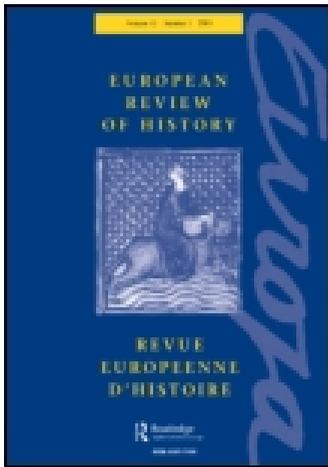


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The Production of Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century Western Europe: Trends in and Perspectives on ‘Europop’

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Introduction

In a recent book on the Americanisation of Britain between the mid-1950s and the mid-1970s, historian Howard Le Roy Malchow takes up the familiar question of to what extent British popular culture has been influenced by American people, ideas, media organisations and money. Summarising the literature on this topic, he distinguishes between two lines of research. The 1970s had been dominated by studies that analysed the American influence as a form of ‘cultural imperialism’, a one-way global export of American values, facilitated by economic might and powerful institutions, which was said to have either led to a flattening of culture and shallow consumerism or promoted democracy and civility abroad. A revisionist approach that rose to prominence in the 1980s and 1990s stressed the agency of local recipients and highlighted that consumers in the importing countries managed to adapt US culture to their particular needs and in effect hybridised the American import.¹ Malchow’s own study then goes on to prove that many popular phenomena which had been labelled British or European by both contemporaries and historians were, in fact, American in content and personnel. The ‘1968 Underground [...] of Notting Hill, Dam Square, Christiania, or Kreuzberg [...] was [...] first and foremost driven forward by penetrative, media-amplified American cultural hegemony’, ‘[t]he British rock music world of the late sixties and early seventies [...] was instructed and led by the larger American scene and market’ and ‘[t]he American origins and character of the British Underground press in the late sixties and early seventies are hardly in doubt.’ According to Malchow, British music journals like the *New Musical Express* as well as the DJs on pirate radio stations essentially imitated American formats, and even *Monty Python’s Flying Circus* is registered as largely American due to its theme song (a Souza march) and the contribution of its American member, Terry Gilliam.² Malchow concludes his book with the statement: ‘It is hard to escape the fact that in Britain ‘America’ was for many a strong and often determining influence in the shaping of mid- and late-twentieth century mentality and aspiration – however much it may have melded with the postcolonial and the new European.’³

With Malchow’s *Special Relations* and Victoria de Grazia’s *Irresistible Empire*, a study that bears its argument for an overwhelming impact of US popular culture on European societies in its title, historical research on cultural Americanisation has come full circle. After two decades of studying the creative appropriation of Hollywood films and Rock ‘n’ Roll music by European consumers, a re-focusing on the political economy

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of popular culture suggests putting micro-level practices back into a macro-level perspective of media ownership, state policy and the relentless spread of US-style consumer society.

While the ‘cultural imperialism’ studies and the reception-focused research represent the opposing ends of the historiographical discourse on cultural Americanisation, they have in common a general neglect of the domestic production of popular culture in Europe. In both perspectives, the fabrication and dissemination of what might be called a particular European popular culture is rendered by and large irrelevant. It appears as either being side-lined by American imports, forced to adopt American elements and formulas, or negligible, because the consumer is seen as the ‘real’ producer of meaning.

This omission of the European production of popular culture is not just topical, something which has been overlooked because it was marginal in the first place. It is deeply rooted in the culture concepts that inform most research on the subject. On the one hand, popular culture is seen as a manifestation of collective values, norms and beliefs which inform individual behaviour and emerge from peoples’ engagement with their surroundings.⁴ According to this view, the US as the most democratic, prosperous and ethnically diverse society of the twentieth century generated and forcefully promoted a form of popular culture that resonated with the needs of Europeans the moment the nations of the Old World turned into liberal-democratic, multi-ethnic consumer societies as well.⁵ On the other hand, historians who often explicitly follow the British Cultural Studies approach and perceive culture as meanings that are created by consumers who act independently from the manipulative intentions of the state and the ‘culture industry’ describe how Europeans recipients appropriated, negotiated, contested, hybridised or creolised American culture.⁶ In general, these reception-oriented studies show little concern for the mechanisms and implications of cultural production, be it American or European.

This special issue on *Europop* focuses on this lacuna and addresses both the topical and the methodological concerns of studying the production of popular culture in Europe. It contains case studies on music, tourism, cinema, fashion, broadcasting, advertising and coffee which deal mainly with the British, French, German and Italian experience, but give occasional glances to smaller countries in Western Europe. The issue covers a period of about 100 years, beginning with the origins of modern popular culture at the end of the nineteenth century and leading on to the last decades of the twentieth century. All contributions take developments in US popular culture as a point of reference, making use of the heuristic potential of comparisons and critically engaging with the Americanisation thesis. The contributions concentrate on the supply side of culture and study how the interplay of producers who operated under conditions particular for their respective cultural fields shaped popular content, but they also point out implications for the consumption of culture.

The issue pursues two aims. Shifting the primary focus from Hollywood movies and Rock ‘n’ Roll songs to Viennese operettas, Parisian fashion, British advertising campaigns, Italian espresso and other, lesser-known popular expressions ‘made in Europe’, the articles study domestic European content which quite often eclipsed US imports in popularity at home and sometimes abroad. They carve out European commonalities and intra-European transfers in the realm of popular culture that have been overlooked in studies which concentrate on national cases and their transatlantic connections. These findings complicate our picture of the history of popular culture in Western Europe in the twentieth century. Rather than tracing an irresistible advance of US culture, the contributions to this issue qualify the scope, timing and processes of the

cultural Americanisation of Europe and make discernible developments which distinguish European popular culture from the American counterpart. They acknowledge that European countries took up American popular culture and adopted US modes of cultural production, but argue that even in those fields where the American presence was strong, as in cinema and advertising, this presence was far from overwhelming, limited in time and mediated by local producers of culture.

The present articles contrast the American way of producing and disseminating popular culture with a distinct European mode of cultural production, whose identification is one of the foremost results of the present issue. While the Fordist US mode of cultural production is characterised by mass production and mass marketing of standardised products that cater for a proven demand, the European production regime allowed for greater autonomy of creatives and turned out to be able to ascribe intrinsic value to popular contents, lifting them above mainstream entertainment. This mode can be traced back to precursors in the first half of the twentieth century and might initially have been one of the reasons why European popular culture in many instances fell behind American imports in popularity. In the second half of the century, however, this mode of production became an important feature of popular culture. Rock songs, films, fashion, foods and advertising campaigns successfully claimed 'relevance' as well as artistic, material or sensual value and turned out to be both economically competitive and culturally influential. Popular culture that was seen as sophisticated and meaningful stimulated the further creation of innovative culture. Moreover, it lent itself to a mode of consumption that allowed recipients to demarcate distinctions of knowledge and taste within the realm of the popular, a form of engaging with popular culture that has shifted and transformed old oppositions between 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow'. This development began around 1960 in the realms of fashion, film, music and advertising and gained momentum during the subsequent 20 years. Intrinsic value, relevance and social distinctiveness have then become and still are primary features ascribed to commercial culture. They distinguish present-day popular from older mass culture, in Europe, America and elsewhere. The contributions to the present issue argue that the emergence of these features owes to a large extent to institutions, conditions and initiatives of cultural production which can be found first and foremost in Europe.

The second aim of this issue is to make a case for an approach to popular culture that accounts for the inherent dynamics of cultural production and the role of cultural intermediaries in the change of repertoires. As mentioned above, research on popular culture has in the last 30 years or so concentrated on meaning and reception and interpreted popular symbolic objects and consumer practices as manifestations of widely shared beliefs and values or evidence of consumers' agency.⁷ In contrast to this, the present articles highlight the role of professional producers from fashion designers and art directors to music publishers, film exhibitors and coffee roasters, to whom the fabrication of culture was delegated in the period under study. Starting from the supply side of symbolic content, the contributions aim to explain when and why certain forms of popular culture appeared in their particular shape and form and how they changed over time. They account for the dynamics of cultural production instead of attributing cultural change to general trends such as demographic shifts, political transformations, economic developments or an alleged need for new values and beliefs. The methodological concern of this issue is to challenge the widespread correspondence thesis that perceives culture as a mirror of society, arguing for historical studies to treat popular culture as a phenomenon in its own right. It should be stressed that this production approach is compatible with research on the consumption of culture as the production perspective acknowledges the

agency of recipients. However, it insists that this agency is enacted on the basis of cultural content that was primarily provided by professional suppliers and suggests that historians who follow the Cultural Studies approach might overstate the autonomy of recipients just as much as older studies of mass culture tend to overestimate the potential of the 'culture industry' to manipulate consumers.⁸

The following paragraphs first outline the production of culture perspective before elaborating the key findings of the issue and pointing out some implications of cultural production for the social history of popular culture. This is done with a broad brush, as this collection of articles should be seen as a point of departure for historical research on popular culture in twentieth-century Western Europe that analyses institutions to answer questions about culture in society.

Explaining the change of popular repertoires: the production of culture perspective

Popular culture – defined here as goods and services provided for entertainment, framed and in most cases also distributed by mass media and consumed by a considerable number of people with considerable intensity – has in the last 30 years attracted growing interest among historians. It is now commonly understood as an important factor in social relations and the formation of collective identities, values and beliefs. As mentioned above in reference to studies on cultural Americanisation, historical research on popular culture generally focuses on its meaning and reception. On the one hand, historians interpret symbolic content as representations of dispositions shared by its consumers; on the other hand, there are a great number of studies that stress the 'agency' of consumers and analyse the ways in which cultural goods were appropriated.

Both these approaches are based on the assumption that culture and society somehow corresponded, as symbols allegedly reflected values, norms and beliefs, and subcultures are supposed to have challenged cultural hegemony. Consequently, they ignore the fundamental gap between the supply and demand of content and fall short of acknowledging the inherent dynamics of cultural production. Due to the scale, division of labour and the mediated distribution that characterises modern popular culture, there was and is hardly any interaction between producers and consumers that would link the two sides. Taking the perspective of content producers during the period under study, it appears that suppliers had little chance to observe audiences directly (think of radio listeners, for instance) and could only begin to interpret peoples' responses after the fact. This basic uncertainty about demand is counted among the essential properties of cultural production.⁹ The fundamental separation between production and consumption made future demand hard to fathom and forced content providers to speculate about the preferences of a public that was remote in both a spatial and temporal sense. As 'real' audiences were anonymous to them, producers orientated their decisions and strategies towards 'institutionally effective audiences', which they projected from market-research data, anecdotal evidence or the proverbial 'gut feeling'.¹⁰ In addition to that, they interpreted their observations in line with their expectations, preferences and interests. As many sociological studies on decision-making in the cultural industries have shown, knowledge about audiences is both constructed and instrumentalised to support the positions of the respective producers who try to make a case for what they like or think beneficial for their career.¹¹ So rather than representing the 'needs' of actual consumers, audience information first and foremost serves to legitimise decision-making. The uncertainty of demand, however, is not the only challenge producers of culture faced. In addition, they were subjected to a number of technological, economic, legal and

organisational conditions, such as the availability and capacities of equipment, copyright laws, broadcasting regulations, companies' hierarchies and professional routines. These and other conditions constrained, but also enabled, certain actions in far more concrete ways than what the public might have wanted or, indeed, any kind of *Zeitgeist*.

The self-referentiality of content production requires historians to study the emergence and change of symbolic objects in modern societies – where their fabrication and dissemination is delegated to specialist intermediaries like screen writers, agents, publishers, editors, distributors, service providers, retailers and critics – as resulting from an interplay between various members of a 'motley crew' of actors who all tried to realise particular interests and preferences and followed diverse informal rules and perceptions about the audience. A viable method to do this is the production of culture perspective. This approach, which became a self-conscious research position in US sociology in the 1970s, 'focuses on how the symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved'.¹² It takes the view of actors involved in the fabrication and dissemination of content to study their behaviour under particular conditions and explain how this affected the symbolic objects, which resulted from their interplay. Sociologist Richard A. Peterson, who until his death in 2010 had been the most prolific proponent of the approach, has conceptualised cultural-production systems as consisting of six interrelated facets:

- technology (for instance, recording facilities or broadcast media)
- law and regulation (for example, copyright legislation or licensing regulation)
- industry structure (the relationship between the various organisations involved in the production process)
- business organisation (the internal structure of firms)
- occupational careers (the professional self-understanding of cultural producers)
- market perception (producers' assumptions about consumer preferences).

The basic assumption of the production of culture perspective says that the constellation of these facets constrains and enables the actions of those involved in the fabrication and dissemination of symbolic objects and thereby shapes the content that becomes widely available. The six facets are interrelated, which means that a change in any of these dimensions, for instance a copyright reform or the appearance of a new distribution medium, affects the other facets and may bring about a fundamental change of the whole production system.

The case study that best illustrates the approach is Peterson's article *Why 1955?*, which explains the rise of Rock 'n' Roll in the mid-1950s US in reference to a coincidence of technological innovations, legal and regulatory changes and shifting relations within the music business. These structural changes opened a window of opportunity for previously marginalised producers, who benefited from their alternative occupational self-understanding and market perception. This way, a sound which had been played and recorded for some time at the margins of the music industry gained wide exposure and broke through in an otherwise uneventful period in US history.

Peterson's study shows how television as the new medium for family entertainment drained audiences, resources and personnel from radio, leaving it in need of cheap content and with youth audiences. In turn, radio programmers opened their channels to broadcast recorded music, something that the established record firms had always prevented, as they firmly believed that people who could listen to music for free would not buy it on record. Consequently, producers of Rock 'n' Roll, who could not compete with the majors along traditional lines and were forced to experiment in their relationship with radio stations,

were the first to find out that airplay was actually the most effective way to promote new records. Small firms producing rock music further benefited from the fact that they were able to decide quicker than the cumbersome record majors that were staffed with ‘bureaucrats’ and ‘craftsmen’. While the latter adhered to organisational hierarchies and stuck to professional routines, rock-producing ‘entrepreneurs’ and ‘showmen’ were prepared to break with the industry’s conventions. They saw no problem in waiving personal preferences that could otherwise prevent them from reacting to what they saw as a change in demand.¹³

Initially, the production of culture perspective had deliberately faded out aspects of meaning and reception, contrasting the method in opposition to the then-dominant hermeneutic approaches, which treated culture as a mirror of society. More recent work in the production of culture tradition has expanded the scope of this perspective to integrate meaning and reception into the analysis. Respective studies have focused on the way shared assumptions about consumer preferences emerge among producers when, for instance, new information about the market becomes available.¹⁴ They have analysed how artistic value is generated and attributed to culture at ‘field-configuring events’ and award ceremonies and through classifications.¹⁵ And they have traced the institutionalisation of styles that were current in certain scenes into genres which subsequently structured the larger-scale production as well as the wider consumption of that content.¹⁶

The present issue takes up the lead of these sociological studies with the intent to explain the wide appearance of particular content at particular points in time and in particular frames. Furthermore, it wants to explore ways to integrate the production, reception and meaning of modern popular culture while taking into consideration the principle divide between producers and audiences. The papers that follow account for the inherent dynamics of cultural production as they heed the commercial environment in which twentieth-century popular culture was fabricated as well as the cognitions, preferences and assumptions that influenced repertoire decisions on the supply side. They focus on the interplay of culture producers and acknowledge the contingency of cultural change, instead of making it appear as an inevitable response to greater societal trends or political and economic ruptures. They explore how production affected the looks, sounds, tastes and experiences of popular culture, and while they do not embark on comprehensive studies of reception, they point out implications for the consumption of culture. In doing so, they are aware of the role of intermediaries in the dissemination of popular content, an aspect that has been neglected in past research on the topic.¹⁷ They also uncover different paths of content production in Europe and the US which have so far been overlooked, and point out particular caesura and periods in the history of modern popular culture.

Beyond Americanisation: trends in twentieth-century popular culture in Western Europe

The period around 1900 has been highlighted as the formative phase of modern popular culture in the West. As larger segments of the population enjoyed rising incomes and reduced working hours, people became more mobile and clustered in towns and cities, and entertainment became ‘industrialised’¹⁸ with new media like cinema and the gramophone, soon to be followed by radio and sound film. These developments were necessary preconditions for the emergence of what we still recognise as popular culture today and took place in the Western world in roughly similar ways at similar times. Looking closer at the supply side, however, we discern that the production of commercial popular culture

took different paths in the Old and the New World from the end of the nineteenth into the twentieth century.

In the US, the market for culture was, until the 1890s, very much geared to works from Europe. The majority of books and music sold to the American public had originated in the Old World and then been reprinted in the US. Many Americans read British standard novels about love, marriage and money, and played 'cultivated' music by European composers on their pianos, while domestic critics lamented the absence of particularly 'American' styles in fiction and music. An important reason for the European cultural dominance lay in the fact that foreign works were not protected by American copyright laws. This allowed US publishers to reprint and sell European books and music without having to compensate original rights holders, i.e. European authors, composers and publishers. This situation changed after 1891, when copyright reforms in the US extended protection to imported books and music and thereby gave incentives to domestic producers, who found that the playing field was now levelled. While the more established firms had the means to continue importing the tried-and-tested European literary and musical repertoire, newcomers to the publishing trade focused on market segments about which incumbent producers held reservations. These newcomers, often immigrants from Central (in music) and Eastern Europe (in the slightly later case of film), explored alternative genres like cowboy fiction and tearjerker ballads and tried out new marketing methods.¹⁹

As Nathaus and Kopper in their contributions on music and tourism describe, US providers of leisure and entertainment developed novel ways to select, produce, distribute and advertise their goods and services which became characteristic for American popular culture. They established a Fordist mode of cultural production which was based on standardised products and quick turnover, allowed for cheap prices and catered to a large number of individualised consumers. New York's popular-music publishers, for instance, churned out formulaic songs, hoping that at least a few of them would 'strike gold' and sell millions of sheet-music copies to consumers who were supposed to play the music at home. American tourists, who since the 1920s typically went on vacation in their private automobiles, could be sure by the 1950s that the motel down the road would not only offer them the same good standard at a reasonable price as any other along their route, but would also look pretty much the same.

Mass production and standardisation favoured larger organisations, and so the Fordist model of production features companies which were started at the right moment from scratch and rose by exploiting economies of scale and assigning tasks to divisions within their organisation. On New York's 'Tin Pan Alley', the centre of American popular-music publishing, first-mover firms like Witmark as well as Shapiro, Bernstein and Marks consolidated around 1900 and occupied the market for popular music which was effectively closed to newcomers as promotional costs rose steeply. In tourism, the motel industry in the 1950s became a franchise business, and in advertising, agencies like J. Walter Thompson multiplied the number of their employees as well as their clients in the 1890s and subsequently grew into multinational concerns. American film production, which until 1907 had also been eclipsed by European imports, was concentrated in a few Hollywood studios during the First World War.²⁰ Large companies were functionally differentiated. Full-service advertising agencies offered every component from market research and media buying to the planning, design and production of campaigns, and Hollywood studios engaged in the production as well as the distribution and exhibition of movies. In the 1930s, the studios bought up most of the leading music-publishing houses, incorporating

the music trade, which itself had divided hit-making into a staged process, into the film business.²¹

Another central element of the Fordist mode of cultural production that emerged in the 1890s is systematic market research. Richard Ohmann has shown how, in a few years around 1893, the field of magazine publishing in the US was transformed by the appearance of a new type of popular monthly periodical, which covered its costs not by expensive subscriptions but by advertising. Essentially, the new ad-supported mass magazines sold not so much content to readers as audiences to advertisers. With audiences becoming the actual commodity, both buyers and sellers of advertising space as well as the planners of campaigns required an evaluation of targeted readerships. This was now provided by agencies that filled the vacuum with systematic market research as a technique to gauge demand as well as convert audiences into a commodity.²² In the 1930s, market research made a leap in sophistication and extended to other realms of popular culture, partly due to technological developments. The appearance of radio forced researchers to find new methods to study an audience that was dispersed in private homes and left no trace when it consumed programmes. This led to the creation of the first popularity charts, which were subsequently used for music programming in radio.²³ In the movie business, rising production costs put pressure on studios to accommodate audiences' tastes in order to avoid box-office failure. Consequently, this industry invested in the systematic study of audiences, with studios going as far as to alter storylines and cut films in reaction to test screenings.²⁴ In music, jukeboxes with built-in click counters were also employed as a market-research tool in the 1930s. Box operators collected data about the frequency at which certain records were selected. This information was compiled and published regularly in the trade paper *Billboard*. Apart from box operators themselves, record producers took this market information as a cue. They recorded music with more bass and percussion to cater for the proven demand for music from the noisy bars where most juke boxes were placed.²⁵

The centrality of market research accounts for the high degree of product differentiation that the Fordist production mode achieved. This means that the standardisation of goods did not make every product look the same. Far from it. Guided by systematic knowledge about audiences, producers and disseminators of popular content often found themselves forced to fade out their own preferences and react to what became discernible as niche markets and changes in demand. As market research generated increasingly differentiated knowledge about audiences and went hand in hand with a strong commitment to 'giving the people what they want', the Fordist production regime was characterised by a preparedness to market new genres, styles or stars, given that there was evidence for a respective demand.²⁶

Against this backdrop of US Fordism, the contributions to this issue analyse European characteristics of cultural production. Some of the features they uncover may explain the decline of certain forms of popular culture in the face of American competition, while others become apparent as examples of a viable alternative to Fordism that superseded it in several respects, at least since the early 1960s. These institutional differences affected the looks, sounds, experiences and values of European popular culture and had repercussions for its consumption.

To begin with, Nathaus' paper on the different origins of modern popular music in Germany and the US shows that the music business in Germany was prevented from developing along the lines of Fordist mass marketing of sheet music, as the interlocking of music publishing, retailing in department stores and song promotion on a vaudeville circuit, which had made Tin Pan Alley big, was obstructed by domestic publishers and the

fragmentation of the German variety business. Due to this structural difference, the popular-music trade in Germany was modernised as a rights industry, with the exploitation of performance and reproduction rights becoming an important source of income for publishers, composers and authors. The shift from selling sheet music to exploiting rights occurred relatively early in comparison to the US and, indeed, Britain. In Continental Europe, however, Germany has to be regarded as a latecomer, as the principle of generating revenue from rights as well as the respective organisations had been established in France already in 1851, then in Italy (1882) and Austria (1897), before it was more or less forced on to reluctant German publishers in the early years of the twentieth century.

Different paths of modernisation created distinct incentive structures in Europe and the US, which may account for different longer-term developments. In Europe, music producers who earned money from licence fees rather than sales of copies to individual consumers dealt with music users rather than listeners. As they sold licences to organisations like radio stations and record companies, they first and foremost had to convince the respective gatekeepers of the value of their music. At times, this incentive structure bred cynicism among music suppliers who tended to disregard the preferences of the 'masses' and offered them what many producers themselves thought to be of lesser value. This happened in the case of German 'Schlager' music, where titles were broadcast mainly because radio personnel had a cut in the royalties a song earned each time it was played. As cliques of producers occupied the channels of promotion, there was a general feeling among authors and composers that song-writing merits counted for little in this network economy.²⁷

A similar disregard for recipients of popular content is identified by Alexander Badenoch in popular-music programming in European public-service broadcasting. The article mentions the awkward position of the programming committee at the European Broadcasting Union that, in the 1960s, felt it had to come to terms with the apparent demand for pop music. It only gave in reluctantly, however, trying to forge a compromise between audiences' 'deplorable' tastes and a certain aesthetic 'quality'. The underlying assumption that the mass of recipients who showed no willingness to be 'educated' might as well be fobbed off with formulaic contents led to a dead end in the longer run. The products which have been produced and disseminated this way have often become 'Eurotrash', devoid of cultural significance and mainly savoured ironically. This part of European popular culture eventually lost out to American imports, as it half-heartedly imitated US popular culture but lacked the commitment to audiences as well as the service ethos of producers who uncompromisingly catered for the popular market.

Patrick Merziger's contribution on European cinemas from the early days of sound film to the blockbuster era tells a similar story of a drawn-out decline. It shows that the erosion of European production formulas was a process that lasted decades and owed more to inherent weaknesses than to an American impact. Merziger points out that during the two decades after the Second World War, domestic films like re-released German comedies from the Nazi period and the British *Carry On* series often drew larger audiences in their national markets than the lavishly produced Hollywood movies, much to the surprise of critics who dismissed domestic films as unoriginal or worse. He argues that national audiences in Europe had got used to liking particular national film genres, styles and stars in the inter-war years, when European states tried to protect their national movie industries against foreign, primarily American, imports and the introduction of sound hampered the transfer of films across language barriers. As Merziger shows, European popular cinema died a slow death because it lost the mainstream public it had accommodated for so long to television, the medium that gave programmes aimed at seemingly everybody a new home.

It was only after the total decline of European cinemas that Hollywood filled the vacuum with its blockbusters in the 1970s and 1980s.

Like Merziger, Veronique Pouillard, Stefan Schwarzkopf and Jonathan Morris in their contributions on fashion, advertising and coffee shed light on the often defensive strategies of European producers of culture, who felt threatened by their American competitors. In the face of US mass production and New York trying to become a fashion centre in its own right, Parisian couture houses from the inter-war years to the 1950s lobbied for extended copyright protection for their designs against counterfeiting by mass producers, as well as for direct subventions from the state. In a similar way, French advertising entrepreneurs employed tactics – from using personal networks to mobilising anti-American sentiment – to keep US competitors at bay while selectively adopting their business strategies. Attempts to close national markets to foreign agencies and copying American methods can be observed elsewhere in post-war Europe, even if not as pronounced as in France. A recent case of protectionism is Italian coffee, whose promoters at the turn of the last century lobbied the Italian government to introduce legislation that authorises inspectors to certify whether espresso and cappuccino served in cafés adheres to ‘Italian’ standards.²⁸ Further examples of protectionism are the quotas that guaranteed domestic cultural products a minimum of media exposure. Such policies were pursued in defence of European cinemas during the inter-war years, as Merziger shows, and have also been applied to music broadcasting, as Badenoch mentions.

At first sight, these measures appear to be purely defensive, intended to shield domestic markets from foreign competition. A closer look, however, reveals that the establishment of certificates, classifications and expert evaluations in some instances were an important building block of a European mode of cultural production that in the second half of the twentieth century proved to be a real alternative to American Fordism. The emergence of such classification regimes can be observed in several realms of popular culture in Western Europe, beginning around 1960. Schwarzkopf shows how in British advertising agencies creativity gained in importance when a group of younger designers and art directors formed British Design & Art Direction in 1962 and tendered an annual award to distinguish work in the field which was recognised by its practitioners as excellent. In this way, British designers introduced the principle of ‘peer review’ to their field and judged designs, which had played a lesser role in the big American agencies where campaigns centred on market research, in accordance to their own categories. The D&AD awards and similar prizes not only confirmed designers’ autonomy, but also drew attention to advertising artwork and offered clients criteria to distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ advertising. Awards shifted the field’s focus from market research to creativity as an element that had been undervalued in American full-service agencies.

A similar development can be identified at about the same time in the realm of popular music, where in the mid-1960s British rock bands successfully claimed greater relevance for their work, which was to be distinguished from the ‘merely’ popular. As in advertising, this required the converging actions of various participants in the field: critics who applied ‘serious’ categories to understand and evaluate rock sounds and were receptive to expressions that broke with conventions of the pop business; established fine artists who co-operated with musicians and consecrated reputation to them, for instance, by designing record sleeves and publicly socialising with them, as well as like-minded filmmakers and fashion designers who highlighted other facets of bands.²⁹ As Schwarzkopf reminds us, the institutionalisation of creativity was not only due to the deliberate efforts of cultural producers, but also to the relative cost effectiveness of independent production in comparison to Fordist production. As the comprehensive services of US-style agencies

became an increasing financial burden, firms that advertised their products were inclined to look for cheaper options and turned their attention to creative 'hot shops'. The same holds true for the British beat bands who initially got their chance to make recordings, not least because they were cheap to produce. From this perspective, the rise of creative autonomy in commercial culture may partly be seen as a consequence of the cost problems of large-scale production to which smaller, more flexible business organisation offered a solution.³⁰

As art directors and musicians claimed relevance for their products, Parisian fashion houses and the promoters of Italian coffee established similar mechanisms to create brands, converting field-specific value into popular attention and economic profit. In the case of fashion, an important step in this direction was the establishment of the Couture-Création classification in the 1950s. Initially, this classification served to channel public subsidies for fashion houses. It required firms that wanted to benefit from state support to register and meet strict criteria of business conduct and craft. Its important side effect was that it secured design and trade standards in the industry and thereby helped to establish labels. These were subsequently shifted into the focus of the field by marketing campaigns that associated leading labels with craftsmanship and tradition. Whereas fashion producers had formerly tried to protect and exploit designs, they now featured brands as their core asset. On the basis of a label's prestige, designers devised tie-in products from perfumes to accessories, carefully balancing between exclusivity and popular appeal.

The case of Italian espresso shows similarities. As Morris demonstrates, coffee was far from likely to become an 'Italian' product; in fact, it took Italians some time to acquire a taste for this beverage. However, coffee roasters and the producers of espresso machines managed to make espresso 'Italian' by blending an invented tradition of a popular coffee culture, which dated back only to the early 1960s, with national clichés of sociability and good temperament. At the same time, Italian espresso promoters claimed authority for the almost scientific definition of the preparation process. The Italian image still seems to last, even though foreign styles of serving the beverage with large quantities of milk as well as Swiss manufacturers of machines began to shape global coffee culture from the 1990s. Like coffee, other European foods successfully fused tradition, craftsmanship, know-how and national clichés to build institutions on them that authenticated their superior quality. A famous example is Burgundy wine, which established the concept that the beverage derived its quality from the very soil the vines grew from (*'terroir'*).³¹

Establishing institutions that transformed entertainment and consumer goods into something more relevant and intrinsically valuable appears to be a European particularity which contrasts with the Fordist production regime. In the European mode of culture production, a relatively small number of respected producers worked to extend the boundaries of 'edgy' advertising, 'progressive' music or 'creative' fashion, focusing the attention on their 'revolutionary' innovations, or, as in food, defended 'traditions' against current adulterations by competitors. In contrast, the Fordist model subscribes neither to creative progress nor to a past in which craftsmanship and care ruled. Instead, it evolves by adding new styles and fixing them in an expanding spectrum of genres which are meant to cater for segmented audiences and occasionally cross over to a mainstream. While Fordist culture is very much guided by analysing the consumer and committed to satisfying existing demand, those European producers of culture who strove for peer recognition addressed fellow field participants, effectively leading demand. Tellingly, the above-mentioned advances in 1930s US consumer research took much longer to be adopted in Europe. The British cinema industry was far behind the American methods of testing audience reactions to films and hardly bothered to systematically analyse fan mail,

let alone try out more sophisticated methods.³² Popularity charts, like the ones which were compiled on the basis of jukebox selections and radio airplay, became a regular feature in Europe about 20 to 25 years after the first *Billboard* bestseller lists appeared and were, more importantly, often ignored by producers who insisted on their professional authority.³³ Format radio, which had become the formula for success in the US radio industry in the 1950s, appeared in Europe only around 1980.³⁴ On the other hand, we find that American award ceremonies like the Oscars or the Grammys are not so much sites for artistic debate or harbingers of aesthetic revolutions as promotional vehicles.³⁵ The question that arises from this comparison is why the above-mentioned mechanisms of authentication could be established in Europe around 1960, while in the US similar attempts – some of which are mentioned in the following articles – were far less successful. One possible answer would point to intervening European states that supported national brands and professional standards (like in the cases of fashion, film and foods); another would refer to the flexibility of independent production, which became a viable economic alternative to large corporations (as in music and advertising).

So far, the production mode that centres on field-specific value has been labelled ‘European’. This can be justified by the fact that it crystallised in European countries around 1960, that it contrasts to Fordism, and that there were, as Schwarzkopf stresses, continuities that date back to European arts and crafts movements of the first half of the twentieth century, like Bauhaus. However, a shift of focus from the transatlantic comparison to an inter-European perspective brings into view the fact that all of the examples mentioned above are actually national cases, with Britain and France playing a pioneering role and being conspicuously successful in several fields. The British case seems particularly intriguing as Britain had the strongest ties to the US, opened up to American influences the most and was the earliest to do so among the other European countries – but has also been the most successful in exporting popular culture globally since the 1960s.

Looking at the whole of the twentieth century, the period in which inner-European transfers and exchange were strongest ended with the increasing nationalisation of the cultural industries in the 1930s, as Merziger and Badenoch demonstrate. The cases of cinema and broadcasting, as well as coffee, as Morris argues, make clear that the nationalisation of popular culture in Europe – which was never comprehensive – required deliberate efforts of those who wanted to promote and protect, control and contain culture within the boundaries of nation states. The phase in which Americanisation was strongest began after the Second World War. It was characterised by the presence of US firms, investment, technology and content, as well as the often-keen adoption of American methods by European producers. This period lasted until about 1960, when the European mode of cultural production began to make a mark in several cultural realms. Since the 1980s, it has become more difficult to speak of specific national or continental modes of cultural production. One reason for this is that economic structures have become so complex that it seems pointless trying to identify a regional origin of a particular content. The takeovers in the advertising industries which Schwarzkopf describes may illustrate this. The increasing concentration of the music business in multinational multimedia companies would be a further case in point.³⁶ As Morris’s example suggests, the latest phase of cultural production is not so much led by producers and marketing specialists as by experts in financing who are able to acquire the capital necessary to launch global brands like Starbucks. But even in cases where regional distinctions are discernible, familiar dichotomies seem to have collapsed or been reversed. This is most evident in the case of television, where Americans and Europeans appear to have changed roles. As

European broadcasting since the privatisations of the 1980s has committed itself to follow audience ratings in programming decisions. American television drama receives a critical acclaim that European productions never enjoyed.³⁷ To complicate matters, however, British actors are conspicuously present in major American series, and it has been argued that the “‘producer-auteur’ model’ that characterises the high end of current US television drama owes much to precursors from British television.³⁸

The production of culture and its implications for consumption and social relations

The contributions to this issue focus on the production and evaluation of popular culture, but their relevance for aspects of meaning, reception and social relations should be obvious and are touched upon in some instances. For each of the periods delineated we may identify particular ways popular culture was consumed. In the early years of the period under study, collective consumption has been a feature in Europe. Kopper mentions this for tourism, where people with lesser means were not only forced to pool their resources and travel in groups, but still continued to do so after they could have gone individually, as providers kept offering communal-style holidays – in Billy Butlin’s camps, for instance. The presence of book and record clubs after 1945 would be a further case in point, making collective consumption another European particularity that is at odds with the idea of a swift Americanisation. What should also be kept in mind is that retailing upheld traditional standards of trade and professionalism which meant that consumers were forced to interact with sales personnel who saw it their task to lead him or her to make ‘the right choice’, rather than just giving the customers what he or she asked for.³⁹

Generally speaking, however, European customers learned to make their choice among a growing variety of cultural goods for individual consumption. While this development took place, the rise of what has been labelled here the European mode of cultural production suggested a new form of engaging with culture that demarcated social distinctions within the realm of the popular. Whereas Fordism tended to erode these distinctions in favour of entertainment value for all, the European mode basically introduced the distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ into segments of popular culture and turned them into sites where social distinctions became increasingly pronounced. Coffee, as Morris shows, is one example of a good that was transformed into a site for conspicuous consumption and connoisseurship. A further case in point is progressive rock music, which became a domain for white middle-class males who took it seriously, unlike 1950s Rock ‘n’ Roll, that had been considered by many to be just a passing fad. Progressive music reinforced class, race and gender boundaries at a time when they were lowered in other areas of society, for instance by the dismantling of legal discrimination.⁴⁰

Finally, since the 1980s, sociologists on both sides of the Atlantic have noticed the appearance of the ‘cultural omnivore’ as a new consumer type that does not limit his or her engagement with culture to the appreciation of ‘high’ art, but derives his superior cultural status from his ‘expertise’ in a large variety of genres and his ability to navigate between registers that became increasingly difficult to separate into ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture.⁴¹ Again, this latest development owes much to changes on the supply side, where the deregulation of the media industry, the privatisation of broadcasting, the multiplication of distribution channels, the use of computer technology in retailing and market research as well as the wider availability of production technology since around 1980 facilitated the proliferation of an ever-growing number of distinct cultural genres and the knowledge about them.

The relationship between the populist conception of popular culture as culture appealing to everyone and the self-referential approach that applies aesthetic distinctions to popular content has changed throughout the period under study. It seems worthwhile to study these shifts by integrating the production and consumption of culture to explain them in reference to changes on the supply side, as well as assess their implications for social relations, which requires the analysis of the demand side.

The contributions to this issue argue that a firm understanding of the change and the transfer of popular culture requires the study of decision-making among cultural intermediaries who were primarily subjected to the particular constraints of their professional environment. They stress the relative autonomy and self-referentiality of cultural production in modern societies and suggest identifying the production of popular culture as a driving force for cultural and social change. They make a case for more research into two areas of popular culture. Firstly, we need to know more about the actors, structures and processes of cultural production, including aspects like work in the creative industries, the effect of technological innovations and copyright legislation on the fabrication of content, the changing perception of consumers and its importance for decision-making in organisations. Secondly, we should get a better understanding of how meanings and values of particular forms of popular culture were institutionalised and pervaded both the organisations of cultural production and the life-world of recipients. Why were creatives, intermediaries and consumers able to identify, for instance, progressive rock as a distinct musical style; why were they able to collectively make sense of it? How did they know how to perform and behave at concerts and what cultural capital was to be attributed to its fans and listeners? The present issue could not explore all of these aspects, but hopes to give an impulse for further research in these directions.

Notes

1. Malchow, *Special Relations*, 3–5.
2. Ibid., 96, 112, 130, 135, 139–40.
3. Ibid., 310.
4. Sewell, “Concept(s) of Culture.”
5. Ostendorf, “Why is American Popular Culture so Popular?”; Faulstich, “‘Amerikanisierung’ als kultureller Mehrwert”; Maase, “From Nightmare to Model?”; Duignan and Gann, *Rebirth of the West*. For the multi-ethnic appeal of American culture see Pells, “From Modernism to the Movies,” and Wells, “Looks, Linguistics and Laughs.”
6. Pells, *Not Like Us*; Maase, *BRAVO Amerika*; Lüdtke, MarBolek, and von Saldern, *Amerikanisierung*; Linke and Tanner, *Attraktion und Abwehr*; Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*; Fehrenbach and Poiger, *Transactions, Transgressions, Transformations*; Minganti, “Rock ‘n’ Roll in Italy”; McKay, *Yankoo Go Home*; Rausch, “Wie europäisch ist die kulturelle Amerikanisierung?” Research has primarily focused on the three decades after the Second World War. For the 1980s and 1990s see Kuisel, *French Way* and Hüser, *RAPublikanische Synthese*. For the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill*. This study describes both American export strategies and European selective appropriation.
7. See the titles listed in references 5 and 6 as well as newer general histories of West European national societies in which commercial popular culture gained increasing attention, particularly in the period after the Second World War, but also for the first half of the century. See, instead of many, McKibbin, *Cultures and Classes*, for England before 1950, with a focus on social relations, and Axel Schildt, *Moderne Zeiten*, for Germany in the 1950s, focusing on changing attitudes.
8. For an instructive review on the debate between Political Economy and Cultural Studies in the social sciences see Peck, “Why we Shouldn’t be Bored.”

9. Cultural economist Richard Caves calls this the “nobody knows property” of cultural production. See [Caves](#), *Creative Industries*, 3.
10. [Ettema and Whitney](#), *Audiencemaking*.
11. [Ang](#), *Desperately Seeking*; [Childress](#), “Decision-Making.” With further references see [Napoli](#), *Audience Evolution*.
12. [Peterson and Anand](#), “Production of Culture Perspective”; [Nathaus and Childress](#), “Production of Culture Perspective.”
13. [Peterson](#), “Why 1955?”
14. [Anand and Peterson](#), “When Market Information Constitutes Fields.”
15. [Anand and Watson](#), “Tournament Rituals”; [Regev](#), “Canonisation”; [Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen](#), *Fairs and Festivals*.
16. [Lena](#), *Banding Together*; [Peterson](#), *Creating Country Music*; [Lena and Peterson](#), “Culture as Classification”; [Negus](#), *Genres and Corporate Cultures*.
17. This lacuna becomes obvious, for instance, in studies on the transatlantic transfer of culture to Europe. For an engagement with this see [Nathaus](#), “Nationale Produktionssysteme.”
18. [Bakker](#), *Entertainment Industrialised*.
19. The influence of copyright legislation on literary fiction has been identified by [Griswold](#), “American Character.” For popular music see [Sanjek](#), *American Popular Music*, 36f.
20. [De Grazia](#), *Irresistible Empire*, 295.
21. [Sanjek](#), *American Popular Music*, 91–114.
22. [Ohmann](#), *Selling Culture*, 94–9.
23. [Napoli](#), *Audience Evolution*; [Strachan and Leonard](#), “Charts.”
24. [Bakker](#), “Building Knowledge.”
25. [Rasmussen](#), “‘Peoples’ Orchestra.’”
26. This argument is developed in reference to the music business in [Nathaus](#), “Turning Values into Revenue.”
27. *Idem*, “From Dance Bands to Radio.”
28. [Morris](#), “Making Italian Espresso,” 182.
29. [Nathaus](#), “Rock Revolution.”
30. From an economic perspective [Lampel et al.](#), “Balancing Act.”
31. [Whalen](#), “Ruby Wine.”
32. [Bakker](#), “Building Knowledge.”
33. [Nathaus](#), “Turning Values into Revenue.”
34. [Schramm](#), *Musik im Radio*.
35. For the Grammys see [Anand and Watson](#), “Tournament Rituals.”
36. [Bakker](#), “Music Multinational.”
37. [Bourdon et al.](#), “Searching for an Identity for Television,” 113.
38. [Bondebjerg et al.](#), “American Television,” 163f.
39. For record retailing see [Nathaus](#), “Turning Values into Revenue.”
40. [Wald](#), *How the Beatles*.
41. [Savage and Gayo](#), “Unraveling the Omnivore.”

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