

‘Generation Conviviality’

The Role of Media Logic in Television Production for Elderly Audiences

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Abstract

This article is a production study of two talk shows for the Danish television channel, TV2 Charlie: *Meyerheim’s Talk Show* (2006-) and *Cecilie’s Book Show* (2015-). TV2 Charlie is a niche channel (part of the TV2 network) that set out to target a mature and elderly audience when it started in 2004. The aim is to bring together mediatization research with production studies and cultural gerontology, and I argue that media logic is a useful analytical concept that allows us to describe production processes in concrete ways and, at the same time, understand the context-specific ways in which media play a role in societal changes. Thus, through a logic of *operationalising conviviality* at the channel level, the production level and the programme level, the programmes contribute to perceptions of ageing and old age that emphasise an increased need for stability and safety, on one hand, and a desire for feel-good moments, on the other. Furthermore, the programmes promote positive and active ageing in some instances while keeping old age invisible in other instances.

Keywords: mediatization, television production, media logic, old age, cultural gerontology

Introduction

In 2004, a Danish television channel, TV2 Charlie (henceforth: Charlie), premiered on Danish broadcast television as part of the TV2 Network. The channel aimed to capture 65+ audiences; and, although the age of the target audience has been lowered over the years to reach a broader audience, the channel has successfully engaged an aging population in Denmark. Thus, it is important to understand how Charlie represents these age groups and how the production teams producing television for Charlie approach issues of ageing and old age. The following article is a production study of two programmes for the channel: *Meyerheim’s Talk Show* (2006-) and *Cecilie’s Book Show* (2015-). Both programmes feature a well-known Danish host, Michael Meyerheim and Cecilie Frøkjær, respectively, and are structured as classic talk shows with celebrity guests. *Cecilie’s Book Show*, as the title reveals, has an emphasis on books and authors. Both programmes are studio recordings that have a live studio audience.

In this study, I apply mediatization theory (Hjarvard 2013, forthcoming, Lundby 2009, 2009a, Livingstone & Lunt 2014) to understand the processes of production as part of a larger societal context and, in particular, how these processes relate to different *ageing cultures* (Gilleard & Higgs 2000, Blaikie 2009). I argue that production studies invite us to look at media logic, which is a central concept in mediatization theory (Hjarvard 2013, forthcoming); and, in a sense, I operationalise this concept so that it may offer analytical value. Altheide and Snow (1979) coined the phrase media logic and argued: ‘Our approach to understanding media as a social force in society is to treat them as a form of communication that has a particular logic of its own [...] Media logic becomes a way of “seeing” and interpreting social affairs’ (Altheide & Snow 1979: 9). Imbedded in their understanding of media logic lies the notion that content is not simply mediated through a given channel. Rather, media shape the way in which the world around us is depicted through their means of production and their conventions and norms. I am interested in this ‘way of seeing’ and ‘interpreting social affairs’ in the context of ageing and old age. Within mediatization theory, this notion of media logic cannot stand on its own. Instead, it is important to understand how media logic is created in a specific cultural context as a result of both broader societal imaginations and institutional structures. Hjarvard (forthcoming: 2) states:

Media logic – as any other type of social logic – does rarely condition human interaction by itself. This does not make ‘media logic’ less important as an analytical concept, but it suggests that we need a wider theoretical framework to specify how media logics come to make a difference.

Mediatization theory provides such a frame. I argue that, in the case of the two talk shows on Charlie, we can identify an overarching logic of *creating conviviality* and that this logic is operationalised through the different rules and resources (Hjarvard 2013) in the production processes and closely entwined with societal discourses about old age and ageing. The operationalisation of conviviality occurs on all levels of the production, and the analysis considers the channel level, the production level and the programme level. Furthermore, the analysis considers technological, institutional and aesthetic dimensions (ibid.) in order to bring light to the different elements of production and their role in the logic of creating conviviality.

Theory: Mediatization, media logic and ageing cultures in TV production

The individual is conditioned by society’s theoretical and practical attitude towards him. An analytical description of the various aspects of old age is not enough: Each reacts upon all the others and is at the same time affected by them, and it is in the undefined flow of this circular process that old age must be understood (de Beauvoir 1972: 9).

De Beauvoir captures a notion relevant to this study: the notion that change occurs in a circular process informed by many different aspects that are interwoven in different and complex ways. Meyrowitz (1985) discusses ‘social manifestations’, and this study focuses on social manifestations of old age as they are circulated on television and the role the production processes play in these manifestations.

In this study, I combine theory of mediatization (Hjarvard 2013, forthcoming, Livingstone & Lunt 2015, Hepp 2013, Lundby 2009) (with an emphasis on media logic) with theories on cultural gerontology (Gilleard & Higgs 2000, Rowe & Kahn 1998) and television production (Mayer et al. 2009, Caldwell 2008, 2009, Ihlebæk et al. 2011, 2014) in order to understand the ways in which media logic is informed by and shapes social imaginaries about old age and ageing. Livingstone and Lunt (2014) conclude in their argument for mediatization research that ‘the institutional and practical logics of the mass media distinctively reshaped many fields of human activity’ (Livingstone & Lunt 2014: 705). Their conclusion captures the focus of this study: how does this reshaping take place within the field of television production?

Mayer (2009) argues that it is at the intersection between the micro and macro that we can analyse social implications of production processes: ‘Production studies, in other words, “ground” social theories by showing us how specific production sites, actors, or activities tell us larger lessons about workers, their practices, and the role of their labors in relation to politics, economics, and culture’ (Mayer 2009: 15). Her perspective on the relevance of studying production processes lends itself well to the theory of mediatization since this theory is, on one hand, a theory capturing societal meta-processes on a macro level but, on the other hand, increasingly a theory that is empirically anchored on micro and meso levels. Caldwell (2008) emphasises that media production never occurs in a vacuum but as part of a larger societal and cultural context. He captures how production communities have the status and authority of cultural institutions in their own right, which is also a point in Hjarvard’s (2013) mediatization approach. This does not mean that production studies disregard the larger cultural context in which the production is embedded. Rather, it allows us to see how production culture intersects with other cultural fields. Hjarvard argues along the same lines: ‘An institutional perspective by no means precludes the consideration of culture, technology, or psychology, but on the contrary provides a framework within which the interplay between these aspects can be studied’ (Hjarvard 2013: 13). Thus, for this analysis, I combine mediatization theory with theories on television production and cultural gerontology.

Media logic as an analytical tool for studying mediatization

Media logic is one of the key concepts in mediatization theory (Hjarvard 2013, forthcoming, Esser 2013, Klinger & Svensson 2014). A prevalent critique has been that media logic implies a single, overarching logic of the media (Lundby 2009), and that such a logic might better be considered a market (commercial) logic. However, while we can certainly identify a more uniform market logic, this is not what I understand to be media logic. Instead, Altheide and Snow place emphasis on format and describe its media-specific character: ‘Format consists, in part, of how material is organised, the style in which it is presented, the focus or emphasis on particular characteristics of behaviour, and the grammar of media communication’ (Altheide & Snow 1979: 10). Thus, media logic refers to the *rules* (both formal and informal) and *resources* (both material and authoritative) (Hjarvard forthcoming) that guide production processes. Furthermore, Hjarvard suggests that media logic must be understood according to three dimensions: *technological*, *aesthetical*, and *institutional*. Thinking about media logic in these terms rather than as one overarching logic capturing all media technologies, platforms and

formats is useful because it allows us to identify the specific dynamics at play and, thus, to see how they shape content through the rules and resources that are applied to these dynamics. Hjarvard (2013: 17) clarifies:

‘Media logic’ does not suggest that there is a universal, linear, or single rationality behind all the media. It is to be understood as a conceptual shorthand for the various institutional, aesthetic, and technological *modus operandi* of the media, including the ways in which the media distribute material and symbolic resources, and operate with the help of formal and informal rules.

In this analysis, production studies allow us to identify the *modus operandi* as they are rooted in specific television production processes. As such, media logic is not an exclusively technological, aesthetic or institutional logic but the logic that emerges as a result of the interdependencies between all of these dimensions. In this analysis, the aim is to identify the relevant dimensions and analyse the rules and resources that inform how content is produced and how material and symbolic resources are distributed.

Changing conditions for television viewing and changing ‘cultures of ageing’

In order to analyse processes of mediatization, it is central to consider broader sociocultural processes of change within the context of the study. Media logic, in itself, does not create change. Instead, mediatization occurs as the logics of the media and the logics of a particular institutional domain, such as ageing or old age, intersect in different ways. In this case, I am interested in the changing conditions for television production, on one hand (Bruun 1999, Ihlebæk et al. 2011, 2014, Caldwell 2004, Gipsrud 2004, Mayer et al. 2009, Hesmondhalgh 2007, Strangelove 2015, Wolfe 2015), and sociocultural changes in cultures of ageing, on the other hand (Rowe & Kahn 1998, Katz 2009, Gilleard & Higgs 2000, Blaikie 2009). From a European perspective, Charlie is a relatively rare case. In the Netherlands, the broadcaster *Omroep Max* is another niche broadcaster devoted to this age group. Yet, while most countries have channels targeted at children or youth audiences, few have channels for elderly audiences. As such, it is relevant to study what kind of ageing is promoted and how the programmes’ production processes shape notions of ageing and old age. Sawchuk (1995: 177) says of television viewing practices:

According to market research, approximately 95 per cent of the present broadcast media is targeted to the under 50 crowd, particularly the 25-49 age group. Change is on the immediate horizon. By the year 2006 the over-50s are projected to be one-third of the Canadian population.

Charlie is, in a sense, a response to these types of demographic changes in viewership. In a Danish context, Søndergaard (2004) states that nearly sixty percent of audiences over 61+ watches television on any average night, while the number is closer to forty percent for the 21-30 year olds. Charlie marks a change since an ageing audience is not only considered a potential and attractive audience. Gilleard and Higgs talk about *cultures of ageing* and identify some of the societal changes that old age has undergone in recent decades. Among other things, they point out how there has been a shift from primarily defining old age in relation to the change of social status that comes with retirement to a focus on seeing senior lives as ‘the third age’. This shift in imagination about old

age implies an increased weight on the individual’s active planning and construction of old age – along the lines of Giddens’s (1991) thoughts on the way late-modern, self-reflexive individuals continually re-adjust and re-create their lives. In opposition to the societal discourse that points to old age as a life phase of social decline when people are leaving the job market, the discourse on ‘the third age’ has a focus on identity formation and change as vital to ageing or entering into old age. Another discourse that has gained ground in both cultural policies and commercial culture is the idea of *active ageing* (Boudiny 2013), or the older notion of *successful ageing* (Rowe & Kahn 1998). The notion of active ageing exists both inside and outside the media, but I argue that the medium – television in this case – shapes our understanding of active ageing and ascribes it specific meaning as a result of media logic.

Methodology: A synthetic approach to production studies

In this article, I present the findings of production studies (carried out from January 2015 to June 2015) of two television series produced for the Danish niche channel TV2 Charlie: *Meyerheim’s Talk Show* (orig., *Talkshowet Meyerheim*, produced by Eyeworks Productions, season 9) and *Cecilie’s Book Show* (orig., *Cecilies Bogshow*, produced by Nordic Film TV, season 1). The two series were chosen because they represent a well-established programme and a brand-new programme, respectively. This selection strategy offered me insight into the rules taken for granted in production processes and the rules as they are in the process of being negotiated and established in the production of a new format. This method proved informative – especially in relation to guests on the show and the live studio audience.

Caldwell (2008) offers an approach to production studies that includes several ‘registers’ for analyses. Since I am interested in the channel level, the production level and the programme level, this study applies a similar synthetic approach and includes data from several registers. The registers used here are: a) *production artefacts* (e.g., research interviews with guests, manuscripts, production plans, etc.), b) *observation* of production processes from researching an episode to editing, c) *in-depth interviews* with the production teams for both series, programme editors, head of programme planning and head of channel, and, finally, d) *textual analysis* of the broadcast programmes. I conducted a total of 18 in-depth interviews between thirty minutes and two hours in length and compiled more than 200 pages of A5 handwritten notes during my observations.

Caldwell (2008) points to a critique of this approach: when interviewing employees in the film and television industry, you can come across people talking from what he labels ‘corporate scripts’, which means that the employees offer a perspective on the production processes that is in line with how they want to be seen by the outside world rather than a true reflection of the actual production. The hierarchy in television production at the two production companies is relatively flat, and people felt comfortable speaking openly about the more sensitive parts of production. In the few instances in which it was clear that the interviewees spoke from ‘corporate scripts’, I still consider the data relevant because it offers insight into the implicit rules and resources that govern the production processes of these programmes.

Findings: *Conviviality* as media logic in Charlie's television production

I argue that, in the two talk shows for Charlie, *conviviality* is the modus operandi at all levels of production but that this logic takes on different expressions and has a number of implications for representations of ageing at different levels (channel, production and programme) and in different dimensions (technological, institutional and aesthetic) (Hjarvard forthcoming) of production. At the channel level, the channel manager, the channel editors and the programme planner consider network and channel branding and what they label 'brand words', but they also consider programme planning and programme flow. Conviviality, on this level, is part of the brand and it guides stability and repetition in the programme flow. On the production level, the production team operationalises conviviality through a mix of production tools such as research interviews, episode scripts, production schedules, filming location and scenography, but they also operationalise conviviality through their selection of guests and themes, the role of the host, and the positioning of the audience. On a programme level, I consider how genre, format, themes and aesthetics contribute to the logic of conviviality. These levels are not clear-cut categories and blend together in different ways. So, issues of themes and audiences, for example, will appear on both the production and the programme level. Altheide and Snow (1979: 22) argue:

Each type of entertainment has unique features and different strategies in the use of time, rhythm, organization, action, mood, color, vocabulary, style of speech, and other subtleties of interaction. Our efforts are intended only to establish the argument that a set of take-for-granted norms of entertainment exist and that entertainment is a relationship that has unique properties that distinguish it from other types of interpersonal relations.

Thus, we can understand the operationalisation of conviviality as a media logic in the sense that it is a set of *taken-for-granted norms* that have *unique features* and is a *strategy for producing television programming* for Charlie. Furthermore, the analysis captures how Charlie, on one hand, ascribes to specific 'ageing cultures' (Higgs & Gilleard 2000) but, on the other hand, also contributes to these ageing cultures in particular ways as they are filtered through the processes of television production.

Conviviality on the channel level

In the following, I consider how conviviality is operationalised on the channel level – in particular, through branding and programme scheduling. Charlie is part of the Danish television network TV2 Networks. While the main channel, TV2, is branded as an all-around family entertainment and news channel, the other niche channels on the network have a sharper and clearer branding strategy. Charlie's slogan is the phrase 'good, solid entertainment', and the channel's aesthetics show several mascot dogs that are visible in the breaks between programmes and advertisements. The Charlie dogs play around on Danish designer furniture and under an orange blanket matching the bright orange of the Charlie logo. Here, Charlie is positioning itself in the landscape of other niche channels by aesthetically signalling that this is the place to go for a convivial evening in a comfortable chair with your furry friends by your side.

Johnson (2012) points out how a sense of channel ownership and loyalty is central to successful branding, and Charlie’s audiences feel a sense of ownership that is expressed in ways that are no longer standard for the other channels in the TV2 network. The head of programme planning for the network explains:

They yell at us when we change [the programme flow] – we’ve broadcast *Heart-beat* (1992-) for almost the whole decade we’ve been on air, and when it’s done, it sort of just starts over again, and there’s always an uproar, and a lot of people call in, and they are upset, but just as many people watch it all over again. They still watch it.

The head of programme planning continues to point out how their audiences are sensitive to the smallest changes in the broadcasting schedule, and they get calls if they move a programme ten minutes in either direction. The channel is also immediately punished in the ratings when it attempts to change the weekly programme flow. As a result, they only do so with great care. On Charlie, they consider this relationship with their viewers quite unique and especially in the context of a television landscape that is increasingly centred on streaming services. This is one aspect of why conviviality is becoming central for Charlie. The head of the channel explains:

We’ve simply – we discussed when the programme editors and I were looking at the brand paper for Charlie just a little over a year ago, when we were adjusting the words we use and [...] we discussed whether ‘safety’ should be one of them, but we felt as if safety is too tame. Conviviality [in Danish: *god stemming*] is more active, somehow, to work with, right? But with that said, conviviality creates safety/familiarity.

Conviviality in this sense becomes a refrain for the programme editors as they work with the production teams that are producing content for Charlie. But the notion of conviviality also includes aspects of safety and familiarity as necessary ingredients for addressing an ageing population. Thus, the idea of conviviality is closely tied to the issue of branding because, as Johnson argues, brands deal with ‘how the network should “feel”’ (Johnson 2012: 19). Along these lines, one of the programme editors on Charlie describes Charlie in these terms: ‘Charlie isn’t an age channel. It’s not really about age. It’s about feeling.’ In this way, Charlie becomes one way of participating in ageing culture in the context of Danish society; and, for Charlie, this culture is closely tied with the notion of convivial television viewing. When the programme editor says that it is not about age, it is because the programme editors assume that their audience does not want to be reminded of their age, and the programme editors expressed this notion on several occasions during my observations. While this notion is informed by an imagined audience and their relationship to ageing, it is also informed by branding as a dimension of TV production, and this institutional dimension places emphasis on ‘feeling’, for example, above other demographic aspects. The head of channel elaborates on the issue of brand:

I think if we start to shake it up too much and say that now we’re going to do something very different from what you’re expecting, I think that goes against Charlie’s brand as it is. [...] It’s a consideration of the viewers but also to the brand. Charlie has to be a safe harbour, in some ways, when you are in doubt about what

you can find everywhere else, you'll know that there's conviviality on Charlie. It's our – our function is conviviality. That's why you zap over to us, because you know it'll be damn cosy viewing.

In a sense, conviviality becomes an operating logic because it is here that sociocultural imaginaries about their audience meet the logic of branding.

Ihlebaek et al. (see 2011, 2014) study programme schedules in a transforming television landscape (or what we can label the 'post-network era'). They describe the historical process in most European countries from monopoly to competition. Specifically, they study a Norwegian context that, in some ways, is similar to the development in Denmark. They argue that 'contrary to claims that scheduling has become obsolete, analyses show that it continues to be a central craft within the television industry, one responding actively to times of change...' (Ihlebaek et al. 2014: 470). When *Cecilie's Book Show* premiered in the spring of 2015, it was deliberately placed in the programme flow just after *Meyerheim's Talk Show*. The head of programme planning explains this move: 'We have to use the familiar, I mean, promote the new on the back of the familiar, because that's what we can see works'. As a niche channel, Charlie is part of a rapidly changing television landscape in which viewer habits are changing. However, simultaneously, they find that viewers respond to the familiar and the safe. Therefore, Charlie, as an active agent in shaping perceptions of ageing culture, manifests the idea of older people as resisting change. Being old, then, in relation to the dimensions of branding and programme flow means being dependent on routines and familiarity, and conviviality is one way to express this.

The head of programme planning goes on to talk about how they fill up the daytime programme flow on Charlie with imported programmes and how, in particular, British and German crime dramas play a major role on the channel. Viewers respond well to programmes featuring 'distinguished older gentlemen' such as DI Frost from *A Touch of Frost* (1992-):

So, we have – it's not bloody crime shows we broadcast. It's more cosy – what do you call it? Murder with garden gloves! [...] It's 'cosy killings' or whatever way you put it. It's not *The Killing* [orig., *Forbrydelsen*, 2007-2012], it's not bleak and dark. It's still a little bit jovial.

As a niche channel, they have a limited budget; and, therefore, part of the established routines and familiarity in the programme flow means showing reruns and imported programmes as result of financial limitations. On a channel level, the managers at Charlie are acutely aware that they need to stay within 'a safe zone' with their loyal viewers, whereas other networks aim to push boundaries and develop genres and formats, but, they are additionally limited by institutional and financial boundaries to create a programme flow based on repetition and reruns. Thus, conviviality is a logic informed by dimensions related to brand, manager imagination, knowledge about their audiences and their habits, and financial considerations.

Conviviality on the production level

Syvertsen (2001) has studied the participation of ordinary people on television dating shows. While the programmes in this study only include celebrities, her observations are

relevant in that they point to the role of guests or participants in television programming – ‘they [the participants] are also part of the logic of the production team wanting to put together the best possible show’ (Syvertsen 2001: 325). In the production of the talk shows studied here, a lot of research goes into producing the best possible show from finding the best and most entertaining guests to researching interviews and structuring each episode – both on an overall level and in terms of the flow in each of the interviews. When the production team discussed celebrities to contact for the show, they would use phrases such as ‘he is very convivial’ to determine whether a guest was suitable for the programme. The celebrities on these programmes play a role as providers of humour and ‘feel good’ moments. Most participants in both programmes went through a thorough research interview, which allowed the production crew to tailor the interviews on the show to bring out the best and most convivial stories. During the research interviews, the guest and members of the production team (usually, the host and/or a programme director) would negotiate which stories to focus on and make sure the stories had a suitable angle for the show. These research interviews served as preparation for the guests, who, being generally familiar with being in the media, completely understood their role in the programmes.

One guest, Hollywood celebrity Viggo Mortensen, brought a large bag of sweets and a bottle of champagne to celebrate his friend and colleague, actress Ghita Nørby, whom he was surprising on the show. This moment was semi-spontaneous. Mortensen had asked briefly in advance if he could bring her something as a gift, but when he entered the stage, he sat down casually on host Michael Meyerheim’s desk and proceeded to open the bottle of champagne while talking about his admiration for Nørby. Mortensen, as a very convivial person, understood his role was to create a celebratory and happy atmosphere. In this way, creating conviviality becomes part of the taken-for-granted rules and resources of production; or, more precisely, conviviality becomes the logic that guides this stage of production in a way that entails positivity, joyfulness and celebration.

Yet, while celebrities feature heavily on Charlie, the channel hardly ever shows the lives of regular Danish elderly people. Even as live studio audiences, they are mostly shown from behind, clapping. The first season of *Cecilie’s Book Show* attempted to have audiences sitting visibly to the camera behind the celebrity guests. This choice was made because the production team wanted to create an atmosphere of sitting around the fire, talking about literature, but also as a result of the location. The studio in which they film is small and does not have a clearly separated stage/audience area. Therefore, the programme’s final aesthetic expression is the result of several elements including financial limitations, physical environment, and editorial visions for the show. However, because these audiences were of a certain age they sometimes had trouble staying attentive (and, in a few instances, awake) during the long hours of taping (they taped two episodes with the same audience). People thinking with their eyes closed or looking asleep on camera does not create conviviality. So, for the second season, audiences were moved to put their backs to the camera as they do on *Meyerheim’s Talk Show*. On *Meyerheim’s Talk Show*, the choice not to show the audience is an economic consideration. Placing the light to show the audience, changing the scenography so they can be in the shot, hiring extra crew to film from this angle is costly; and, since the audience does not have a narrative function beyond creating conviviality with their presence and audible reactions, it is not deemed worthwhile on a channel that has a limited budget.

In regard to the celebrity guests, Meyerheim says about his role as host: ‘With guests like these, who come in and have to perform and nine out of ten are nervous before we start, they have to feel safe’, and he continues: ‘I do not want them to feel like they have to perform to me. So I try to take that responsibility on my shoulders. I will make sure it works.’ Again, the notion of safety is tied to conviviality, audience, guests and viewers are invited to feel safe while watching the show. The head of the channel says about the role of the hosts:

To some degree, when we chose Meyerheim and Friis Mikkelsen [another well-known host on the channel] as our two main faces – they are also of a certain age, they’re both over 60 – that’s a signal, too. And, then, we’ve included Frøkjær who is younger but with whom the viewers have grown up in the sense that she’s been on their television for 20 years [...]. So there’s also some safety in that.

Finally, before taping in the studio, the crew and the production team for *Meyerheim’s Talk Show* meet in the studio for a run-through of the plans for the day. Programmes are recorded live on tape. So, once that process has started, it will not typically be stopped until the show is finished. At these events, the line producer goes through the day. On one occasion, other members of the crew stated that they felt they could use some more enthusiasm from the line producer. He replied in a light tone that he had turned it down a notch because others had told him he was too much. The crew responded with heartfelt laughter. Likewise, before every taping, the line producer offers encouraging words over the microphone to the people in the studio. In order for an episode to feel good, everyone involved needs to project conviviality and feel good because the mood in the studio will rub off and show on the screen.

Conviviality on the programme level

In a study from 2013, Hilt investigates the attitudes of broadcast managers towards older adults. He argues for the importance of researching these attitudes: ‘The media set the agenda for the audience by emphasizing certain topics and by slighting other issues through omission’ (Hilt 2013: 14-15). Thus, it is important to understand what behavioural characteristics to put into focus and which are to be omitted on a programme level – but also how these choices are structured through editing and camera use.

In one of the episodes of *Meyerheim’s Talk Show*, celebrity guests were invited because they were ‘still going strong’ despite their high chronological age. ‘Still going strong’ was the working title for this episode during production, and it guided the focus of the research interviews and the manuscript for the episode. Actor and comedian Ulf Pilgaard (b. 1940), attorney Merethe Stagetorn (b. 1942), former Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen (b. 1943) and actress Lise Nørgaard (b. 1917) were guests on the programme. The guests told stories on the show about how they were still physically active and politically engaged. Other segments in this episode focussed on the humorous intergenerational misunderstandings when the guests were asked the meaning about youthful slang words. In this episode, old age is front and centre but only in a particular way. Conviviality in this episode is operationalised in such a way that it focuses almost exclusively on *active ageing* (Boudiny 2013), who enjoys life to the fullest and is not limited by chronological age. One programme director commented in the interview that

Meyerheim’s Talk Show is not the type of show in which you talk about how some of these people may not be around for another decade. Rather, the emphasis is on a positive outlook and the guests’ active lifestyles. Boudiny (2013) points out how an emphasis on active ageing risks being reductive. She argues how ‘it does not correspond to older adults’ own perceptions, as many of them resist an exclusive emphasis on “youthful” physical activities’ (Boudiny 2013: 1080). While the emphasis on active ageing provides viewers with primarily positive representations of old age and ageing, it is also an emphasis that risks excluding representations of the old-old audiences and elderly audiences that are not physically or mentally capable of participating in an active ageing culture.

This focus or emphasis is, in a way, a ‘rule’ that is tied, on one hand, to the genre of talk shows but, on the other hand, to keeping the downsides of old age (e.g., eventual death) thematically invisible. This does not mean that the show never deals with uncomfortable topics, but it does so by following rules to ensure the maintenance of conviviality. A programme director on *Meyerheim’s Talk Show* explains that, while the episodes may on occasion deal with issues such as illness, divorce and death, the primary focus is then on how the guest has mastered this life crisis: ‘Well, here’s the thing, the talk show is an entertainment programme. So, for that reason, we try to stay within the lines of positive topics.’ For example, Danish actor Peter Mygind was a guest on an episode; he had recently suffered a blood clot in his lungs and had undergone extensive treatment. Mygind talked about his new-found appreciation for life and his obligation to spread knowledge so that others can avoid a similar situation. Host Meyerheim made sure that the story ended on a high note, and the audience clapped as they celebrated Mygind’s recovery.

Similarly, during my observations at an editorial meeting with the production team before taping an episode show, the host ran through his interview with Ghita Nørby and emphasised that the interview would finish with a question about her future and a positive look ahead. In these instances, the rules tied to the genre and the format guide the way in which old age is approached and which elements of old age are left out. Thus, the old age themes in the programmes are primarily represented in the light of positive, active ageing, while the more problematic parts of growing older are either brought up as life lessons or kept invisible. It is part of the grammar of these types of formats (Altheide & Snow 1979). Celebrity guests on the two shows are admired for their ability to defy their chronological age and still work long hours, for being physically active, staying up-to-date on current events and being socially engaged. When active ageing has become a prevalent discourse in cultural politics and in the broader public, we may consider how the logic of the media are interwoven with other social processes and how this discourse is promoted and circulated in society – in part, for reasons that may not always have anything to do with the experience of growing old in itself but have to do with genre, format and societal imagination about television audiences’ desires in their viewing practices.

The host for *Cecilie’s Book Show* offers a similar thought about an episode themed around the Danish Queen’s birthday:

[It] was damn good, and they were so good, the people who were on it, and the mood was so good and everything, but it’s purely ‘we love the Queen’ [...] But that’s what we hear. They don’t like conflict on Charlie. It can’t be precarious. Everyone has to get along. [...] That’s probably the episode that’s most down the Charlie alley.

The host offers insight into how content is shaped because of this constant operationalisation of conviviality: a different format or genre on a different network might have dealt with the Queen's birthday in a different, more critical or more satirical way; but, for Charlie, there is a predominate logic that shapes the content in a specific way. In the interviews, many echoed the sentiment that Charlie audiences want to be 'in good company' with the people on screen and want conflict to be mainly absent.

With regard to the set design, the production team discussed whether a white or an orange sofa would provide the most conviviality. An orange sofa might seem more vibrant on screen, but the white sofa was more comfortable for some of the ageing guests. Similarly, the editors on both programmes worked from a notion of conviviality when editing trailers and episodes. Which clip, for instance, provided the most conviviality? As a multi-camera studio production, they had the option to choosing from several angles, master shots, and close ups. On Charlie, trailers for the programmes need to stay true to the programme content, whereas there is a tendency for other types of programming to increase the level of drama or tension in the trailers to draw viewers in (sometimes, by putting together clips that are not chronologically linked in the programme). An editor of *Cecilie's Book Show* explains, 'And here, you can say, we're completely beyond that when we talk about Charlie. Here, we're in the safe zone, all the time'.

As Charlie stays in 'the safe zone' for their ageing audiences and in their representations of growing old, they perpetuate an ageing culture that mainly focuses on positive aspects of growing older. While it is certainly not Charlie's responsibility as a single niche channel to offer broad representation and diversity, it is interesting to consider the role of television content in ageing discourses such as active ageing.

Conclusion

[C]ultural content is basically organized and defined in terms of media logic. It is not a case of media dictating terms to the rest of society, but an interaction between organized institutional behaviour and media (Altheide & Snow 1979: 15).

In this study, I have identified the prevalent dimensions of the production of two talk shows for the Danish niche channel Charlie. I have analysed these dimensions on the channel level, the production level and the programme level in order to see how a media logic of conviviality is operationalised on all levels of production and to understand how media logic may be considered a central element as a transformative force in societal processes of change.

Furthermore, the analysis shows that media logic is not an autonomous logic that operates and creates change on its own but, rather, that it is deeply interwoven with social, institutional, cultural, market, aesthetic, and technological logics. Conviviality is the feeling or mood that the production team is aiming to capture. This means, in turn, that conviviality becomes operationalised as a way of assessing content at all levels of the process, including the aesthetic, technological and institutional dimensions. Hjarvard states, 'In this light, mediatization can be described as a process created by the overlap and reciprocal adaption between media logics and the logics of institutions' (Hjarvard forthcoming: 7). This happens because media logic has authority in its own right, which makes it a pervasive logic that cannot easily be circumvented or disregarded. The logic

of conviviality is deeply ingrained into the production process; it informs all stages and everyone involved with the process. Media logic in the processes of production for these two talk shows shapes the ways in which old age and ageing are talked about, applied as thematic content and represented on the two shows.

Finally, conviviality has specific age-related connotations for the production team: old age and ageing are connected to the notion of active ageing (Boudiny 2013). The programmes do not offer viewers a mirror on their own realities and lives. Instead, they project aspirational representations of old age such as the graceful actress, age 84, who performs on stage, night after night, or the famous attorney who starts each day with a swim and a long walk. At the same time, there exists an assumption by the production teams that their viewers are in need of good company because old age is connected to solitude and loneliness, and television has the affordance of bringing a convivial mood into people’s living rooms. In the same vein, the production teams operate around the notion that viewers do not want to be reminded of old age in their television viewing, and this understanding is emphasised by the logic of creating conviviality. This becomes especially obvious in regards to the difficulties of incorporating a live studio audience, which in turn supports an omission of representations of a not-so-active audience. The operationalisation of conviviality becomes part of the *rules* and *resources* that shape the production of these two programmes. The conceptions of old age that are emphasised on the two programmes, of course, are not solely the result of television programming or even media as a whole. However, since the media have an increased authority and ubiquitous place in Western culture, it is important to understand how media logic plays a role in the circulation and shaping of these social imaginaries.

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