

Abstract for the ECREA Conference, Nov 2016 in Prague

Lünenborg, Margreth / Töpfer, Claudia

Mediated affects in global Reality TV formats and matters of belonging

While until now research on reality TV has primarily explored issues of economic, ethical, and ideological criticism, the 'affective turn' and the affiliated question of the programs' affective dimensions and their relevance for the construction of audiences as user communities, still has raised little attention in media and communication studies (Wetherell 2012; Gregg/Seigworth 2010; Massumi 2002). Accordingly, the social and cultural study of affects and emotions in reality TV formats in particular has only recently begun. Working on the attraction of current forms of reality TV, we would like to fill this gap in theory building and show how contemporary discourse of affect theory helps to expand the relation between globalized media products and affects and emotions. This theoretical frame enables us to understand the affective dimensions of sociality and matters of belonging.

To begin with, we will present our theoretical concept of emotion repertoires and offer an approach of relational affectivity to be adopted for further research in media and communication studies. Understanding reality TV as a *mediatized arena for affects and emotions* it serves as an example to reflect upon the question of how media and communication practices are involved in processes of *affective relatedness* – referring to the interrelation between media production, the media text, and its audiences. In order to meet the demands of viewers worldwide, allegedly universal emotions like pride, shame, schadenfreude, or love – are produced in audiovisual content. Through the transnational distribution of these formats on a massive scale, these performances of emotional practices and experiences circulate globally, while likewise local adaptations attempt to integrate these repertoires into existing emotional orders (Aslama/Pantti, 2006). In this sense, the success of these formats might be ascribed to their ability to address a culturally diverse audience. At the same time, – and this is the guiding line of our paper – the growing appearance of performers with migrant background, specifically in German reality TV (Lünenborg/Fürsich 2014), possibly provides the ground for the emergence of hybrid emotional repertoires, thereby producing transcultural affective shifts.

Thus, questions arise about supposedly transcultural emotions and affects and how they contribute to notions of cultural belonging. Therefore, our focus is especially on modes of transcultural communication in popular TV program and its impact for construing belonging. Finally, we will conclude with analytic reflections on the commodification and transnational mediation of affects and emotions and the question how to understand 'being at home' in mobile and culturally diverse societies.

References

- Aslama, M./Pantti, M. (2006): Talking alone: Reality TV, Emotions and Authenticity. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 9(2): 167-184
- Gregg, M./Seigworth, G. J. (2010) (Eds.): *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lünenborg, M./Fürsich, E. (2014): Media and the Intersectional Other: The Complex Negotiation of Migration, Gender, and Class on German Television. *Feminist Media Studies* 14(6): 959-975
- Massumi, B. (2002): *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Wetherell, M. (2012): *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding*. Los Angeles, London: SAGE Publications Ltd.