

**NEW PATTERNS IN GLOBAL TELEVISION FORMATS, KARINA
AVEYARD, ALBERT MORAN AND PIA MAJBRIIT JENSEN (EDS) (2016)**

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Reviewed by Eduard Cuelenaere, Ghent University, Belgium

After reading *New Patterns in Global Television Formats*, the concept of format remains somewhat opaque to the reader, unavoidably disappointing some while contenting others. However, sketching an exhaustive definition of the concept is perhaps not the main objective here. This is excellently proven by the authors of this volume, who instead of defining rather opt to offer a contextualized understanding of the historical, contemporary and prospective currents in the 'television template trade' (3). By doing so, it is claimed that the relatively new study of formats (as a branch of television studies) can provide refreshing and fruitful insights for scholarly research. This includes (comparative) cultural and jurisdictional analyses, as well as political and business studies, or the field of adaptation studies. The structure of the edited volume, which consists of five different parts that each contain four chapters, reveals the variety of different interpretative lenses through which one can analyse the television format. As such, the editors intelligently chose to organize the volume by favouring a topical clustering over a more conventional approach, such as a methodological or geographic overview. Taken together, the twenty entries raise thought-provoking questions about television formats in a global context, treating matters of production, content (or meaning) and reception alike. To accomplish this, a variety of both senior and emerging scholars have contributed to the edited volume. Moreover, the editors succeeded in finding a balance between historical, theoretical and empirical research, with an eye to both micro and macro studies, conducted in national, transnational and supranational contexts.

The first four essays provide an excellent overview of the format phenomenon, thereby advancing large contextualizing schemes that reflect upon the 'ontology' of the format (Biltreyst and Soberon), next to, for example, a consideration of the inherent hybridity of the practice drawing on (while also questioning) concepts of originality as well as facsimile (Coletta). History is the central theme of the volume's second part. It includes essays ranging from the forerunners of the first 'real' television format such as the Italian show, *Medea's Children* (Buonanno), to the first TV programme that was consciously developed as a format, *Romper Room* (Keinonen). The business or industrial side of the format flux is touched upon in the third part of the book. This bundle of essays varies between (historically) dissecting very powerful commercial corporations such as Fremantle Media (Moran and Aveyard) and essays focusing on the BBC's different broadcast outlets of the *Wallander* format, guided by different ideological rationales (McCabe). The following segment of contributions zooms in on three different geographical settings, namely China, Africa and Israel. It explains that the incubation of television formats is always embedded in a larger macro-context, wherein developments in the format industry are the (in)direct result of certain political, technological and socio-economic evolutions and shifts. For example, Africa's 'mega-formats' are on the one hand a result of 'the emergence and

consolidation of regional market clusters, with inter-regional, pan-African and global linkages' (219), and on the other hand of the liberalizing and privatizing forces that took place in the early 1990s (Ndlela). Another essay in this section appertains the pivotal impact of cultural differences on formats, thereby undergoing several 'cultural translations' to fit audiences of, for example, China (Keane and Ma). The latter paves the way for the last part which mainly deals with audiences. Thereby, it contributes to reception studies of television formats, a field of research that is still in an infant stage. It is for instance claimed that, in the context of the twentieth-century global-digital changes, the increased transnational sensibility resulted in a hyperawareness of format flows by the audience. This 'format-awareness' contributed to different degrees of hostility towards certain 'adaptations' of television formats, which not only reflects the speed at which (television) content nowadays resonates with audiences, but also points to the ingrained stereotypical distinctions that still exist between, for example, British and American drama (Hogg).

In the introduction, the editors stress the importance of cosmopolitanism in TV format studies. Therefore, it is somewhat unfortunate that, although the volume does choose to consider supranational formations with regard to television networks or cooperation, it only does so once. Only a single chapter investigates the history and current status of Eurovision and (the quite unknown) Intervision. The latter two stand for media networks between West-European countries first, and those between Eastern European countries second (Yurtaeva and Mikos). Luckily, this is compensated with the attention paid towards different smaller geo-linguistic regions such as Nigeria, China, Finland and Israel, which proves to be just as revealing. Furthermore, the volume is substantially receptive to other fields as it does not eschew interdisciplinarity, hence providing new conceptualizations that help open up the clouded (and gradually crowded) sky in which the format finds itself. In conclusion, this edition presents us with a valuable and significant academic overview and can be recommended to all those interested in TV formats specifically, as well as to those who would like to know why programmes like *Iron Chef* and *Robinson Crusoe* were great successes across different parts of the world, but failed to capture attention in China.

REFERENCES

- Iron Chef* (1993, Japan, Fuji Television)
Medea's Children (1959, Italy, Programma Nazionale)
Robinson Crusoe (1997, United Kingdom, Planet 24)
Romper Room (1953, The United States, ABC)
Wallander (2005, Sweden, Yellow Bird)

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Eduard Cuelenaere is a Ph.D. researcher at the Department of Communication Sciences at Ghent University, Belgium, and a member of the research group Centre for Cinema and Media Studies (CIMS). His research interests focus on film theory, cultural studies, adaptation/remake studies, and audience studies. In his FWO-funded Ph.D. project he critically investigates the merging practice of same-language film remakes in the Low Countries.

E-mail: eduard.cuelenaere@UGent.be