

11-11-2004

Westwinds: The Impact of American TV Shows on German Television and Culture in the 1960s

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**Paper for the 2004 ASA-Conference:
 “Westwinds: The Impact of American TV Shows on German Television
 and Culture in the 1960s”**

Coming on the heels of the economic “miracle,” as West German and international observers described the dramatic turnaround of the 1950s, West German consumer culture fully came of age in the 1960s. The most severe consequences of postwar deprivations like starvation, rationing or the focus on sheer economic survival became a thing of the past for most West Germans. The consumerist cornucopia promised particularly by the victorious United States, long desired and emulated, increasingly became a lived reality for quickly expanding segments of the population in the Federal Republic. From increased motorization and home ownership to a rapid influx of household and electrical appliances, increased disposable income fueled a leap towards a consumer culture already nascent in the late 1950s. West Germans worked less, spend more and began their eternal love affair with mass tourism. By the second half of the 1960s, commentators spoke of the emergence of a “modern way of life” and “new society” in West Germany.¹

The changes in the media landscape in many ways correlated with and partially fueled these transformations in the society at large. The most significant trend in this respect was that television finally emerged as the primary medium in West Germany in the 1960s, designating radio to the back seat of popular culture and laying a body blow to cinema and its viewing audiences. The triumphant victory march of television can be quickly gleaned in some key demographic changes: In 1960, nearly 600 million tickets were sold in German cinemas; by 1970 that number had been reduced to almost a fourth its earlier size—160 million. Radio ownership still increased from roughly 15 to 20 million between 1960 and 1970, driven largely by the sale of portable compact radios and the concomitant expansion of youth-oriented popular music. In the same 10-year period, television ownership increased from about 3.5 million to over 15 million viewing families and continued to grow to nearly 19 million sets by the mid-1970s. In many respects, West German society thus replicated the media transitions which had decisively shaped US culture—only with approximately a decade time-lag.²

Additionally, it is paramount to emphasize that the German TV set and what it delivered were hardly the same in 1960 and 1970. In 1960, German viewers were relegated to one state-operated channel (ARD—Allgemeine Rundfunksgesellschaft

¹ For two explorations that discuss these and other changes see Axel Schildt, “Materieller Wohlstand—pragmatische Politik—kulturelle Umbrüche. Die 60er Jahre in der Bundesrepublik,” und Wolfgang Ruppert, “Zur Konsumwelt der 60er Jahre,” in: Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried und Karl Christian Lammers (eds.), *Dynamische Zeiten: Die 60er Jahre in beiden deutschen Gesellschaften* (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 2000), 21-53 und 752-767.

² For an expanded discussion of these trends see Konrad Dussel, “Vom Radio- zum Fernsehzeitalter. Medienumbrueche in sozialgeschichtlicher Perspektive,” in: Schildt et als., *Dynamische Zeiten*, 673-694; and Knut Hickethier, *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*, Chapter 8. The numbers are from p. 201 of Hickethier’s survey.

Deutschlands) which went on the air from the late afternoon until midnight. The programs included news shows and the ever-popular sporting events, but were dominated by programs laden with educational and culturally elevating broadcasts. Programming executives placed a premium on what viewers should like—despite the recurring calls for more entertainment shows reflected in all popular surveys undertaken since the mid-1950s. In contrast, by 1970 color television sets were available to those who could afford them and all TVs offered three channels and broadcast programs produced at higher professional standards with a significant and ever-increasing number of entertainment shows, including imported American series. Even though West Germany still prohibited commercial television and all three channels operated under state supervision, the television viewing experience had been radically and irreversibly altered by the end of the 1960s.

Before focusing on the main topic of this paper—the increased presence of US series and their impact on the development of German television—I want to briefly highlight the important ramifications of the expansion to several channels on West-German television. The main seachange occurred in 1963 with the introduction of the second channel (ZDF—Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen). Not only did this for the first time create competitive pressure and a true alternative to the established channel. The second channel was also created under different economic conditions: whereas the ARD received most of its revenue from viewer fees, the ZDF fee contribution was limited to only 30 percent of its overall budget. From its inception, therefore, the program officials at the ZDF felt increased pressure to create their own revenue flow through initially two hours of broadcasting during which commercial interruptions were permitted. This more commercially inclined approach also led to more openness on the part of the programming executives to look towards entertainment programs to attract larger viewing audiences and sources of revenue. The first director of the second channel almost immediately signaled this significant shift in a speech soon after taking office: “The steady flow of entertainment programs must provide the foundation into which all others are embedded and among which others will stand out.” Not coincidentally, then, the second channel quickly emerged as a leader in entertainment shows and forced the ARD to follow suit more quickly than its program directors had desired.³

The increased import of American series was part of this new compromise with West German TV viewers. What began as a trickle of US shows on German television in the late 1950s with series like *Fury* and *Lassie* turned into a significant chunk of broadcasting time by the late 1960s and early 1970s. In what follows, I would like to pursue the following three set of questions in connection with this development:

1. Which American series and genres were the most popular on West German television in the 1960s and the early 1970s, and how did these shows rate in the United States?
2. What impact did this increased import of US television series have on the development of German programs, their contents and their narrative structures?
3. How important was this transfer of cultural programming on the overall West German culture of the 1960s, and how does it fit into the ongoing debate about the Americanization of the global media?

³ Konrad Dussel, “Der Streit um das Grosse U: Die Programmgestaltung des öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunks und der Einfluss der Publikumsinteressen, 1949-1989,” in: *Achiv für Sozialgeschichte* 35 (1995), 278-281 und Hickethier, *Die Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*, 215-223.

I. American TV Series on German Television in the 1960s and 1970s

If one takes a long view back over West German television history in the postwar period from the current time, it is relatively easy to divide the roughly 50 years history into three fairly distinct phases. The first phase is captured by the 1950s, a time period during which West German television got started, established its national presence and emerged as a significant, though secondary, medium. From the early 1960s to the mid-1980s, television became the primary medium. The introduction of color television, the expansion to three state-operated channels, the vast extension of the network schedule, the increased professionalization and improved aesthetic standards were part and parcel of the development of television in West German just as much as the continued, steady dose of American series imported during this time period. The last phase of development started in the mid-1980s and continues to the current day. It was initiated by the introduction of commercial television channels in 1984 as alternatives to the existing government-supervised programs. The “dual system,” as it is known, allows for the uneasy coexistence of and competition between established state-operated channels, which are still partially funded by a user fee, and the new private television stations, which survive solely by advertising dollars. As might be expected, this new direction has led to a renewed rise, indeed a veritable flood, of American TV series in the late 1980s and 1990s which alone enabled private television stations to fill their available airtime in an expedient and cost-effective manner.

With this context in mind, there is no doubt that the first wave of imported American series hit the German shores in the 1960s. Prior to 1960, there were only a few US series that had been shown on West German television: *Fury*, *Lassie*, *Circus Boy* (*Corky und der Zirkus*) and *The Adventures of Rin Tin Tin* (*Rin-Tin-Tin*). Beginning in the early 1960s, even prior to the arrival of the second national channel, a number of shows were added which quite literally became the trendsetters for the rapid expansion of imported US series. In 1960, the ARD aired the first three series of *77 Sunset Strip*, to be followed by a second, longer run of the series between 1962-66 (45 episodes). The first episode of the most popular US import ever, *Bonanza*, premiered on German television in 1962; the series continued, with interruptions, until the mid-1970s. Other new arrivals in the early 1960s were *The Donna Reed Show* (*Mutter ist die Allerbeste*—1962-65), *Laramie* (*Am Fuss der blauen Berge*, first run 1960-65), *Maverick* (first run, 1962-64) and *Perry Mason* (1960-62). The inception of the second channel in 1963 with its increased reliance on entertainment programming further accelerated this development. Maybe this internal dynamic of television, namely the increased competition between the two channels, explains one of the most curious and paradoxical developments of West German television history—the fact that the first peak of American imported series lay between 1968 and 1972, which were precisely the same years when German anti-Americanism due to the war in Vietnam was at its height.⁴

⁴ Angela Krewani mentions the great increase of American series in the late 1960s and early 1970s in her article, “Amerikanisierung am Nachmittag: Amerikanische Serien in ARD und ZDF. Ein Überblick über quantitative Entwicklungen,” in: Irmela Schneider (ed.), *Amerikanische Einstellungen: Deutsches Fernsehen und US-amerikanische Produktionen* (Heidelberg, Carl Winter Verlag, 1992), 176. See *Ibid.*, 128-135 for the information on individual American series broadcast on West German television.

The following list provides a more comprehensive—though not complete—overview of the American shows which appeared on West German television in the 1960s and 1970s⁵:

American Title, Network Years Aired and Episodes	German Title, Channel Years Aired and Episodes
<i>The Adventures of Ron Tin Tin</i> ABC, 1954-56, 52 episodes	<i>Rin-Tin-Tin</i> ARD, 1956, 5 episodes ARD, 1961-63, 16 episodes
<i>Banyon</i> NBC, 1971, 13 episodes	<i>Los Angeles 1937</i> ARD 1974-75, 11 episodes
<i>Bert D'Angelo, Superstar</i> ABC, 1976, 13 episodes	<i>Superstar</i> ARD, 1977-78, 12 episodes
<i>Bonanza</i> NBC, 1959-73, 310 episodes	<i>Bonanza</i> ARD, 1962-66, 26 episodes ZDF, 1967-69, 100 episodes ZDF, 1973-77, 130 episodes
<i>Bronco</i> ABC, 1958-61, 68 episodes	<i>Bronco</i> ZDF, 1967-69, 36 episodes
<i>Cade's County</i> CBS, 1971, 24 episodes	<i>Sheriff Cade</i> ARD, 1972-73, 13 episodes
<i>Charlie's Angels</i> ABC, 1976-81, 121 episodes	<i>Drei Engel für Charlie</i> ZDF, 1979-80, 26 episodes ZDF, 1983, 11 episodes
<i>Circus Boy</i> NBC/ABC, 1956-58, 67 episodes	<i>Corky und der Zirkus</i> ARD, 1957-62, 46 episodes
<i>Columbo</i> NBC, 1971-77, 23 episodes	<i>Columbo</i> ARD, 1975-76, 19 episodes
<i>The D.A.</i> NBC, 1971-72, 13 episodes	<i>Der Ankläger</i> ARD-WWF, 1976-77, 10 episodes
<i>Dallas</i> CBS, 1978	<i>Dallas</i> ARD, 1981-85, 168 episodes
<i>The Donna Reed Show</i> ABC, 1958-62, 275 episodes	<i>Mutter ist die Allerbeste</i> ARD, WWF, 1962-65, 41 episodes
<i>Dragnet</i> NBC, 1951-58, 300 episodes NBC, 1967-70, 98 episodes	<i>Polizeibericht</i> ARD-WWF, 1968-71, 45 episodes

⁵ This is an abbreviated list of shows put together by Irmela Schneider. See her article, "Vom Sunset Strip zur Southfork Ranch. Wege der amerikanischen Serien zum deutschen Publikum (von den Anfaengen bis 1985)," in Schneider (ed.), *Amerikanische Einstellungen*, 128-135.

**American Title, Network
Years Aired and Episodes**

Dynasty
ABC, 1981

The FBI
ABC, 1965-74, 208 episodes

The Fugitive
ABC, 1963-67, 120 episodes

Gunsmoke
CBS, 1955-75

Hawaii Five-O
CBS, 1968-80, 268 episodes

Holocaust
NBC, 1978

Honey West
ABC, 1965-66, 30 episodes

Ironside
NBC, 1967-75, 185 episodes

Kojak
CBS, 1973-77, 110 episodes

Kung Fu
ABC, 1972-75, 72 episodes

Laramie
NBC, 1959-63, 124 episodes

Mannix
CBS, 1967-74, 192 episodes

Marcus Welby, M.D.
ABC, 1969-1976, 172 episodes

Maverick
ABC, 1957-64, 138 episodes

Mc Cloud
NBC, 1971-77, 33 episodes

**German Title, Channel
Years Aired and Episodes**

Der Denver Clan
ZDF, 1981-85, 87 episodes

FBI
ARD, 1968-72, 41 episodes

Auf der Flucht
ARD, 1965-67, 26 episodes

Rauchende Colts
ARD, 1967-73, 72 episodes
ZDF, 1977-85, 126 episodes

Hawaii Fünf-Null
ARD, 1971-72, 27 episodes

Holocaust: Die Geschichte der Familie Weiss
ARD, 1982, 4 episodes

Privatdetektive Honey West
ARD-WWF, 1967-68, 18 episodes

Der Chef
ARD, 1969-70, 18 episodes
ARD, 1974, 13 episodes
ARD, 1979-80, 26 episodes

Einsatz in Manhattan
ARD, 1974-78, 61 episodes
ARD, 1985, 26 episodes

Kung Fu
ZDF, 1975-76, 39 episodes

Am Fuss der blauen Berge
ARD, 1960-65, 82 episodes
ARD, 1969-70, 24 episodes

Mannix
ARD, 1969-73, 45 episodes

Dr. med Marcus Welby
ARD-WWF, 1972-75, 51 episodes

Maverick
ARD, 1962-64, 7 episodes
ARD, 1967, 14 episodes

Ein Sheriff in New York
ARD, 1978, 13 episodes
ARD, 1981, 13 episodes

American Title, Network Years Aired and Episodes	German Title, Channel Years Aired and Episodes
<i>The Mod Squad</i> ABC, 1968-72, 124 episodes	<i>Twen-Police</i> ARD, 1970-71, 18 episodes
<i>M Squad</i> NBC, 1957-59, 117 episodes	<i>Dezernat M</i> ZDF, 1966, 26 episodes ZDF 1968, 26 episodes
<i>Nakia</i> ABC, 1974, 15 episodes	<i>Nakia, der Indianersheriff</i> ARD, 1975, 8 episodes
<i>The Outsider</i> CBS, 1968-69, 26 episodes	<i>Der Einzelgänger</i> ARD, 1970, 2 episodes
<i>Perry Mason</i> CBS, 1957-65, 245 episodes	<i>Perry Mason</i> ARD, 1960-62, 15 episodes
<i>The Rockford Files</i> NBC, 1974-80, 108 episodes	<i>Detektiv Rockford: Anruf Genügt</i> ARD, 1976-80, 66 episodes
<i>The Rookies</i> ABC, 1972-76, 88 episodes	<i>Die Rookies—Neu im Einsatz</i> ARD-WWF, 1978, 11 episodes
<i>Roots</i> ABC, 1977, 12 episodes	<i>Roots</i> ARD, 1978, 11 episodes
<i>77 Sunset Strip</i> ABC, 1958-64, 205 episodes	<i>77 Sunset Strip</i> ARD, 1960, 3 episodes ARD, 1962-66, 45 episodes
<i>Starsky and Hutch</i> ABC, 1975-80, 92 episodes	<i>Starsky und Hutch</i> ZDF, 1974-79, 25 episodes
<i>The Streets of San Francisco</i> ABC, 1972-77, 120 episodes	<i>Die Strassen von San Francisco</i> ARD, 1974-79, 96 episodes ARD, 1982-83, 37 episodes
<i>Vegas</i> ABC, 1978-81, 67 episodes	<i>Vegas</i> ZDF, 1980-81, 26 episodes ZDF, 1984, 13 episodes

There are a number of aspects which very quickly stand out from this overview. The first is that it includes an almost equal number of popular, memorable as well as little-known and unsuccessful series. The reason for this was that American production companies sold not individual series but only packages of programs to international purchasers. The imports thus included the good, the bad, and the ugly. The second aspect which becomes apparent very quickly is how many of the most popular American shows never made it to Germany. Only one of the longest-running situation comedies of the 1950s and early 1960s was ever shown on West German television: *The Donna Reed Show* (*Mutter ist die Allerbeste*). Neither *I Love Lucy* or *The Adventures of Ozzie and*

Harriet nor *Leave it to Beaver* ever entertained German audiences in the 1960s, nor were German audiences exposed to such later signature series as *M*A*S*H** or *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*.⁶

One other key feature of this cultural transfer immediately becomes apparent: there was a clear and consistent preference for American western series and, even more so, crime shows. For the two decades in question, these two genres made up almost half of all US import series represented on German television, with detective series taking the lion share, an issue I will return to later in greater detail.

This increase of imported shows in general and of American series in particular is also supported by quantitative studies. Although the data for the early 1960s are more difficult to find, it seems safe to say that fewer than 5 percent of West German programming in these early years consisted of international shows. By 1973, in contrast, the overall percentage of imports had increased to 25-30 percent of West German programming (23 percent for the ARD and 30 percent for the ZDF), with American series increasing their share steadily as the years progressed and making up the bulk of non-German broadcasts (roughly 30-40%). In West Germany, this trend actually receded slightly by the early 1980s, before the percentage of imported shows spiked up sharply with the introduction of commercial television in 1984.

This general trend also held steady across Western Europe from the 1960s through the 1980s, even though with significant regional variations, in that both small countries (like Ireland or Finland) or countries with commercial television usually relied more heavily on international, specifically American, imports. Overall, roughly 30 percent of national programming across Western Europe consisted of imports by the early 1980s, while each decade saw a steady increase of American series; by the mid-1980s, around 45 percent of all West European TV imports originated in the United States.⁷

A similar development appeared in a related aspect of West German television, the broadcasting of feature films. Here as well, American imports became increasingly prominent in the 1960s and 1970s. As Irmela Schneider has demonstrated, the ongoing love affair with Hollywood films first found its expression on German TV screens in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By the early 1960s, nearly 20 percent of films screened originated either in the United States or Great Britain. Between 1963 and 1977, American and British films contributed nearly 50 percent of all imports, clearly dominating the broadcast times set aside in West German programming for the screening of feature films. Moreover, it was during this same time span (1963-77) that American films quickly surpassed British movies in terms of popularity: while the majority of

⁶ For a list of the longest-running Situation Comedies of the 1950s and early 1960s, see J. Fred MacDonald, *One Nation under Television: The Rise and Decline of Network TV* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1994), 75. For a discussion of the packages sold to international purchasers, see Chapter 8.

⁷ My data here are based on a three studies which analyzed national TV programs over short periods of time in order to calculate the percentages of imports in general and the percentages of American series in particular: Tapio Varis, "The International Flow of Television Programs," in: *Journal of Communication* 34 (1984), 146; Winand Gellner, "Hollywood im Glottertal. Die Macher und die Nutzer europäischen Fernsehens," in: Winand Gellner (ed.), *Europäisches Fernsehen—American-Blend? Fernsehmedien zwischen Amerikanisierung und Europäisierung* (Berlin: Vistas Verlag, 1989), 26; and Preben Sepstrup, "Transnationalization of Television in Western Europe," in: Christian W. Thomsen (ed.), *Cultural Transfer or Electronic Imperialism? The Impact of American Television Programs on European Television* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Verlag, 1989), 113.

feature films in 1965 were still British, American movies clearly led the field by 1970. The most popular genres, similar to the import of television series, were crime stories/mysteries, westerns, comedies and adventure features.

The other noticeable trend in connection with TV feature films was the important role that American movies from the 1950s played in this development. Whether it was based on availability or popular demand is unclear, yet 1950s Hollywood films clearly outweighed any other time period in terms of films aired on West German television in the 1960s and 1970s. The classic film directors whose films were most frequently seen included the following four: Alfred Hitchcock (*Suspicion*, *Foreign Correspondent*, *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* and *The Secret Agent*), Henry Hathaway (*Niagara*, *The Sons of Katie Elder*, *Nevada Smith* and *North to Alaska*), John Ford (*Three Godfathers*, *My Darling Clementine* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*), and Michael Curtiz (*Four Daughters*, *Dodge City* and *Casablanca*). Each of the mentioned films was screened either three or four times over the course of the 1960s and 1970s.⁸

To put these developments into a larger perspective, we can draw the following preliminary conclusions. Clearly all West European countries integrated an increasing number of international shows into their national programming in the 1960s and 1970s, with American series and movies taking up ever increasing percentages. However, in terms of total programming hours, it is difficult to speak of a domination of West European television by American programs: on average, between 10-15 percent of national programming in individual West European countries consisted of American imports by the early 1980s—nearly half of 30 percent total imports. In West Germany, the averages were at the lower end of the overall West European spectrum during the 1960s and 1970s, prior to the introduction of commercial television.

Another piece of information is equally important in this context: West German shows and series nearly always remained the top-rated programs or series on West German television. From 1964 to 1974, the news broadcasts *Die Tagesschau*, the game shows *Was Bin Ich?*, the crime series *Der Kommissar* or sporting events (usually the soccer World Cup) were the most popular programs on the air; all of these were German-produced shows. This trend continued from the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s as well: crime—*Tatort*, game shows—*Am Laufenden Band* or *Die Rudi-Carrell Show* and, usually every four years, the World Cup soccer tournament proved to be the biggest crowd pleasers. Only occasionally did imports outrank German-produced shows as the top-rated programs: this happened in 1964, when the British crime series, *Tim Frazier*, took first place and it occurred again both in 1983 and 1984 when the series *Dallas* cast its spell on West German as well as worldwide TV audiences.⁹

⁸ For a survey of feature films shown on West German television, see Irmela Schneider, "American and British Feature Films Broadcast by the ARD between 1954 and 1985. An Outline of their Development," in: Thomsen (ed.), *Cultural Transfer or Electronic Imperialism?*, 71-76. The preferences of German audiences, or at least the frequency with which certain films and genres were screened, are discussed by two contributors of one anthology: Hartmut Winkler, "Wie gehen die Filmredaktionen der ARD und ZDF mit der US-amerikanischen Filmgeschichte um?" and Andreas Nowak, "Spielfilmhits im Fernsehen: Zur Akzeptanz von Importprogrammen. Britische und US-amerikanische Spielfilme im Fernsehen von ARD und ZDF: die "top ten" der Jahre 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 und 1985," in: Schneider (ed.), *Amerikanische Einstellungen*, 245-260 and 261-278.

⁹ Werner Faulstich, "Fernsehgeschichte als Erfolgsgeschichte: Die Sendungen mit den höchsten Einschaltquoten," in: Werner Faulstich (ed.), *Vom 'Autor' zum Nutzer: Handlungsrollen im Fernsehen*

At the same time, however, the American imports were highly concentrated in the segment of entertainment shows and the development of series in particular. Moreover, to limit the influence of American television strictly to directly transplanted (although dubbed) series is of course too narrow a perspective. In the following section, I want to shift focus therefore and ask not just what impact the transplanted series had on the development of West German television, but also analyze other genres on West German TV which were heavily influenced by American programs.

II. The Impact of US TV Series on Genre Development and Content

There can be little doubt that British and American TV shows, both the imported ones as well as series which were never directly transplanted, had a tremendous influence on the development of TV shows and genres on West German television. I will highlight some of these influences here in connection with two genres in particular: crime shows and game/quiz programs.

Even before West German audiences ever saw the first episode of the first American TV crime series, *77 Sunset Strip* in January 1960, they had already been exposed to the narrative devices and structures of both American and especially British detective/police stories in a number of ways. Beginning before the onset of television, detective stories from both countries had been translated in the late 1940s and immediately proved very successful with German audiences. Particularly popular were stories by the British author, Francis Durrbridge, which in the 1950s also became the basis of the popular West German radio series *Paul Temple*. His detective series proved equally successful when they were transposed onto the TV screen beginning in the early 1960s. The first German police show premiered on television in 1958, titled *Stahlnetz*, on the other hand, was modeled after the vastly popular American series *Dragnet*. Like the American police series, which was first aired over the radio in the United States in the late 1940s, the West German adaptation focused not just on timely issues but also complicated the story lines with insights into the lives of the detectives and their personal problems. The series was one of the most popular programs on early West German television and ran from the late 1950s through 1968. Interestingly, 45 episodes of the remake of *Dragnet* aired from 1968 to 1971 under the title, *Polizeibericht*, only after the German version of the show had gone off the air.¹⁰

The impact of British and American police or detective series further increased in the 1960s, when crime stories from Great Britain and the United States gained ever larger audiences on West German television. Whereas the already mentioned detective stories of Francis Durrbridge were usually shown in several parts, American series like *77 Sunset Strip*, *Perry Mason*, *Maverick*, *Ironside* and *M Squad* soon became weekly TV fare. This trend continued and further expanded in the 1970s, as series such as *The Streets of San*

(Geschichte des Fernsehens in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Vol. 5, Muenchen: Wilhelm Fink Verlag), 217-236.

¹⁰ Claudia Cippitelli and Axel Schwanebeck (eds.), *Das Mord(s)program: Krimis und Action im deutschen Fernsehen* (Frankfurt:Gemeinschaftswerk der evangelischen Publizistik, 1998), 16-17. See also, Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory of Prime Time Network and Cable Shows, 1946-Present* New York: Ballantine Books, 2003; 8th ed.), 334-35 (*Dragnet* entry).

Francisco, Starsky and Hutch, The Rockford Files, Kojak, Mannix, Columbo, Charlie's Angels and *Hawaii Five-O* all made their way over to the Federal Republic of Germany.

What is interesting, though, is that West German television relatively quickly began to emancipate itself from American police series in the early 1970s and started to produce long-running crime series of its own. Starting with the first show of *Der Kommissar* in 1969 (ZDF), German producers were able to adapt the genre and develop engaging, suspenseful dramas which focused on topical issues debated in German society set in familiar West German locales. The first German channel soon followed suit in 1971 and produced the series *Tatort*. Both programs quickly surpassed their American rivals in terms of popularity and advanced to become the top-rated shows in 1972 and 1974, respectively. More surprisingly, both series are still on the air today and remain exceedingly popular with TV audiences. In addition, they have spawned several offshoots, such as *Der Alte* and *Derrick*, which themselves have evolved into international hits exported to other TV markets.¹¹

While it is not possible to trace the development of the police series genre in depth here, it is clear that West German programs in general emerged as international hybrids, benefiting both from British and American models yet also developing their own unmistakable style. Especially prior to the 1980s and continuing to a large part to the current times, German producers shunned away from the action-packed, flashy style of car-chasing cops engaged in close shoot-outs or hand-to-hand combat with their opponents and instead preferred the more slow-paced, psychological crime series frequently identified with British crime stories. Moreover, German police shows usually emphasized the true-and-narrow format of early American series which highlighted the police as the only legitimate agency to fight crime and led to clear vindication of the law. In contrast, they rarely explored the gray zones between law and order and fighting fire with fire as the American *Kojak* or *Rockford* series did, for example. In general, it was not until the 1980s that action and pyrotechnics became major aspects of some German police series and that crime fighters might be successful using extra-legal means to achieve their higher ends.¹²

One can observe this same trend towards the development of hybrid genres in connection with the game and quiz programs. As Gerd Hallenberger has convincingly argued, the genre as a whole as well as different programs in the West German media were inspired by their American predecessors and developed with a constant eye to the development across the Atlantic. Not coincidentally, several early hosts of these West German programs spent several years in the United States and were intimately familiar with the shows and their enormous popularity. A good example of this was the German game show host Peter Frankenfeld, who was introduced to American game shows while he was a POW during World War II. In the 1950s, as he pursued a career in radio and television he fell back on this first-hand experience with American entertainment: based on the series *People Are Funny* he hosted a popular radio program in West Germany titled *Wer Zuletzt Lacht*. After the introduction of television, this program made the transition to the screen under the title, *1:0 Für Sie*. Frankenfeld frequently returned to the

¹¹ Gerd Hallenberger, "Harry, stell' schon mal den Fernseher an...", in: Cippitelli and Schwanebeck (eds.), *Das Mord(s)program*, 58 ff.

¹² Ibid., and Schneider, "Vom Sunset Strip zur Southfork Ranch," in: Idem, *Amerikanische Einstellung*, 110-124.

United States during the course of his TV career and even appeared in an American game show himself. These experiences kept him apprised of US developments, which he regularly integrated into his own repertoire.¹³

It's important to highlight that game and quiz shows were the first entertainment genres which established themselves on West German television. One of the main reasons for this was that the producers and hosts of these programs convinced generally entertainment-shy program directors that their shows contained a strong educational appeal and were therefore consistent with the mission of West German broadcasting, which was to educate the German masses and gradually raise their cultural taste.

Based on this official stamp of approval, German game shows based on American models dominated the entertainment segment of early West German television. While many of these programs had a very quick turn-over rate, some would be long-running, semi-permanent features on German TV. Examples of the latter kind were shows like *Alles oder Nichts*, based on *The \$ 64,000 Question*, und *Hätten Sie's Gewusst?*, modeled after *Twenty-One*, which ran on West German television for well over a decade and remained unaffected by the quiz show scandal which ended the run of the two American shows after which they had been patterned. Another good example of this continuous trans-Atlantic transfer was the longest-running game show in the history of American prime-time network television, *What's My Line?* In the United States the program had started in 1950 and aired continuously for the next 17 years. In West Germany, the program premiered on television in 1958 under the popular host Robert Lemke after it had already completed a 3-year tour on radio. With interruptions, it stayed on the air in West Germany until the 1980s, becoming one of the biggest successes in German television history.¹⁴

Despite the clear influence of American TV game shows and the continuous imitation on the part of German producers and hosts, it is very noteworthy to point out that the genres, and even two versions of the same show, still showed significant differences in terms of their programming styles and emphasis. As Hallenberger highlights, there were a number of significant variations in terms of quiz shows. One was the length of the programs: while American programs were usually limited to half an hour, its German counterpart might run for one or even two hours. This led to a more relaxed and conversational format on West German television, where the dialogue between the host and the contestant(s) played a much more central role in the broadcast. Another key difference was the different settings of the respective programs: in US commercial television, the emphasis was on the cash prizes and going home a lot richer than one had arrived. In West German shows of the late 1950s and 1960s, by contrast, the thrill of the contest itself remained central, as contestants were sent home with small participation prizes. Moreover, whether it was meant to assuage the broadcasting executives or originated from cultural differences, German quiz shows remained more challenging than their American counterparts; while it did not take a Ph.D. to compete in these shows on West German television, the aim was still to add to the base of knowledge

¹³ Gerd Hallenberger, "Vom Quiz zur Game Show: Geschichte und Entwicklung der Wettbewerbsspiele des bundesrepublikanischen Fernsehens," in: Hans Dieter Erlinger and Hans-Friedrich Foltin (eds.), *Unterhaltung, Werbung, und Zielgruppenprogramme* (Geschichte des Fernsehens in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Vol. 4) (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1994), 27-37.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39-42; and Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh (eds.), *The Complete Directory*, 1299.

of the audiences. A final noteworthy difference is that the West German quiz/game shows never suffered a scandal or major irregularities, which preserved the untainted reputation and enjoyment of these shows and their continued expansion during the 1960s.¹⁵

As West German television became more established and professionalized in the late 1960s and 1970s, even game and quiz shows began to wean themselves from their heavily reliance on American models by developing independent genres and looking to other European TV markets for inspiration. Quiz shows which related to travel increased in the 1960s concomitant with the increased motorization and the beginning of mass travel, for example, which had only few parallels in the United States. Programs like *(P)Reise auf Raten* (1964-66) or *Rate Mit—Reise Mit* (1965-67) clearly reflected West German fascination with vacation and travel. This trend towards a greater autonomy and internationalization of game/quiz shows increased into the 1970s, similar to the police series, before the introduction of commercial television brought another wave of American imports to the re-unified German TV screens.¹⁶

In general, this trend towards hybrid format and the internationalization of genres was not limited to police series and game shows but can also be traced in other West German programming. Probably one of the best examples can be found in domestic situation comedies, even though West German television had developed its own independent programs since the late 1950s.¹⁷ The example I have in mind is the American series *All in the Family*, which made television history not just in the United States but in Great Britain and West Germany as well.

The first aspect to be mentioned about *All in the Family* was that the concept for the show originated not in the United States but instead in Great Britain. The inspiration for *All in the Family* was a British series titled *Till Death Us Do Part*, which had debuted in Great Britain in 1966 and quickly emerged as a critical and popular success. As Jeffrey Miller highlights, although no British sitcom had been shown on American television prior to 1970, *Till Death Us Do Part* and other British situation comedies, like *Steptoe and Son* (American *Sanford and Son*), provided powerful models for Norman Lear's popular sitcoms of the 1970s. Of course, Lear significantly transformed *Till Death Us Do Part* as he adjusted it for American audiences: ethnicity became as significant as class, upward mobility—reflected in college student Michael Stivic—was added to the plot, and the disgruntled housewife of the British series was polished and defanged for its American debut. Interestingly enough, the show only made it to West German after its American detour and another make-over to speak to German audiences (*Ein Herz und eine Seele*). In their adapted formats, *All in the Family* and *Ein Herz und*

¹⁵ Hallenberger, "Vom Quiz zur Game Show," in: Erlinger and Foltin (eds.), *Unterhaltung, Werbung und Zielgruppenprogramme*, 44-48; and Idem, "'Amerikanisierung' und 'Germanisierung': Quizsendungen im deutschen Fernsehen—eine 'mitatlantische' Programmform?," in: Schneider (ed.), *Amerikanische Einstellung*, 85-87.

¹⁶ Hallenberger, "'Amerikanisierung' und 'Germanisierung'," in: Schneider (ed.), *Amerikanische Einstellung*, 88-90.

¹⁷ On the development of West German talk shows, see Hans-Friedrich Foltin, "Die Talkshow. Geschichte eines schillernden Genres," in: Erlinger and Foltin (eds.), *Unterhaltung, Werbung und Zielgruppenprogramme*, 69-112. For a quick overview of German domestic series prior to the 1970s, see Hickethier, *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*, 240-41.

eine Seele proved just as relevant, explosive and popular as *Till Death Us Do Part* had been in Great Britain.¹⁸

Even when one paints the development of the impact of American TV shows on German programming in broad strokes, some important trends become apparent (which need to be further researched and analyzed in detail). One is that American models clearly had a tremendous influence on the programs, contents and genre development of West German television in the 1960s and 1970s. Interestingly enough, especially the late 1960s and early 1970s were years when many US imports made their way over to West Germany, despite the increasing anti-American sentiment which dominated much of German public sentiments. Equally noteworthy is the fact that it was precisely during this high point of US transfers to the West German TV screens that German producers and television executives gained more independence by developing shows which spoke more directly to the interest of German TV audiences, at least as far as police stories and game/quiz shows were concerned. In this process, American models and influences were no doubt very significant, but German producers explored other TV markets and models, such as Great Britain's, creating increasingly internationalized hybrid programs and genres which were geared primarily towards domestic audiences but frequently also appealed to international, especially European, viewers.

(If one listens to the interviews of German media professionals, this also in many ways reflects the status of German television production in more recent decades, even after the introduction of commercial television in the mid-1980s and the renewed flood of American imports which succeeded it. In interviews with Anette Brauerhoch in the early 1990s, German producers, directors and writers highlighted that the "Hollywood model or narrative" still plays a dominant role in nearly every TV market, the German one included. Almost without exception these professionals highlighted the higher production expertise and professionalism of the American television, which still gives it an important edge due to its long history and the enormous financial resources which are available. Nearly all of the interviewed German media experts freely admitted that regular visits to United States production centers are part of their schedules.¹⁹)

III. The Impact of American TV Programs and Culture on West Germany in the 1960s and 1970s

Numerous historians stress the fact that both West German society and culture underwent some profound transformations in the 1960s particularly. Axel Schildt has characterized the 1960s as a "time of fermentation" in West Germany, when trends and developments which could already be gleaned in the late 1950s evolved into dynamic, transformative movements. Driven by a hunger for reform and vastly enhanced

¹⁸ Jeffrey S. Miller, *Something Completely Different: British Television and American Culture* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minneapolis Press, 2000), Chapter 6: "All in the Anglo-American Family: Hollywood Reproductions of British Originals". See also Annette Brauerhoch, "What's the Difference? Adaptionen amerikanischer Situation Comedies im deutschen Fernsehen," in: Schneider (ed.), *Serien-Welten*, 196-97.

¹⁹ Anette Brauerhoch, "Kapitale Mythen, oder: 'Lernen, worum es ueberhaupt geht.' Leitfadenterviews mit Fernsehredakteuren, -regisseuren, Autoren, Produzenten. Zum Einfluss amerikanischer Sendungen auf deutsche Serienproduktion." *Arbeitshefte Bildschirmmedien*, Universitaet Siegen.

consumer society, a majority of people in the Federal Republic shed more traditional German values of the postwar years, such as the emphases on social status, political hierarchy, order and duty and increasingly embraced a set of values aimed at democratic participation, more flexible social interactions, leisure and an openness towards new influences. In his opinion, the expanded leisure and consumer culture combined with the heightened role of media, especially television, did not lead to political inactivity or passivity but became part and parcel of the new political expectations and demands of the political reform era.²⁰

Detlef Siegfried has taken this argument one step further. According to him, the new cultural influences were absolutely critical in the creation of a more youth-oriented, liberal and open-minded society in West Germany in the 1960s. The gradual loosening of the grip of social hierarchy and the thawing of strict cultural and social standards led to a more informal society and enabled the emergence of new cultural and political norms which informed ever-increasing segments of the West German public, especially the younger generations. Encouraged by Anglo-American social and cultural models and enraged by the political events in West Germany and abroad, this situation facilitated the creation of an alternative political culture. As Siegfried has argued, this fusion of popular culture and political activism was a core ingredient of and stimulus for the politicization of West German society in the late 1960s: “The impulses of the popular youth culture fused with the political demands of the students since 1967 and signaled a new departure among the young generation.”²¹

This dynamic function of the media was probably the most noticeable in pop music and the related West German TV shows which premiered in the late 1960s. Two TV programs in particular stand out in this context: the *BeatClub*, which premiered in 1965, and *baff*, which followed in 1968. What distinguished these programs on West German television were their unapologetic embrace of the new youth-oriented pop culture and the introduction of a new, less filtered and more dynamic, presentation style. These were live shows produced for young audiences which celebrated new life styles and open, tolerant attitudes. The emphasis was on experiencing the show, not merely watching it. Hand-in-hand with this new TV aesthetics, these broadcasts also proved to be more overtly political and sponsored as well as fed into the increased politicization of West German youth audiences. A new sense of being and interacting, a more critical attitude as well as a more participatory and active involvement of individual citizens were all at the heart of the new sensibility and understanding of these cultural expressions.²²

It is difficult to assess to what degree American TV imports of the 1960s and 1970s meaningfully contributed to this convergence of popular culture and political

²⁰ Axel Schildt, “Materieller Wohlstand—pragmatische Politik—kulturelle Umbrüche. Die 60er Jahre in der Bundesrepublik,” in: Schildt et al. (eds.), *Dynamische Zeiten*, 21-53; and Idem, “Die 60er Jahre—eine Dekade im Schatten des Mythos von ’68,” in: Estermann and Lersch (eds.), *Buch, Buchhandel und Rundfunk. 1968 und die Folgen*, 9-29.

²¹ Detlef Siegfried, “Vom Teenager zur Pop-Revolution. Politisierungstendenzen in der westdeutschen Jugendkultur 1959 bis 1968,” in Axel Schildt et al. (eds.), *Dynamische Zeiten*, 582-623; and Idem, “Draht zum Westen. Populäre Jugendkultur in den Medien 1963 bis 1973,” in: Estermann and Lersch (eds.), *Buch, Buchhandel und Rundfunk*, 83-109; the quote is from p. 102.

²² Kathrin Fahlenbrach and Reinhold Viehoff, “Die Dynamisierung der visuellen Ästhetik des Fernsehens. Am Beispiel der medialen Inszenierung von Jugendkultur im Beat-Club,” in: Estermann and Lersch (eds.), *Buch, Buchhandel und Rundfunk*, 110-141.

activism. However, there are several trends and arguments which suggest a strong correlation between these two developments.

One of these new trends which is noteworthy is the publication of recent studies that highlight an expanded understanding of Americanization, significantly deviating from earlier German historiography. Unlike previous historical analyses, which routinely dismissed American cultural influences as sub-standard and dangerous to autonomous German cultural traditions, these researchers view at least part of the American cultural transfers as significant incubators of beneficial social and political reform in West Germany. One important proponent of this position is Winfried Fluck, who has expanded the study of Americanization by analyzing the ongoing appeal of American imports and has focused on “the psychological, emotional and social usages as well as the aesthetic effects” of these imported cultural expressions. Among the key attractions of these cultural transfers in the West German context was the emphasis on the criticism of rigid social hierarchies (*Enthierarchisierung*) as well as the pronounced informal and laid-back life style they portrayed. This mix of sensibilities combined freedom, less staid interactions, openness towards change and flexibility. Ultimately, this new understanding of the relationship between self, community and society fed into a process of democratization and therefore contained a distinct political dimension. Based on this altered understanding of the cultural transfer from the United States, Fluck stresses the attractiveness of the imports as well as the agency on the part of the recipients. As he puts it, speaking from a German perspective: “We are not being Americanized. We Americanize ourselves.”²³

Another historian who has advanced a similar argument is Kaspar Maase. In his study of youth culture in 1950s West Germany, Maase emphasizes the appeal American culture had on disaffected segments of West German youth, whom he views as the incubators of some of the cultural and political reforms which flourished in the 1960s. What attracted these youngsters were the decidedly different style and the alternative way of life that the US popular culture signified. Through the embrace of American fashion, music, and attitude these early rebels showed their disdain for the tired German traditions and expressed their alternative positions as well as their divergent vision, which according to Maase ultimately led to the development of a charged fusion of cultural expression and political activism by the 1960s.²⁴

German historians and media scholars who have studied German television of the 1960s and 1970s have come to diverging conclusions in terms of the respective values which were emphasized by imported American programs. On the one hand stand those researchers who have highlighted the overall conservative nature of the vast majority of TV programming, including US imports. Udo Göttlich, for example, has argued that

²³ Winfried Fluck, “‘Amerikanisierung’ der Kultur. Zur Geschichte der amerikanischen Populärkultur,” in: Wenzel, Harald (ed.), *Die Amerikanisierung des Medienalltags*. Frankfurt a.M. and New York: Campus Verlag, 1998, 13-52; the quote is from p. 49. For a great overview of the Americanization debate, see Phillip Gassert, “Amerikanismus, Antiamerikanismus, Amerikanisierung: Neue Literatur zur Sozial-, Wirtschafts- und Kulturgeschichte des amerikanischen Einflusses in Deutschland und Europa,” in: *Archiv fuer Sozialgeschichte* 39, 1999, 531-561.

²⁴ Kaspar Maase, *Bravo Amerika: Erkundungen zur Jugendkultur der Bundesrepublik in den fuenfziger Jahren* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 1992).

most American programs of the 1960s stressed more traditional values like discipline, obedience, order and duty. Far from being instigators of change, then, he portrayed these series as a good fit for a more traditional value system which dominated West Germany particularly during the 1950s and into the early 1960s.²⁵

This view has been further supported by media scholars who have focused on issues such as conflict resolution and gender ideologies in the American series of the 1960s. Not surprisingly, these early shows expressed a pronounced black and white view in terms of the restitution of justice: social conflicts portrayed a clear dichotomy between right and wrong, and the legitimation of justice was usually unequivocally supported and brought about by the individual actions of the show's (male) heroes. Equally, there was a clear, gendered iconography which ran through most of the shows, portraying men as active, dynamic agents and usually relegating women to a set of traditional feminine values—subordination, modesty, loyalty, combined with a willingness to adapt and sacrifice their own interests. According to these researchers, it was not until the mid-1970s that significant value changes on both these issues were noticeable in American programs.²⁶

On the other hand, Peter Ludes has argued very convincingly that there are a number of key differences in terms of the main values which inform social life in the United States and Germany, respectively. Based on more extensive sociological studies, he has demonstrated several important distinctions. As examples, Ludes cites the fact that Americans hold dear to the tradition of individualism and private solutions, their faith in progress and rationalism, and their emphasis on mobility and social justice through equal opportunity. Likewise, sociologists refer to the more pronounced tendency of Germans to value organizational solutions backed by state authority, the resilience of social hierarchies and stronger emphasis on education as a humanistic goal, to mention but a few of the important differences. The larger, as yet unanswered, question which this raises is whether the creation of transnational genres and narratives in West Germany in the 1960s and 1970s, West German values underwent an equal transformation, not last because of the ongoing cultural transfer of American TV programming, despite some normative overlap, consistently highlighted and privileged a separate and distinct set of cultural norms and expectations.²⁷

²⁵ Udo Göttlich, "Traditionalismus als Leitidee. Werte und Wertestruktur amerikanischer Serien," in: Schneider (ed.), *Serien-Welten*, 102-137.

²⁶ Heike Kippel, "Alles total normal. Die Welt der sozialen Konflikte," and Irmela Schneider, "Variationen des Weiblichen und Männlichen. Zur Ikonographie der Geschlechter," in: Schneider (ed.), *Serien-Welten*, 74-101 and 138-176.

²⁷ Peter Ludes, *Kulturtransfer und transkulturelle Prozesse. AMerikanisierung und Europäisierung des Fernsehens in der Bundesrepublik* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Verlag, 1991), especially Chapter 4.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to provide a survey of the some of the most important developments and questions in connection with the cultural transfer of American TV series to West Germany in the 1960s and 1970s. The goal was to identify the most popular US programs and series, to assess some of their respective impact on West German television during these decades and hypothesize about the overall impact of this cultural transfer had on 1960s West German society and culture at large.

In many respect, this paper raises as many questions as it answers. In this respect, it is a blueprint for an extended research project which pursues some of the answers in greater depth. From my own perspective, the research and writing of this paper has crystallized four set of queries which provide important inspirations for my own project:

1. What explains the selection of specific American series for West German television, and why were so many of the successful and popular programs overlooked? What does this tell us about the transnational transfer of culture and the respective images and stereotypes which are communicated and reinforced? Is such a “televisual tourism”²⁸ unavoidable and what are its consequences?
2. How exactly can one explain the overlap of two seemingly paradoxical developments in West Germany in the late 1960s? On the one hand, this was a time period of increased political activism, much of which was directed and fueled by an increasing anti-American sentiment. Simultaneously, the period from the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s saw the vast increase of cultural imports from the United States, including more TV series than ever before.
3. It is key to necessary to study the correlation between American TV shows and genres and the development of culturally and politically oppositional movements in a broader context. Only then is it possible to understand whether US cultural imports and Americanization actually provided a fertile breeding ground which fostered the development and expansion of indigenous cultural production.
4. Related to the last question raised above, to what degree has the generally derogatory debate surrounding the topic of Americanization with its emphasis on the lowering of cultural standards and destruction of native, autonomous cultures has overlooked and important, positive spin-off of this cultural transfer? Or to put the question rather pointedly and crudely in the West German context studied here: Did American TV programs and US popular culture at large ferment and instigate positive social transformations which became facilitators of political activism and reform during the 1960s and beyond?

²⁸ For a good discussion of this point see Graham Murdock, “Televisual Tourism: National Image-making and International Markets,” in: Thomsen (ed.), *Cultural Transfer or Electronic Imperialism?*, 171-184.

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