

Still TV: On the resilience of an old medium

by Alexander Dhoest and Nele Simons

For more than a decade now the very status of television as a medium has been one of the predominant themes in television studies. The tone is mixed – both jubilant, welcoming all the exciting innovations which make television so much more than it was before, and fearful, for it is not clear whether television as we know it will survive all these changes. The sense of an end is looming, both in conferences (e.g. *Ends of Television* in Amsterdam, 2009) and in book titles (e.g. *The End of Television?*, *Television after TV*, and *Beyond the Box*).^[1] While the discipline as such is quite young – not so long ago we were wondering ‘What is the television of television studies?’^[2] – and has not yet established its disciplinary boundaries it is already questioned, as are many classical fields of communication and media research in the era of digitisation and convergence. Convergence, in this context, refers to ‘the new textual practices, branding and marketing strategies, industrial arrangements, technological synergies, and audience behaviours enabled and propelled by the emergence of digital media’.^[3]

This article does not aim to review or discuss the extensive literature on convergence and the changing nature of television^[4] but rather to deliberately look the other way and consider what is ‘still’ TV (as it was) in the contemporary media ecology. Although we hope to contribute to the theoretical debate our focus is on empirical evidence. Industry and journalistic discourses in particular seem to be so preoccupied with changes and innovations that mainstream contemporary television practices all but disappear from view. If we do not simply focus on what is new but rather take a broad and open view of contemporary television then strong continuities come to the fore. Of course we are not the only ones noting these continuities;^[5] also, we are aware of the fact that we do reduce the complexity of contemporary debates and writing on television by positing that it is mostly about what is new and different. After the initial excitement recent academic research indeed seems to have returned to a more tempered and critical stance, among other things pointing at continuities, as noted by James Bennett and others.^[6] Yet, as also pointed out by Bennett, the overall debate in television studies seems to have moved to ‘new media’.^[7] We do think that the overall emphasis in television studies is on change rather than continuity, so we bring together a set of arguments to the contrary, hoping to contribute to the reestablishment of a balanced discourse about contemporary television.

It is important to note that we did not deliberately set out to find such continuities. Rather, they presented themselves throughout different research projects we initiated over the past years. In each case innovations were the focus of research, while continuities caught our attention during the analysis. All of these projects dealt with a particular case: Flemish (North Belgium, Dutch-language) television. Our findings may therefore be culturally specific and cannot simply be generalised to other TV markets, so the bulk of our argument will be limited to the Flemish case. At the same time, as our findings diverge from expectations and assumptions in most international (English-language) writing on television they question many seemingly ‘universal’ generalisations on contemporary television, which turns out to still be quite nationally specific.^[8] In this way our findings clearly indicate that concrete, historically, and culturally-situated research is necessary to more accurately assess how television is actually changing, at different speeds and in different modes, towards more convergent forms.^[9]

Our research and this paper also focus on one particular category of programmes: TV drama. Again, we should be cautious in generalising to other genres and programme categories. However, drama is particularly relevant in relation to discussions on digitisation and convergence as it offers many new options in terms of production, distribution, textual extensions, and viewing practices, as we will develop below. Therefore, if we do indeed find much continuity in relation to a category of programmes that is so strongly linked to convergence culture there is reason to believe that overall television has not changed as radically as we are often led to believe.

In our account we also want to stress the importance of considering different aspects of television. Just focusing on what is technologically possible or offered content-wise does not allow us to completely grasp how TV operates. It is also important to understand the concrete production context and the intentions and motivations guiding the making of contemporary television programming. At the same time we need to consider what audiences actually do with the extended options they get and how they explain and motivate this, for it is becoming increasingly clear that audiences do not collectively and overwhelmingly grasp every new possibility the industry offers them. To quote Sonia Livingstone, ‘new media research is an empirical as well as a theoretical question, demanding continued investigation into the production, circulation and interpretation of texts in context, and so into the activities of audiences’.[\[10\]](#)

Our argument is that academic writing, like the industry itself, tends to underestimate the persistence and resilience of established TV processes and habits. These ‘residual’ practices are not marginal and disappearing but rather the opposite (at least for the time being) – still strong and dominant, though delegitimised, as convincingly argued by Newman and Levine.[\[11\]](#) The discourse of a ‘radical change’ in which all that was solid would melt into air and thus threatening the model of broadcasting seems very new, though it echoes older debates. For instance, in the 1980s the liberalisation of the broadcasting market in Europe, the end of public broadcasting monopolies, and the rise of commercial broadcasting generated a huge amount of academic writing, combining anxiety with bold statements about the future.[\[12\]](#) Undeniably, the rise of commercial broadcasting was a watershed and European TV in the late 1990s was very different from European TV in the early 1980s, though many expectations did not come true. To name but one in the context of television drama in Flanders: the rise of commercial broadcasters did not lead to the end of domestically-produced, culturally-specific television drama at the expense of massive imports of cheap American drama; on the contrary, it led to an increasing output of ‘national’ drama.[\[13\]](#) Similarly, public broadcasting was threatened and it did change, though in Flanders as indeed across Europe it remains an important player in the television market. In the short term changes were overestimated – the fragmentation of the television market was not as drastic as expected, commercial TV did not lead to straightforward levelling down, etc. In the longer term, however, it is undeniable that many smaller changes have led to radically different television logic. For instance, instead of mass importing cheaper (American) programmes, in a competitive commercial environment broadcasters have started to buy and adapt formats in order to create (seemingly) culturally-specific programming while building upon established and proven concepts.[\[14\]](#)

Of course this previous period of radical changes does not help to predict the future, but the current discourse does echo the sense of immediate urgency and threat. Like before, while things are changing it is hard to keep in mind what is not changing. So in what follows we systematically sum up some of the things that have not (completely) changed in Flemish

television. While there is no room here to give an international, comparative account, we suggest the reader make a similar mental exercise about his or her own broadcasting context in order to either notice similar tendencies or to become aware of nationally-specific differences.

The TV market and the production of drama

One of the possibilities and fears raised by digital television in the age of convergence is the breakdown of mainstream, national TV markets because of the multiplication of easily-available regional, national, and transnational channels and programmes. This, of course, is not a new fear and (in Europe) can be traced back to different milestones such as the introduction of cable, the start of commercial competition, and transnational satellite television – all of which reduced the ‘scarcity’ of the early decades and led to an age of ‘availability’, to use John Ellis’ term.[\[15\]](#) However, combining all of this with the time-shifting possibilities of digital television, there is a sense that national television markets and audiences will crumble into a multiplicity of niches, potentially threatening the viability of mainstream national TV.

In Belgium the national TV market has always been split between a northern Dutch-language (Flemish) segment and the southern French-language segment. However, both still operate as strong (sub-)national markets. In Flanders in 2012 the two main channels together had a market share of more than 50% – Eén, the first public channel, at 34.4% and vtm, the main commercial channel, at 19.9%. Adding three more channels – public channel Canvas (8.3%) and commercial channels VT4 (6.8%) and 2be (5%) – the market share rises to about 75%.[\[16\]](#) Given that there are only 6.3 million inhabitants in Flanders this implies that the ratings these market shares represent are relatively low compared to larger nations. However, there is no denying that the Flemish market is not as fragmented as has often been predicted in the past. After some troubles in the 1990s, in the 2000s and later the public broadcaster VRT has always been the market leader, while the main commercial competitor VMMA is still Flemish-owned. Again, we should point out that this is not a common pattern across Europe let alone in the rest of the world. In Flanders mainstream, generalist TV is still strong and domestically-produced programmes top the charts.[\[17\]](#) This may be specific to Flanders as a small, non-English language television market where Flemish cultural identity is important in the federalised Belgian political context and where cultural proximity may be more important in TV viewing than elsewhere.[\[18\]](#) Nevertheless, it is a strong example of ‘national’ TV surviving if not thriving in the age of convergence.

Turning more specifically to the production of drama, the general expectation would be that it is increasingly spilling over the boundaries of the television medium, spreading and promoting the same text across other media (‘cross-media’) or even developing new concepts simultaneously across different media platforms (‘trans-media storytelling’).[\[19\]](#) In this view the television text has lost its former central position as it is now surrounded by ‘paratexts’.[\[20\]](#) Television is increasingly considered as ‘content’ delivered in various formats, available through different media, continuously repurposed and adapted. Consequently, the production of TV drama is changing as formerly separated media and products are increasingly produced within the same company, creating narrative universes unfolding across multiple platforms.[\[21\]](#) These narratives are promoted to create ‘brand communities’,[\[22\]](#) using trailers, previews, and advertisements to frame interactions between the spectator and the text.[\[23\]](#)

While such an account is valuable in pointing out important changes in the production and promotion of American TV drama – in particular high-profile high-budget shows like *Lost* [24] – it is worth considering whether similar tendencies can be noted elsewhere, also including more ‘low profile’ drama productions. In 2010 we interviewed 14 key players in the production of drama in Flanders including producers, directors, and screenwriters, as well as the VRT and vtm drama producers. [25] While our focus was on cross- and transmedia fiction, for which we selected people involved in programmes using cross-media extensions (see below), we actually found quite limited evidence of the convergent production processes discussed above. [26] When talking about the production process most interviewees only referred to the classical stages like scriptwriting, shooting, editing, and post-production. None of the productions we discussed were conceived as trans-media projects, while cross-media extensions were generally added after the production process and situated in a different part of the organisation (e.g. the ‘line extensions’ department) or even outside the company producing the television text. For commercial channels paratexts were mostly commercially-oriented and sought new ways to cash in on the success of existing programmes, while public channels rather aimed to create a community of viewers and to increase viewer involvement, for instance in the daily soap *Thuis*.

Interestingly, the public broadcaster VRT invests more in cross-media extensions to its drama, while American literature would lead us to expect that commercial broadcasters would be more eager to do so in order to create loyal ‘brand communities’ for their programmes. Budget restrictions seem to be one of the main reasons for this. Within a small TV market like Flanders dramatic programme budgets are extremely tight and only the public broadcaster, which has slightly higher and more secure funding, can afford to invest in paratexts which may not generate extra revenue. The VRT also has a public service remit to innovate creatively and technologically, as prescribed in its contract with the government and as inspired by other public broadcasters, notably the BBC. [27] More generally, the tight budgets are often mentioned in the interviews as a factor constricting innovation and determining artistic and creative choices in Flemish drama, which reminds one of the specificity of the US and other large markets (e.g. British) catering to huge national and international audiences. Put differently, while not every US show is equally supported by paratexts as is *Lost*, Flanders does not even have the means to make its own *Lost*, which is the case in many smaller European countries. While there are some high-profile and (relatively) high budget ‘quality’ dramas on Flemish television their target audience is generally much broader, so specific paratexts oriented towards a youth or dedicated fan audience are not deemed to be profitable.

Scheduling and the TV text

One of the key features of ‘old’ broadcast TV is the strategic placing of programmes in scheduling grids, creating ‘planned flow’ aimed to attract viewers at regular times and to keep them loyal. [28] As late as 2000, John Ellis regarded scheduling as the ‘last creative act in television’. [29] After the multiplication of available channels alternative ways of watching digitally (DVR, DVD, etc.) were claimed to threaten the use and usefulness of schedules, leading to individually-adapted viewing menus. [30] The consequences would be far-reaching, undermining the social process of (actual or imagined) ‘co-viewing’ and thus the whole 20th century cultural conception of television as a mass, social medium.

Considering the Flemish case it is undeniable that television viewing has changed – perhaps less radically than many expected but still considerably. One of the main industry reasons for

concern is, of course, the threat to the current commercial model that relies heavily on advertisements which are often avoided by viewers using DVR.[31] At the time of writing drama is the first potential victim as it is less actuality-based, and as the winter 2012 TV season is extremely competitive, with viewers recording many programmes in order not to miss others.[32] Indeed, as one of the minor commercial channels VT4 (now VIER) was taken over by Woestijnvis – the main production company previously catering to the public broadcaster – it was expected that the power-balance as sketched above would radically shift. Woestijnvis brought some of the highest-rated programmes to its new channel – the public broadcaster fearing to lose its market leadership and the main commercial channel vtm fearing the loss of advertising income.

However, after some months of broadcasting the persistence of ‘old’ TV and its habits became clear. Apart from one quiz show performing relatively well (but still substantially lower than previously on public TV) the new channel VIER did not manage to tease away many viewers from their usual channels and schedules. The strong horizontal and vertical programming of the main public channel één was continued, successfully filling in the empty slots with new programmes which were ‘hammocked’ or ‘locomotived’ by old favourites. The public channel’s strategic planners were also convinced that their branding strategies (such as the use of in-vision announcers) create strong viewer loyalty.[33] The main commercial channel vtm retained its audience (and advertisers) by launching a new, younger house style and by scheduling programmes wisely (‘mimicking’ the public channel’s schedule). They also invested in social media integration for live shows to encourage live viewing.[34] In short: it does still matter when and on which channel programmes are scheduled.

Flemish viewers appear to be very loyal.[35] They can but generally do not constitute their own TV evening, many at most delaying the viewing of some programmes by a few hours or a day.[36] Again, this is just a snapshot, as the ownership shift described above may have more radical consequences in the long run. Moreover, digital television and DVR are still quite new (though spreading) in Flanders, so further changes are to be expected.[37] At the same time the evidence we now have suggests that TV channels and schedules may actually provide necessary guidance in an era of availability and choice, which is a thought we will develop further when we discuss audiences.[38]

The very building blocks of schedules – the individual programmes – are also deemed to change in the age of convergence. TV shows now have the capability to spill over the borders of the medium, as discussed above in relation to cross- and transmedia. If content is available on multiple platforms, in varied formats and supported by multiple paratexts, can we still talk about a television programme as a singular text? Parallel to the interviews with producers mentioned above and based on the model provided by Askwith[39] we analysed the expanded television text of four Flemish drama productions in 2010.[40] We included one soap opera, one telenovela, and two crime dramas – all selected on the basis of the presence of many paratexts.[41] All programmes share possibilities for expanded access (through digital TV, the Internet, and/or DVD), repackaged content (through websites, Wikipedia, IMDb, etc.), social interaction (on Netlog and Facebook fan pages), and related activities (all had a yearly themed activity day for fans); some are also supported by ancillary content in other media (e.g. books, radio plays, blogs) and branded products. In terms of formal programme qualities, i.e. textual characteristics encouraging more active viewing, we only found the introduction of a few business storylines in the soap *Thuis* which allowed some interaction through corporate websites (which were not successful and were discontinued).

The most advanced transmedia example we could find was the blog of a minor character in *Thuis*.

In sum this may look like – and actually is – quite a lot, while it is worth noting that none of these features are really interactive, allowing viewers to contribute (rather than respond) to the programme. The border between production and consumption, at least in Flanders and in relation to TV drama, is still very firm. Also, beside the range of merchandising around the telenovela *Sara* (an adaptation of the global format *Yo soy Betty la fea*) there is no ‘brand community’ to speak of – again, a model that seems unique to big budget (particularly American) shows. The television programme turns out to still be the firm textual anchor of any paratext, the latter mostly supporting and/or cashing in on the success of the weekly or daily episodes, which in turn are still firmly anchored in the two main channels’ schedules as discussed above.

It is no coincidence that the four programmes discussed here all belong to clear and established genres; they have multiple episodes and seasons, providing familiar viewing fare which allows for the establishment of firm connections with faithful viewers – who do constitute some kind of community, if not online then mostly around the daily or weekly TV broadcasts, as the high ratings for all four programmes suggest.^[42] As genre products these programmes are not as ‘hybrid’ as another expectation related to recent television changes would suggest. While some generic experimentation can be found in the Flemish television offer, this is mostly to be situated in reality TV or in the (less circumscribed) genre of ‘quality drama’. The latter programmes mostly run only one season, are very expensive, and are supported by extensive mass media marketing campaigns rather than other (digital, interactive) paratexts. The bulk of the drama on offer is still constituted by familiar generic productions (soap, comedy, and crime drama) which are still clearly circumscribed, both generically and textually.

Drama viewers – or users?

All the changes mentioned above conspire to provide audiences with more options and more ‘freedom’. Overall, digitisation and convergence are supposed to shift the power balance away from producers to the advantage of individual users. ‘Classic’ broadcast television was typically considered as a ‘lean back’ medium and criticised for encouraging lazy, conservative viewing behaviour, while heavy viewers were often described as ‘couch potatoes’. The current TV offering is positively hailed as more enabling, which undoubtedly is a potential inherent in many of the digital innovations of the past decades.

Again, we set out to look for such innovations in the viewing practices of engaged Flemish TV drama viewers.^[43] Using TV diaries and in-depth interviews we explored their viewing habits and the reasons for these habits.^[44] Overall we did find evidence of multiple and varied uses of drama content across different platforms, as this was the very basis upon which respondents were selected. However, even these ‘engaged’, interested viewers are generally not that ‘active’ – or at least not in the way some literature seems to suggest. First, the observed viewing patterns vary across a range from relatively ‘classic’ viewing (e.g. watching on schedule, sometimes with a short delay, on the TV screen) to ‘individualistic’ viewing (at the time and on the platform of one’s choice), though the step to actual audience interactions and creations (on forums, in fan production, etc.) is rarely made.

Second, even the ‘new’ self-determined viewing practices build upon similar motivations and needs – most centrally, convenience. Costs (in terms of money, time, and effort spent) are weighed against benefits (in terms of control, quick gratification, etc.). This varies across individual users and programmes, leading to different viewing patterns such as the downloading of entire seasons (e.g. of foreign shows not yet available in Flanders), the purchase of some shows on DVD (e.g. ‘quality drama’), digital recording (e.g. weekly instalments of programmes scheduled at inconvenient times), and the following of regular schedules (e.g. ‘must see’ shows).

Third, it is striking that although some have predicted full flexibility, individualised, and personalised viewing practices,[\[45\]](#) even ‘individual’ viewing patterns actually have a strong social dimension in a very traditional way. Viewing at alternative times or on alternative platforms may be a way to watch together with others (e.g. watching recorded programmes at a convenient family time), just as traditional linear television brought viewers together; it may also be a way to synchronise one’s viewing to follow a programme at the same time and in the same rhythm as others (e.g. following the ‘original’ rhythm of an imported show) in order to be able to discuss it afterwards – that is, face to face, as even our ‘engaged’ audiences rarely interact with television using (online) social media.

Again, simplistic broad-ranging views about change are challenged. Flemish audiences can and do ‘use’ drama in different ways as they do have more choice and control, but television (in particular drama) is still mostly about leisure and entertainment. Therefore, convenience and the ability to ‘lean back’ – now also when and where you want – are still important. Control is weighed against ease, the fixed schedule still providing reliable rhythms and shared experiences. The core of this continuity, as also remarked by John Hartley, is the stability and recognition broadcast television provides.[\[46\]](#) John Ellis conceptualises this as television’s role of ‘working through’ in the age of uncertainty, providing patterns in an era of choice fatigue and still providing a means for social cohesion.[\[47\]](#) It seems that the old function of television to provide a sense of social belonging, corresponding to the need for identity and ontological security,[\[48\]](#) is actually still very much alive.

All of this should come as no surprise, as TV has for a long time been more than just domestic, collective viewing. From the 1970s TV content and possibilities for access have increasingly grown but cable, VCR, satellite, etc. have not led to a radical erosion of collective, shared viewing experiences. In this age of media and information overload this may actually be the unique selling point of the medium (as of other old mass media): the fact that it guides audiences through the multiplicity on offer, requiring minimal effort and thus playing on the need to be entertained. For a large part of the Flemish audience most of the time ‘using’ TV is still about watching particular texts proposed by trusted channels and according to pre-established schedules.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is worth returning to our initial statements. Although we focus here on evidence to the contrary we do not want to argue that television has not changed at all. Rather, we want to (if a bit one-sided and provocatively) call attention to what has not changed – or at least not as radically as is often suggested. Partly echoing the industry and journalistic excitement about convergent and multiplatform television, academic writing tends to focus on what is new and it may therefore create a sense of revolution, of an end, a

post-television era. We do think this is premature and clearly contradicted by at least some of the facts.

In a domain like television studies, drawing on the rich theoretical and conceptual foundations of the broader fields of media and cultural studies, evidence-based (not to say empirical) research should have its place. The scarcity and selectivity of such empirical checks seems to be a first reason for the relative overemphasis on changes in the current television ecology. More work on a broader range of examples and countries would be welcome to better understand the current state of the medium. As it is, most of the literature focuses on highly convergent cases, both in terms of production and audience practices, while little is known about the overall spread of convergent television practices.

Another reason may be the tendency of both journalists and academics to reflect on what is new, trying to understand and explain it. Of course research should be about what matters now, but we would argue it therefore also has to deal with what matters 'still', even if this is less exciting and may seem like old news. Third, as noted by many there is a great deal of determinism involved in early assessments of new (including digital) technologies.^[49] Put simply, it is not because something is technologically possible that users will adopt it. To that we could add media centrism: it is not because we can observe changes in the media provision that audiences will consume it. Fourth, there is a good deal of wishful thinking and utopianism involved in writing about the new possibilities of convergent media, which are associated with free mobility and framed as positive, exciting, and revolutionary.^[50] This tone actually recalls the 'active audiences' literature at the time of the expanding technologies and channels mentioned above, which wanted people to be critical instead of passive victims.

Fifth, there seems to be a tendency to mistake the presence and possibility of certain convergent television uses and applications for their prevalence or even dominance. Indeed it is possible to watch one's individual schedule on a range of devices, but for the time being in Flanders at least one million viewers still tune in daily to watch the soap *Thuis* at 8 PM.^[51] Sixth, we can relate the overemphasis on changes to a tendency to generalise from a small and unrepresentative sample. At the most basic level the academic focus on convergence closely matches our own position as educated media scholars probably more interested and involved in active media uses, belonging to a middle class having technological and economic access to a range of devices and applications, and intellectually oriented towards discriminating and critical media use. More generally, there is a tendency to focus on and validate younger (male, affluent^[52]) web-savvy and multitasking media users. Their media uses are mostly linked to the population cohort they belong to (the web generation, which grew up with digital media) and less to their age and life stage as young people who have the urge, time, and freedom to explore the potential of convergent media. While predictions are extremely dangerous in this field it seems plausible that even the web-savvy kids of today will retain at least some of the more regular patterns of media use when they grow up, have children and jobs, etc.

Finally, and perhaps most centrally, we hope our argument on Flemish TV drama has shown that it is useful to consider particular, different television markets to better understand how convergence proceeds in concrete national, socio-cultural, and historical contexts. Although our argument may seem more sweeping at its core we want to make the point that, at least in the Flemish case and at this time, television is not as convergent as it could be. Based on these observations it seems wise to keep an open view on all TV uses and practices, old and new, acknowledging the fact that television is now more plural than ever in its channels,

genres, and interfaces.[53] Old models persist while new models are introduced;[54] television diversifies while it still presents some of the advantages of old broadcasting (like a sense of live community[55]). Television becomes more global while the national does still matter.[56] Television, in short, is still TV, while it may indeed have become so much more as well.

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[1] Katz & Scannell 2009; Turner & Tay 2009; Ross 2008.

[2] Brunsdon 1998.

[3] Kackman et al. 2011, p. 1.

[4] For a good start see Stauff 2012.

[5] E.g. Hartley 2009, pp. 22-23; Gripsrud 2010; Tay & Turner, 2010.

[6] Bennett 2011, pp. 5-6.

[7] Bennett 2011, p. 9.

[8] Dhoest 2011.

[9] A similar point on national differences is made by Turner 2009 and Tay & Turner 2010.

[10] Livingstone 2004, p. 77.

[11] Newman & Levine 2012, pp. 130-152.

[12] E.g. Blumler 1992. For the Flemish context see De Bens 1991. For a retrospective account on these changes see Wieten, Murdock & Dahlgren 2000.

[13] Dhoest 2007.

[14] Moran 1998.

[15] Ellis 2000.

[16] VRT 2012, p. 21.

[17] For instance, in 2011 there were only six imported programmes in the Flemish top 100. See http://www.cim.be/downloads.php?files=20120111_Top100_NOORD_2011.pdf

[18] Dhoest 2009.

[19] Jenkins 2006.

[20] Gray 2010.

[21] Askwith 2007, pp. 15-17; Caldwell 2004, p. 49; Gray 2008, pp. 82-83.

[22] Jenkins 2006.

[23] Gray 2010.

[24] Pearson 2007.

[25] VTM fiction producer Jan Creuwels and (former) VRT drama producer Stef Wouters; producers Tine De Meulenaere, Marina Willems, Ludo Schats, Paul Schellekens and Wim Janssen; scriptwriters Paul Piedfort, Hugo Van Laere, Ward Hulseimans and Bas Adriaensen; creative director Reinhilde Dewit; director Serge Bierset; and actress/blogger Tine Deboosere.

[26] For an elaborate account see Simons, Dhoest & Malliet 2012.

[27] About the role of the BBC in the converging 'multiplatform' media environment see Bennett et al. 2012.

[28] Williams 1990, pp. 86-96.

[29] Ellis 2000.

[30] Uricchio 2004.

[31] According to recent numbers more than 80% of DVR viewers skip commercials, which means that advertisers do not have to pay for these viewers (Debackere 2012).

[32] JDB 2013.

[33] Based on interviews with the public channel's manager Jean Philip De Tender and marketing director Sibylle De Backer (November 2012). See also Van den Bulck & Enli 2013.

[34] Based on an interview with Yf Brodala, line extensions manager at VMMA (October 2012).

[35] Dumon 2012.

[36] See Simons, forthcoming.

[37] For example, the percentage of Flemish households with DTV has increased from 47.3% in 2009 to 82.1% in 2012 (De Moor, Schuurman & De Marez 2012, p. 6).

[38] In the Norwegian context, Ihlebæk, Syvertsen & Ytreberg (2013) come to a similar conclusion.

[39] Askwith 2007.

[40] Simons, Dhoest & Malliet 2012.

[41] The public channel één's soap *Thuis* and crime drama *Witse*, the commercial channel vtm's telenovela *Sara* and crime drama *Aspe*.

[42] Top ratings exceeding 1.5 million (*Witse*), 1 million (*Thuis*), 950,000 (*Sara*) and 830,000 (*Aspe*) viewers on a population of about 6.3 million Flemings; <http://www.cim.be>.

[43] These viewers, selected through an online survey, are actively involved with TV drama by individualising their viewing practices, by communicating about it, by consuming cross- and transmedia elements, and by producing TV drama-related content.

[44] For a more extensive account see Simons, forthcoming.

[45] See Barkhuus 2009 and Hoppenstand 2006.

[46] Hartley 2009, p. 22.

[47] Ellis 2000, pp. 171-176.

[48] Blondheim & Liebes 2009, pp. 183-185.

[49] Spigel 2004.

[50] Kackman et al 2011, p. 3.

[51] While only 200,000 viewers (or 18%) watch delayed (Debackere 2012).

[52] Newman & Levine 2012, pp. 129-152.

[53] Mittell 2011, p. 52; Gripsrud 2010, p. XV.

[54] Uricchio 2009.

[55] Hartley 2009, pp. 22-23.

[56] Moran 2009; Turner 2009.