In the German-speaking context, it is 3sat (a joint project of the German ARD and ZDF, Austrian ORF and Swiss SRF—Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen [Swiss Radio and Television]). Arte, on the other hand, is a German–French TV channel. Financial participation through co-financing and co-production by the subsidiaries ARD Degeto and ZDF Studios (formerly ZDF Enterprises) as well as shares in foreign media companies (in the case of the latter) also point to transnational dimensions.

In particular, ARD and ZDF have acted as minor co-financiers of Scandinavian and especially Danish series (e.g. Hansen and Waade 2017, 150–151; Redvall 2020, 127–128), which are often labelled "Nordic noir". These series were frequently discussed in the interviews. For some practitioners, such foreign investments by ARD and ZDF represented a controversial topic. For example, Ulrike Leibfried (2016), formerly a freelance editor at RTL and now managing director of UFA Fiction, criticised the outsourcing of creativity. From her point of view, the willingness to take risks with co-financing is greater than with internal German productions. One might read this assessment as an almost nationalistic argument, according to which German funds should be spent on German content and should flow only to producers in Germany. The commissioning editor Harald Steinwender (in the interview with Simionescu and Steinwender 2018) also identified "a certain nationalistic note" in the preference for German productions as demanded by the public broadcasters. First and foremost, however, Leibfried complained about the lack of willingness to take risks—a commonly voiced and long-held criticism of public broadcasters and the German television market in general (e.g. Fröhlich 2010, 130).

Germany as a Conservative Import Market

Several interviewees also criticised the long-standing commercial, ad-funded channels RTL, Sat.1 and ProSieben (run by two opposing media conglomerates: Bertelsmann's RTL Group and ProSiebenSat.1 Media) for commissioning original fiction that is too formulaic and conservative. Furthermore, several TV professionals complained, the commercial broadcasters relied primarily on US series imports to fill their broadcast slots from the 2000s onwards. Usually, such imports are significantly cheaper than German originals. But, at some point, the supply in mainstream US procedurals broke off.[3]

Several practitioners at commercial broadcasters in Germany—which have long banked on linear schedules—described recent US series as too "niche" or too complex in their serial storylines as compared to the former "monster of the week" format. Several more recent hit US series, such as *This Is Us* (NBC, 2016–2022) and *Empire* (Fox, 2015–2020), indeed have achieved only low viewing figures in their linear broadcasting on commercial German channels. The commercial networks' partial efforts during the sample period (2015–2023) to commission more German-language productions—again, in view of the current state of US series and their declining ratings—illustrate how transnational, and specifically US, developments affect the German television market.

Public broadcasters have a long history of focusing on German fiction, partly with the intention of strengthening the local production landscape. Claudia Simionescu and Harald Steinwender (2018) from BR (part of the ARD network) criticised, however, that the corresponding focus on German drama "weaned" audiences from international programmes, and "international cinema" in particular. In addition to US cinema productions, Simionescu and Steinwender's use of the term "international" presumably also refers to European films with transnational distribution. In their argument, which is strongly related to the context of individual films and cinema (rather than serial television drama), the lack of imports leads to a narrowing of the programme. In my interviews with German practitioners of television screenwriting, public-service commissioning editors (e.g. Gleim 2016) in particular addressed the absence of US drama in the current and recent prime-time and early-evening programmes of ARD and ZDF, and they often criticised the supposed self-centredness of German television fiction.

For contemporary quality drama projects from Germany, it is obvious that productions from the US have served as models. By orienting themselves to the narratives and habits of other Western television markets, German television professionals expressed hope that their productions could come to circulate transnationally, like those foreign models, and generate international attention.

6.2 Serial Exports and Transnational Distribution

The industry discourse on German quality TV drama has for a long time revolved around the question of how these productions can achieve increased distribution abroad. Such desires are not new, as a look at German film history shows. Already in the early 1930s, German film producers sought to make high-quality *Großfilme* (big films) that also circulated on the international market and had potential to become successful on a broad economic basis (Garncarz 2016, 132–133). But, unsurprisingly, in accordance with the recent shifts related to serial television drama and streaming distribution, the discourse on transnational exports no longer focuses on cinema and the single feature film; rather, it is tied to serial content and the various platforms available in today's transformed and digitised television context.

Many studies on German television have noted a lack of exports, often attributed to the tradition of the "total buyout", according to which producers cede all rights to the commissioning broadcaster.[4] It is argued that in giving up all rights German producers are left with fewer opportunities to generate funds through foreign sales. Thus, they also have fewer incentives to attempt to reach foreign markets and are also less able to invest additional income through transnational sales via foreign subsidiaries. British production companies, by contrast, are said to have succeeded in penetrating external markets, such as Germany, through their local subsidiaries and format sales, thus strengthening their transnational position (Castendyk and Goldhammer 2018, 38).

Of course, the transnational television business consists of not only the direct export of programmes but also the trade in format rights, which has become significantly more dynamic due to transnational streaming companies and digital distribution. The procedure that was common for many years, whereby a format first had to succeed on the domestic

market and then, where necessary, could be adapted for other countries, has been suspended to a certain extent by simultaneous publication on platforms such as Netflix. In the transnational format trade, seen as an "Anglo-American invention" (Chalaby 2012), and which shaped German television from the 1990s onwards, Germany generally appears more as an importer than an exporter. Additionally, several TV dramas from the sample period were based on foreign formats. These include, among others, *DRUCK/SKAM Germany* (Funk/ZDF, 2018–), the German version of *SKAM* (NRK, 2015–2017); *Bonusfamilie/Bonus Family* (ARD, 2019), based on the Swedish dramedy *Bonusfamiljen/ Bonus Family* (SVT/Netflix, 2017–); and the medical youth drama *Club der roten Bänder/Club of Red Bracelets* (Vox, 2015–2017), based on the Catalan *Polseres vermelles* (TV3, 2011–2013), alongside further "original" dramas by the commercial broadcaster Vox (e.g. *Milk & Honey*, 2018). But, on the flip side, the British subsidiary Studio Hamburg UK produced *The Cleaner* (2021–), a British adaptation of *Der Tatortreiniger/Crime Scene Cleaner* (NDR, 2011–2018) for BBC One (Niemeier 2020a). Previous to that, a Dutch, Belgian, Ukrainian and Russian version of *Danni Lowinski* (Sat.1, 2010–2014) was produced. In the US, one pilot was filmed based on this Sat.1 dramedy about a lawyer offering her services in a shopping mall (Niemeier 2017). Against this background, alongside a great many series exports, the thesis that German television drama has hardly found any distribution beyond the German-speaking countries cannot be consistently upheld.

Serial Export Traditions

In less "prestigious" non-English-speaking markets and in the daytime programming of various nations, German series have been present for some time. The long-running crime procedurals *Derrick* (ZDF, 1974–1998) and the daily soap *Sturm der Liebe/Storm of Love* (ARD/WDR/ BR, 2005–), licensed to more than 20 countries, are particularly well-known and successful examples of drama exports from Germany. *Heimat*, especially the first season, subtitled *Eine Deutsche Chronik—A German Chronicle* (ARD/SFB/WDR, 1984), as well as the Rainer Werner Fassbinder drama *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (ARD/WDR/RAI, 1980) were likewise critically acclaimed beyond West Germany. The interviewed practitioners also repeatedly referred to these two examples of auteur work for TV, clearly influenced by New German cinema, when exploring quality

drama in German television history and bringing national traditions into the discourse on transnationalisation (Krauß 2021a).[5]

Later event miniseries, such as *Die Flucht/March of Millions* (ARD, 2007) and *Dresden* (ZDF, 2006), both mostly set during the National Socialist era and originating from the production company UFA Fiction and its predecessor teamWorx, also circulated beyond the German-speaking world (see Cooke 2016). However, the US distribution of the three-episode period drama *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter/Generation War* (ZDF, 2013), following five young German friends and their different paths through Nazi Germany and the Second World War, took place in only a few arthouse cinemas (Scott 2014). Nevertheless, Florian Cossen (2018), one of the two directors of *Deutschland 86* (Amazon Prime Video, 2018), and other television professionals presented this production as a turning point towards the more widespread distribution of German television drama. Still, harsh accusations of revisionism, which *Generation War* faced especially in the US (see Scott 2014) and Poland (see Saryusz-Wolska and Piorun 2014) due to its focus on young, "good" Germans in contrast to negatively portrayed Polish minor characters, can also be interpreted as a problematic and ultimately hindering the reputation of German television fiction abroad. Among the television professionals interviewed were equally critical voices about such "event" dramas on National Socialism. Some complained about the formulaic narration and a falsification of history or feared a thematic narrowing. Meanwhile, Kosack (2017, 2018), from his perspective as UFA managing director, argued at industry workshops that German television drama on the National Socialism era in particular has sold well transnationally. Robert C. Reimer, Reinhard Zachau and Margit M. Sinka (2017, 244) state similarly in their introductory volume on German cinema: "Movies dealing with Nazi themes had been of the largest export successes". From an economic point of view, it thus seems understandable that, according to Kosack (2019), UFA Fiction continued to stick with the 2019 series project on the life of the young Adolf Hitler, which received a lot of (negative) media attention and faced accusations of glorification even in its nascent state, before any greenlighting or shooting had occurred. While the transnational distribution company Beta Film is said to have been quick to take a financial stake in the miniseries, which is based on books by Hark Bohm and Nicki Stein, other potential financiers, including from the US, kept their distance. The industry magazine *DWDL.de* emphasised the reluctance of ARD and ZDF, in particular,

to support the Hitler miniseries after the commercial broadcaster RTL dropped the project (Niemeier 2019). The supposedly successful model of "UFA series and films on National Socialism" thus seems to have reached its limits.

Deutschland 83 and its two sequels, *Deutschland 86* and *89* (Amazon Prime Video, 2018/2020), with their 1980s settings, pop culture references and strong serialisation, have taken different paths than previous period dramas from UFA, which were strongly anchored in the television film format of two or three 90-minute parts. Further, *Deutschland 83* represented a change in drama exports from Germany by breaking through to English-speaking markets.

Series Exports in a Changing Media Environment

Deutschland 83 was the first German television drama to run on a US channel (Rogers 2018), albeit only on the niche pay TV channel SundanceTV. However, when broadcast on Britain's Channel 4 in 2016, the production became the "highest-rated subtitled drama in television history" (Oltermann 2016), and many English-language reviews were favourable (e.g. Genzlinger 2016). Several production members of *Deutschland 83* and the sequels *Deutschland 86/89* (Fig. 6.2) emphasised the series' transnational success, especially in English-speaking markets, while other practitioners relativised or even questioned the show's great fortune. Gebhard Henke, for example, who was still an influential executive at WDR (a constituent member of the ARD network) at the time of the interview, argued that one could hardly assess the claim that *Deutschland 83* was an international hit: "They don't tell you that they're selling it to Lithuania for 1,000 euros; I'm just going to say that mockingly" (2018). Henke's statement might be interpreted as malice from an arguably less transnational or less successful competitor, but it also points to the lack of transparency when it comes to television exports. The details of licence payments are rarely made public, and so the economic significance of foreign sales of German television fiction can often only be guessed at. When asked about the relevance of this situation from UFA Fiction's perspective, Kosack (2019) noted that the individual sums may not be huge but transnational sales nevertheless make an important difference, as the production company can invest these additional revenues into story development. According to this line of argument, export earnings are relevant precisely for funding screenwriting.

Fig. 6.2 Series export in a changing TV landscape—a still from the second-season *Deutschland 86* (© UFA FICTION/Anika Molnár)

Regardless of the actual licence payments made, the production of *Deutschland 83* represented an innovation for TV drama exports in the German context—on the one hand because it reached the US market, which until then had been closed to German television fiction, and, on the other, because the US broadcast took place before the German one. The long-standing rule that a series must first succeed in the German market before being exported to other countries no longer seems compelling.

Eva Novrup Redvall (2018, 148) differentiates between series that are sold transnationally as finished, filmed and usually already nationally distributed products and those still in production during licensing. In Germany, the latter scenario is now also conceivable, where producers begin thinking about foreign distribution from the outset. For *Babylon Berlin*, for example, the "venture capital" (Henke 2018) flows through Beta Film. This transnational distribution company from Germany thus also acts as a producer, "in the certainty that it will be refinanced by international partners", as noted by Henke, who was involved in the development and production of the show's first two seasons.

This certainty likely stems from the described expansion of channels and platforms. Even if the "gold rush mood" (Winger 2019) propelled by the plethora of commissioners has increasingly dimmed since 2020,

it is still true in principle that the demand for series has increased across countries because filling online offerings demands different content. In view of digital distribution, broadcasters and platforms can also include "niche" dramas in their programming, such as German-language series, which in many countries and distribution contexts are only or primarily distributed with subtitles.

There is also a certain interest in German series from transnational and European programme providers because of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive. According to these guidelines on audiovisual media services drafted by the European Commission, EU member states must ensure that the share of "European works" (European Commission 2020) in video-on-demand catalogues is at least 30% (see also Eichner 2021). In his keynote speech at the 2020 *Berlinale Series Market*, media lawyer Christoph Fey (in Fey et al. 2020) problematised the fact that the instrument of the programme quota still stems from "linear times". The quota provides streaming portals the loophole to hide purchased local goods in their large offerings. According to Fey, rules on commissioning independent production companies to create "local content" therefore make more sense as a way to strengthen the local television industry. What "local" content ultimately is, however, is not always easy to determine. The European Commission includes in its definition of "local works" co-productions between the EU and other countries (European Commission 2018). Against the background of this understanding, a further increase in European and transatlantic co-productions is to be expected.

The co-productions discussed in Sect. 5.2 as an economically minded approach are also one way of working towards transnational distribution of largely German series. With the participation of different broadcasters or platforms, distribution beyond Germany seems guaranteed. Alongside conventional co-productions, another scenario has emerged: productions for transnational SVoD platforms, where transnational distribution is already baked into the deal. Individual streaming services—first and foremost Netflix—release series mostly simultaneously in different territories (see Fig. 6.3, see also Lobato 2018, 69) such that export occurs almost automatically and without the intermediate step of licence trading. This process can be problematic for production companies. Producers at the 2020 *Berlinale Series Market* complained that Netflix only pays local prices, and they highlighted the loss of additional income through licence sales (Fey et al. 2020; see also Krauß 2020e). In the interviews, corresponding criticism of Netflix's inadequate pay was hardly ever voiced

Fig. 6.3 Release in different territories—posters for season two of *Dark* (©
Netflix)

and, when it was, only "off the record". Probably, the practitioners were
careful not to discredit Netflix as a potential or actual partner. Given
the time of most interviews (2018–2019), it is also likely that many
of the practitioners had not yet cooperated with this or other similar
transnational SVoD platforms and still looked at them optimistically.

Particularly in relation to Netflix, the television professionals also dealt
with the question of language. Often, they regarded the German language
as a hurdle when it comes to the transnational distribution of local

Fig. 6.3   (continued)

productions. However, in this respect, the television landscape in and beyond Germany also appears to be in a process of transformation, as conveyed through the practitioners' self-reflections.

The Dilemma of Language(s)

Are subtitled TV dramas becoming increasingly accepted, even in English-speaking countries, in light of the diversified, transnational television market, facilitated by digital platforms and the option they give viewers to

Fig. 6.3   (continued)

consume content in different languages (including with various subtitles)?
The interviewed television professionals regularly expressed this hope.
Such faith stems from the relative success of some Danish series in the
UK in the 2010s (see e.g. Eichner and Esser 2020). "All non-English is
completely exotic, still", however, emphasised Frank Jastfelder (2018a),
director of original drama productions at Sky Deutschland. For the period
drama *Das Boot / The Boat* (Sky Deutschland, 2018–), which had not yet

been released at the time of the interview, Jastfelder predicted a comparatively large audience in Sky's territory of Great Britain, as one of the show's original languages is English (alongside German and French).

Thus, one strategy to succeed transnationally is to include English dialogue. In fact, English dialogue and English-speaking characters appear in several contemporary quality drama productions from Germany. For example, *Deutschland 86* and *89* have increased English compared to the first season, *Deutschland 83*. In *Unorthodox* (Netflix, 2020, see Fig. 6.4), the follow-up (and still German) project by the head writer of *Deutschland 83* and *86*, Anna Winger, English clearly dominates over German and Yiddish, the other, comparatively exotic, language of this miniseries about a young Jewish woman fleeing her ultra-Orthodox community in New York to live in Berlin.

The mystery drama *Dark* represented an innovation in dealing with the language question, as its commissioner Netflix also made a dubbed version available in the English-speaking market, where foreign films and television programmes (excepting children's and animated formats) are usually only subtitled. But some practitioners regarded *Dark*'s dubbed version in English as a mere "test balloon" (Jastfelder 2018a) and a clever marketing tactic with which Netflix continued to make a name for itself.

Fig. 6.4 English, Yiddish, German—the multilingual Netflix series *Unorthodox* (© Anika Molnar/Netflix)

Thus it was not always viewed as a sustainable approach pointing the way to the future or as a way to generally increase export opportunities for German drama productions.

Discourses on language also affect the production and screenwriting steps. Several quality TV drama projects from Germany have been characterised from the outset by English-German bilingualism in their script development and therefore by interconnected globalisation and localisation processes. Sometimes, writers also wrote treatments, concepts or first dialogues primarily in English. English-speaking consultants were brought in, or editors from non-German commissioners such as Netflix gave notes in English.

6.3   The Transnationalisation of Project Networks and Actors

In meetings with foreign or at least transnationally oriented financiers, economic and creative exchange processes occur via the linked co-productions and co-financing arrangements and in the emerging project networks, alongside a potential transfer of knowledge (Szczepanik 2018, 168). In screenwriting, approximations of processes from the US industry, especially the "showrunner" and "writers' room" models,[6] emerge, but national specifics also come to light. In addition to such ways of writing and producing television dramas, the interviewed practitioners negotiated how they and their colleagues transnationalise their profiles and cooperation, at the micro-level, within individual project networks and screen idea work groups.

The Transnationalisation of Individual Actors

At least some players in the German television industry are now taking a more transnational approach to television production. Jörg Winger, for example, the co-creator of the *Deutschland* trilogy, founded Big Window Productions within the UFA group. Under Big Window, he aims to develop both English- and German-language series for transnational distribution.[7] Likewise, Hanno Hackfort, part of the "HaRiBo" writer trio behind the gangster drama *4 Blocks* and the Netflix action thriller *Kleo* (2022), expressed interest in doing "something in a more international framework" (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018). Hackfort referred to communication with a British production company that had

shown interest in one of HaRiBo's ideas but insisted on having a German co-producer on the project as well. Here, the relevance of national considerations within the context of the tendency towards transnationalisation emerges once again. This specific anecdote brings to mind the theoretical approach of glocalisation and suggests limits in the globalisation or transnationalisation process.

Bernd Lange (2018), a well-known screenwriter of several feature films and the crime miniseries *Das Verschwinden/The Disappearance* (ARD et al. 2017), addressed barriers to transnationalisation specifically with regard to his profession and the language used in the writing process:

> When it becomes more specific, when it has more to do with what surrounds you […], then the path from the mother tongue to writing in a second language is a really big step for a writer. That is a handicap and a strength: yes, you are close to what surrounds you and can articulate that well. And a handicap when it comes to internationally understandable dialogue. And here, of course, you are less cosmopolitan than Eddie [Berger] or Christian Schwochow or someone.

The directors Edward "Eddie" Berger and Christian Schwochow mentioned by Lange are well-known, repeatedly cited examples of transnationalisation on an individual, personal level. Both have now also directed English-language series: Berger *The Terror* (AMC, 2018–2019) and *Patrick Melrose* (Sky Atlantic/Showtime, 2018), and Schwochow several seasons of *The Crown* (Netflix, 2016–2023). For the director, Lange's statement implies, the move abroad or to another language seems easier than for the screenwriter.

The migration of individual professionals to the US and UK is one factor in the current industry discourse surrounding a "war on talent". Several practitioners lamented the struggle to secure for their projects "the top people in the profession" (Zöllner 2018), in view of the increase in TV drama production in and beyond Germany and the expansion of commissioners. Such intensified competition is similarly evident in other European markets and is related to the transnational networks of television financing, if we follow Redvall (2018, 148). She states: "[I]nternational funding opportunities mean new and fierce competition around securing the best talent, in front of and behind the camera". To contend with this situation, producers from Germany also resort to hiring

from abroad; at the same time, German television professionals (at least in individual cases) find themselves in a transnational competition.

Transnationality as a Selection and Quality Criterion

The transnational appeal of individuals, teams, groups and production companies can constitute an important selection criterion when composing screen idea work groups and broader project networks. Furthermore, transnational appeal affects production companies' promotion of series to potential financiers as well as the commissioning and later greenlighting of projects. When acquiring financiers and licensees for *Babylon Berlin*, the internationally renowned director Tom Tykwer took on an important role, according to Gebhard Henke (2018). For the first German Netflix series, *Dark*, the transnational selection criterion was decisive as well. Netflix likely selected the production company Wiedemann and Berg for this project because it had been responsible for the earlier transnationally successful feature film *Das Leben der Anderen/The Lives of Others* (2006), winner of the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 2006. Further, writer Jantje Friese (2019) suggested that her and partner Baran bo Odar's first work experiences in the US industry, along with their idea for *Dark* and the notable success of their German cyber thriller *Who Am I* (2014), were important factors behind Netflix selecting them:

> [For Netflix], it was totally great that we had already learned this American way of working. […] When they were looking, they had the feeling: Okay, you can somehow work with them, and they speak our language. By that I don't just mean English.

This claim of experience in the US industry, as well as those by other interviewees (especially Winger 2017; Berger 2018), must be seen against the background of "self-interest, promotion, and spin", which, according to John Thornton Caldwell (2008, 14), generally characterises interview statements by television and film producers. Like Friese, several interviewees seemed keen to appear transnationally versed and networked, at least in the direction of the US and Western Europe.

The transnationality of individual projects and their actors can also play an important role long after the initial idea development and screenwriting stage, during evaluation of a series' first season and the question

of continuation. The director and writer Achim von Borries (2019) minimised the significance of viewing figures for the linear broadcast of *Babylon Berlin* on the German public broadcaster Das Erste (The First, by ARD), which some in the television industry regarded as rather disappointing, claiming that the series was "an international super-success […] a huge thing". The screenwriter Hackfort (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018) stated that recognition abroad should be considered alongside or instead of audience ratings in a national context. Transnationality is thus positioned as an important criterion. In this sense, it is closely related to the debates on quality in German TV drama.

With regard to transnationality in narration and content, the analysed practitioners tended to also emphasise local traits. For instance, Hackfort and Konrad (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018) pointed out with an ironic undertone:

Hanno Hackfort: There's this famous saying.
Bob Konrad: The more local, the more global.

Accordingly, the practitioners spoke of "local stories […] with universal problems or universal characters" (Jastfelder 2018a). "Why shouldn't a series set only in the Ruhr Valley […] or only in the Swabian Jura work internationally?" continued Hackfort rhetorically, naming very specific regions of Germany and referring to the BBC drama *Happy Valley* (2014–), set in Northern England. *Dark*, on the other hand, was seen by some practitioners as "locally detached" in its mystery setting or, as *Deutschland 86* director Florian Cossen (2018) put it, "completely international":

[It] simply doesn't matter that the actors speak German, but the whole impression, the aesthetic, the atmosphere, this mystery, this secret about a missing child. […] It just seems to work internationally.

In addition to subjects, setting and characters, the narrative style may be decisive in determining whether a series circulates beyond the German-speaking world and, more precisely, in Anglo territories. After all, it was not only a shared language but also the "common story-telling culture among the Anglo Saxon nations" (Horan 2007, 111) that made English-language broadcasters buy English-language television fiction from other English-language countries for a very long time.

Clearly, the practitioners were not only concerned with the content and form of a series in relation to transnationality. Rather, the textual characteristics played a central role in their discourse on quality TV drama in general, alongside questions about financing and production methods. The following chapter looks more closely at how the practitioners negotiated contents and forms, both present and past, of German television series. With this discourse, they also reproduced the notion of a national, or at least German-language, television culture unifying the television industry and the audience, which is presumably very much shaped by local productions.

Notes

1. See also the discussion of co-productions and co-financing in Sect. 5.2.
2. Chapter 7, which explores the practitioners' text-related criticisms of German television fiction, looks more closely at this supposed conservatism in the forms and contents of television.
3. See also Sect. 5.2 on transatlantic co-productions that were supposed to fill the gap of mainstream US procedurals.
4. Chapter 4, on financing and distribution, offers a more in-depth look at the "total buyout" model.
5. For the historical traits mentioned in the practitioners' discourse on quality TV drama, see also Sect. 7.3.
6. For in-depth discussion of the discourses and practices of the "showrunner" and the "writers' room", see Chapter 8.
7. Big Window's first released project was *Sam, ein Sachse/Sam, a Saxon* (2023) for Disney+, a drama based on a real Afro-German policeman working in East Germany, which was internationally marketed as a "Hulu original".

Contents and Forms of German TV Drama: Aesthetic and Narrative Styles and Criticisms

"It's just cobbled together like that. Cut, counter-cut. No staging ideas and so on", said Richard Kropf, co-writer of *4 Blocks* (TNT Serie2017–2019) and *Kleo* (Netflix 2022), when comparing German series to US ones, which, by contrast, had a "completely unique look" (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018). The other practitioners likewise negotiated contents and forms of German TV drama by critically comparing it with transnational or European quality TV and their ideas of what such series should look like. Their frequent focus on contents and forms of TV corresponds to the facet of screenwriting research that deals with storytelling and dramatic composition, and furthermore to Eva Novrup Redvall's "screen idea system" model (2013, 21), which builds on the approach of the "screen idea work group" (Macdonald 2010). Redvall's model accounts for not only creatives and institutionally involved gatekeepers but also existing television and film texts as central forces in script development. The researched producers, writers, directors and commissioning editors discussed the state of German television fiction on the basis of textual "trends, tastes and traditions" (Redvall 2013, 31) and drew on foreign productions for comparison.

155

7.1   Current Television Fiction from Germany

When the practitioners discussed German TV fiction, they were more strongly influenced by their personal experiences within the local industry than when negotiating foreign productions.[1] Therefore, their statements on the state of German TV drama must be considered against the background of this involvement in local personnel networks. To put it another way: To what extent were the TV professionals willing or able to comment on the work of colleagues? Who said what about whom and in what form could potentially be related to past and future collaborations. Evaluating content and narration also happened against this context of project networks, since the reputation of both production companies and individuals can determine their recruitment (Fröhlich 2007, 41). Thus, it is hardly surprising that the television creators tended to use diplomatic expressions and to emphasise the quality of local fiction: "It is imperative that I defend what we provide and offer in terms of quality every week", stated, for example, Martina Zöllner (2018), programme head of RBB, one of ARD's local broadcasters, and then head of fiction and documentary for RBB in respect to ARD's TV films and series. Practitioners in other positions, on the other hand, more forcefully criticised TV dramas from Germany, presumably to set their work apart from "all these conventional series" (Hess 2019) and TV films and to portray themselves as more innovative and courageous. One recurring criticism of content and narration—and which, at the same time, addressed processes of script development—was German TV series' stereotyped characters and formulaic narratives.

Formulas and Formats

Many practitioners classified German television fiction, and especially series, as too formulaic, formatted and monotonous. This corresponds to Andreas Reckwitz's diagnosis that, in the "creativity dispositif" of contemporary society (2017, 8), many complain about too little newness despite an abundance of aesthetic objects (2013, 30). The development producer Gunther Eschke (2015), for example, attributed a "consonance" to German series (in comparison with contemporary US ones, in the early context of 2015), by which he meant: "You kind of think, 'Yes, of course, it goes exactly like that'. It doesn't get you going". In connection with this supposed monotony, TV professionals additionally criticised aesthetic

deficits. For instance, in reference to ZDF's fiction programming, and specifically the medical procedural *Der Bergdoktor/The Mountain Doctor* (ZDF/ORF 2008–), commissioning editor Liane Jessen (2019) grumbled: "It's bad editing, it's bad lighting, it's terrible music, it's a loveless camera". According to her, the formulaic nature continues with casting in most German series: "Pre-evening actors are always in the pre-evening section, crime actors are always in the crime section". Recurring castings likely arise from the German television industry's comparative smallness and, in terms of quality series projects, its limited pool of "top people" (Zöllner 2018). According to Jessen (2019), however, it is also crucial to make decisions with such "pigeonholes" in mind.

These pigeonholes include, among other things, broadcast slots: "I see something and immediately know: Aha, that's on Fridays, that's on Thursdays", stated Jessen (2019), thus addressing formatting along linear structures, just as Knut Hickethier (1998, 527) observed them on German television in the 1990s. According to him, this decade saw the onset of the "standardisation" of programmes. The interviewed and observed practitioners in the more recent past still regarded broadcast slots as a decisive restriction shaping screenwriting and storytelling. The producer and writer Gabriela Sperl (2018), for example, emphasised: "You have no idea how tight this restriction is". The screenwriter Kropf (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018) cited the "so-called Thursday evening T-shirt" as an example of these strict formulas: "at a private broadcaster", due to market research results, the male hero had to wear long-sleeve button-down shirts. Very likely, Kropf was describing the commercial broadcaster RTL, which commissioned several series, mostly procedurals, with such male protagonists, including the school dramedy *Der Lehrer/The Teacher* (2009, 2013–2021) and the action thriller *Alarm für Cobra 11—Die Autobahnpolizei / Alarm for Cobra 11—The Highway Police* (1996–).

In addition to such concrete ingredients, broadcasters often seek a certain tonality for their individual schedules. Hauke Bartel (2017) explained, at the *Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing* industry workshop, that the commercial broadcaster Vox (of which he was then head of fiction) wants a "positive human image" in its original series rather than stories where the main characters are in a perpetual downward spiral. A happy ending is not mandatory, but the catharsis of the main character is crucial, he concluded. An orientation towards a certain lightness and cheerfulness seems to have shaped German television fiction overall, as

the later Sect. 7.3 tracing the industry's historical perspectives on German quality drama makes clear once again.

The formulaic nature of German TV fiction can generally be linked to its past, since crucial structures and characteristics of TV films and series have developed over many years. In this context, the practitioners repeatedly addressed the lopsided socialisation of their industry and the audience, which ultimately prevented or hindered quality serials. The screenwriter Hanno Hackfort (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018), for example, complained about a "desert of recipients" resulting from the uniformity of broadcast programmes, and the director Achim von Borries (2019) problematised "cultivated" viewers who watch TV drama even if it is "uninteresting". These statements are united by the idea that the television industry "moulds" the audience, at least to a large extent.

According to Hackfort's colleague Kropf (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018), however, the broadcasters and their editors have repeatedly used simplistic audience concepts to justify the formulaicness through supposed viewer preferences:

> When we talk to these broadcasters, […] there are sentences like: "This is for Thursday evening; Friday is almost the weekend. And the viewer has to be released with a good feeling". Something like that […] is insanely constricting.

This description suggests that formatting and formulaicness are not only visible in content but also shape screenwriting and production processes.

Discussions on the formulaic nature of TV fiction also focused on the side of reception. Practitioners critically addressed audience ratings as an elementary measure of success that usually conflicts with budgetary and content criteria (see Windeler et al. 2001, 111). According to the television professionals, over time the prioritisation of quantitative audience ratings "spilled over" to the public broadcasters (Rauhaus 2016). Thus, quantitative viewing figures became a central and today remain a highly relevant, control variable throughout the industry. The endeavour to reach a "mass audience" (Hess 2019) or at least a very broad target group, which has shaped the industry for years and often continues to do so, seems to have significantly pushed this reliance on formulas, "brands" and stereotypes. The scriptwriter Annette Hess (2019) diagnosed that,

against such a background, characters often have to be very quickly recognisable: "The evil brother-in-law […] the cautious flower seller", so that the viewers can immediately go, "Oh yeah, I know that one".

The crime genre's ubiquitousness in German TV fiction has also been repeatedly attributed to the perceived fixation on quantitative audience ratings.

The Omnipresent Crime Genre

The practitioners' debates on the strict formulas and formats of German TV drama repeatedly returned to the crime genre. As a result of the industry's perceived focus on crime fiction, several TV professionals on the one hand lamented a dearth of other genres, which other markets allegedly have; on the other hand, they often considered crime fiction to be "neutral" (Henke 2018) or a form in which "pretty much anything you want can be told" (Steinwender in Simionescu and Steinwender 2018):

> International crime literature or the international crime novel has long since broken away from conventional strategies. There are also crime stories that have no murder at all, but people have only imagined one. Or someone would like to commit murder, but doesn't. There are all kinds of variations. (Jessen 2019)

This is how Liane Jessen, then head of fiction at HR within the ARD network, summarised the potential conversations on the crime genre that could have been had in the central meetings on the popular *Tatort / Crime Scene* franchise (ARD/ORF/SRF 1970–), but, according to her, were not.[2] If we follow the corresponding arguments, it is less a question of how many crime shows are produced than of variation. Many of Germany's productions stamped as "quality TV drama"—such as *4 Blocks*, *Babylon Berlin* (ARD/Degeto/Sky Deutschland 2017–), *Das Geheimnis des Totenwalds / Dark Woods* (ARD/NDR/Degeto 2020) and, from more than 10 years ago, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens / In the Face of Crime* (ARD et al. 2010) and *KDD—Kriminaldauerdienst / KDD – Berlin Crime Squad* (ZDF 2007–2010)—feature crime elements, as several interviewees noted. Different, experimental or even quality aspects have often been identified in the series' multiple and serial storylines, which distinguish them from more simplistic crime procedurals with one case per episode (see Rothemund 2011). Those who worked on the mafia

drama *4 Blocks* also described the shift in perspective there—away from the police investigators and towards the criminal, migrant family clans—as breaking from German TV fiction conventions. Anke Greifeneder, head of production at WarnerMedia's German pay TV channels, is said to have suggested this narrative perspective. "With *4 Blocks* it was also a trigger to give airtime to characters that you don't usually see or, at most, sometimes in *Tatort* when they are brought before the judge", she argued retrospectively in an interview with the trade magazine *Blickpunkt Film* (Greifender in Heine 2021, my translation).

At the 2017 *Winterclass* industry workshop, Greifeneder (2017) emphasised, similar to in her public interviews (e.g. Ströbele 2017), the desire to not fall into a repetitive loop that otherwise characterises German television, with its "German angst". Beyond again delineating supposedly typical German characteristics, what's striking here is Greifeneder's deliberate attempts to differentiate her work from more "ordinary", formulaic television fiction, self-attributing a quality of innovation, in the sense of the new (see Krauß 2020b, 140, 143). "Is it something new, innovative, fresh?" is how Christian Honeck (2018), the editor co-responsible for *4 Blocks* and now head of fiction for Disney+ Germany, described a basic selection criterion for German series commissioned by TNT Serie and TNT Comedy (now WarnerTV Serie and WarnerTV Comedy). At the same time, after the three successful seasons of *4 Blocks*, the advertisements for *Para—Wir sind King / Para—We Are King* (TNT Serie 2021), a coming-of-age drama about four girls in Wedding, one of the poorest and most ethnically diverse areas of Berlin, boasted: "from the creators of *4 Blocks*". With clear parallels in environment and plot, *Para* represents a kind of younger, more female version of *4 Blocks*. In 2023, Warner Comedy released the mockumentary series *German Genius* (2023), in which Kida Khodr Ramadan, playing himself, tries to step away from his famous lead role as Ali "Toni" Hamad in *4 Blocks* to create a German version of the star-packed sitcom *Extras* (HBO2005–2007), with Ramadan as the German counterpart to the British comedian Ricky Gervais. These examples clearly show that certain types of repetitions, if not formulaic ones, are emerging on the TNT/Warner channels too, just as they do on other more established and more mainstream broadcasters.

Character Formulation

Another recurring topic of discussion, alongside the formulaic nature of German TV drama, was the formulation of characters, which, as already explained, the practitioners regarded as central components of quality dramas. According to Hess (2019), recourse to formulas and conventions—in the sense of popular, familiar ingredients—can be quite constructive in character formulation, to activate viewers' existing "empathy" through "recognisability" and, from there, to "take them on a journey". The first step of screenwriting, according to her, is "setting oneself up to be as popular as possible". Only after achieving that is it a good idea to add "relevant content" and "become a bit more artistic", by which she, as a screenwriter, presumably meant experiments in the story, including its characters. Hess further explained the notion of starting with basic stock characters through the example of characters in two series that she primarily wrote. In the three-part *Ku'damm 56* (ZDF 2015, see Fig. 7.1), we have the protagonist Monika Schöllack, who, unlike her two sisters, does not conform to the normative ideas of her conservative mother; the mother is the "evil stepmother" and the disappointing daughter the "Cinderella" ("*Aschenbrödel*"). Then we have *Weissensee/The Weissensee Saga* (ARD/MDR/Degeto 2010–2018), which, according to Hess, builds on the *Romeo and Juliet* story: in it, Martin Kupfer and Julia Hausmann, the offspring of two very contrasting, intertwined families in East Berlin, fall in love. In Hess's process, it is then necessary to break the character stereotypes in a second step. However, she criticised, there is often a lack of desire or willingness to do this among television practitioners in Germany. As with Hess, other professionals' negotiations regarding the deficits in German television fiction related in particular to character formulation.

This focus on characters arose from the basic assumption that one of quality drama's special attributes is multi-layered characters who fascinate viewers and keep them interested. Frank Jastfelder (2018a) from Sky Deutschland classified "character-centricity" as an "essential distinguishing feature" of pay TV fiction compared to "free TV". Linear broadcasters' aforementioned aversion to ongoing serials and their favouritism of procedurals may be a crucial reason why German TV fiction—as repeatedly diagnosed—has lacked more profound or complex character formulation. John Yorke (2013, 62) deals with the connection between series structure and character in more detail in *Into the Woods* (a mixture

Fig. 7.1 A "Cinderella" who does not conform to normative ideas—Monika Schöllack (Sonja Gerhardt, with raised hand) in the period drama *Ku'damm 56*. ©ZDF/[m] KNSK Werbeagentur GmbH (*Photo* Tobias Schult)

of a screenwriting guide and dramaturgical analysis): "They may not change inside – their knowledge of a situation changes instead", he notes about protagonists in episodic series, continuing: "Rather than a flaw, these characters have a deficiency of knowledge, which improves as the story progresses". Crime procedurals exemplify this mode, as they traditionally hinge on investigators gaining knowledge of their respective cases. In Germany, and especially in public-television fiction, such episodic crime series continue to be extremely prevalent, not least through hybrids of television films and series, such as 90-minute crime productions that are roughly linked together.

Gebhard Henke (2018), at the time of the interview still programme director at WDR, dealt, in his role as coordinator for *Tatort*, with the well-known series' character development and serial storylines. On the part of the creatives, the desire to tell "horizontal" stories across different *Tatort* episodes is definitely present, Henke stated. Indeed, the series' 90-minute films feature attempts to link cases and, where narratively possible,

to have different local investigators appear across episodes, for example, in the double episode *Tatort: In der Familie / Crime Scene: Inside the Family* (ARD/WDR/BR 2020; after Henke's time). According to Henke, such approaches to ongoing dramatic continuity in *Tatort* often lead to problems. Sometimes, a year can pass between episodes featuring the same investigator, so that viewers at best can only vaguely remember the earlier film. As of 2023, the roster includes more than 20 teams of investigators, each of which usually looks into one case per episode in their respective cities; it can indeed take quite a long time until the next episode featuring them is broadcast.[3]

The corresponding structure of dramaturgy and distribution, which also shapes other German crime procedurals with 90-minute episodes, has potentially made it difficult to develop characters more profoundly. Jessen (2019), who produced several *Tatort* films at HR, including the multi-award-winning, comparatively experimental *Im Schmerz geboren / Born in Pain* (ARD/HR 2014), complained—far beyond the *Tatort* format—about a tendency towards plot-driven and theme-focused storytelling in the submitted scripts and treatments that she reviews:

> Afghanistan returnees, incest, genetic engineering, Alzheimer's, hazardous waste so-and-so – that doesn't interest me at all! That can be the carrier subject, so to speak. To that I say: Okay, I'll tell an interpersonal story and use hazardous waste for that. But the hazardous waste cannot be the actual content. […] What interests me is: How does evil come into being and what guise does it take on?

Individual writers, on the other hand, complained that producers often demand dramatic plot twists instead of giving space for more detailed character sketches. "Can't we build a destroy-the-world button into this season somewhere here?" was the feedback, according to Richard Kropf (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018), on a concept for a drama serial with ongoing continuity that he, Hanno Hackfort and Bob Konrad developed around 2008. According to him, many German producers' need for a flashy start and "big drama" prevents "a lot of stories that could be told" from getting the green light.

Kropf also problematised the recurring feedback from broadcasters that their viewers "like it black and white" when it comes to characters. Although the discussion on the "brokenness of characters", according to Bernhard Gleim (2016), former commissioning editor at NDR (a

member of the ARD consortium), was already happening in public broadcasters' editorial offices during the time of this early interview in 2016, it seems that certain broadcast slots continue to be held for specific character types—a practice that Yorke, with regard to British television production, emphasises in one short sentence: "Can you make them nice?" (2013, 5). The interviewed and observed practitioners sometimes took the same view as Yorke: "Niceness tends to kill characters. […] They key to empathy […] does not lie in manners or good behaviour. […] It lies in its ability to access and bond with our unconscious" (5).

Hess (2019) similarly argued that viewers must be able to "dock" with protagonists. Screenwriter Martin Behnke (2019) considered "a character who is always strong" to be "uninteresting". A protagonist must grow in the course of a story, he explained; otherwise, the character remains incomprehensible to the viewers and there is "no drama". Behnke's point of reference here was the miniseries *Die Stadt und die Macht / The City and the Power* (ARD/NDR/Degeto 2016) (Fig. 7.2), which he co-wrote and which, according to his retrospective analysis, lacks congruent character development: the protagonist Susanne Kröhmer is expected to "suffer many strokes of fate", but the viewer does not relate to this character, as "she has no agenda".

Fig. 7.2 "A character who is always strong"—Susanne Kröhmer in the miniseries *Die Stadt und die Macht*. © ARD/Frédéric Batier

Alongside the characters—or often linked to them—realism and authenticity emerged as important themes in the practitioners' discussions of the state of German TV drama and its contents and forms.

Realism and Authenticity

Realism and authenticity are, as already mentioned, central aspects that media scholars, television critics and practitioners have all attributed to quality TV drama (see e.g. Mikos 2021, 187). The observed and interviewed TV producers also noted deficits in terms of authenticity and realism. In this context, they once again criticised a formulaic or uniform tone. The writer Kropf (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018), for example, attested to the very standardised appearance of the hospital staff in German medical dramas. The nurses and doctors usually appear as if they have "just come out of make-up":

> No one looks like they worked in a hospital for even a minute that day. And that is vanity on the part of the actors possibly. But that's also a complete lack of understanding. […] There seems to be an image going on that a perfect mask [is] a perfect image. No – a perfect mask depicts what that person experienced that day.

In this context, his co-writer Konrad also criticised the casting process: "Nobody asks: What do the people who do this job actually look like?" Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf (2018) addressed the interplay of different trades and thus production tendencies that affect content and aesthetic form. Camerawork, make-up, acting and casting, their diagnosis suggests, often fail to align and thus prevent realism and authenticity.

As for their own profession, the three scriptwriters expressed particular concern with the lack of authenticity in dialogue. In their view, dialogue in period dramas is especially inauthentic. In *Charité* (ARD/MDR 2017–), for example, an event miniseries about the famous Berlin hospital in different eras, the medical staff of yesteryear talk in a way that today's viewers understand immediately and that veers heavily towards exposition: "I think this person has influenza infernalis / You mean this contagious disease that inevitably leads to death? / Exactly", said Hackfort (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018), mimicking the fictional professionals' speech. According to him, there is no recognition that the viewers ultimately do not care "what kind of influenza this person has. The main

thing is that the audience understands that [the characters] are about to die". Such reasoning is familiar from screenplay guides and analyses. Yorke (2013, 168), for example, argues that not every word in dialogue has to be understandable; rather, the audience only needs to be able to decode the intention of the characters, not the exact meaning of their words.

In German television fiction, repeated diagnoses suggested, overly clear "explanatory dialogue" often prevails. Departing from this tendency received the practitioners' praise. For example, *Winterclass* participants applauded the cryptic jargon of the investment bankers in the financial thriller *Bad Banks* (ZDF/Arte 2018–2020). Producers, writers and commissioning editors at this industry event also negotiated "expository dialogue" (*Erklärdialoge*) in the gangster drama *4 Blocks*. Shot on location, partly starring amateur actors, set in the present and containing comparatively explicit scenes of violence, this production of the pay TV channel TNT Serie is generally considered a prime example of greater "authenticity". *4 Blocks* was marketed and reviewed accordingly (e.g. Mützel 2017). However, during the *Winterclass* workshop discussion with the show's head writers—Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf (2017)—TV professionals criticised the first season's repeated mentions that the migrant, criminal protagonists do not have permanent residence status, even decades after their arrival to Germany. The show's three authors and editor Christian Honeck, who was present in the audience of experts, defended the prominence of this information at the dialogue level by saying that this fact was decisive for the characters portrayed, and their situation is explained and told from their perspective. But other voices identified an overly explanatory narration style.

Babylon Berlin director and writer Achim von Borries (2019) also considered "explanatory television" to be problematic: "When the viewer is to be lectured, all quality television is simply dead". He feared stories that underwhelm the audience. As can be seen here, the negotiations on authenticity and realism once again revolved around the viewers: What can be expected from them in respect to content and storytelling? What do they understand? How much are they willing to engage in complex serial storylines? The TV professionals tended to view quality TV dramas as programmes that demand more from the audience than supposedly "ordinary television"—in accordance with similar attributions to quality TV in academia (e.g. Thompson 1996).

The conceptualisation and addressing of viewers, together with aspects of content, also played an important role when the practitioners explored

the sociopolitical relevance of TV drama, as linked to realism and authenticity.

Sociopolitical Relevance

Sociopolitical relevance, like realism, has repeatedly functioned as a quality criterion in considerations of television (e.g. Weber 2020, 220). Some scholars have argued, in respect to German TV films, that fiction in particular can frame political and complex issues at the individual human level (Schatz and Schulz 1992, 701). Several of the interviewed and observed TV producers tended to use similar arguments and emphases. Hess (2019), for example, casually equated "high-end" series with "relevant" content. Jessen (2019) attributed to TV drama the potential to "change thinking and lead people more to democracy or good than any informative programme or documentary". According to her, TV drama can not only inform an important subject but also enable viewers' "emotional docking". Following this assessment, relevance arises on not only a rational level. Viewers' activity also seems to play an important role, which corresponds to theories of cultural studies whereby the meaning of a media text ultimately unfolds only in reception and appropriation (e.g. Johnson 1996, 97).

Florian Cossen (2018), who directed *Deutschland 86* and the third part of the drama trilogy *Mitten in Deutschland: NSU / NSU German History X* (ARD et al. 2016) on the radical right-wing terrorist organisation National Socialist Underground, cited the potential of "using the burning [or magnifying] glass of fiction [*Brennglas der Fiktion*] to bump into something that is true without it being the truth". When I asked him to expand, he explained that "truthfulness" relates to a broader significance "about the time [and] the society in which we live". Through fictional narratives, "painful pinpricks" can be made "on issues that concern us all".

Von Borries (2019) also dealt with relevance when exploring the quality of *Babylon Berlin*: he noted indirect references in the script of this period drama to current sociopolitical issues, a claim he also made in previously published press statements by him and his two director colleagues (e.g. Schader 2017). Paratexts on *Babylon Berlin* have further emphasised and discussed the parallels between the series' historical world, the Weimar Republic of the late 1920s, and the present, in the

context of the recent financial crisis and establishment of the right-wing party AfD—Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany) in Germany's political landscape in 2013 (e.g. Schmitt, Thorsson and Scharffetter 2018). According to von Borries (2019), current relevance can be an important motive for viewers, including beyond Germany, to watch *Babylon Berlin* and results in a difference in quality as compared to other, more "ordinary" programmes. In developing the script, he noted, he and his two co-writers and directors were aware of the parallels between *Babylon Berlin*'s historical time and the present, but deliberately avoided "hammering away at it". Relevance is important, but must not come across too clearly—echoing an argument common among television producers.

According to von Borries (2019), the series' sociopolitical relevance also played an important role in the adaptation process. For example, he stated that, when adapting a script from Volker Kutscher's novels (e.g. Kutscher 2017), he and his co-writers strengthened "all these political dimensions". The series depicts, among other things, a clandestine rearmament and possible coup by the real-life Black Reichswehr, an illegal paramilitary group promoted by the German Reichswehr army during the Weimar Republic. The "big plot behind it", summarised von Borries (2019), lies in the question of "how does each person decide and how can a democracy perish? […] why could it come to such a catastrophe?" The "catastrophe", in the context of contemporary history, is obviously the takeover of the NSDAP, the National Socialist German Workers' Party, and its aftermaths in German and European history. Here, von Borries probably was referring to the "theme" or "controlling idea" (McKee 1997, 115), which is a central component of film dramaturgy and especially storytelling in TV drama. What is the underlying, central concept that unites various plotlines and episodes? The theme is also always about relevance, since (according to screenwriting manuals) audiences will discover meanings when they take the "controlling idea" and follow its implications into every aspect of their lives (McKee 1997, 115).

The deeper, overarching theme, as accentuated by von Borries in his self-praise for *Babylon Berlin*, is reminiscent of "double storytelling". Eva Novrup Redvall (2013, 68) identifies this concept as a basic principle of the series productions from the Danish public broadcaster DR: "series not only containing 'a good story' but also a story with ethical

or social connotations" are a must there. Several of the studied practitioners argued along these lines and identified quality in content that had multiple dimensions and was thus relevant.

At the same time, however, the practitioners also tended to reject the specific sociopolitical intentions of a programme or, more generally, its underlying ideology—similar to what John Thornton Caldwell (2008, 317) has said about the US film and television industry: "In trade talk, screenplays and films are never ideological, television shows are never racist or about race, and producer-creators never have a cultural axe to grind". Since Caldwell made this observation, certain issues—such as #MeToo and attempts to increase diversity in production and representation—have become more prominent in both public and industry discourses. Germany's TV workers are also influenced by these debates (see e.g. Zarges 2020a). Still, the studied TV professionals frequently distanced themselves from "political correctness" or at least stated that they had finally put aside doubts as to whether one was "allowed" to portray controversial issues.

Repeatedly, practitioners criticised German television fiction for having an overly obvious political agenda or (from their point of view) a misunderstood relevance. The screenwriter Hackfort (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018), for example, faulted German broadcasters for often only considering subjects to be relevant if clearly aiming at topics of the moment. Thus, he also problematised the selection criteria of most commissioners. Frank Jastfelder (2018a), from Sky Deutschland, highlighted the question of how obvious relevance arises. In distinction to public-service television fiction, with its clear orientation towards social relevance—such as the three-part miniseries *Mitten in Deutschland: NSU* on right-wing violence—he emphasised the entertainment function of Sky's German series: "For us, entertainment is in the foreground". He had reservations about TV series concepts submitted with arguments such as "this has to be told now". According to Jastfelder, such views correspond more to the work of public-service editors.

As Jastfelder's interview indicates, the relevance debate has largely revolved around public-service television fiction and "'the serious' in a public service ethos" (Nelson 2007, 51). Several practitioners heavily criticised public-service commissioners' supposed focus on sociopolitical relevance. For example, Bob Konrad (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018), in an exchange with his two *4 Blocks* co-writers, snarled about ZDFneo dramas such as *Lobbyistin/Lobbyist* (2017) and *Tempel/Temple*

(2016): "it's so public service, it makes you want to puke". From his point of view, these ZDFneo productions deal with current social issues in a too simplistic and overly clear manner, such as gentrification in *Tempel* and corporate influence on politics in *Lobbyistin*.

At the same time, several television professionals demanded relevant content and quality from ARD and ZDF in particular, since, according to a recurring comment, they do not have the same financial pressures as the advertising-financed commercial broadcasters and can thus risk more unwieldy content. In many German public-service series, the practitioners missed this relevance or located it instead in streaming or pay TV productions. Jessen (2019), who emphasised the "democratic mission" of public broadcasters, praised Netflix and Amazon Prime Video for programmes that she found "deeply essential, interesting" and that moved her forward "as a human being". The anthology series *Black Mirror* (Channel 4/ Netflix 2011–2019), for example, negotiates "a deep realisation" beyond "pure suspense dramaturgy", according to the former fiction head of HR:

> What is morality? What is the human? What is worth fighting for? What should survive? Et cetera. These are democratic, philosophical and human questions that I don't really find in any series on public television […] especially in Germany.

What is lost in Jessen's applause for the transnational streaming providers here is the fact that Netflix was not involved in the first two seasons of *Black Mirror* and the original commissioner, Channel 4, is a UK public broadcaster, albeit one that also operates commercially to a great extent (Born 2003).

In the discussion of public-television fiction and its realism and relevance, the producers kept coming back to television films.[4] The editor Harald Steinwender from BR, for example, emphasised the "tradition […] of thematic films", which when programmed as part of a "kind of theme night", made "discourse offerings to the television audience" (in Simionescu and Steinwender 2018). ARD's national channel Das Erste (The First), in particular, likes to deal with "relevant" sociopolitical topics, unfixed to a particular genre, in its weekly films during Wednesday prime-time. Examples, among others, are *Die Getriebenen / Merkel: Anatomy of a Crisis* (ARD/RBB/NDR 2019), a political TV film about Chancellor Angela Merkel and German refugee policy around the year 2015, and

Ökozid / Ecocide (ARD/RBB 2020), a near-future science-fiction court-room drama in which Global South nations sue the Federal Republic of Germany for the consequences of climate change. Talk shows and documentaries in the subsequent linear broadcast, and even entire theme weeks, often take up the sociopolitical issues of such single films.

The television film also emerged more comprehensively as a central topos in the industry discourse on quality drama. Some practitioners saw a higher quality in individual fiction productions and considered them to usually be more relevant, or at least more daring and less formulaic, than most German series. But other TV makers regarded the ongoing importance of the TV film (especially in public-service fiction) as a fundamental structural problem of the German TV industry.

The Television Film as a Central Programme Trend

Greg M. Smith (2011, 113) has described series production as a constant manoeuvring between the advantages and disadvantages of serial and episodic structures. Accordingly, in their negotiation of the quality TV drama, the analysed television-makers repeatedly dealt with both poles—the series and the serial, episodic structure and ongoing dramatic continuity—and highlighted the TV film as a defining characteristic of German television. The practitioners often described the high number of TV films in comparison with other European nations (Fontaine and Pumares 2018, 2), and specifically public-service fiction ones, as a unique path of German television. However, other local and temporal contexts also have a tradition and appreciation of the television film (e.g. Monnet-Cantagrel 2021, 119), such as the "Golden Age of Live TV" (Feuer 2007, 147) in the US in the 1950s, which encompassed live "anthology" teleplays whose status as prestige programmes came from their proximity to theatre, a supposedly "higher" art form (Feuer 2007, 146–147; Feuer, Kerr and Vahimagi 1984). In British television, too, the television film was long considered more progressive in form and content than serial "long-form drama" (Creeber 2004, 1).

Especially in the German-speaking market, the development away from the TV film does not seem to have happened in the way that Robin Nelson (1997, 31) describes—away from the "television play" and towards the "flexi-narrative", which mixes soap opera and procedural structures, serial and series. In Germany, the television film continues to form an important programme segment and thus shapes the work, as

well as the argumentation, of many of the nation's television creators. Producer and writer Jörg Winger (2017), for example, emphasised in our interview that the local TV fiction industry comes "from a television film tradition". According to him, this tradition is reflected in, among other things, the relatively few prime-time slots for series. And with that statement, the relevance of fixed, linear programme windows, as a historically evolved structure of television that still holds great sway over the industry and audiences, thus became visible once more.

The existing programme structures and flavours are, as outlined in Sect. 4.3, shaped by, among other things, hybrids of television films and series, the so-called *Reihe*. Some practitioners considered *Tatort*—the best-known example of this kind of procedural with feature-length episodes—to be not only the "bonfire of the nation" (Hess 2019), around which a comparatively large and heterogeneous audience still comes together on Sunday night (e.g. Zubayr and Gerhard 2019, 102–103), but also an example of "German quality TV" (e.g. interview with Leibfried 2016). The decisive factor for this assessment seemed to be not so much the socially relevant and buzzy topics that *Tatort* deals with, as has been pointed out several times (e.g. Hißnauer, Scherer and Stockinger 2014a, 12), but rather its breaking away from formula and formatting and its involvement of various creators. Thus, commissioning editor Johanna Kraus (2018) explained about *Tatort* and the related *Polizeiruf 110/ Police Call 110* (DFF/ARD/ORF 1971–): "We have very exciting writers there. Different narrative styles are tried out. […] you also have different, very ambitious directors and also always a different look". As Kraus, as a commissioning editor, supervised several *Polizeiruf 110* films about Magdeburg's chief detective, Doreen Brasch (Claudia Michelsen), and now leads the fiction department at the ARD local broadcaster MDR, her statement can be read as being influenced by self-interest and aimed at self-promotion (see Caldwell 2008, 14). For the discourse on the quality series and its comparison with the television film, it is particularly interesting that Kraus identifies quality precisely in the variance between episodes. The "always different look" results from *Tatort*'s and *Polizeiruf 110*'s division into minorly linked individual films and their respective changing production teams.

The tendency towards single films is also evident in the "event" miniseries. The practitioners critically addressed the so-called *Mehrteiler* as another traditional characteristic of German TV fiction when negotiating the contents and forms of quality drama. As a rule, these miniseries

consist of two or three 90-minute episodes—quasi-films—and they usually air on linear television within a short time period and outside regular broadcast slots, as an "event". "With a very big emphasis on *event* [like for] *Dresden*, *Der Tunnel*", noted writer Hanno Hackfort (in Hackfort Konrad and Kropf 2018) with an ironic undertone, thus connecting the German miniseries to its more recent guise as "historical 'event television'" (Cooke 2016). Such "event" dramas are (as already discussed in chapter 6) strongly influenced by the production company UFA Fiction and deal with topics of twentieth-century German history through individual, mostly female heroes. Their narratives include the aforementioned bombing of Dresden during the Second World War (*Dresden*, ZDF 2006) and the division of and escape attempts from the GDR in *Der Tunnel /The Tunnel* (Sat.1 2001). The stumbling block for Hackfort and his co-writers Konrad and Kropf was not so much the popular, formulaic or even revisionist form that this portrayal of German history, and especially National Socialism, takes (which many critics consider inappropriate). Rather, their issue was with the density of the plot, which they linked to the tendency towards television films. In connection with character construction, we have already reviewed their criticism that local television fiction is solely plot-driven. At an industry workshop, the three writers described it even more clearly as a structural problem in script development that the prevalence of the two or three 90-minute episode structure limits the possibilities of serial drama.

Particularly in public-television fiction, the tendency towards the *Mehrteiler* and the associated convergence with the television film continues.[5] In terms of distribution and reviews, these two- or three-parters are often considered to be films rather than series. The practice of broadcasting miniseries in double episodes, and thus adapting them to the television film and the *Mehrteiler* format, is common; for example, the postwar spy drama *Bonn—Alte Freunde, neue Feinde / Sleeping Dog* (ARD/WDR 2023) was broadcast this way. When it comes to transnational or online-based releases, however, some German miniseries, such as *Ku'damm 56*, have been split into shorter series episodes. Martina Zöllner (2018) remarked that the 90-minute two- or three-parter has "a different flow" and that the dramaturgy must take into account the corresponding distribution. While for Zöllner combining the television film and more serial distribution and narration is possible (albeit not without its challenges), Edward Berger (2018), the director of several *Deutschland 83* episodes (RTL2015) and the Netflix film *Im Westen nichts Neues / All*

Quiet on the Western Front (2022), emphasised the difficulty of achieving such a "hybrid form".

In the interviews, Berger emerged as a particularly vehement critic of the programming favouritism for television films. In his view, the television film—including the aforementioned borderline cases—is boring, antiquated and, compared to serials with more plot time and often stronger multi-perspectivity, superficial. The television film, he judged, is a German particularity that makes it difficult to connect with other, transnational markets. He chastised the *Reihe* film-series hybrid in particular for being "expressions of total standstill and conservatism". According to Berger, the television film focus has also negatively impacted the German TV series: the local industry "missed the boat" for years in promoting series and instead relied on the "outdated 90-minute TV movie format".

In the quality series discourse, practitioners variously hoped for, feared or at least noted the decline of the television film. Annette Hess (2019) casually described the television film as a "dying genre" that is considered "unsexy" in the industry: "Almost everyone wants to make series, series are being looked at". This reputation of the serial, as expressed by Hess, probably stems from the public and media perception that series in particular are contemporary, innovative and of high quality. Of course, the fact that series are "looked at" can also mean that they have a stronger or more lasting presence with the audience, as Winger (2017) assessed. He considered series to be the more clever economic strategy as compared to the single TV film, partly because of viewers' commitment to a specific platform or broadcaster over a longer period of time. Berger (2018) similarly criticised the television film's short-lived nature, in part due to its frequent "up-to-the-minuteness" on sociopolitical issues, by which he was probably alluding to the public-service "theme film". "They actually produce [TV films] for the dustbin", he remarked.

Commissioning editors at public broadcasters, on the other hand, repeatedly upheld the quality and importance of television films. "Why does one actually despise the tradition of the television film, which the Americans do not have at all? […] Series is not synonymous with good", argued Gebhard Henke (2018). The fact that individual films have always played an important role in US television history and are also commissioned and purchased by current streaming providers of US origin was somewhat lost in this comparison with the US.

Several public-service editors also described their own work as being strongly influenced by television films. In the project *Mitten in Deutschland: NSU*, following the crimes of the National Socialist Underground from different perspectives, the goal, according to its supervising editors, was to combine the television film and the serial. Steinwender (in Simionescu and Steinwender 2018) noted, however, that in the end only limited horizontal connections occurred between the project's three films—due to a lack of time resources, their highly individual narratives and protagonists, and their respective lead creatives and their teams. Certain production conditions, as the next chapter looks more closely at, seem to have made serial storytelling across *Mitten in Deutschland: NSU*'s different episodes very difficult.

When it comes to comparing series against TV film-series hybrids as well as the traditional single TV film in German TV fiction, Berger's sweeping "dustbin" critique can be counter-argued with the clear fact that several quality series projects from Germany have been short-lived and not very visible. Examples include *Die Stadt und die Macht*, which was taken into account in the interview sample and was often rated as a flop, as well as the German-Austrian crime biopic *Freud* (Netflix/ORF 2020), dismissed by many TV critics (e.g. Jungen 2020).

In their discussion of German television fiction, the practitioners repeatedly negotiated corresponding attempts in the local industry to produce and distribute "other", qualitatively more valuable, more prestigious series.

7.2   Quality Drama Series from Germany

The Recent Series Boom

In view of the numerous television productions in the quality or high-end arena and the diversification of potential commissioners (described in Sect. 4.1), many television professionals professed a "gold rush time" (von Borries 2019) or "*Gründerzeit* of German television drama" (Zöllner 2018). This diagnosis is reminiscent of talk of the "golden" television era in other local and temporal contexts (see e.g. Agger 2020), such as US teleplays in the 1950s, and is certainly due to the timing of most of the interviews: they largely took place before the economic and energy crises in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the aftermaths

of the Covid-19 pandemic. In their (still) positive sentiments, the practitioners repeatedly identified German quality drama in recent productions departing from the well-trodden paths of the nation's television fiction. In some cases, such associations overlapped with self-promotion and self-marketing, as when industry representatives saw innovation and quality specifically in their own work. This known tendency towards self-promotion (e.g. Redvall 2013, 193) characterised the lectures and discussions at the attended industry workshops. Both the speakers and the industry participants in the audience sought to "sell" themselves and the institutions they represented as positively as possible and to establish networks.

Screenwriter Annette Hess's (2019) survey of contemporary TV dramas went further than the sweeping enthusiasm for the "German series boom", reminiscent of marketing materials, when she continually identified textual deficits and questioned the myth of "higher" quality from the new, internet-based providers. According to her, in view of streaming services' online distribution and "the new viewing habits" of consumers, pilot episodes in particular must "grab [and] be exciting". However, from Hess's standpoint, the focus on "audience appeal" often promotes sensational stories and is not necessarily conducive to quality. In connection with current platforms and their serial distribution, she also addressed the high quantity of series "cranked out" by streaming services. *You Are Wanted* (Amazon Prime Video 2017–2018), which critics largely disregarded (e.g. Sander 2018), offers a comparatively early example. Its commissioner, Amazon Prime Video, is said to have pushed hard for quick completion in order to release its first German drama original before its competitor Netflix. The increased activities of Netflix and Amazon Prime Video spurred other critical voices in the industry, at least behind closed doors, regarding their German series productions. Even more, as they have cancelled several series and even stopped production in advance, new commissioners have increasingly come to be seen as unreliable or risky partners (see e.g. Lückerath 2022). The impression of a "boom" and the enthusiasm for the new US-based streaming services thus has become somewhat dampened.

In the practitioners' debates on current German quality series, "prototypes" crystallised, similar to in the underlying, US-centred discussions in the newspaper feature pages and in academia. Again and again, the interviewed and observed TV professionals referred especially to *Bad Banks*, *Babylon Berlin* and *4 Blocks*. I partly brought these series into

the interviews myself—explicitly naming them as examples or by selecting interview partners related to them. Beyond these obvious examples of quality dramas, the practitioners spoke of more marginal ones, in the independent and newcomer area, in the local programmes of the ARD network (the so-called third channels, run by ARD's different local broadcasters) or outside the established broadcast slots and their economic resources. Claudia Simionescu, the head of TV films at BR, for example, cited the local dramedy *Hindafing* (ARD/BR/Arte 2017–2019) as a "small project by university students" (Rafael Parente, Boris Kunz and others from HFF München, the University of Television and Film Munich) and emphasised regionality's influence at the level of content: "very Bavarian […], very *Heimat*" and cast with "Bavarian folk actors" (in Simionescu and Steinwender 2018).

Just as Simionescu rated *Hindafing* as "of great prestigiousness" (for the commissioner BR, represented by her), the other practitioners often evaluated individual examples and potential manifestations of the quality TV drama in Germany. However, many industry representatives seemed to shy away from overt criticism in the interviews. This was indicated by the fact that, when partaking in unofficial conversations (which I overheard or conducted at industry workshops), some practitioners distanced themselves much more strongly from specific German series and their commissioners than they did in the recorded interviews. However, more diplomatic and cautious expression may not be necessarily or solely due to my presence; rather, it may also reflect the way many practitioners work: editors and producers in particular often must leave their own taste out of the equation and judge in an argumentatively well-founded and differentiated way. Such an analytical approach was hinted at in Claudia Simionescu and Harald Steinwender's (2018) examination of *Charité*. According to Steinwender, the fact that this period medical drama, and especially its first season, was very successful in prime-time is partly due to the fact that it is a "family series in historical garb" that "pushes buttons". "There you can already see what works, what is made for the German market", Simionescu added. The "pushed buttons" include, among other things, melodramatic elements and the central characters of the three seasons so far. Set in different historical eras, each focuses on young, intelligent and attractive women with, firstly, medical ambitions in a male-dominated professional field and, secondly, challenges in their family and love life.[6]

Compared to *Charité*, many ambitious serials from Germany, with storylines across several episodes or seasons, have not been very

successful—at least if one uses the conventional criterion of quantitative audience ratings as a yardstick. In the discussion of individual quality dramas from Germany, the practitioners also repeatedly dealt with such "failure studies" (Redvall 2013, 194).

Failures and Unfulfilled Expectations

In considering "failed" quality TV projects from Germany, television professionals moved towards the "failure studies" that Redvall (2013, 194) argues warrant close attention. After all, industry representatives generally prefer to talk about their stories of success. Hanno Hackfort (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018) deviated from this rule when he emphasised the unavoidability and potential productivity of failure: "Innovation inevitably involves failure. If everything is a success, then something is wrong". However, the failure that came up in the practitioners' debates was often only that of others. While Hess (2019), for example, attested to writing "really for the viewer", she considered *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* to be "told from an artistic ivory tower". In 2010, the audience figures for this ambitious ten-part crime drama about the "Russian mafia" in Berlin fell short of expectations when it was broadcast on Das Erste (e.g. Keil 2010).

Practitioners repeatedly attributed the supposed failure of German quality series projects to distribution: certain broadcast slots and patterns or the channel and its programming environment were considered the cause of disappointing audience figures. Jörg Winger (2017), for example, argued with regard to the historical series *Deutschland 83*, which he produced and co-wrote and which ran in weekly double episodes on RTL in 2015 with disappointing ratings: "The viewers who like our series did not find their way to RTL". As with *Deutschland 83*, the weekly broadcast of miniseries in double episodes was frequently criticised, but so was the "event programming" model (within a few days of each other). In some cases, TV producers classified linear broadcasting as a fundamentally wrong distribution strategy for serials with ongoing dramatic continuity.

But, above all, the TV professionals saw the deficits of German quality TV drama in the narrative style and structure. Liane Jessen (2019), for example, attributed "major problems" in terms of dramaturgy to *Babylon Berlin*—a central prestige project of ARD, of which she was a leading member as fiction head of HR. Scriptwriter Martin Behnke (2018) described the action thriller *You Are Wanted*—which, as the first

German Amazon production, can certainly be considered a quality TV project—as "narratively quite harebrained". He felt he was seeing "set pieces from different series" whose interplay did not work.

Practitioners not only pled for narrative coherence but also argued that copying the US models was not enough. Achim von Borries (2019) insisted that the gangster drama *4 Blocks* (whose third and final season was still pending at the time of the interview) needed to break further away from the "American models" and become "more specific". A conspicuous approximation or adaptation of US precedents with a lower budget may quickly appear embarrassing. Heavy borrowing from *Breaking Bad* (AMC 2008–2013) in the ZDF miniseries *Morgen hör ich auf / Tomorrow I Quit* (ZDF 2016) and a direct comparison between the two by Norbert Himmler (then ZDF programme director), for example, led to ridicule in reviews (e.g. Freitag 2016).

Only rarely did the television-makers address sociopolitical or ideological aspects such as gender representations in their discussion of textual characteristics and deficits. Hess (2019) was an exception when she attributed to herself a "special feminist view" and evaluated ambitious German series from this perspective.

Gender Representations

With regard to gender representations, Hess (2019) classified many attempts at quality TV from Germany as lopsided and ultimately "chauvinistic": "Always crime series set in the milieu", she said, referring to *4 Blocks*, which has a decided preponderance of male protagonists. She also found *Babylon Berlin* to be narrated from "a male point of view". She suggested that its central protagonist, Charlotte Ritter, always caters to the male leads of the show—particularly the central character Gereon Rath. Hess's criticism that sex workers are being portrayed the same as they have been "since the '70s, '80s" also seems to be aimed at *Babylon Berlin*, where Charlotte, a typist and later criminal assistant, occasionally, secretly and without traumatic burden engages in prostitution. Thus one possible reading of the series is that it perpetuates the trivialisation or mystification of female sex work.

Hess's critique of gender representations sometimes veered towards Laura Mulvey's (1975) concept of the "male gaze", which posits that female characters in Hollywood cinema of the studio era were mostly objectified and rarely active protagonists. According to Hess (2019), a key

factor is that men represent the majority of screenwriters and, even more so, directors, because "men look differently at it". In view of constructivist gender theories (e.g. West and Zimmerman 1987) and their transfer to film and television analyses, corresponding assumptions of a dichotomous "male" and "female" gaze on the production side and a direct connection with representation are questionable. In the specific field of German quality TV approaches, moreover, tricky and stereotypical gender representations also emerge in drama productions where women have lead roles. For example, many reviewers criticised a backward, crude or even contemptuous portrayal of women in the six-part ZDFneo drama *Parfum / Perfume* (ZDFneo/Netflix 2018–), written by Eva Kranenburg (e.g. Steinhart 2018). The period miniseries *Ku'damm 56*, written by Hess, also met with "feminist criticism" for a rape scene that some voices (e.g. Rieger 2017) regarded as downplaying sexual assault and highly problematic in its framing. Namely, the show's central character, Monika Schöllack, falls in love with her rapist. The staging of the rape merely serves the purpose of positioning the male protagonist as multifaceted through an ambivalent portrayal, argue Freya Herrmann and Vera Klocke (2020, 65). Following this interpretation, the striving for ambivalent characters—known to be an important ingredient of quality TV drama—led to problematic representations from a feminist point of view.

However one might assess the gender representations in *Ku'damm 56* (and in its two sequels, *Ku'damm 59* and *63*) as well as Hess's assumption of one clear "male gaze", it remains that Hess's feminist perspective on the German quality drama is fruitful. That is, from this angle, feminist evaluation criteria and the entrenched gender hierarchy of the German TV and film industry become visible. Women are still underrepresented in many creative guilds as well as in the project networks and screen idea work groups of individual productions. Skadi Loist and Elizabeth Prommer (2019, 99) point out that male directors dominate high-budget productions in particular in Germany's film industry. In the cost-intensive segment of quality or high-end drama, too, the preponderance of (white, cis, hetero) male directors and head writers is par for the course. Hess (2019) offered her own count of Netflix's German projects that had been announced at the time of the interview: "eight series, and of the 30 creators, five women". In 2022, the *Serienstudie* (Series Study) commissioned by Hess and her colleague Kristin Derfler (on German series from between 2017 and 2021 with an episode length of 40 minutes or more)

cemented the finding that women are significantly underrepresented "in all screenplay areas analysed" (Stieve 2022, 34, my translation).

The share of women in directing and screenwriting roles depends on the genre, as Loist and Prommer (2019, 105) show in their analysis of film festivals and Alia Perren and Thomas Schatz (2015, 91) reflect in their theorisation of the writer-producer: "when members of historically marginalised groups rise to positions of power [i.e. the showrunner], they frequently find themselves pigeonholed by genre and less recognised by critics". According to Hess (2019), screenwriters in German TV fiction who come from the traditionally marginalised group of women are often only allowed to be responsible for less prestigious stories and genres, which in turn are evaluated more negatively in reviews. As she pointed out, the "Sunday women's film"—that is, the TV films and film-series hybrids broadcast on ZDF Sunday prime-time under the label *Herzkino* (heart cinema)—are considered clichéd, "light" and "romantic pablum", whereas the crime thriller often ranks as "artistically high quality". But, she explained, the "same pattern" can be discerned again and again in German crime shows, too: "Some crazy cop […] who is not allowed to see his child. Always finds bags with coke, bags with weapons".

As mentioned, numerous quality TV projects from Germany are anchored in the crime genre. Several of these dramas, such as *Dogs of Berlin* (Netflix 2018) and *4 Blocks*, also have an almost entirely male arsenal of characters. However, Hess's argument—regarding a valued "male" crime thriller versus a disregarded "female" romantic drama—must be countered by the fact that the German television crime thriller's omnipresence has been repeatedly criticised in the industry and media (e.g. Herzog 2012). Despite its exaggeration, Hess's argument is again productive at this point, as it hints at the contexts within which quality judgements are determined, as Charlotte Brunsdon has emphasised: "Quality for whom?, Judgement by whom?, On whose behalf" (1990, 73).[7] Just as the attribution of typically "feminine" or "masculine" characteristics is potentially a judgemental and hierarchising process (see e.g. Krauß 2007, 145), quality judgements (to which discussion of quality TV inevitably leads) and gender can be related (see e.g. Weissmann 2015). This corresponding relation also came to the fore when practitioners complained about increasingly "light" and "sweet" TV drama in recent German television history (see Krauß 2021a). When dealing with the current content and forms of German television fiction, this topic was just one of many instances where the creators returned to television's past.

7.3   Historical Perspectives on German TV Drama

Quality Drama in Television History

When considering (West) Germany's television past, the industry discourse on quality TV drama once again bore "glocal" features: transnational references were joined by national and local ones.[8] First, several practitioners cited past television productions to counter the impression that German-language television fiction has a quality deficit and, beyond the daily and weekly soap, no ongoing serial storytelling. "Television has always made serials […], the know-how has been there", argued Claudia Simionescu (in Simionescu and Steinwender 2018) from BR, referring to *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* from 2010 and *KDD—Kriminaldauerdienst* from 2007–2010, among other examples. The interviewees especially highlighted these two crime serials, which thus took on the status of "prototypes". Less frequently, they also referred to the now largely forgotten Sat.1 thriller *Blackout—Die Erinnerung ist tödlich / Blackout—Remembering Is Lethal* (Sat.1 2006) and the experimental midlife-crisis drama *Zeit der Helden / Time of Heroes* (ARD/SWR/Arte 2013). All the cited examples are not yet quite *historical*, but they do come from a very different television landscape than today's—one with fewer channels and commissioners where linear distribution clearly reigned supreme. The practitioners addressed stylistic and narrative devices in these series that were unusual, at least in the context of past German television fiction, such as the handheld camera work in *KDD* and (once again) serial storylines across series in lieu of episodic "monster of the week" dramaturgy.

The long-standing structure of linear scheduling means that programming is closely interwoven with television's past. Johanna Kraus (2018) highlighted the GDR family epic *Weissensee*, which began in 2010 and ran until 2019, as a show with serial storylines that aired on Das Erste's linear programme in the Tuesday prime-time slot. Usually, this weekly slot—which begins at 8:15 p.m., immediately following the national news *Die Tagesschau*—features one-case-per-episode shows, such as the crime comedy *Mord mit Aussicht / Murder with a View* (ARD/WDR 2008–) or the family drama *Tierärztin Dr. Mertens / Zoo Doctor: My Mom the Vet* (ARD/MDR 2006–), set in a zoo. Gebhard Henke (2018) dealt specifically with the programming of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* on the national public broadcaster Das Erste in the autumn of 2010. Due to "the relatively poor ratings", Henke explained, Volker Herres, Das Erste's

programme director at the time, decided to append the last episode to the previous two episodes, which started on a Friday at 10 p.m. According to Henke's account, the 10 p.m. broadcast slot was decided "in complete agreement" with the series' director, Dominik Graf, and could not have aired earlier due to its 16+ rating. Still, according to Henke's retrospective summary, this programming change was portrayed as "wrong and uncharitable" in the German media (see e.g. Keil 2010).

The practitioners also problematised the broadcast slots and rhythms of TV imports from the US. According to their account, well-known quality TV productions such as *Breaking Bad* and *The Sopranos* (HBO 1999–2007) were shown only on niche channels or at late, unattractive times, if at all, and thus reached very few viewers. Commissioning editors from public broadcasters also complained about the disappearance of foreign dramas from ARD's and ZDF's daytime and prime-time programmes over the years. This absence, they argued, may have made the linear broadcast of more recent quality dramas from the US and other countries more difficult.

Whether as an import or a German-commissioned production, serials with ongoing dramatic continuity seem to have had a hard time in the country's mainstream television landscape in the recent past and so have been rather scarce. Cross-episode storytelling was more common, and potentially easier to realise, in the 1970s and 1980s than it was in the 2000s and 2010s. At least that is what several practitioners suggested when they located quality dramas in the distant television past of the 1970s and 1980s, including *Acht Stunden sind kein Tag / Eight Hours Don't Make a Day* (ARD/WDR1972), *Rote Erde / Red Earth* (ARD/WDR 1983), *Heimat—Eine deutsche Chronik / Heimat: A German Chronicle* (ARD/WDR/SFB 1984),[9] *Monaco Franze—Der ewige Stenz / Monaco Franze—Eternal Dandy* (ARD/BR 1981–1983) and the now less well-known family period drama *Löwengrube / Lion's Den* (ARD/BR 1989–1992). For Jörg Winger (2017), *Heimat*—which was also strongly perceived in other Western countries at the time—offered a point of comparison for the transnational success of the miniseries *Deutschland 83*, for which he was jointly responsible: *Deutschland 83* is "the only German programme" that has "broken through in recent, long years, perhaps since *Heimat*".

With *Das Boot / The Boat* (ARD/WDR 1981/1985), the practitioners identified a past work that has been continued as a series co-production under the same title (i.e. as a transnationally known "brand" [Jastfelder

2018a]) and that features "cross-stories between cinema and television" (Hackfort in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018). Günter Rohrbach—who, as managing director of Bavaria Film, was jointly responsible for the major project *Das Boot* and was head of WDR's television drama department from 1965 to 1979—coined the term "amphibious film" (2009, first 1977, 170) for such productions. When it comes to amphibious films, exploitation in the cinema and on television is planned from the very beginning.[10] Overlaps with cinema can also be seen in the fact that many "classic series" from Germany were conceived as "multi-part films" (see Hickethier 1998, 451).

Some of today's TV practitioners also thought of these earlier TV series as films to some extent, identifying them primarily as works by well-known (male) film directors such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Helmut Dietl. Basically, they classified the public-service fiction of the 1970s and 1980s as bolder, more sociopolitically relevant or less formulaic. In contrast to this, they identified a paradigm shift towards mass compatibility and narrowing genre conventions beginning in the 1990s. In looking at these developments in the history of German television, the television-makers also sought to explain the present landscape.

"Harmonisation" and Formulas: Developments in Public-Service Drama

Problematic or lopsided developments, so the practitioners argued, have decisively shaped today's television fiction and its textual characteristics. The editor Bernhard Gleim (2016) attested that, in particular, ARD's and ZDF's series productions for a long time served only the viewers' "need for harmonisation". Henke (2018) diagnosed a shift towards "lightly entertaining formats" in the 1980s and 1990s and attributed this to US imports—that is to say, to not only local but also external and transnational influences. Due to the hit soaps *Dallas* (US 1978–1991, CBS) and *Dynasty* (1981–1989, ABC), but also the ratings-boosting TV premiere of the film *Pretty Woman* (1989) on Das Erste, "the sophisticated television play [*Fernsehspiel*] and also the sophisticated series came under the wheels".

In retrospect, the scriptwriters Hanno Hackfort, Bob Konrad and Richard Kropf (2018) also identified a loss of quality and described the establishment of commercial, advertising-financed television in the 1980s

as a decisive caesura. Then came an "unspeakable urge" from the public-service broadcasters to not give the private competitors any ground by lowering themselves to their level, Hackfort pointed out. The criticism of the competition between public and private broadcasters and their shared "downward shift in quality" (Kammann, Jurkuhn and Wolf 2007, 17, my translation) is well-known. It is explored, for example, in *Es werde Stadt!/ It Will Be a City!* (WDR et al. 2013–2014), a critical documentary on German TV drama on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the prestigious Grimme Award. In their off-camera commentary, directors Martin Farkas and Dominik Graf state:

> More precisely, the reaction of the public-service broadcasters from the end of the 1990s onwards to the attack of the private broadcasters seemed like a belated total turnaround: away from all educational mandates and far away from all cultural pioneering functions. So exaggerated that one suspects a neurosis and wants to ask: What's wrong with you? What is hurting you so much? (2014, my translation)

Graf and Farkas provide a larger context to this identified loss of quality and significance when they accuse political forces of deliberately undermining the public-service system "because it was too insubordinate for them". They accuse the public broadcasters themselves of operating commercially and distorting the market with profit-oriented production and distribution subsidiaries. However, the resonating notion of "system purity" (Kammann, Jurkuhn and Wolf 2007, 69, my translation) can hardly be sustained in either the current or the past media environment. Lutz Hachmeister (1994, 53) had already stated in 1994, ten years after the introduction of commercial television in Germany, that convergence is simply inevitable where two television systems refer to the same audiences and partly to the same economic reference groups, even if those systems are organised differently.

When taking a historical view, Gleim (2016) noted less an alignment of the public broadcasters with their advertising-financed competition than a contrary and reactionary target-group orientation. Günter Struve, programme director of Das Erste from 1992 to 2008, deliberately counteracted "the 14- to 49-year-old target group by looking at the actual demographics […] through the Degeto films on Friday, the famous Neubauer melodramas". These TV films, Gleim argued during our interview, shaped German series in a certain way: "You can see that very

concretely in the Tuesday slot. […] The central pattern of this Tuesday series is that a middle-aged woman loses her husband and then has another new existence". Gleim's statement contains various references to the more recent television past: to the long-standing core target group of advertising-financed commercial television—14- to 49-year-olds—which is countered by an ageing German population, and to broadcast slots, including Tuesday night, which to this day remains Das Erste's only regular prime-time slot for 45-minute series. In addition, Gleim addressed Degeto television films. Largely associated with the actor Christine Neubauer and melodrama, the ARD subsidiary Degeto was considered a "schmaltz factory" by newspaper critics in the 2000s and 2010s (e.g. Bergmann 2012). Degeto also came under criticism because its budget was overdrawn for several years, resulting in an oversupply of programming (Zarges 2014).

The *Süßstoffdebatte* (sweetener debate) around 2001 (see e.g. Volker 2009, 11) involved distinctly negative talk around a *Degetoisierung* (Degeto-isation) of public television (Bergmann 2012) and, with attention to ZDF's Sunday-night romance films, of a *Pilcherisierung* (Pilcher-isation; Kammann et al. 2007, 100). ZDF's Sunday schedule became particularly well-known for TV versions of Rosamunde Pilcher's romance novels (the first adaptation was *Rosamunde Pilcher: Stürmische Begegnung / Rosamunde Pilcher: The Day of the Storm*, ZDF/ORF 1993). In television criticism and in the industry, a so-called optimisation paper attracted specific criticism. The former ARD television film coordinator Jürgen Kellermeier drafted this paper in 2000, and today it is no longer accessible (Heinz 2012, 299). According to the guidelines formulated there, a television film must, among other things, be "cheerfully comically emotional" (quoted in Heinz 2012, 299, my translation) and have a narrative that is "uncomplicated, simple, clear, and in no way confusing" (quoted in Bergmann 2012, my translation). In addition, the television film should be set in an "attractive, at least interesting, not repulsive" milieu (quoted in Bergmann 2012, my translation) and should not mix genres (Heinz 2012, 299–301).

In Gleim's talk of "Neubauer melodramas" (*Neubauer Schinken*), a clear coldness can be felt towards such manifestations of German television fiction. Here, as in the entire *Süßstoffdebatte*, the aforementioned tendency to devalue content and genres with "feminine" connotations is also apparent. More specifically, Gleim referred to the historically evolved tone of Das Erste's Tuesday prime-time programme as being shaped by

productions such as *Um Himmels Willen/For Heaven's Sake* (ARD/MDR 2002–2021), a light comedy procedural about a group of nuns, and the weekly medical drama *In aller Freundschaft/In All Friendship* (ARD/MDR 1998–), which is broadcast in the slot immediately afterwards. Following Gleim, these series show "connections to the German *Heimatfilm*" (a film genre highly popular in the late 1940s to the early 1960s, frequently accused of kitsch, that had a long-standing presence on German television) and primarily appeal to an older audience.

The "50-plus age group" (Gaßner 2006, 16, my translation)—which is decisive in Germany's overall demographics and which, according to quantitative viewer data, spends significantly more time watching (linear) television (e.g. Engel 2016)—became the focus of public-service series fiction in the course of German television history. Advertising-financed private television is generally aimed at a younger target group, which is considered more flexible in its purchasing decisions and is thus of particular interest to advertisers.

US- and Mainstream-Centricity: Germany's Commercial Broadcasters

In general, commercial broadcasters frame their audience in a way fundamentally different than their public-service counterparts do. They see viewers primarily from an economic perspective—as receivers of advertisers' paid-for messages, and not so much as citizens of a society to be connected (Ang 1991, 53). More recently in the world of Germany's commercial broadcasters, however, crucial shifts have occurred, because, among other things, viewers can now choose between a larger number of programmes and platforms and also watch formerly linear-only television programmes online. The "techniques of quantification"—which, according to Andreas Reckwitz (2018, 174; see also 2020, 158), play an important role especially for "singular goods" in the "society of singularities" and form an economic foundation for advertising-financed television—have become differentiated and refined in this context. The development producer Gunther Eschke (2015) critically noted, with regard to target-group orientations and programme developments at commercial broadcasters in Germany, that for too long the aim has been at a big "mainstream", thus resulting in a very conservative approach. And, at some point, this approach to programmes and audiences stopped working. Audience maximisation also characterised US networks until the 1980s (e.g. Hoskins and Mirus 1988, 507). In 1988, Colin Hoskins and

Rolf Mirus (1988, 505) still advised: "[I]t is not wise to broadcast material that is so sophisticated that potential audiences switch to a different broadcaster or seek alternative forms of entertainment". The quality TV drama, on the other hand, and as previously mentioned, is usually associated with narrowcasting—aiming at a more specific target group. This approach would become formative for the US television industry starting in the 1990s (Parsons 2003). In the smaller German television market, however, this target-group fragmentation was absent until recent years. Therefore, as can be deduced from Eschke's diagnosis, more specific or "unwieldy" quality dramas for a long time faced difficulties within Germany's commercial channels.

With regard to more recent developments at Germany's two big private broadcasters, RTL and Sat.1, Eschke (2015) also problematised the single-minded US-centrism from the 2000s onwards, as a result of which the two broadcasters failed to develop new drama formats of their own and to promote local talent. The immense ratings successes of US procedurals such as *House, M.D.* (Fox 2004–2012) and *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS 2000–2015) were decisive for this US-centrism. German audiences' previous tendency to generally prefer German series (Windeler et al. 2001, 96) seemed to suddenly evaporate.

Roger Schawinski also refers to this development in *Die TV-Falle* (*The TV Trap*), a retrospective on his time as managing director at Sat.1 from 2003 to 2006, a period he describes as a "*CSI*-isation of the television world" (2008, 77) and a "huge tectonic shift in the tastes of the German audience" (87):

> German series were now generally rejected to a large extent, which soon forced RTL to discontinue their new, most important and even their multiple award-winning series by the dozen. (87–88, my translations)

In the course of these developments, a strategy emerged to emulate US series and participate in this "*CSI*-isation" with German-commissioned productions. In his interview, Joachim Kosack (2019) mentioned the German crime series *R. I. S.—Die Sprache der Toten / R. I. S.—The Language of the Dead* (Sat.1 2007–2008), which he produced, about a team of forensic specialists. Like its Italian predecessor *R.I.S.—Delitti imperfetti / R.I.S—Imperfect Crimes* (Canale 5 2005–2009), it obviously tried to build on the success of *CSI*. However, according to Kosack's retrospective diagnosis, the German *R.I.S.* show lacked a "German soul".

The idea of a "German soul" is more than difficult to apprehend in view of the transnational dimensions of Germany's television and media industry, and especially its series production. On the other hand, the question of local specifics played an important role in the industry discourse again and again when it came to describing the "different quality" of German drama series in a transnational media environment, export opportunities and these series' success on the domestic market.

Alongside the pushback against German series at the commercial stations, countervailing tendencies emerged. Kosack (2019) cited, for example, the Sat.1 successes *Der letzte Bulle / The Last Cop* (2010–2014), about a policeman from the 1980s put into a modern police department after emerging from a coma, and the legal dramedy *Danni Lowinski* (2010–2014), about a lawyer offering her services in a shopping mall. In Kosack's estimation, both shows, unlike *R. I. S.*, had a "German soul again". But RTL and especially Sat.1—respectively operated by the two opposing media groups RTL Group and ProSiebenSat.1 Media—still repeatedly struggle to anchor German series as well as broadcast slots for them. In 2020, for example, the industry magazine *DWDL.de* ascribed to Sat.1's newly launched comedy series *Die Läusemutter / Lice Mother* (2020) and *Think Big!* (2020) "disaster ratings" (Krei 2020, my translation). In contrast to the lauded US drama, the German series may have established a lacklustre image in the 2000s, as Kosack (in Eschke and Bohne 2010, 8, my translation) pointed out in 2010: "German series today are simply uncool for now".

In combination with the developments described at ARD and ZDF—towards light, entertaining content and conservatism in television drama—the reluctance of commercial broadcasters from the mid-2000s onwards ultimately meant that many German series were public-service commissions and aimed at older viewer groups. According to several practitioners, series also seem to have played only a subordinate role in Germany's television history, due to the aforementioned dominance of the television film.

Germany's Television Film Tradition

In terms of quality and value, the television film in Germany traditionally ranked above the series. Several practitioners arrived at this assessment—although it is certainly a contestable viewpoint, when considered against the backdrop of the aforementioned quality series of yesteryear,

such as *Heimat* and Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (ARD/WDR/RAI 1980). Jörg Winger (2017) identified a certain "value pyramid in Germany" in the past (which he did not specify more precisely): the motion picture always had been "the supreme discipline"; next came the television film, "at some distance and then nothing for a long time", with the series bringing up the rear. Rather than a valuable art form, the series was considered a mere "commodity".

The editor Gleim (2016) similarly identified a traditionally marginal role for the series as compared to the TV film and saw the reasons for this as being the "inability to integrate entertainment" into the concept of culture. The "German culture" that the interviewee identified in this context derives from making comparisons to its Anglo-American counterpart; paraphrasing his former boss at Radio Bremen (one of ARD's local broadcasters), Gleim contrasted Goethe and Shakespeare:

> If you want to know what German television is like, then you have to look at what the two great classics from England and Germany look like. Goethe is educational theatre and Shakespeare integrates elements of popular theatre to a significant degree.

According to Gleim, the paltry reputation of the television series stems from this tradition and was reflected in its former primary environment: the pre-prime-time slot (*Vorabend*), where, in contrast to other public-service slots, ads were (and are) shown. Series in this context offered advertisers "something like regularity", Gleim suggested, but due to its commercial background, this segment of public-service drama was outsourced to a certain extent. Internally at the public-service ARD, the pre-prime-time series had been described as a "hooker" who "goes out on the street so that the brother can study"—the brother presumably being the TV film shown at prime-time. In this saying, which seems to belong to a certain time and in which gendered production cultures come to light, a critique of the commercialisation of television emerges that, today, hardly plays a role in discourses on German quality TV drama. Furthermore, the low status of the series as compared to the television film (see also Hickethier 1998, 356–57) once again resurfaced.

The practitioners also discussed the tendency towards television films and German audiences' special appreciation of them with regard to production processes, especially vis-à-vis the important role of directing—commonly associated with single films. The following chapter delves into

how the television professionals focused on production, and in particular script development, in their discourse on the quality TV drama. They linked quality drama to certain screenwriting methods and negotiated which production cultures might enable this kind of television.

Notes

1. For their arguments on foreign quality TV dramas, see Sect. 2.3.
2. The popular crime procedural *Tatort* consists of different parts and episodes made by the various ARD members, which are shot and produced in their local contexts.
3. There are more than 20 teams and about 35 episodes of *Tatort* a year. Therefore, a team might feature in only one or two episodes a year.
4. As explored in Sect. 4.3, television films emerged as a central, ongoing trend in German TV fiction in the discussion on series types and production.
5. In addition to the trilogy *Mitten in Deutschland: NSU*, which was a focus during the interview acquisition process, many other miniseries with two or three 90-minute episodes were produced during the sample period (since 2015). For example: *Winnetou— Der Mythos lebt / Winnetou—The Legend Lives* (RTL 2016), *Honigfrauen/Honey Women* (ZDF2017), *Gladbeck/54 Hours* (ARD/Degeto 2018), *Preis der Freiheit/The Price of Freedom* (ZDF 2019), *Club der singenden Metzger/The Master Butcher* (ARD/Degeto/SWR2019), *Altes Land/Old Land* (ZDF 2020), and *Alice* (ARD et al. 2022).
6. The fourth season of *Charité* (2024), still in production at the time of writing, is set in the future in the year 2049.
7. Chapter 2 deals in more detail with the contexts of judgements of quality.
8. For a more detailed discussion on the glocal features of the industry discourse on quality TV drama, see chapter 6.
9. *Heimat* had various, but now less popular, sequels, such as, among others, the second season *Die zweite Heimat—Chronik einer Jugend / The Second Heimat—Chronicle of Youth* (ARD et al. 1992).
10. Chapter 4 looks more closely at the current trend towards increasingly fluid boundaries between film and television production.

Quality TV and Its Production Cultures: Negotiations on Writing and Producing

Writers come together day after day for an extended period, develop serial storylines and try to find original ideas of high quality through their continuous interaction in the same physical room, while a few doors down the first episodes are shot. Such a scenario is still a great exception in the German television industry. Much more frequently, writers in Germany work on their own, clearly separated from production, and come together only for a few meetings, if at all. Along with addressing issues of individual and collaborative work and the connection between screenwriting and production, the interviewed and observed practitioners described negotiating agency in both project networks and screen idea work groups. They often argued for shifts in power and changed modes of production, linking these to questions of content and aesthetic quality. The following chapter analyses how the practitioners dealt with production cultures within the discourse on German quality drama.

The particular focus of this chapter is screenwriting. This emphasis finds its roots, first of all, in my interview study, which revolved around television professionals involved in the screenwriting work of individual quality TV dramas, and it also stems from a similar focus found at the attended industry workshops. Furthermore, it is a decisive and well-known argument among TV practitioners that this phase of television drama production is crucial for quality and that the German industry

has deficits in this area, especially compared to other production countries. Finally, in the feature pages and review sections of German-language newspapers in the 2010s, a similar assessment and special attention to script work featured heavily in the debates on quality TV drama (e.g. Staun and Caro 2017), and likewise in the halls of academia (e.g. Jensen 2017).

We will look in more detail at how practitioners of that era as well as those working today have engaged with the production cultures of script development and, in the process, with the work of screenwriters. This professional group traditionally has been considered secondary to directors within the context of European film and television production (Szczepanik 2013; Kasten 1994) and appears marginalised in the accounts of many TV professionals. However, with more recent approaches to the showrunner—the lead "writer/executive producer who create[s] the series and who oversees the writing staff" (Del Valle 2008, 403)—we can see signs of a shift in favour of the writer, including in the German television industry. The models of the "project network" and the "screen idea work group", which were introduced in Chapter 3, represent the central basis for investigating such questions of agency and the interaction of writers with other trades, above all producers, directors and commissioning editors.

The interviewed and observed practitioners repeatedly argued that the efficiency of the screenwriting process differs considerably from project to project. As outlined in Chapter 3 and discussed by various practitioners, project networks are at the same time interconnected; after all, actors are often selected on the basis of previous collaborations and the resulting relationships they make. Cross-project production cultures also emerge among series types and genres and the production areas linked to them.[1] The practitioners emphasised the differences between production described as "day-to-day business" (interview with Hess 2019) and production considered quality or high-end. According to the writer Annette Hess (2019), whereas in the former segment, with its "short-cycle processes", everyone has a fixed place, in the quality drama arena—our focus here—the composition of project networks and screen idea work groups is more difficult, individual and flexible.

In addition to the "magic triangle", as Jantje Friese (2019), co-creator of the Netflix drama *Dark* (2017–2020), called the cooperating parties of writer, producer and director, other collaborators can play a role in the screen idea work group, such as prominent and influential actors

who pursue a "certain agenda" (interview with Behnke 2018). Commissioning editors in particular are relevant precisely because they act as gatekeepers to the broadcasters and streaming platforms and have "a certain mandate and specific managerial ideas about what to produce" (Waade et al. 2020, 8). However, these editors and the departments they represent, as well as production company staff, have only limited economic means at their disposal. Again and again, the corresponding economic framework conditions were at issue when the television professionals negotiated production cultures in screenwriting. Budgets make certain types of content possible, but, by the same token, they can also restrict content, as Arnold Windeler, Anja Lutz and Carsten Wirth (2001, 111) explain when describing the ambivalent relationship of many producers to economic means.

8.1   The Economic Conditions of Screenwriting

Underfunding Script Development

Linked to the well-known argument that quality deficits stem from low budgets, many of the interviewed and observed practitioners held the opinion that screenwriting in German series is underfinanced (see also Fröhlich 2010, 128). The television professionals repeatedly criticised the fact that the budget share for script development in Germany is lower than in other countries associated with quality drama, such as the UK, the US and the Scandinavian nations. In doing so, they once again made a transnational comparison. Correspondingly, Jörg Winger (2019), producer and writer of *Deutschland 83/86/89* (RTL/Amazon Prime Video, 2015–2020), contended at an industry workshop that, in Germany, unlike in the US, no development industry exists whereby creatives can develop scripts and concepts and make a living from it, even if an idea does not lead to actual series production. Linked to making transnational comparisons and centring the US, there is a tendency to idealise the production conditions of American quality TV (see also Pjajčíková and Szczepanik 2016). Winger (2019) advised young screenwriters to write "on spec", that is, without funding and purely speculatively as far as the chances of a sale are concerned. From an economic point of view, however, a speculative screenplay is an extremely risky undertaking, especially in the field of television series, where a single script is not enough and an overarching concept is required. According to an

industry lecture in 2015, the pay for a cross-episode series concept with interfaces to the "series bible" (see Zabel 2009, 69)—a still typical development tool in German TV production—is only 6000 euros at most. And such a fee is paid only if a large, comparatively financially strong production company is involved and the writers are already established. According to development producer Gunther Eschke (2015), the production company, which itself has limited financial resources, ultimately passes on the high risk of a yet-to-be-commissioned TV drama concept to the writer through this low payment. The sum of 6000 euros has not increased significantly since that 2015 lecture, despite the rising demand for fresh content for digital streaming services. Thus, the early phase of conceptualisation and brainstorming, which is considered very labour intensive by practitioners, is still paid comparatively little.

Against this background, it has hardly been economically attractive for writers to develop new television series, at least for the last several years. A higher—and, above all, more secure—payment scenario often still awaits those who write for an already existing series or serial format. Furthermore, focusing one's work on the early concept phase is not very lucrative, because payment patterns are strongly geared towards final scripts, which can be brought into film and series production (see Gößler and Merkel 2021, 224).

Payment Structures in Script Development

Generally, writers in Germany receive payment during each stage of the television serial writing process, from the initial concept paper to the final polishing of dialogue. Among these different steps, they receive the largest sum for the finished script (Zabel 2009, 69–70). According to producer and screenwriter Gabriela Sperl (2018), this fee remains the same "whether you write your script in three weeks or in two years", which she saw as a structural problem.

Certain practices and hierarchies within script work result from this payment arrangement: for economic reasons, writers tend to complete a series project instead of dropping out of it, even if the cooperation with the director, producer or editor turns out to be difficult or barely functional. Any additional writers' activities after the script has been completed, such as potential feedback on dailies (film takes circulated during shooting), are generally not included in the budget.

With regard to script development, the question is not only how much is paid for this aspect of production. Also at issue is the extent to which the script work is connected to the later—or in the case of some series, parallel—production and how the development funds are distributed in different phases. Several practitioners considered research in particular to be underfunded and not sufficiently anchored in local production cultures for screenwriting. Even more common than the aforementioned spec screenplay, with its high economic risk for authors, seems to be "spec research" (Redvall 2018, 147): writers do research without knowing whether they can expect payment for it and whether the project will ultimately be realised. Against this background, practitioners called for greater remuneration for research, which they considered especially important for quality drama. They tended to regard serial quality programmes as feeling authentic and realistic, and therefore likely to require intensive research. In the meantime, a stronger financial reward for research work has arisen in certain individual project networks, for example, for the first German Netflix series, *Dark*, where a research assistant supported the writers.

Hess (2019) noted a general, fundamental shift in the overall budget in favour of screenwriting, at least for quality or high-end drama. However, more ambitious serials, with intertwined cross-episode storylines or very specific plot worlds, also require more intensive script work than other production areas in German TV, such as the "industrial" daily soap and the local procedural, with their well-rehearsed processes and more formulaic narrative styles.[2]

Commitment and Symbolic Capital

The ambition to create quality drama leads not only to more economic attention on the screenwriting process but also to screenwriters showing a particularly high level of commitment during the development phase—even though they will not receive compensation for this extra work. For example, Hanno Hackfort and his two co-writers Richard Kropf and Bob Konrad (2018) described the gangster drama *4 Blocks* (TNT Serie, 2017–2019), for which they were largely responsible, as extremely research intensive and at the same time "budget-wise […] the smallest thing we did". According to these creators and head writers, *4 Blocks* was "a low-budget production" in respect to their payment, but "of course" (Hackfort in Hackfort et al. 2018) they were keen on doing it. This

particular project's "quality" status seems to have functioned as a performance compulsion of the "creativity dispositif", in the sense of Andreas Reckwitz (2017, 8), or as "symbolic capital", in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu (e.g. 2010, first 1979). That is, in order to gain reputation and be able to use this standing successfully afterwards, writers become particularly committed to even underfinanced projects if they are artistically appealing. In this context, self-exploitation can occur from the goal to write a quality programme.

The studied practitioners' discourse on the economics of screenwriting repeatedly revolved around such commitment and the question of which actors in the project network are in charge of financing the development phase: Is it the writers themselves, through their committed working time as an advance investment; the production companies, who want to keep risks as low as possible; or the commissioners of the programmes? Established public and advertising-financed broadcasters and their editorial teams are faced with the problem that their budgets often stagnate or decline over the multiple years that production can take, when adjusted for inflation. In addition, public broadcasting in Germany has come under increasing political pressure, to the result that raising the broadcasting fees (paid by every household in Germany) is very difficult to justify and implement (see e.g. Nünning 2020). The interviewed commissioning editors (e.g. Zöllner 2018) nevertheless emphasised that they prioritise financing the script development, or at least push for this. A key point's paper of the ARD network of local public-service broadcasters also declared a "willingness to take into account […] development costs", including expenses for "research [and] preparatory work on a script that does not become part of the subsequent script contract". At the same time, this official ARD document on supposedly "balanced contract terms" states: "Research is basically part of the entrepreneurial risk of the producers" (ARD 2019, 15, my translation).

Who bears what risk and finances script development to what level is related to the fundamental interplay between production companies and commissioners and their financing models. In the diversified, transnationalised and digitalised television series landscape, the forms of financing are in flux.[3] Mixed and co-financing, new partnerships and new commissioners, especially from the subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) and pay TV segments, are also contributing to change in the screenwriting process. US-origin streaming platforms, for example, tend to impose the US copyright system and thus the assignment of all rights to authors.

In this way, the fragile economy of writers is being called into question, concludes Mehdi Atmani (2019). In some cases, Netflix binds local creatives exclusively to itself (and thus approaches the studio model, as discussed in Sect. 5.3). Within the industry, such a move has certainly provoked criticism: one accusation held that the company is buying talent away from the market without being involved in the development of young talent in the same way that public broadcasters and their specific editorial departments are (Lückerath 2020a). For example, Das kleine Fernsehspiel (The Little Television Play), under ZDF (Germany's other public broadcaster alongside ARD), supports emerging film- and television-makers and co-funds their first projects.

However, Netflix has in the meantime started an initiative for finding and supporting upcoming screenwriters and declared a goal to promote particularly "creative talents from underrepresented groups in society" (Netflix 2021). Benjamin Harris (2022), the project manager of this initiative, highlighted the diversity goal during our interview, conducted in the Berlin Netflix office, and declared: "Netflix is here to stay". How sustainable and serious Netflix's work on young talent and diversity is, and to what extent it will influence the German TV industry with its historically rooted structures, remains to be seen.

In co-financing situations with new providers such as Netflix, collisions can occur among the varying views and models of collaboration with writers, and tensions can arise regarding the requirements for scripts and other documents of the screenwriting process. As a result of the manifold economic partnerships in an expanding television series landscape, the already collaborative character of series production is increasing.

Collaborativity also emerged as a central point of discussion in a general sense—that is, beyond strictly economic questions—in the analysed industry discourse on German quality drama. This was the case especially when practitioners explored the writers' room as a possible means of creativity and quality enhancement.

8.2   The Writers' Room and Collaborativity

Collaborativity in Series Development

Series productions are fundamentally complex processes. They involve numerous individuals with "many motivations and interests", as Hess (2019) put it, within institutional, organisational and technological

contexts (Newcomb and Lotz 2002, 76). My interviews and observations cemented this well-known finding. In their discourse on quality series, the practitioners repeatedly addressed the collaborativity arising from the multiple involved parties on the one hand and the various steps of script development on the other. The constellation of writers can change and expand considerably throughout the various work phases, from the early pitch paper or series concept to the final polishing of dialogue. The steps also include script versions (*Drehbuchfassungen*), which the writer Kropf (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018) defined as involving "fundamental" variations, such as where "something else changes in the structure […] a new character is added […,] one is kicked out or a character is completely repositioned". Smaller deviations not affecting the entire "framework", on the other hand, fall under "polishing". From the writers' point of view, this final revision, especially of dialogue, is a particularly delicate moment when it is carried out by other colleagues (see also Redvall 2013, 110). Related questions include who is responsible for the polishing, who chooses this person and to what extent does the "polisher" communicate with the previous writers. Several times, the practitioners mentioned communication problems and dissension in this step, similar to issues that arise with the director's version of the script. Practitioners often considered the difficulties connected to collaborative work to be a cause of quality deficits.

The collaborative nature of television series production is stronger compared to that of individual films, since the screen idea work group members can change from episode to episode and season to season. Hackfort (in Hackfort et al. 2018) noted that, for the first season of *4 Blocks*, he and his two co-writers approached the production company and broadcaster from the outside with a clear story, while in the second season, the various people involved had different ideas about how to proceed. This "second season syndrome" (Hess in Lückerath 2015) is known and feared by writers. In addition to the pressure to promptly produce the next chapter—before the story and the established brand are forgotten among the huge roster of serials—the increased polyphony can make the development of the sophomore season more difficult.

Seriality further promotes collaborative production practices due to the fact that a large number of episodes often must be produced within a short period of time and within a certain budget, which only a large number of actors, or even several teams, working in parallel can achieve.

The historical crime drama *Babylon Berlin* (ARD/Degeto/Sky Deutschland, 2017–), for example, which has significantly more episodes than most other quality drama projects from Germany, was shot in parallel by three units, divided according to filming locations, and was edited in three editing suites, between which the three directors switched back and forth (Zarges 2017b).

In addition to seriality, the digital media environment is a crucial factor to the highly collaborative nature of the development and production of current television series. Project networks or screen idea work groups can expand through actors who deal with further narration on platforms beyond television, such as social media producers (Krauß and Stock 2021, 419–20). The move towards transmedia storytelling or "world-building" (Ryan 2015, 5) is characterised by interdisciplinary, cross-craft collaboration (Renger 2021, 576). For such transmedia expansions, the key producers must decide whether to outsource the work or keep it within the screen idea work group (Mittell 2015, 265). The case studies on which the present production study is based do not include dedicated transmedia projects, as they have only partially emerged in German television fiction; however, the particular productions discussed in the interviews are, for the most part, strongly oriented towards online distribution. The changed media environment is also reflected in several of the selected case studies, evident in the involvement of relatively new platforms as distributors and commissioners.

At the micro-level of the screen idea work group, collaborativity is key to the writers' room, whereby writers develop series together. This model originated in the Hollywood studio system and further developed in US television production as a way to increase time efficiency (Gößler and Weiß 2014, 31). Since the 2010s, and linked to the discourse on quality TV drama, the writers' room has been championed, negotiated and tested in the German television industry as well.

The Writers' Room as a Collaborative Practice

In the German television industry, the writers' room is especially discussed as a development path that should lead to both higher quality and a faster production pace, which streaming platforms in particular demand in the digital media environment. While John Thornton Caldwell (2008) identifies immense stress in "writing by committee" (211), related to time pressures and the high volume of work (215–16), and draws parallels

to "the non-union digital sweatshops of below-the-line workers" (214), most of the interviewed and observed practitioners framed this collaborative mode of writing only in positive terms. They rarely described the writers' room as a hierarchical and burdensome work context, as some production and media industry scholars have done via their research into power imbalances within writers' rooms related to age, class, race and gender (e.g. Henderson 2011). Instead, the practitioners positioned the writers' room as a means of creativity demanded by the "creativity dispositif" (Reckwitz 2017, 8) prevalent in today's television industry and in society at large. Achim von Borries (2019), for example, one of the directors and head writers of *Babylon Berlin*, spoke of a "creative space" in which every idea can be expressed without being sanctioned, which then becomes filtered through the collaboration interaction. In respect to the joint script development with his fellow writer-directors Hendrik Handloegten and Tom Tykwer—which, at three people, is a group size reminiscent of the small, efficient writers' rooms used for many Danish series (Redvall 2013, 132)—von Borries argued that three people already represents "the smallest unit of an audience". According to this description, the mutual, immediate feedback is productive and, as von Borries's words imply, can take place significantly differently and more interactively in a trio than in a duo.

In their negotiations of the writers' room, the practitioners often questioned the extent to which local writers are capable of the collaborative script work they repeatedly attributed to quality drama productions. Are writers in Germany the traditional lone warrior type, or can they, as Martin Behnke (2018), a writer on the Netflix drama *Dark*, put it, "keep their egos in check"? Are they willing to subordinate themselves to other writers, especially to the head writer or showrunner, and adapt to their vision? Jantje Friese (2019), *Dark*'s co-creator, identified this adaptability as essential, demanding flexibility from writers in addition to greater collaborativity: "If you want to work in a writers' room and you're on a horror show, then you have to be able to write horror in the style of the head writer". However, this scenario can be problematic, particularly for less established writers, as invisibility looms for those with a marginal position in the collective (Caldwell 2008, 213).

It is probably due to this danger, among others, that a scepticism towards collaborative writing prevailed for a long time in the German industry, as well as in many other European countries (e.g. Born 2005, 107). In the local industry discourse on the writers' room and the

showrunner (who is usually the leader and manager of this collective of writers), the combination of collaborative and individual writing was a recurring issue. This fundamental tension in script work (see Davies 2007, 174) crystallised particularly clearly when practitioners described individual work as formative for screenwriting in German television fiction and contrasted it with the situation of the writers' room.

Different Production Cultures

In Germany, fiction television production cultures traditionally have been characterised by miniseries and multi-part films (the so-called *Mehrteiler*, comprising two or three 90-minute parts) and by a dramaturgical tendency towards procedurals and single TV films.[4] Due to this tendency, historically writers usually worked alone on single scripts for television films or episodes of procedurals. This arrangement has been linked to a particular working practice and production situation summarised by former commissioning editor Bernhard Gleim (2016):

> You're dealing with writers who are all working on something else, who have to get a certain portfolio together for themselves, who sometimes write an episode of *SOKO* [a popular crime procedural with local spin-offs by public-service channel ZDF] or are on a children's series and so on.

Screenwriters work simultaneously on various scripts and projects and hardly ever write exclusively for one drama serial and its writers' room. To change this situation, according to Gleim, a different form of remuneration is ultimately needed. The dominant scheme, as previously mentioned, is payment for individual finished scripts, alongside an alternative payment model for "story editors" of daily or weekly soap segments, who constantly develop plotlines (see Kirsch 2001).

The proclivity for individual writing also seems to be linked to the underfunding of script work, which several practitioners complained about. "It is different when one person writes for 45 minutes versus three people for 45 minutes", Kropf and his co-writers Hackfort and Konrad (2018) stated, postulating that collaborative writing requires different budgeting than traditional individual writing.

According to Hauke Bartel (2018), at the time of interview head of fiction for Vox, a commercial broadcaster of the RTL Group, the lack of a writers' room and showrunner system perpetuates the individualised

work of writers. Bartel argued that, in Germany, "you always have to stand out as an individual" because, unlike in the US, the "classic" hierarchical system of television writing is missing, where "you go through these individual stages from staff writer to editor, to co-executive [...] and then at some point you are offered your own series as showrunner" (see also Phalen and Osellame 2012, 6). As in the discourse on content and aesthetic quality,[5] the US once again served as a crucial benchmark for practitioners when exploring the writers' room.

In addition to structural and economic conditions, the television professionals discussed the socialisation and "conditioning" (Konrad in Hackfort et al. 2018) of writers in Germany, which possibly hinders the collaborative development required in the writers' room and thus makes it difficult to move towards quality drama. While character development across serial storylines is considered a central ingredient of these highly valued television productions, writers shaped by the long-standing individual work tradition "don't really take a bold approach to the protagonists", Gleim (2016) contended. According to his diagnosis, writers are often afraid to change the character too much in a specific direction, such that "the person who writes the next episode can't use [it] at all".

Correspondingly, several practitioners noted shortcomings of scriptwriting in Germany when it comes to developing serial, cross-episode and character-centred storylines. A recurring argument held that more craft in serial writing, and a greater appreciation of the skills required for it, is needed. In this context, shortcomings in training were also discussed. According to industry voices, the state-run film schools in Germany—traditionally central to generating talent—still strongly favour individual films and single directors and focus little on serial and collaborative script development (see also Sabine de Mardt in Lückerath 2020b).

Traditions of individual work and the individual piece (in the shape of single TV films and single episodes of procedurals) may also connect to the fact that many writers, as problematised by editorial director Martina Zöllner (2018) from the ARD broadcaster RBB, concentrate solely on "developing characters by themselves" instead of doing additional research. Psychological accuracy (at which writers' individual self-reflection or soul-searching often aims) is indeed important, but this approach can sit alongside intensive research, Zöllner argued; that is, they are not mutually exclusive practices. However, as previously discussed, this type of research poses a challenge under the economic conditions of early

script development, being work that is rarely paid (even though Zöllner, as a representative of ARD, explicitly acknowledged remuneration for such additional writing and development activities).

In respect to the writers' room and script development more generally, practitioners negotiated how ideas are generated. While the writer in the screen idea work group is normally regarded as the "originator of the screen idea" (Macdonald 2010, 55), other scenarios often arise in the development of German television series. Due to the traditionally strong influence of the commissioning broadcasters, initial ideas sometimes emerge in editorial departments or in broadcasters' meetings with producers. In such cases, writers come on board at a later point (see also Zabel 2009, 64). That means that the idea generation does not take place initially or even primarily in the writers' room and the person generating the idea is not the same as the showrunner leading the writers' collective. Writers repeatedly criticised the initiation of script development by other professions, saying that too little thought is given to the narrative itself and too much to programme schemes and themes. According to the writer Stefan Stuckmann (2016), creator of the low-budget political comedy *Eichwald, MdB* (ZDF, 2014–2019), "entire development processes are dispatched on the basis of settings and themes, although there is actually no idea". Similarly, Hackfort (in Hackfort et al. 2018) argued that what should be foregrounded first is the story, and not—as is the case in much German television fiction—a particular issue of current social interest.

Hierarchies in favour of commissioning editors or producers, as they appeared in the discussions on idea generation, and the tendency towards individual writing work characterise the adaptation of the writers' room and its associated practices to the German context.

"Writers' Room Lite"

The writers' room—in the narrower and literal sense of writers working together for almost the entire script development and in one location (Phalen and Osellame 2012, 8)—is something that in Germany previously only, or at least primarily, existed in the production of daily soap operas (such as the long-running *Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten/Good Times, Bad Times*, RTL, 1992–). Since the 1990s, daily soap operas have used collective writing to accomplish an intense division of labour strongly motivated by time efficiency. So-called story editors, who are mostly permanent

employees due to their continuous work (Knöhr 2018, 34), develop the storylines together. These elaborate treatments provide the foundation for dialogue writers, who mostly act more individually as freelancers (Kirsch 2001, 48–49). Within this development process—which several practitioners categorised as "industrial"[6]—we also find steps towards the showrunner: the producer is responsible not only for the budget but also for the creative continuity of the episodes, acting as a kind of "over-director" (*Über-Regisseur*), as Gunther Kirsch (2001, 46) puts it in his production study on daily soaps.

Beyond the practices of the daily soap sector, a number of the interviewed practitioners also labelled as "writers' rooms" temporary, less frequent and less systematised meetings of writers for series with significantly fewer episodes. For instance, during the industry workshop *European TV Drama Series Lab*, Jörg Winger (2017), producer and writer of the 1980s period drama *Deutschland 83/86/89*, even described a few meetings with writers of the long-running local crime procedural *SOKO Leipzig/Leipzig Homicide* (ZDF, 2001–)—on which he was a producer for many years—as the "lightest form of the writers' room". In the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, a digital group-writing scenario emerged as a new approach to this method. The writers' room, which does not exist in a singular form in any case, is not easy to define in view of such multifarious and often only loose and temporary gatherings.

The practitioners (e.g. Blumenberg 2018) mostly agreed that what goes by the name of "the writers' room" in Germany and other European countries differs considerably from the corresponding screenwriting process in the US context. The main deviations in the German context lie in a smaller number of episodes per series, differently socialised and trained writers and, above all, fewer economic resources. Often, the term "team writing", which Eva Novrup Redvall (2013, 190) brought into play for Danish serial production, seems more appropriate, especially since collaborativity was revealed in several projects as happening through small teams of two or three rather than in larger writers' rooms.

In the German industry as a whole, the writers' room model is usually found only in a rudimentary form, over short periods of time and—apart from a few high-budget cases such as *Dark* and *Babylon Berlin*—mostly without a continuously shared physical workspace and only in tandem with other, more common or more established practices of screenwriting, such as individual work on a script for a single episode (see Krauß 2021b). No overarching model crystallised in my interviews and observations

at industry workshops. Rather, collaborative development sessions take various forms and can include other actors in addition to writers.

Who Belongs in the Writers' Room?

In several project networks for contemporary serials from Germany, relatively inexperienced writers classified as "newcomers" belonged to rudimentary writers' rooms. Their inclusion was a calculated move, as head writers and producers hoped for "fresh ideas" (Eschke 2015) or a "younger perspective" (Hess 2019) on the storylines. Just starting their careers and raised on serial dramas, junior staff may also be particularly motivated by and open to collaborative development work and subordination in the writers' room. Above all and quite simply, however, they are cheaper (see also Caldwell 2009, 227).

Alongside the writers, directors are also involved in many writers' rooms, thus upholding the industry's focus on this role, which stems from the historical tendency in German television fiction towards producing individual films. For *Babylon Berlin*, the writers' room cohered following the tradition of the auteur film, since the production team consisted primarily—particularly in the beginning—of the writer-directors Handloegten, von Borries and Tykwer (Freitag 2020). Tykwer is the best known of this trio, through German and international feature films such as *Lola rennt / Run Lola Run* (1998) and *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (2006). Correspondingly, he received the greatest media attention—however, not so much as a writer but rather primarily as a director, thus continuing the attention on this latter guild. Other quality drama projects cited as case studies also point to the ongoing relevance of the director through involving a director and head writer who are closely personally linked. For the political drama *Die Stadt und die Macht / The City and the Power* (ARD/NDR/Degeto, 2016), for example, these roles were performed by a pair of brothers, and *Dark*'s primary director is also its co-creator as well as the romantic partner of the head writer. For most productions, though, it is common that the director joins production only after the first drafts of the script are complete—and only on this basis does a "director's stage" happen in the screenwriting process. Often the director's involvement lasts only days, which indicates that directors are not yet an integral part of the writers' room.

Experts can also belong to the writers' room, though only on a temporary basis, such as advisers from the worlds of journalism and politics (as in

the case of *Die Stadt und die Macht*) or eyewitnesses of the past and historians (for period dramas such as *Deutschland 83*). For the family dramedy *Labaule & Erben/Labaule & Heirs* (ARD/SWR, 2018), SWR, the local ARD broadcaster in charge, is said to have approached the "HaRiBo" writer trio (Hanno Hackfort, Richard Kropf and Bob Konrad) with the idea of including a "confidant" among the writers' room ranks, which was the wish of Harald Schmidt (a well-known television presenter and former popular late-night host), who conceived the show's initial concept. This person, however, was not a screenwriter in the classical sense but rather a scholar. This example of the public-service comedy *Labaule & Erben* demonstrates that broadcasters—or at least the commissioning editors representing them—as well as other actors can also have a say in the composition of writers' rooms and similar writing teams.

Commissioning editors, often described as very influential actors in the script development hierarchy, can sometimes sit in on writers' rooms as well. For the 24-part Christmas serial *Beutolomäus und der wahre Weihnachtsmann/Beutolomäus and the Real Santa Claus* (2017), made for public-service children's broadcaster KiKA by ARD and ZDF, the editor even regularly participated in story development meetings, to give direct feedback and thus shorten the process (Schulte and Gößler 2017; see also Gößler and Merkel 2021, 196–99).

A role related to the commissioning editor is played by the dramaturge, sometimes also called the development producer, who is involved in several writers' room approaches. For the *Beutolomäus* project, Timo Gößler (2017) acted both in this capacity and as a more general writers' room consultant responsible for integrating this development method into the public-service processes of KiKA. Above all, Gößler suggested the use of the beat system, which revolves around the smallest unit of action in a screenplay (the beat), which he emphasised in his interview: "The beat system [can] give you a kind of dramaturgical blueprint, which in a writers' room leads you to simply work more effectively, because everyone knows: OK, dramaturgically they always have a kind of density, of rhythm, of narrative speed" (see also Phalen and Osellame 2012, 8). However, none of the other interviewed and observed practitioners seemed to have worked systematically, with structural specifications for beats or otherwise. This lack of a shared or consistent approach to collaborative writing once again clearly indicates that the writers' room is often used only in a rudimentary and barely systematised form in the German industry.

Practices and Techniques

In the discussions on screenwriting and the writers' room, a certain scepticism towards overly strict structures often emerged, related both to writers' self-conceptions and to discourses of value and quality. "[T]he suspicion that somehow craft must be the enemy of authenticity" is how John Yorke (2013, 43) summarises British authors' aversion to technique and craft. In reply to my question about a certain technique in the (so-called) writers' room that she led for the drama *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo/We Children from Zoo Station* (Amazon Prime Video et al. 2021), the screenwriter Annette Hess (2019) seemingly took up a similiar stance: "I hate any form of technique". At the same time, she hinted at using particular techniques during our interview when she referred to "dramaturgical knowledge", and she also discussed her conversation with Anna Winger, head writer of *Deutschland 83* and *86*, about Winger's alleged writers' room experience, in particular about the number of writers involved, their remuneration and the intensity of rewriting by the head writer. Such aspects of collaborative writing, and the fact that practitioners engage in discussion about them, suggest that certain techniques are emerging and solidifying in the approaches to the writers' room in Germany.

One practice of the rudimentary writers' room observable in the above-mentioned shows—which also seems to be shared among other projects—is that a head writer, or occasionally a director or a writer-director duo, brings in several writers after this lead figure and the other creators have already clearly outlined the series concept. For the first two seasons of the mystery drama *Dark*, for example, prewritten outlines with many gaps are said to have formed the foundation of the collaborative story development, which took place four days a week in a physical space over an extended period.

Another approach mentioned several times was individual writers taking over certain characters or groups of characters. In the case of *Dark*, with its rich plotlines and characters, the first thing done in the joint development work was to create a "family tree", as co-writer Martin Behnke (2018) explained:

> Who is actually related to whom and how does that change over time? […] Who is actually what – father, son, daughter, mother? […] What are the actual motives for these characters outwardly [and] under the surface?

Thus characters—which, as shown in Chapters 2 and 7, the practitioners identified as an important element of the content and narration of quality drama and so as a central evaluation criterion—also shape approaches to the writers' room.

In addition to divvying up writing duties according to characters, division by episode was also relatively common in German approaches to the writers' room: writers worked out individual episodes after developing the overarching plot together. Quite often, however, the head writers—in whom approaches to the showrunner are evident—were responsible for the final version of the scripts, and even for the "second, third and fourth versions" (Friese 2019). According to Jantje Friese (2019), despite writing versions of the first episode together in a physical space, for subsequent episodes, the writers under her at *Dark* were very much "inside their respective episode worlds". "To have an eye for everything, then, that's the function of the head writer in the end", she reflected on her own role, linking the writers' room closely to the showrunner. Patricia Phalen and Julia Osellame (2012, 8), however, have assessed this scenario of the head writer being responsible for the final draft as suboptimal, because ideally the showrunner should be able to delegate all tasks.

The tradition of individual writing work is potentially reflected in this adherence to a central authority. In a sense, the development of television drama in Germany continues to be strongly characterised by the individual writer: the supremacy of individual head writers is clearly reflected in their better financial compensation and the copyright distribution in their favour within individual project networks. In this respect, contractual stipulations cement the dominance of the head writer.

How the writers' room is practised in Germany in concrete terms depends, above all, on the economic conditions. Since 2020, the economic situation has become more difficult, through the crises spurred by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Covid-19 pandemic. Even before those changed circumstances, a lack of comprehensive funding meant the writers' room in many cases remained a superficially tested tool and did not become a central element in the creative process. Often the writers' room, despite the increasing approaches to it, continued to pose a challenge in the face of low production resources and differentiated production cultures. Linked to budgeting, practitioners discussed the remuneration of individual writers, their share of the copyright profits and their placement in the credits, on which subsequent payments depend (for

example, fees for writers through the collecting society VG Wort—Verwertungsgesellschaft Wort [Collecting Society Word], which distributes residuals from secondary publication rights). Against this backdrop, the adaptation of the writers' room is strongly linked to legal issues and the negotiation skills of writers. Beyond script development in the writers' room, the practitioners also dealt more comprehensively with the position of writers in the German industry. Writers' more general involvement in and agency within project networks and screen idea work groups, especially in connection with the showrunner, was the primary point of negotiation.

8.3 The Showrunner and the Evolution of Television Screenwriting

The Showrunner as Creative and Business Leader

The surveyed practitioners repeatedly described quality TV drama as strongly influenced by writers. Approaches to the showrunner, a hybrid writer-producer, were often considered fruitful in both strengthening the writer's position and increasing the quality of German drama. The industry term "showrunner", in wide use since the 1990s, refers to a head writer who usually also leads, recruits for and manages the writers' room (see Mann 2009). By being responsible for both business and creative aspects of series production (Newman and Levine 2012, 40), this lead figure personifies the close social entanglement of aestheticisation and economisation that Reckwitz attributes to the "creativity dispositif" (2017, 8; also 2013, 34), which characterises contemporary society at large. Quite often, the person in the showrunner role is also the series creator, from whom the idea, and thereby the basis for the collaborative plot development, originates (see Del Valle 2008, 403). Within the writing team, showrunners also might take on dramaturgical tasks, such as dividing up and coordinating episodes and acts. In addition, they operate beyond the script development phase in order to ensure the narrative and aesthetic unity of the programme. As an executive with "managerial oversight" (Mittell 2015, 90), the showrunner may also be involved in distribution and may mediate between different parties and actors: "network and studio executives, advertisers, above- and below-the-line personnel, critics, journalists, viewers, and beyond" (Perren and Schatz

2015, 90). In the case of transmedia franchises, showrunners some-times manage the cross-platform activities, although larger international or US-dominated projects may require a "six-pack of executive produc-ers" (Mann 2009, 100) rather than a single leader (Perren and Schatz 2015, 91). Stefania Marghitu (2021, 12) also points to collaborative aspects of the showrunner role and its integration into networks when she states in her book *Teen TV*: "Without the support of viewers and the business side of the industry, a showrunner cannot sustain their place within cultural memory and history". However, in public representations as well as in many of the practitioners' self-reflections, television dramas and their showrunners are often associated with individual star creators. These solo creators have come to serve as a "branding instrument" (Meir 2019, 115) and a "label of quality and exclusivity" (McCabe and Akass 2007a, 10) in the negotiation and marketing of quality TV. Interdepen-dencies with audiences and the media industry as well as industrialised production processes based on the division of labour are quickly forgotten in the course of such marketing narratives.

In the period of study (2015–2023), several clear deviations from the showrunner principle—in the sense of a central writer-producer and creator—became apparent. For example, in the case of the political drama *Die Stadt und die Macht*, the original, central writer left the screenwriting process at an early stage, which was not planned but rather resulted from inconsistencies in the development process. The polyphony in the devel-opment of *Die Stadt und Macht*, about which the involved practitioners complained, clearly differed from the showrunner model in its sense of "a creative authority".

Despite the lack of a true showrunner in many German TV drama productions, this lead writer-producer figure has at least discursively found its way into the local television industry. Some individual practitioners (e.g. Winger 2017) have classified quality series as a "writer-producer's medium" in contrast to the director-driven single TV film, and others have argued that the combination of economic and creative responsibil-ities leads to higher quality. Correspondingly, Friese (2019), the creator of *Dark*, contended that when creatives manage the budget, it makes a decisive difference:

> I believe that many things […] look better when the creative person makes the decision: Where do we put the red pencil now? And what is […] important, and what should the red pencil not touch.

As in the case of *Dark*, one can observe certain adaptations and changes to script work to be taking place in the German industry alongside discourses on the showrunner. A notable difference in Germany as compared to the production conditions in the US—so often used as the benchmark and model—is that serials, and in particular quality or high-end ones, generally comprise fewer episodes. As such, a central showrunner who creatively and economically oversees all episodes, from their development to their production, and thus who controls and holds together the singular or "one vision" of a series, tends to be less necessary (Redvall 2013, 107). It is also due to differing production cultures that the showrunner model, similar to the writers' room, is practised in only a rudimentary form in Germany and adapted to historical structures.

Showrunner Adaptations and Practices

The professions of the writer and the producer, which are united in the showrunner, are typically clearly separated from each other in the German television fiction industry. According to the fiction editor Hauke Bartel (2018), this demarcation of "very specific fields of activity" has made it difficult for "showrunner personalities in Germany" to emerge. The writer Hanno Hackfort (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018), by contrast, attributed to the Anglo-American world in particular a view of individualised trades as "highly esteemed, highly polished craftspeople" and, against this background, was critical of writers in Germany who suddenly assumed producing, casting or directing duties. With regard to the expanded field of activity for writers, several practitioners hinted at scepticism towards local showrunner adaptations.

At times, practitioners also questioned the extent to which a production model originating in the US could be transferred to German and other European contexts, as well as how meaningful and desirable such a transfer would be. For example, the French producer Jimmy Desmarais (2016)—a co-lead on the French-German co-production *Eden* (Arte/ARD/SWR, 2019), a drama exploring European refugee policy—doubted, during the course of an industry presentation, that imitating the showrunner principle in Europe would automatically open up access to "international" markets. He stated that he did not believe in importing systems but only in importing people. In pan-European discussions, TV professionals often referred to the different, more democratic production cultures in Europe as compared to the US (e.g. Fatima Varhos

in Buffoni et al. 2020) and emphasised the collaborative nature of the writer-director-producer trio versus the situation of central management by one executive (e.g. Caroline Benjo in Root et al. 2020). Some practitioners also complained that the buzzword "showrunner" lacks sharpness. A more general aversion to Americanisation or US hegemony seemed to resonate particularly on the French side in discussions where the showrunner was criticised. But Friese (in Buffoni et al. 2020), during the pan-European panel "Producing with Netflix" as part of the 2020 *Berlinale Series Market*, expressed the hope that German and European series production would move more in the direction of this model in the future.

Friese's definition of the showrunner in this panel—an executive who wears the "vision goggles" and a role that also can be shared by two people (in Buffoni et al. 2020)—seems to be geared towards herself and Baran bo Odar, the duo behind *Dark*. Her statement suggested that a certain adaptation of the showrunner has emerged in the local industry, namely as a self-designation that not least of all serves the purpose of self-marketing. In German, this Anglicism can convey modernity and internationalism. Other practitioners who dubbed themselves "showrunners" in the interviews or at the observed industry events include Jörg Winger (2017), who evolved from producer to writer for the *Deutschland* trilogy, and Stefan Stuckmann (2016), writer and creator of the political satire *Eichwald, MdB*, who associated the term primarily with agency. As a showrunner, Stuckmann was able to creatively guide *Eichwald, MdB* and reject editorial feedback, when necessary, which is what sealed his decision to go with ZDF's Das kleine Fernsehspiel as the production context: "That meant I was paid much less, but I could set more conditions. And that was […] the basic condition I had: that I could work there as a showrunner, so to speak". According to Stuckmann's account, the showrunner was practised in a precarious context and in connection with the "auteur film", towards which ZDF's long-standing editorial department for newcomer films is traditionally oriented (e.g. Wietstock 2003). However, the practice of the writers' room, which usually goes hand in hand with the showrunner, did not take place—though primarily only for economic reasons, as Stuckmann and the ZDF editors in charge of the first season of *Eichwald, MdB* admitted (interview with Haslauer and Schmidt 2015).

An adaptation of the showrunner into existing, historically developed power structures also emerged when practitioners (e.g. von Borries 2019)

located this role within that of the director. This trade is traditionally important in European cinema and television film production (Szczepanik 2013) and is also influential in television fiction in Germany, which is characterised by individual films. Such a director-centricity was particularly evident in the *Babylon Berlin* project. That series' three central writer-directors were often dubbed showrunners (e.g. Freitag 2020) or referred to themselves as such. "For me, [the] showrunner is actually the creative, artistic decision-maker behind all the things, and that was always the three of us", announced a self-confident Achim von Borries (2019). He saw a decisive advantage in the fact that he and his two counterparts, by directing and writing at the same time, could make changes to the script even at a late stage and thus respond to feedback during filming.

An association of the showrunner with directing was also evident when the producer and writer Gabriela Sperl (2018) referred to West German television history by identifying directors or "auteur filmmakers" as showrunner personalities. These names included Helmut Dietl, the creator of *Kir Royal – Aus dem Leben eines Klatschreporters / Kir Royal – From the Life of a Gossip Reporter* (ARD/WDR, 1986) and *Monaco Franze – Der ewige Stenz / Monaco Franze – Eternal Dandy* (ARD/BR, 1981–1983), two comparatively high-budget miniseries set in Munich's glitterati scene of the 1980s that continue to be popular today, especially in Bavaria. In this context, Sperl linked the showrunner with cost-intensive productions, sitting outside a "given low-budget industrial mode of production", as well as with certain "artist[s]" and creatives. Sperl herself exhibits approaches to showrunner, as she has acted for years in the rare combination of writer *and* producer, for example, for the three-part miniseries *Preis der Freiheit / Prize of Freedom* (ZDF, 2019) on German reunification in 1989–1990. For the trilogy *Mitten in Deutschland: NSU / NSU German History X* (ARD et al. 2016), which dramatises the true events and people of the National Socialist Underground, a German neo-Nazi terrorist group, Sperl was not an official writer but nevertheless acted as the central idea generator and initiator.

Beyond the exceptional case of Sperl, other writers have displayed only occasional tendencies towards becoming showrunners, in the sense that few have developed in the direction of (co-)producers. In some cases, they have founded production companies (such as Anna Winger, head writer of *Deutschland* and *Unorthodox* [Netflix 2020], with Studio Airlift) or taken on production tasks beyond pure screenwriting work, thus gaining stronger "creative control of a series" (Newcomb and Lotz

2002, 76). The prominent writer Annette Hess now also acts as creative producer for her various series. For the period dramas *Ku'damm 56* and *59* (ZDF, 2015/2018), Hess had parallel contracts for her multiple roles, through which she was eventually remunerated for these additional activities. Furthermore, the contracts fixed her right to have a say and "partly also to make decisions in finding the director and then later [...] the look and music, casting, editing, [and] rough cut" of the series (Hess 2019). But, even in this case, development and shooting work remained largely separate. Hess (2019) noted that, as a writer, it is advisable to go to set "a few times", but in Germany, lead writers do not have a continuous presence on set as they do in other countries (interview with Berger 2018; on the showrunner's presence on set, see also Caldwell 2008, 212; Redvall 2013, 145). Last but not least, the lack of economic means for such additional activities is decisive for the fact that the showrunner is, ultimately, only rudimentarily applied as German television-makers take steps to realise quality dramas. Co-determination rights of the kind and intensity that Hess has negotiated are also an exception and constantly need to be articulated and defended. Linked to the showrunner and the extended activities undertaken by some screenwriters, the interviewed and observed practitioners also negotiated the position and agency of the writer's trade.

8.4   Evaluating the Scriptwriter's Power

The Marginalisation of Writers

Initially, the industry discourse on German quality drama and production cultures was dominated by the thesis that the situation of local screenwriters was bad: they were not valued enough, they were quickly forgotten and they did not have enough agency. The long-standing tendency towards the model of 100 per cent financing through the commissioner and the so-called total buyout (see Sect. 5.3), in which writers relinquish rights and thus lose influence, as well as their accompanying exclusion from the production process, seems critical to this diagnosis of marginalisation. For a long time, the following attitude towards writers prevailed, as described by the producer Jan Kromschröder (2018), who personally distanced himself from this stance: "Here, you get your last instalment. Bye. [...] You're at the beginning of the food chain, and now you leave us alone". Through this separation of screenwriting

and production, the script is often significantly developed and changed by other production participants without the writer being able to object.

In other markets, as the practitioners' negotiations on quality TV drama suggest, writers often have more agency through project networks and screen idea work groups. However, the marginalisation or (relative) invisibility of screenwriters, as well as the mostly emotional discourse on this, are by no means limited to the current German television industry (see e.g. Mittell 2015, 88). In an interview study of the screen idea work group in the United Kingdom in the 2000s, Ian Macdonald (2010, 51) revealed that writers felt excluded from decision-making processes and constantly rejected. According to Macdonald, this sense of violation arises from the basic structure of the screen idea work group, into which individual authors add their input, submitting their writing "to a process of review and decision-making in an arena fraught with social complexities, industrial and cultural conventions and individual habitus masquerading as 'sound artistic judgement'" (55).

This general arrangement is probably linked to the reason television writers in Germany (as several practitioners observed) have long anticipated and internalised the evaluations and feedback of broadcasters, to the result that they do not take too many risks and often end up kowtowing to commissioning editors and their guidelines. This diagnosis and the reference to the precarious position of writers was accompanied by the demand from several practitioners that they take on more responsibility. The opportunities for such increased agency have grown, at least for some established writers and in certain series segments. Hackfort (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018) described how producers and editors, as a result of the many new commissioners and the related increase in series production, approach certain writers with more fervour. Writers with notable reputations are therefore more sought after in the diversified market and have more freedom in selecting projects. Practitioners' power to select is known to be decisive for series production in project networks and for the interplay between broadcasters, production companies and creative freelancers. A tendency towards extending more agency to writers was also evident in the initiative and voluntary commitment Kontrakt '18—a sort of declaration of screenwriters' rights—and the accompanying industry discourse it spurred.

Kontrakt '18: Writers' Demands

In 2018, in the midst of the present study's period of investigation, several well-known screenwriters (including some of the interviewees) called for "contractual and behavioural standards" that allegedly have "long been a matter of course in other countries" (Zahn 2018). This action triggered quite a large media echo (e.g. Ströbele 2018). The 92 signatories (Krei 2021a)—now more than 200 (in 2023)—of what came to be called Kontrakt '18 declared that they would enter into contract negotiations only if their agreements included the following six options:

1. The author is responsible for the script until the final version, unless otherwise agreed in writing.
2. The author has a say in the selection of the director. The decision will be made by mutual agreement.
3. The author is invited to table reads with the actors.
4. The author is granted the right to see and comment on the dailies as they come in and on the rough cut at the earliest opportunity. The author is invited to internal screenings or rough cut presentations with the network.
5. The author is mentioned by name in all communication materials about the project (press releases, programme notes, posters, etc.) and invited to all project-related public events.
6. The signatories undertake to accept orders for script revisions to another author's project (rewriting, polishing, etc.) only after they have come to an understanding with the author who is leaving the project (Zahn 2018)

The trigger for this list of demands is said to have been the outrage prompted by the 2018 ceremony for the Deutscher Fernsehpreis (German Television Award), an important industry-run annual television award: writers of nominated works were not invited, except for the specific category "Best Screenplay". In response, Kristin Derfler, writer of the series-TV film hybrid *Brüder/Brothers* (ARD/SWR, 2017), which took the award for Best Multi-Part Series (or *Mehrteiler*, separated from regular series in the Deutscher Fernsehpreis categories), complained in a public Facebook post about the lack of appreciation for her guild (Lückerath 2018). This post sparked the discourse that led to the formation of Kontrakt '18.

During our interview, Hess (2019), a co-initiator of Kontrakt '18, stated that great support for the group's demands came from producers and commissioning editors "who will still be playing in the market in the future, because they have of course recognised that now is the hour of the writers, the storytellers". She explicitly mentioned the goal of wanting to "educate people" about the Kontrakt '18 initiative and the mode of production it stipulates—a statement that clearly confirmed that media practitioners who take part in production studies, as stated by Caldwell (2008, 14), pursue a certain agenda and self-interest in their responses to surveys.

Other interviewees largely praised Kontrakt '18, but also partially and carefully criticised the initiative. For instance, Claudia Simionescu (in Simionescu and Steinwender 2018), a lead commissioning editor from BR (a member of the ARD consortium), found the writers' demands understandable, but at the same time she expressed a fear that issues would be conflated "which do not necessarily have anything to do with each other". In addition, she emphasised the sovereign rights of public broadcasters, which are responsible for their programmes and managing the spending of public fees; such a statement can be understood as a defence of the existing hierarchies. Friese (2019) asserted that writers, in order to have a say in some of the terrains claimed by Kontrakt '18, would have to co-produce, which in turn would affect the rights situation and the (existing) producers' ability to act. She criticised the Kontrakt '18 initiators for displaying an attitude of "just wanting without giving". Florian Cossen (2018), one of the directors of the *Mitten in Deutschland: NSU* trilogy and *Deutschland 86*, also referred to economic responsibilities, which he saw as being more strongly held by producers and directors than writers. According to him, producers and directors are "the decisive point" where it becomes apparent whether "a budget explodes or is adhered to".

Especially Kontrakt '18's second demand—the writer's right to have a say in the selection of the director—led to controversies and broader discussions, similar to how the industry discussion on production cultures in television screenwriting more generally revolved around the interaction of the director and the writer and their respective statuses.

Director and Writer: A Complicated Relationship

The director and the writer are the central makers of television content, if we follow Werner Holly's (2004, 34) German-language introduction to

television. However, as the discussions on Kontrakt '18 and the related statements of many interviewees made clear, writers and directors often are not equal partners in television drama productions. The tendency for directors to have more agency may be related to the greater attention paid to them in many German-speaking film studies as well as in past discourses on the value of television (e.g. Kammann et al. 2007, 118). In the face of ambitions to produce quality TV drama and negotiations on the showrunner and writers' room, however, the weighting has shifted at least discursively in favour of the writer. Against the background of a potentially threatening loss of power for the director, it is hardly surprising that the Kontrakt '18 demands were not met with unadulterated praise from that side. For example, Edward Berger (2018), lead director for the first-season *Deutschland 83*, objected in our interview that the Kontrakt '18 initiative "overshot the mark a bit". In his view, the reasons other actors intervene in the script usually lie with the writers themselves or in the deficits of their work. Von Borries (2019), who is equally active as a director and a screenwriter, expressed a similar opinion:

> Why are books changed? Because the editing doesn't work, because the story is literarily good but not cinematically realisable, because it is told too much through dialogue […] and transported [too little] into the plot […], because it is not dramatised but remains literary and mute, and so on.

Still, von Borries also acknowledged that writers are valued in a very different way in the US—that is, as central creative players—again revealing a certain idealisation of the US television and film industry as well as the showrunner figure. Berger (2018) argued, now in alignment with the Kontrakt '18 initiators, that writers' work output would improve "if they were given more rights and more support". In his discussion of the writer-director relationship, he argued for intensive cooperation and assessed directors' script ambitions as being, in principle, positive:

> If you want a certain director, then you have to expect […] that they have their own vision. And usually those are the people who are also better. […] Of course they want to intervene in the script. That's why you should simply involve them [the directors] from the beginning.

The public criticism of Kontrakt '18 by the well-known film and television director Dominik Graf, responsible for the early German quality drama project *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens / In the Face of Crime* (ARD et al. 2010) and dozens of TV films, took a similar bent. In an article for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, one of Germany's top newspapers, Graf mocked the Kontrakt '18 initiators for choosing the wrong enemy in the figure of the director, and he criticised the common practice in Germany of bringing directors "on board late, when the script, important cast members and also staff have already been decided" (Graf 2018, my translation).

However, this very early and comprehensive collaboration between director and writer—or "togetherness to the pain threshold"—demanded by Graf (2018, my translation) stands in stark contrast both to the conceptions and practices of the writers' room found in my surveys, where it was cast as a prolonged and autonomous creative space for the writers alone, as well as to the understanding of quality drama serials as compilations of several episodes by different directors who have to subordinate themselves to the showrunner. As outlined earlier, series are a "writer-producer medium", not a "director medium", according to producer and writer Jörg Winger (2017). Hess (2019) quoted the proverb "cobbler stick to your last" and argued for a clear separation between the activities of writer and director. Such an argument can also be understood as a critique of the so-called auteur film and the auteur theory, which is a sensitive and emotionally charged topic in screenplay discourses beyond Germany as well, because the artistic contribution of screenwriters threatens to be forgotten in the focus on star directors (see Maras 2009, 97).

More concretely, the reservations of many writers regarding screenplay work by directors, as expressed in Kontrakt '18 and in several interviews, stem from instances of cooperation that were experienced as negative. Several times, interviewees cited these collaboration experiences as "failure studies" of sorts (Redvall 2013, 194), where directors either hijacked writers' scripts or obtained a writer credit for economic reasons. Hess (2019), for example, problematised such a collaboration on *Weissensee / The Weissensee Saga* (ARD/MDR/Degeto, 2010–2018), a public-service period drama following two families in East Berlin between 1980 and 1990 that she created. According to her, in the second season, the director massively rewrote the script. Hess and the director, Friedemann Fromm, who now shares the writer credit, have publicly addressed discrepancies in opinion on the plot and character development for

Weissensee (e.g. Klode 2015). Or, as the former commissioning editor Gebhard Henke (2018) put it, taking a critical view of Hess: the pair "aired plenty of dirty laundry". The HaRiBo trio of writers behind the first German Amazon Prime Video drama production, *You Are Wanted* (2017–2018), likewise described the collaboration with the prominent director and lead actor Matthias Schweighöfer—credited as showrunner in official external communications—as extremely difficult (Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018). Bob Konrad, part of the trio, more generally criticised that the screenplay work of directors, in contrast to that of writers, is usually not subject to any control:

> A script is partly rewritten over years, every comma is turned around, everything is […] discussed to death, and then you have this book and give it to the director, and then suddenly it's a black box. That means that the director usually writes a director's version, or has it written, […] whatever. Then no one accesses it any more, it is not discussed.

"It is not discussed" probably means that, at this stage, writers are left out of the process and directors have the final say. Once again, the separation of script development from the subsequent production reveals itself to be foundational to the writer's often precarious position.

In addition to the director's version of the script, dailies and the rough cut were considered central moments in the production process, and access to them was part of negotiations regarding the writer's agency in the project network and vis-à-vis the director. The dailies—or, as Hanno Hackfort (in Hackfort et al. 2018) described them, "takes that […] go out and don't go straight into the dustbin"—are mentioned in the fourth tenet of Kontrakt '18 and, with the digitisation of television production, these takes have become more easily and directly accessible. Whereas in the past viewing appointments in the cinema were required to view dailies, today they can even be checked on the taping date and made available to various production participants as a digital file. The "important people", as Hackfort formulated it, get to see these basics for editing purposes and can thus keep track of whether the shoot is going according to their ideas. These "important people" include the lead producers, central representatives from the broadcaster or platform and, according to Hackfort, not necessarily but "ideally" also the writers. However, writers reported

that their digital access to dailies can be limited or even terminated altogether if their feedback displeases other lead production participants. In this respect, writers have to choose and formulate their feedback carefully.

Similar caution and self-reflection also characterise writers' approach to the right to comment on the rough cut, which is demanded by Kontrakt '18 (Zahn 2018). The editing phase usually requires cuts to hit a certain length, and so the narrative can be drastically changed to meet these standards, sometimes leaving writers with the impression that the foundational story they wrote has not been sufficiently respected and valued. From the point of view of the writer, their involvement in the editing process serves as a means of control and is conducive to quality, contributing to protecting the "singular vision" of a serial drama.

Time and again, practitioners invoked the idea of a singular or "one vision" (Redvall 2013, 102) when arguing that "the story" needs to be held together and controlled. Hess (2019), for example, confidently attributed to her trade the fact that they know the base narrative best and, against this background, can most competently decide on cuts and the selection of scenes and settings. Hackfort (in Hackfort et al. 2018) reflected that if writers have a say regarding dailies and rough cuts, then it is also important that they afford directors a little bit of influence. According to the practitioners' negotiations, the aim is to increase not only writers' agency but also their productive cooperation with other actors in the project network, especially the director.

Increased Agency of Writers?

In the discourse on German quality drama and its production cultures, a focus on the increased agency of writers became apparent several times—and not only with regard to their cooperation with directors. The Kontrakt '18 demands and the discourses on the showrunner, which are closely linked to the negotiations on German quality drama, proved to be influential. However, the screenwriter's supposed increase in power was less about clearly quantifiable effects and more about a mood or feeling beginning to permeate the sector; as described in 2021 in the online industry magazine *DWDL.de* by Volker A. Zahn, a screenwriter and central co-initiator of Kontrakt '18, his profession is now "clearly more appreciated" (in Krei 2021a, my translation). Accordingly, the broadcaster representatives I interviewed announced that they would listen to and involve writers more. Martina Zöllner (2018), head of the

department for documentary and fiction programmes at RBB, suggested that the (at the time of the interview still quite recent) demands of Kontrakt '18 prompted one to "take another critical look at your own behaviour". According to her, this self-reflection includes, among other things, committing to protecting writers from directors if necessary and pointing out the limits of their agency to the latter.

In the meantime, several broadcasters have developed guidelines to regulate revenue sharing and development fees for writers, and, according to public accounts, they intend to deepen cooperation with writers or increase their involvement in the production process (e.g. Hennings 2020b). The corresponding negotiations with ARD and ARD Degeto (a film rights trader and production company) involved Kontrakt '18 initiators alongside the VDD—Verband Deutscher Drehbuchautoren (Association of German Screenwriters) and the Allianz Deutscher Produzenten—Film & Fernsehen (Alliance of German Producers; short name: Produzentenallianz) (Hennings 2020b). While steps are being taken, it remains true that official guidelines can be formulated so vaguely that violations of them have no legal consequences. Likewise, broadcasters and platforms can potentially use their guidelines to relativise and dilute the demands of Kontrakt '18. These two issues have been pointed out in the Kontrakt '18 group's continuous criticism of these negotiations (especially against ARD; see Niemeier 2021a). As a result, Kontrakt'18 commissioned a legal review of ARD's guidelines (Krei 2021a).

Key representatives of Kontrakt '18 announced, in *DWDL.de*, the initiative's goal to establish a special regulation for its members or signatories (Krei 2021a). This narrowing to members only implies that increased agency will be made available only to individual writers who are already firmly anchored in the industry and so who can dare to sign the Kontrakt '18 demands. The fact that the German industry lacks a "middle class" of emerging screenwriters, as discussed by the practitioners, is a determining factor for this concentration on a few established and successful ones. Kontrakt '18 signatory Bernd Lange (2018), who is the writer or co-writer of several feature films as well as the drama serials *Das Verschwinden/The Disappearance* (ARD et al. 2017) and *Die Kaiserin/ The Empress* (Netflix, 2022), considered it important to support especially those writers who "may not have the guts or are too young, too inexperienced" and who do not yet understand that screenwriting films and especially series is inevitably "a collaborative process".

Similar to other professions and trade union struggles in general, those with smaller networks, or those who are less organised or formalised, risk being left out. Even with the rise of the quality drama serial and emerging approaches to the showrunner, there is not always an accompanying increase in the power of the writer. Several representatives of this guild also addressed ongoing reservations about their involvement in broader production negotiations on behalf of other trades. In corresponding discourses on the role of scriptwriters, it again became apparent that the industry discourse on German quality drama series and the production cultures enabling them very often was and is about agency within project networks and screen idea work groups. Including but not only in regard to screenwriters and producers, the industry discourse on German quality dramas and their production conditions continues to be intense.

Notes

1. For more on these production cultures, see Sect. 4.3.
2. For a description of these production areas, see Sect. 4.3.
3. Chapter 5 explores these topics in more detail.
4. See Chapter 7 for more on this bias towards "single pieces", which practitioners emphasised in their discussion of the textual characteristics of German television fiction and their historical genesis.
5. See Chapter 7.
6. For more on "industrial" series and other series types and production areas in Germany's television industry, see Sect. 4.3.

To Be Continued: Conclusion and Outlook

Television in Germany is currently undergoing a fundamental change—one that looks like it will continue for the foreseeable. This book has addressed this time of transformation in the digital age by looking at the phenomenon of the quality TV drama, and especially at its writing and narrative styles. In doing so, I have deliberately considered quality TV—which is difficult to define, in any case—less in the sense of aesthetically and narratively "good" programmes and more as a discursive construct. In this mode, the study has analysed how the interviewed and observed practitioners negotiated, tested and reflected on German quality TV drama and, through it, broader transformations in the television industry: its programmes, their contents and their forms; its distribution and reception models and methods; and its production practices, including screenwriting, which is this study's focus and which determined the research perspective. The analysis of the TV professionals from the perspective of media industry studies and screenwriting research revealed extremely differentiated ways of perceiving German TV drama, and especially the aforementioned upheavals as well as the sustainability of older television structures. Some practitioners positioned themselves, for example, on the side of the new, online-based streaming providers, while others argued that the "solid, old German television" (interview with Hess 2019) is still holding on and emphasised the importance of

the historically established structures. These structures include standard-ised broadcast slots and the continuously shown, financially lucrative and therefore still significant "bread-and-butter series" such as *Großstadtre-vier/Big City Police Station* (ARD/NDR,1986–), a long-running light crime procedural on the day-to-day cases at a fictional police station in Hamburg. These entrenched structures, underlined by the TV profes-sionals through such examples, are not obsolete per se. Rather, the current shape of television is partly explained by the winding paths of this history, as Ralf Adelmann et al. (2001, 205) stated more than 20 years ago in their foundational German-language anthology of television studies texts.

Therefore, it would be short-sighted to proclaim a completely new television of the digital age, suggesting that the increased number of quality or "high-end" serials from Germany, accompanied by a clear focus on online distribution, exist in a dichotomy with the television from the "old" models. In addition to the definitely extant tradition of ongoing serials in the German television industry, it is also important to consider that, in general, "television" has never represented a coherent entity but has always been characterised by renewals in every phase of its development. "Post-network television" does not displace "old forms of television"; rather it "re-articulates already existing topics, problematiza-tions, or supposed 'potentials' with different emphases and strategies", Judith Keilbach and Markus Stauff (2013, 92) highlight. Applied to tele-vision fiction in Germany, this means that there is currently not only one linear developmental path away from the single work, usually taking the form of the television film or the case-per-week procedural, and heading towards the (supposed) quality serial, with its cross-episode story arcs and a focus on online distribution. The television film and its associated film-series hybrid (the so-called *Reihe*) remain influential and robust in this country, both for many practitioners and their ways of working and for audiences and their preferences. And yet seriality—a guiding concept and aesthetic principle of television (see Fahle and Engell 2006, 11)—plays an extremely crucial role in the current transformations. In productions for online distribution, which continues to gain importance, the emphasis is on serial formats, and central changes in screenwriting and production methods are clearly motivated by this stronger serialisation. One indica-tion of this connection between seriality and changed modes of writing and producing is the growing relevance of the showrunner. Discussed in detail in Chapter 8, the showrunner combines the functions of scriptwriter

and producer and is thus supposed to ensure a singular or "one vision" (Redvall 2013, 107) among numerous participants in serial production, and thus the series' coherence across episodes. This striving for a singular vision adheres to the basic assumption—which can be found again and again in the industry—that production methods and cultures decisively pre-structure and shape the programmes themselves.

Both sides of this equation—the television product, including its contents and forms, and the production modes and processes, including the key stage of screenwriting—formed the central focal points of the examined industry discourse on the German quality TV drama. The following pages summarise the results of the analysis in relation to: the transformations of the television industry and especially its forms of financing; distribution, with the increase in online streaming; changed modes of reception and their analysis and conceptualisation within the industry; and the changes in production cultures and screenwriting. In the final section, I venture an outlook on the future of television in Germany in a "society of singularities" (Reckwitz 2018, 2020b).

9.1   Transformation of the Television Industry

The year 2015 marked a "pivot point for quality drama" (Eichner 2021, 205) from Germany. Most prevalently, we began to see changes through the initiation of fiction production in the pay TV sector and exports to English-speaking countries. Here, the period drama *Deutschland 83* (RTL, 2015) acted as a gamechanger (see Krauß 2020f), and it therefore forms the beginning of this study's period of investigation. Since then, the local television industry has expanded and transformed considerably. Several new commissioners and distributors for drama series have emerged, especially in the interlinked areas of pay TV and subscription video-on-demand (SVoD). Chapter 4 provided a basic introduction to this expanded and diversified television series landscape. Looking at various broadcasters, platforms and production companies, as well as different areas of series production, showed how there is neither one form of "German television" nor a singular approach to the German quality drama more specifically. However, as a decisive difference to the US television industry—the context in which "quality TV" was first spoken of (Feuer 2007, 147) and to which the bulk of academic discussions of such serials refer (e.g. McCabe and Akass 2007a; Thompson 1996)—it can be stated that the production landscape in Germany is

much more strongly shaped by public-service broadcasters. ARD and ZDF still represent the most active and financially strong commissioners. However, the public media institutions, which are highly complex, diverse and bureaucratised entities, repeatedly face demands for leaner structures and more "modern" production and distribution channels (e.g. Mantel 2020)—and not only since the great media attention given to the "Schlesinger affair" surrounding the director (*Intendantin*) of the ARD broadcaster RBB, who resigned in 2022 due to accusations of nepotism. The public broadcasters are undergoing fundamental changes against a backdrop of new media policy demands and the ever-changing digital media environment. The advertising-financed commercial broadcasters—which for years formed one-half of Germany's "dual broadcasting system" (*Duales Rundfunksystem*) (Hickethier 1998, 422–424)—are also reorienting themselves. These processes of upheaval are particularly visible in quality drama projects. Germany's established programme providers are relying heavily on online distribution for these series, while the commercial broadcasters are trying out new business models, as the previous ones have come under considerable pressure.

Chapter 5 offered a closer look at the expanded forms of series financing and distribution and thus took into account how the practitioners' negotiations on the quality TV drama and its screenwriting repeatedly revolved around economic questions. This attention to finances is hardly surprising, because despite all the differences found among quality or high-end dramas, they all share at least one central tendency: higher budgets. In order to support these higher costs, new cooperative ventures in production and distribution are forming, further diversifying Germany's TV series landscape, including partnerships across channels or platforms and countries. Film and media funding bodies—which in Germany are highly federally structured—as well as larger production companies are also increasingly involved in financing the writing of series and their later production. In general, the relationship between production companies and the programme providers who commission them is changing. At the same time as there has been a shift away from one broadcaster supplying 100% of the financing (which was dominant for a long time) and the associated "total buyout" model (according to which all rights are transferred to this commissioner [Fröhlich 2010, 123]), a simultaneous development *towards* this arrangement, or even a kind of studio model, has occurred. Under this model, platforms such as Netflix take over considerable parts of the production alongside all distribution

chains and bind writers and other creatives exclusively to themselves. In any case, one thing is certain: in Germany's diversified television market, there is no *one* approach to realising quality TV drama from an economic point of view.

When it comes to series financing as well as certain other respects, fundamental changes in the heterogeneous "German television" are also evident in the fact that it increasingly bears transnational traits. Particularly in the quality or "high-end" drama segment, the transformation of television "from a national, largely broadcasting, market to a transnational multiplatform market" (Turner 2018, 137) is becoming apparent, as can likewise be observed in many other countries at present. However, the practitioners' discussions about German quality TV drama studied here, as well as the observed economic networks of individual series projects, simultaneously underline that the national and the local remain significant. National and local aspects interact with transnational or global ones, similar to what general theoretical debates on this topic have repeatedly established (e.g. Hansen 2020), which is why the German quality TV drama and the industry behind it can ultimately be classified as "glocal"—that is, as equally local and global (Robertson 2014). The parallel significance of locality and globality also characterises distribution, which was a central point of reference in the studied industry discourse and where the current phase of upheaval in television is particularly visible.

9.2   Transformation of Distribution

In the period under investigation—that is, since 2015—the area of "internet-distributed television", as Amanda D. Lotz (2017) calls it in her book *Portals*, has undeniably gained in importance in Germany. While in the earliest of my surveys producers still classified online distribution as a means of advertising the linear broadcast and therefore ultimately subordinate to it, numerous series productions from Germany are now mainly or even exclusively distributed via online streaming, without a fixed broadcast slot. In the context of Germany, too, internet distribution is not a uniform phenomenon but rather encompasses very different programmes, practices and institutions.

Netflix is by no means the only manifestation of online distribution, although it is a particularly influential and probably the best-known platform. This high-profile and aggressive SVoD provider, which has been available in Germany since September 2014, has intensified the local

industry's transnationalisation, as it usually releases its commissioned productions, including German original dramas such as *Dark* (2017–2020), *1899* (2022) and *Liebes Kind/Dear Child* (2023), ad hoc in numerous countries (see also Afilipoaie, Iordache and Raats 2021). For Germany's TV professionals, this presents a scenario that is both appealing and threatening. On the one hand, they can potentially considerably expand their work's exposure and reach previously untapped, and even very specific, audiences in a wide range of countries. Banded together, niche audiences may form a relevant aggregate, which means that even content that is rather specialised can prove economically viable (Hennings 2020a). On the other hand, additional income from foreign sales and licencing threatens to disappear, since Netflix, despite its transnational operations, likes to pay only "local prices", as some producers (e.g. in Fey et al. 2020) criticised. Against this backdrop, this streaming provider of US origin is increasingly coming up against criticism in the German television and film industry. Some writers and other TV creators may still consider their first Netflix drama as a "knighthood" (Zarges 2021c, my translation), but more and more, the realisation that this commissioner does not necessarily guarantee quality or global success is sinking in. In the large online programme range of streaming providers like Netflix, only a few international, non-English-language series, such as *Dark*, have managed to generate transnational attention. Many SVoD providers are therefore returning focus to national or at least German-speaking audiences—as Benjamin Harris (2022), from Netflix Germany, also admitted in our interview—and are thus beginning to apply much more conservative selection criteria, which is something that TV professionals at the 2023 *Berlinale Series Market* noted (Berry et al. 2023; see also Krauß 2023e).

Nevertheless, the degree and success of transnational distribution are increasingly becoming a decisive evaluation criterion in the German TV industry, upon which the level of economic commitment, initial greenlighting or series continuation may depend. For practitioners, the possible demand for "international appeal" (Eichner 2021, 191) is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it makes room for different content and narratives than in a market oriented solely towards German-speaking viewers, who are used to the historically evolved broadcast slots and formats; on the other hand, the demand potentially means additional pressure and stress or could lead to decision-making dilemmas if producers want the

local and linear broadcast to succeed at the same time. Editors in public-service broadcasting in particular addressed a gap between series that fit established German broadcast slots and those distributed transnationally and online. For all the tendency towards niche or quality production for online and transnational distribution, commissioners in Germany often still harbour a "desire for a campfire", as scriptwriter Bernd Lange (2018) put it—that is to say, the famous bonfire around which the national television audience gathers. The insistence to consider national broadcast slots and ratings that emerge here can be classified as conservatism, a quality often attributed to the local television industry (Eichner 2021, 191). However, this orientation is also based on market research that found viewers still watch a considerable amount of linear television (e.g. Hess and Müller 2022, 419). Another aspect that should not be neglected is certainly that linear distribution still represents a reasonably reliable, profitable and transparent framework for practitioners, according to which, for example, they are remunerated for repeat broadcasts and can more reliably track how many viewers their production reached than with transnational streaming providers.

In the practices and negotiations of television practitioners, both forms of distribution, linear and non-linear, are ultimately closely connected, such that maintaining the dichotomy between them that some researchers and producers have invoked appears questionable. Often (but not always) the series successful on linear television are also the ones popular on streaming services. However, some dramas—such as daily and weekly soap operas, which are very much integrated into daily broadcast slots and viewers' personal routines—might not work in non-linear digital contexts in the same way. Online distribution has also had an effect on linear broadcast slots, which are increasingly orienting towards serial content that also works online (as in the case of the Wednesday TV film schedule of ARD's national channel Das Erste (The First), which now often supports the linear programming of miniseries). The impact of digital distribution on linear television is especially visible in event programming, where episodes are broadcast within a few days or hours, enabling a kind of "binge watching" in the context of linear broadcasting. The industry discourse on quality series from Germany repeatedly revolved around such forms of linear distribution and also attributed the (supposed) failure of some quality TV projects to the programming conventions there.

A more far-reaching transformation of distribution—which is not only about moving away from fixed broadcast slots but also focused on

bringing together different media texts in the sense of "transmedia *world-building*" (Ryan 2015, 5, emphasis in original)—played only a marginal role in the analysed industry discourse on German quality TV drama. While practitioners dealt with feedback and marketing on social media, they rarely explored deeper cross-platform storytelling (motivated less by marketing than by narration), presumably because of the finding, mentioned in industry presentations, that transmedia projects require considerable additional human and financial resources and that only a few viewers ultimately actively participate (e.g. Wouda 2016). The industry's initial euphoria around transmedia narration gave way to a certain scepticism in the course of the 2010s.

Among the 13 case studies used to acquire interview partners for this production study, the German youth series *DRUCK/SKAM Germany* (Funk/ZDF, 2018–) and its Norwegian original, *SKAM* (NRK, 2015–2017), which has been adapted in various countries, show promising ways to distribute and narrate in a transmedial way.[1] For *DRUCK*, as for *SKAM*, scenes and sequences were shared online precisely when they took place in the fictional world of the plot and only later were they compressed into series episodes every Friday, all of which also remained accessible after the fact. Thus, a linear, or at least weekly, distribution and an asynchronous "binge watching" option were combined and extended by the "real-time" social media approach (Krauß and Stock 2021, 414). The fictional protagonists' activities on social media reinforce this real-time impression and further narrate storylines and characters.

It remains to be seen whether the German television industry will launch further such transmedia productions in its efforts to increase the quality of and rejuvenate TV drama. For commercial providers, it can be difficult to make content available for free on external channels, as was done for *DRUCK* by its central commissioner Funk (ARD and ZDF's shared online content network). Barriers arise from the providers' dependence on revenue from advertising, subscriptions or both as well as their vested interest in their own "exclusive" programmes, especially in the case of subscription services. Public television is more flexible in this regard, but it is in danger of losing its brand recognition if—as in the case of Funk—it takes place almost exclusively on external platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. The content is also necessarily submitted to the commercial logics found there. Sven Stollfuß consequently sees the concept of "public value"—that is, the society-oriented mission of public broadcasters—as being at risk:

Platforms that are run by corporations whose business model establishes and consolidates forms of communication and algorithmically prefigured information and data processing […] are changing the conditions of democratic societies in the digital age. (2021, 131)

Television's transformation at the level of distribution—which is particularly evident in the case of quality series that are strongly distributed online—is in no small part connected to more general social changes. The practitioners repeatedly dealt with sociopolitical relevance in a transforming society, especially in respect to content. The "relevant" stories highlighted by them as a criterion of quality should be further studied, particularly in terms of how this relevance is to be thought of in the digital distribution environment. How can television and its expansions, especially regarding the public-service providers, continue to be relevant or be relevant again and constructively contribute to democratic society in the digital age, as mentioned by Stollfuß? *The Public Service Media and Public Service Internet Manifesto*, published in 2021 (Fuchs and Unterberger 2021), called for the creation of a public-service internet and the reinvigoration of public-service broadcasting. Drama series that address viewers not as customers or as data mines but as citizens and that have the social relevance mentioned by the practitioners could be part of this vision.

The manifesto identifies data protection as a core area of the proposed public-service internet: "Public service internet platforms minimise and decentralise data storage and have no need to monetise and monitor internet use" (Fuchs and Unterberger 2021, 5). In the researched industry discourse on German quality TV drama, with its focus on textual characteristics and production and screenwriting cultures, such positions were hardly found, as the topic of datafication generally was not of great importance. However, it is certainly true that data generation, algorithms, automation and artificial intelligence are playing an increasingly important role in contemporary hybrid television, including series from Germany. Linked to distribution, reception—including the television industry's monitoring of this data—is undergoing a fundamental change.

9.3   Transformation of Reception and Its Capture

Although this study focuses on production, the researched industry discourse on the quality TV drama also repeatedly dealt with reception and its transformation. The "situational integration" of viewers in their "individual domestic environment" and "in a larger social framework" as well as their "apparative arrangement" vis-à-vis the television set—which the German media scholar Knut Hickethier (1995, 69, my translations) speaks of in his model *Dispositiv Fernsehen* (dispositif television), proposed more than 25 years ago—have taken on a more diverse, more flexible and more mobile character during the period under investigation. At the same time, the relationship between viewers and the television industry and its practitioners has also changed, especially because, in the digital media environment, comprehensive data on viewer behaviour is collected and content tends to become more target group specific.

Thanks to online distribution, audiences have access to a wide range of content at any time, freed from fixed broadcast slots. When it comes to this online content, especially series, episodes and seasons carry particular importance. In view of the flood of TV dramas, broadcasters and platforms as well as creators face a greater battle when it comes to reaching and retaining an audience. Following Andreas Reckwitz (2018, 238), this challenge can be seen as an expression of our "society of singularities", whose "cultural machine" (*Kulturmaschine*) generally produces a structural asymmetry between an extreme overproduction of cultural formats (and information) and a scarcity of users' attention. The desire found in the industry and among screenwriters to have their programmes stand out from the crowd through producing quality dramas, as well as to bind viewers over a longer period of time through serial storytelling, must be understood against this market-related and social background.

An increased commitment to series may also be motivated by the fact that this format allows creators to respond to audience behaviour data and feedback through adjusting aspects of the programme; a single, already completed film, by contrast, allows no such adjustment. This motivation is not new, nor is the more general aim of the television industry to track and control viewers and their behaviour. Already in the early 1990s, Ien Ang (1991) systematically identified how broadcasters sought to reinforce and renew people's desire to watch television. Today, data and algorithms offer unprecedented insights into viewers' activities. However, audiences are at risk of being under permanent observation and

becoming "transparent", which is a problematic scenario for democratic societies that rely on private spaces for opinion formation (see Zuboff 2019). On the other hand, when it comes to assessing programmes—around which the practitioners' negotiations on the German quality TV drama inevitably revolved—digital distribution and reception practices also create the potential for audiences to participate in an open critical discourse on quality as well as the society-oriented mission of public-service broadcasters, as Uwe Kammann, Katrin Jurkuhn and Fritz Wolf (2007, 14) hoped for several years ago. When it comes to viewers' involvement in fictional series, and more generally their participation in current digital television and the public-service media of the future, there certainly remains considerable need for both action and research.

So far, data on viewers seems to have had little bearing on the development and production processes of TV drama in Germany.[2] In the case of the high-end dramas considered in this study, it is certainly relevant that such series usually consist of relatively few episodes (often only six), which are developed, written and then produced in one unified process. Changes to the plot, casting or other aspects on the basis of viewer data obtained at the distribution phase are difficult to accommodate within this process and are also not planned for. A look at individual "project networks" (Sydow and Windeler 2001) and "screen idea work groups" (Macdonald 2010)—the collaborative models of series production central to this study—also reveals how knowledge about viewers can be distributed very unevenly between the individual actors of commissioning platform or broadcaster, production company and, lastly, freelance creatives such as screenwriters. The digital divide that Danah Boyd and Kate Crawford (2011) predicted in their *Six Provocations for Big Data*, born of varying access to digital devices and data, can therefore also be discussed in terms of series production in Germany. Especially the relatively young streaming providers, which like to be associated with quality content, often represent a "black box" even for central production participants: they grant access to their data only partially at best, and usually only to particularly important management personnel, as they tend to operate under "anti-transparency policies" (Wayne 2021, 17).

It should also be noted that these SVoD platforms tend to present themselves as particularly innovative by publicly claiming to have elaborate data at their disposal that they can use in a targeted manner. However, "Netflix tends to do more talking about data, rather than using them for real", the producer Georg Ramme (quoted in Abbatescianni 2021) stated

at the *Let's Talk Screenwriting!* online panel hosted by Utrecht University. Ramme also addressed the danger that very comprehensive data can lead to over-formalisation, ultimately resulting in boring programmes. Formatting and formulas were, as explained in Chapter 7, also central to the practitioners' discourse on quality drama and were particularly problematised in relation to current and past television fiction from Germany. So far, however, practitioners have associated formatting and formulaicness less with algorithms and SVoD providers than with linear television's modes of reception and distribution, especially the traditional broadcast slots and the quantitative audience ratings to be achieved there.

Ratings—a common subject of critical public debate (e.g. Seidl 2014)—pervade the industry's negotiations on quality series, although it has been acknowledged that the digital age requires different measures and evaluation criteria. Quantitative audience figures are by no means obsolete, including for online content, but the German TV industry is increasingly realising that it is not forward-looking to focus solely on the highest possible numbers or on the frequent and regular viewers of linear broadcasts. Although these "TV patrons" ensure high ratings, they may also form the "already dying clientele of the uninterested", as screenwriter Hanno Hackfort (in Hackfort, Konrad and Kropf 2018) exaggeratedly put it. TV ratings measurements have already been adjusted to fit the changing distribution modes; for example, the market research company GfK, which monitors these numbers in Germany, now also surveys streaming service use through its "SVOD Tracker" (Zarges 2019). The observed and interviewed practitioners emphasised the increasing relevance of non-linear reception especially for the series segment.

A more complex and diverse measurement and evaluation of audience response are linked not only to the different forms of distribution but also to the diversification of the television series landscape and its business models. In the pay TV sector, which has become more important and is particularly influential for the high-end segment, the TV professionals, according to their self-reflections at industry workshops (e.g. Root et al. 2020), also used evaluative criteria other than ratings—for example, awards and thus the critical reception of a series—because high viewer numbers do not necessarily result in more subscribers. In the case of streaming providers that, for example, use algorithms to compile their programmes, the former battle for high ratings has clearly turned into a competition to secure customer data (see Hennig-Thurau et al. 2019, 18). However, doubts around algorithms and data generation have

also been raised in the industry, for example, when Soumya Sriraman (in Tereszkiewicz et al. 2020), then CEO of the British streaming provider BritBox, questioned at the 2020 *Berlinale Series Market* whether reception could be controlled via personalised content and called for a return to the "basics". Such basics could include quantitative ratings. Does this mean we will see an accompanying stronger focus on quantitative viewing figures? In the case of the major transnational streaming providers Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, we can at least more recently observe, including with their original German-language productions, an orientation more towards the mainstream than the artistic niche that quality TV was once associated with. Quantitative audience numbers therefore will still play—or will *again* play—an important role in future, hybrid and online-based television in the digital age.

In the researched industry discourse, the significance of audience ratings is also tied to negotiations about past viewer response and conceptions of the audience. On the one hand, practitioners discussed whether and why attempts at quality TV dramas from Germany, such as *Deutschland 83*, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens / In the Face of Crime* (ARD et al., 2010) and *Die Stadt und die Macht / The City and the Power* (ARD/NDR/Degeto, 2016), had failed in respect to quantitative ratings, and thus conducted a kind of "failure studies" (Redvall 2023). On the other hand, television professionals primarily attributed deficiencies in the dramaturgical quality of German series, including abbreviated and formulaic narratives, to a ratings orientation. They especially criticised the public broadcasters, which they suggested could afford to use different evaluation parameters than the advertising-financed private broadcasters because of their fee income. In connection with the supposed fixation on quantitative viewing figures, the practitioners also addressed the lopsided socialisation of the industry and the audience, which ultimately prevented or made quality series more difficult to develop. Linked to the assumption that audience tastes have been shaped by existing programmes is the discussion around the extent to which audiences can be "educated". In the documentary film *Es werde Stadt! / It Will Be a City!* (WDR et al., 2013–2014), a critical review of the state of German television fiction in 2013 and 2014, Barbara Buhl, the former fiction head of the TV film and cinema programme group at WDR (ARD's biggest local broadcaster), speaks of a reciprocal relationship: "The audience is the way we made it ourselves, but we are also the way the audience wants us to be. Of course we want to be liked".

However, it appears many viewers no longer like the majority of German series. Or at least several of the practitioners assumed as much, based on television criticism and concrete feedback from audiences. In fact, the interviewed and observed television professionals repeatedly dealt with the "bad image" of German television productions. They also frequently discussed how to reach or win back lost and especially younger viewers. Questions of rejuvenation and "youthification" (Sundet 2021, 146)—not only in terms of reception but also at the levels of representation, distribution, screenwriting and production—generally played an important role in the practitioners' debates. In recent years, various youth series from Germany have appeared alongside (and not necessarily in line with) dedicated quality projects, such as the exemplary *DRUCK*, the German *SKAM* adaptation; *How to Sell Drugs Online (Fast)* (2019–), a Netflix comedy about a high school student starting an online drug business; and *Wir sind jetzt / We Are Now* (RTL+, 2019–), a youth drama about a teenage love triangle. Such programmes, which respond to the renaissance of serial teen TV dramas in the US as well as in other markets, especially through the streaming service Netflix (see Krauß and Stock 2020, 17–20), are largely the responsibility of young producers and also integrate social media to varying degrees in both their distribution and at the level of plot and visual aesthetic. How successful and formative such rejuvenation attempts are for the local industry will require more detailed analysis in the future. Presumably, in the course of the shift towards teen TV and younger audiences, the role of viewers will also continue to change, due to factors such as transmedia options primarily aimed at mobile use, circulation on various platforms and the integration of social media. Is the audience—or at least a small, particularly dedicated minority of fans—now becoming more interactive? Such a transformation has been repeatedly noted and hoped for in treatments of transmedia storytelling (see e.g. Jenkins 2006, 246) and also predicted by Jörg Sydow and Arnold Windeler (2004b, 4) in their early study of series production using the organisational form of the project network. In any case, in the digital media environment, the degree and characteristics of audience activity can become further criteria for judging series' success. Linked to the viewers' position and its analysis, production practices are likewise being transformed, which the present study has examined primarily in relation to screenwriting.

9.4   Transformation of Production Cultures and Practices

Changes in TV drama production in Germany are particularly noticeable in the work of screenwriters and their involvement in project networks and screen idea work groups. Writers increasingly develop plots and scripts collectively in the so-called writers' room, albeit often only in a rudimentary form and adapted to the different production cultures and limited economic resources of Germany's industry. At the same time, and as in other European markets (see Barra and Scaglioni 2021b, 17–21), many projects have turned to working with a showrunner—the hybrid writer-producer figure—as the central executive in TV series production. In a similar vein, at least a few prominent writers in Germany have taken on some production tasks, for example by acting as creative producers and being involved in decision-making processes such as casting and rough cut approval. Still, their agency continues to be discussed and negotiated in individual projects. Directors often maintain a central position that may be superior to that of the writers.

In addition to the complicated relationship between writers and directors, the influence of commissioning editors was a central issue for the practitioners when exploring the production modes of quality TV drama. The interviewed and observed television professionals often pleaded for greater autonomy for the writer in relation to the staff of broadcasters and platforms, and they problematised the large number of editors operating in the complex, bureaucratic public-service institutions. The role of these editors—as the practitioners' discussions revealed—is likewise transforming in the changed media environment. For example, editors no longer necessarily or solely manage the linear broadcast slots and their programme contents and tonalities. As selectors of scripts and pitch papers and as translators between the various economic and artistic parties (Conor 2014, 74), editors also will have a part to play in the future television practices that may develop, such as integrating the data obtained via online distribution or artificial intelligence tools into the screenwriting process (see Keilbach and Surma 2022). These transformations of screenwriting and the involvement of commissioning editors and producers will require more detailed research in the future. If writers continue to increasingly insist on artistic autonomy and agency, it can be assumed that immense tensions would arise if editors were to demand changes to

the dramaturgy or content of a series based on, for example, data analyses of audiences.

In addition to screenwriting and its possible datafication, future studies on the hybrid television industry in Germany (and in transnational contexts) should take even greater stock of other production phases and their actors. Fundamental works and concepts of media industry studies and production studies (e.g. Caldwell 2008; Banks et al. 2016b) have made clear that it is precisely *below-the-line* practitioners who need to be considered—that is, those practitioners beyond the better-known trades associated with creativity. In addition to the invisible work (e.g. Banks 2009, 91) carried out by such below-the-line actors, unpaid work (e.g. Siebert and Wilson 2013) also needs to be looked at more closely in Germany's drama production industry. Especially in the quality series segment, it is obvious that practitioners put their whole heart and soul into a project and thus possibly exploit themselves. Quality status can function as symbolic capital in Pierre Bourdieu's sense (e.g. 2010, first 1979), a fact that has repeatedly enabled media industries to demand and gloss over a harmfully high level of commitment and problematic working conditions.

Beyond the quality TV drama discussed in this study, the comprehensive transformation of television production in Germany can mean uncertainty and precarity for practitioners at large. As Mark Deuze and Mirjam Prenger (2019, 16) have noted for media production in general, "a wide array of new roles, skills, and competences" contributes to an ongoing "destabilization process" that practitioners experience and feel. The judgement of quality in and beyond the industry—inherent to discussion of quality series—can also lead to significant stress for practitioners, and the attempt to achieve quality interacts with the requirement under the "creativity dispositif" (Reckwitz 2017, 9) "to constantly perform and present yourself in the best possible light in order to succeed" (Deuze and Prenger 2019, 17). This pressure and precariousness are also rooted in the temporary organisational form of the project network, which continues to characterise series production in Germany, especially in the case of prestigious quality dramas, which usually consist of only a few episodes and, unlike weekly and daily soaps and traditional procedural shows, are not produced over long periods of time. Consequently, the majority of television producers bounce from project to project.

In public and semi-public announcements—for example, in industry publications or at festivals and panels—industry players often downplay

precariousness and insecurity. The situation is somewhat different when it comes to the issue of diversity, which producers and industry publications from Germany have more recently taken up, regarding both content and production teams (Niemeier 2021b, c). However, studies by the MaLisa Foundation, an organisation initiated by the German actor Maria Furtwängler and her daughter Elisabeth Furtwängler (e.g. Prommer and Linke 2019), have shown that women remain underrepresented in German television and film fiction, especially from the age of 30 onwards. On the production side, empirical studies have also identified a lack of diversity. This deficit likely characterises prestigious quality series in particular, considering Skadi Loist and Elizabeth Prommer's (2019, 99) finding that especially male directors dominate when it comes to such high-budget productions. For the leading personnel of German quality TV drama, therefore, a tendency towards an overrepresentation of men also ultimately seems to be formative. Alisa Perren and Thomas Schatz (2015, 91) note a similar finding in their examination of past and current showrunners of US productions: "[W]hite males continue to disproportionately dominate fictional prime-time producing positions; women and people of colour still struggle to find spots on writing staffs, let alone become showrunners".

Discrimination and hierarchies along the lines of gender, race, class, age and other aspects of identity should be addressed more closely in future studies on television production in Germany and examined in relation especially to questions of value inherent to the industry. This is not just about a general "principle of justice". Rather, Charlotte Brunsdon's point (taken up in Chapter 2) that judgements of taste depend on context is fundamentally valid here: "Quality for whom?, Judgement by whom?, On whose behalf?" (1990, 73). In view of the many contemporary quality dramas from Germany with primarily male characters and central production participants (as in the case of *Babylon Berlin*, ARD/Degeto/Sky Deutschland, 2017), it is doubtful that the television and film industry in Germany is becoming more diverse, and thus that its tastes and other selection criteria are likewise expanding. But it is perhaps the case that diversity—at least in terms of gender and race (less so in terms of class and age, which are often "blind spots" in current diversity discourses)—is increasingly coming to be regarded as an evaluation criterion by the industry. If so, then it is possible that this concern is influencing the

industry's negotiations on television quality and the production conditions required for it. Might we indeed expect more innovative and diverse German drama content in the future?

9.5   Transformation of Contents, Forms and Storytelling

The contents, forms and storytelling of television are changing, especially in the case of the quality TV drama, since it makes space for the testing and negotiation of unusual narrative forms (at least for German television fiction), especially in connection with new forms of distribution. Chapter 7 presented the practitioners' discussions on contents and forms in more detail. In particular, it worked out how the professionals critically engaged with current television fiction from Germany on the basis of their attributions regarding serial quality TV. For example, they repeatedly mentioned and complained about the German tendency towards single films, especially at the public broadcasters; these films in particular distinguish local TV fiction from that of other countries. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the practitioners' confrontations with current quality TV projects from Germany. Alongside euphoric diagnoses of a current German "wave" in TV drama, other, more critical voices identified ongoing story deficits and unfulfilled expectations. Failures and deficiencies were also partly attributed to television history, although some practitioners identified German quality television precisely as part of this retrospective, citing the satire *Kir Royal − Aus dem Leben eines Klatschreporters / Kir Royal − From the Life of a Gossip Reporter* (ARD/WDR, 1986) and the epos *Heimat − Eine deutsche Chronik / Heimat: A German Chronicle* (ARD/WDR/SFB, 1984) as examples worthy of imitation.

Such referencing of other series was a notable facet of the examined industry discourse. This practice aligns with studies that emphasise the influence that previous film and television works have on current production and development modes. According to Eva Novrup Redvall's model of the "screen idea system", which builds on the "screen idea work group" (Macdonald 2010) concept, the "trends, tastes and traditions" (2013, 31) stemming from existing television and film productions influence the screenwriting process, and they likewise affect creative individuals and institutional gatekeepers, who develop certain mandates and

management approaches (Waade et al. 2020, 7–8). Against this background, the practitioners' focus on contents and forms when discussing German quality TV drama—which overlaps with similar public debates in newspaper feature pages and television criticism in general—has a "realpolitik" or practical significance for the German TV industry and its screenwriting practices. Gatekeepers such as commissioning editors decide, on the basis of narrative and aesthetic concepts and judgements, whether certain scripts are developed and realised and to what extent. These decision-makers are influenced by debates of both the industry and the public. Creatives in individual screen idea work groups also repeatedly negotiate which existing works they are significantly (not) oriented towards (Macdonald 2010, 54).

Individual programmes and their evaluation play a decisive role especially today, in the changed media environment. In linear television, the focus was and is primarily on formatting according to broadcasting schedules and on the programme's flow—that is, the merging of programmes and their reception (Williams 1984, first 1975); however, in the quality or high-end segment, it is much more a matter of standing out from the mass of programmes and leaving formulas behind. In several current TV dramas from Germany, we can observe greater flexibility in the length of individual episodes, a decoupling from specific broadcast slots and their tonalities, and a greater variety of themes and aesthetics. However, the diagnosis that there has been a "complete breakout" from the formatting often lamented by practitioners is contradicted by the fact that linear broadcast slots still (co-)determine visibility, budget, contents and tonalities of series. Furthermore, new formulas are also emerging in the segment of quality TV drama that is strongly distributed online. Thus, ingredients that German practitioners have attributed to US quality TV have also found their way into German TV series, such as quite explicit scenes of sex and violence (e.g. *Parfum/Perfume*, ZDFneo/ Netflix, 2018–); a high density of plots and turning points (e.g. *Dark*; *Legal Affairs*, ARD/Degeto/RBB, 2021); and (male) anti-heroes of an ambivalent nature (e.g. *Euer Ehren/Your Honour*, ARD/Degeto/ORF, 2022).[3] As Hélène Monnet-Cantagrel (2021, 127) notes in relation to the high-budget period drama *Versailles* (Canal+, 2015–2018), there is "a sort of international standard, where only the scenery changes but whose style and audacity boils down to 'sex or violence every 15 minutes'". In a similar vein, the screenwriter Annette Hess (2019) opined in our

interview that streaming services in particular demand exciting, attention-grabbing content, which in her view often leads to sensationalised storytelling. Future evaluation discourses on contents and forms seem inevitable in view of such assessments and programme developments.

9.6   OUTLOOK

The last systematic study of television in Germany is now more than 20 years old (Hickethier 1998) and refers to a time when streaming providers, their drama programmes and the modes of reception associated with them did not yet exist. Since then, television has undergone considerable transformation and expansion. By focusing on writers and other TV professionals involved in screenwriting, their modes of production and their discourses on programmes, with particular attention paid to the so-called quality TV drama, this book has drawn a comprehensive, though by no means conclusive, picture of current television in Germany and its changes. To evaluate the observed transformations of television and screenwriting, it makes sense to consider them in the context of broader processes of social upheaval. In view of the digital transformations in television as well as other areas, particularly instructive is, as has been shown throughout this book, Andreas Reckwitz's concept of the "society of singularities":

> [T]he media technological revolution of computing, algorithms, and the World Wide Web, […] since the 1990s, has enabled not only the introduction of new cultural elements to the world (photos and stories, works of graphic art, films, games) in a historically unprecedented manner, but also the creation of a mobile realm of permanent competition for attention, in which singularities are to be made visible for potentially everyone and everything. (2020, 148)

Within the complex observed by Reckwitz, the industry's negotiations on and turn towards the quality TV drama can be understood as practices of "valorization" and "singularization" (146). Following his diagnosis, I propose to interpret quality series as "singular goods […] that contain the promise of something authentic and non-interchangeable" (148) and that fight for visibility and esteem among the different online services. Reckwitz further assesses that the late-modern culture of digitality gives rise to a "cultural space of images, narrations, game situations—a cultural

hypertext, which constantly accompanies every subject and wherein an overproduction of cultural singularities is taking place" (151). If we are to follow this argument, then we must also take into account forms of hybrid, digital television other than the fictional quality drama under consideration here. Scripted reality TV, for instance, is a very obvious example, as it emphasises the imperative of singularity in its content. Alongside Germany's commercial broadcasters, which sit under the opposing media conglomerates ProSiebenSat.1 Media and the RTL Group, streaming services also offer such "factual entertainment", which is usually less expensive to produce than fiction. And yet it is, more than any other programme type, the quality TV drama that desires to stand out from the mass of programming and therefore greatly strives for singularity—just as its practitioners, in their network-like cooperations, strive to produce a "singular good", with a special narrative, aesthetic, creative, ludic and moral-ethical quality, as Reckwitz (2020, 146) attests is common among today's cultural objects.

In view of particularly public broadcasters' ongoing tendency to commission and (co-)finance quality series, it is possible to say that sociopolitical relevance (a kind of moral-ethical quality) plays a particularly important role in the German context. In the diversified, digital media environment, public broadcasters face challenges in keeping up with the quality programmes of their commercial competitors, especially SVoD platforms, while simultaneously producing and distributing fiction productions for different segments of the population as part of their sociocultural mandate. Can they contribute to social cohesion through TV dramas—a function that is needed more than ever in the society of singularities, in which many members use different, individual media instead of sharing the same content and engaging in mutual discussion through it? Or do public broadcasters precisely support social separation through producing ambitious quality dramas as "singular goods" (Reckwitz 2020, 148) that attract only very particular groups? Such questions are also ripe for exploring in future discussions on television quality—although, as Reckwitz (2018, 435) generally notes, retrospection on the lost "generality" of industrial and bourgeois modernity (such as television's loss of power as a mass medium) tends to have a nostalgic character.

We cannot be certain how the future of quality series from Germany and their screenwriting cultures will unfold in public-service broadcasting and beyond, particularly in relation to other types of programmes and other countries' productions in the expanded and increasingly digital

transnational television landscape. More and more, doubts are being raised about the economics of many SVoD providers, especially Netflix, as their mountains of debt continue to pile up and individual prestige productions, such as *The Crown* (Netflix, 2016–2023), become extremely expensive, while their share values and numbers of subscribers remain static or even decrease (see e.g. Zarges 2022a). Will the relatively young, US-dominated streaming providers therefore continue to produce German TV dramas in the longer term? In Netflix's transnationally available portfolio—a prime example of the overcrowded cultural space of the digital, in Reckwitz's (2020, 151) terms—German-language series, just like other non-English programmes distributed mainly with subtitles, are in danger of being quickly lost in the fray, in any case. When it comes to platforms like Netflix, Lothar Mikos (in Christiani 2021) generally points to viewers' limited interest in non-English-language, "local" series beyond the respective markets of origin. According to industry representatives, the openness to such series has increased in Anglo-Saxon markets (e.g. Harris 2018, 327), but in Germany and elsewhere around the globe this interest is ultimately very limited, usually restricted to Spanish and South Korean productions. High-end series from Germany have not been as transnationally popular as the South Korean survival drama *Squid Game* (Netflix, 2021–) or the Spanish crime show *Money Heist / La casa de papel* (Netflix/Antena 3, 2017–2021), both of which are admittedly isolated phenomena and, in their publicly proclaimed success, products of skilful Netflix marketing. Nevertheless, they offer clear evidence that transnational "blockbuster series" (Eichner 2013, 46, my translation) are no longer limited to English-language productions. Despite the comparatively lower transnational clout of German TV drama, the high turnover and large core audience of the German-language television market (Eichner and Esser 2020, 190), as well as the legal instrument of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), speak to the continuing importance of series from Germany at, but also beyond, the SVoD providers. The European Commission's AVMSD obliges transnational platforms to have a 30% minimum share of "European works" (European Commission 2020) in their video-on-demand portfolio. Streaming companies such as Amazon Prime Video must therefore focus on German-language content for reasons other than self-interest.

It remains to be seen what developments the AVMSD will lead to in individual EU countries and what successes German producers will

see from their demands for a local investment obligation from transnational SVoD operators (see Zarges 2021a). As of the publication of this book in 2024, it is also uncertain what sort of influence the inflation, economic turmoil and energy crises in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the aftermaths of the Covid-19 pandemic will have on quality drama efforts from Germany. "[I]t is not yet clear whether this watershed moment will mark the end of the European renaissance or the beginning of a further phase of rethinking and reshaping", stated Luca Barra and Massimo Scaglioni (2021a, 1) in the midst of the pandemic in 2021. A similarly vague assessment can be made for the more specific context of Germany. During the pandemic, it looked as if the importance of streaming providers and non-linear online distribution, as well as the importance of the series distributed in this context, was continuing to rise (see e.g. Mantel 2021). It was cinema, rather than series, production that was losing ground. However, at least since 2022, a sort of decline can be observed among transnational SVoD services, including those involved in German serial fiction, whereby projects have not been continued or not even realised in the first place. Martin Moszkowicz, then CEO of Constantin Film, commented in an article published on *DWDL.de*:

> The gold rush era in streaming is over, but I see that more as a positive development. Because what matters now is what we are strong at anyway – commercial quality with special programmes that resonate with viewers, and not just volume at any price. (Zarges 2022b, my translation)

Moszkowicz's statement proves that practitioners once again brought issues of quality into play.

Quality serials, which practitioners and critics have long pined for in German television fiction, continue to be developed and produced on a large scale. In view of the high output of TV dramas in Germany and beyond, as well as the clear indication we have already reached "peak television" (John Landgraf in Rose and Guthrie 2015)—passing its zenith through an oversupply of series—questions of quality once again arise. It is possible that quality will now become an even more decisive criterion for gaining attention among the mass of cultural objects in today's society of singularities (Reckwitz 2020) and under more difficult market conditions. Quality—this much seems clear—will continue to be a central theme of Germany's hybrid, digitalised television industry in the future, and one whose transformations will emerge in screenwriting and beyond.

Notes

1. The full list of German series case studies to acquire the interviewees is: *Babylon Berlin* (ARD/Sky Deutschland, 2017–), *Club der roten Bänder/Red Band Society* (Vox, 2015–17), *Dark* (Netflix, 2017–20), *Deutschland 83/86/89* (RTL/Amazon Prime Video, 2015–20), *Drinnen – Im Internet sind alle gleich / Inside – On the Internet All Are Equal* (ZDF, 2020), *DRUCK/SKAM Germany* (Funk/ZDF, 2018–), *ECHT/Real* (ZDF, 2021–), *Eichwald, MdB* (ZDF, 2014–19), *Mitten in Deutschland: NSU / NSU German History X* (ARD et al., 2016), *Die Stadt und die Macht/The City and the Power* (ARD/NDR/Degeto, 2016), *Das Verschwinden/The Disappearance* (ARD et al., 2017), *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo/ We Children from Zoo Station* (Amazon Prime Video et al., 2021) and *4 Blocks* (TNT Serie, 2017–19). See also Krauß 2023c, 23–30.
2. For such approaches in the Netherlands, see Keilbach and Surma 2022.
3. *Euer Ehren* is the German counterpart to *Your Honor* (Showtime, 2020–22), both of which are adaptations of the Israeli drama *Kvodo* (yes studios, 2017).

References

Abbatescianni, Davide. 2021. "Country Focus: The Netherlands: The First 'Let's Talk Screenwriting!' Round-Table Explores How Algorithms and Data Analytics Are Making Inroads into European Screen Production." *Cineuropa.org*, March 23, 2021. https://cineuropa.org/en/cfocusnewsdetail/1963/399217/.

Adelmann, Ralf, Jan O. Hesse, Judith Keilbach, Markus Stauff, and Matthias Thiele. 2001. "Geschichten des Fernsehens." In *Grundlagentexte zur Fernsehwissenschaft: Theorie, Geschichte, Analyse*, edited by Ralf Adelmann, Jan O. Hesse, Judith Keilbach, Markus Stauff, and Matthias Thiele, 203–13. Konstanz: UVK.

Adorno, Theodor W. 2009, first 1953. "Fernsehen als Ideologie." In *Texte zur Theorie und Geschichte des Fernsehens*, edited by Michael Grisko, 66–73. Stuttgart: Reclam.

Afilipoaie, Adelaida, Catalina Iordache, and Tim Raats. 2021. The 'Netflix Original' and What It Means for the Production of European Television Content. *Critical Studies in Television* 16 (3): 304–325. https://doi.org/10.1177/17496020211023318.

AGF Videoforschung. 2020. "AGF TV-Plattform 2020-I: Rund 36 Prozent nutzen kostenpflichtige Streaming-Dienste/Neueinsteiger Disney+ auf Platz 5/Pay-TV stabil." 2020. News release. June 22, 2020. Accessed July 31, 2020. https://www.agf.de/agf/presse/pressemitteilungen/?name=pm_20200622.

AGF Videoforschung. 2021. "TV-Daten: Monatsmarktanteile Top 30 Sender: Oktober 2021; Jahresmarktanteile Top 30 Sender: 2020." Accessed November 30, 2021. https://www.agf.de/daten/tv-daten.

Agger, Gunhild. 2020. "The Golden Age of Danish Public Service Drama Series." In *Danish Television Drama: Global Lessons from a Small Nation*, edited by Anne Marit Waade, Eva Novrup Redvall, and Pia Majbritt Jensen, 25–42. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ang, Ien. 1991. *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. London et al.: Routledge.

Appelgren, Charlotte. 2018. "The Impact of Regional Film Funds on the European Co-Production Model." In *European Film and Television Co-Production: Policy and Practice*, edited by Julia Hammett-Jamart, Petar Mitric, and Eva Novrup Redvall, 265–79. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

ARD. 2019. "Eckpunkte für Ausgewogene Vertragsbedingungen und eine faire Aufteilung der Verwertungsrechte bei Produktionen für die Genres Fiktion, Unterhaltung und Dokumentation." Accessed November 27, 2019. http://www.ard.de/download/4966170/ARD_Eckpunkte_fuer_ausgewogene_Vertragsbedingungen_und_eine_faire_Aufteilung_der_Verwertungsrechte_Eckpunkte_2_0.pdf.

Atmani, Mehdi. 2019. "Netflix stellt die fragile Ökonomie der Autoren in Frage." *Cinebulletin*, June 21, 2019. https://cinebulletin.ch/de_CH/artikel/netflix-stellt-die-fragile-okonomie-der-autoren-in-frage.

Banks, Miranda J. 2009. Gender Below-the-Line: Defining Feminist Production. *In Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell* 2009: 87–98.

Banks, Miranda J., Bridget Conor, and Vicki Mayer. 2016a. Preface. *In Banks, Conor, and Mayer* 2016: ix–xv.

Banks, Miranda J., Bridget Conor, and Vicki Mayer, eds. 2016b. *Production Studies, the Sequel! Cultural Studies of Global Media Industries*. New York, NY, London: Routledge.

Barra, Luca, and Massimo Scaglioni. 2021a. Introduction: The Many Steps and Factors of a European Renaissance. In *A European Television Fiction Renaissance: Premium Production Models and Transnational Circulation*, ed. Luca Barra and Massimo Scaglioni, 1–10. London, New York: Routledge.

Barra, Luca, and Massimo Scaglioni. 2021b. "The Grounds for a Renaissance in European Fiction: Transnational Writing, Production and Distribution Approaches, and Strategies." In Barra and Scaglioni 2021, 13–32. London, New York: Routledge.

Barraclough, Leo. 2017. "Lionsgate Drives into TV Drama Production in Britain." *Variety*, April 1, 2017. https://variety.com/2017/tv/global/lionsgate-uk-tv-drama-production-1202020672/

Bartl, Marc. 2020. "Der Abo-Streamingmarkt in Deutschland: Netflix liegt bei der täglichen Nutzung klar vorne." July 10, 2020. *Kress*, October 30, 2020. https://kress.de/news/detail/beitrag/143852-der-abo-streamingmarkt-in-deutschland-netflix-liegt-bei-der-taeglichen-nutzung-klar-vorne.html.

Batty, Craig, ed. 2014. *Screenwriters and Screenwriting: Putting Practice into Context*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Batty, Craig, and Dallas J. Baker. 2018. Screenwriting as a Mode of Research, and the Screenplay as a Research Artefact. In *Screen Production Research: Creative Practice as a Mode of Enquiry*, ed. Craig Batty and Susan Kerrigan, 67–84. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Batty, Craig, and Stacy Taylor, eds. 2021. *The Palgrave Handbook of Script Development*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Beil, Benjamin, Lorenz EngelI, Jens Schröder, and Herbert Schwaab. 2012. Die Fernsehserie als Reflexion und Projektion des medialen Wandels. In *Mediatisierte Welten: Forschungsfelder und Beschreibungsansätze*, ed. Friedrich Krotz and Andreas Hepp, 197–223. Wiesbaden: VS Springer.

Bendix, Regine F., and Christine Hämmerling. 2014. "Autoren und Rezipienten: Zu einem distanzierten Verhältnis." In *Zwischen Serie und Werk: Fernseh- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte im "Tatort"*, edited by Christian Hißnauer, Stefan Scherer, and Claudia Stockinger, 243–57. Bielefeld: transcript.

Bennett, James. 2016. Public Service as Production Cultures: A Contingent, Conjunctural Compact. *In Banks, Conor, and Mayer* 2016: 123–137.

Bergmann, Jens. 2012. "Degeto Film: 'Alles wird Gut'." *brandeins* 14 (6). https://www.brandeins.de/magazine/brand-eins-wirtschaftsmagazin/2012/risiko/alles-wird-gut. Accessed November 29, 2018.

Bílek, Petr A. 2013. "TV Serials and Series as Specific Representations of Mimetic and Performative Impact." In *National Myhologies in Central European TV Series: How J. R. Won the Cold War*, edited by Jan Čulik, 1–9. Brighton, Chicago, Toronto: Sussex Academic Press.

Blanchet, Robert. 2011. Quality TV: Eine kurze Einführung in die Geschichte und Ästhetik neuer amerikanischer TV-Serien. In *Serielle Formen: Von den frühen Film-Serials zu aktuellen Quality-TV- und Onlineserien*, ed. Robert Blanchet, 37–70. Marburg: Schüren.

Bodmer, Michel. 2019. Es muss nicht immer Kaviar sein: Qualität im Filmprogramm. In *Qualität*, ed. Philipp Auchter, Josephine Diecke, Johanna Diener, Simon Meier, Benjamin Eugster, and Corinna Haag, 130–143. Marburg: Schüren.

Boellstorff, Tom, Bonnie A. Nardi, Celia Pearce, and T. L. Taylor. 2012. *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Ethnography and virtual worlds. Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Bolik, Sibylle. 1997. Qualitätsfernsehen—Fernsehqualitäten. In *Qualitätsfernsehen—Fernsehqualitäten*, ed. Sibylle Bolik and Helmut Schanze, 9–31. Siegen: Universität Siegen.

Born, Georgina. 2003. "Strategy, Positioning and Projection in Digital Television: Channel Four and the Commercialization of Public Service Broadcasting

in the UK." *Media, Culture & Society* 25 (6): 774–99. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443703256004

Born, Georgina. 2005. *Uncertain Vision: Birt, Dyke and the Reinvention of the BBC*. London: Vintage.

Borsos, Stefan. 2017. "Nach dem 'Quality TV': Anatomie und Kritik eines Diskurses." *MEDIENwissenschaft* 34 (1): 8–25. https://doi.org/10.17192/ep2017.1.6546.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 2010, first 1979. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.

Boyd, Danah, and Kate Crawford. 2011. "Six Provocations for Big Data." *A Decade in Internet Time: Symposium on the Dynamics of the Internet and Society*, September 21, 2011. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1926431.

Brunsdon, Charlotte. 1990. Problems with Quality. *Screen* 31 (1): 67–90. https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/31.1.67.

Bruun, Hanne. 2016. "The Qualitative Interview in Media Production Studies." In Paterson et al. 2016, 131–46.

Bührmann, Andrea D., Thomas Dierschke, Marko Heyse, and Nina Wild. 2013. "Die Soziale Lage von Film- und Fernsehschauspieler/innen in Deutschland." Münster: IfS Working Papers. Münster. https://www.uni-muenster.de/imperia/md/content/soziologie/bema/berichte/working_paper_bema_2016_2.pdf.

Buß, Christian. 2018. "Deutsch-französisches Serienfiasko: Zwei Weltkriege, 200 Schlechte Witze." *Spiegel Online*, October 30, 2018. https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/deutsch-les-landes-deutsch-franzoesisches-serienfiasko-von-der-telekom-a-1234998.html.

Caldwell, John Thornton. 1995. *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press.

Caldwell, John Thornton. 2004. Industrial Geography Lessons. In *MediaSpace: Place, Scale, and Culture in a Media Age*, ed. Nick Couldry and Anna McCarthy, 163–189. London, New York: Routledge.

Caldwell, John Thornton. 2008. *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press.

Caldwell, John Thornton. 2009. 'Both Sides of the Fence': Blurred Distinctions in Scholarship and Production (A Portfolio of Interviews). *In Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell* 2009: 214–230.

Caldwell, John Thornton. 2013. "Zehn Thesen zur Produktionsforschung." *montage AV* 22 (1): 33–48. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/422.

Cardwell, Sarah E. 2007. "Is Quality Television Any Good? Generic Distinctions, Evaluations and the Troubling Matter of Critical Judgement." In *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, edited by Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, 19–34. London, New York: I.B. Tauris.

Castendyk, Oliver, and Klaus Goldhammer. 2018. *Produzentenstudie 2018: Daten zur Film- und Fernsehwirtschaft in Deutschland 2017/2018*. Leipzig: Vistas. Accessed August 11, 2023. https://www.hamburgmediaschool.com/assets/documents/Forschung/Produzentenstudie-2018_Web.pdf.

Chalaby, Jean K. 2012. At the Origin of a Global Industry: The TV Format Trade as an Anglo-American Invention. *Media, Culture & Society* 34 (1): 36–52. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443711427198.

Christiani, Eckard. 2021. "Das Goldene Zeitalter der Massenmedien ist vorbei!". [Interview with Lothar Mikos]. *Krass & Konkret*, August 11, 2021. https://krass-und-konkret.de/medien-kultur/das-goldene-zeitalter-der-massenmedien-ist-vorbei/.

Conor, Bridget. 2014. *Screenwriting: Creative Labor and Professional Practice*. London, New York: Routledge.

Conor, Bridget, Rosalind Gill, and Stephanie Taylor, eds. 2015. *Gender and Creative Labour*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.

Cooke, Paul. 2016. "Heritage, *Heimat*, and the German Historical "Event Television": Nico Hoffmann's TeamWorx." In *German Television: Historical and Theoretical Approaches*, edited by Larson Powell and Robert R. Shandley: 175–92. New York: Berghahn.

Creeber, Glen. 2004. *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen*. London: BFI.

Cucco, Marco. 2018. The Many Enemies of Co-Productions in Italy: Moviegoers, Broadcasters, Policy-Makers and Half-Hearted Producers. *In Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, and Redvall* 2018: 191–206.

Dasgupta, Sudeep. 2012. "Policing the People: Television Studies and the Problem of 'Quality'." *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies*, 1 (1): 35–53. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/15039.

Davies, Máire Messenger. 2007. Quality and Creativity in TV: The Work of Television Storytellers. *In McCabe and Akass* 2007: 171–184.

Valle, Del, and Robert. 2008. *The One-Hour Drama: Producing Episodic Television*. Los Angeles: Silmon-James Press.

Deutscher Fernsehpreis. 2023. "Der Deutsche Fernsehpreis 2023: Statut." Accessed August 11, 2023. https://www.deutscher-fernsehpreis.de/preis/statut/statut/.

Deuze, Mark, and Mirjam Prenger. 2019. "Making Media: Production, Practices, and Professions." In *Making Media: Production, Practices, and Professions*, edited by Mark Deuze and Mirjam Prenger, 13–28: Amsterdam University Press.

Diez, Georg, and Thomas Hüetlin. 2013. "Im Zauderland." *Der Spiegel*, March 28, 2013: 130–133.

DJ Frederiksson [Anonymous]. 2014. "Die Ausbleibende Revolution." Accessed August 11, 2023. http://d-trick.de/wp-content/uploads/die_ausbleibende_revolution.pdf.

Drake, Philip. 2018. From Co-Productions to 'Co-Distributions'? Re-Evaluating Distribution Policies for European Film. *In Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, and Redvall* 2018: 83–104.

Dreher, Christoph. 2010. Autorenserien: Die Neuerfindung des Fernsehens. In *Autorenserien: Die Neuerfindung des Fernsehens*, ed. Christoph Dreher, 23–61. Stuttgart: Merz & Solitude.

Du., Gay, and Paul. 1997. *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage.

Dunleavy, Trisha. 2009. "Strategies of Innovation in 'High-End' TV Drama." *Flow Journal*, March 6, 2009. https://www.flowjournal.org/2009/03/strategies-of-innovation-in-%E2%80%98high-end%E2%80%99-tv-drama-the-contribution-of-cable%C2%A0%C2%A0trisha-dunleavy%C2%A0%C2%A0victoria-university-of-wellington%C2%A0/.

During, Simon. 1993. Introduction. In *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During, 1–28. New York, London: Routledge.

Dwyer, Paul. 2019. Flexibility, Innovation, and Precarity in the Television Industry. *In Deuze and Prenger* 2019: 347–359.

Eichner, Susanne. 2013. Blockbuster Television: Neue Serien im Kontext von Produktion, Institution und Ästhetik. In *Transnationale Serienkultur: Theorie, Ästhetik, Narration und Rezeption neuer Fernsehserien*, ed. Susanne Eichner, Lothar Mikos, and Rainer Winter, 45–65. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Eichner, Susanne. 2021. "Selling Location, Selling History: New German Series and the Changing Market Logic." In Barra and Scaglioni 2021, 191–210. London, New York: Routledge.

Eichner, Susanne, and Andrea Esser. 2020. Key International Markets: Distribution and Consumption of Danish TV Drama Series in Germany and the UK. *In Waade, Redvall, and Jensen* 2020: 187–207.

Eichner, Susanne, and Anne Marit Waade. 2015. Local Colour in German and Danish Television Drama: *Tatort* and *Bron//Broen. Global Media Journal* 5 (1): 1–20.

Eigler, Joachim, and Samaneh Azarpour. 2020. Reputation Management for Creative Workers in the Media Industry. *Journal of Media Business Studies* 17 (3–4): 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2020.1741148.

Engel, Bernhard. 2016. Mediennutzung im demografischen Wandel. *Media Perspektiven* 46 (5): 270–276.

Engell, Lorenz. 2012. *Fernsehtheorie zur Einführung*. Hamburg: Junius.

Erich Pommer Institut. 2018. "European TV Drama Lab." Accessed August 11, 2023. https://www.epi.media/tv-lab/.

Eschke, Gunther, and Rudolf Bohne. 2010. *Bleiben Sie Dran! Dramaturgie von TV-Serien*. Konstanz: UVK.

European Commission. 2020. "Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD)." Accessed August 11, 2023. https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/audiovisual-media-services-directive-avmsd.

European Commission, and Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology. 2018. "Promotion and Distribution of European Works." Accessed August 11, 2023. https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/promotion-and-distribution-european-works.

Evens, Tom, and Karen Donders. 2018. *Platform Power and Policy in Transforming Television Markets*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fahle, Oliver, and Lorenz Engell. 2006. "Philosophie des Fernsehens: Zur Einführung." In *Philosophie des Fernsehens*, edited by Oliver Fahle and Lorenz Engell, 9–19. Munich: Fink.

Feil, Georg. 2006. *Fortsetzung folgt: Schreiben für die Serie*. Konstanz: UVK.

Fennessey, Sean. 2017. "End of Independent Film as We Know It." *theringer.com*, June 10, 2017. https://www.theringer.com/2017/4/10/16044256/netflix-amazon-studios-independent-film-sundance-5def390a69ef.

Feuer, Jane. 2007. HBO and the Concept of Quality TV. *In McCabe and Akass* 2007: 145–157.

Feuer, Jane, Paul Kerr, and Tise Vahimagi, eds. 1984. *MTM: Quality Television*. London: BFI.

FitzGerald, Drew, Joe Flint, and Benjamin Mullin. 2020. "WarnerMedia Plans Thousands of Job Cuts in Restructuring: Changes at Owner of HBO, Warner Bros. Seek to Cut Costs by up to 20% as Coronavirus Pandemic Pressures Film and TV Business." *The Wall Street Journal*, October 8, 2020. https://www.wsj.com/articles/warnermedia-plans-thousands-of-job-cuts-in-restructuring-11602182057.

Fontaine, Gilles. 2017. "TV Fiction Production in the European Union." Strasbourg: European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe). https://rm.coe.int/tv-fiction-production-in-the-eu-2017/16807bb1c2.

Fontaine, Gilles. 2023. "Audiovisual Fiction Production in Europe: 2021 Figures." A publication of the European Audiovisual Observatory. Strasbourg: European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe). https://rm.coe.int/audiovisual-fiction-production-in-europe-2021-figures-g-fontaine/1680aa60ec.

Fontaine, Gilles, and Marta Jimenez Pumares. 2018. "The Production and Circulation of TV Fiction in the EU28: Television and VOD." Strasbourg: European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe). https://rm.coe.int/the-production-and-circulation-of-tv-fiction-in-the-eu28-television-an/1680946229.

Freeman, Matthew. 2016. *Industrial Approaches to Media: A Methodological Gateway to Industry Studies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Frees, Beate, Thomas Kupferschmitt, and Thorsten Müller. 2019. ARD/ZDF-Massenkommunikation Trends 2019: Non-lineare Mediennutzung nimmt zu. *Media Perspektiven* 49 (7–8): 314–333.

Freitag, Jan. 2016. "'Morgen hör ich auf': Falsche Fünfziger." *Die Zeit*, January 1, 2016. https://www.zeit.de/kultur/film/2015-12/morgen-hoer-ich-auf-pastewka-zdf?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.startpage.com%2F.

Freitag, Jan. 2020. "'Babylon Berlin' geht weiter: Vom Ballsaal in den Kellerclub: Dritte Staffel startet im Ersten." *DWDL.de*, October 10, 2020. https://www.dwdl.de/meinungen/79763/babylon_berlin_geht_weiter_vom_ballsaal_in_den_kellerclub/.

Frizzoni, Brigitte. 2014. "Zwischen Trash-TV und Quality-TV: Wertediskurse zu serieller Unterhaltung." In *Populäre Serialität: Narration—Evolution—Distinktion*, edited by Frank Kelleter, 339–52. Bielefeld: transcript.

Fröhlich, Kerstin. 2007. "Koordination und Innovation in der TV-Input-Produktion: Institutionenökonomische Analyse der Beziehung zwischen Sender und Produktionsfirma." *MedienWirtschaft* 4 (Sonderheft 2007): 38–47. https://doi.org/10.15358/1613-0669-2007-S-38.

Fröhlich, Kerstin. 2010. Die Innovationslogik der deutschen TV-Unterhaltungsproduktion. In *Handbuch Unterhaltungsproduktion: Beschaffung und Produktion von Fernsehunterhaltung*, ed. Katja Lantzsch, Klaus-Dieter. Altmeppen, and Andreas Will, 117–134. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Fuchs, Christian, and Klaus Unterberger. 2021. *The Public Service Media and Public Service Internet Manifesto*. London: University of Westminster Press.

Gangloff, Tilmann P. 2016. Die Angst der Redakteure: Warum es bestimmte Drehbuchideen hierzulande grundsätzlich schwer haben. *TV Diskurs* 20 (3): 102–107.

Gangloff, Tilmann P. 2022. "Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei: Graue Wolken über der deutschen Produktionsbranche." *mediendiskurs* 26 (4): 70–74.

Garncarz, Joseph. 2016. *Medienwandel*. Konstanz: UVK.

Gaßner, Hans-Peter. 2006. Werberelevante Zielgruppen im Wandel. *Media Perspektiven* 36 (1): 16–22.

Genzlinger, Neil. 2016. "Review: 'Deutschland 83' Focuses on a Reluctant Cold War Spy." *The New York Times/nytimes.com*, May 15, 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/16/arts/television/review-deutschland-83-focuses-on-a-reluctant-cold-war-spy.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&_r=0.

Gill, Rosalind. 2011. "Life Is a Pitch": Managing the Self in New Media Work. In *Managing Media Work*, ed. Mark Deuze, 249–262. Los Angeles: Sage.

Glockseisen, Laura. 2018. *Filmdistribution in Deutschland: Die Zukunft des TV-Marktes im Zeitalter der Digitalisierung am Fallbeispiel Netflix*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Goldmedia, and Guido Schneider. 2020. *Wirtschaftliche Lage des Rundfunks in Deutschland 2018/2019*. Leipzig: Vistas.

Gößler, Timo, and Katrin Merkel. 2021. *Der German Room: Der US-Writers'-Room in der deutschen Serienentwicklung*. Berlin: Master School Drehbuch.

Gößler, Timo, and Frank Weiß. 2014. Kreativitätsindustrie: Writers Room. *Televizion* 27 (1): 30–34.

Graf, Dominik. 2018. "Zweisamkeit bis zur Schmerzgrenze: 'Kontrakt 18'." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, August 1, 2018. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/medien/kontrakt-18-zweisamkeit-bis-zur-schmerzgrenze-1.4076534.

Graf, Dominik, and Martin Farkas. 2014. *Es werde Stadt! 50 Jahre Grimme-Preis in Marl*. Accessed August 11, 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SwRn2CBbu4.

Grampp, Sven, and Sophia Stiftinger. 2022. "Über mehr oder weniger belanglose Dinge: Zum Status der Handlungsmacht nicht-menschlicher Akteure bei der Entwicklung von Drehbüchern am Beispiel der Fernsehserie *Das Traumschiff*." In Henschen et al. 2022, 25–46.

Gransow, Christiana. 2018. *Public Value-Konzepte im öffentlichen Rundfunk: Eine vergleichende Analyse europäischer Rundfunksysteme*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Gray, Jonathan, and Amanda D. Lotz. 2019. *Television Studies*, 2nd ed. Newark: Polity Press.

Gropp, Martin. 2013. "Video-Streamingdienst Watchever produziert selbst." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 18, 2013. https://blogs.faz.net/netzwirtschaft-blog/2013/10/18/video-streamingdienst-watchever-produziert-selbst-3561/.

Gynnild, Astrid. 2016. "Applying Grounded Theory in Media Production Studies." In Paterson et al. 2016, 115–30.

Hachmeister, Lutz. 1994. Das Programm ist das Programm. In *Fernsehen: Medien, Macht, Märkte*, ed. Helmut Monkenbusch, 38–62. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.

Hackl, Christiane. 2005. Qualitätsverständnis Von ProduzentInnen Im Kinderfernsehbereich. *Televizion* 18 (2): 52–57.

Hall, Stuart. 2006, first 1973. "Encoding/Decoding." In *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, edited by Meenakshi G. Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, 163–73. Malden, Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing.

Hallenberger, Gerd. 1990. "Anmerkungen zur Amerikanisierung der Fernsehunterhaltung in der Bundesrepublik." In *Amerikanisierung der Alltagskultur? Zur Rezeption US-amerikanischer Populärkultur in der Bundesrepublik und in den Niederlanden*, edited by Kaspar Maase, Gerd Hallenberger,

and Mel van Elteren, 39–57. Hamburg: Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung.

Hallenberger, Gerd. 1998. Fiktionale Fernsehproduktionen in Deutschland: Ergebnisse der Eurofiction-Studie 1997. *Media Perspektiven* 29 (9): 463–471.

Hallenberger, Gerd. 2002. Eurofiction: Fiktionale Fernsehsendungen in Europa. In *Grundlagentexte Zur Transkulturellen Kommunikation*, ed. Andreas Hepp and Martin Löffelholz, 421–435. Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft.

Hallenberger, Gerd. 2010. Fiktionales Unterhaltungsfernsehen in Europa. In *Handbuch Unterhaltungsproduktion: Beschaffung und Produktion von Fernsehunterhaltung*, ed. Katja Lantzsch, Klaus-Dieter. Altmeppen, and Andreas Will, 171–179. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Hammett-Jamart, Julia. 2018. 'Official Co-Production in the EU: The Role of Eurimages'—An Interview with Roberto Olla. *In Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, and Redvall* 2018: 243–254.

Hammett-Jamart, Julia, Petar Mitric, and Eva Novrup Redvall. 2018. Introduction: European Film and Television Co-Production. *In Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, and Redvall* 2018: 1–26.

Hannerz, Ulf. 1998. "Other Transnationals: Perspectives Gained from Studying Sideways." *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 60 (44): 109–23.

Hansen, Kim Toft. 2020. Glocal Perspectives on Danish Television Series: Co-Producing Crime Narratives for Commercial Public Service. *In Waade, Redvall, and Jensen* 2020: 83–101.

Hansen, Kim Toft, and Anne Marit Waade. 2017. *Locating Nordic Noir: From Beck to the Bridge*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Harris, Benjamin. 2018. 'European Television Co-Productions'—An Interview with Klaus Zimmermann. *In Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, and Redvall* 2018: 319–328.

Havens, Timothy, and Amanda D. Lotz. 2012. *Understanding Media Industries*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Havens, Timothy, Amanda D. Lotz, and Serra Tinic. 2009. Critical Media Industry Studies: A Research Approach. *Communication, Culture and Critique* 2 (2): 234–253. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-9137.2009.01037.x.

Heine, Frank. 2017. "RTL: Neue Heimat für deutsche Serien." *Blickpunkt Film*, December 12, 2017. https://beta.blickpunktfilm.de/details/424990.

Heine, Frank. 2021. "Anke Greifeneder: 'Ich bin eine sehr loyale Socke'." *Blickpunkt Film*, January 12, 2021. https://beta.blickpunktfilm.de/details/456860.

Heinz, Julia von. 2012. *Die freundliche Übernahme: Der Einfluss des öffentlich-rechtlichen Fernsehens auf den deutschen Kinofilm von 1950 bis 2010*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Helten, Christian. 2012. "'Wir Sind Eine Experimentierplattform': Interview [with Simone Emmelius, then head of ZDFneo]." *jetzt*, April 4, 2012. https://www.jetzt.de/interview/wir-sind-eine-experimentierplattform-543810.

Henderson, Felicia D. 2011. The Culture Behind Closed Doors: Issues of Gender and Race in the Writers' Room. *Cinema Journal* 50 (2): 145–152.

Henke, Gebhard. 2003. "Zum Stellenwert der öffentlich-rechtlichen Fernsehfilm-Redaktion." In *Die Fernsehproduzenten: Rolle und Selbstverständnis*, edited by Lutz Hachmeister and Dieter Anschlag, 127–35. Konstanz: UVK.

Hennecke, Chris, and Harald Rau. 2015. "Transparenz? Fehlanzeige! Verflechtungsstrukturen der umsatzstärksten TV-Sender in Deutschland." *MedienWirtschaft* 12 (2): 30–39. https://doi.org/10.15358/1613-0669-2015-2-38.

Hennig-Thurau, Thorsten, Ricarda Schauerte, Niko Herborg, and Daniel Wiechmann. 2019. "Quo Vadis, Deutsche Medien? Zur Zukunft deutscher Fernsehanbieter in digitalen Streaming-Zeiten." Munich: Roland Berger. https://www.rolandberger.com/publications/publication_pdf/roland_berger_tv_der_zukunft.pdf.

Hennings, Kevin. 2020a. "'Unorthodox'-Showrunnerin im Gespräch: Anna Winger: 'Viel Magie mit deutlich weniger Geld'." *DWDL.de*, March 26, 2020. https://www.dwdl.de/interviews/76883/anna_winger_viel_magie_mit_deutlich_weniger_geld/.

Hennings, Kevin. 2020b. "ARD will Zusammenarbeit mit Autoren vertiefen: Stärkere Mitsprache." *DWDL.de*, April 14, 2020. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/77210/ard_will_zusammenarbeit_mit_autoren_vertiefen/.

Henschen, Jan, Florian Krauß, Alexandra Ksenofontova, and Claus Tieber, eds. 2022. *Drehbuchforschung: Perspektiven auf Texte und Prozesse*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Herbert, Daniel, Amanda D. Lotz, and Aswin Punathambekar. 2020. *Media Industry Studies*. Cambridge, UK, Medford, MA: Polity Press.

Herrmann, Freya, and Vera Klocke. 2020. "'Stop Portraying Rape': Die Inszenierung von sexualisierter Gewalt im Film." *ffk Journal Film- und Fernsehwissenschaftliches Kolloquium* 5 (5): 61–72. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/13758.

Herzog, Katja. 2012. "Deutschland, Deine Krimileichen." In *Jahrbuch Fernsehen 2012*, edited by Institut für Medien- und Kommunikationspolitik. Köln: Institut für Medien- und Kommunikationspolitik. http://www.jahrbuch-fernsehen.de/datenbank/essays/2012/essay-2-katja-herzog.html. Accessed August 11, 2023.

Hesmondhalgh, David. 2010. Media Industry Studies, Media Production Studies. In *Media and Society*, ed. James Curran, 3–21. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Hess, Claudia, and Thorsten Müller. 2022. ARD/ZDF-Massenkommunikation Trends 2022: Mediennutzung im Intermediavergleich: Aktuelle Ergebnisse der repräsentativen Langzeitstudie. *Media Perspektiven* 52 (9): 414–424.

Hickethier, Knut. 1995. "Dispositiv Fernsehen: Skizze eines Modells." *montage AV* 4 (1): 63–83. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/483.

Hickethier, Knut. 1998. *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*. With the assistance of P. Hoff. Stuttgart: Metzler.

Hißnauer, Christian, Stefan Scherer, and Claudia Stockinger. 2014a. Einleitung. *In Hißnauer, Scherer, and Stockinger* 2014: 7–25.

Hißnauer, Christian, Stefan Scherer, and Claudia Stockinger. 2014b. "Entscheidungsprozesse in der Redaktion." In Hißnauer, Scherer, and Stockinger, 219–42.

Holly, Werner. 2004. *Fernsehen*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Holt, Jennifer, and Alisa Perren. 2019. Media Industries: A Decade in Review. *In Deuze and Prenger* 2019: 31–43.

Horan, Dermot. 2007. Quality US TV: A Buyer's Perspective. *In McCabe and Akass* 2007: 111–117.

Hoskins, Colin, and Rolf Mirus. 1988. Reasons for the US Dominance of the International Trade in Television Programmes. *Media, Culture & Society* 10 (4): 499–515. https://doi.org/10.1177/016344388010004006.

Hughes, Sarah. 2016. "Deutschland 83 Opens the Floodgate for a German TV Renaissance." *guardian.com*, February 23, 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2016/feb/23/deutschland-83-opens-the-floodgate-for-a-german-tv-renaissance.

Jenke, Marion. 2013. *Berufswege von Alumni einer Filmhochschule: Arbeitsmarktsituation und Spezifika des Studiums*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Jenner, Mareike. 2017. Binge-Watching: Video-on-Demand, Quality TV and Mainstreaming Fandom. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 20 (3): 304–320. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877915606485.

Jensen, Mikkel. 2017. "'From the Mind of David Simon': A Case for the Showrunner Approach." *Series—International Journal of TV Serial Narratives* 3 (2): 31–42. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2421-454X/7610.

Johnson, Richard. 1996. "What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?" In *What Is Cultural Studies? A Reader*, edited by John Storey, 75–114. London, New York: Arnold.

Jost, François. 2021. "What Is a Quality French Series? Reflections on *The Bureau*." In Barra and Scaglioni 2021, 130–41. London, New York: Routledge.

Jungen, Oliver. 2020. "Vatermord auf Koks: 'Freud' bei Netflix." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 24, 2020. https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/medien/serie-freud-bei-netflix-vatermord-auf-koks-16692953.html.

Kammann, Uwe, Katrin Jurkuhn, and Fritz Wolf. 2007. *Im Spannungsfeld: Zur Qualitätsdiskussion öffentlich-rechtlicher Fernsehprogramme*. Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Kasten, Jürgen. 1994. Der Drehbuchautor in der Filmproduktion—Ein historischer Abriss und ein aktueller Ausblick. In *Filmproduktion, Filmförderung, Filmfinanzierung*, ed. Jan Berg and Knut Hickethier, 133–149. Berlin: Sigma.

Kauschke, Andree, and Ulrich Klugius. 2000. *Zwischen Meterware und Maßarbeit: Markt- und Betriebsstrukturen der TV-Produktion in Deutschland*. Gerlingen: Bleicher.

Keil, Christopher. 2010. "Schnelles Ende für 'Im Angesicht des Verbrechens'." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 11, 2010. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/medien/ard-einknicken-vor-der-quote-schnelles-ende-fuer-im-angesicht-des-verbrechens-1.1022679.

Keilbach, Judith, and Markus Stauff. 2013. When Old Media Never Stopped Being New: Television's History as an Ongoing Experiment. In *After the Break: Television Theory Today*, ed. Marijke Valck and Jan Teurlings, 79–98. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Keilbach, Judith, and Hanna Surma. 2022. "Nutzungsdaten und das Bauchgefühl der Drehbuchautor*innen: Eine Fallstudie zur datengestützten Drehbuchentwicklung für einen Streamingdienst." In Henschen et al. 2022, 47–67.

Kelleter, Frank. 2014. Populäre Serialität: Eine Einführung. *In Kelleter* 2014: 11–48.

Kiefer, Marie Luise. 2001. *Medienökonomik: Einführung in eine ökonomische Theorie der Medien*. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Kinder, Marsha. 2008. Re-Wiring Baltimore: The Emotive Power of Systemics, Seriality, and the City. *Film Quarterly* 62 (2): 50–57. https://doi.org/10.1525/fq.2008.62.2.50.

Kinghorst, Julian. 2020. "Aktuelle Webserien aus Deutschland: Austauschprozesse zwischen Akteur*innen von Fernsehsendern und Nachwuchskräften." Master thesis. Siegen: University of Siegen.

Kirsch, Gunther. 2001. "Produktionsbedingungen von Daily Soaps: Ein Werkstattbericht." *montage AV* 10 (1): 45–54. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/92.

Klode, Ulrike. 2015. "Alle entwickeln Serienkonzepte wie die Bekloppten: DWDL.de-Interview mit 'Weissensee'-Erfinderin Annette Hess." *DWDL.de*, September 29, 2015. https://www.dwdl.de/interviews/52525/alle_entwickeln_serienkonzepte_wie_die_bekloppten/.

Klug, Daniel, and Klaus Neumann-Braun. 2016. "Fernsehrealität: Genrevielfalt und Produktionspraxis: Zur Einleitung in die wissenschaftliche Untersuchung von Scripted Reality-Formaten." In *Scripted Reality: Fernsehrealität zwischen Fakt und Fiktion: Perspektiven auf Produkt, Produktion und Rezeption*, edited by Daniel Klug, 7–32. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Knilli, Friedrich. 1968. Vorwort. In *Die Unterhaltung der Deutschen Fernsehfamilie: Ideologiekritische Kurzanalysen von Serien*, ed. Friedrich Knilli, 7–18. Munich: Hanser.

Knöhr, Nathalie. 2018. "Neues aus der Soap Factory: Ethnografisches Forschen in der deutschen Fernsehindustrie." *Navigationen* 18 (2): 27–46. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/3535.

Knorr, Andreas, and Christina Schulz. 2009. Filmförderung in Deutschland - zur Problematik eines kulturpolitischen Anspruchs. In *Medienökonomik: Ordnungsökonomische Grundfragen und Gestaltungsmöglichkeiten*, ed. Dirk Wentzel, 247–276. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Koepsel, Meta-Kristin. 2015. "Das deutsche Feuilleton und sein 'Quality TV'." *Pop-Zeitschrift*, January 24, 2015. http://www.pop-zeitschrift.de/2015/01/24/das-deutsche-feuilleton-und-sein-quality-tvvon-meta-kristin-koepsel24-1-2015/.

Krauß, Florian. 2007. *Männerbilder im Bollywood-Film: Konstruktionen von Männlichkeit im Hindi-Kino*. Berlin: wvb.

Krauß, Florian. 2019. "'All Is Changing': Interview with Joachim Kosack on *Deutschland83* and Transformation of the German TV Series Industry." *Series—International Journal of TV Serial Narratives* 5 (1): 69–73. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2421-454X/9716.

Krauß, Florian. 2020a. From 'Redakteursfernsehen' to 'Showrunners': Commissioning Editors and Changing Project Networks in TV Fiction from Germany. *Journal of Popular Television* 8 (2): 177–194. https://doi.org/10.1386/jptv_00017_1.

Krauß, Florian. 2020b. 'Qualitätsserien' und Produkt- und Prozessinnovationen: Aushandlungen in der deutschen Fernsehbranche. In *Innovation in der Medienproduktion und -distribution: Proceedings der Jahrestagung der Fachgruppe Medienökonomie der DGPUK 2019*, ed. Christian Wellbrock and Christian Zabel, 137–150. Stuttgart: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Publizistik und Kommunikationswissenschaft.

Krauß, Florian. 2020c. 'Social Media muss in alle Gewerke einfließen': Interview mit dem Produzenten Lasse Scharpen über den Herstellungsprozess von *DRUCK* und Teen TV aus Deutschland. In *Teen TV: Repräsentationen,*

Lesarten und Produktionsweisen aktueller Jugendserien, ed. Florian Krauß and Moritz Stock, 271–282. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Krauß, Florian. 2020d. *Teen* und *Quality TV*: *Deutschland 83* und Transformationen der deutschen Fernsehserie. *In Krauß and Stock* 2020: 163–183.

Krauß, Florian. 2020e. Transnationale Vernetzungen in der Fernsehserien-Produktion: Branchendiskussionen beim *Berlinale Series Market* 2020. *TV Diskurs* 24 (3): 4–7.

Krauß, Florian. 2020f. "When German Series Go Global: Industry Discourse on the Period Drama *Deutschland* and Its Transnational Circulation." *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* 9 (17): 1–12. https://doi.org/10.18146/view.212.

Krauß, Florian. 2021a. "Historische Perspektiven im 'Qualitätsserien'-Diskurs der Fernsehbranche." In *Serienforschung und Fernsehwissenschaft*, edited by Dominik Maeder, Denis Newiak, and Herbert Schwaab. Wiesbaden: Springer.

Krauß, Florian. 2021b. Writers' Room and Showrunner: Discourses and Practices in the German TV Industry. *In Batty and Taylor* 2021: 251–266.

Krauß, Florian. 2023a. Fictionalizing the COVID-19 Pandemic 'Instantly': A Case Study of the German Comedy *Drama Drinnen—Im Internet Sind Alle Gleich. Illuminace, the Journal of Film Theory, History, and Aesthetics* 35 (1): 7–35.

Krauß, Florian. 2023b. "German Quality TV as a Glocal Industry Discourse." *Global Media Journal* 13 (1): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.22032/dbt.57910.

Krauß, Florian. 2023c. *Qualitätsserien aus Deutschland: Produktionspraktiken, Erzählweisen und Transformationen Des Fernsehens*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Krauß, Florian. 2023d. "Streaming für Preteens: Eine Fallanalyse der ZDF-Web-Kinderserie *ECHT*." *medien + erziehung* 57 (5): 36–45.

Krauß, Florian. 2023e. "Produktionsnetzwerke in Krisenzeiten: Aushandlungen einer herausgeforderten Branche beim 'Berlinale Series Market' 2023." *mediendiskurs*, March 24, 2023. https://mediendiskurs.online/beitrag/produktionsnetzwerke-in-krisenzeiten-beitrag-772/.

Krauß, Florian, and Skadi Loist. 2018a. "Medienindustrieforschung im deutschsprachigen Raum: Einleitung." *Navigationen* 18 (2): 7–25. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/3533.

Krauß, Florian, and Skadi Loist, eds. 2018b. *Medienindustrien: Aktuelle Perspektiven aus der deutschsprachigen Medienwissenschaft. Navigationen* 18 (2).

Krauß, Florian, and Moritz Stock. 2020. Repräsentationen, Rezeptionen und Produktionen des Teen TV: Einleitung. *In Krauß and Stock* 2020: 3–32.

Krauß, Florian, and Moritz Stock. 2021. Youthification of Television Through Online Media: Production Strategies and Narrative Choices in *DRUCK / SKAM Germany. Critical Studies in Television* 16 (4): 412–432.

Krei, Alexander. 2018. "Die Bilanz von One und ZDFneo: Von wegen Jung-brunnen." *DWDL.de*, August 10, 2018. https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/68210/die_bilanz_von_one_und_zdfneo_von_wegen_jungbrunnen/.

Krei, Alexander. 2019. "'Mit Zunge oder ohne?': RTL II und die Jugend von heute: DWDL.de-Serienkritik zu 'Wir Sind Jetzt'." *DWDL.de*, April 28, 2019. https://www.dwdl.de/meinungen/72072/mit_zunge_oder_ohne_rtl_ii_und_die_jugend_von_heute_/.

Krei, Alexander. 2020. "'Think Big!' und 'Läusemutter' verlieren sogar noch weiter: Katastrophen-Quoten für Sat.1-Serien." *DWDL.de*, February 15, 2020. https://www.dwdl.de/zahlenzentrale/76226/think_big_und_laeusemutter_verlieren_sogar_noch_weiter/.

Krei, Alexander. 2021a. "'Wir sind noch lange nicht fertig': Wo steht 'Kontrakt 18' heute? Initiative von Autorinnen und Autoren." *DWDL.de*, February 9, 2021. https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/81446/wir_sind_noch_lange_nicht_fertig_wo_steht_kontrakt_18_heute/.

Krei, Alexander. 2021b. "Christine Strobl: 'Niemand sollte uns unterschätzen': ARD-Programmdirektorin im DWDL-Interview." *DWDL.de*, December 3, 2021. https://www.dwdl.de/interviews/85619/christine_strobl_niemand_sollte_uns_unterschaetzen/.

Krei, Alexander. 2023a. "Kommt der 'Super-Streamer' jetzt auch in Deutschland?" *DWDL.de*, May 5, 2023. https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/92846/kommt_der_superstreamer_jetzt_auch_in_deutschland/?utm_source=&utm_medium=&utm_campaign=&utm_term=.

Krei, Alexander. 2023b. "'Ein erheblicher Verlust für den Kreativmarkt in Deutschland': Das Ende der deutschen Fiction bei Sky." *DWDL.de*, June 30, 2023. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/93680/ein_erheblicher_verlust_fuer_den_kreativmarkt_in_deutschland/.

Kuhn, Markus. 2016. Die WG im Netz: Deutschsprachige Webserien-Genres im Spannungsfeld kultureller und medialer Transformationsprozesse. In *Transmediale Genre-Passagen: Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven*, ed. Ivo Ritzer and Peter W. Schulze, 431–459. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Kuipers, Giselinde. 2011. Cultural Globalization as the Emergence of a Transnational Cultural Field: Transnational Television and National Media Landscapes in Four European Countries. *American Behavioral Scientist* 55 (5): 541–557. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211398078.

Kutscher, Volker. 2017. *Babylon Berlin: Translated by Niall Sellar*. Dingwall: Sandstone Press.

Langer, Jörg. 2015. "Die Situation der Film- und Fernsehschaffenden 2015: Studie zur sozialen Lage, Berufszufriedenheit und den Perspektiven der Beschäftigten in der Film- und Fernsehproduktionswirtschaft Deutschlands 2015." Accessed April 14, 2020. http://www.langermediaconsulting.de/resources/Studie-Filmschaff_FINAL_JL.pdf.

Latour, Bruno. 1996. On Actor-Network Theory: A Few Clarifications. *Soziale Welt* 47 (4): 369–381.

Leder, Dietrich. 2015. "Als wäre es ein Weltwunder: Zur deutschen Begeisterung über die gegenwärtige Serien-Produktion in den USA." *Medienkorrespondenz/Leders Journal* (24). http://www.medienkorrespondenz.de/leitartikel/artikel/als-waere-es-ein-weltwunder.html. Accessed December 7, 2015.

Lee, David. 2018. *Independent Television Production in the UK: From Cottage Industry to Big Business*. Cham: Springer.

Lentz, Kirsten Marthe. 2000. Quality Versus Relevance: Feminism, Race, and the Politics of the Sign in 1970s Television. *Camera Obscura* 15 (1): 44–93.

Lobato, Ramon. 2018. *Netflix Nations: The Geography of Digital Distribution*. New York: New York University Press.

Lobato, Ramon, and James Meese, eds. 2018. *Geoblocking and Global Video Culture*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

Lobigs, Frank. 2020. Das Virus als Video-Menetekel. *TV Diskurs* 24 (3): 44–47.

Logan, Elliott. 2016. 'Quality Television' as a Critical Obstacle: Explanation and Aesthetics in Television Studies. *Screen* 57 (2): 144–162. https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjw020.

Loist, Skadi, and Elizabeth Prommer. 2019. Gendered Production Culture in the German Film Industry. *Media Industries Journal* 6 (1): 95–115. https://doi.org/10.3998/mij.15031809.0006.106.

Loist, Skadi, and Deb Verhoeven. 2019. Complex Not Complicated: Gendered Media Industries in the Wake of #MeToo. *Media Industries Journal* 6 (1): 67–71. https://doi.org/10.3998/mij.15031809.0006.104.

Lorenzen, Tjark. 2021. "HBO Max: Kommt der Streamingdienst von Warner Bros. jetzt nach Deutschland?" *Netzwelt*, March 24, 2021. https://www.netzwelt.de/news/187560-hbo-max-kommt-streamingdienst-warner-bros-deutschland.html.

Lotz, Amanda D., ed. 2009. *Beyond Prime Time: Television Programming in the Post-Network Era*. New York: Routledge.

Lotz, Amanda D. 2017. *Portals: A Treatise on Internet-Distributed Television*. Ann Arbor, Mich: Michigan Publishing Services.

Lotz, Amanda D., Georgina Born, Bernard Miege, Graham Murdock, and Janet Staiger. 2018. "Plenary: Media Industries Research: Foundations of a Broad Field." Media Industries Conference 2018: Current Debates and Future Directions, London, April 18.

Lotz, Amanda D., Ramon Lobato, and Julian Thomas. 2018b. Internet-Distributed Television Research: A Provocation. *Media Industries Journal* 5 (2): 35–47. https://doi.org/10.3998/mij.15031809.0005.203.

Lückerath, Thomas. 2014. "Die Welle rollt: Fox lässt zwei TV-Serien entwickeln." *DWDL.de*, October 29, 2014. http://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/48256/die_welle_rollt_fox_laesst_zwei_tvserien_entwickeln/.

Lückerath, Thomas. 2018. "Kein Platz für Autoren beim deutschen Fernsehpreis? Empörung in den sozialen Medien." *DWDL.de*, January 11, 2018. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/65077/kein_platz_fr_autoren_beim_deutschen_fernsehpreis/.

Lückerath, Thomas. 2019. "Moszkowicz will Serienproduktion der Constantin hochfahren: Constantin Film-CEO im DWDL-Interview." *DWDL.de*, October 14, 2019. https://www.dwdl.de/mipcom2019/74454/moszkowicz_will_serienproduktion_der_constantin_hochfahren/.

Lückerath, Thomas. 2020a. "'Die Anzahl der Netflix-Filme made in Germany steigt spürbar': Interview mit Kai Finke." *DWDL.de*, August 12, 2020. https://www.dwdl.de/interviews/78891/die_anzahl_der_netflixfilme_made_in_germany_steigt_spuerbar/.

Lückerath, Thomas. 2020b. "'Barbaren'-Produzenten: 'Wenn, dann muss es highend sein': Gespräch mit De Mardt und Marquass." *DWDL.de*, October 23, 2020. https://www.dwdl.de/interviews/79946/barbarenproduzenten_wenn_dann_muss_es_highend_sein/.

Lückerath, Thomas. 2021. "Disney made in Germany: Deutsche Serien für Disney+ beauftragt." *DWDL.de*, February 16, 2021. https://www.dwdl.de/interviews/81563/disney_made_in_germany_deutsche_serien_fuer_disney_beauftragt/?utm_source=&utm_medium=&utm_campaign=&utm_term=.

Lückerath, Thomas. 2022. "Deutsche Telekom zieht sich aus der Serienproduktion zurück: Strategiewechsel." *DWDL.de*, June 30, 2022. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/88559/deutsche_telekom_zieht_sich_aus_der_serienproduktion_zurueck/?utm_source=&utm_medium=&utm_campaign=&utm_term=.

Lückerath, Thomas. 2023. "Apple macht Kaspar Pflüger zum Inhalte-Chef in Deutschland." *DWDL.de*, February 13, 2023. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/91737/apple_macht_kaspar_pflueger_zum_inhaltechef_in_deutschland/?utm_source=&utm_medium=&utm_campaign=&utm_term=.

Macdonald, Ian. 2004. Disentangling the Screen Idea. *Journal of Media Practice* 5 (2): 89–100. https://doi.org/10.1386/jmpr.5.2.89/0.

Macdonald, Ian. 2010. '…So It's Not Surprising I'm Neurotic': The Screenwriter and the Screen Idea Work Group. *Journal of Screenwriting* 1 (1): 45–58.

Macdonald, Ian. 2013. *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mann, Denise. 2009. It's Not TV, It's Brand Management TV: The Collective Author(S) Of the Lost Franchise. *In Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell* 2009: 99–114.

Mantel, Uwe. 2012. "TV-Hits: Die meistgesehenen Sendungen 2012: DWDL.de-Jahresrückblick 2012." *DWDL.de*, December 27, 2012. https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/38850/tvhits_die_meistgesehenen_sendungen_2012/page_1.html.

Mantel, Uwe. 2018. "RTL-Chef Hoffmann: 'Wir brauchen einfach Geduld': Mit Serien-Offensive zufrieden." *DWDL.de*, June 12, 2018. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/67317/rtlchef_hoffmann_wir_brauchen_einfach_geduld/.

Mantel, Uwe. 2020. "Ramelow über ARD/ZDF: 'Netflix- statt Kulenkampff-Modus'." *DWDL.de*, October 19, 2020. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/79881/ramelow_ueber_ardzdf_netflix_statt_kulenkampffmodus/.

Mantel, Uwe. 2021. "'Die Pay-TV-Branche hat sich als krisensicher gezeigt': Streaming treibt das Wachstum für Bezahlinhalte." *DWDL.de*, July 27, 2021. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/83802/die_paytvbranche_hat_sich_als_krisensicher_gezeigt/.

Mantel, Uwe. 2024. "Paramount+: Kahlschlag bei deutschen Produktionen." *DWDL.de*, January 31, 2024. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/96627/paramount_kahlschlag_bei_deutschen_produktionen/.

Maras, Steven. 2009. *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice*. London: Wallflower.

Marghitu, Stefania. 2021. *Teen TV*. New York, London: Routledge.

Maurer, Torsten, Anne Beier Beier, and Frank Weiß. 2020. Programmprofile von Das Erste, ZDF, RTL, VOX, Sat. 1 und ProSieben: Ergebnisse der ARD/ZDF-Programmanalyse 2019 – Teil 1. *Media Perspektiven* 50 (5): 246–263.

Mayer, Angelika M. 2013. *Qualität im Zeitalter von TV 3.0: Die Debatte zum öffentlich-rechtlichen Fernsehen*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Mayer, Vicki. 2011. *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*. Durham NC: Duke Univ. Press.

Mayer, Vicki, Miranda J. Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell. 2009a. Introduction: Production Studies: Roots and Routes. *In Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell* 2009: 1–12.

Mayer, Vicki, Miranda J. Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell, eds. 2009b. *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*. New York: Routledge.

McCabe, Janet, and Kim Akass. 2007a. Introduction: Debating Quality. *In McCabe and Akass* 2007: 1–11.

McCabe, Janet, and Kim Akass. 2007b. Sex, Swearing and Respectability: Courting Controversy, HBO's Original Programming and Producing Quality TV. *In McCabe and Akass* 2007: 62–76.

McElroy, Ruth. 2020. The Linguistic Landscapes of Transnational Crime Drama: Nordic Noir's Celtic Contact Zone. *In Waade, Redvall, and Jensen* 2020: 63–80.

McGrath, Charles. 2000. The Triumph of the Prime-Time Novel. In *Television: The Critical View*, ed. Horace Newcomb, 242–252. New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press.

McKee, Robert. 1997. *Story: Style, Structure, Substance, and the Principles of Screenwriting*. New York: HarperCollins.

McKee, Robert. 2011. *Story: Die Prinzipien des Drehbuchschreiben*. Berlin: Alexander.

McRobbie, Angela. 2006. From Holloway to Hollywood: Happiness at Work in the New Cultural Economy? In *Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life*, ed. Paul and Gay, 97–114. London: Sage.

Meier-Beer, Jürgen. 1995. Produktionssteuerung statt Produktion? *Rundfunk und Fernsehen* 43 (1): 56–61.

Meir, Christopher. 2019. *Mass Producing European Cinema: Studiocanal and Its Works*. New York, London, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Meuser, Michael, and Ulrike Nagel. 1991. "ExpertInneninterviews—vielfach erprobt, wenig bedacht: Ein Beitrag zur qualitativen Methodendiskussion." In *Qualitativ-Empirische Sozialforschung: Konzepte, Methoden, Analysen*, edited by Detlef Garz and Klaus Kraimer, 441–71. Opladen: Westdt. Verl.

Meza, Ed. 2019. "'Babylon Berlin 3' Sells to Dozens of Countries, Netflix for U.S." *Variety*, April 8, 2019. https://variety.com/2019/tv/news/babylon-berlin-3-sells-35-countries-netflix-north-america-1203183271/.

Mikos, Lothar. 2016. Germany as TV Show Import Market. *In Powell and Shandley* 2016: 155–174.

Mikos, Lothar. 2021. "TV Drama Series Production in Germany and the Digital Television Landscape." In Barra and Scaglioni 2021, 177–90. London, New York: Routledge.

Mikos, Lothar, and Elizabeth Prommer. 2005. "Das Babelsberger Modell." In *Qualitative Medienforschung : Ein Handbuch*, edited by Lothar Mikos and Claudia Wegener, 162–69. Konstanz: UVK.

Mitric, Petar. 2018. The European Co-Production Treaties: A Short History and a Possible Typology. *In Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, and Redvall* 2018: 63–82.

Mittell, Jason. 2006. "Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television." *The Velvet Light Trap*, 58 (fall 2006): 29–40.

Mittell, Jason. 2015. *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*. New York: New York University Press.

Monnet-Cantagrel, Hélène. 2021. "The Strategy of 'Quality TV': Branding, Creating, and Producing at Canal+." In Barra and Scaglioni 2021, 118–29. London, New York: Routledge.

Müller, Jochen. 2019. "Leonine übernimmt W&B TV." *Blickpunkt Film*, November 15, 2019. https://beta.blickpunktfilm.de/details/445575.

Mulvey, Laura. 1975. Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Screen* 16 (3): 6–18. https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/16.3.6.

Murley, Jean. 2008. *The Rise of True Crime: 20th-Century Murder and American Popular Culture*. Westport: Praeger.

Mützel, Daniel. 2017. "Wir haben die neue Serie '4 Blocks' mit echten Berliner Gangstern geschaut." *Vice*, May 12, 2017. https://www.vice.com/de/article/mgm383/wir-haben-die-neue-serie-4-blocks-mit-echten-berliner-gangstern-geschaut.

Nelson, Robin. 2007. Quality TV Drama: Estimations and Influences Through Time and Space. *In McCabe and Akass* 2007: 38–51.

Nesselhauf, Jonas, and Markus Schleich. 2016. "Feeling That the Best Is Over: Vom Ende der Qualität und der Qualität von Enden." In *Das Andere Fernsehen?! Eine Bestandsaufnahme des "Quality Television"*, edited by Jonas Nesselhauf and Markus Schleich, 9–31. Bielefeld: transcript.

Netflix. 2021. "Netflix Promotes Next Generation of German-Language Screenwriters and Launches Accelerator Program with Impact: Press Release." News release. November 15, 2021. https://about.netflix.com/en/news/netflix-promotes-next-generation-of-german-language-screenwriters-and.

Neuberger, Christoph. 2011. *Definition und Messung publizistischer Qualität im Internet: Herausforderungen des Drei-Stufen-Tests*. Berlin: Vistas.

Newcomb, Horace, and Amanda D. Lotz. 2002. The Production of Media Fiction. In *A Handbook of Media and Communication Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies*, ed. Klaus Jensen, 62–77. London: Routledge.

Newman, Michael Z., and Elana Levine. 2012. *Legitimating Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status*. Oxon, New York: Routledge.

Niemeier, Timo. 2017a. "Nach Filmförderungs-Plus: Und was ist mit TV? Produktionsstandort Deutschland." *DWDL.de*, March 21, 2017. https://www.dwdl.de/vitamind/60620/nach_filmfrderungsplus_und_was_ist_mit_tv/.

Niemeier, Timo. 2017b. "Sat.1-Serie 'Danni Lowinski' soll verfilmt werden: Verhandlungen laufen." *DWDL*, July 25, 2017. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/62567/sat1serie_danni_lowinski_soll_verfilmt_werden/.

Niemeier, Timo. 2018. "Erster europäischer Overall-Deal: Netflix bindet 'Dark'-Macher Friese und Odar an sich." *DWDL.de*, June 19, 2018. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/67445/netflix_bindet_darkmacher_friese_und_odar_an_sich/.

Niemeier, Timo. 2019. "Nico Hofmanns geplante Hitler-Serie liegt weiter auf Eis: Kein Deutscher Partner in Sicht." *DWDL.de*, July 20, 2019. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/73198/nico_hofmanns_geplante_hitlerserie_liegt_weiter_aus_eis/?utm_source=&utm_medium=&utm_campaign=&utm_term=.

Niemeier, Timo. 2020a. "BBC One adaptiert NDR-Serie 'Der Tatortreiniger'." *DWDL*, January 14, 2020. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/75740/bbc_one_adaptiert_ndrserie_der_tatortreiniger/.

Niemeier, Timo. 2020b. "ZDF schickt Miniserie 'Parfum' in eine zweite Staffel." *DWDL.de*, April 9, 2020. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/77170/zdf_schickt_miniserie_parfum_in_eine_zweite_staffel/.

Niemeier, Timo. 2020c. "Produzenten gehen Staatshilfen nicht weit genug." *DWDL.de*, July 13, 2020. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/78480/produzenten_gehen_staatshilfen_nicht_weit_genug/.

Niemeier, Timo. 2021a. "Drehbuchautoren schreiben offenen Brief an Christine Strobl: 'Den Schuss bis heute nicht gehört'." *DWDL.de*, June 27, 2021. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/83376/drehbuchautoren_schreiben_offenen_brief_an_christine_strobl/.

Niemeier, Timo. 2021b. "Vielfalt im TV: Ein bisschen besser, aber noch nicht genug: Neue Studie zeigt Baustellen auf." October 5, 2021. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/84774/vielfalt_im_tv_ein_bisschen_besser_aber_noch_nicht_genug/.

Niemeier, Timo. 2021c. "Diversity im Fernsehen? 'Die Branche ist bemüht': Vielfalt in der Personalsuche." *DWDL.de*, October 21, 2021. https://www.dwdl.de/vitamind/84922/diversity_im_fernsehen_die_branche_ist_bemueht/?utm_source=&utm_medium=&utm_campaign=&utm_term=.

Noelle-Neumann, Elisabeth, Winfried Schulz, and Jürgen. Wilke. 2000. *Fischer Lexikon: Publizistik Massenkommunikation*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch.

Nünning, Volker. 2020. "Geschehnisse in Sachsen-Anhalt: Einmaliger Vorgang: Ein Bundesland lässt die Erhöhung des Rundfunkbeitrags scheitern." *Medienkorrespondenz*, December 19, 2020. https://www.medienkorrespondenz.de/leitartikel/artikel/geschehnisse-in-sachsen-anhalt.html.

Oltermann, Philip. 2016. "Deutschland 83 Has Wowed the World—Pity the Germans Don't Like It." *guardian.com*, February 17, 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/feb/17/deutschland-83-wowed-world-germans-dont-like-it.

Ortner, Sherry B. 2010. Access: Reflections on Studying up in Hollywood. *Ethnography* 11 (2): 211–233.

Parker, Philip. 1998. *The Art and Science of Screenwriting*. Exeter: Intellect.

Parsons, Patrick. 2003. The Evolution of the Cable-Satellite Distribution System. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 47 (1): 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4701_1.

Paterson, Chris, David Lee, Anamik Saha, and Anna Zoellner, eds. 2016a. *Advancing Media Production Research: Shifting Sites, Methods, and Politics*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Paterson, Chris, David Lee, Anamik Saha, and Anna Zoellner. 2016b. "Production Research: Continuity and Transformation." In Paterson et al. 2016, 3–19.

Perren, Alisa, and Thomas Schatz. 2015. Theorizing Television's Writer–Producer: Re-Viewing *the Producer's Medium. Television & New Media* 16 (1): 86–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476414552907.

Peterson, Richard A., and N. Anand. 2004. The Production of Culture Perspective. *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (1): 311–334. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.30.012703.110557.

Phalen, Patricia, and Julia Osellame. 2012. Writing Hollywood: Rooms with a Point of View. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 56 (1): 3–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2011.648686.

Pham, Annika. 2022. "Danish Productions in Turmoil—Netflix, Viaplay, TV2 Put Commissioning on Hold." *Nordisk Film & TV Fond*, June 8, 2022. https://nordiskfilmogtvfond.com/news/stories/danish-productions-in-turmoil-netflix-viaplay-tv2-put-commissioning-on-hold.

Philipsen, Heidi, and Tobias Hochscherf. 2016. *Beyond The Bridge: Contemporary Danish Television Drama*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Pickard, Michael. 2019. "Go West." *Drama Quarterly*, February 11, 2019. http://dramaquarterly.com/go-west/.

Pjajčíková, Eva, and Petr Szczepanik. 2016. Group Writing for Post-Socialist Television. *In Banks, Conor, and Mayer* 2016: 105–120.

Powdermaker, Hortense. 1951. *Hollywood, the Dream Factory: An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie-Makers*. London: Secker & Warburg.

Pratt, John W., and Richard J. Zeckhauser, eds. 1985. *Principals and Agents: The Structure of Business*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press.

Prommer, Elizabeth, and Christine Linke. 2019. *Ausgeblendet: Frauen im deutschen Film und Fernsehen*. Köln: Herbert von Halem.

Przybylski, Pamela, Klaus-Dieter Altmeppen, Funda Güngör, M. Bjørn von Rimscha, Denise Voci, and Matthias Karmasin. 2016. "Mediale Grenzüberschreitungen: Methodische Herausforderungen der Unterscheidung von international, multinational, transnational und global in der Medienökonomie." In *Methodische Zugänge zur Erforschung von Medienstrukturen, Medienorganisationen und Medienstrategien*, edited by M. B. von Rimscha, Samuel Studer, and Manuel Puppis, 215–46. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Rasmussen, Nina Vindum. 2018. European Co-Productions in a Digital Single Market: EUtopia or Dystopia? *In Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, and Redvall* 2018: 105–120.

Reckwitz, Andreas. 2017. *The Invention of Creativity: Modern Society and the Culture of the New*. Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity.

Reckwitz, Andreas. 2018. *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten: Zum Strukturwandel der Moderne*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

Reckwitz, Andreas. 2020. The Society of Singularities. In *Futures of the Study of Culture*, ed. Doris Bachmann-Medick, Jens Kugele, and Ansgar Nünning, 141–154. Boston, Berlin: De Gruyter.

Redvall, Eva Novrup, and John R. Cook. 2015. Television Screenwriting—Continuity and Change. *Journal of Screenwriting* 6 (2): 131–136. https://doi.org/10.1386/josc.6.2.131_2.

Redvall, Eva Novrup. 2013. *Writing and Producing Television Drama in Denmark: From the Kingdom to the Killing*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Redvall, Eva Novrup. 2016. Film and Media Production as a Screen Idea System. In *The Creative System in Action: Understanding Cultural Production and Practice*, ed. P. McIntyre, J. Fulton, and E. Paton, 139–154. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Redvall, Eva Novrup. 2018. International Co-Production of Nordic Television Drama: The Case of *Ride Upon the Storm. In Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, and Redvall* 2018: 137–152.

Redvall, Eva Novrup. 2020. Can You Export a Production Culture? *The Team* as a European Nordic Crime Drama. *In Waade, Redvall, and Jensen* 2020: 125–145.

Redvall, Eva Novrup. 2023. Failure Studies. In *Produktionskulturen audiovisueller Medien: Neuere Perspektiven der Medienindustrie- und Produktionsforschung*, ed. Stefan Udelhofen, Dennis Göttel, and Aycha Riffi, 67–84. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Reimer, Robert C., Reinhard Zachau, and Margit M. Sinka. 2017. *German Culture Through Film: An Introduction to German Cinema*. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company Incorporated.

Renger, Sarah. 2021. 'You Never Know Who Is in Control': German Transmedia Content Development. *In Batty and Taylor* 2021: 569–583.

Rhody, André. 2022. Bewegtbild im Internet erreicht immer mehr Menschen: Ergebnisse der ARD/ZDF-Onlinestudie 2022. *Media Perspektiven* 52 (10): 487–492.

Ritzer, Ivo. 2011. *Fernsehen Wider Die Tabus: Sex, Gewalt, Zensur*. Berlin: Bertz und Fischer.

Robertson, Roland. 2014. Europeanization as Glocalization. In *European Glocalization in Global Context*, ed. Roland Robertson, 6–33. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rohrbach, Günter. 2009, first 1977. "Das Subventions-TV: Ein Plädoyer für den amphibischen Film." In Grisko 2009, 170–79.

Rose, Lacey, and Marisa Guthrie. 2015. "FX Chief John Landgraf on Content Bubble: "This Is Simply Too Much Television"." *Hollywood Reporter*, August 7, 2015. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/fx-chief-john-landgraf-content-813914.

Rosten, Leo. 1941. *Hollywood: The Movie Colony, the Movie Makers*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace and Company.

Rothemund, Kathrin. 2011. KDD-Kriminaldauerdienst: Das Brüchige im Krimi-genre. In *Die Lust am Genre: Verbrechergeschichten aus Deutschland*, ed. Rainer Rother and Julia Pattis, 197–206. Berlin: Bertz + Fischer.

Rothemund, Kathrin. 2013. *Komplexe Welten: Narrative Strategien in US-amerikanischen Fernsehserien*. Berlin: Bertz + Fischer.

Roudometof, Victor. 2016. *Glocalization: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. 2015. "Transmedia Storytelling: Industry Buzzword or New Narrative Experience?" *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 7 (2): 1–19. https://doi.org/10.5250/storyworlds.7.2.0001.

Sander, Daniel. 2018. "Schweighöfer-Serie 'You Are Wanted': Mitleid mit Matthias!". *Spiegel Online*, May 18, 2018. https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/you-are-wanted-staffel-2-mitleid-mit-matthias-schweighoefer-a-1208323.html.

Saryusz-Wolska, Magdalena, and Carolin Piorun. 2014. Verpasste Debatte: *Unsere Mütter, Unsere Väter* in Deutschland und Polen. *Osteuropa* 64 (11–12): 115–132.

Sawall, Achim. 2013. "Streaming-Plattform Germany's Gold wird aufgegeben." *golem.de*, September 16, 2013. https://www.golem.de/news/ard-und-zdf-streaming-plattform-germany-s-gold-wird-aufgegeben-1309-101614.html.

Schader, Peer. 2017. "'Babylon Berlin': 'Ein Sittengemälde im Krimi-Gewand': DWDL.de-Interview mit den Serien-Machern." *DWDL.de*, October 11, 2017. https://www.dwdl.de/interviews/63557/babylon_berlin_ein_sittengemlde_im_krimigewand/.

Schatz, Heribert, and Winfried Schulz. 1992. Qualität von Fernsehprogrammen: Kriterien und Methoden zur Beurteilung von Programmqualität im dualen Fernsehsystem. *Media Perspektiven* 11: 690–712.

Schawinski, Roger. 2008. *Die TV-Falle: Vom Sendungsbewusstsein zum Fernse-hgeschäft*. Reinbek near Hamburg: Rowohlt.

Schirmer, Nina. 2013. *Personalmanagement für Kreativschaffende: Das Konzept des Künstlerbeziehungsmanagements*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

Schlicker, Alexander. 2016. *Autor—TV-Serie—Medienwandel: (De-)Figurationen serieller Autorschaft*. Marburg: Schüren.

Schlütz, Daniela. 2016. *Quality-TV als Unterhaltungsphänomen: Entwicklung, Charakteristika, Nutzung und Rezeption von Fernsehserien wie The Sopranos, The Wire oder Breaking Bad*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Schmid, Stephan. 2016. *Papier-Fernsehen: Eine Ethnographie der digitalen TV-Produktion*. Bielefeld: transcript.

Schmitt, Jan, Steen Thorsson, and Max Scharffetter. 2018. "Babylon Berlin: Die Lehren von Weimar [online article to the news magazine *Monitor*, October 25, 2018]." Accessed December 11, 2020. https://www1.wdr.de/daserste/monitor/sendungen/babylon-berlin-138.html.

Schneider, Irmela, and Bernhard Zimmermann. 1992. Einleitung. In *Wege zur Fernsehgeschichte: Ein Interview mit Rolf Häderich, Einblicke in Seriengeschichten und Ergebnisse einer Umfrage zu Serien*, ed. Irmela Schneider and Bernhard Zimmermann, 7–8. Siegen: Universität Siegen.

Schreitmüller, Andreas, and Eckart Stein, eds. 1986. *Freispiele: Das kleine Fernsehspiel, Freiraum im Programm*. Munich: TR-Verlagsunion.

Schultze, Thomas. 2019. "Dennis Schanz und 'Skylines': Zukunftsmodell Showrunner." *Blickpunkt Film*, September 25, 2019. http://beta.blickpunktfilm.de/details/444044.

Schwaab, Herbert. 2010. "Reading Contemporary Television, das Ende der Kunst und die Krise des Fernsehens." *Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft* 2 (1): 135–39. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/2196.

Schweinitz, Jörg. 1994. "'Genre' und lebendiges Genrebewußtsein: Geschichte eines Begriffs und Probleme seiner Konzeptualisierung in der Filmwissenschaft." *montage AV* 3 (2): 99–118. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/472.

Scott, A. O. 2014. "A History Lesson, Airbrushed." *nytimes.com*, January 14, 2014. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/15/movies/generation-war-adds-a-glow-to-a-german-era.html.

Seidl, Claudius. 2014. "Die Große Quoten-Lüge." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 16, 2014. http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/medien/das-fernsehen-und-seine-zahlen-die-grosse-quoten-luege-12803540.html.

Shapiro, Stephen. 2020. Algorithmic Television in the Age of Large-Scale Customization. *Television & New Media* 21 (6): 658–663. https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476420919691.

Siebenhaar, Hans-Peter. 2012. "'Germany's Gold': ARD und ZDF investieren in Online-Videoportal." *Handelsblatt*, April 4, 2012. https://www.handelsblatt.com/unternehmen/it-medien/germanys-gold-ard-und-zdf-investieren-in-online-videoportal/6479664-all.html.

Siebert, Sabina, and Fiona Wilson. 2013. All Work and No Pay: Consequences of Unpaid Work in the Creative Industries. *Work, Employment and Society* 27 (4): 711–721. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017012474708.

Simon, Sunka. 2023. *German Crime Dramas from Network Television to Netflix*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Smith, Greg M. 2011. How Much Serial Is in Your Serial? *In Blanchet* 2011: 93–114.

Staff, A. Y.S. 2023. "Disney+ Cancels Original German Series Sultan City Amid Creative Differences." *Zenger.news*, July 20, 2023. https://www.zenger.news/2023/07/20/disney-cancels-original-german-series-sultan-city-amid-creative-differences/.

Starkey, Ken, and Christopher Barnatt. 1997. Flexible Specialization and the Reconfiguration of Television Production in the UK. *Technology Analysis &*

Strategic Management 9 (3): 271–286. https://doi.org/10.1080/095373 29708524284.

Staun, Harald, and Hernán D. Caro. 2017. "Neues Deutsches Fernsehen." *F.A.Q. Frankfurter Allgemeine Quarterly*, November 16, 2017. http://www. faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/medien/in-deutschland-beginnt-das-zeitalter-amb itionierter-serien-15282805.html.

Steinhart, Marietta. 2018. "'Parfum': Keine Herznote." *Die Zeit*, July 2, 2018. https://www.zeit.de/kultur/film/2018-07/das-parfum-serie-rezens ion-muenchner-filmfest-august-diehl/komplettansicht.

Stieve, Belinde Ruth. 2022. "Serienstudie 2022: Wer schrieb die deutschen Serien 2017 bis 2021?" Im Auftrag von Kristin Derfler und Annette Hess. Accessed June 30, 2022. https://schspin.stieve.com/2022/05/16/stieve-serienstudie-2022/.

Stollfuß, Sven. 2019. Is This Social TV 3.0? On Funk and Social Media Policy in German Public Post-Television Content Production. *Television & New Media* 20 (5): 509–524. https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476418755514.

Stollfuß, Sven. 2021. The Platformisation of Public Service Broadcasting in Germany: The Network 'Funk' and the Case of *Druck/Skam Germany*. *Critical Studies in Television* 16 (2): 126–144. https://doi.org/10.1177/174960 2021996536.

Straubhaar, Joseph D. 2007. *World Television: From Global to Local*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Ströbele, Carolin. 2017. "Anke Greifeneder: 'In Deutschland wird ein Format so oft produziert, bis es tot ist'." *Die Zeit*, November 28, 2017. https://www.zeit.de/kultur/film/2017-11/anke-greifeneder-tur ner-broadcasting-4-blocks-produzentin/komplettansicht.

Ströbele, Carolin. 2018. "Kontrakt '18: 'Serienautoren sind die Romanautoren der heutigen Zeit'." *Die Zeit*, June 9, 2018. https://www.zeit.de/kultur/ film/2018-06/kontrakt-18-drehbuch-autoren-rechte-annette-hess?utm_ref errer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.startpage.com%2F.

Sundet, Vilde Schanke. 2020. From 'Secret' Online Teen Drama to International Cult Phenomenon: The Global Expansion of *SKAM* and Its Public Service Mission. *Critical Studies in Television* 15 (1): 69–90. https://doi.org/10. 1177/1749602019879856.

Sundet, Vilde Schanke. 2021. 'Youthification' of Drama Through Real-Time Storytelling: A Production Study of Blank and the Legacy of *SKAM*. *Critical*

Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies 16 (2): 145–162. https://doi.org/10.1177/17496020211005311.

SWR, and unnamed author. 2018. "Drehstart der deutsch-französischen Serie 'Eden'." News release. April 26, 2018. Accessed August 12, 2020. https://www.swr.de/unternehmen/kommunikation/26-drehstart-der-deutsch-franzoesischen-serie-eden/-/id=10563098/did=21588952/nid=10563098/15ou206/index.html.

Sydow, Jörg., and Arnold Windeler. 2001. Project Networks and Changing Industry Practices Collaborative Content Production in the German Television Industry. *Organization Studies* 22 (6): 1035–1060. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840601226006.

Sydow, Jörg., and Arnold Windeler. 2004a. Projektnetzwerke: Management von (mehr als) temporären Systemen. In *Organisation der Content-Produktion*, ed. Jörg. Sydow and Arnold Windeler, 37–54. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Sydow, Jörg., and Arnold Windeler. 2004b. Vernetzte Content-Produktion und die Vielfalt möglicher Organisationsformen. *In Sydow and Windeler* 2004: 1–17.

Szalai, Georg. 2022. "HBO Max 'Ceasing' Original Programming Efforts in Parts of Europe." *Variety*, July 4, 2022. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/hbo-max-halts-originals-production-europe-1235175293/.

Szczepanik, Petr. 2013. "Wie viele Schritte bis zur Drehfassung? Eine politische Historiographie des Drehbuchs." *montage AV* 22 (1): 102–36. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/425.

Szczepanik, Petr. 2018. Breaking Through the East-European Ceiling: Minority Co-Production and the New Symbolic Economy of Small-Market Cinemas. *In Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, and Redvall* 2018: 153–173.

Szczepanik, Petr. 2021. *Screen Industries in East-Central Europe*. London: British Film Institute; Bloomsbury.

Teurlings, Jan. 2013. Unblackboxing Production: What Media Studies Can Learn from Actor-Network Theory. *In Valck and Teurlings* 2013: 101–116.

Thompson, Robert J. 1996. *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER*. New York: Continuum.

Thompson, Robert J. 2007. "Preface." In McCabe and Akass 2007, xvii–xx.

Turner, Graeme. 2018. Netflix and the Reconfiguration of the Australian Television Market. *Media Industries Journal* 5 (2): 129–142. https://doi.org/10.3998/mij.15031809.0005.208.

Udelhofen, Stefan, Dennis Göttel, and Aycha Riffi, eds. 2023. *Produktionskulturen audiovisueller Medien: Neuere Perspektiven der Medienindustrie- und Produktionsforschung*. Produktionskulturen der Medien. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

van Dijck, José, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal. 2018. *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Volker, Lilienthal. 2009. "Integration als Programmauftrag." *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, February 17, 2009. https://www.bpb.de/apuz/32158/integration-als-programmauftrag?p=all.

Vonderau, Patrick. 2013. "Theorien zur Produktion: Ein Überblick." *montage AV* 22 (1): 9–32. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/421.

Waade, Anne Marit, Eva Novrup Redvall, and Pia Majbritt Jensen. 2020. Transnational Television Drama? Lessons Learned from Danish Drama. *In Waade, Redvall, and Jensen* 2020: 1–22.

Wayne, Michael L. 2018. Netflix, Amazon, and Branded Television Content in Subscription Video on-Demand Portals. *Media, Culture & Society* 40 (5): 725–741. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717736118.

Wayne, Michael L. 2021. Netflix Audience Data, Streaming Industry Discourse, and the Emerging Realities of 'Popular' Television. *Media, Culture & Society* 44 (2): 193–209. https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437211022723.

WDR mediagroup. 2013. "Germany's Gold wird nicht weiterverfolgt: Wirtschaftlicher Erfolg nach den Vorgaben des Kartellamts nicht gesichert." News release. September 16, 2013. https://www.presseportal.de/pm/59521/2556792.

Weber, Tanja. 2013. Betty's Glocal Love Affair: Kulturelle Adaptionsstrategien am Beispiel von *Yo Soy Betty, La Fea. In Eichner, Mikos, and Winter* 2013: 269–286.

Weber, Tanja. 2019. "*Post Quality TV* oder warum es sich doch lohnt (anders) über Qualität im Fernsehen nachzudenken." *MEDIENwissenschaft* 36 (3): 230–48. https://doi.org/10.17192/ep2019.3.8169.

Weber, Tanja. 2020. "Ausblick – Reflexionen über die Praktik der Grimme-Preisvergabe aus der Perspektive des Medienwissenschaftlichen Qualitätsdiskurses." In *Medienqualität: Diskurse aus dem Grimme-Institut zu Fernsehen, Internet und Radio: Diskurse aus dem Grimme-Institut zu Fernsehen, Internet und Radio*, edited by Frauke Gerlach, 215–20. Bielefeld: transcript.

Weis, Manuel. 2022. "Mit Jürgen Vogel: Drehstart für erste deutsche Starzplay-Serie." *DWDL.de*, July 25, 2022. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/88915/mit_juergen_vogel_starzplay_bestellt_erste_deutsche_serie_/%20@.

Weissmann, Elke. 2015. "Problems with Quality." *Critical Studies in Television: CST Online*, December 10, 2015. https://cstonline.net/problems-with-quality-by-elke-weissmann/.

Wessler, Hartmut, and Michael Brüggemann. 2012. *Transnationale Kommunikation*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender and Society* 1 (2): 125–51. https://www.jstor.org/stable/189945.

Wietstock, Ellen. 2003. "'Die Innovation findet im Fernsehen und nicht im Kino statt': Interview mit Heike Hempel." *black box Filmpolitischer Informationsdienst* (not specified.). http://www.blackbox-filminfo.de/html/pdf/innovation.pdf. Accessed March 7, 2017.

Williams, Raymond. 1968. *Communications*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Williams, Raymond. 1984, first 1975. *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. New York: Schocken Books.

Windeler, Arnold. 2004. Organisation der TV-Produktion in Projektnetzwerken: Zur Bedeutung von Produkt- und Industriespezifika. *In Sydow and Windeler* 2004: 55–76.

Windeler, Arnold, Anja Lutz, and Carsten Wirth. 2001. "Netzwerksteuerung durch Selektion: Die Produktion von Fernsehserien in Projektnetzwerken." *montage AV* 10 (1): 91–124. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/94.

Yorke, John. 2013. *Into the Woods: How Stories Work and Why We Tell Them*. London: Penguin.

Zabel, Christian. 2009. *Wettbewerb im deutschen TV-Produktionssektor: Produktionsprozesse, Innovationsmanagement und Timing-Strategien*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Zahn, Volker A. 2018. "Kontrakt '18." Accessed August 11, 2023. http://kontrakt18.org/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2014. "Christine Strobl – die resolute Anti-Süßstoff-Kämpferin: Eine DWDL-Aufsteigerin des Jahres 2014." *DWDL.de*, December 10, 2014. https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/48831/christine_strobl__die_resolute_antisuessstoffkaempferin/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2015a. "Die Totengräber und ihr Wunsch, höher zu fliegen." *DWDL.de*, February 11, 2015. http://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/49682/die_totengraeber_und_ihr_wunsch_hoeher_zu_fliegen/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2015b. "Europas neue Serien-Reife: Jeder macht's mit jedem." *DWDL.de*, April 27, 2015. http://www.dwdl.de/magazin/50725/europas_neue_serienreife_jeder_machts_mit_jedem/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2015c. "Gewagtes Serien-Abenteuer am Kap der guten Hoffnung." *DWDL.de*, July 23, 2015. https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/51844/gewagtes_serienabenteuer_am_kap_der_guten_hoffnung/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2015d. "Bessere Serien ohne Redakteursfernsehen?" *DWDL.de*, October 29, 2015. https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/53232/bessere_serien_ohne_redakteursfernsehen/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2017a. "Endlich mehr Output für High-End made in Germany: Serien-Preview 2017." *DWDL.de*, January 10, 2017. https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/59485/endlich_mehr_output_fuer_highend_made_in_germany/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2017b. "2.200 Stunden Material—und nun auch noch ein Nachdreh: TV-Mammutprojekt 'Babylon Berlin'." *DWDL.de*, February 8,

2017. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/60035/2200_stunden_material__ und_nun_auch_noch_ein_nachdreh/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2018. "'Gone' bei Vox: Wenn Mr. Big Dienst nach Vorschrift macht." *DWDL.de*, January 24, 2018. https://www.dwdl.de/meinungen/ 65146/gone_bei_vox_wenn_mr_big_dienst_nach_vorschrift_macht/?utm_ source=&utm_medium=&utm_campaign=&utm_term=.

Zarges, Torsten. 2019. "Die Streaming-Zukunft: Radikale Schritte zur 'Heimat to go'? Immer mehr Video-on-Demand-Studien." *DWDL.de*, October 16, 2019. https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/74453/die_streamingzukunft_r adikale_schritte_zur_heimat_to_go/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2020a. "Serien als Erzähler von Diversität: 'Schwarze sieht man als Drogendealer oder Prostituierte'." *DWDL.de*, March 16, 2020. https:// www.dwdl.de/magazin/76535/schwarz_sieht_man_als_drogendealer_oder_ prostituierte/?utm_source=&utm_medium=&utm_campaign=&utm_term=.

Zarges, Torsten. 2020b. "'Man muss die psychologische Verfassung des Zuschauers kennen': Marc Conrad im DWDL.de-Interview." *DWDL.de*, December 1, 2020. https://www.dwdl.de/interviews/80488/man_muss_ die_psychologische_verfassung_des_zuschauers_kennen/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2021a. "Produzenten fordern lokale Investitionspflicht für Netflix & Co. 'Marktpluralität stärken'." *DWDL.de*, July 1, 2021. https:// www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/83450/produzenten_fordern_lokale_investitions pflicht_fuer_netflix__co/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2021b. "Network Movie will weiter wachsen. Verzerrt das den Wettbewerb? Expansion der ZDF-Tochter." *DWDL.de*, October 20, 2021. https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/84985/network_movie_will_wei ter_wachsen_verzerrt_das_den_wettbewerb/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2021c. "Neues Geschäftsfeld Serie—mit ein bisschen Hilfe von Julien Bam: Expansion der Load Studios." *DWDL.de*, October 22, 2021. https://www.dwdl.de/nachrichten/84998/neues_geschaeftsfeld_ serie__mit_ein_bisschen_hilfe_von_julien_bam/.

Zarges, Torsten. 2022a. "Netflix: Von den Regeln der Schwerkraft auf den Boden geholt: US-Studios im Umbruch." *DWDL.de*, May 12, 2022. https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/87781/netflix_von_den_regeln_der_sch werkraft_auf_den_boden_geholt/?utm_source=&utm_medium=&utm_cam paign=&utm_term=.

Zarges, Torsten. 2022b. "'Goldgräberzeit vorbei': Das Streaming-Risiko der Constantin Film: Produktionsriesen im Umbruch." *DWDL.de*, July 8, 2022. https://www.dwdl.de/magazin/88581/goldgraeberzeit_vorbei_das_ streamingrisiko_der_constantin_film/.

ZDF. 2023. "Quantum: Das Formatlabor." Accessed May 10, 2023. https:// www.zdf.de/filme/das-kleine-fernsehspiel/quantum-das-formatlabor-des-kle inen-fernsehspiels-serien-100.html.

Zubayr, Camille, and Heinz Gerhard. 2019. Tendenzen im Zuschauerver-halten: Fernsehgewohnheiten und Fernsehreichweiten im Jahr 2018. *Media Perspektiven* 49 (3): 90–106.

Zuboff, Shoshana. 2019. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for the Future at the New Frontier of Power*. London: Profile.

Industry Panels and Lectures (Participant Observations)

Anschütz, Jonas. 2015. "Europäische Serienfinanzierung/Co-Production und Sales." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 20.

Arndt, Stefan, Alexandra Heidrich, Stefan Schnorr, Julia Vismann, and Marcus Wolter. 2017. "Neue Player, frisches Geld: Goldene Zeiten für Film und TV?" Republica/Media Convention, Berlin, May 8. Accessed August 21, 2017. https://re-publica.com/de/17/session/neue-player-frisches-geld-goldene-zeiten-film-und-tv.

Bartel, Hauke. 2017. "Serial Storytelling im linearen Fernsehen – Erfahrungen aus dem CLUB DER ROTEN BÄNDER / Case Study." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 10.

Berben, Oliver, Sophie von Uslar, Rüdiger Böss, Kathrin Bullemer, and John Hopewell. 2020. "Constantin Film Showcase." Berlinale Series Market, Berlin, February 24.

Berry, Ruth, Rodolphe Bluet, Robert Franke, and Beatrice Springborn. 2023. "Adapting to the Market: Panel." Berlinale Series Market, Berlin, February 20.

Blumenberg, Lisa. 2018. "Quality TV als europäische Co-Produktion: Case Study BAD BANKS." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 17.

Buffoni, Laura, Rachel Eggebeen, Jantje Friese, Meta Soerensen, Fatima Varhos, Anna Winger, and Manori Ravindran. 2020. "Producing with Netflix: Presentation." Berlinale Series Market, Berlin, April 26.

Desmarais, Jimmy. 2016. "Essential Components of a Co-Production." European TV Drama Series Lab, Berlin, May 2.

Eschke, Gunther. 2018. "Überall Quality TV? Qualitätsmerkmale von High End Serien (Case Study)." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 15.

Fey, Christoph, Alex Boden, Philipp Kreuzer, and Danna Stern. 2020. "Terms of Trade: Global Streamers Investing in Local Originals." Berlinale Series Market, Berlin, February 24.

Friedrichs, Christian. 2017. "Spannungsfelder europäischer TV-Co-Produktion." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 11.

Greifeneder, Anke. 2017. "Neue Player, Neue Serien/Case Study: TNT SERIE." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 10.

Grob, Veronika, and Oliver Zeller. 2016. "Serienfinanzierung in Deutschland—Möglichkeiten von Förderprogrammen." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, October 27.

Hackfort, Hanno, Bob Konrad, and Richard Kropf. 2017. "High End Serien in Deutschland Entwickeln—Case Studies." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 10.

Jastfelder, Frank. 2018. "Deutsche Quality Serien im Pay TV/Case Study SKY DEUTSCHLAND (BABYLON BERLIN, ACHT TAGE, DAS BOOT, DER PASS)." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 16.

Käumle, Anja. 2015. "Internationale und nationale Serienvermarktung, Case Study DEUTSCHLAND 83." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 20.

Kienlin, Amelie von. 2017. "International Co-Production—Packaging and Sales." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 10.

Kosack, Joachim. 2017. "Serienproduzieren in Deutschland—Marktcheck mit Ideen der Teilnehmenden." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 11.

Kosack, Joachim. 2018. "Serienproduzieren in Deutschland—Marktcheck mit Ideen der Teilnehmenden." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 17.

Lippold, Henriette, and Johanna Kraus. 2019. Talk on *Charité* with Lothar Mikos and students at the Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf. Potsdam, May 31.

Root, Antony, Lars Blomgren, Marcus Ammon, Caroline Benjo, and Elsa Keslassy. 2020. "In the Trenches: TV Production Roundtable." Berlinale Series Market, Berlin, February 26.

Schulte, Carsten, and Timo Gößler. 2017. "Writers' Room Light?! Deutsche Adaption des Konzepts und dessen Konsequenzen im Herstellungsprozess/ Case Study." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 11.

Tereszkiewicz, Rémi. 2020. "Navigation Through the European TV Landscape [Presentation within the panel 'The Streaming Revolution']." Berlinale Series Market, Berlin, February 24.

Tereszkiewicz, Rémi, Arnim Butzen, Sergio Oslé, Soumya Sriraman, and Filippa Wallestam. 2020. "Opening Panel: The Streaming Revolution." Berlinale Series Market, Berlin, February 24.

Thielen, Barbara, and Joachim Kosack. 2015. "Serien-Producing in Deutschland (Status quo und Tendenzen)." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 19.

Winger, Jörg. 2018. "High End Drama in Deutschland Produzieren: Case Studies DEUTSCHLAND 83/86, HACKERVILLE." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 15.

Winger, Jörg. 2019. "High End Drama in Deutschland Produzieren: Von DEUTSCHLAND 83/86/89 zu HACKERVILLE." Winterclass Serial Writing and Producing, Potsdam, November 14.

Wouda, Esther. 2016. "Second Screen: Making Content Contagious." European TV Drama Series Lab, Berlin, June 7.

Interviews

Bartel, Hauke. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. April 23, 2018. Köln.

Behnke, Martin. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. March 15, 2018. Berlin.

Berger, Edward. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. November 26, 2018. Online.

Borries, Achim von. 2019. Interview by F. Krauß. February 21, 2019. Berlin.

Cossen, Florian. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. October 30, 2018. Berlin.

Eschke, Gunther. 2015. Interview by F. Krauß. October 6, 2015. Berlin.

Friese, Jantje. 2019. Interview by F. Krauß. March 1, 2019. Berlin.

Gleim, Bernhard. 2016. Interview by F. Krauß. July 1, 2016. Hamburg.

Gößler, Timo. 2017. Interview by F. Krauß. September 26, 2017. Berlin.

Hackfort, Hanno, Bob Konrad, and Richard Kropf. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. February 14, 2018. Berlin.

Harris, Benjamin. 2022. Interview by F. Krauß. December 19, 2022. Berlin.

Haslauer, Lucia and Lucas Schmidt. 2015. Interview by F. Krauß and students at the University of Siegen. July 8, 2015. Online.

Henke, Gebhard. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. March 8, 2018. Cologne.

Hess, Annette. 2019. Interview by F. Krauß. March 7, 2019. Berlin.

Honeck, Christian. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. March 20, 2018. Munich.

Jastfelder, Frank. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. November 16, 2018. Potsdam.

Jessen, Liane. 2019. Interview by F. Krauß. January 17, 2019. Frankfurt on the Main.

Kosack, Joachim. 2019. Interview by F. Krauß. January 29, 2019. Potsdam.

Kraus, Johanna. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. October 25, 2018. Berlin.

Kromschröder, Jan. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. February 2, 2018. By phone.

Lange, Bernd. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. November 21, 2018. Berlin.

Leibfried, Ulrike. 2016. Interview by F. Krauß. June 16, 2016. Berlin.

Rauhaus, Martin. 2016. Interview by F. Krauß. June 16, 2016. By phone.

Scharpen, Lasse. 2019. Interview by F. Krauß. June 20, 2019. Berlin.

Simionescu, Claudia and Harald Steinwender. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. November 7, 2018. Munich.

Sperl, Gabriela. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. November 22, 2018. Berlin.

Stuckmann, Stefan. 2016. Interview by F. Krauß. May 13, 2016. Berlin.

Winger, Jörg. 2017. Interview by F. Krauß. May 15, 2017. Berlin.

Zöllner, Martina. 2018. Interview by F. Krauß. October 26, 2018. Berlin.

Index