The platformisation of public service broadcasting in Germany: The network ‘funk’ and the case of Druck/Skam Germany

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Abstract
This article investigates how platformisation changes the practices of content production and distribution through the case of the web series, Druck (tr. Pressure (2018–), for the public service content network ‘funk’ (ARD and ZDF). An analysis of the German adaptation of the Norwegian television and web series Skam (tr. Shame) (NRK3, 2015–2017) shows how public service broadcasting (PSB) in Germany is changing due to the influence of social media. To reach a younger audience, PSB has to meet them on third-party platforms. Consequently, PSB must provide content that fits the mobile media environment of social media.

Keywords
Social media, public service broadcasting, Skam, platformisation, convergence, multiplatform, mobile media

Introduction
In March 2018, the first episode of the web series, Druck (tr. Pressure), premiered on YouTube. The online teen drama series is produced by Bantry Bay Productions for the content network ‘funk’, which is a joint venture of the leading German public broadcasters ARD (a consortium of public broadcasters) and ZDF (Second German
Television). *Druck* is the German adaptation of the Norwegian television and web series, *Skam* (tr. *Shame*; NRK3, 2015–2017) and tells the coming-of-age stories of a group of young people at a Berlin-based high school and their everyday cultural difficulties, thereby addressing questions important to young people within a fictional narrative. In doing so, the series attempts to engage with the everyday life challenges of its target group (users age 14 to 20-years-old; Peltzer, 2020). In short, *Druck* is about friendship, love and relationships, cultural diversity, religion, social integration, bullying and performance pressure at school, as well as sexual orientation, gender, self-actualisation and self-discovery. The series also includes young people’s problems including substance abuse.

But *Druck* is also a new way of storytelling that fits the participatory digital environment of social media; just like the Norwegian original, *Druck* is not a ‘regular television series, but rather an online drama’ (Sundet, 2020: 70) that spreads its storylines across different social media platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram to simulate a form of real-time narration (Hartmann and Mikos, 2020: 264; Peltzer, 2020: 234). As the series’ producer Lasse Scharpen put it in an interview, the production company initially started negotiations with commercial broadcaster Vox for an adaption of *Skam* for German TV (Krauß, 2020: 272). However, since Vox favoured a ‘linear form of distribution’ for television, broadcaster executives were somewhat hesitant about the project. Soon after public broadcaster ZDF showed interest in an adaptation of the series for the social media-driven public service content network ‘funk’, the Bantry Bay team was invited to provide a concept that ultimately brought *Druck* to life. The online drama series challenges previous production practices: social media influences every aspects of the production as well as working routines of the production team (Krauß, 2020: 276). In that sense, *Druck* is a good match for public service network ‘funk’ since it attempts to reach a younger audience with online formats on social media platforms – where the target group is searching for it. ‘Funk’ privileges social media over television: as I have put it elsewhere, this is ‘taking place in the face of a change in policy by television executives who are impelled to align themselves with the social media culture’ (2019: 516). In the context of digitally networked media and convergence, the amalgamation of television and social networking sites (SNSs) is moving beyond social media’s status as an ‘additional function of television’ (Buschow et al., 2014: 130; see also Han and Lee, 2014; Klemm and Michel, 2014). Younger media users in particular are challenging public service broadcasting (PSB) to rethink strategies and develop content on digital platforms meaningful for the target group (see Andersen and Sundet, 2019; Lowe and Maijanen, 2019; Reiter et al., 2018).

The multi-platform setting forces PSB to find ways to produce and distribute specific content that especially fits the environment of social media. Here, PSB does not have to merely provide content for on-demand use (see Donders, 2019; Kunow, 2016: 36; Ramsey, 2018). Rather, it has to make use of a communicative infrastructure provided by third-party platforms while following their operational principles, the ‘platformization of cultural production’ (Nieborg et al., 2019: 87). PSB’s recent attempt to provide content for younger media users on social media has been addressed by a number of studies (see Andersen and Sundet, 2019; Krauß and Stock, 2020, 2018; Krüger and Rustad, 2019;
Sundet, 2020). However, the specific upheavals to the practices of content development, production and distribution caused by platformisation on local PSB still require further examination. Within this emerging field of research, the aim of this article is to address production and the distribution of content under the changing conditions of platformisation in the context of German PSB. I intend to discuss the question of how platformisation affects processes and practices of PSB content development, production and distribution in Germany, using Druck as an example. In so doing, I follow a critical approach on two levels. First, on the institutional level, I discuss the changing media policy of public broadcasters ARD and ZDF in the context of ‘funk’. Second, on the production and distribution level, I analyse the online drama series Druck (2018–) as a case study, in order to highlight the series’ terms of platformisation.

The theoretical framework of the article is based on approaches about platformisation (see Nieborg et al., 2019; Nieborg and Poell, 2018; van Dijck et al., 2018b) in the context of cultural production in the converging fields of PSB and social media (see Andersen and Sundet, 2019; Hartmann and Mikos, 2020; Krauß and Stock, 2020, 2018; Sundet, 2020). Methodologically, the article relies on document analysis (Mayring, 2016: 46ff.) of the official press portfolio of Druck including background information on the casting and production process; institutional policy documents on strategies about the ‘funk’ network, written statements and interviews by PSB executives; and news articles and official posts by the Druck production team on social media. Furthermore, the document analysis considers interviews held by media scholars and journalists with production executives and decision makers working at Bantry Bay, plus the public broadcasters responsible for the ‘funk’ content network. These interviews are considered reflexive statements by actors in charge, those who provide information from within the institutional and production apparatus that enables critical reflections on media production practices (Krauß and Loist, 2018; Vonderau, 2013; see also Caldwell, 2008).

**Platformisation as a challenge for German public service broadcasting**

Social media platforms have fundamentally transformed today’s media landscape. In the West in particular, the platforms owned by major tech companies Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft (GAFAM) have evolved into infrastructural services that regulate large areas of the online media environment (Nieborg and Poell, 2018; Plantin and Punathambekar, 2019). The GAFAM platforms therefore constitute a ‘corporately run ecosystem’ that penetrates ‘existing societal arrangements as [it] is increasingly mingling with established institutional structures’ (van Dijck et al., 2018b: 15–16). Consequently, platforms that are ‘not connected to the ecosystem’s core can hardly profit from its inherent features: global connectivity, ubiquitous accessibility, and network effects’, as José van Dijck et al. (2018b: 15) put it.

Moreover, as these GAFAM platforms seek to expand their function as the connective media ecosystem’s infrastructural forces, they drive other so-called ‘sectoral platforms’ into mutual relationships by integrating them culturally and economically into their platformised environment (van Dijck et al., 2018b: 19; see also Helmond, 2015; Nieborg
and Poell, 2018). Sectoral platforms offer services for a specialised cultural field and market (for example, BuzzFeed for the news sector) while serving as ‘connectors’ between users, content and cultural or economic providers (van Dijck et al., 2018: 16). Within the GAFAM environment they represent complementary structures to the core ecosystem of these major tech companies’ platforms. However, the effects of the infrastructural platforms on the production of cultural content are evident in the present-day online media culture as a whole (Nieborg et al., 2019; Nieborg and Poell, 2018). Social media platforms have ‘penetrated the heart of societies’, thus ‘affecting institutions, economic transactions, and social and cultural practices’ (van Dijck et al., 2018a: 2). As Anne Helmond claims, platformisation in terms of social media-driven reorganisation of the web rests on a double-sided logic ‘of social media platforms’ expansion into the rest of the web and, simultaneously, their drive to make external web and app data platform ready’ (2015: 8).

For German PSB then, social media platforms represent a profound challenge. According to recent ARD and ZDF online studies, more than 90 per cent of the German population is online, while in the younger age groups (14 to 19 and 20 to 29) daily use of the internet reaches nearly 100 per cent (Beisch et al., 2019: 375; Frees and Koch, 2018: 399). The smartphone in particular, as the ‘indicator and motor of mediatization’ and a medium that has an ‘intercorporeal relationship’ with its users (Miller, 2014), encourages a high degree of variability and flexibility in today’s computer-mediated communication (CMC), in particular for young media users (Rustad, 2018: 507). Of course, television with its flow of content in a defined programme architecture still plays an important role (Egger and Gerhard, 2019: 389). Nevertheless, video on demand services (VODs) and social media platforms in particular are constantly growing in significance (Egger and Gerhard, 2019: 392). Moreover, social media have a substantial impact on the everyday and media culture of younger users in Germany, including the entertainment-oriented use of content on SNSs (Frees and Koch, 2018: 406–407). International studies such as Saleem Alhabash’s and Mengyan Ma’s have also shown that the motivation for and use of social media platforms like Instagram or Snapchat is ‘significantly predicted by entertainment’ (2017: 6–9). Consequently, communication and media studies scholars such as Stuart Cunningham and David Craig (2017) have already pointed towards new forms of so-called social media entertainment. Therefore, on the institutional level, German PSB executives must find new ways for their content to carry on in a social media environment.

However, due to the ongoing process of platformisation, PSB content producers are reliant on platforms on two levels with regard to production and distribution in a social media environment. First, content production is ‘contingent on the control and technology of [...] service providers’ (Morris, 2015: 26). Content presentation, audience accumulation and data feedback – and thus the relationship between producer, user and content and the dynamics of content adaptation – are driven by a platform’s technological apparatus (see also van Dijck and Poell, 2013). Second, as Jeremy Morris (2015: 17) as well as David Nieborg, Thomas Poell and Mark Deuze have pointed out, the ‘penetration of economic, governmental, and infrastructural extensions of digital platforms into the web and app ecosystems’ (2019: 85) radically alters the production of
media cultural content. Platformisation influences the operational mode of content productions; platform-aligned content appears contingent on being ‘modular in design’, reworked due to the user’s feedback and ‘open to constant revision and recirculation’ (Nieborg and Poell, 2018: 4275–4277). In that sense, content producers become ‘platform complementors’ as they align production processes with the operational mechanisms of social media platforms (Nieborg and Poell, 2018: 4282). To show how PSB in Germany is changing due to the rise of social media and platformisation, I will discuss influences on the institutional level with regard to the public service content network ‘funk’. On the production and distribution level, I analyse the changed practices of production and distribution in the case of Druck.

The institutional level: ‘Funk’ as public service content network for social media

The ‘funk’ content network represents a stage of German PSB in the era of digital and multiplatform media between the linear ‘flow’ and the non-linear ‘on-demand’ modes. In the course of the PSB executives’ attempt to ‘transform television in the digital age’ (see also Bruun, 2020), the ‘funk’ network must be seen in the light of the synchronisation of television with social media. This alignment takes place by means of their flexible and horizontal media integration within the ‘matrix-media strategy’ of PSB executives (Curtin, 2009), which is driven by a social media-related media policy. The ‘funk’ public service content network therefore combines the ‘media logic of television’ with the ‘logic of social media’ (Altheide and Snow, 1979; van Dijck and Poell, 2015, 2013), amalgamating PSB with the infrastructure of social media’s platformised environment (see also Stollfuß, 2019: 510–511). As Gry Rustad puts it, television is trying to adapt to the digital and social media habits of the mobile screen culture: ‘Television consumption is at once both becoming more private and personal as these activities migrate from shared screens of the television in the living room or the cinema to the private phone screen’ (2018: 508). The ‘funk’ network can be seen as an example of the German PSB’s adaptation to the mobile screen culture of social media.

The official ZDF website states: ‘Formats will be initiated and supervised by all local broadcasters of ARD’s state broadcasting network and the ZDF. The leading executive broadcaster is the SWR’ (ZDF, 2016). The networks’ mission statements make it clear that their innovative media formats occur online – on social media – since ‘linear television is diminishing in importance for the younger target groups’ (ZDF, 2016). ARD and ZDF have reacted to the situation with the content network ‘funk’. It exists primarily on social media, while the networks’ own websites and mobile media apps operate as archives and traffic agents to push content and data towards social media platforms: ‘We are funk – the first [German] public service content network, which started on October 1, 2016. We create online-only content on social networks and third-party platforms including Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, for 14–29 year-olds’ (Funk, 2020).

The content network has a public service mandate and is financially supported by the television and radio licence fee as set out by the German Broadcast State Contract (ZDF, 2016). ‘Funk’ takes an ‘online only’ approach in providing content for a young audience
(between the ages of 14 to 29) on more than 70 different social media channels. Original content is grouped by ‘orientation’ (e.g. lifestyle), ‘information’ (e.g. web documentaries), and ‘entertainment’ (e.g. web series). As an alternative to a digital youth channel or an ‘online only’ approach based solely on a PSB website, the ‘funk’ network emerges within the communicative environment of social media. In this sense, ‘funk’ must provide content that fits the social media ecosystem and permits the third-party platform to amass and change a digital public within the operational boundaries of social media platforms. Thomas Bellut, the director of ZDF, makes it clear that ‘funk’ is proving to be a challenge for PSB, since public broadcasters need to create online-only content that interests a younger audience and present it to them on the internet or social media (Das Erste, 2016). Karola Wille, the director of PSB for Central German Broadcasting (Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, MDR), which covers the federal states of Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia – and who was the chairwoman of ARD from January 2016 to December 2017 – has also indicated that PSB must improve its internet communication and provide specific content for users in the digital and social media environment (MDR, 2017). Accordingly, the ARD’s 2017 report on PSB’s structural development in the digital age states that content made for social media communication – such as the ‘funk’ network – must be extended on third-party platforms ‘even if it means that PSB has to conform to their rules’ (ARD, 2017: 9).

In the wake of the reorganisation of PSB as public service media (PSM), the challenges for PSB seem to lead to an alignment with third-party platforms. Certainly, discussions on the challenges of PSB by commercial platforms (Syvertsen, 2003) as well as on their hybrid economic arrangements (Bennett and Medrado, 2013; Johnson, 2013) are hardly new. Moreover, it could be argued equally that confrontations or arrangements between PSB and commercial infrastructures were an issue even before the rise of digital platforms (Collins, 1998). However, as Karin van Es and Thomas Poell contend, PSB and policy makers must ‘develop specific understandings of platforms and their audiences’ since ‘platformization requires a fundamental rethinking of the public service mission’ (2020: 2). Platforms ‘are not just new channels through which public service content can be distributed; they profoundly reshape the larger media landscape in which PSM operate’ (2020: 3; see also Iosifidis, 2011: 620; van Dijck and Poell, 2015: 148).

While PSB’s mandate of making democratic public service content available to every citizen still applies to PSM, the concept of public value is increasingly being challenged by the ongoing alignment of PSB with social media platforms. Platforms that are run by corporations whose business model establishes and consolidates forms of communication and algorithmically prefigured information and data processing (for example, personalised ads or the economic exploitation of user-generated data) are changing the conditions of democratic societies in the digital age. Due to the ongoing platform-driven transformation of PSM, and thus the tendency toward ‘implicit (algorithm-determined) personalised public services’, Hilde van den Bulck and Hallvard Moe have even called for a ‘public service algorithm’ (2018: 890) in the interest of the public service mission in today’s connective digital environment.

However, in order to create stronger PSM, we need to rethink the concept of public value as ensuring a certain quality of public discourse in the connective social media
environment (Mitschka and Unterberger, 2018). PSB is characterised largely by its public service mandate to serve the common good (Gonser and Baier, 2010; Hönberg, 2003). Certainly, to meet younger media users on third-party platforms, collaboration with commercial platforms may be required (Neuberger, 2011: 46; Steinmaurer and Wenzel, 2015: 39–62). This means that the platformisation of content production challenges basic public service principles, since PSB is forced to operate within the logic of social media. In that regard, PSB functions as a platform complementor in a social media ecosystem and helps these platforms move ‘all kinds of sociality’ from ‘public to corporate space’ (van Dijck, 2013: 37).

According to Gregory Lowe (2016), however, PSB’s ‘intrinsic value’ is being challenged as the servant of the public and provider of a universal, socially, culturally and educationally enlightened, cohesive form of content in support of a democratic, diverse and open public. ‘Such attributes are rhetorically described as naturally pertaining to public service roles and functions in media. They are construed as its essential attributes’ (Lowe, 2016: 37). These attributes are linked to PSB as non-commercial and socially rooted institutions; its content must circulate for free in order to be accessible to all citizens. However, PSB is also increasingly faced with questions of its ‘exchange value’ based on the principles of economic transaction; its content is juxtaposed with how much a ‘customer’ spends on goods or services. In addition, PSB is being confronted with its ‘use value’, which ‘is about the practical benefit an individual gets from using what she has acquired’ (Lowe, 2016: 37). Use values are usually related to ‘personal’ needs or satisfaction. Consequently, PSB is harnessed between (a) its institutionally entrenched intrinsic value; (b) an economically-driven exchange value that is embedded in the broader discourse on the creative media industry’s need for digital ‘entrepreneurialism’ and a push for more ‘innovation’ to serve customers in the digital realm (Lowe, 2016: 38); and (c) the audience’s individual use value of content for its special interest. In order to measure and serve public value, but also to create it in the realm of social media, PSB must engage with content and platform services that are involved with multiple stakeholders with a social impact – from other non-commercial actors and platforms to popular and even commercial ones (Lowe, 2016: 40; Neuberger, 2011: 46; Steinmaurer and Wenzel, 2015: 18–19).

As Uwe Hasebrink (2007: 42) notes, generally, public value is generated as a result of communication and negation involving all stakeholders. At the same time, due to changing social conditions, public value must be sufficiently flexible and constantly adjusted to meet new social demands and goals – especially in the digital age. In the wake of platformisation however, PSB’s content production is becoming increasingly dependent on certain major platforms. This means it is continuously drawn into their opaque processes and practices and serves their operational aims. PSB is forced to support the logics of a third-party platform in order to accumulate an audience under their algorithmic and operational conditions. PSB employees such as the ‘funk’ staff are increasingly focused on developing and producing content for social media. As they do so, they are trying to come up with guidelines for content production and communication on social media platforms. Their existing basic principles involve compliance with the rules and regulations of netiquette and of the law in general: no commercials, additional
charges, editing of user-generated content (UGC) or restriction to access are permitted; content is moderated and managed by selected PSB employees (ARD, 2012). Otherwise, social media platforms set the standards to which PSB must adapt. As van Dijck and Poell put it, social media have ‘genuinely impacted editorial and other professional practices and standards’ (2015: 154) of PSB in Europe; and this also applies to Germany. ‘The dual attraction–suspicion attitude toward social media as public platforms has resulted in a cautionary approach toward their monetizing intentions’ and a ‘struggle between “social” and “public”’ (van Dijck and Poell, 2015: 154).

Even though PSB’s executives demonstrate a critical awareness of an ongoing support of third-party platforms through the ‘funk’ network, on the institutional level at least, the infrastructural entanglements of PSB with social media have led to a change in PSB’s media policy. In that it is now aligned with the operational mode of platformisation and its impact on the content (see ARD, 2017: 9).

The production and distribution level: The case of Druck

Since its premiere in 2015, the Norwegian online drama, Skam, has moved beyond its national boundaries to become a ‘global online cult phenomenon’ (Sundet, 2020) and a ‘transitional object’ (Krüger and Rustad, 2019) with several European adaptations. These include Skam Italia (Italy, 2018–), Wifock (Belgium, 2018–2020), Skam France (France, 2018–), Skam España (Spain, 2018–2020), Skam NL (Netherlands, 2018–2019) and Druck (Germany, 2018–). Moreover, with Skam Austin (USA, 2018–2019), the series’ concept has also entered the US market (Bronson, 2016). The original Skam series ‘not only reaches its core audience in social situations that are characteristic of this audience’s everyday life, it also depicts and thematises teen media use as typical in its storylines’ (Krüger and Rustad, 2019: 73; see also Andersen and Sundet, 2019: 5–8; Sundet, 2020: 74ff.). All adaptations thus far follow an online approach. John Hopewell quotes Haakon Moslet, NRK’s head of youth TV, as saying that, when producers adapt the concept to national perspectives, they ‘do a lot of research in their own countries’ target group before making the series, finding out what is unique about the dreams and dilemmas of teenagers, not just copying the original’ (2017). The various international adaptations all focus on a group of teenage high school students, while each season mainly follows one character’s life, love and struggles at school and home. The adaptations apply cross-media storytelling on social media platforms to varying degrees. The various markets take different approaches to the particular conditions of production and distribution for a younger audience on digital platforms. Skam Italia was released on Telecom Italia’s subscription-based video streaming service TIMvision. Wifock was distributed via commercial broadcasters VIER and VIJF on the Belgium online series’ own website. Skam France aired on France.tv Slash’s website, which is the public broadcaster’s digital platform for youth content. Skam España premiered on Telefónica’s subscription-based video platform Movistar+; Skam NL was broadcast in parts on YouTube and then shown together as one episode on the PSB youth channel NPO3 on Sundays. The US adaptation Skam Austin aired on Facebook Watch (Max, 2018). To
provide a more nuanced perspective on similarities and differences between adaptations of the Skam format, I will discuss the German version in more detail.

Like the source text, Druck has a large cast, and most of its main issues are approached from a female point of view. Therefore, as Florian Krauß and Moritz Stock have pointed out, ‘special attention is paid to adolescent femininity. In addition to female solidarity and friendship, the series negotiates female sexuality as part of intimate conversations on topics like contraception, masturbation experiences, nude pictures on the internet and penis sizes’ (2018: 86). In that sense, ‘talking about sexual insecurities and preferences is no longer taboo as it is represented as a natural part of the living environment of young females’ (Krauß and Stock, 2018: 86).

The first season of Druck follows the storylines of Hanna (Lilly Dreesen), her struggles in her relationship with her boyfriend and her social environment of female friends. Mia (Milena Tscharntke) is Hanna’s friend and the feminist main character of season two. The third season focuses on the love, life, and sexual orientation of male character, Matteo (Michelangelo Fortuzzi), while the fourth follows the story of Muslim character Amira (Tua El-Fawwal) and her struggles to combine religion with everyday life. The fifth season introduced a new cast and follows the story of the main character of Nora (Mina-Giselle Rüffer). The sixth season started in December 2020 with the main character of Fatou (Sira-Anna Faal). Unlike the Norwegian original, the German adaptation introduced transgender character David in season three, as portrayed by transgender actor Lukas von Horbatschewsky (Kunz, 2020). The adjustment was a response to both the fan community’s desire to include such a character, as well as the relevance of transgenderism in the current social climate (Hartmann und Mikos, 2020: 263). Additionally, some smaller adjustments were made to better address the German target group. Norwegian high school students’ spring ‘russ celebration’, for example, had to be changed since the tradition does not exist in Germany. Moreover, the character Jonas (Anselm Bresgott) not only uses marijuana but also sells it, creating more dramatic significance for German audiences (Hartmann und Mikos, 2020: 263). As series director Pola Beck said in an interview, ‘in Germany, smoking pot is nothing to write home about. Teens have access to it’ (Schneider, 2019). Thus, to prevent the audience from criticising the series for forcing educational content, the subject of drug use was steered in a different direction.

However, more so than the textual adjustments, the conditions for production and distribution would seem challenging and demanding for the Bantry Bay team. The production apparatus of Druck consists of young media professionals of film and television such as the directors Beck, Jano Ben Chaabane and Tom Lass, writers like Alexander Lindh and Janna Nandzik, or producers like Lasse Scharpen. Furthermore, a specialised social media team of young creatives is also part of the crew (like Farid-Philippe Bouatra or Salomon Hörler) to serve the series’ platform-driven approach on SNSs in particular. Like Skam, Druck’s storytelling principles follow the rules of online publishing and social media communication in order to simulate a form of real-time narration. Skam was also distributed linearly on NRK3, while its online broadcast on NRK TV’s digital web platform and the series website were much more important for the target group’s reception of the series (Sundet, 2020: 70). However, Druck further
expands the social media-driven logic by the way it tells stories. Episodes premiere on YouTube mostly on Fridays: all accompanying video clips are published on YouTube as well, at different times or days according to the everyday behaviour of the series’ characters. All characters use accounts on Instagram to augment the ‘real-life experience’ of the social media-impelled approach to storytelling, and this is done to create a community by offering interactive communication and direct response. Moreover, through the use of fictional chat histories and Instagram stories, the series’ story world is extended even further on the platform (see also Stollfuß, 2020: 83). Additionally, before WhatsApp ended its newsletter function in December 2019, audiences and fans could receive more story-driven information via WhatsApp chat histories. When the production team informed the audience about the termination of the newsletter function on WhatsApp, they also asked the community for future use about the alternative instant messaging services they used (such as Telegram) (druckaddicts, 2019). The series’ production apparatus is geared to fit the social media environment as the series’ screenplays and shooting schedules are adjusted to the content production flow for social media (Hartmann und Mikos, 2020: 264–265; Krauß, 2020: 277). Moreover, the amateur cast of Druck assists the Bantry Bay Productions team in adapting the scripts for a young and social media-shaped audience. In addition, the production team uses social media editors at the filming locations to support, for instance, series director Beck and writer Lindh (Schneider, 2019). Producer Scharpen has also indicated that the production team was concerned with the challenge of using Instagram features in the storytelling. As he says: ‘We managed to immediately accumulate a fan base on social media when we started broadcasting Druck. We get continuous feedback from the series’ fans, we quickly revise errors, and we receive praise for our updates’ (Schwegler, 2018). Due to audience’s feedback, story parts and even whole episodes are adjusted, as Scharpen made clear in an interview with Florian Krauß (2020: 278).

As Vilde Schanke Sundet has said of Skam, the series’ concept takes ‘its lead from convergence culture and participatory media’ (2020: 73). Fan activities and involvement can be seen as the cultural essence of the format (2020: 83). Druck’s production apparatus also relies on a participatory mode that manages the audience on social media by addressing the community and letting them become part of the development process. For instance, the additional cast for the fifth season is discovered and put together via social media. Similar to the casting procedure of both Skam and the first casting for the German adaptation in 2017 – where the final cast was chosen from among more than 700 adolescent drama students and amateur applicants with little experience in professional acting (Hartmann und Mikos, 2020: 261; ZDF, 2018) – the recent casting process addresses Druck audiences and fans, particularly on Instagram (druckaddicts, 2020a). Audience members receive information on the casting process after checking the Instagram story on the official fan account (@druckaddicts). Here they are redirected to the Bantry Bay Productions website and instructed to create a personal profile. To participate in the casting process, applicants must upload a current non-edited facial image and body shot, together with a short video clip, all of which can be taken and recorded on a smartphone (an additional video on hobbies and personal skills is optional). Moreover, applicants are asked to comment on what they like about Druck, to
say whether they have any role models and to describe their generation in three catchwords. Applicants are also asked to briefly describe their everyday issues and what they most fear and to describe which developments they would like to see in the new season.

In addition to the casting call, the production company has launched an online survey on social media as part of audience-based research on potential new ideas that could be fed into the development process for the upcoming season (druckaddicts, 2020b). The survey entails more than 30 questions on a variety of topics: these include graduation, favourite school subject, participation in school groups, performance pressure, the everyday relevance of smartphones, their most-used mobile apps and preferred times of day for smartphone use. The questionnaire also comprises subjects like love, relationships, friendships and sexual orientation. Participants have to comment on both their own love lives and friendships. Answers are evaluated to provide new information for the series’ writers (Krauß, 2020: 278). The Druck production team thereby invites the series’ audience to become collaborators by means of a ‘series-audience relationship’ that exists primarily on social media (see also Stollfuß, 2020: 92–95).

In order to serve the demographic, the production team of Skam also ‘did extensive audience research, including 50 in-depth interviews with Norwegian teens from across the country, 200 speed interviews, school visits, social media scanning and the readings of reports and statistics on teen culture’ (Sundet, 2020: 74). Druck’s production apparatus places more emphasis on the ‘interactive involvement’ inherent in digital media (Lahey, 2016: 634) while also using the potential for direct audience research provided by the social media environment (Deller, 2011). Thus, the production apparatus of Druck meets the audience on a level of participation that gives the audience more influence, particularly through digital and social media (Turnbull, 2014: 63). From this perspective, the Druck production team and its audience operate as digitally-based ‘communities of practice’ in the sense of a gathering ‘of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavour’ (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992: 464). Communities of practice are identified by a ‘mutual engagement, a joint negotiated enterprise and a shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time’ (Wenger, 1998: 126). For the Druck community, this comprises the feedback-driven communication between the production team and the audience (‘mutual engagement’). In so doing, the story is made together (‘joint negotiated enterprise’) using and sharing personal information, cultural knowledge, creative energy and human resources (‘shared resources accumulated over time’). These elements are the conditions for this social media-aligned production process in a platformised context. Here, Druck takes the essential cultural strength of the Skam format, further extends the social media-driven logic of storytelling and production through the use of new features on platforms like Instagram and uses its community-related characteristics as part of the participatory mode of production.

At the same time, the audience management approach in the case of Druck concerns a form of communication practice that serves the production apparatus of the series by addressing the audience as collaborators (Lahey, 2016) and by using it as a resource for the production process in a platformised social media environment. In this sense, the series’ audience management touches on aspects of what Nancy K. Baym has called the
'relational labour of connections' (2015: 14). The production team’s approach relies on the strategic interdependence of social and production relationships. Following Baym, ‘the shift to media that enable continuous interaction, higher expectations of engagement, and greater importance of such connections in shaping economic fortunes’ may lead to new skills ‘in fostering connections and managing boundaries’ (2015: 16). Therefore, cultural producers on social media must be connected with their audience base in order to make economic gains as well. The attempt to create a community on social media is thus designed not only to generate an audience, but also to integrate it in the pursuit of the producers’ own commercial goals.

Due to the strategic attempt by the ARD and ZDF to further extend PSB content on social media through the content network ‘funk’ (ARD, 2017: 9), the Druck production apparatus is forced to accumulate an audience on social media. It thus creates and expands a social network by using the network simultaneously for the series’ cultural viability and for Bantry Bay’s production viability. As it does so, the production apparatus must follow the rules and principles of social media platforms to create a wider audience and potentially increase their participation. This is PSB’s intention as outlined, for example, in the report on the mission and structural development of the ARD public broadcasters in the digital age (ARD, 2017: 9). Once again, the audience provides personal information and cultural knowledge (through online surveys or continuous feedback and interaction) or creative energy and human resources (by participating in the casting process in the hope of becoming part of the series’ cast). In so doing they support not only the continued cultural feasibility of the series (with a content of interest) but also the viability of the production apparatus. In that sense, the mutual relationship cannot operate on an equal level. The audience provide personal information on many aspects of their everyday life to support Druck in its development and production. The Druck team, on the other hand, operates highly approachable on SNSs due to its direct and participatory form of community management. However, the team does not follow a similar approach of ‘open communicative practices’ as it is needed from the series’ fans. In doing so, the Druck production team has established a policy of partial or asymmetric participatory production practices (see also Stollfuß, 2018: 43) that allows the audience and fans to engage with the series in a phase of developmental involvement, but only within defined parts of the process. Accordingly, the team addresses the audience as collaborators (Lahey, 2016) in a community of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Wenger, 1998) while using their activity in terms of a ‘relational labour of connections’ (Baym, 2015). Here, these connections are used to serve the series’ production team within the process of content development and production. This is particularly true as the Druck production apparatus’s operational model is the ‘platformization of media production’ (Nieborg et al., 2019), which influences the production and distribution of content for use on social media.

**Conclusion**

Social media, and particularly the ongoing process of platformisation, are constantly challenging PSB in Germany to provide new and innovative content that fits the needs
and habits of younger media users in a mobile media environment. To reach younger media users with relevant public service content, ARD and ZDF have launched the content network ‘funk’ to create and distribute content, primarily on third-party platforms. In this respect, the ‘funk’ network constitutes a shift in the PSB system (Stollfuß, 2019: 517). As van Es and Poell have argued, ‘public service broadcasters and policy makers are thoroughly aware of the challenges posed by platformization’ (2020: 8). In Germany, the ‘funk’ network stands for a new organisational direction with regard to content production and distribution beyond traditional structures. On the institutional level, PSB’s media policy has changed in order to provide content that fits the operational mode of platformisation (Nieborg et al., 2019; Nieborg and Poell, 2018). German PSB is becoming more flexible, more participatory and more audience-oriented due to PSB executives’ matrix-media approach (Curtin, 2009) and their attempt to transform PSB in alignment with the logic of social media (Stollfuß, 2019; van Dijck and Poell, 2013, 2015). Therefore, on the institutional level, the ‘funk’ network represents platformisation’s structural penetration of German PSB (see also van Dijck et al., 2018b: 15–16; van Es and Poell, 2020: 8) since it amalgamates the established institutional structures of ARD and ZDF with commercial third-party platforms. While the ‘funk’ network still serves the institutionally entrenched intrinsic value of its public mission, it is also challenged by its economically driven exchange value and the audience’s individual use value (Lowe, 2016). This allows it to provide innovative public service content for younger media users that fits their special interests in the realm of digital media.

The case of Druck, then, shows that platformisation highly influences the series’ terms, especially on the level of production and distribution. The production apparatus of the series not only follows the strategic attempt of PSB to align with social media’s rules; it also tries to use the platforms’ mechanisms and logics to its own advantage. Social media represent not only important platforms for the series’ approach of storytelling; they are constitutive components for the series’ processes of content development and production. In that sense, Druck does not only rely on media convergence and participatory culture as it is essential for Skam (Sundet, 2020: 73). The German adaptation emerges and evolves within a social media environment. The series is made for SNSs, and the production team meets the series’ audience and fans on social media. Thus, the transmedia object of Skam continues to develop as a specific social media-entrenched text in the case of Druck. The production of Druck is positioned to benefit from social media and synchronise its social and cultural feasibility with the viability of the production apparatus in a social media-driven environment. In so doing, the series’ user management on social media is based on a double-sided logic. First, production executives adopt an ‘audience-as-collaborators’ approach (Lahey, 2016) in order to let them become part of the development process. Here, the production team and the audience operate in terms of a community of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Wenger, 1998), but following a policy of asymmetric participatory production practices. Second, in this context, the production apparatus not only uses social media for direct audience research (Deller, 2011), but also uses the audience in relation to practices of a ‘relational labour of connections’ on social media platforms (Baym, 2015). Here, audience and fans are used as a creative resource to serve the production team within the
process of development, to provide content with a target group-specific appeal that fits the social media environment in particular.

In this regard, *Druck* uses the *Skam* format to push social media-entrenched terms of storytelling, production and distribution. The original *Skam* series emerged from a production model that bridged the ‘flow’ and ‘on-demand’ modes of Norwegian PSB youth content (Andersen and Sundet, 2019: 12; Sundet, 2020: 70). The German adaptation, by contrast, develops within a social media environment, fully joined with its operational mode of platformisation.

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