

Transcultural Emotional Repertoires in and by Reality TV

Within B02 “Transcultural Emotional Repertoires in and by Reality TV” Prof. Margreth Lünenborg and her research associates Tanja Maier and Claudia Töpfer as well as associate Laura Sūna and student assistant Marten Brehmer analyse the affective dynamics engendered by globally distributed entertainment formats like talent and dating shows.

As a globally marketed television format, reality TV foregrounds emotions and affects in particular ways. It can be understood as a mediatised arena of affects, where emotional repertoires, that affect both participants and spectators, are produced and exhibited through performance. The copious distribution of reality TV formats across national borders enables these emotional repertoires to circulate globally. Local adaptations attempt to integrate these repertoires into existing emotional orders, however, – and this is the guiding line of inquiry – the involvement of diverse actors, specifically in German reality TV, provides the ground for the emergence of hybrid emotional repertoires, thereby producing transcultural affective shifts. The analysis of such popular television formats and the examination of their use and appropriation allows for an investigation of the emotional dimensions of this public process in its origin.



Map of countries/regions, in which adaptations of the format „Next Top Model“ are ore were broadcast, Source: [Wikipedia](#)

The project examines performative reality TV (in particular: talent and dating shows) with regard to the following questions:

- We inquire into the (economically induced) conditions that precede the production of emotions and affects in globally circulating reality TV formats. Based on interviews with experts we will reconstruct the production processes of allegedly universal emotional concepts and their global circulation.

- In the context of the shows themselves we are faced with the question by which means emotions are staged. The degree of ordinariness in reality TV formats in Germany finds its particular expression through the visibility of protagonists with a migrant background. Based on a description of genre-specific conventions that inform the representation of emotional repertoires in casting and dating shows, we will analyze exemplary sequences in which the affective resonances and dissonances that are produced by migrant protagonists become visible in their format-specific ways.
- Concerning the audience we will investigate the specific affects of reality TV, and ask whether and how they become a basis for a mediatized collectivization, which enables forms of social participation through cultural citizenship. This includes the analysis of the direct process of reception (non-participant observation through video analysis), the appropriation of media (thinking aloud), and the discursive negotiation of collective orientation (group discussion).

Our project raises questions about modes of belonging and affiliation through reception and appropriation of popular TV program with a focus on transcultural emotional repertoires, and thereby opens a new field of research.