

# “Quality TV” within German public-sector TV

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TV in the age of transnationalisation and transmedialisation

## Quality Discussion in the German media

- Debates on “Quality TV” and “Quality series” in German feuilleton (Ritzer 2011)
- Praise of series from the US, Denmark and the UK
- Criticism of German series
- Example: “Why are the Germans oversleeping the future of TV?”  
Diez / Huetlin (2013) in *Der Spiegel*

In which ways and to which extent  
has **Germany's public broadcaster ZDF**  
possibly captured the global phenomenon of  
fictional, serial **"Quality TV"**?

**Mit dem Zweiten sieht man besser**



## Structure

1. The term “Quality TV”
2. Capturing and adapting of serial “Quality TV” in ZDF
  - regarding narration and content
  - regarding distribution and programming
  - regarding modes of production

# 1. The term “Quality TV”

- “Quality TV” = global, at least Western phenomenon?
- → Production and reception tendencies  
(Blanchet 2010, Ang 2007, Hahn 2013)

## “Quality TV”

- Potential banality: “good TV” vs. “bad TV”
- Social construction of taste and “quality”
  - taste and distinction  
(Bourdieu 1997, first 1979)
- = PR and marketing narrative?

## “Quality TV”

- = Term established, reused and interpreted within the TV industry

→ target groups policy

→ programme strategy

→ answer to an increased competition (transnational and transmedial)

## German “Quality TV” attempts as reaction

- to series from other countries
- to critique of public-service broadcasting and its series



## 2. Capturing and adapting of serial “Quality TV” in ZDF

→ Narration and content

## Narration

- Narrative capturing of “Quality TV”?
- Serial / horizontal or flexi-narrative storylines

vs. the dominance and norm of episodic series in German TV

( Eschke/Bohne 2010, DJ Frederiksson [anonymous] 2014)

## **Narration:** serial storylines in historical mini series



### **Generation War**

(*Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter*,  
Germany 2013, ZDF):

- Problematic representations (Saryusz-Wolska/Piorun 2014)
- Attempt to narrate serially

Motion comic of *Generation War* > ZDF.de

**Narration:** serial storylines in **crime series**



***KDD – Kriminaldauerdienst***  
(Germany 2007–2009, ZDF)

- Ambivalent characters
- Diversity

(Rothemund 2011)

Content: **adaption** of non-German series?

*Eichwald, MdB* (Germany 2015, ZDF)

and *The Thick of It* (UK 2005–2012, BBC)



## Adaption of non-German series?

*Morgen hör' ich auf* (Germany 2015, ZDF)

and *Breaking Bad* (USA 2008–2013, AMC)

## 2. Capturing and adapting of serial “Quality TV” in ZDF

→ Distribution and programming

## Programme planning strategies

- Mini series and event TV
  - broadcast of mini series within few days
- Programming within established weekly slots
- Relegation to peripheral time slots and channels
- “Webfirst” strategy: online release of several episodes



## 2. Capturing and adapting of serial “Quality TV” in ZDF

→ Modes of production

## “Quality series” through new producers?

- ZDF editorial department “[Kleines Fernsehspiel](#)” and Quantum lab: precarious experimentations
- Involvement of emerging filmmakers and [film producers](#)

## Writers' Rooms and Showrunners

- Capturing of production processes and cultures?
- Capturing of “Quality TV” in self-presentations  
(Caldwell 2008)

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