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• From internationalization to transnationalization

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The transnationalization of global media at the beginning of the 21st century can be comprehended as the third phase in a succession of paradigm shifts in the evolution of international communication from the mid-19th century onwards.

Internationalization

The second industrial revolution that developed during the second half of the 19th century (Caron, 1997), and the new technologies associated with it, spurred the first big bang in international communication. In the 1850s, the application of electricity to the telegraph facilitated the transfer of information over long distances. In the ensuing decade, progress in steamship and cable technology enabled telegraph companies to begin laying down submarine cables. By the end of the century, telegraph communications connected the world's main cities, reducing from weeks to hours the transmission time of information (Kieve, 1973; Standage, 1998).

Alongside the emergence of the first corporations with an international scope, such as telegraph companies and news agencies (Rantanen, 1997), the first international media markets developed. In technology, firms with cutting-edge expertise (e.g. Marconi), rapidly expanded their activities in several territories (Hills, 2002). In entertainment, the fledgling international film trade was first dominated by the French studios, and later overtaken by a Hollywood-based US film industry during the interwar period (Trumpbour, 2002).

Governments played a crucial role because they considered the progress of international communication a strategic priority. European powers subsidized telegraph companies – when they did not own them – and the US State Department worked closely with Hollywood in its bid

for world supremacy (Trumpbour, 2002). Thus these developments benefited governments most who used international communications networks to assert their diplomatic influence and exert control over their colonial empire (Thussu, 2000).

Globalization

During the first half of the 20th century, international communication continued to expand through wireless communication and broadcasting technologies. A new paradigm began to emerge in the 1960s, when a series of innovations in the field of telecommunications – prompted by advances in computing, microelectronics and space-related technologies – provoked a second explosion in international communication. Most notable was the invention of fibre optic cables and geo-stationary communication satellites, which were progressively developed into global networks under the aegis of international organizations such as Intelsat and the International Telecommunications Union (Evans, 1987; Hecht, 1999). TV broadcast satellites enabled the instantaneous and worldwide circulation of sounds and images, and TV news began their planetary daily rounds via the news exchanges of broadcasters' regional associations.

Satellites also created live global audiences for international sporting events and other major happenings such as armed conflicts. As satellites gained more bandwidth, more power and a larger footprint, TV channels began to cross borders. In August 1989, CNN emerged as the world's first global channel when it became available worldwide 24 hours a day with transmission on a Soviet satellite to Africa, the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent and Southeast Asia. From a technological perspective, the world became a global village indeed, satellite broadcasting and the electronic media transforming the planet into a 'single constricted space resonant with tribal drums' (McLuhan, 1962: 31).

The global integration witnessed in the technology field was soon echoed in the corporate world. In the 1980s, the United States spearheaded a worldwide policy shift of deregulation and liberalization, which opened the gates to a round of corporate consolidation in the following decade (Tunstall, 1986; Gershon, 2000). The size of these newly created American companies and their dominant position in the home market gave them added incentive to expand overseas when new markets were opening up. This process resulted in the emergence of a handful of media corporations with unprecedented global reach. Companies like Time-Warner, Viacom and News Corporation spread to the world's most significant markets, spanning all key media sectors

from film production to TV distribution. The trend towards global integration is equally significant in the advertising industry. Following two decades of mergers and acquisitions, around 10 global agencies that 'control more than 80 percent of global media billings' thrive on coordinating the global marketing campaigns of multinationals with worldwide sales (Tharp and Jeong, 2001: 111).

At the end of the 20th century, a borderless media system has developed whose backbone is a global communication network comprising fibre optic pipes and TV broadcast satellites. Its expansion is driven by the internationalization of media markets following deregulation and a worldwide integration of the media industry. The globalization of communication plays a determining role in the deterritorialization of capitalism and economic liberalism (Latouche, 1996) and is central to the globalizing process at large. Many fields of activities are currently integrating on a world scale and progressively turning into global systems (Held et al., 1999). Global communication adds to the flow of information, networks of communication and systems of exchange that intensify the interconnectedness of these fields and facilitate their worldwide integration (Chalaby, 2003).

Transnationalization

It is increasingly apparent that a new international communication paradigm is emerging, even though the first communication satellites are barely 40 years old. The information technology revolution has further deepened the integration between computing, telecommunications and electronic media (Forester, 1985; Castells, 1996). Outcomes of this process include the digitization of broadcasting systems – making communication networks more powerful and flexible – and the emergence of new digital media.

A transnational media order is coming into being that is remapping media spaces and involving new media practices, flows and products. An international reach is no longer the preserve of Western-based conglomerates, as an increasing number of smaller media companies from the developing world are expanding overseas, from Multichoice in South Africa to Zee Network in India (e.g. Thusu, 2005). Transnational TV channels have multiplied and grown in diversity over the past 10 years to include some of the most innovative and influential channels of our times. Many of them are at the heart of the transformation of regional media cultures, most noticeably in the Middle East, South Asia and even Africa, but also in Europe (Chalaby, 2005).

Transnational audiences are increasingly widespread, due notably to the expansion of migratory flows, the establishment of large migrant communities, and the availability of relatively cheap satellite TV reception equipment. When watching television, migrant audiences seek enjoyment as do any other viewing audience, rather than something diaspora-specific (Aksoy and Robins, 2003: 101). But unlike other viewers, their position enables them to compare TV channels originating from different cultures. The practice of transnational viewing places migrants in an 'ironic stance to cultures', and far from reinforcing long-distance national identities it fosters a relationship to knowledge and experience that is 'moving beyond the frame of national society' (Robins and Aksoy, 2005: 36).

In the corporate world, media conglomerates are adopting a new organizational structure and management mentality, mutating from global to transnational media companies (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1998). Headquarters give affiliates growing autonomy, specialize them according to their strengths and resources, and then link them up into an interdependent corporate network. This new organizational structure enables these companies to combine global efficiency with responsiveness to local and regional markets. In broadcasting, global TV channels from Bloomberg to MTV are transforming into transnational networks of local channels. These channels share a concept, brand, part of the programming and library titles, resources and infrastructures, but employ local staff and develop according to their respective environment, setting up their own schedule mixing shared network content with their own material.

At the same time, the new media are opening up public access to international communication. The web gives instant access to international content and emails facilitate interpersonal communication across borders. These tools are more individual-centred and are less government-controlled than old pathways to international communication. Digitization and the new media have led to an unprecedented democratization of international communication and the empowerment of the growing number of people who have access to them.

There is obvious continuity between the three stages, which feed into one another. Internationalization is still in progress: although global communication networks reach all parts of the world they are still unequally distributed. The media industry continues to integrate on a world scale with each technology leap, round of corporate consolidation and policy deregulation. However, the prevailing dynamic differs each time. The first phase is typified by international *expansion*, telegraph

companies and news agencies joining up previously unconnected parts of the world. The globalization stage is characterized by worldwide *integration* and the formation of an electronic global village.

The distinctive feature of the current era is *cosmopolitanization*. Once, international communication reinforced nation-states, then it linked them together, and today it is transforming their very fabric. International communication is restructuring media flows at up to four levels (local, national, regional and global), involving a complex network of companies, products and audiences (Sinclair et al., 1996; Straubhaar, 1997). This period is not so much characterized by the creation of a new layer of communication flow but by the enmeshing of these four levels. Beck (2002) defines cosmopolitanization as 'inner globalization' – 'globalization *from within* the national societies': 'borders are no longer predeterminate, they can be chosen (and interpreted), but simultaneously also have to be redrawn and legitimated anew' (pp. 17–19). The transnational media order belongs to this emerging context, challenging boundaries, questioning the principle of territoriality and opening up 'from within' the national media. New media practices and flows are shaping media spaces with built-in transnational connectivity, creating contemporary cultures pregnant with new meanings and experiences.

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• The taming of the shrew: global media in a Chinese perspective

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No global media outlet can be considered truly 'global', if it fails to reach a quarter of the world's population. Put another way, the world system of global communication would remain a far-fetched myth without China's involvement and commitment. Not surprisingly, 'engaging China' has risen to the top of the agenda of transnational media