Making it local: Contextuating programming on commercial free-to-air television in Australia.

Margaret Nixon

PhD

University of Technology, Sydney

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Certificate of authorship/originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how global, national and local identities are articulated in television practices. Specifically, I focus my analysis on the non-program material of television and argue that this material participates in the articulation of national identities that are simultaneously positioned within regional spaces and a global television sphere. That is, viewers are positioned as located in particular places that are situated interdependently within a national television system and culture that operates in a global television environment.

In order to grapple with the complexity of the ways in which non-program material locates and positions viewers, I coin the term "contextuating programming" and in my study I analyse a number of instances of Australian television to examine how contextuating programming operates in different programming contexts and in different broadcasting regions of Australia. I analyse a segment of contextuating programming during a television program and also a segment from the end of one program to the beginning of another and draw conclusions about how contextuating programming functions differently in these environments. I also examine regional "fillers" to determine how they function in local identity-building. My major analysis of contextuating programming is of the free-to-air broadcasts of the Olympic Games in 2000 (Sydney) and 2004 (Athens) when simultaneous broadcasting across Australia of the global media event revealed much about how the Australian television system positions viewers as having global, national and local identities.

The contextuating programming of the commercial free-to-air television system in Australia speaks of the specificities of that system, particularly the relationships between network, affiliate and regional stations, and the relationships between imported and locally produced programming. My research concludes that while television promotes itself as being a global force, television practices are intricately and powerfully tied to specific notions of local and national identity. Finally, I identify areas where research into practices similar to contextuating programming would further expand our understanding of the intricacies between local, regional, national and global practices and identities.